The Cullman Tribune

SERVING CULLMAN – IN THE HEART OF DIXIE – SINCE 1874

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EXCLUSIVE FULL STORY

CHS officially names Gardendale's Plunkett new head football coach

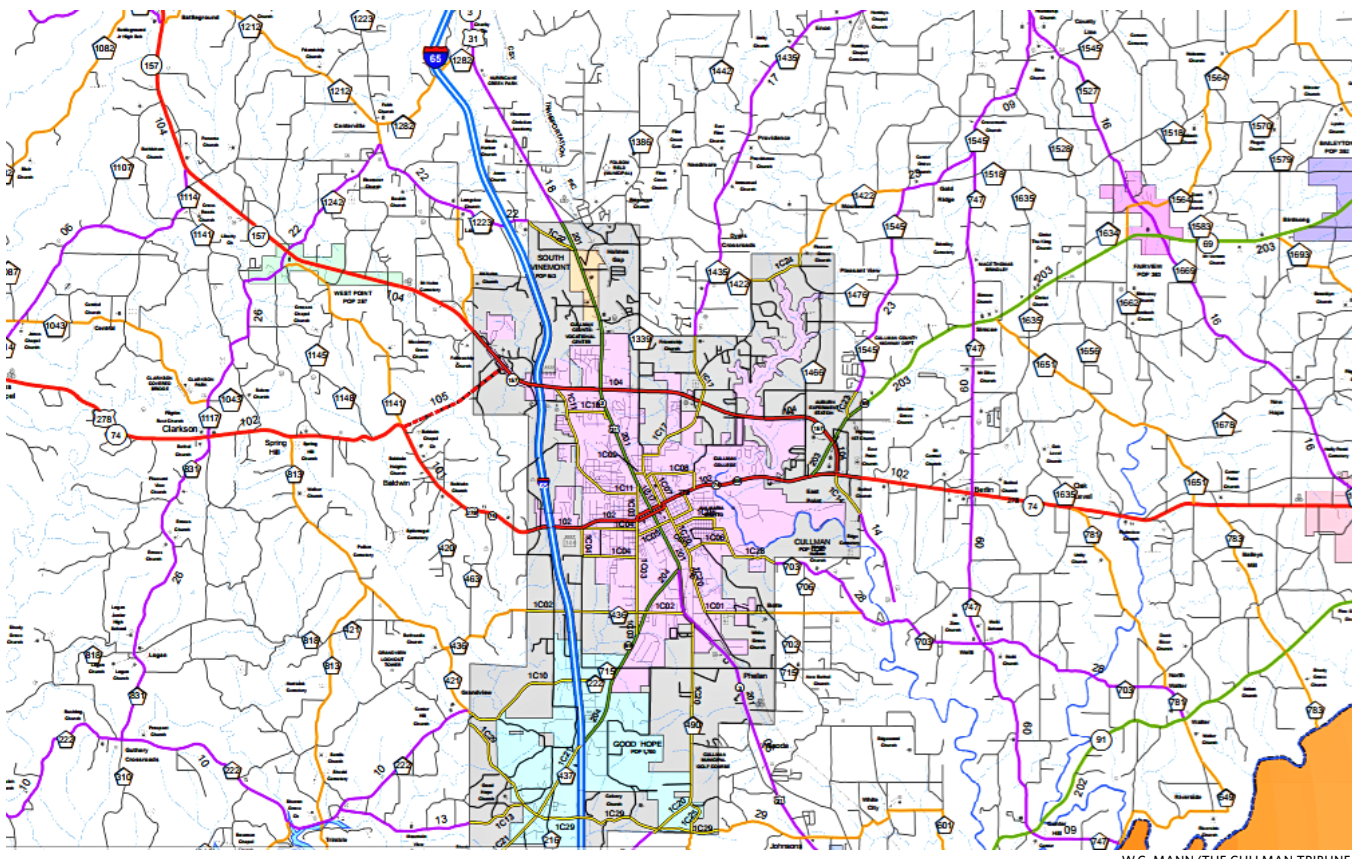


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NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Pictured, from left to right, are Patterson, Allison Plunkett (holding 1-year-old Makenzie Plunkett), 3-year-old Maddison Plunkett, Coach Plunkett and Hall.

County commissioners, county engineer respond to road concerns



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman County has 2,393 miles of roads, more than 1,500 of which are maintained by the Cullman County Road Department.

W.C. Mann
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CULLMAN – A while back, The Tribune invited its readers to sound off about county roads in need of repair or repaving. The roads reported included County Roads 4, 6, 15, 18, 19, 54, 59, 68, 71, 109, 134, 223*, 248, 258, 276, 370, 395, 418, 501, 550, 551, 601, 702, 730, 771, 813*, 818, 831, 855, 1043, 1082, 1087, 1107, 1155, 1174, 1193, 1218, 1255, 1258, 1286, 1288, 1296, 1386, 1422, 1428, 1442, 1455, 1485*, 1486, 1490, 1616 and 1625. (* denotes roads that received substantial attention from multiple commenters)

Not included in this list are several roads and road issues about which readers offered numerous comments, including the concrete barriers on U.S. Highway 278, the narrowed portion of the same road between Lowry's Station and East Point, conditions on I-65, and seemingly stalled projects on U.S. Highway 31 and Alabama Highway 157.

These four roads fall under state and/or federal jurisdiction through the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), and neither Cullman County nor the City of Cullman have any jurisdiction over them.

At the end of this article are links to ALDOT pages listing north Alabama projects, including a plan for "additional lanes and bridges from SR-69 to east of SR-3" with "bridges over Lake Catoma and CSX Railroad" on Hwy. 157, scheduled for fiscal year 2019.

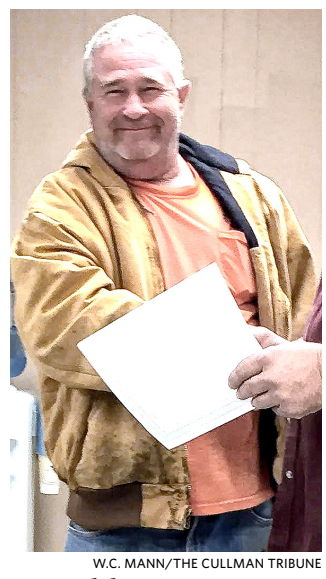
Among the comments in the thread on The Tribune's Facebook page, Cullman County Commissioner Garry Marchman took time to communicate with a few of the commenters, and stated, "I am appalled and embarrassed at the condition of many of our county roads. I have worked tirelessly to create a plan that would improve what we do.

"I cannot fix every problem with the resources we currently provide, but hope we can work together to improve our situations. I will find out why the problems you identified have not been addressed or if they have been addressed what efforts we made to improve the situations. I apologize if I have overlooked your situation for some reason. Every road and every citizen is important to me, and I will do my very best to work towards improving our situations."

By the numbers

Understanding a few facts about the road system of Cullman County may help Tribune readers better understand the tasks and work of the Cullman County Road Department.

- Cullman County has 2,393 miles of paved roads, second only to Jefferson County in raw mileage. Of these miles, ALDOT maintains 187 miles (Highways 31, 69, 91, 278, 157; and I-65) and 643 miles are maintained by municipalities and private entities.
- The Cullman County Road Department maintains 1,563 miles of roads in unincorporated parts of the county, surpassing even Jefferson County in that respect.
- Though Cullman County is second in raw road mileage and first in county-maintained mileage, it is 17th in line for distribution of fuel tax revenues from the State. Those revenues are not distributed according to mileage, but by population, and each county's revenue goes into the big pot for distribution. In other words, buying gas in a certain county does not mean that all of the fuel tax you pay goes to that county. (It's important to note that the Cullman County Road Department is responsible for non-incorporated areas; roads inside municipalities are the responsibility of those municipalities, except for state roads.)
- The cheapest form of paving, chip-seal, costs more than $30,000 per mile to apply. At the other end, the asphalt paving recommended for heavily used roads averages $102,000 per mile.
- At that high end and with no unforeseen extra expenses, the repaving of all county-maintained road mileage would cost $159,426,000. Even at the low end, the cost would well exceed $46 million.
- The Cullman County Road Department's 2018 budget is $8,157,276. The largest portion of that, as with most local government agencies, goes to employee expenses; with utilities, facilities, and equipment costs taking their slices of the pie as well. Road paving and maintenance gets $1,436,631.



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Ronald D. "Lightning" Park, who received a commendation from Commissioner Garry Marchman for his service to the road department, and who was recognized by County Engineer John Lang during our discussion.

On Wednesday, The Tribune sat down with Marchman, fellow Commissioner Kerry Watson, and Commission Chairman Kenneth Walker, along with County Engineer John Lang, to talk about what the County Road Department is doing.

Lang began, "We have a grossly underfunded road department. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that there's no waste in the road department; » PAGE 7

Cullman man charged with murder in shooting death of stepfather



CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

William Thomas Maddux

Wendy Sack
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CULLMAN – A Cullman man who allegedly shot and killed his stepfather before turning the gun on himself has been charged with murder, according to Cullman Police Department Sgt. David Nassetta, the lead investigator on the case. William Thomas Maddux, 27, turned himself at the Cullman County Detention Center Friday morning.

"We talked with his attorney yesterday," said Nassetta, "and he agreed to turn himself in this morning." Nassetta said Maddux's bond was set at $50,000.

Perry Shoemake, 56, of Cullman, was pronounced dead at the scene of the deadly incident, which occurred at 1829 Cottonwood Dr. SE in the Carrol Acres subdivision in the city of Cullman on the evening of Nov. 12, 2017.

Maddux was airlifted from the scene and was in critical condition at UAB Hospital for several days. On Dec. 5, Nassetta confirmed that Maddux was awake and under psychiatric care at the medical center. Today he said Maddux was released from UAB around Christmas Day.

Lt. Gene Bates confirmed in the hours following the double shooting that the two people shot were stepfather and stepson. Cullman County Coroner Jeremy L. Kilpatrick identified the deceased as Shoemake.

Nassetta told The Tribune on Nov. 13, "What we believe is that the suspect, who is also the stepson of the man who is deceased, attempted to come into the house. He was not let in. The suspect ended up coming back and breaking in the back door of the house. He came in and there was an exchange of gunfire. The suspect then attempted to commit suicide. He suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head."

As to a possible motive for the shooting, Nassetta said the preliminary investigation has revealed that Maddux was upset because his mother and stepfather would not give him money, but said he thinks there's a lot more to it than that. "That's a pretty big leap to make," he said, "going from being upset over money to shooting someone and attempting to kill yourself."

Bates said no one else was injured, although there was someone else at home when the shooting happened.

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
JANUARY 6, 2018

Coach (from Front)

Nick Griffin, Wendy Sack
Contributors

CULLMAN – The Cullman City School Board Friday morning approved the hiring of Matt Plunkett as the new head football coach at Cullman High School. Plunkett, who has served as head football coach and athletic director at Gardendale High School since 2013, will take over the Bearcat program from longtime Cullman coach Mark Britton, who retired last season.

"Coach Plunkett's football expertise, knowledge of building successful programs, developing young men as well as his emphasis on multi-sport athletes makes him the perfect fit for the Cullman City Schools' football program," said CHS Principal Kim Hall. "It is with great pride that I introduce to you Coach Matt Plunkett as Cullman High School's head football coach."

Plunkett is an Arab High School graduate who grew up in Joppa. He attended the University of North Alabama and the University of Alabama, and was a student assistant coach in both football programs. Out of college, Plunkett held assistant coaching titles at Pittsburg State University, Carson Newman College and Missouri Southern State University, serving as offensive coordinator, recruiting coordinator and tight end and wide receiver coach. In 2010, Plunkett accepted a position as offensive coordinator and offensive line coach at Magnolia West High School in Magnolia, Texas. In each of these schools, Plunkett chose to lead Fellowship of Christian Athlete programs.

In 2013, Plunkett returned home to Alabama to take over the reins as the head football coach and athletic director at Gardendale High School, a 6A program. At GHS, Plunkett led his teams to four straight state playoff runs and winning seasons, posting a record of 37-22. In 2014 and 2015, his teams earned back-to-back school-record-breaking seasons on offense while the teams earned 6A quarter-finalist statuses. In 2015, the GHS Rockets achieved the school's first 10-win season in more than a decade. During his time at Gardendale, Plunkett had 18 football players go on to sign collegiate scholarships.

Plunkett told The Tribune he has always felt like he had roots in the Cullman community and it's only made him more excited to get started; he's already preparing for week one in August and has some ideas for the culture he wants to have in the football program.

The new head Bearcat also said he's happy to be able to bring his family into the community and school system.

"It's a big-time thing for us to be able to come to Cullman, that was big," Plunkett smiled. "Whether its eating lunch at Busy Bee or something like that with my grandmother and bringing lunch to my granddad, Bill Andrews and Edgar Plunkett both worked here, so those are big memories that I have growing up in eastern Cullman County in Joppa. Cullman was the first big city that I knew about and going there was always a big deal, so Matt Plunkett being announced in Cullman is a big deal to me and our family."

He continued, "I couldn't be more excited. I've got a lot of blood, sweat and tears that my family has put into this county and this community working here for a long time; I'm talking 100 years of heritage between the Plunketts and the Andrews so I'm excited."

Plunkett is ready to take on the challenge of getting in and getting to work.

"It's a tremendous opportunity to get the opportunity to follow a great coach like Mark Britton and getting this program where he first built it and continued to build it and move forward with these guys, but it's a new day and we'll be excited to move on. It's not about Matt Plunkett, I'll tell you that, it's going to be about these Bearcats," he shared. "I'm excited to get to lead these guys, but the reason we're going to be successful will be these players and what they're going to put into this community and what they do in the classroom first and foremost. We wouldn't have this football team if it wasn't for this school and the education that they are provided. I'm so proud that my daughters will get to be educated in the Cullman City Schools system, what a tremendous opportunity for them, the best in the state. It's all really exciting so I can't wait to get to work. Cullman men are tough and I'm excited to build on that; there's something about being a Bearcat and I just couldn't be more excited."

What's he focused on? The Jasper game.

"We've got a big game against Jasper coming up and that's the most important game right now; that's the only thing we're going to talk about until August rolls around is those Jasper Vikings so I'm real excited and motivated for that."

Plunkett is proud of what he and his staff were able to do at Gardendale and is confident that the Rockets are in a good place going forward, but he said the timing at Cullman was too good to pass up.

"We've got a tremendous football team at Gardendale; they're going to be fantastic. That program is better today than it was, and I take a lot of pride in what our players and assistant coaches were able to accomplish. Gardendale is going to be fantastic the next two years. Those guys will play some of the best competition in the state and they're going to be good so I'm excited to see what they will still accomplish," Plunkett said.

"I was really looking forward to working with those kids because we had worked really hard for five years to build that program to where it was state-respected, and we played in a lot of playoff games and some other big games and I was very fortunate to be the head football coach there, but when it was obvious there was some mutual interest (at Cullman), I pursued it and it was really a timing thing. Everything fit right; doors were opened at the right time and doors were closed at the right time. Nothing was out of the ordinary or weird and everything seemed to happen for a reason, so the timing was perfect."

Plunkett told The Tribune he's always wanted to be at Cullman High.

"I knew I would want it if it came open and I honestly thought it'd be a little later in my career," he said. "A lot of people have told me they thought this would be a great stepping stone job, but I don't see Cullman as a stepping stone, I see it as a great job to raise your children in a great community and get them through school and build a tremendous football program that is respected across the state. When people come into this stadium and when we get off the bus at our opponents' stadiums, people are going to respect Cullman. We're going to play with class and character, and that was my vision when this job came open. I could always see myself coaching here and I knew when I had that vision that it was the right time to make the move and I'm really excited."

The search to replace Britton

The search for a new head football coach at CHS saw the school administration, along with Cullman City School Board Superintendent Dr. Susan Patterson, employ a rigorous process to find the right person to step into Britton's shoes. In an exclusive interview, Hall and Assistant Principal/Athletic Director Mark Stephens sat down with The Tribune to discuss the particulars.

The process began with a parent meeting where Hall created a survey and asked parents to provide sample questions or other things they wanted to see as a part of the search. Then, she worked with the administration, along with Patterson and other head coaches, to formulate a rubric to score the incoming resumes.

"It's a very calculated, academic process because there's a lot of qualities that we're looking for in a head coach, including that coach being, or wanting to become, an invested member of our community," Hall said.

A five-member search committee, made up of a cross-section of people from the community, was formed to assist in the selection. Until now, the names of committee members were not released, in order to ensure the validity of the hiring process.

Hall said she felt fortunate to have the committee members helping in the search and talked about why each was selected, starting with Cullman football great Wayne Trimble.

"The first committee member is Wayne Trimble. He's a Cullman High School graduate and played on the 1962 state championship team here at Cullman. He is a current resident of Arab. After he graduated high school he played football at the University of Alabama for Bear Bryant and he also played in the NFL for the San Francisco 49ers," Hall said. "He has experience as a high school head coach; he's been a high school principal and a school board member, so the perspective he brought was first and foremost the football knowledge, plus the tradition that we look for in our community."

Next up was another CHS alumnus and athlete, Donovan Lovell. Hall said she valued Lovell's input as both a parent and former athlete.

"Donovan graduated from Cullman High School and he was a multi-sport athlete here at Cullman. He is a local business owner; he owns R.E Garrison Trucking, and he has been a parent in athletics as well, a very recent parent. That was very valuable to us. His son Owen played football and baseball here at Cullman and now Owen is playing baseball at Mississippi State, so we thought that he had a good understanding of what it takes to be competitive in high school sports. The Lovells have been active booster club members, as well, for multiple sports."

Gary Hollingsworth was the third member of the committee, and his football experience, parental experience and academic commitment were things that Hall felt brought a lot of value to the committee.

"Gary is originally from Hamilton and he played football at the University of Alabama as well. He is married to Sharon Hollingsworth, who teaches in the Cullman City School System. Gary is a resident here and a business man in the area and he has also been one of our parents. His son played baseball here and his daughter was on the swim team and did track and field. One of the other things we were looking for was parents that were focused on both academics and athletics, and Gary brings that with along with a lot of football knowledge."

Stephens backed up those sentiments and touched on the burden that high school sports can put on parents within the program.

"Both of his (Hollingsworth's) kids were high performing academically and athletically, so he understands the challenges it presents to parents especially in our baseball program," Stephens said. "It's a high-demand program and he was on the parent side of that and also had high expectations academically, and like Mrs. Hall said, he also has extensive football knowledge, so he brought a lot to the table as far as the committee was concerned."

The faculty representative on the committee was coach Brent Patterson, who was brought because of his valuable experience running the 6A baseball program for Cullman.

"Coach Patterson represents our faculty as well as our other head coaches. He was able to provide insight into what it takes to a run a high-level, competitive 6A program. We've been a 6A school for a few years now and competing at this level has been a challenge in every sport because the competition is different," Hall said. "He's been able to provide great insight to our faculty and as a representative of our school he's been able to speak on behalf of our teachers and coaches. That's something we're looking for in a head coach, being able to mesh well with other head coaches because when you are a small 6A school, you have to make it a priority to support other programs and to work with multi-sport athletes."

Chris Henderson rounded out the search committee. Henderson, a current CHS parent, has a son playing both football and baseball. Hall said she valued the perspectives of the parents when putting the committee together and Henderson was able to bring that to the table.

"Once the season was over we added Chris Henderson. His son Hayden plays baseball and football and he's a senior this year, so we added Chris because he was a parent that is currently in the program," Hall said. "He'll finish out after this year and he was really able to add the perspective of the current parents to the committee."

Hall is confident that the administration, along with the committee, found the right person for the job.

"We ended up with over 90 applicants. We had some people that would inquire about the job, maybe choose to apply and maybe not. Like I said before we did have applicants from large schools, small schools, in state and out of state," Hall said. "We did a lot of homework into what goes into a 6A program and maybe what are the next steps that we need to take. We got a lot of input from parents and then when we got our committee together and looked at what parents were saying, what we as a staff had to say, what our teachers and other coaches thought we needed and it was really very cohesive. Then it came to the point of looking for the person that could make those things happen for our school."

One thing is clear. Plunkett has big shoes to fill, taking the place of longtime and much-loved coach Britton, who announced his retirement on Sept. 22, after 17 winning seasons.

"Coach Britton has never had a losing season here and there are a lot of variables that come into play when you're looking to fill his shoes because those are really some big shoes to fill," shared in November. "That's why we're trying to be very cautious in the process, to be very thorough, and you know there isn't a surefire answer to who the right person will be. You have to have all the right pieces of the puzzle working together and Coach Britton has had a very special career and we've been blessed to have him and his leadership. He loves the kids; he's very passionate about our school and our community, so finding that kind of balance will be very difficult.

"In a coach, we're obviously looking for strong leadership skills and someone that will help us to raise young men to be strong leaders in our community. Yes, we want a great football mind, but we also want someone that is invested in Cullman and that acknowledges and respects the commitment that our teachers and other extracurricular sponsors show," Hall said.

Said Plunkett, "The coaching profession is about leading people to success; I believe this is my strongest asset. A championship work ethic will be displayed on a daily basis and instilled in the life of each and every person (in our program)."

Plunkett is married to Allison Plunkett from Texas. The couple has two children, Maddison Jane (3) and Makenzie Brooks (1).

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Crane Hill man ID'd as victim in Thursday night crash in Hanceville

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HANCEVILLE – A Crane Hill man was killed, and another person injured, Thursday night when a pick-up truck and 18-wheeler collided at what Hanceville residents say is a notoriously dangerous intersection.

Cullman County Coroner Jeremy L. Kilpatrick identified the victim as Burshel Eugene Boatrite, 74.

The incident occurred around 5:05 p.m. at Alabama Highway 91 and Edmondson Road, according to Hanceville Mayor Kenneth Nail.

"An 18-wheeler was traveling west on Alabama Highway 91," said Nail, "and a small pick-up truck was pulling out of Edmondson Road South and ran under the 18-wheeler, ejecting at least one person."

Boatrite, the driver of the pick-up truck, died shortly after being transported to UAB Hospital, confirmed Kilpatrick.

The other occupant of the pick-up was transferred to an area hospital by ambulance.

The driver of the 18-wheeler was not physically injured.

Members of Hanceville Fire and Rescue and the Hanceville Police Department worked the scene.

Nail expressed frustration about the "dangerous intersection," Thursday night, asking, "How many people have to die before something is done?"

The mayor said the City has requested a red light at the intersection, but was told there was not enough cross traffic to warrant one. He said the City has even offered to pay for the light.

Highway 91 was closed down for about three hours following the incident.

News from the Pond

Jimmie Dean Carnell
Tribune Contributor



Good morning Tribune readers and families. I sincerely hope that everyone had a good Christmas season. I would also like to wish everyone a Happy New Year for 2018.

It sure feels like the true winter season. This is some of the coldest weather I can remember.

I also hope that your favorite college football team won their game in the New Year's Day Bowl games. All the games were very exciting and could have gone either way.

We had a very special guest speaker on Sunday, December 31 at First Baptist Church here in Holly Pond. Colby Adams was our speaker.

Colby is a third-generation preacher in his family. Colby is the son of Scott and Tracey Adams. Scott is also in the ministry as well as Colby's grandfather, the late Dewayne Adams. Colby is in college at the Southeastern Seminary in North Carolina.

He is just beginning his studies. He presented an outstanding message on Sunday morning. We are sure he has a bright future ahead of him as he prepares for a life of service to the Lord.

Like many other families, my sister and brother-in-law, Walt and Judy Floyd travelled over the Holidays.

They met in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to celebrate Christmas with their son and family, Drew, Dee, Ronan and Kadin Floyd the week before Christmas. After leaving Tennessee Walt and Judy flew to Salt Lake City, Utah and visited with their daughter, Doctor Candace Floyd and her husband, Paul Auffant. Candace and Paul have recently moved to Salt Lake City, where Candace is now employed.

I hope that they will enjoy their stay in that colder part of the United States.

On Friday night, the family of Lane and Nancy Horton met in Hanceville for their Christmas and New Year's get-together. One of the highlights or the evening was receiving the new photos of their family.

It had been several years since they had family pictures made that included all the immediate family.

There was quite a large group included with this celebration with Nancy and Lane Horton, Gina and Doug Webb, Tony, Susan and Josh Marks, Nathan, Kerry, Isiah, Ella Horton, Gennifer, Shannon and Mavanea Baker, Mrs. Hightower, Julia and Walt Floyd and yours truly.

Until next week, keep warm and stay safe.

Tribune Files from Yesteryear

From The Files Of 1926:

Miss Mary Clara Goehler and Max F. Buettner were married on September 5th, at high noon, at Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, with the Reverend Henry Meyer officiating.

Earl Wilhite, of Dayton, Ohio, is the guest of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Wilhite, at Vinemont.

Miss Ainna Ratliff, who has been the guest of her sister, Mrs. Steve Warren, at Hanceville, has gone to Andalusia, where she will teach this fall.

Miss Elizabeth Abercrombie left on Monday for Maryville, Tennessee, where she will attend college this year.

Alvie Biggers escaped with only a few scratches, on Sunday afternoon, when a tire blew out on his car and it turned over three times.

The City PTA will meet on September 14th with the following program: piano duet, Eunice and Grace Martin; reading, Verlon Wilhite, vocal solo, Mrs. Jesse Oldacre; paper "Is Your Child Ready For School?" by Mrs. R.P. Johnston.

The First Baptist Church has issued a call to Doctor J.D. Gwaltney, of Richmond, Virginia, to be pastor here.

Married on Sunday afternoon with the Reverend E.L. Knopp officiating were Miss Annie Mae Barker and Roy Foust.

At a public sale the building and five acres of land at the old Leander School will be sold according to Superintendent H.G. Dowling.

You can buy an improved Washington Home furnace, which is as pretty as a victrola at Rauchmann Company, Hanceville – Adv.

Miss Leona Lassetter, daughter of the Oscar Lassetters will leave this week for Saint Louis, Missouri, where she will enter Webster College.

The Silver Moon Café, in the Max Schmitt Building, on First Avenue West was badly damaged, by fire on Sunday morning, when a gas stove exploded.

Bill Kensey, café owner, estimated the damage at $900.

Milo Dickerman, who was born in New York, in 1844, died on Saturday morning at the home of his son, Milo Dickerman, Junior.

Cullman High School is off to a good start for the fall term, with 400 students.

Army worms are doing great damage to Cullman County cotton.

From The Files Of 1938

Holly Pond News

Mrs. Maudie Crutchfield is visiting relatives, at Vinemont, this week.

The P.W.A. grant of $138,330, which the schools of Cullman County are to receive, will go for the improvements with the schools listed below:

Logan: New school building to replace the one burned last spring, seven rooms and an auditorium, brick veneer.

Joppa: New school building, seven rooms and auditorium, brick veneer.

Bethel: New school building, three rooms, frame.

Valley Grove: New school building, two rooms, frame.

Cullman County High School Vocational Building: Brick veneer. Completion of present auditorium.

Arkadelphia: Addition, auditorium and two classrooms.

Cold Springs: Addition, auditorium and three classrooms.

Crane Hill: Addition, auditorium and steam heating plant.

Good Hope: Addition, auditorium and three classrooms.

Battleground: Addition of four classrooms.

Jones Chapel: Auditorium chairs for present auditorium.

West Point: Addition, two classrooms, library, study hall and water system.

Vinemont: Addition, auditorium and two classrooms.

Grandview: Addition and two classrooms.

Hanceville: Addition, four classrooms, steam heating plant and sanitary toilets.

Garden City: Addition and auditorium.

Holly Pond: Addition and two classrooms.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

Happy almost new,but ever so slightly used, year

Bill King
Tribune Contributor



I love antiques and vintage things. I have never owned many of them, or at least not at the right time. Most of what I have owned was just old. There is a difference. I owned a 1957 Chevy once and later a 1969 Malibu, but neither one at a time when it was worth much. The Malibu got fifteen miles per gallon of gas and seventeen miles per quart of oil! I think the engine must have been a two cycle one. Now I realize I should have bought more oil and kept both cars. I don't remember what I bought after I sold the '57, but after I sold the Malibu I bought a Vega. They still aren't worth anything. Vega sounds like Vegas. I don't gamble but getting a good Vega was one. If you ever owned one, bless your heart.

Sometimes, some things, are worth much more when they are old than they were when they were new. Isn't it strange how some things that are old and worn out become vintage and valuable if you keep them long enough?

All my cars have been used, except one. Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot that "used car" is not the correct wording these days.

I should have said, "Preowned, slightly used, gently used, or almost new vehicle." At least I didn't say, "Heap, jalopy, clunker, or boneshaker." I can remember the days when you never knew exactly how used your "preowned vehicle" was. That was before they started providing long term housing for guys caught running back odometers.

In 1984, I bought a brand-spanking new Buick Regal. It was a mauve color (not to be confused with pink), with a landau top. They gave me a new push lawnmower and mailed me a payment book that was about the size of the unabridged edition of Webster's Dictionary.

By the time I got home with my new Buick I realized it was a slightly used car. The shine on my new car dulled long before I used up all those payment coupons.

The next year, I drove my almost new car to an Atlanta Braves game and someone, whom I didn't know, drove it home – to their home. I did eventually get it back but only after it was much more than gently-used.

Every house I have lived in was new – at one time. If I'm not mistaken, the house I grew up in was the same one where Abraham raised Isaac and Ismael. Early in ministry, Jean and I lived in pastoriums. Pastorium is Greek for "Where the pastor lives." Eventually, we bought our own houses but all of them were used, excuse me, preowned, except one. Jean and I had the joy of building our own house in Southaven, Mississippi. I've heard all the horror stories from others about building a new house, but we had a blast building ours. Not only were we still married when we moved in but to one another and neither of us had suffered a black eye or slept on the sofa.

2017 is now vintage. 2018 is no longer new but it is still only slightly used. We've only used a few days of the new-year, so hopefully, we still have plenty of days to be lived out.

Don't just resolve to do better, make some commitments. Join a gym, or better yet join a church.

You aren't getting any younger - I don't care how old you are. None of us can go back so we can't change what has been, but we can move ahead and make wise decisions. Happy slightly used year!

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

Poet's Corner

Hope Is A Thing With Feathers

By Emily Dickinson

1830-1886

Hope' is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul

And sings the tune without the words

And never stops—at all

And sweetest in the Gale is heard

And sore must be the storm

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm

I've heard it in the chillest land

And on the strangest Sea

Yet, never, in Extremity,

It asked a crumb—of Me.

HEALTH

Cullman Regional seeing almost 10x more flu cases than last year

Wendy Sack
wendy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) last week issued an alert of increased influenza (flu) activity across the state, and Cullman Regional continues to see a higher than normal number of patients testing positive for the virus.

Cullman Regional's Executive Director, Marketing and Public Relations Lindsey Dossey said late Thursday, "The flu is certainly in our community.

"Comparatively, during the past seven days we've had 88 positive flu tests versus nine in the same time period last year."

The Tribune received several reports of crowding at Cullman Regional's ER, but Dossey said that's normal at all hospitals right now and not just because of the uptick in flu cases.

"We are busy; however, so is every other hospital in Alabama and the United States, (but) it is not just due to flu. Although we are seeing a high volume of patients who are testing positive for flu in the ER, those patients are being discharged home with medication and instructions for managing at home," said Dossey.

"However, the patients currently in the hospital are sick with illnesses that tend to flare up when the weather turns cold and dry, e.g. COPD, heart failure, pneumonia, etc. We are not currently holding any patients in the ER."

Below is a list of flu signs and symptoms, as well as tips for prevention, from Cullman Regional.

Symptoms
Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:
- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

* It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

People at High Risk from Flu
Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.

What are the emergency warning signs of flu sickness?
In children:
- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults:
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any infant who has any of these signs:
- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

What should I do if I get sick?
Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.

If, however, you have symptoms of flu and are in a high risk group, or are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your health care provider (doctor, physician assistant, etc.). See information on those that are high risk.

Do I need to go the emergency room if I am only a little sick?
No. The emergency room should be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill. Instead, go to your primary care doctor.

If you have the emergency warning signs of flu sickness, you should go to the emergency room. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or you are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice. If you go to the emergency room and you are not sick with the flu, you may catch it from people who do have it.

Are there medicines to treat the flu?
Yes. There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating the flu called "antivirals." These drugs can make you better faster and may also prevent serious complications.

How long should I or my kids stay home if sick?
CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®. You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings. Keep children home from daycare and/or school if they have symptoms of the flu.

What should I do while I'm sick?
Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others.

Can I visit my family members in the hospital if I have the flu?
Visiting patients in the hospital may contribute to additional adverse reactions because hospitalized patients have already weakened immune systems so visiting anyone in the hospital is strongly discouraged if you have flu-like symptoms.

Prevention Tips
1. Take time to get a flu vaccine.
- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. While there are many different flu viruses, a flu vaccine protects against the viruses that research suggests will be most common.
- Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year before flu activity begins in their community. CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October, if possible.
- CDC recommends use of injectable influenza vaccines (including inactivated influenza vaccines and recombinant influenza vaccines) during 2017-2018. The nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine or LAIV) should not be used during 2017-2018.
- Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to them.
- Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for infants should be vaccinated instead.
- It's not too late to get the flu vaccine. Flu season typically runs through March each year and takes approximately 2 weeks to get into your system, so it's not too late.

2. Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.

3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.
- If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can be used to treat your illness.
- Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
- Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For people with high-risk factors, treatment with an antiviral drug can mean the difference between having a milder illness versus a very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay.
- Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started within 2 days of getting sick, but starting them later can still be helpful, especially if the sick person has a high-risk health condition or is very sick from the flu. Follow your doctor's instructions for taking this drug.
- Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.









Stephanie Jowers honored with 'Service Above Self' Award

Brian Bradberry
Contributor



CULLMAN ROTARY CLUB

Pictured, left to right: Perry Shields, Maria Stanford, Stephanie Jowers and Jeb Williamson

CULLMAN – The Cullman Rotary Club on Thursday presented its Community Service Above Self Award to Stephanie Jowers.

The award is named in honor of longtime Rotarian Bill Buettner, an outstanding Rotarian who had perfect attendance for 50 years. Buettner was president of Buettner Brothers Lumber for many years and served the community quietly behind the scenes, never wishing to be in the spotlight – and truly exhibited "service above self."

To Rotary members the motto "Service Above Self" means that as professionals we pool our resources, network with like-minded professionals, and use our time and talents to serve our community. This award was created to recognize non-Rotarians in our community who live out this motto with their selfless actions.

Past recipients of the William O. Buettner Service Above Self Award include Bert McGriff, the Peinhardt family, Bill Burkett, Jackie Satterfield, Betty Leeth Haynes, Sonny Teague, Tim Scott, Ken Caviness, Billy Coleman, Grover Reeves, Mike Duke and Melanie Conn. Jowers exemplifies the motto of "Service Above Self" and is most deserving of the award. She works behind the scenes in different areas in the community through her service to the church, in the school community, with her work with The Link of Cullman County and through the Cullman Regional Foundation.

Stephanie is a dedicated servant leader and consistently gives back in a variety of ways, trying to improve the quality of life in our community. She works behind the scenes with the various organizations such as:

St. John's Church

• She is a volunteer with the children's ministries; for several years she has organized and coordinated the church play for the children.

• She recently implemented a new community-wide program called, Created for a Purpose, for young ladies and continued with a Christmas session. The program she started is for girls ages third through eighth grade.

• She also teaches Wednesday night children's classes, volunteers with the youth programs for middle school and high school students and offers to help with special programs as needed.

Alliance to the Cullman County Medical Society

• Board member and past president of the Cullman Medical Alliance

• She is the past president of the state board and led several campaigns to improve health and wellness throughout the state.

• The Cullman County Society promotes various health initiatives in area schools with programs on topics such as Bullying, Healthy Eating and on Making Good Food Choices.

• Also, she supports a breast cancer foundation and raises money for local needs of breast cancer patients.

The Link of Cullman County

• Helped start a new program called – "Unmasked" for women of the community – this will be unveiled in January of 2018.

• Volunteers with a ladies' committee to bring issues to the forefront.

Cullman Regional Service Guild

• A member of the executive committee and volunteered countless hours to fundraising for the Gala and the Fall Fundraiser

• She is currently the secretary of the Service Guild.

• She has helped coordinate the food and venues for several events and uses her expertise while helping save money for the hospital.

Cullman Regional Foundation

• Serves on the executive committee, nominating committee, Refresh-A-Room Capital Campaign, Dr. Herman C. Ensor Lights of Love and Dr. Bownes For Kids' Sake committees

• Served as president for two years and served as secretary for two years

• Currently serves as the past president of the board

• Gives her time and talents to help advance healthcare at the medical center

• If you ever ask Stephanie for her help on a project, she is always willing to give of her time, talents, or resources

CHS Tennis Boosters

• In 2017, she headed up the fall fundraiser for the annual campaign at Cullman High School.

East Elementary/ Cullman Primary School

• Homeroom mother at both schools

• PTO homeroom coordinator

Stephanie is married to Dr. Joe Jowers and is a mother to three daughters. She is the kind of person who works behind the scenes and enjoys seeing satisfaction on the faces of those she touches. She has definitely had an impact on women and children in our community and gives back seeking no attention or promotion of her work. Stephanie has a joyful heart and has a passion for helping others.

OPINION

Paws for Frosty

Alice Martin
Contributor

After hearing countless versions of "Baby It's Cold Outside" during this Christmas season, I couldn't help but think of the poor four-footed friends left out in the cold. As a rule, if you feel chilly, so does your pet. Most dogs and cats cannot tolerate lower than 45 degrees for an extended period. Pets left outside can experience hypothermia, frostbite and even death, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

While Huskies may happily linger in the snow and ice, a Jack Russell may shiver at 50 degrees, Indoor pets miss the signal to grow thick winter hair and may appreciate a warm sweater for that outdoor walk. Short hair and short legs both result in a cold dog. Small breeds with tummies close to the snow can rapidly turn from Toto dogs into Terrier-cicles.

Feral cats may rebuff your offer of garage space, but will still seek out warm places, like your car engine. To prevent a tragedy, a couple of raps on the hood before you open the door should scare the cat into deserting the engine. Leaving your dog in the car on a cold day can be as deadly as a hot day as the cold can get trapped inside, creating a refrigerator effect.

Be sure to clean your cat's or dog's paws and bellies when you come in from playing in the snow. Rock salt can cling to hair and toes. When pets lick these irritants off, they can harm the throat and stomach, sometimes requiring emergency veterinary treatment.

If you are putting on a jacket, your dog or cat needs extra treats and food. Cold weather burns more calories and a little extra bacon or tuna can make life more comfortable for furry family members.

Watch for the signs of hypothermia: if your pet is whining, shivering, appears anxious or weak, slows down or stops moving, or starts looking for warm places to burrow, take action to get them inside and slowly warmed up, advises AMVA.. Frostbite may not show up for days, after it is too late to treat. Seek immediate veterinary care.

It is a hard-cold reality that warmer temperatures are around the corner in Alabama. In our state, heat causes more doggie deaths than cold. Many of the adorable puppies received this Christmas, and from Christmases long ago, will be placed in cars for trips around town with their owners during our warmer months. It is hard to look at surrounding lanes of traffic and not see a dog "driving", in the driver's lap, or hanging out the window in Alabama. I know because our lab, Sue, loves to ride to the farm in the back of the Suburban, but if we aren't in the car neither is she, unless the rear doors are open.

We know our pets love the adventure and are happy to be along for the ride or ride shotgun, but let's not fool ourselves into thinking they want to go to the mall or grocery store and sit in the car waiting on us! Nope, they'd rather be safe at home taking a nap or doing their thing. I mean, who hasn't had a quick 5-minute trip in the grocery store turn into 20 minutes? All the while that backseat 'bed' can become an oven very quickly with no windows down – or with a window "cracked." Studies show the temperature can rise 30 degrees in only 20 minutes. Heatkills.org reports that "at 70 degrees on a sunny day, after a half hour, the temperature inside a car is 104 degrees. After an hour, it can reach 113 degrees." The joyride is over, and a heat stroke can occur or death.

AMVA reports that hundreds of dogs die every year from heat exhaustion. YouTube videos show how quickly temperatures rise in a car. And, it doesn't just happen in summer – spring is around the corner and our pleasant 70s temperatures can become deadly hot in a parked car.

It is time for Alabama's lawmakers to join 27 other states and pass protections for our fur family members that will protect our pets and those Good Samaritans who would rescue a pet from a hot car. When they return to Montgomery in 2 weeks, for a predicted short legislative session, I urge them to pass Pet-in-Hot Car Bill, HR 524, which did not pass in 2017. That law would provide good Samaritan civil immunity from personal or property injury claims if a window is broken to protect a pet in dangerous conditions. This is one step forward to help Alabama out of the bottom tier of states with much needed animal cruelty laws.

Remember, your dog cannot sweat and he's wearing a fur coat. Paws and think about 'is it really a good idea for Molly or Max' to go on this ride? Call your local legislators and express your support, or leave a comment with your pet's names and your county and I'll be sure to forward it.

Alice Martin is the former United States Attorney for Northern Alabama (2001-2009) and former Chief Deputy Attorney General for Alabama (2015-2017). She is running for Alabama Attorney General. alice@alicemartin.com



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EDUCATION

2 Cullman-area students named to Judson College Dean's List

Mary Amelia Taylor
Contributor

MARION – Two Cullman-area students were named to Judson College's Dean's List for the Fall 2017 semester. Freshman Allie Smith, of Holly Pond, and senior Katie Speer, of Cullman, were named to the list.

To be eligible for the honor, students must have completed a minimum of 15 hours, earned letter grades with no incompletes and earned at least a 3.7 grade point average with no grade below a C.

Judson College is a private undergraduate institution offering a residential undergraduate education for women and selected online undergraduate programs for men and women in over 20 areas of study. Founded in 1838 and affiliated with the Alabama Baptist Convention, Judson College is located in Marion, Alabama. For more information about Judson College, visit www.judson.edu.



JUDSON COLLEGE

Allie Smith, left and Katie Speer, right

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Date: January 5, 2018
State of Alabama
County of Cullman
Town of Holly Pond

INVITATION TO BID
COMMUNITY SAFE ROOM

Sealed Bids shall be received for one (I) or more Community Safe Room(s) by the Holly Pond Town Council, until noon on local time by January 29, 2018. The bids will be opened on February 1, 2018 at noon at the Town of Holly Pond Town Hall, Holly Pond, Alabama. At this time bids will be opened and publicly read for an above-ground, pre-engineered, pre-manufactured, 114" steel plate safe room, with bathrooms, generator and generator cover that complies with FEMA 361 (2015) and ICC 500 Community Shelter Design Criteria. The contract, if a bid is chosen will be awarded at the regular Town of Holly Pond council meeting after the February 1, 2018 opening.

The Community Safe Room shall meet the specifications in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Publication 361. Each bid must certify that the bid meets or exceeds FEMA 361 specifications. The successful bidder will also be required to provide a notarized Contractor/Installer form certifying this upon completion of the job, as well as an engineering peer review.

The Holly Pond Town Council reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive informalities in awarding this bid to the best responsive bidder. The bid award will not be based solely on price. Quality, conformity with the specifications, purpose for which required, terms of delivery, and past service and experience are among the factors that will be considered in determining the best responsive bidder. Other factors such as compliance with Qualifications for Safe Room Design Acceptance, value, conditions and past performance will be considered in determining the best bid. Bidders must show proof of a minimum of five (5) years' experience in successfully completing community safe room projects of this size and type. Provide at least three (3) references from previous community safe room projects, with photos.

Bids submitted are firm and no claims for errors will be considered after bids are opened and subsequent thereof.

The bidder shall use domestic products and labor and if domestic products are not used, there shall be a downward adjustment in the contract price equal to any realized savings or benefits to the contractor/installer.

All bidders **must** use the attached form for submitting their bid. All bids must be sealed and marked - in the lower left-hand envelope **"BID #1139- Community Safe Room", with opening date and time. Late bids will not be opened. All Bids must be submitted to the Town of Holly Pond at 10885 US Hwy 278 E (PO Box 9), Holly Pond, AL 35083. The proposal package includes specifications, a copy which is available for examination from, Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:30pm at the Cullman County Economic Development Office, 325 Second Street SE, Cullman, AL 35055. For questions regarding this invitation to bid, please email, Tanya Sears, Project Coordinator at tanya@cullmanecondev.org or call at 256-736-2434 or contact Mayor Bill Oliver at townofhollypond@outlook.com or call at 256-796-2124 or 256-796-6180.**

Obituary Announcements: Jan. 6- 8

Ivin (Al) John Preiss, Jr. of Cullman, Alabama passed away on January 4, 2018. Alvin was born on October 10, 1927 in Cullman, Alabama to the late Alvin and Frieda Preiss. He graduated from Cullman County High School in 1946 and attended the University of Alabama after Military Service. He was a Veteran of World War II, serving in the United States Air Force as an Instructor and an Aerial Flight Engineer, and he was a member of The American Legion. Alvin was a life-time member of The Lutheran Church. He is survived by his wife, Shirley Preiss; a daughter, Carol Ann Wilson; two sons: Donald Preiss and wife Charmaine and Timothy Preiss and wife Carla; a sister, Elizabeth M. Smith; a brother, Fred Preiss (pre-deceased); eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, he requested donations to be made to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Cullman, AL. A private memorial service will be held at a later date.

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.

Funeral Service for William Elliot Free, III, age 75 of Cullman, will be at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 7, 2018 at Grace Episcopal Church with Rev. Steve Gruman officiating. Burial will follow at Good Hope Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. William Elliot Free, III died on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at St. Vincent's Hospital. He was born June 10, 1942 in Jacksonville, FL to William Elliot and Alice Wescoat Free. Elliot attended Auburn University where he earned a B.S. in Chemical Engineering. He was a Lieutenant in the United States Navy and served two tours in Vietnam. He is preceded in death by his parents. Survivors include his wife of fifty-three years, Joan Knight Free; children: Dr. Paul and Vicki Free, Mr. Wescoat and Katie Free, and Rev. Zana Free; grandchildren: Natalie Free, Camille Free, William Elliot Free, IV, Mabry Free, and Wyatt Free. Visitation will be from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. on Saturday, January 6, 2018 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home. The family welcomes donations to Grace Episcopal Church in honor of Mr. Free.

Mr. Roy Lee Maner of Cullman passed away on January 4, 2018 at the age of 88. He was born in Cullman on April 11, 1929 to Perry Lee and Laura Elizabeth Tillman Maner. He is preceded in death by: parents, mother of his children and wife of 32 years Mildred Leola Conn Maner, son Alan Lee Maner, five siblings Adell Maner, Mabelle Scott, Bertha Self, little Ruby Maner and Joseph M. Maner. He worked at C. Arnold and Son in Cullman for 40 years until he retired. He was an accomplished carpenter and a member of Good Hope Baptist Church. After a long career as window foreman at C. Arnold and Son, Roy turned to woodworking as a hobby. All of the females in the family received a beautiful cedar chest. Mantel clocks and jewelry boxes were also produced. Funeral services are Sunday, January 7, 2018 at Moss Funeral Home Chapel at 2 p.m. with Dr. Ralph Andrews officiating. Interment will be in Ebenezer Cemetery. Survivors are: wife of 30 years Barbara Hinkle Maner and his children Tim (Delores) Maner, Melody (Ed) Johnson, 4 grandchildren Kendra Hutto, Blake (April) Johnson, Chase (Natasha) Johnson, Laura Maner Perry, 6 great grandchildren: Ian, Millie, Avery, Bennett, Addison and Jon, 2 great-great-grandchildren: Londyn and Brylee and extended loved ones Kim and Kurt Jeffries and family, Tiffany and Brent Worley and family and a host of nieces, nephews and other much loved relatives and friends. Visitation is Saturday at Moss Funeral Home 5:30 pm until 9 pm. Memorials may be made to Gideon Bibles or your favorite charity.

Graveside service for Patricia Stephens, age 76 of Cullman, will be at 3 p.m. on Monday, January 8, 2018 at Bethsadia Baptist Cemetery with Rev. Tommy Graves officiating. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mrs. Stephens passed away on Thursday, January 4, 2018 at her residence. She was born, August 30, 1941 to Benjamin Harrison and Ruby Harkness. She is preceded in death by her parents, and six siblings. Survivors include her, husband, William Stephens, son. David (Amy) Wallace, daughters, Denise (Perry) Griffin, and Belinda (Kim) Hyatt, step-sons, Scott D. Stephens, and Chad E. Stephens, grandchildren, Lauren Grant, Jake Hyatt, Hunter Griffin, JCee Hyatt, Abbie Wallace, Dylon Wallace, Averi Wallace, Adyson Wallace, Ashlyn Stephens, Raegan Stephens, Carley Stephens, Tucker Stephens, and great grandchildren, Jaden Grant, Cannon Hyatt, Greyson Grant, and Hezra Griffin.

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Roads (from Front)

that would not be true. Whenever you have an entity as large as what we've got, you're going to encounter some waste, and we're no exception. We're taking strides to make the amount of waste smaller; we're doing what we can within the bounds of the law and good prudence to reduce waste.

"We've taken several actions. We're trying to keep overhead down by reducing staff gradually, through attrition.

"We've looked into alternative methods of pavement preservation, and of machinery that we're able to do more with less, because that's the direction we're heading.

"We expanded our toolbox to enable us to use all these developing technologies in order to reduce the waste, so there's that aspect of things. We're doing what we can to try and make it better.

"The other side of the coin, of course, are the resources. I told Garry this morning: if we took every dollar in our budget, and we didn't do any maintenance, we had no employees and no maintenance, and all we did was pave roads with it, by the time we got done, it would be time for us to start over again.

"And that would be to start over again on the roads that hadn't washed out due to drainage issues or that were overgrown with foliage.

"The key issue is resources, and the resources don't match the need. You can pretty much throw a dart at a map of Cullman County and draw a circle around it, and you're going to hit a whole bunch of bad roads. We are aware of that."

Historical road structure weaknesses

Walker said, "I remember as a kid, seeing motor graders ditching roads, and just throwing it up in the middle of the road, and just letting it run off, and just putting tar and gravel down. Our problem is the base of our roads: we've never had a base.

"So John, when he came in as our engineer, we started, if we paved a road, we'd go all the way down to the base and rebuild it, do it the correct way that wasn't done before.

"And it costs us more money to do it, but we've tried to do it the right way the first time."

"One thing I try to tell people," added Marchman, "this is something that's been created with bad management over the years. I don't care to say that, but that's exactly what happened.

"We had people in here that didn't manage the road system the way it should have been managed, that didn't fix roads the way they should have been fixed, that didn't put money where it needed to be put.

"This is a problem that can be fixed. It can be fixed. There's no problem that can't be fixed, but there's not easy answers to it.

"If you fix one problem, then you've got to let another area go, to fix that problem with the resources we have.

"That's the way our society is: they want it done now, they want it done today. And this can't be done in a two-year stretch or a three-year stretch, or a four-year stretch. This has got to be long-term planning. It's got to be seen all the way through, because if you don't, you're going to be right back where you was at."

Establishing priorities and maintaining accountability

Said Watson, "This is a situation that's been political for so long, and we've come in and we've tried to right the ship in the right way to do it, to take the politics out of it.

"We have district supervisors that are out there, that work the roads every day. They know the ones they get the most complaints on. They do a list; they get with John, they look it over with the engineer. When they get to the point that it's time for us to step in, they present them to us and we sign off on it.

"I think that's helped a lot, because that keeps everybody from just going out here and paving whoever's road.

"We try to hit the roads that are the most needed. The people with their feet on the ground who are working out there every day, they're the ones that kind of know."

Marchman has created a database of all county roads to keep track of road statistics and conditions, along with the dates and types of work done on each road.

A new engineering database program being developed will allow the road department to track what is being done to each road and even view recent video of each road, to monitor how repairs are holding up.

According to Lang, each call that comes in to the road department is now logged and the information recorded. The goal, according to the commissioners and engineer, is to create a mechanism of accountability, to make sure that residents' concerns are addressed and that problems are resolved fairly and in as timely a manner as resources will allow.

"Something that we used to hear in the past a lot," said Lang, "is that people weren't getting callbacks; that's something that we really stressed.

"That's why we keep good records, so that there's accountability from the top to the bottom, where if somebody calls into the office and issues a complaint, and we either take an action or follow up with the person within three business days. That's our internal policy, and we've been pretty effective at that.

"And the days of where you'd hear 'I called and nobody ever called me, and nothing got done'--I'm not going to say that never happens anymore, but it's way less and it's not something we accept."

Marchman said, "When I look at the priorities that have been turned in on road numbers, that's one of the things I go back to: how long it is, how many residents is on it, what's the traffic count on it.

"If you combine all those numbers, then you know that you're making the biggest impact on wherever you spend your money.

"Now, does a road with two houses on it need paving? Of course it does. Is it a priority? Of course it is, but not as much of a priority as this road that has 200 houses on it. How do you set your priorities and let people understand? Because the problem that they have is the problem with the pothole in front of *their* house.

"They're not worrying about somebody that lives in Arkadelphia or Bremen, or anywhere else. All they're worried about is the pothole that's in front of their house."

Several factors go into the decision-making process in determining priorities for road maintenance and repair:

- Truly dangerous road conditions receive immediate response. The officials differentiated between conditions that require response (trees or debris in the road, lanes washed out or frozen over, etc.) and complaints about what a particular road does to the vehicle of a person known to drive their vehicle at excessively high speeds on that road.
- Roads that have more residences may have to take priority over those that are sparsely populated. Commissioners insisted that serving all the people is important, but that the department has to prioritize in order to do the most good for the most people with the resources available.
- Roads that are more heavily traveled, especially those that impact the local economy, have to receive attention with regularity. Roads known in state parlance as "major collectors," those that provide easy thoroughfares for farmers transporting produce and livestock, evacuation or emergency access routes in times of disaster, and routes to economic staples like Smith Lake or local industries, may get repaired and repaved more often than others because of federal funding earmarked especially for such roads; those funds cannot be diverted even to more pressing needs. Cullman County's major collectors include all or portions of County Roads 8, 35, 91, 222, 703, 747, 831, 940, 1043, 1082, 1101, 1114, 1117, 1223, 1242, 1435, 1527, 1545, 1669, and possibly others.

Proposed gasoline and diesel fuel tax

The County budget currently allots $1,436,631 for road paving and maintenance. Using budget money and grant funds, the road department resurfaced 32 miles of roads in FY 2017 at a cost of approximately $2.6 million.

The Cullman County Mayors and Commissioners Association recently gave its support to a state bill that would call on Cullman County residents to vote on a 3-cent increase on gasoline tax and a new 4-cent diesel fuel tax that would be dedicated to the purchase of materials for road repaving and repair. In the proposed form of the bill, no generated revenue would go to road department salaries or administrative expenses.

If passed, the tax is anticipated to generate approximately $1.5 million annually, doubling the road department's pre-grant repaving and maintenance budget.

"It would help," said Marchman, "It would be an impact."

According to Lang, by purchasing its own asphalt with extra funds dedicated to materials, and not having to outsource, the per-mile repaving cost could be significantly reduced from $102,000 to around $70,000.

"If you're talking about doing 800 tons a day," said Lang, "you can save $20,000 a day. It's significant."

Marchman added, "You don't think it's that much, but we could add another 5 or 6 miles per district. (The county is divided into four districts.) Even if we hit it just right, maybe even 10 miles in each district."

It comes down, though, to whether or not the voters of Cullman County will support a tax, and whether or not they have confidence in the people who will spend that tax money.

"I think when you mention tax," said Watson, "they automatically go off."

"It's automatic," agreed Marchman. "That's the consensus I get, you know: 'We don't want to give you any more money to mismanage.'"

Lang added, "That's one of the reasons I think it's important to differentiate who we are, to let everyone know that we are not the (Alabama) Department of Transportation. Because you go up and down 278 and see concrete barriers, and think, 'What are these people thinking?' Here in Cullman, it has been grossly unpopular, and we want everybody to know that the Cullman County Road Department has absolutely nothing to do with the safety enhancements on 278. Some of the things that people attribute to mismanagement aren't housed in the commission office."

The final word

At the close of our protracted discussion, Marchman stated, "I want y'all to know, and I want everybody to know, that I'm doing everything that I can to be as transparent as I can, and to make everything that I can out of what we've got."

Watson shared, "Something I always brag about is the staff we have. I mean we've got really good department heads here. We made some changes when we came in, but nothing major, just a few. But we have some people who care about what they're doing. I know sometimes it don't come across to the public that way, but most of our people really care about the county, about what they do--take pride in what they do, from the road department to sanitation. Those guys have a tough job, and they actually take pride in what they do, and they do a very good job. They make the county look good for what they do."

Lang added, "You talk about people who take pride in their job; one in particular that comes to mind is Lightning (Ronald D. "Lightning" Park) out on the west side.

"That is a great example of someone who goes above and beyond, and does what he needs to do with pride, takes care to do it right. And he has one of the worst jobs around; nobody else wants to do it.

"He walks behind a dirt patching truck whenever the weather is suitable, and sometimes when it's certainly less than desirable, and he really goes 110 percent and gives every extra effort he can, and does a great job.

"We move him across the county sometimes, just because if we have an area that's trouble, we know if we send him out there we're going to get an A-plus job. And he really takes a lot of pride in what he does. It's people like him that we really appreciate."

Lang invited citizens with concerns about roads to contact the County Road Department at 256-796-2266. After-hours calls go through the Cullman County Sheriff's Office dispatch office, which has a list of road department personnel on call.

For a listing of current ALDOT projects in the Cullman area, visit https://cpmsapps.dot.state.al.us/OfficeEngineer/Plan/NorthRegion and https://cpmsapps.dot.state.al.us/OfficeEngineer/ProjectReports/StipRpts/Hwy/NORTH_Hwy.pdf.

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.

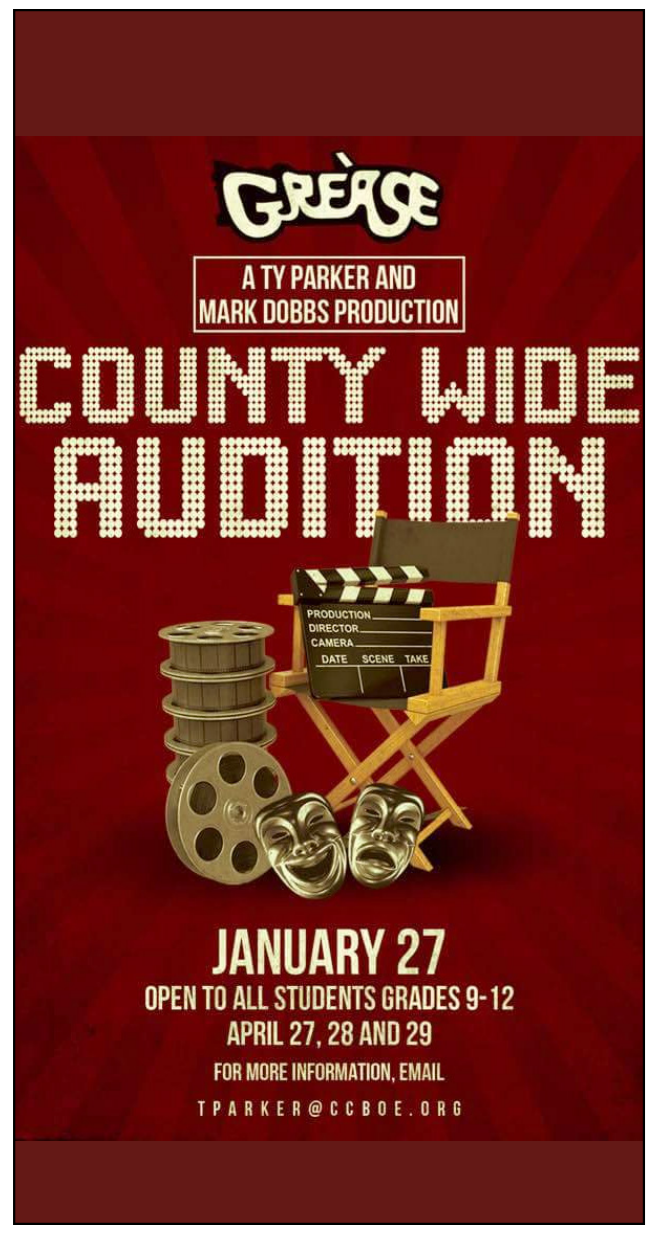
Patrick Gene Swindoll
Personal Representative

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





COMMUNITY NOTE

Cullman GOP calls for Fairview CCBOE candidates



FAIRVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

Waid Harbison
Contributor

CULLMAN – The Cullman County Republican Party is currently looking for Cullman County Board of Education (CCBOE) candidates from the Fairview district. Chris Carter, our incumbent school board member from Fairview, has done a great job the past eight years serving on the board and we appreciate all his service; however, Mr. Carter will not be running for re-election, and the party is not aware of anyone else who is intending to run at this time.

Interested residents must be registered voters in the Fairview school district who align with the Republican Party.

Qualifying for the office will take place between Jan.8-Feb. 9. Any interested candidates must qualify to run in the June 2018 primary by Feb. 9.

Interested candidates can contact Cullman County GOP Chairman Waid Harbison at 256-708-1650.

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