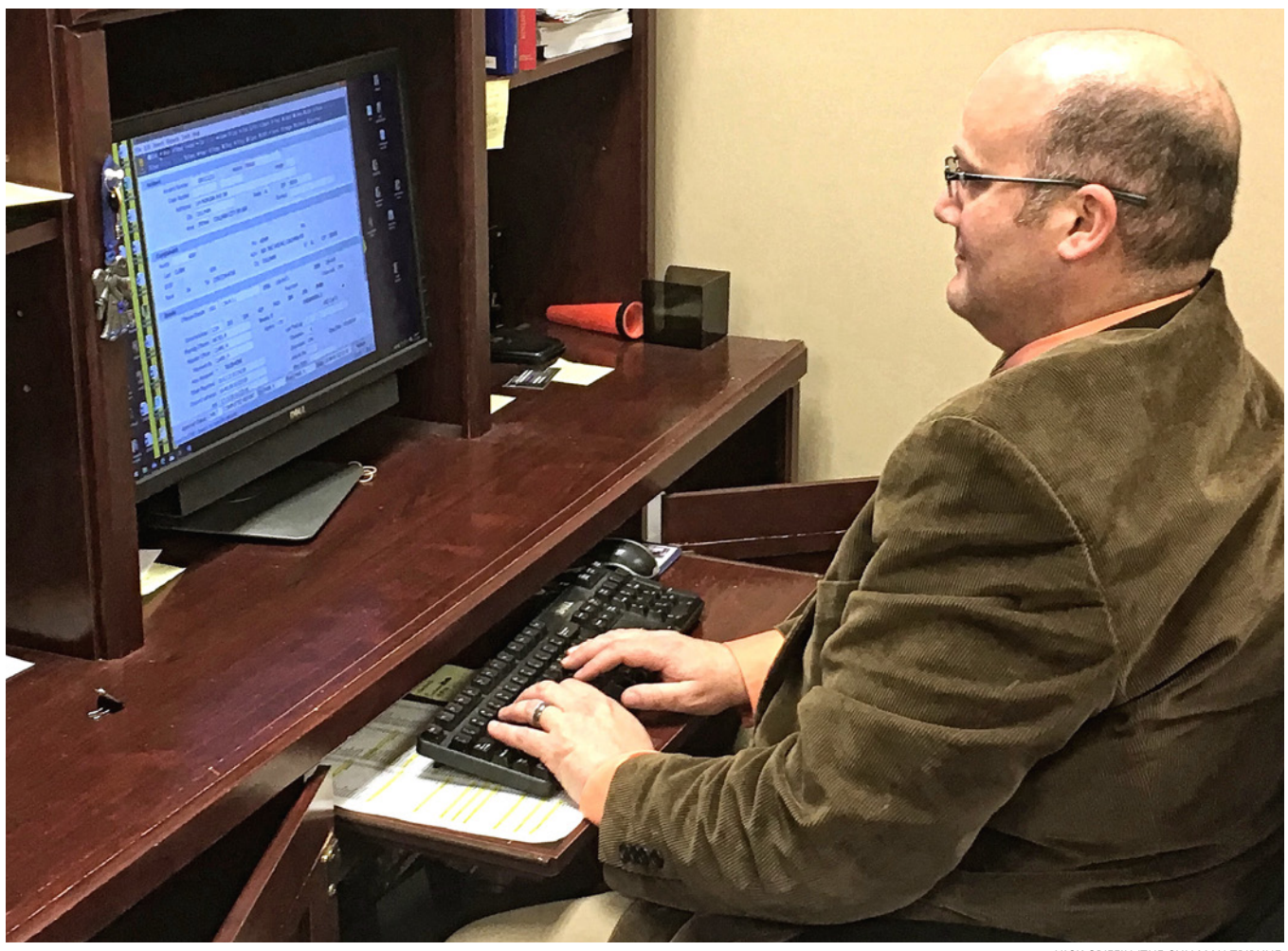
The Cullman Tribune

SERVING CULLMAN – IN THE HEART OF DIXIE – SINCE 1874

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Cullman Police bust forgery operation; 4 arrested so far



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Sgt. Adam Clark, pictured here on Monday, Feb. 12, is heading up the forgery investigation that has so far seen the arrest of four men.

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent

CULLMAN – The Cullman Police Department has arrested four men for various forgery charges in the last three weeks, all as the result of a call from an alleged victim of identity theft back on Jan. 23.

The investigation began, according to Sgt. Adam Clark, when patrol officers responded to a call from a residence on Morgan Avenue Southwest. Patrol Officers David Brooks and Roy Bates responded to the call and made discoveries that prompted the investigation.

"Patrol officers David Brooks and Roy Bates did an outstanding job on the investigation of the initial call, which led to the search warrant," said Clark.

As a result, Christopher Allen Haynes, 37, was arrested on Jan. 23 and charged with identity theft and possession of a forged instrument. Chad Thomas Wallace, 43, and Gregory Wade Wallace, 47, were arrested on Feb. 5 and each charged with possession of a forgery device, forgery and possession of a forged instrument. Lastly, Galon Wesley Parker, 36, whom Clark said was just released from prison on Jan. 9, was arrested on Feb. 10 and charged with six counts of forgery, six counts of possession of a forged instrument and one count of possession of a forgery device.

As to how the investigation unfolded, Clark said, "They (the officers) got a call there (Morgan Avenue) because they had a victim from Decatur who had his vehicle stolen, and the victim said that someone had gotten a loan in his name and used that address."

Clark said the officers went to the Morgan Avenue residence to investigate the identity theft. The officers made contact with a man at the residence who claimed to be the victim, not knowing the victim was sitting in the patrol car. The man impersonating the victim turned out to be Christopher Allen Haynes.

Clark said, "So, we identify him, and he was charged with identity theft because he had the guy's social security card, he had a driver's license made with that guy's information, but with his picture on it. He admitted to using it to get a loan. We found out later that he used it to get phones from AT&T. Also, on his person he had a check in the victim's name, and the check had 'Group Services' written on top of it as the company name.

"We started asking him where he got the check from; well, he tells us a guy named Galon Wesley Parker wrote him the check and Chris had went and cashed one with Galon that day at Jack's Beverage in Trinity, Alabama. We start trying to talk to him a little bit more and he points into the living room and tells us he's got a printer and a computer in there and that's where he prints the checks from. We asked one of the occupants of the house, Gregory Wade Wallace is his name, asked him whose bedroom it was, and he said, 'It's mine,' so we asked him if we could walk in there and when we walked in there we saw the printer, the computer and you could look in this cabinet and see a box of Office Depot checks, blank checks that

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TRIBUNE EXCLUSIVE

Garlan Gudger, Jr. talks state senate run



GARLAN GUDGER, JR.

Southern Accents owner and Cullman City Council President Garlan Gudger, Jr. is challenging incumbent Alabama Sen. Paul Bussman, R- Cullman for the Alabama District 4 Senate seat.

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

CULLMAN – Local businessman and Cullman City Council President Garlan Gudger, Jr. shocked the community when he filed, just ahead of last Friday's qualification deadline, to run for state office in the upcoming 2018 election cycle. The 42-year old owner of Southern Accents Architectural Antiques is challenging incumbent Alabama Sen. Paul Bussman, R-Cullman for his seat in Senate District 4, which includes Cullman County, most of Lawrence County, and portions of Marion and Winston Counties.

Gudger sat down for an exclusive talk with The Tribune about what led him to his decision, and what he hopes to accomplish.

Tell us about your years of service on the Cullman City Council.

"I decided to run right when my first child was born. He was 6 months old, and (my wife) Heather and I decided to run for city council. I ran against an incumbent at that time, and won, and that was for my first term. I had some good leadership there: Lucille Galin, Don Green, Woody Jacobs, Wayne Walker--and they helped me--and Ernest Hauk, and Kevin Morrow.

Gudger continued, "Four years after that, every one of those people that I just mentioned was gone, and I was kind of the lone man standing. Everybody was looking to me for answers, so I became the president of the city council. And I had all that weight on my back, and everybody asking me, kind of, 'What do we do?', 'Where do we go?' and 'How do we do this?'

» PAGE 4

Cullman native challenging Aderholt for U.S. House seat

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

BERLIN – A Cullman native who resides in the Berlin community has decided to throw his hat in the ring to challenge Robert Aderholt for his U.S. House of Representatives District 4 seat. Anthony Blackmon, a proponent of term limits, said he hopes to follow the path of US President Donald Trump and bring a fresh non-politician's point-of-view to Washington.

Blackmon was born in Cullman and graduated from Cullman High School in 2001. After four years in the Army, including one deployment to Iraq, he returned home and made his home in the Berlin community. A truck driver by trade, he is also a captain with the Berlin Volunteer Fire Department and spends the occasional weekend as an explosive ordnance disposal technician with the Alabama National Guard. He has a wife, Brittney, and a son, Lane.

In a conversation with The Tribune, Blackmon did not speak ill of Aderholt, pointing simply to the representative's 21 years in office and saying that it's time for term limits and elected officials who are not career politicians.

"I want to try and make a difference," said Blackmon. "I believe in term limits. Mr. Aderholt's been there for 20-plus years; I think that it's time for a change, and I think I can help better this community, this district, the state, and even the country, based on having another political idea up there.

"Me and him: ideology is generally the same. I want to produce results. I've always been a servant. I'm a member of the Berlin Fire Department, so I've served my community here. And I was active duty Army; I'm a member of the Alabama National Guard. So I serve my state, I've served my country and

» PAGE 7



ANTHONY BLACKMON FOR CONGRESS/FACEBOOK

Cullman native Anthony Blackmon is challenging incumbent US Rep. Robert Aderholt for his seat in the US House of Representatives.

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
FEBRUARY 13, 2018

Colony council swears in 2 new members

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com

COLONY – The town government of Colony, at a standstill since last fall due to two town council resignations and the lack of a council quorum, is once again ready to get down to business. Recently, Cullman County Judge of Probate Tammy Brown swore in Mary Parker and Samuel Ashford to fill the seats vacated by Margaret Jamelle Dimbo and Tammy Malcom.

On the town government's radar are the reopening of Colony's community center and gym this summer, a renewal of last year's highly successful summer feeding program, and a series of summer children's programs sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman. Air Evac Lifeteam also recently chose a landing site in Colony, near the town hall.

Longer term goals include landing a Dollar General retail store in the town. See www.cullmantribune.com/articles/2018/01/24/colony-fills-2-vacant-council-seats-announces-celebration-colony-event.



PATRICIA PONDER/TOWN OF COLONY

L-R: Colony Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem Curtis Johnson, Mayor Donnis Leeth and new council members Mary Parker and Samuel Ashford.

Arrest report: Feb. 9-11

Wendy Sack
wendy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – Below are the arrests reported for Feb. 9-11. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Bailey, Jon Austin Hilton, 34
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia
- failure to appear- possession of prescription medicine
- failure to appear- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Beasley, Steven James Richard, 39
- third-degree domestic violence- harassment

Bevington, Brian Alan, 51
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- failure to appear- unlawful breaking and entering of a vehicle (2 counts)
- unlawful breaking and entering of a vehicle
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Burks, Sarah Leanna, 33
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia

Cagle, Beverly, 60
- failure to appear- negotiating worthless negotiable instrument

Chapanar, Nicholas George, 38
- first-degree robbery

Collins, Brenda Diane, 36
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Curvin, Meshach John, 22
- failure to appear- third-degree domestic violence-harassment

Dodson, Sindy Lynn, 35
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- second-degree promoting prison contraband (2 counts)
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance (2 counts)

Dunn, Jerry Vann, 66
- driving while suspended
- public intoxication

Eason, Gary J. Shawn, 23
- attempting to elude
- failure to appear- fourth-degree theft of property
- failure to appear- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana
- failure to appear- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Gann, Paisleigh Ariyana, 38
- probation revoked- third-degree forgery (2 counts)
- plea agreement- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Godsey, Michelle Renee, 36
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance (2 counts)

Hagemore, Scott Allen, 37
- judge's order- possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance

Jackson, Stephanie Robertson, 40
- negotiating a worthless negotiable instrument (9 counts)
- failure to appear- negotiating a worthless negotiable instrument

Kelso, Cody David, 29
- third-degree domestic violence- harassment

Kugler, Karla Denise, 19
- first-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument (2 counts)

Lovell, Anthony Ray, 43
- public intoxication
- resisting arrest
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Maddux, William Thomas, 27
- failure to appear- murder

Osmon, Michelle Mae, 37
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia
- failure to appear- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Parker, Steven Eugene, 56
- negotiating a worthless negotiable instrument

Pope, Phillip Chad, 23
- negotiating a worthless negotiable instrument

Price, Billy Wayne, 20
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance
- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana

Self, Richard Dale, 53
- failure to register quarterly- SORNA

Stallings, Alyssa Mercedez, 19
- disorderly conduct

Sturgeon, William Leroy Jr., 50
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia
- failure to appear- unlawful possession of a controlled substance (2 counts)

Thompson, Kenneth Jeffery, 46
- public intoxication

Walker, Sara Mason, 24
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia

Welch, Cody Lauren, 32
- reckless endangerment

Wleklnski, Kevin William, 40
- public intoxication

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Stephens, Charles D., 32
- unlawful possession or receipt of a controlled substance
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Drinkard, Gregory D., 44
- unlawful possession or receipt of a controlled substance
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Parker, Galon W., 36
- third-degree forgery (6 counts)
- third-degree possession of a forged instrument (6 counts)
- possession of a forgery device
- second-degree promoting prison contraband

Wynn, Gregory P., 42
- fourth-degree theft of property

Burks, Sarah L., 33
- failure to appear- possession of drug paraphernalia

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

No arrests reported.

Find arrest reports online Monday-Friday at www.CullmanTribune.com.



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POLITICS

Chess Bedsole headlines packed Cullman GOP meeting; candidate list

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Candidate for Alabama attorney general, Chess Bedsole, headlined the latest meeting of the Cullman County Republican Party.

CULLMAN – The Cullman County Republican Party held its monthly breakfast meeting this past weekend, welcoming one of its biggest crowds in recent memory.

Nearly all of the local GOP members who are running for elected office in 2018 were in attendance, ranging from county school board members to judges, and each got a few moments to speak. Those running unopposed kept their statements brief, while candidates gearing up for contested races spoke a bit longer.

After the local officials got their chance to speak to the packed room, featured speaker Chess Bedsole, who is a candidate for Alabama attorney general, took the podium. Bedsole is a lawyer and former criminal court judge in north Alabama. He has been working with President Donald Trump and U.S. Attorney Gen. Jeff Sessions for the past couple of years, providing counsel for the Department of Justice, and is perhaps best known for his work on George W. Bush's campaign during the Florida recount in 2004.

Bedsole began his speech by talking about the path that has led him to this race and his interactions with candidate Trump back before the 2016 election. Bedsole was asked by then Sen. Jeff Sessions if he would be interested in running a statewide campaign, and after saying yes, Bedsole said he received a phone call that changed his political career forever and was his first interaction with Trump.

"Two weeks later totally out of context I'm down in Florida on a family vacation in a short-sleeved shirt having fun with my kids and my wife and my phone rings.

"It's a 23-year-old girl on a cell phone and she says, 'Hey this is the Donald Trump for President Campaign.' Thinking it was a joke I kind of joked back with her and two hours later I found out it wasn't a joke and two days later I meet Mr. Trump," Bedsole said.

"I go up to New York and he comes down off the elevator and he's wearing jeans and a long-sleeve polo shirt, just a regular cotton shirt.

"He was the nicest man in the world and the easiest guy to talk to and he has a huge curiosity. He could ask you anything at all and its just 20 questions all the time from him and it might be about your hair or how your business did five years ago compared to now, it could literally be anything and it's all the time questions and he's a really interesting guy."

Bedsole continued, "After 45 minutes of chit-chat he looked at me and he said, 'Listen, everybody get serious, everybody get serious I want to say something serious right now. If you all are going to work on this campaign, I want you to know one thing right now. There's going to come that night at 2:30 in the morning when you check into a city where you don't even know where you are because you've been travelling so much and working so hard and sleeping so little and you're going to look in the mirror and you're not even going to recognize the person looking back at you because you will be so tired that you won't even look like yourself. When that moment comes, and you know that you look that bad, I want you to know one thing, I outworked you that day. I outworked Hilary Clinton and all her people and everybody on my campaign and everybody on her campaign, I outworked all of you. I will never spend a single day where somebody outworks me and here's why. We're not in it to get a nomination, we're not in it to make some papers or get our name ID out here or all this stuff people tell you they're so proud of after they lose. We're in it to change this country, grab hold of it and put it back on the track it needs to go on.'"

Bedsole talked about how he feels about the current conditions in Montgomery and some changes that he believes are necessary for Alabama.

"There are two people running for attorney general, one of them took the temporary appointment to be AG from (former) Governor (Robert) Bentley and the other one took the permanent appointment from Governor Bentley to be AG, therefore, neither one of them is qualified to lead the investigation into everything that's happened in Montgomery in the last three years or four or five, I don't how long, a long time," Bedsole said.

"Now I found that to be shocking and disturbing, and the reason why is this state cannot turn the page when we don't have somebody in this job who can actually do it. And as a lifelong Republican who has always been involved in everything I possibly can, I find that unacceptable. So, I went home and talked to my wife about it, we prayed about it, slept on it for probably a week or two and then we decided to get in. What I'm offering you is this, I don't want you to support me because it's me, I want you to support what it is I'm doing and what it is I want to do."

The Cullman County Republicans will have their next meeting on March 3.

2018 Election dates

- June 5 Statewide Primary Election
- July 17 Statewide Primary Runoff Election
- Nov. 6 Statewide General Election

Below is a list of the offices up for re-election and the candidates who qualified for each. The Tribune will be interviewing each local candidate leading up to the primary election on June 5.

Governor

- Kay Ivey - R (incumbent)
- Tommy Battle - R
- Bill Hightower - R
- Michael McAllister - R
- Slade Blackwell - R
- Scott Dawson - R
- Walt Maddox - D
- Sue Bell Cobb - D
- James Fields - D
- Christopher Countryman - D
- Doug Smith - D
- Anthony White - D

Lt. Governor

Vacated by Kay Ivey upon appointment to post of governor

- Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh - R
- Rusty Glover - R
- Will Ainsworth - R
- Will Boyd - D

Secretary of State

- John Merrill - R (incumbent)
- Michael Johnson - R
- Lula Albert - D
- Heather Milam - D

State Attorney General

- Steve Marshall- R (incumbent)
- Chess Bedsole - R
- Troy King - R
- Alice Martin - R
- Joseph Siegelman - D
- Chris Christie - D

U.S. House District 4

- Robert Aderholt - R (incumbent)
- Anthony Blackmon - R
- Lee Auman- D
- Rick Neighbors- D

Alabama House District 9

- Scott Stadthagen- R
- James R. Bowling- R
- Justin Morrow- R
- Terrie Jones Savage- D

Alabama House District 11

- Randall Shedd (incumbent)

Alabama House District 12

- Corey Harbison- R (incumbent)
- Alex Chaney- R

Alabama Senate District 4:

- Paul Bussman- R (incumbent)
- Garlan Gudger- R

Cullman County Probate Judge

- Tammy Brown- R (incumbent)
- Carol Berry- R

Cullman County Sheriff

- Matt Gentry- R (incumbent)

Cullman County Coroner

- Jeremy Kilpatrick- R (incumbent)
- Gary Murphree- D

Associate Cullman County Commissioner, West Side

- Garry Marchman- R (incumbent)
- Andy Coffee- R

Associate Cullman County Commissioner, East Side

- Kerry Watson- R (incumbent)

32nd Judicial Circuit (Cullman County) Circuit Judge, Place 1

- Greg Nicholas- R (incumbent)

32nd Judicial Circuit (Cullman County) Circuit Judge, Place 2

- Martha Williams- R (incumbent)
- Melvin Hasting- R

District Judge, Place 2

- Wells "Rusty" Turner- R (incumbent)

Circuit Clerk

- Lisa Parker McSwain- R (incumbent)

Cullman County School Board, Fairview District

- Bill Ballew- R
- Shane Rusk- R
- Michael Knop- R

Cullman County School Board, Hanceville District

- Kenny Brockman- R (incumbent)

Cullman County School Board, Good Hope District

- Jason Speegle- R (incumbent)
- Kerry Neighbors- R

Cullman County School Board, Vinemont District

- Mike Graves- R (incumbent)

Legal Notice

Notice is hereby give to all owners, secured parties and lienholders of the following described motor vehicles, which I have a right to sell at public auction, to the highest bidder, in accordance with the State of Alabama abandoned motor vehicle law, Statues, Chapter 13, Section 1-8, Title 32 and Alabama Law Act Number 83-494-S-80, as per Legislative Act 2015-470:

2004 Chevrolet Blazer, Gray, Vin. #1GNDT13X04K161442.

This vehicle will be sold on March 26, 2018, at 9:00 a.m. for towing/storage fees if not claimed. Located at Hammock Auto Sales, 17 County Road 406, Cullman, Alabama 35057.

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY

STATE OF ALABAMA
CULLMAN COUNTY

CASE NO.: AD 2018-002

IN THE MATTER OF:
J.D.H.H.,
A minor child.

NOTICE OF PETITION FOR ADOPTION

TO: ROBIN DENISE WILEY AND ROBERT DANIEL JAY HOOPER, WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN

A PETITION FOR ADOPTION WAS FILED IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA BY STEVEN EARL WILEY AND TAMMY LEE WILEY. IF YOU SHOULD CONTEST THIS ADOPTION, YOU MUST FILE A WRITTEN RESPONSE WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS FROM THE DATE OF THE LAST NOTICE OF PUBLICATION. YOUR RESPONSE MUST BE FILED WITH COUNSEL FOR SAID PETITIONER, WHOSE NAME AND ADDRESS IS SHOWN BELOW, AND WITH THE CLERK OF THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA, POST OFFICE BOX 970, CULLMAN, ALABAMA 35056.

DONE THIS 24th DAY OF January, 2018.

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

ANNETTE IRONS-PARKER
Attorney for Petitioners
PARKER AND PARKER, P.C.
215 Main Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055
(256)775-4444

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY

STATE OF ALABAMA
CULLMAN COUNTY

CASE NO.: AD 2018-001

IN THE MATTER OF:
A.J.W.H.,
A minor child.

NOTICE OF PETITION FOR ADOPTION

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

ANNETTE IRONS-PARKER
Attorney for Petitioners
PARKER AND PARKER, P.C.
215 Main Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055
(256)775-4444

DISTRICT COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY

Joy L Murphree
(PLAINTIFF)
VS
Scotty Mullins
(DEFENDANT)

CASE NO: SM-2017-000375

NOTICE OF FILING OF LAW SUIT

DEFENDANT(S), Scotty Mullins, whose whereabouts are unknown, must answer the complaint brought against him/her by the PLAINTIFF, Joy L Murphree, for $1,600.00 plus court cost, cause of action being: Failure to pay promissory notes.

ANSWER TO THE COMPLAINT MUST BE MADE BY THE SAID DEFENDANT on or before the 6th day of March, 2018, or a default may be rendered against him/her in the above styled cause.

DATED THIS THE 29th DAY OF January, 2018.

Lisa MCSwain
LISA MCSWAIN
CIRCUIT COURT CLERK
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF
WILLIS JERRY HOLMES,
DECEASED.

CASE NO. PC 2018-002

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Letters Testamentary of said decedent having been granted to the undersigned on the 23rd day of January, 2018, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of the Probate Court of Cullman County, notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

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

/s/Pauline Holmes, Personal Representative

Annette Parker
Attorney for Personal Representative
215 Main Ave SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055
(256) 775-4444

TO: Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

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

Tammy Brown
TAMMY BROWN
Probate Judge
Cullman County, Alabama



Thursday, February 22nd
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm
Cullman EC Training Room,
1749 Eva Rd NW, Cullman
Visit Cullman EC's Facebook events page for more info

Cullman Electric Cooperative proudly presents this acclaimed IMAX movie as a FREE community event during National Engineers Week and Girls Night Out

Details: Movie length is 45 minutes, see trailer at www.dreambigfilm.com.
Popcorn and drinks provided, then take a behind-the-scenes co-op tour.
All ages are welcome, especially kids who will receive a special gift for attending.

THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
FEBRUARY 13, 2018

Great chili for a great cause

Nick Griffin
Tribune Correspondent



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman Regional's Cullman EMS hosted its third annual Chili Cook-Off on Saturday, Feb. 10.

CULLMAN – Cullman Regional's Cullman EMS hosted its third annual Chili Cook-Off Saturday afternoon, and while the rain may have kept some people at home, the participants in attendance were as excited as ever. Police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, EMS personnel and plenty of individuals from the community came out to support a good cause.

Each year the chili cook-off donates its proceeds to a local organization. This year's event was put on for local veterans' nonprofit, Saving Forgotten Warriors. Cullman EMS Director James Curtis said he is excited to be able to help out a great local cause and appreciates how many people worked to put this year's event together.

"This is our third annual chili cook-off and every year it goes to a different charity of some sort. This year we got together and picked Saving Forgotten Warriors," Curtis said.

"They're an outstanding group of folks out there helping people so we're happy to be able to help them out a little bit. Jennifer Young is the one who really organized all this and put it together and she has done a fantastic job putting it all together. Everybody has contributed: law enforcement, firefighters, EMS, everybody coming together.

"We couldn't do this without those guys competing and bringing in crowds with family and friends and lots of sponsors and folks that donated door prizes, tickets to Rock the South and different vendors around town have stepped up to help out this charity."

Curtis agreed that the rain probably played a factor in this year's crowd size, but he was still happy with the turnout despite the dreary weather.

There were a few prizes up for grabs and those were dealt out toward the end of the event Saturday afternoon. The day's grand prize was platinum Rock the South tickets. They went home with winner Chad Knop.

As for the cook-off's People's Choice winners, finishing in third place was Charlie Givens of Hanceville Fire and Rescue, and second place went to Adam Taylor, who works for Cullman Fire Rescue. The first-place chili for this year's cook-off was made by Daniel Cummings of the Cullman County Sherriff's Office.

Logan Fire Department's Jared Johnson took home two prizes this year, claiming the Director's Choice chili and Hottest chili awards.

Find out more about Saving Forgotten Warriors at www.facebook.com/Savingforgottenwarriors.org.

Seat (from Front)

"I went from the youngest city councilman in the history of the city of Cullman to the highest ranking official overnight, I guess you would say. Thank God I had good people that kind of helped me, and we worked through stuff as a team. There's a lot of things I was still learning, but the key is to ask people, be humble, and realize you don't know everything.

Gudger said the best thing about being on the council is bringing people together.

"You know, the best thing about my time on the city council is, what I have done besides helping with the downtown and industrial recruitment, and infrastructure, and water and sewer lines; but you're kind of bridging and bringing people together, I feel like. There's always people who are always at odds in politics, and there always will be, but the key for that is for somebody to be able to be in a room, that can somehow find a solution to both problems and bring it together. And I feel like I have an innate ability or attribute to be able to do that."

Gudger said he made his decision with his family.

"Some people close to me have known I have always wanted to run for Senate. In 2010 I was very close to running. I didn't think it was the right time; my kids were still pretty young. In 2014, I felt it was about the same; I needed to be there one last time, you know, coming up.

"And so, we'd been praying about it for a while. I decided that I would just pray about it and think about it until the end, and if I still felt like I was blanketed with a decision that I need to make, then I would do it. And the past--about--week, we've been back and forth on thinking it, but I made sure I talked to each of my sons, I talked to my wife--those three mean more to me than anybody--I talked to my parents a little bit, my sisters, and when it was all said and done, it seemed like it was the right time for me to do this.

"Again, I'm honored to be able to be working for the city. I feel like I've done a lot of good for the city, but I feel like I can hopefully take those attributes and the things that I've learned just through experience to Montgomery, and do the same thing down there, and hopefully bring people together, and bring home some grant money and money for this community."

And what does Gudger want to do as a senator?

"I was asked earlier about what's the difference (between me and Bussman) and why. I want to make sure that I am definitely on the record in stating: I'm not running out of a dislike for my opponent. That's not what I'm about; that's not what my heart is in this for, it is not vengeance.

"My heart *is* in serving people, and it has been since I was a dribble team leader back when I was on the high school basketball team.

"But at the same point, all the way till now, I want what's best for people, almost to the point where it's a fault of mine. And I believe in people, and I want people to do the right thing and help other people; because in the overall scheme of my world, their world, and this whole world, can get better if we do work together. Even if you're on opposing views, and there always will be opposing views, but there's always a way to come together for the benefit of the parties that are there, that are the ones fighting. And I think that that is something, again, I can bring to Montgomery, that I feel like might not be there right now. And I want to make sure that I'm doing the best thing I can, voting for the people and the constituents of this district--150,000 people--the way that they want us to. And I want to give it my all, just like the last 14 years."

State Senate District Four includes all of Cullman County, most of Lawrence County, and portions of Marion and Winston Counties. People in the other counties may not know you from your business and from the city council. What would you like for them to know about you?

"I would say, first of all, I was raised in and am a lifelong native of this district, number one. Number two is I'm a Republican candidate, I have conservative values, I'm pro 2nd Amendment, I'm pro-life personally, I want and listen to anyone who comes my way. I will have an open-door policy, like I do now. I want to make sure that the people in this district know that I will represent them to the best of my ability.

Continued Gudger, "I have a small business that I run (Southern Accents); it's an architectural salvage store. There's not a lot of those in the nation, because it is a lot of heavy lifting and hard work, and tearing down buildings, and restoring those pieces to sell to people building new homes or commercial buildings, or office space.

"But I have been interacting with a lot of people within the district, and they have told me their disbeliefs of what's happened to them on certain issues, and I've just listened to them over the years, and always thought that something would be done, and finally got to the point where my wife said, 'It's time for you to do something.' And so I decided to run, but I can balance a small business, my personal life with raising two boys with my wife, and running this race just like I have for the last 14. This is nothing new to me. I'm not scared of it; I've got a peace about it, and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure I roll my sleeves up and work as hard as I can to win."

Now that you're qualified to run, what will happen with your city council seat?

"What I've understood, the city council seat--if, let's say that I'm honored enough to win the race, there'll be a vacant seat. Of the four members of the city council, they would appoint someone to fill the vacant seat the rest of my term, which is a little over two years. From that, if they disagreed, our city clerk told us the governor would do that; but then I found out last night that, we believe, the mayor--even though he's not a voting member--would actually become a voting member for the fifth vote, to have a 3-2 vote, if he could settle with someone, too. So I'm in the process of learning that part of that, but I know that the council members would appoint, if there's a 3-1 or 4-0 vote, the new person into that seat."

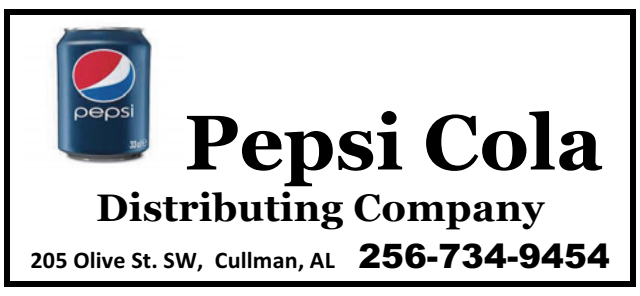
The final word

"I think that, overall, I just want people to know that, if they don't know me, I want to get to know them. I would love for people to call me, at the city or at the store, email me, Facebook me. I want to hear what their needs are, what they're wanting to talk about. I'm a genuine person. I want to hear that before I go down there, and if there's anything I can do to help, then I want to do it, represent the people as much as I possibly can when I'm there in Montgomery.

Gudger concluded, "There are people that are out there saying that there needs to be a real aggressive, senator, and am I going to be aggressive? Well, I don't really think that's the right term.

"I think that, if you get down there and you're real aggressive, you might look around and instead of being the leader you think you are, and everybody's following behind you, you turn around and there's nobody behind you. So, when you try to pass a bill, if I was that way, you don't have any votes.

"What you're going to have to do is bridge people together, and I think that's probably my best quality. And that's what I want to shoot for in Montgomery."







Galloway crowned Miss Wallace State 2018

Gail Crutchfield
WSCC



WSCC

Samantha Galloway of Fyffe, second from left, was crowned 2018 Miss Wallace State by the most recent title holder, Jordan Johnson, left, during the 2018 Miss Wallace State Pageant at Wallace State Community College. Kaylin Mulberger of Arab, right, was named first alternate. Miss Alabama 2017 Jessica Procter, second from right, served as mistress of ceremonies.

HANCEVILLE – Wallace State Community College crowned Samantha Galloway as 2018 Miss Wallace State on Sunday, Feb. 11, 2018, at the Burrow Center Recital Hall. Galloway, of Fyffe, is the daughter of Austin and Sandy Galloway and is majoring in General Studies, with plans to transfer to Jacksonville State University to study art therapy.

With the win, she will represent Wallace State in the Miss Alabama pageant at Samford University in June.

As Miss Wallace State, Galloway received a one-year renewable scholarship for tuition and fees to Wallace State valued at $3,600, a $200 cash scholarship and a gift certificate from Leigh Joy Photography.

First alternate and a $200 cash scholarship were awarded to Kaylin Mulberger, of Arab.

She was also presented the Talent award and an additional $100 cash.

The Swimsuit award and a $100 cash scholarship went to Audrey McMickens, of Bremen.

All of the contestants received a $200 Contestant Award.

Other students competing for the title of Miss Wallace State included Gabrielle Grace of Bessemer, Reagan Wyche of Okinawa, Japan, and Kaitlyn Wadsorth of Moody.

Galloway said she was surprised to be named Miss Wallace State and is proud to be able to represent Wallace State at the Miss Alabama pageant.

"I'm very nervous about Miss Alabama, but I think I will represent Wallace State very well," she said. "I'm excited to see what work I can do as Miss Wallace State."

Mulberger, a Physical Therapist Assistant major, said the experience of participating in Miss Wallace State was a good one.

"I'm probably going to do it next year because it was just incredible, and I loved the bond I shared with the girls."

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Cullman Lions Club's annual Fish & Ham Dinner set for March 3

Cullman Lions Club
Contributor

CULLMAN – The Cullman Lions Club's will host its annual Fish and Ham dinner on Saturday, March 3 from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. in the Cullman Middle School cafeteria.

Dinner will consist of fish or ham, baked potato, slaw, hush puppies, homemade dessert and other trimmings.

Patrons can eat in, carry out or drive through- all this for a donation of $10.

Funds will be used to support Cullman Lions Club projects.

Come bring a friend and join others.

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Obituary Announcements: Feb. 13-25

Terry Eugene Kilpatrick, 70 of Arley, entered into rest on Sunday, February 11, 2018, at his home surrounded by loved ones. A full obituary and funeral arrangements will be announced at a later date by Nichols Funeral Home.

James Edward Blackwood of Cullman passed away on February 9, 2018 at the age of 81. He was born in Cullman on March 28, 1936 to John David and Winnie Alldredge Blackwood. He is preceded in death by his parents, brothers William Eldridge Blackwood, John T. Blackwood and John Buren "Hunky" Blackwood. Funeral services are Tuesday, February 13, 2018 at 2 p.m. at Crossroads Baptist Church with Rev.'s Doug Pitts and Tommy Blackwood officiating. He will lie in state for one hour at the church. Interment to follow in the adjoining cemetery. Survivors are wife Barbara Blackwood, son Greg (Melissa) Blackwood, sister-in-law Bonnie Blackwood, Jan Higgins, grandchildren Abby, Brianna, Emma, Maria "Mia" Blackwood, a host of nieces and nephews. Moss Service Funeral Home directing.

Mr. Vernon Goodno, age 63, of Birdsong community passed away at his home early Sunday morning. He was born in Cullman County to Henry and Melba Jo Waldrop Goodno. Over 25 years of his life was spent working for the City of Cullman Street Department. He is predeceased by his mother. Survivors are his wife, Mary Elizabeth Waldrop Goodno; son, Jeremy Goodno; and father, Henry Goodno; and a host of relatives and friends. Visitation will be at Holly Pond Funeral Home, 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. Tuesday evening, February 13 and Service 11 a.m. Wednesday, February 14 in Holly Pond Funeral Home Chapel with burial in New Hope #2 Cemetery.

Funeral service for Delilah Jane Hulsey, 78 of Logan, will be at 2 p.m., Wednesday, February 14, 2018 at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Valley Springs Cemetery, Revs. Tim Box and Dillion Calvert officiating. Cullman Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mrs. Hulsey passed away Monday, February 12, 2018 at her residence. She was born October 7, 1939 to Cornwell & Irene Martin Evans. She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Alford Evans; sisters, Dixie Tackett, Nanny June White. Survivors include her husband of 58 years, Jessie Hulsey; sons, Buster (Leah) Hulsey, David (Kallen) Hulsey, Tracy (Angela Johnson) Hulsey; sister, Betty Scott of Virginia; grandchildren, Aaron (Ashley) Hulsey, Stefan (Elena) Hulsey, Drew (Kari) Hulsey, Tristan (Mackenzie) Hulsey, Christian Hulsey; great granddaughter, Liv Hulsey; a host of family and friends. Visitation will be Tuesday evening at the funeral home from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m.

James Edward Nelson Sr., 77, of Houston, entered into rest on February 11, 2018 at Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper. Edward was born on October 15, 1940, in Moulton, Alabama. He was a professional window cleaner. Edward enjoyed fishing and working on cars. Visitation will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at New Home Baptist Church in the Moreland Community, where services will be held on Wednesday, February 14, 2018 at 11 a.m.; he will lie in state from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. Brother Johnny Sims will officiate. Burial will follow in Moreland Community Cemetery. Edward is survived by his son, James Nelson Jr. and his fiancé Teariany Powell; step sons, Toby Hardesty, Robert Hardesty; step daughter, Cindy Nelson; brother Bobby Ayers and his wife Lois; sister, Billy Fay Key and her husband David. He had 9 step grandchildren, 13 step great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren, Cole and Jayda. He was preceded in death by his wife, Verda Hardesty; daughter, Marenda Nelson; parents, Elijah and Elsie Nelson; step daughter, Holly Jones, and a step son.

Junior Ottis Freeman, age 90 of Logan, died on Friday, February 9, 2018. He is survived by his wife, Peggy Sue Curvin Freeman; son, Gregory Freeman (Joyce); Daughters; Myra Deese, Tina Speakman (Hugh), and Vickie Tubbs (Albert); sister, Shirley Rexford; grandchildren: Jennifer Skeens (Jason), Crystal McManamon (Mark), Jerry Freeman, Carissa Garlewski (Alec), Gail Lacklear (John), David Bragg, Joshua Willingham, LaKrishia Hailey (Jesse), Skylar Holloway (Felicia), Bailey Raymond (Sara), and Taylor Johnson; 17 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great-grandchildren. The family will receive friends on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Moss Service Funeral Home. The celebration of Junior's life will be Wednesday, February 14, 2018 at 2 p.m. at Moss Service Funeral Home Chapel. Burial will follow in Fairview Baptist Church Cemetery. Moss Service Funeral Home directing.

Iravell Feltman, 80 of Houston passed away on February 11, 2018 at home surrounded by her family. She was born on March 5, 1937 in Houston Iravill has attended of The Rock Church for 15 years. She retired from the State Health Department where she worked as a custodian. Visitation will be held on Wednesday, February 14, 2018 form 2 p.m. until 3 p.m. at Nichols Funeral Home in Double Springs, where services will be held at 3 p.m. Pastor Drew Robbins will officiate. Burial will be in Burdick Cemetery. She is survived by her daughters, Rebecca Smith and Wanda Kay (Donnie) Nix; sister, Melinda Johnson; she was Grandma to 6 grandchildren, Ronnie Feltman, Lori Feltman, Chad McCay, Fallon McCay, Jamie Nix and Kristy Elliott; 8 great grandchildren, Jaden McCay, Taylor McCay, Elijah Martin, Logan Feltman, Hayden Nix, Jack Nix, William Carter, Shakiya Carter. She was preceded in death by her parents, Olen and Rachel Stewart; son, James Feltman; and great grandson, Copper Jaxson McCay.

Funeral service for Margie Ann White Burns, 68, of Cullman will be at 2 p.m., Thursday, February 15, 2018 at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Springhill Baptist Cemetery. Cullman Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mrs. Burns passed away Saturday, February 10, at Cullman Regional. She was born April 22, 1949 to Archie Lewis & Mildred Caldwell White. She was preceded in death by her father; her husband, Fred Burns; special friend, James Murphree. Survivors include her mother, Mildred White; brother, Alan (Connie) White; sister, Charlene (Jimmy) Harris; step-daughter, Teresa; step-sisters, Edna, Kathy, Debbie, Betty, Ann; and a host of nieces, nephews, family and friends. Visitation will be Thursday at the funeral home from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Nella Fayteen Johnson, age 84 of Cullman, went to her heavenly home Monday, February 5, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband, H.M. Johnson. Fayteen is survived by daughters: Janet Calloway (Jackie), Karen Johnson, and Regina Thayer (Scott); sisters: Bobbie Johnson, Dairlene Lipsey (Charles), and Mechelle Baker (Mike); brother, Pete Johnson (Linda); grandsons: Jared Calloway (Amanda), Jeremy Calloway (Jennifer), and Michael Thayer; and great grandchildren: Abby, Emma, Hanna, Emily, and Eli Calloway.The memorial celebration of Fayteen's life will be Sunday, February 25, 2018 at 2 p.m. at Longview Church of God. The family request in lieu of flowers donations be made to your favorite charity in memory of Mrs. Johnson. Please visit mossservicefh.com to leave condolences for the family. Moss Service Funeral Home directing.

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Cullman Regional's Hospice establishes Mitchell Investment Fund for indigent patients

Lindsey Dossey
Cullman Regional

CULLMAN – Hospice of Cullman County Inc., the fundraising arm of Cullman Regional's Hospice, recently established the Mitchell Investment Fund. The fund was created in order to provide care for indigent patients who need hospice care in Cullman County thanks to a planned gift of from the estate of Vervil Lovene Mitchell of Hanceville. The earnings from the fund will support end-of-life care for patients who do not have insurance coverage for hospice care and do not have the financial means to support the cost of care.

"We are humbled and appreciative of the gift to Hospice of Cullman County Inc.," said Nell Dunlap, Hospice Inc. Board chair. "As Cullman County's only nonprofit hospice, this donation will impact lives in Cullman County for many years through the creation of this investment fund."

Routine hospice care costs on average $5,000 per month, per patient. Last year, Hospice Inc. provided more than $60,000 in assistance to more than 25 patients. This not only provides care for the patient but also assists families with everyday living expenses such as utility bills, prescriptions not covered under their diagnosis, food, shelter, gasoline, clothes and basic life necessities while their loved one is receiving care.

Mitchell passed away in June of 2016 at the age of 93. She was born in Cullman in 1923 to W.J. Mitchell and Mattie Rice Mitchell. She was a retired professor at the University of Florida at Gainsville and authored a number of articles and books dealing with estate planning, insurance and personal finances. She was also a talented wood carver.

"We are proud to provide the same loving, quality care to both insured and uninsured patients," Shelly Ligon, director of Cullman Regional's Hospice & Home Care.

"We are extremely grateful to Ms. Mitchell for supporting the mission to provide excellent end-of-life care for all residents, and grateful to the Hospice Inc. Board for supporting this through their various fundraising efforts annually."

Hospice of Cullman County Inc. has provided funding for approximately 10 percent of the Hospice patients served over the past 30 years. This is only possible thanks to various fundraising efforts including the MEGA CASH Draw Down, held each year in July; $5 Jewelry Sale Fundraisers hosted at Cullman Regional throughout the year; community donations from groups including The Share Club of Cullman, Merchants Bank Charity Invitational as well as individual donations and contributions. Hospice of Cullman County, Inc. is a 501(c)3, nonprofit and all donations are tax deductible as allowable by IRS rules and regulations.

For more information on Hospice of Cullman County Inc. or services available through Cullman Regional Hospice and Cullman Regional, visit online at CullmanRegional.com. Donations to Hospice of Cullman County Inc. can be mailed to PO Box 1108, Cullman, AL 35056-1108 or you may drop them by the Hospice office, Cullman Regional Professional Office Building 1, second floor, Suite 230.



CULLMAN REGIONAL

Pictured from left to right, Gary Mitchell, representing the estate of Vervil Lovene Mitchell; Nell Dunlap, chair of Hospice of Cullman County Inc. Board; Shelly Ligon, Cullman Regional Hospice & Home Care director; and William Peinhardt, MD, medical director Cullman Regional Hospice & Home Care

Seat (from Front)

now I think I can serve in a lawmaker role.

"My slogan is 'Common Sense Representation for Alabama.' What that is, is I want to bring, you know, instead of a 200-page bill, can't we have a two-page bill? You see what I'm saying--so we don't have all this riff-raff. I want to bring the laws down to the common level, bring everything down to the lowest common denominator, so you don't have to have a college education to be able to understand what is being written. And so I'm more of the 'live in the country' type: take it easy, take it slow, keep it simple; and that's the kind of stuff I want to take away from what is known as the politicians in Washington right now.

"The fact is that they get up there, they're lawyers, they're doctors, they've got all this education, and they talk to you like you're expected to be on their level. And I think you could get more people involved into politics--and more people should be involved into politics, but I think you've got a large representation of people that would like to, but are scared to, because they don't think that they can understand it. I want to bring that understanding from a way-up high level down, that anybody can understand: any education level, anything like that. And so that's why the 'Common Sense Representation for Alabama' is, I think, a great slogan."

Blackmon's platform includes:

• drawing money from foreign aid funds to respond to disasters and other domestic needs within the US, taking care of Americans first

• cutting government spending and creating tax cuts for citizens who aren't paid for taking money from them in other ways

• shrinking the federal government and sending more authority back to states

• emphasizing the US Constitution in law and government

• securing US borders, including building a wall along the Mexican border, while streamlining legal paths to immigration and citizenship

• state and local control of education, without federal interference

• replacing the Affordable Care Act with a health care program that includes health care cooperatives, health savings accounts and allowing the purchase of insurance across state lines

• helping police, fire and medical first responders with funding to provide them with high-quality training and equipment

More information can be found on Blackmon's campaign website at www.anthonyblackmonforcongress.org.

Forgery (from Front)



Chad Wallace



Chris Haynes



Galon Wesley Parker



Greg Wallace

PHOTOS COURTESY CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

they use to print."

Clark continued, "They get Chris Haynes and we start to delve a little more into the check that he had because it was a forged check and that was for sure because John Paul Bryant, which is our victim from Decatur, we know that's not his check already. So, he tells us that Galon is writing checks and Greg took us into the room and we saw all the stuff. There were a lot of people who stayed in that apartment, more than like five or six, and there were a couple beds in that room, so based on the information that guy gave us, officers stayed there and held the apartment, made sure nobody touched anything in the apartment and we went and wrote a search warrant."

Clark said he and Sgt. Todd Chiaranda went to the residence with Officer Roy Bates and Officer David Brooks and served the search warrant. Allegedly recovered were two computers, check-writing software called "Checksoft," the printer, the blank checks and hundreds of pre-written checks that were written to Chad Thomas Wallace, Gregory Wade Wallace, Galon Wesley Parker and another man.

"There were checks written to all of them which means to us, of course, they're all probably writing checks. Chad Wallace, Greg Wallace and Galon Parker, they have all three been arrested and are all three currently incarcerated at the Cullman County Detention Center. I have also interviewed (another man) and he has confessed to cashing the checks that Galon wrote him.

"We interviewed Wesley (Galon), and Wesley kind of puts all the blame on everyone else, but he does admit to writing the checks. The accounts were opened in Wesley's name; he actually opened four accounts in his name at different banks, at Regions Bank and Independent Bank which is out of Michigan, he opened up online accounts and then went in person to open one here at Regions and then took his personal bank account number and created checks in a business name, either 'Group Services,' 'Total Construction' or 'Complete Contractors.'

"One of his points was that he didn't forge them because he used his real account number, but I told him no, you did because that's a personal bank account number and you've created business checks and been fraudulently cashing them throughout our community. They cashed them here, Decatur, Moulton, Arab, Jasper and possibly other places, there's no telling."

Clark and the Cullman Police Department received assistance from the Secret Service during their investigation.

"U.S. Secret Service Agent Shaun Holbert came in and assisted me and helped me conduct interviews, and they've been really great assisting in the investigation. We got a search warrant for the content on the computers and the phones and stuff that we seized that day and the U.S. Secret Service is in possession of them getting the content off of them for us."

Clark said that the amounts on the forged checks ranged anywhere from $200 to $1,000 and used multiple account numbers.

The investigation is ongoing at this time and Clark said there could be more arrests to come in connection with the case.

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
FEBRUARY 13, 2018

FAITH

Night to Shine: special needs community enjoys magical night

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmansense.com



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

FALKVILLE – On Friday evening, the special needs community of a multi-county area around north Alabama gathered at Fairview Church of God, known as The Grace Place, in Falkville for the Night to Shine Prom. This is the congregation's second year to host the event.

Night to Shine is a program of the Tim Tebow Foundation, which defines this ministry as "an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older."

Event coordinator Kelli McAnally explained, "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!"

There were special touches for the target audience, like "buddies" to hang with and look after each special guest, and a sensory room where guests could retreat when the lights and music got to be a bit too much, but it really was a prom.

There were prom pictures, music, a DJ, karaoke and a dance floor that became increasingly busy as the night went on. The crowd got to welcome more guests: Elsa and Anna were there, along with Snow White and Elvis.

Even Santa took a break from his end-of-season vacation to drop by.

This year's event more than doubled last year's. 2017's prom drew 67 guests; 2018 could surpass 150. According to McAnally, by around 7 p.m. most of the 138 pre-registered guests had arrived, and an unknown number of walk-in guests had joined in the fun, as well.

In addition to 138 buddies for the registered guests, more than 200 other volunteers provided buddies for walk-ins, entertainment, food and drinks, security and medical services as needed.

Fairview Pastor Milan Dekich talked to The Tribune about his church's decision to become involved in the Tim Tebow Foundation's Night to Shine program.

"I was looking on Facebook, and I saw that Tim Tebow was doing the Night to Shine and kind of promoting it, and I thought, 'We've always been a church that tries to reach out to needy people, to reach the least of these.' You know, 'If you've done it to the least of these, you've done it to me,' Jesus said. And I said, 'That looks like something exactly what we need to do;' so I talked to our staff. They loved the idea.

"We applied for it--it's an application process--we applied for it and we were accepted. Last year was our first year to do it. Danielle Hays and Kelli McAnally took it over, and they have done a marvelous job," said Dekich.

"You know, it's not just our church. We've reached out; the whole community is helping do this. We're just the facility that it's done in, but the whole community pitches in and helps us. We have a team that's been working on it for months. There's a lot of logistics that go into it, but we're just excited to help this group of people that, any other time, probably would remain hidden."

Dekich continued, "No one knows how many special needs people there are because they're at home, they're not out in public, and we're not aware of this whole population of people that no one knows about. One dad told me: he said, 'I never dreamed that I'd be preparing my daughter for a prom, and you've given me that opportunity to do that.' You know, that's something they've never experienced before in their life that every other kid experiences, but they didn't get to.

"So we want to give them the chance to show them that we love them, that God loves them, and just have a good time!"

After their second year hosting Night to Shine, Dekich and McAnally agreed unconditionally that there will be a third prom at their church, and that they will begin planning for next year before the dust even settles from this year's event. The Grace Place is excited.

"We have a great group of people here at Fairview," said Dekich, "a group of people that serve other people. Our motto is 'Serving others with the love and grace of Jesus Christ,' so our whole mission is to serve other people.

"So we are constantly looking for ways to serve; and whenever we do, people are generous, they volunteer their time, they give money, they serve others . . . I've been here for 38 years, serving as pastor here. I'm very excited about what God is doing, and what He continues to do, because we feel like we're here to show God's love, and to show them that He loves them and accepts them, and that they can be His--they can belong to Him.

"And it's a good community, too. We work with our other pastors, our other churches, to do things together.

"We do projects together. It's just a great community; there's a lot of unity here, a lot of love here. All the churches work together for the common good of serving God."

Learn more about Night to Shine and the Tim Tebow Foundation at www.timtebowfoundation.org.



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