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The Cullman Tribune

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'This is big. Really big': City of Cullman announces $14M grant to complete Hwy. 157 4-lane project



MAGGIE DARNELL/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Alabama Highway 157's "bridges to nowhere" in Cullman will soon have somewhere to go; road construction is slated to begin in 2019. The City of Cullman on Friday morning announced that it has been awarded a $14 million BUILD Grant to complete the widening of Hwy. 157 from just east of U.S. Highway 31 to just past Cullman Regional. The 3.5-mile stretch of Hwy. 157 is the only portion of that highway that is not four lanes.

» PAGE 3

Christmas parade schedule changes



Good Hope's Christmas Parade and Christmas in the Park have been rescheduled to next Saturday, Dec. 15 at 2 p.m.

Holly Pond's Christmas Parade has been CANCELED. **Luminaries in the Park** will now take place on Tuesday, Dec. 11 at 5:30 p.m.

Fairview's Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting have been rescheduled to next Saturday, Dec. 15 at 5 p.m.



CHRISTY PERRY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Left to right: Rep. Corey Harbison, R-Good Hope; James Bates, Jacob Bailey, Good Hope Mayor Jerry Bartlett; Nexan Office Manager Crystal Carpenter; Christy Goens; and Good Hope Parks and Recreation Director Dana Dunagan

CHRISTMAS HELPERS

Good Hope's Nexan Building Products plays Santa for area children

Christy Perry
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GOOD HOPE – Giving back to its community is something the staff at Nexan Building Products, Inc. in Good Hope loves. For the past six years the company has helped bring joy to families chosen by the Christmas Love program at Good Hope Schools. This year, three families from Good Hope were sponsored by Nexan.

The ladies in the Nexan front office make plans on Black Friday each year to shop for the families Nexan sponsors. The teachers select the families of students who could use a little extra help during the holidays. The three families sponsored by Nexan this year have a combined 11 children.

Office Manager Crystal Carpenter shared, "We love it! We make plans and have a great time as a group. The teachers find out each child's sizes and interests. We make sure everyone gets a new coat, shoes, clothes and lots of fun toys. This year everyone gets a Play-Doh set. We taped the needed batteries on all toys that require them, so everything is ready for Christmas morning."

Nexan gave the office staff $3,500 to spend on the families. As they were shopping, they were made aware of three more children who could use their help. Carpenter was more than happy to help, and her office looks like Santa's workshop with all the gift wrapping, bows and presents.

Good Hope Mayor Jerry Bartlett expressed his gratitude, saying, "They have always been so good to the kids. We never have to call and ask for help. We get a call from them each year from Crystal ready to shop for our kids. She is the ring leader."

Bartlett and other representatives from Good Hope picked up all the toys and clothes Thursday afternoon. The gifts will be distributed at school on the last school day before winter break.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Meet Erica York, Cullman's first city engineer

Christy Perry
christy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – Erica York has been on the job for less than a month and has "already made major contributions and been a great asset to Cullman," according Cullman Economic Development Agency Director Dale Greer. York is the City of Cullman's first city engineer.

Originally from New Hope, Alabama, York earned her degree in civil engineering from The University of Alabama in Huntsville in 2016. While at UAH, she worked at International Paper in Courtland and later for Alabama Power. When she graduated from UAH she transitioned into an engineering position with Alabama Power.

While attending UAH, she met her husband Austin York, a graduate of Cullman High School. The couple has lived in Cullman for five years and welcomed son Jack just six months ago. York's new position in Cullman is a welcome change from the more than one hour commute to her previous job.

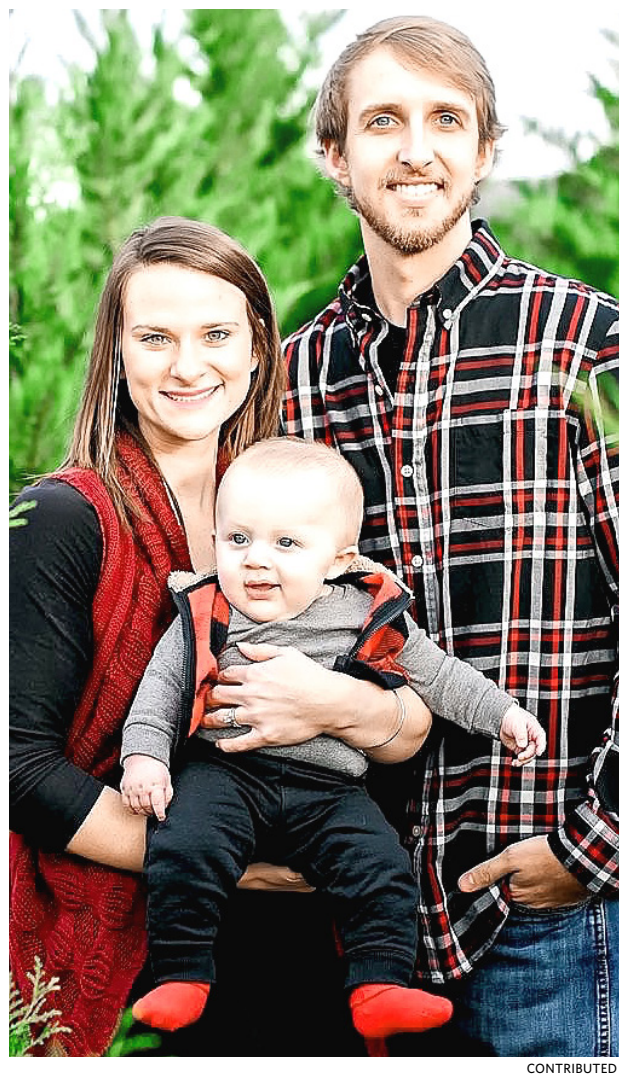
"My dad encouraged me to go into civil engineering," she smiled. "I've always liked and done well in math and science. I realized there is so much you can do with civil engineering and so many tracks you can take with it."

She continued, "For years people have been asking Cullman to hire an engineer and I've been told I am the first. This allows the city to bring some things in-house and to also have someone for the city to verify and help with checking calculations and assumptions, making sure developers and projects are compliant.

"For example, things like drainage calculations, that's a very specified thing that you learn in civil engineering. I hope to resolve issues before they can become an issue or before they become a major problem later on."

York enjoys working and living in Cullman, saying, "With this position, I'm getting into my major. I'm getting back into what I went to school to do."

York said of her new home, "I love Cullman. It's so nice to find a place out in the county with lots of space but when you need something, everything you need is just 5-10 minutes away. I love all the parks. I like that it's not Huntsville or Birmingham. Cullman is still kind of small, but it has everything you need."



CONTRIBUTED

Cullman City Engineer Erica York with her husband Austin and son Jack

Austin and Erica York live in west Cullman County. Austin York is also a civil engineer. He works on Redstone Arsenal. They have a farm and produce corn, wheat and soybeans. Erica York is an avid runner, although she admits she hasn't been as active since baby Jack was born. The Yorks also have a giant mutt named Waylon.

Ho! Ho! Ho!



CHRISTY PERRY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Santa Claus rides atop a firetruck in this week's Arley Christmas Parade. The parade took place on Wednesday night, with many braving the cold to enjoy the festivities.

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EDUCATION

Vinemont History Day offers students glimpse of the past

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmantribune.com

VINEMONT – In its eighth year, Vinemont Elementary School's History Day was expanded this year, thanks to the state's Bicentennial, the Alabama 200, celebration, to share the area's heritage with a larger group of students.

Former Vinemont Principal Dr. Jane Teeter and music historian Dr. William Mann, who led last year's program for fifth graders, returned this time to present to third through fifth graders, with additional presenters including:

- NASA engineer Mary Hovater, talking about the area's contributions to the Huntsville-based U.S. space program
- Jeremy Wilt providing a rocket exhibit
- Cullman County Sacred Harp singers, introducing a traditional musical form
- Brian Lacy of the Cullman Electric Cooperative, talking about the organization's history
- Annette Carlisle demonstrating traditional handicrafts
- Native heritage historian Gray Fox, teaching local tribal history
- Shirley Arnette, talking about Vinemont History
- Shawn Edward Warnke, presenting Cullman County farming history

Principal Kim Brown said, "Alabama's having the Bicentennial celebrations, and we wrote a Bicentennial grant--we were awarded a $2,000 grant. And we decided to focus on the history of Vinemont and its uniqueness, so the community could understand where they came from, so the kids could learn all about how Vinemont came to be, and why it's here, and all the different incarnations it's had. And so that's why we did Vinemont History Day.



KIM BROWN

Brian Lacy, of the Cullman Electric Cooperative, speaks to students at Friday's Vinemont History Day at Vinemont Elementary School.

"I think one of the cool things today has done, it's shown them how Vinemont ties in with lots of things they probably didn't think about: how Vinemont and Cullman played a role in putting a man on the moon and many NASA projects, how the gin at Vinemont was one of the first outdoor lighting projects in Cullman County through the Co-op. And then we had Dr. Jane Teeter, who has carried all third, fourth and fifth graders around the community on a bus, telling them about the unique history of each place--from Holmes Gap to Pinnacle to Vinemont, and about the schools and how they all got to be where they are, and how Vinemont became Vinemont Eagles instead of Holmes Gap Eagles."

Brown continued, "I think it gave the kids some pride in our school, in our community, in their community. This is who we are, and it's really cool! We've gone far beyond Vinemont: we've helped Neil Armstrong carry something to the moon, we've helped light the community. I think it was really good for them."

Michelle Schlosser, who hosted one of the stations in her classroom, said of the students, "They were all actively engaged. To me, it seemed like they were truly interested. It's something they were not used to seeing . I think they truly enjoyed it. They didn't want to leave when their time was up in here."

After the conclusion of the event, fifth-grade teacher Jacqueline Hill told The Tribune, "Our Vinemont History Day was a great event that connected generations. I asked several teachers and students what they liked about today's events, and the bottom line was that they learned something they didn't know before.

"From all the responses, it was plain to see everyone connected to one or more of the stations. One of our fifth-grade students said they were shocked to learn that there was once a hotel and amusement park at Vinemont.

"A second and third grader said their favorite part was seeing and hearing the old instruments. After listening to the Sacred Harp Singers, one student said it was interesting to find out that they used shapes like triangles, circles and squares to sing songs and they still do that today. Several were proud to learn that business in Cullman helped send rockets to space.

"Students are always eager to learn about Native American artifacts, and the presenters today certainly had the students' attention. At one of the stations the students saw an old washing machine and, after it was explained how it was used to wash clothes, they were really glad that washing machines had improved over the years," Hill smiled.

"I personally enjoyed all of the stations, even the one from the Cullman Electric Co-op where I was only one of three adults in the room who not only knew what and where the drive-in theater was in Cullman, but actually had watched a movie there before," said Hill. "All in all, I'd have to say it was a great day."

Vinemont's Community History Day, scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 8, was canceled due to the threat of bad weather. It has been tentatively rescheduled for April.

Cullman Regional's Lights of Love held, honoring Dr. Robert Echols

Christy Perry
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CULLMAN – The Cullman Regional Foundation hosted the annual Dr. Herman C. Ensor Lights of Love Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony Thursday evening, and this year the Foundation Board honored Dr. Robert L. Echols, who passed away in September. Family and friends of Echols were special guests and Foundation Board Member Danny McAfee delivered a special tribute.

McAfee said of Echols, "He was one who dedicated countless hours of service to the medical community. He gave 44 years of service to the field of medicine. His legacy continues.

"He was known to many as simply 'Doc' and he will always be remembered as a selfless physician, a gentleman of integrity and friend to all.

"He was board-certified in emergency medicine and worked the past 23 years at Cullman Regional.

"Countless patients and their families were blessed by his remarkable ability to diagnose, his unforgettable compassion, love and sometimes humor."

Echols was quoted as saying, "Even if you didn't pay me, I'd be here doing this."

After the touching tribute, attendees enjoyed a musical program featuring the First Kids Chorus and Ladies Ensemble from Cullman First Baptist Church.

The final performance was a trio of Dr. and Mrs. David Shupe, on tuba and bassoon, and Ken Simpson on piano.

Staying true to tradition, everyone moved outside for the lighting of the tree. Miss Wallace State Emma Wright led the singing of "Silent Night" as the grandchildren of Dr. Echols lit the Christmas tree.

Cullman Regional Foundation Executive Director Maria Stanford said, "The mission of the Cullman Regional Foundation is to advance healthcare excellence at Cullman Regional."

Lights of Love is one of several fundraisers the Foundation holds throughout the year. Donors gave gifts of love for $20, $40, $60 or more to place lights on the Christmas tree as tributes to someone special.

Said Stanford, "This year's Lights of Love has raised more than the previous years. The money raised this year has helped purchase cardiac monitors and defibrillators for all the CEMS (Cullman Emergency Medical Services) ambulances."

The 11 cardiac monitors and defibrillators cost $352,000; the Foundation was able to give $175,000, while the hospital paid the difference.

Cullman EMS Director James Curtis explained, "The new equipment is an excellent investment for the community.

"The monitors can measure blood pressure, carbon dioxide levels, respiratory rate and other data.

"The data is imported into the patient's healthcare record. The equipment can help in early recognition of strokes or give sepsis alerts."

The new equipment allows real-time communication between the ambulances and hospital.

The Cullman Regional Foundation continues to take Lights of Love donations throughout the holidays. Acknowledgment cards are sent to those honored or to families of those remembered.

"It's a great way to give the gift of love," said Stanford.

Lights can be purchased online, by phone or in person. For more information visit www.cullmanregional.com/foundation or call 256-737-2565.

About Lights of Love:
"Named in memory of the late Dr. Herman Ensor, who established this event, the tree lighting ceremony enables members of the community to honor or remember family and friends. For a minimum donation of $20, a personalized card is sent to the honoree or family of those being remembered. Refreshments are served while guests enjoy reflective, meaningful Christmas music while the tree is lit atop the hospital."

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IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF KARON LYNETT HUTTON, DECEASED. * CASE NO PC-2018-378

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Administration having been granted to FRAYNE HUTTON, as Personal Representative of the Estate of KARON LYNETT HUTTON, Deceased, on the 29th day of November, 2018, by the Honorable Tammy Brown. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that all persons having claim against the said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Frayne Hutton
Personal Representative

Douglas C. Martinson
Attorney for Petitioner
115 North Side Square
Huntsville, AL 35801
(256) 533-1667

TO: **The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune**

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

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

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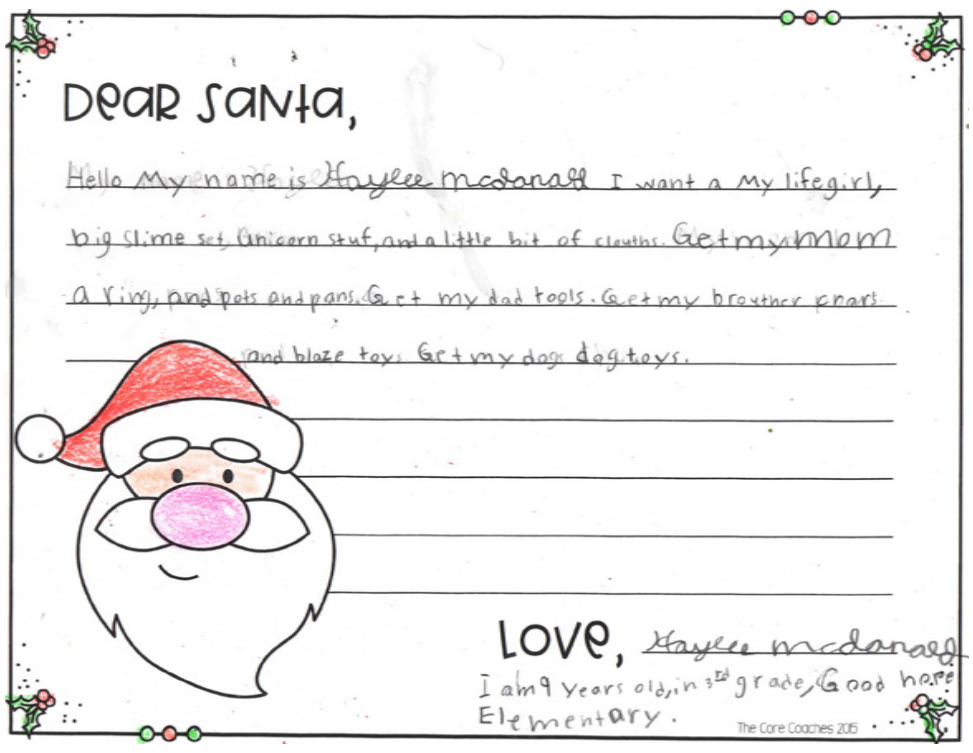
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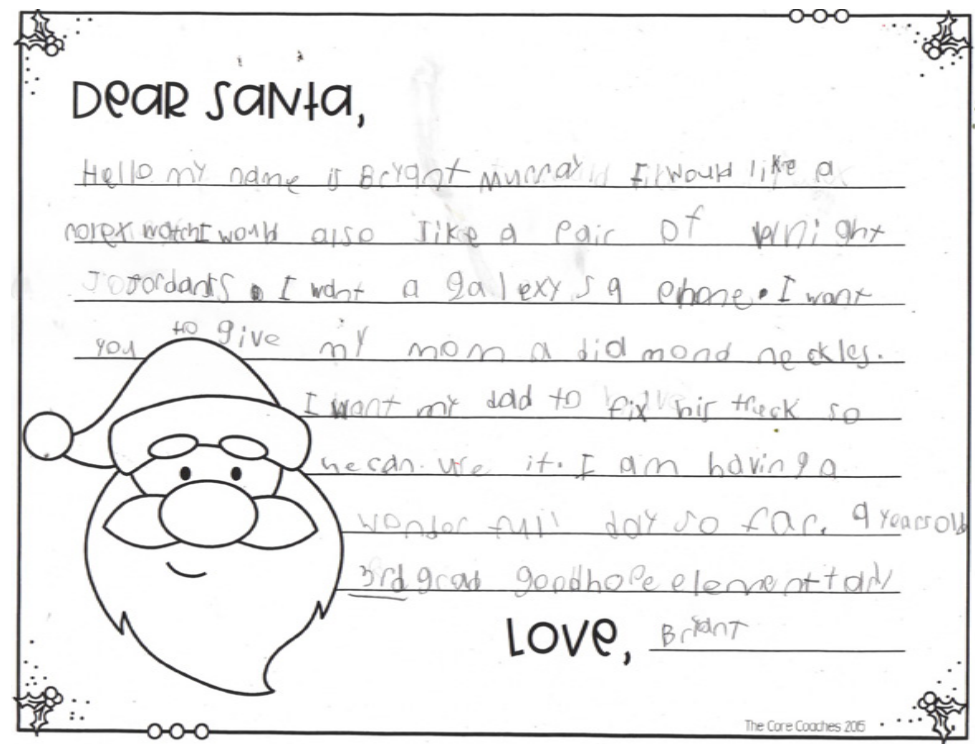
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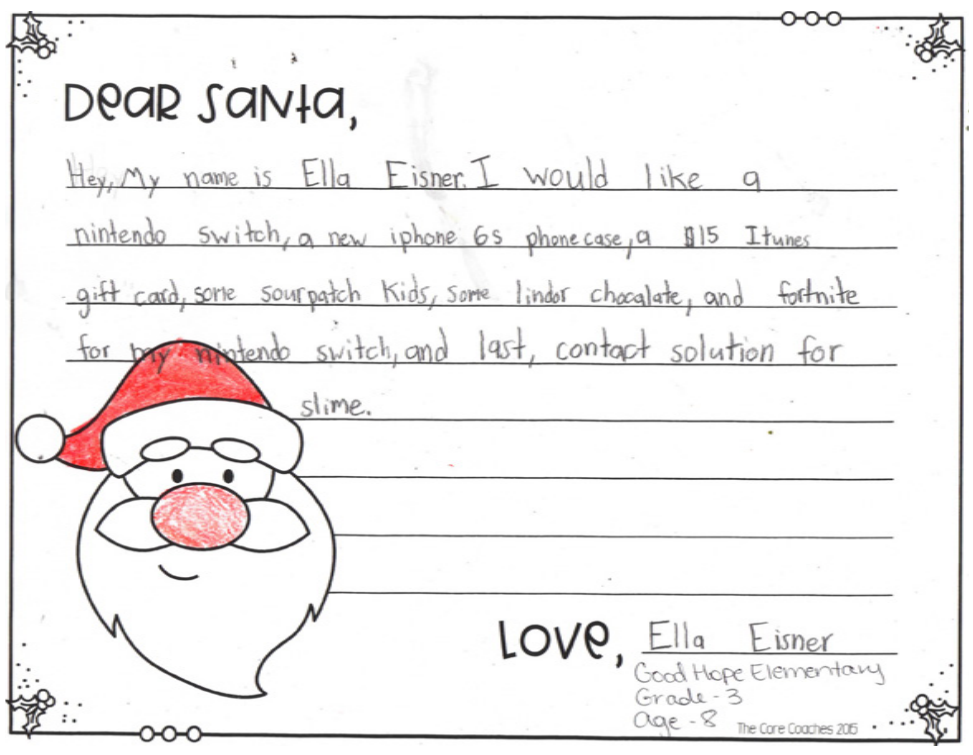
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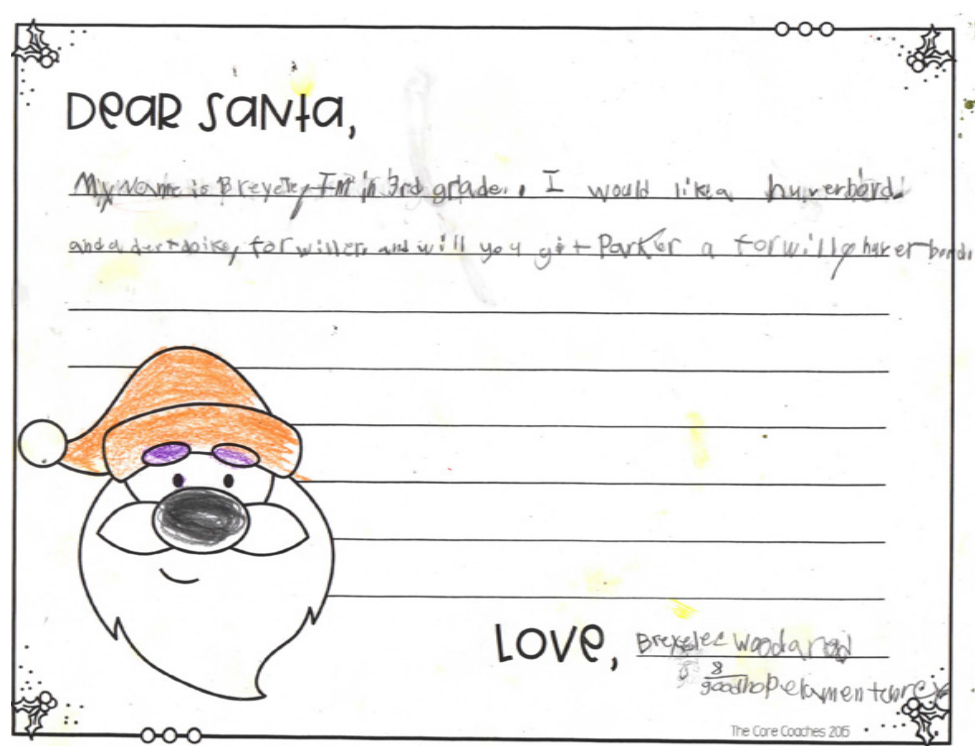
Letters to Santa

Mrs. Penn's 3rd grade class, Good Hope Elementary









Grant (from Front)

Wendy Sack
wendy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – "This is big. Really big," said a proud Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs Friday morning. The project to complete the expansion of Alabama Highway 157 from two lanes to four between U.S. Highway 31 and Alabama Highway 69 is finally going to be completed, thanks to a $14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant program.

"This project will have a major impact on the city of Cullman, Cullman County and the surrounding areas," said Jacobs.

"The City submitted a grant application this summer to complete the widening of the remaining 3.5 miles of Alabama Highway 157. Yesterday after lunch, we received notification from Washington, D.C. that we got that grant."

Jacobs said there were between 900 and 1,000 grant applications across the United States, and only 10 percent of those were awarded.

"This $14 million grant, to my knowledge, is the largest grant the City of Cullman has ever been awarded," he said.

Jacob's talked about the importance of the project, especially concerning access to Cullman Regional. This two-lane portion of Hwy. 157 is the direct route to Cullman Regional, which serves more than 175,000 people in a six-county area. The current traffic congestion on this road makes it difficult at times for emergency vehicles to reach the hospital. More than 15,000 cars travel this two-lane section of road daily, which includes trucks trying to get from local industries to Interstate 65.

"Highway 157 is like 90 miles of road, and the whole corridor is four-lane, except for this last 3.5 miles," said Jacobs.

"Numerous ambulances run up and down that stretch. And we all know how congested that stretch can get. And if for some reason it ever got shut down, somebody could die having to go around to get to the hospital. That was honestly included in our grant application."

"Bridges to nowhere"

The "bridges to nowhere" in the 3.5-mile corridor, one over the railroad and one over Lake Catoma, were completed over two years, finished in 2013. Widening of the road was postponed indefinitely because of a lack of funding.

The bridges have been the subject of much controversy among Cullman County residents, who have frequently voiced frustrations about the completed bridges being inaccessible.

According to Jacobs and Cullman Economic Development Agency (CEDA) Director Dale Greer, however, if not for those bridges, this grant would not have been possible.

"Poor old ALDOT (Alabama Department of Transportation) took a whipping about these two bridges sitting out there cause they're finished but not being utilized. Well let me tell you, without those two bridges, we could not have gotten this grant," said Jacobs, "because part of this grant process was it's got to be a project that's pretty well ready to go. Over 90 percent of the right-of-way of has already been acquired and the bridges are completed. All of this money has to be spent by 2025. That sounds like a long time until you start doing road work. They've already got quite a bit of the engineering done; they'll have to clean it up and get it to that point. If those bridges weren't already there and those things, we couldn't have even applied."

Jacobs said, "This is an everybody grant. It affects everybody."

According to Greer, the total project cost is estimated at $28 million. The remaining $14 million will be paid for by ALDOT. It is anticipated that construction on this project will begin in early Fiscal Year 2020. All funds have to be expended by September 2025.

"Our team at the City of Cullman did a remarkable job preparing this grant. The City of Cullman, Cullman County and the surrounding area will benefit greatly from this project.

"The city, county, state delegation, and leaders in Washington D.C. worked in unison so that we knew at the end of the day, we did all we could to give Cullman the best shot at this opportunity.

"Today, we can say that through the efforts of many hard-working people, we have seen this process across the finish line," said Jacobs.

"I would like to thank our federal delegation - especially Sen. Shelby and his staff. Also, I want to give a big thank you to our staff here at the City of Cullman. Without their persistence and drive on securing this grant, it would not have happened," said Jacobs.

BUILD grant applications could not be less than $1 million in rural areas and not greater than $25 million.

No more than $150 million could be awarded to a single state. At least 30 percent of funds had to be awarded to projects located in rural areas.

"This BUILD grant awarded to the City of Cullman will allow for critical highway infrastructure improvements in the region," said Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Alabama.

"As Cullman continues to experience significant commercial, industrial, and residential growth, it is important that we find ways to support this rapid development. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues and DOT in paving the way for economic success by rebuilding our local infrastructure."

"Securing this federal infrastructure grant allows Alabamians, in our district, to benefit for generations to come," said Sen. Garlan Gudger, R-Cullman.

"This much needed improvement will address our current safety and transportation concerns, along with providing a boost in economic development and allowing opportunities for expansion of industry."

PUBLIC NOTICE TO SELL LAND NOT NEEDED FOR PUBLIC OR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES

On November 5th, 2018, the City of Cullman approved to vacant and surplus 3.97 acres, more or less, of property, which is no longer needed for public or municipal purposes, located at County Road 473, Cullman, AL 35057 (PPIN: 9443 and PARCEL#17-04-19-0-000-010.000), more particularly described as: All that part of the Northeast Quarter of Section 19, Township 10 South, Range 3 West, more particularly described as: commencing at the northeast corner of said Section 19; thence South 0°29'12" East a distance of 1599.24 feet to an existing ½ inch pipe and the true point of beginning of the property herein described; thence from said true point of beginning run South 0°20'00" East a distance of 398.05 feet to an existing ½ inch pipe; thence North 88°22'02" West a distance of 434.74 feet to an existing ½ inch pipe; thence North 0°20'49" West a distance of 398.26 feet to an existing ½ inch pipe; thence South 88°20'24"East a distance of 434.84 feet to the true point of beginning and containing 3.97 acres, more or less. Description from survey of H.D. Harris, AL. Reg. No. 5742, dated August 27, 2003. Subject to the Oil and Gas Lease to H. D. Easton, Jr. as filed for record in Book 112, Page 179 and also subject to the ROW for the gravel road along the East side of subject property as shown by the survey of H.D. Harris, AL. Reg. No. 5742, dated August 27, 2003. Zoning and all other matters of record. PROPERTY IS BEING PURCHASED IN "AS IS" CONDITION. On November 14th, 2018, the Crest Appraisal Group (an independent appraiser) valued the above described property as $74,500. The City of Cullman is required to sell the property for no less than its fair market value. The cost of the appraisal was $400.00. The cost of conveying the property by the City is projected to be $350.00. Therefore, the minimum bid for the property is $75,250.00, which is appraised value plus the cost of appraisal and the projected cost to the City of conveying the property. The City is requesting sealed bids for the property. Bids can be hand delivered to the Cullman City Clerk Wesley Moore or mailed to the Post Office Box 278, Cullman, AL 35056. Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope marked attention Property Bid and addressed with the bidder's name and address. All bids will be opened at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, December 14th, 2018 in Cullman City Hall located at 204 Second Avenue NE, Cullman, AL 35055. No bids will be accepted after 2:00 p.m. on Friday, December 14th, 2018. All bids will be publicly opened and read. Any bid received less than the minimum bid of $75,250.00 will be rejected. The highest responsible bidder will be required follow and comply with all local, state, and federal laws and/or regulations. The winning bidder will be required to deposit a $5,000.00 non-refundable payment (earnest money) on the day of the bid opening with the City Clerk. Closing shall occur within 30 day of bid award. Bidder withdrawing after award the deposit shall forfeit the earnest money and the next highest qualified bidder shall have two business days from said notification to deposit earnest money of $5,000.00 and close within 30 days of said notification. Any cost of financing, title insurance, and title search shall be at the cost of purchaser. Property to be conveyed by Statutory Warranty Deed. The City of Cullman reserves the right to reject any and all bids without cause.

THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
DECEMBER 8, 2018

EDUCATION

Richard Jerome Burkett Memorial Scholarship established at Wallace State

Scholarship supports students in Building Construction or HVAC programs

Gail Crutchfield
WSCC

HANCEVILLE – The family of the late Richard Jerome Burkett has created a memorial scholarship in his honor at Wallace State Community College, providing an annual scholarship for students in the Building Construction or Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) programs at the college.

"My brother would be happy about this," said his brother Mike Burkett.

Burkett said his brother was one of those people who was very good with his hands but didn't care for scholastics.

Still, he gave college a try by enrolling at a nearby community college after high school. He started working in construction as a teenager and continued through most of his life. The last several years of his life, he worked in HVAC.

"He loved doing air conditioning because he loved taking those things apart and putting them back together," Burkett said.

"He just had a knack for fixing things. He could look at a part and see right where it fit."

Providing scholarships to help students like his brother was an opportunity Burkett said he and his parents, Elva Cucunato of Cullman and Charles Mitchell Burkett of Corner, wanted to pursue to honor their loved one's memory. "They're tickled that we could do this," he said of his parents.

Burkett teaches construction at the Cullman Area Career Center and is a member of the Advisory Board for the Wallace State Building Construction program.

He said it's important that students learn how to write a proposal or draft a letter and understand the mathematics involved in construction or HVAC.

"I tell my kids when I teach up there, you have to know a little bit of both," he said.

The Richard Jerome Memorial Scholarship will provide up $2,500 annually to a student in the Building Construction or HVAC program. The scholarship recipient will be chosen based on financial need and should have at least a 2.0 GPA.

"I just personally want to thank you and your family," said Wallace State President Dr. Vicki Karolewics.

"Most people who want to go into the industry don't really think about going to college to learn how to do it, because they're afraid of college," she said. "They want to work with their hands. They don't want to sit in a college classroom. So, having the ability to connect young people with those kinds of careers is really something we're working on."

Donations to the Richard Jerome Burkett Memorial Scholarship Fund will be accepted and can be made online at www.wsccfuturefoundation.org or by mail at PO Box 568, Hanceville, AL 35077.

The first scholarship could be awarded as early as the Spring 2019 semester. To apply, contact Suzanne Harbin at 256-352-8144 or Suzanne.harbin@wallacestate.edu.

Registration for Spring 2019 is currently underway at Wallace State, with classes to begin on Jan. 7. Visit www.wallacestate.edu or call 256-352-8000 for more information.



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman County Sheriff's Deputy Shane Chambers gives a wagonful of attendees a ride at Thursday's special needs rodeo at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center

Cullman Regional to host Photos with Santa Dec. 15

Mary Beth Sellers
Cullman Regional

CULLMAN – Cullman Regional is excited to host a free Photos with Santa event on Saturday, Dec. 15 from 8-11 a.m.

Children can visit with Santa and have their photos made.

Refreshments will be provided, including candy canes, cookies and hot chocolate.

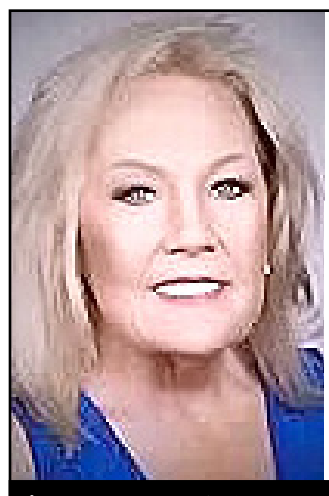
The Photos with Santa event will take place in Cullman Regional's Colonel Cullmann Room (Professional Office Building 2).

For more information, email news@cullmanregional.com or visit www.cullmanregional.com.



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W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman County Sheriff's Deputy Shane Chambers gives a wagonful of attendees a ride at Thursday's special needs rodeo at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center

Special needs event kicks off 2018 Cullman County Sheriff's Office Rodeo

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – Cullman County Sheriff Matt Gentry often refers to it as the "heart and soul of the sheriff's office." On Thursday morning, the Cullman County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) kicked off the annual Jimmy Arrington Memorial Rodeo with a mini rodeo for the county's special needs community. More than 1,000 attendees filled the stands at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center, while hundreds of community volunteers and CCSO deputies came to help, many of them volunteering off-duty hours.

The mini rodeo featured exhibitions of events like calf roping for men, breakaway roping for ladies, team roping, bull riding, and ladies' and juniors' barrel racing.

While it was an exhibition, the participants were the real thing; the upcoming pro rodeo is sanctioned by both the Professional Cowboy Association and International Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association.

The other sheriff, "Sheriff Woody," and veteran rodeo clown "Dusty" kept the crowd laughing, cheering and generally fired up.

After the regular rodeo events concluded, the arena floor opened to the audience. Students, assisted by volunteers and rodeo staff, barrel raced on stick horses, tried their hands at roping dummy calves and took hayrides in wagons pulled by deputy-driven tractors. At every step, deputies and volunteers lent helping hands to make sure that students' limitations wouldn't limit their fun.

Every public school in the county system sent its special needs students, along with some students who even made the trip from Winston County.

Cullman County Schools Superintendent Dr. Shane Barnette was on hand to join in the fun and told The Tribune: "We have a high population of special needs kids in Cullman County, and this is an event that they look forward to every year. They start talking about it as soon as they come back to school in August, and they don't stop talking about it until they get out in May. But it's a great event, and a lot of these kids, they won't forget this the rest of their life. It means a lot to us, because it just puts a spotlight on all of those kids."

For professional clown Dusty, the special needs event is the highlight of the three-day rodeo.

Shared Dusty, "This is actually the best day of the weekend, right here. I'll tell you, Sheriff Matt Gentry and the rest of the deputies put on a great deal here for all the kids to get to come out, enjoy and be a part of the rodeo. And to see these kids smile is worth every second that we're here, because it is great. I love to see these kids have fun. This is my fourth year to get to come do this deal, and it gets better and bigger every year."

The pro rodeo took place Friday, Dec. 7 and will again tonight, Saturday, Dec. 8. Gates open at 5:30; events start at 7:30. The Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center is located at 17645 U.S. Highway 31 N, Cullman, Alabama 35058.

Enjoy the holiday season with fire safety in mind

Christmas trees, holiday lights and decorations help make December a leading month for U.S. home fires

National Fire Protection Association

QUINCY, Mass. – Festive meals, flickering lights and holiday decorations are all hallmarks of the holiday season. However, Christmas trees, candles, electrical decorations and cooking all contribute to an increased number of home fires during December, making it one of the leading months for U.S. home fires.

To help everyone enjoy a fire-safe holiday season, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is encouraging everyone to be aware of potential fire risks, and to take steps to minimize them.

"Fire can quickly turn this festive time of year into a tragic one," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of NFPA's Outreach and Advocacy division. "Fortunately, when decorating your home and entertaining guests, following some simple safety precautions can go a long way toward enjoying a fire-safe holiday season."

Following are NFPA's holiday-related fire statistics:

• **Christmas trees:** Christmas tree fires are not common, but when they do occur, they're much more likely to be deadly than most other fires. One of every 45 reported home Christmas tree fires results in a death, compared to an annual average of one death per 139 reported home fires. See more at www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr6b9b8FYKk.

• **Candles:** December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. In 2016, the top three days for candle fires were Christmas Day, New Year's Day and New Year's Eve. More than half (56 percent) of the December home decoration fires were started by candles, compared to one-third (31 percent) the remainder of the year.

• **Holiday decorations:** Between 2012 and 2016, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 800 home fires per year that began with decorations (excluding Christmas trees). These fires caused an annual average of two civilian deaths, 34 civilian injuries and $11 million in direct property damage. One-fifth (19 percent) of these home decoration fires occurred in December. One-fifth (21 percent) of decoration fires started in the kitchen; 15 percent started in the living room, family room or den.

• **Holiday cooking:** While cooking fires are the leading cause of U.S. home fires and injuries year-round, Christmas Day ranked as the second-leading day for home cooking fires in 2016 (behind Thanksgiving Day.) On Christmas Day in 2016, there was a 73 percent increase in the number of home cooking fires as compared to an average day.

NFPA offers a wealth of holiday fire safety tips and information for consumers, along with tools and resources for local fire departments to promote holiday fire safety in their communities. Visit www.nfpa.org/holiday for more information.





Ten Things from a Tribune Tastemaker

Ben Johnson South
Tribune Contributor

In this creative weekly series, local author, artist and all-around entertaining and eccentric (not to mention classy!) Southern gentleman Ben Johnson South introduces Cullman Tribune readers to the creative thinkers and doers in the Cullman community.

"10 Things from a Tribune Tastemaker"
This week, meet Kathryn Callaway Jones, professional home organizer

"Think outside the box about all the things you no longer need or want, and then put those things in a box and donate them to someone who needs or wants them. It's that simple," said Kathryn Jones, the professional home organizer who founded the popular, Cullman, Alabama-based Simplified Spaces.

Jones is encouraging everyone to celebrate Boxing Day, Wednesday, Dec. 26, a cherished tradition throughout Great Britain for almost 200 years.

Said a smile-beaming Jones, "We all have generous hearts during the Christmas season and we're more aware of others who need more. One of my earliest memories makes me seem destined to become a home organizer.

"I grew up in Eufaula, the oldest of three girls. Each Christmas my sisters and I would pull everything out of our closets and decide how to welcome our new toys and clothes. Things we had outgrown went into a big box and my folks gave them to a local charity.

"My dad was a veterinarian and each Christmas he would box up used pet toys and extra food and grain that had been donated to him and give those to pet owners who could put them to good use.

"Eufaula is not 'veddy British,' but we were celebrating Boxing Day each year, as do many in Alabama."

Continued Jones, "I love to collaborate with Simplified Spaces clients during Christmas and the New Year as together we decide what to purge, cull, donate and move forward. Many of my clients have almost 'spiritual' attachments to objects. I understand that.

"If my house were on fire, God forbid, I'd grab my dearest, sentimental things, little drawings my talented grandmother sketched and my own baby cup before I'd think to grab my computer laptop.

"By the way, everyone reading this, please back up all your important computer data and photos."

To learn more about Jones, call or text her at 256-347-7717.

Here are 10 ways Jones encourages you to celebrate Boxing Day on Wednesday, Dec. 26 with her this year. All of the nonprofits she suggests will provide you a donation receipt for your tax filing.

Jones smiled and added, "After you enjoy the decluttered lightness, you can reward yourself as Forrest Gump and I would, with a box of chocolates."



CONTRIBUTED

Kathryn Callaway Jones

1. Box all the warm, winter clothes your family hasn't worn in the last two years and give to The Foundry, Goodwill, Salvation Army and other clothing charities.

2. Box pet supplies and toys and give to the Humane Society or to a local veterinarian to pass forward.

3. Box canned vegetables and other pantry items to donate to an Alabama food bank.

4. Box unused gardening tools and supplies and give to Master Gardeners at your county's Alabama Extension Service.

5. Box the ignition keys to an unused car, truck or boat and give to an Alabama public radio station like WLRH (Huntsville) or WBHM (Birmingham) to support programming.

6. Box any DVDs, CDs, books, magazines or games your family now accesses online and donate to the Friends of the Public Library.

7. Box bags of birdseed and donate to the Audubon Society to feed our fine, feathered friends this winter.

8. Box ignored craft supplies, paints, kits, tools and give to an art school or art teacher.

9. Box seldom-used kitchen gadgets and special task tools to your church kitchen or a United Way agency.

10. Box (with your children learning to share) toys they no longer play with and give those toys to a children's charity.

HAPPY BOXING DAY, WEDNESDAY, DEC. 26, 2018!! Thank you for giving and sharing.

Obituary Announcements: Dec. 8 - 9

Mr. William Everett Malcom, 78, of Hanceville, passed away at Cullman Regional on Tuesday, December 4, 2018. He was born June 28, 1940 to William and Mattie Lou Boyd Malcom. Mr. Malcom was a member of Colony First Church of God, and he was an employee of Tyson for Twenty-Five years. Visitation will be on Saturday at Pleasant Grove Methodist Church from 12 noon until 1 p.m., with his service beginning at 1 p.m. Reverend Nicholas Nall is officiating. He was preceded in death by his wife; Medora Malcom, and two brothers; Oliver and Donnel Malcom. Survivors include; three daughters, Etta (Billy) Washington, of Warrior, Donna Hardy, of Richton Park, IL., Barbara Turner, of Hanceville, one son, David (Kimmie) Malcom, of Hanceville, six Grandchildren; Jerald, Adam, and Jerrel Malcom, Nyles Hardy, Tamara and Diane Roden, one Great Grandchild, Amiria Malcom, two brothers, J.V. Malcom, and Zether Malcom, four sisters, Letha McKinny, Kathleen Harris, Glenda Hall, and Debra Ward.

Funeral Service for James Ambrouse Nail, 90, of Vinemont, will be 12 p.m. Saturday, December 8, 2018, at Cullman Heritage Funeral Chapel, with interment in Cullman Heritage Cemetery. Visitation will be at the funeral home one hour prior to service. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mr. Nail passed away Sunday, December 2, at his residence. He was born June 8, 1928, to his mother, Amanda Sylvania Nail Ramey. He was preceded in death by two daughters, Deborah Diane Mackey and Shelia Lynn Martin. Survivors include his daughter, Lawana Danielle; sons-in-law, Bo Kennedy, Fred Mackey; grandchildren, Chad Johnson, Jackie Phillips, Krisha Muirheid, Jamie Segler, Michelle Long, Delane Martin; sisters, Mary Ruth Gusich, Doris Ramey; brother, Wallace "Boot" Ramey; and a host of great-grandchildren and friends.

Gloria Julia Veglia Stieffel, 92 of Trussville, formerly of New Orleans, LA and Cullman, AL passed away on Monday, December 3, 2018 at Compassus Hospice in Birmingham, AL. Mrs. Stieffel was a lifelong resident of New Orleans until retirement when she and Calvin moved to Cullman to be close to their daughters and grandchildren. While in Cullman, she was a parishioner of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and the Altar Society. After moving to Trussville, she became a parishioner of Holy Infant of Prague Catholic Church. She is preceded in death by her husband, Calvin Stieffel, daughter, Janice Stieffel, sister, Sr. Eugenie Veglia and brothers: Claude and Ambrose Veglia. Her survivors include daughters: Gwendolyn Stieffel Evans and Ann Stieffel (Nick) Vincent; son, Louis (Leslie) Stieffel; grandchildren: Eddie (Laurie) Evans, Toby (Satoko) Evans, Rachael (Nathan) Haden, Rebecca Evans, Natalie Stieffel, Jessica (Jim) Payne, Michael (Allyson) Vincent, Eric (Brittany) Vincent and Ryan (Rachel) Vincent and 17 great grandchildren. The family will be offering a second visitation at Moss Service Funeral Home Saturday, December 8, 2018 from 8:30 a.m. until 9 a.m. The Mass of Christian Burial will be on Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Cullman, AL. Burial will be at Sacred Heart Catholic Cemetery.

Funeral Service for Jervis J. Farley, Sr., age 85, of Vinemont, will be at 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 8, 2018, at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home with Jerry Lake and Junior Garmon officiating; interment at Bethlehem West Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mr. Farley passed away on Thursday, December 6, 2018, at his residence. He was born May 2, 1933 to David and Eva Miller Farley. For many years, he grew sweet potatoes and was a poultry farmer. He served in the U.S. Army, and he was a member of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Survivors include his wife, Sharon; son, Jerry; daughter, Cynthia, three grandchildren, one great granddaughter; four devoted step-children, Julie (Russell) Durand, Jeff (Jennifer) Nichols, Jennifer Folette, and Jason (Shannon) Nichols; seven step-grandchildren; and one step-great-granddaughter. Visitation will be from 12 noon until 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 8, 2018, at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home.

Mr. Hanford Buel Smith of Vinemont passed away December 5, 2018 at the age of 87. He was born in Cullman on March 18, 1931 to Copal and Etta Mae Shoemake Smith. Mr. Smith was a 20-year veteran of The United States Air Force and he also worked for The United States Postal Service. He is preceded in death by his wife Nell Smith. Funeral services are Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 2 p.m. at Moss Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Pete Grund officiating. Interment will be in Hopewell Cemetery. Military honors will be rendered at the graveside. Survivors are: son Stephen (Renee) Smith, grandson Phillip Smith and a host of nieces and nephews. Visitation is Saturday from 1 p.m. until service time.

Edith Imogene Butts, 88, passed away December 6, 2018 at her Cullman residence with her loving family by her side. She was born to the late Percy E. Henry and Minnie C. McAnnally Henry on February 7, 1930, in Marshall County. She graduated from J.B. Pennington in 1948. After her graduation she started work at Cullman Hospital in June 1948, where she stayed until her retirement in 1999. In 1953, she married the late Rev. Frank C. Butts, the two spent 56 years together, 46 of which were spent as pastors of Hanceville Assembly of God Church. Mrs. Butts is preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Frank C. Butts, her parents, Percy E. Henry and Minnie C. McAnally Henry, and a host of siblings, Josie, Ed, Tom, Ollie, Elb, and June. She is survived by her only child, Jean (Junior) Heaton of Cullman; two grandsons, Johnathon (Jennifer) Heaton of Cullman and Justin (Amber) Heaton of Good Hope; great-grandchildren, Whittney, Payton Emma, Allie, (their mother Jessica), Katie, Tyler, Caleb, and Natalie; sisters-in-law, Linda Smith & Cora Henry. Edith was very proud of her family and leaves behind nothing but beautiful memories. Funeral services will be held at Hanceville Assembly of God on Sunday, December 9, 2018 at 2 p.m. The viewing will be held on Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 5 p.m. at the church. Cullman Funeral Home directing.

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Funny things from yesterday: Taking shots at the country store

Robert N. Tidwell, Sr.
Tribune Contributor



With a tear in my eye I am dedicating this story to the memory of a dear friend of our boyhood days at Logan, Freddie Lee Starnes. I originally wrote this story in 1986.

Back in the 1940s, the Health Department would send a nurse out to the country stores and all the children in the community would have to go down and get a shot- much like they do for dogs taking rabies shots today.

I hated to take those doggoned shots worse than almost anything. I made an ugly face once and all the other children laughed.

Maybe that laugh made it easier for the rest of them to take their shots.

As I mentioned before, we had a summertime friend, Freddie Lee, who lived at Logan.

Now Freddie Lee's parents did not make him take all those shots, and I always worried about him catching some dreaded disease.

He was a frail looking little boy, and I thought if he did catch a disease, he wouldn't last through the summer.

After a few summers of being pals with Freddie Lee, he and his family moved away. That was a sad day for me. Seems like it was Gadsden or someplace that seemed awfully far off. I didn't see Freddie Lee for several years after that.

Years later, when I was a senior in high school, we had a picnic at Lake Rhea near Gadsden.

A strange boy walked up to me and asked if I was Robert Tidwell. I told him that I was.

After seeing the blank look on my face, he said, "You don't remember me but, I'm Freddie Lee."

I was really surprised, for that frail little boy who didn't take any shots had grown to be 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed about 225 pounds, without an ounce of fat on him.

There I was 5 feet 91/2 inches tall and did good to weigh 165 pounds.

I decided that those doggoned shots must have stunted my growth!

I got to see Freddie Lee one more time. In 2004 my wife had a niece in the hospital in Gadsden and a person visiting her knew Freddie Lee. She called him, and he came by and we visited a while then.

Rest in peace, Freddie Lee.

Tribune Files from Yesteryear

From The Files Of 1955

Seven students from Cullman County were among the 625 to get degrees at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 29th, in Denny Stadium, from the University of Alabama. This was the 124th commencement for the University of Alabama.

Those from this county getting degrees were: James W. Tucker, a bachelor of laws degree, William E. Rasco, a bachelor of arts, with a major in journalism, Martha Sue Smith, a bachelor of arts, with a major in music, Sidney R. Gibbs, a bachelor of science, Bette Louise Buettner, a bachelor of science in education, Gerald A. Davis, a bachelor of science in engineering and Doris E. Bush, a diploma in nursing.

Among the Sacred Heart Junior College graduates were eight young women of Cullman. Among the Academy graduates were twelve Cullman girls.

Miss Nelle Bowling, of Hanceville, is the winner of the gold medal for Highest Average in the sophomore class of Sacred Heart Junior College.

Tying for the distinction of next in merit are Miss Doris Burnham, of Cullman and Miss Mary Ellen Cook, of Birmingham.

Miss Marian Cooper, of Pensacola, Florida, is recipient of the gold medal for Highest Average in the college freshman class. Miss Dorothy Land, of Cullman was named as next in merit.

Miss Jacqueline Young, of Cullman was awarded by the National Guild of Piano Teachers a First Year College Diploma.

Misses Virginia Boike and Mary Ann Veigl, of Cullman were invested with the gold insignia of Quill and Scroll, the international honorary society for high school journalists.

As a result of the National Piano Playing Auditions conducted at Sacred Heart Junior College and Academy, April 29th-30th, the following pupils from the Cullman district merited high ratings:

National Winners – Patsy Coggins, Rosalie Dunlap, Joyce Marie Jones, Jacqueline Lee and Mary Claude Millar, Ellaminia Peinhardt, Nancy Pylant, Karen and Mary Stiefelmeyer, Marcella Voss, Cathy Williams, Patricia Wolf and Linnel Jones.

T.C. Shoemaker celebrated his 70th birthday on Sunday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Charles Jones, in Hanceville. Those attending were: Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Shoemaker and Bobby, of Russellville, Mr. and Mrs. Jay Cole, Bill, Jerry and Brenda, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jones and Hubert, Mrs. Homer Gibbs and Rickey and Mr. and Mrs. Shoemaker.

Among the gifts received were seventy silver dollars.

Just as the birthday dinner was finished, a telephone call came from Mr. and Mrs. Bert Shoemaker, of Chicago, to give birthday wishes and to talk to the family.

Miss Kathryn McKoy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. McKoy, of Logan, became the bride of Mr. Gerald Alvin Trimble, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dave Trimble, of Route Six, Cullman.

The wedding was on Saturday evening, May 28th at seven o'clock at the Logan Baptist Church, with Reverend Deward Raney officiating.

The 80 acre farm of Mrs. W.A. Freeman, in the Bethsadia Community, on Days Gap Road, was the Mystery farm of last week.

The first persons to correctly identify it were Mrs. Velma Freeman, Mrs. Warren Jones, Mrs. W.M. Waters and Mrs. Luther Parker.

Mrs. Freeman and her late husband bought the farm from John Adams forty years ago and erected all of the present buildings.

At present, Mrs. Freeman's son, Harold, with the aid of one renter, operates the farm on which are grown 25 acres of corn, ten acres of cotton, eight acres of potatoes and an acre of strawberries, as well as potato plants and small amounts of various other crops. They do their farming with both tractor and mules.

Mrs. Freeman, the former Alic Speegle and her husband were married in 1905. Mrs. Freeman's hobby is raising flowers and she attends Bethsadia Baptist Church.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

Good things come to those who wait

Bill King
Tribune Contributor



In the great state of Alabama, you are either an Auburn Tiger Fan or a University of Alabama fan. The first words uttered by our children are not Mama or Dada, they are War Eagle or Roll Tide. We are serious, too serious sometimes, about our college football. It does not matter where you went to college or even if you didn't go at all, you pull for one of those two teams.

Having said all that which you most likely already knew anyway, whether you pull for the Tigers, the Tide, or the Rock, you probably pulled for Jalen Hurts last Saturday. Did you just ask, "Who is the Rock?"

Well, of course, that would be Slippery Rock University, located in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania. Perhaps most of those watching the SEC championship game this past weekend, except for Georgia Bulldog fans, were rooting for Jalen Hurts.

What a comeback story! I'm sure most of you who watch college football at all know the story. I don't write about football often, but this story is too good to not tell.

As a true freshman, in the second game of the season, Hurts became the starting quarterback.

That had not happened for thirty-two years, since Vince Sutton did so back in 1984. Over the next two years he broke school records.

He led his team to victory in the SEC championship game over Florida. He was named the SEC Offensive Player of the Year, as well as the SEC Freshman of the Year. He was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated.

The next year he led Alabama to a 13-1 season. They played Clemson in the Sugar Bowl and he was named the offensive MVP of that game.

Then an unexpected turn of events happened as he was benched at halftime of the Playoff National Championship.

Another true freshman named Tua Tagovailoa came off the bench and led to team to a comeback victory and a national championship.

Tagovailoa became the starting quarterback this season and Hurts found himself in an unfamiliar place - on the bench, playing second fiddle.

We watched to see what this young man would do. Would he leave, would he transfer, or would he stay? In a day when many in similar situations have transferred to go play somewhere else, he surprised many and stayed.

He spent the entire season playing in the cleanup role, coming in after games were already decided.

Then in the SEC championship game against Georgia, the new starting quarterback went down with a game ending ankle injury.

Georgia had led for the entire game.

Hurts had his long awaited shot at redemption. He threw for a touchdown to tie the game, and in true Hurts fashion, ran for the final one to put his team on top.

His team won the game and the championship! After the game Hurts tweeted, "You can't stop what's destined. Thank you Lord! #AllGlory2God #NeverLoseFaith #Blessed #Wow."

Most of us have had times in life when things didn't go our way.

There may have even been times when things did not seem fair and we are tempted to quit. If that has never happened to you, hang on, it still can.

The big question is not what happens, but how do we respond to what happens?

When life gives us lemons, are we able to use them to make lemonade?

Hard as it is for us to believe sometimes, there are many things in life much more important than a game.

When it's tough, do we quit, do we move, do we become bitter, or do we trust? I believe good things come to those who wait.

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

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Poet's Corner

Old Time Christmas

By: Randy C. Hale



When my Dad was a boy
Christmas time was a joy.
Homemade decorations,
a fresh cut tree.
A batch of homemade cookies
baked hot on Christmas eve.
Going to bed after stories told,
the stove banked till morning
atop of warm coals.

Sleeping was hard,
waiting on light
laying beneath tall covers
on this special night.
Rising at dawn to see
what Santa brought
An orange, an apple,
peppermint candy, some socks.
Walnuts and licorice,
a small glass car.

A small doll for each little girl
bright new ribbons
to place in their curls.
One year some whistles,
a Yo Yo, a top.
A tiny new tea set,
a few wooden blocks.

Ham from the smokehouse
Biscuits and eggs,
a skillet of gravy,
some cheese in a wedge.
Later for dinner a
chicken to fry,
a pot of green beans,
a sweet tater pie.
Playing together,
running outside
enjoying each other
unaware of the time.

But the days would pass
and the years would go by,
Some moved far away,
some stayed near by.
The parents would age
and one day be gone.
The children gather
one last time at their home.
To look at some pictures,
things their mother had sewn,
To walk through the woodshop
their father loved so.

So many memories
was in that place.
They could almost hear
their mother say,
"Stay in touch with each other
along life's hard way.
Take care of my grandkids
and teach them to pray.
A family must stay together
through difficult times.
To be there in troubles is
love's truest sign."

So they gathered together
at least once a year.
And as the years passed,
they too disappeared.
But what was passed down
continued to last.
The Spirit of Christmas
the old fashion way
from Father and Mother
and the Love that they gave.

OPINION

Cullman internet speeds 33% lower than Alabama average. Can it be fixed?

Ben Williams
BroadbandNow.com

Residents of Cullman are likely familiar with this frustrating situation: only one or two options for internet service, and high prices for slow speeds.

Unsurprisingly, local internet speeds are 33 percent slower than the average for Alabama. According to speed test data, the average internet connection in Cullman only delivers 24.4 Mbps, which is just shy of the 25 Mbps the U.S. government considers as "basic service." A full quarter of Cullman has only one option for internet service faster than 25 Mbps download — or no option at all.

According to BroadbandNow data, Cullman is falling behind state and national standards for internet availability. This has major consequences for economic development, as businesses and skilled workers relying on internet access are forced to move to better-connected areas.

In Cullman, Spectrum promises speeds up to 200 Mbps for around $50/month. Nearby areas with fiber options like Huntsville can get close to 900 Mbps "gigabit" internet for the same price.

Is there a solution? There is: more competition for AT&T and Spectrum. Cities like Huntsville that have multiple internet providers always have lower prices and higher speeds, since companies are incentivized to compete for customers.

The question is: how do you tempt new providers to the area? This isn't easy, but it can be done, and it has worked in the past. Huntsville, for example, saw success creating a public-private partnership where the city invested in fiber lines and leased them to private companies. Those private companies were able to enter the market quickly and affordably and invested in their low lines to extend to new addresses. The result: distributed risk for all parties involved, and dramatically improved service for residents.

For Cullman, the first step is community involvement. Grassroots groups can pressure local legislators to adopt fiber-friendly regulation (or de-regulation).

So-called "dig once" laws are a common approach that require the installation of fiber conduit (underground pipes for internet cables) any time the street is dug up for general construction.

Another common strategy is installing public-owned "municipal" broadband. Unfortunately, Alabama currently has a variety of laws restricting this practice, thanks to extensive cable lobbying. Community groups promoting local internet alternatives have to complete referendums and extensive feasibility studies before local government can move forward on infrastructure investments.

Partnerships between public and private institutions, like those in Huntsville, might be the best choice for an area like Cullman. With the promise of 5G still years away, the only way for some communities to get decent internet is to demand it — and convince the government it's worth investing in the connected future of local economies.

