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FAITH

St. Andrews Youth Group opens free food pantry in southwest Cullman



CHRISTY PERRY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The St. Andrews United Methodist Church Youth's Free Food Pantry is at the corner of Main Avenue and Sixth Street Southwest in Cullman. It is located in the north parking lot of the church. **» PAGE 7**

Aurora victim Josh Pinkard's funeral set for Sunday in Cullman

Wendy Sack
wendy@cullmantribune.com

HOLLY POND, Ala. – Holly Pond native Josh Pinkard, a victim in the Feb. 15 workplace shooting in Aurora, Illinois, will be laid to rest in his home state. According to Holly Pond Funeral Home, friends may visit with the family on Saturday, Feb. 23 at 4 p.m. at Loft 212, 212 Fourth St. SW, Cullman. Pinkard will lie in state from 1-2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24, with funeral services following at 2 p.m. at Loft 212. Burial will follow in the cemetery of Redan Baptist Church in Holly Pond.



CONTRIBUTED

A family photo of Josh Pinkard, his wife Terra and their three children

Read the full obituary on page 2.

Cullman County Veterans Treatment Court seeking mentors

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. – In their continuing efforts to establish a Veterans Treatment Court in Cullman County, Circuit Judge Gregory Nicholas and District Judge Rusty Turner, along with Cullman VFW Post 2214, are seeking to recruit mentors--especially other veterans--to work with veterans who find themselves in the county's legal system for nonviolent offenses that may be tied to substance abuse or mental disorders like PTSD.

To that end, on Thursday, Feb. 27 they will host Col. Ray Zimmerman, a veteran of both the U.S. Army and Madison County's established Veterans Treatment Court, at the Cullman VFW Post, 112 Veterans Dr. SW, at 6 p.m.

In a statement, Nicholas shared:

Col. Ray Zimmerman, a lead mentor for the Madison County Veterans Court, will be at the Cullman VFW on Feb. 27, 2019 at 6 p.m. to answer questions for local veterans who may be interested in serving as mentors in the newly formed Cullman Veterans Court.

Veterans Treatment Courts hold individuals accountable for their actions while also providing treatment for service related issues such as PTSD, traumatic brain disorders, substance addictions and similar problems. The Veterans Treatment Courts unique approach is able to facilitate communication between the Veterans Affairs Administration and other Veterans organizations to provide treatment and other services that address the underlying problem so that individuals are less likely to reoffend in the future.

Having dedicated mentors is the key to a successful Veterans Court Treatment program that will ultimately not only improve the lives of all veterans living in our community, but make our community a safer place for everyone. Any veteran interested in serving as a veteran's mentor is encouraged to attend the meeting to learn more about the program.

The guest speaker at this event, Col. Ray Zimmerman, has an engineering background and worked many years for Thiokol Corporation, the producer of solid propellant rocket motors for space and defense applications. As an engineer at Thiokol, Zimmerman worked on programs supporting satellite launch vehicles and weapon systems. Zimmerman served a total of 31 years either on active duty with the U.S. Army or in the U.S. Army Reserves. During his military career, Zimmerman served as a member of several General Staffs (Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel and Logistics, 81st Regional Support Command) and as Chief of Staff (87th Division (Exercise). His military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit (w/OLC [oak leaf cluster]), the Meritorious Service Medal (w/ OLC), and the Army Commendation Medal (w/4 OLC). Col. Zimmerman was awarded the Honorable Order of St. Barbara. He is an inductee in the Field Artillery Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame and is also a graduate of the Army War College. In addition to his professional activities, Zimmerman is involved in a number of civic activities. He is the past Executive VP of the North Alabama Veterans Coalition and since August 2013 he has served as a mentor with the Madison County Veterans Court, helping train many of the mentors presently serving in that program.



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Circuit Judge Gregory Nicholas, VFW Post 2214 Commander Will Harris and District Judge Rusty Turner are leading the drive to establish a Veterans Treatment Court in Cullman County.

Mentors key to Veterans Court success

A veterans court will partner with local law enforcement, mental health services, veterans' services agencies and others to bring resources together from a broad range of disciplines to help participants, but the main points of contact between veterans and the program are other veterans who serve as mentors.

Nicholas previously told The Tribune, "We're really fortunate, I think, in this county that we do have people in the DA's office, and the judges, and the law enforcement that are committed to veterans. And this concept is something that we're all invested in, but **» PAGE 8**

CRIME

Former AL Senate Majority Leader Zeb Little allegedly stole more than $25K from client trust funds

Wendy Sack
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MONTOMERY, Ala. – Former Alabama Senate Majority Leader Zeb Little, 50, turned himself in Thursday in Cullman after being indicted by a Cullman County grand jury on three counts of first-degree felony theft of property. Cullman Police Department Capt. of Investigation Becky Boyd told The Tribune Friday morning that the case has been taken over by Alabama Attorney Gen. Steve Marshall.



CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Zeb Little

Marshall's office issued the following statement Friday: "Following an investigation by the Cullman Police Department and the Attorney General's Office, Attorney General Steve Marshall's Criminal Trials Division presented evidence to a Cullman County grand jury on Feb. 11, resulting in the three-count indictment. Specifically, the indictment charges Little, an attorney, with three counts of first-degree theft of property for stealing a combined total of more than $25,000 of client trust funds."

Marshall's office said no further information about the investigation or about the defendant's alleged crimes other than that stated in the indictment may be released at this time.

If convicted, Little faces a potential penalty of two to 20 years on each theft of property count. First-degree theft of property is a class B felony.

Little, of Tuscaloosa, a Democrat and native of Cullman, served in the Alabama Senate representing District 4 from 1998 to 2010. He was the Senate Majority Leader and Floor Leader of the Senate from 2002 to 2010, when he was defeated by Republican Paul Bussman.

Little was booked into the Cullman County Detention Center Thursday on a $15,000 property bond and has since been released.



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Arrests and incidents reported on Feb. 21-22

Wendy Sack
wendy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN – Below are the arrests and incidents reported on Feb. 21-22, 2019. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

GJ = grand jury; **FTA** = failure to appear

REPORTED ON FEB. 21
CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INCIDENTS
Feb. 18
- domestic violence; CR 1742
- criminal mischief; CR 1508
- domestic violence; CR 1237
- possession of drug paraphernalia; 1st Ave. N Garden City
- theft of property; Hwy. 31
- harassment; Schwaiger Dr.
- unlawful breaking and entering of a motor vehicle; Hwy. 31
- shooting into an occupied dwelling; CR 1114
- unlawful possession of marijuana; Hwy. 157
- domestic violence; CR 775

Feb. 19
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 1527/CR 1545
- harassment; CR 1725
- theft of property; Hwy. 31
- domestic violence, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle; CR 1422
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 1718
- domestic violence, reckless endangerment; CR 1589

Feb. 20
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia; Hwy. 157
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 1816
- violation of protection order; CR 1545
- domestic violence; CR 1422
- theft of property; Hwy. 69 S
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 1665/CR 1668

ARRESTS
Feb. 19
Aaron, Matthew Eli, 36
- third-degree burglary

Allred, Chastity Beatrice, 30
- probation revoked- chemical endangerment of a child

Barnett, Santanna Marie, 28
- drug court sanction- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Brooks, Jonathan Scott, 32
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Cofield, Caleb Craig, 34
- FTA- second-degree criminal mischief
- FTA- possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana
- FTA- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Cook, Christal Ann, 34
- second-degree criminal mischief

Cornelius, John Brandon, 38
- third-degree domestic violence- menacing
- interfering with a domestic violence emergency

Duke, Tracy Diane Hood, 33
- probation revoked- third-degree burglary

Golden, Jesse Gene, 23
- judge's order- unlawful manufacturing of a controlled substance

Graveman, Stephanie Elaine, 24
- drug court sanction- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Handley, David Shannon, 23
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance
- FTA- possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Harman April, 36
- drug court sanction- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Hyde, David Brandon, 35
- fourth-degree theft of services

Kitchens, Timothy Justin, 28
- third-degree burglary

London, Dennis Charles II, 32
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Lynn, Dalton Leonnard, 27
- third-degree burglary

Lyons, Charles Coe, 25
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Martin, Olivia Danielle, 26
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

McFadden, Tammy Leigh, 29
- probation revoked- unlawful possession of a controlled substance (2 counts)

Nunnery, Trevor Alan, 30
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Patterson, Zachary Thomas, 26
- judge's order- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Raley, Darrell Scott, 49
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Rodriguez, Amberleshea Helen, 38
- drug court sanction- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Russell, Robert Marcus, 42
- FTA- expired tag
- FTA- liability insurance required
- FTA- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Ryan, Justin Wayne, 27
- drug court sanction- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Shellnut, William Thomas, 19
- fourth-degree theft of property

Tabor, Lisa Ann, 50
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Tolbert, Willie Jack, 36
- FTA- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

White, Stephen Harold, 54
- judge's order- unlawful distribution of a controlled substance (2 counts)

Feb. 20
Ballenger, Dakota James, 21
- bail jumping- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana
- bail jumping- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Boucher, Oneil Michael, 31
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- trafficking in methamphetamine

Cunningham, Patrick Joseph Jr. ,39
- FTA- possession of drug paraphernalia (2 counts)
- FTA- trafficking in methamphetamine
- FTA- unlawful possession of a controlled substance (5 counts)
- FTA- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana

Haws, Benjamin Olen, 39
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Hitt, Patrick Shane, 31
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Lortz, Nicholas Ryan, 31
- second-degree bail jumping- attempting to elude
- second-degree bail jumping- resisting arrest
- FTA- attempting to elude
- FTA- DUI
- FTA- resisting arrest

Morgan, Crystal Lynn, 36
- FTA- possession of drug paraphernalia (2 counts)

Pearce, Scott Eric, 47
- attempting breaking and entering of a motor vehicle
- third-degree criminal trespassing
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- public intoxication
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Shaffer, Eric Michael, 35
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Smith, Timothy Lee, 38
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- first-degree receiving stolen property
- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

Wallace, Gregory Wade, 48
- probation revoked- unlawful possession of a controlled substance

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
INCIDENTS
Feb. 20
- third-degree burglary; person; Logan St. SW; AC unit, misc., damaged window
- second-degree criminal mischief; person; Lessman Circle SW; damage to '02 Ford Ranger; $600
- unlawful breaking and entering of a motor vehicle; Cherokee Ave. SW; phone
- fourth-degree theft of property; Wal-Mart; Olive St. SW; hoverboard; $148

ARRESTS
Feb. 20
No arrests

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
No incidents or arrests reported.

REPORTED ON FEB. 22
CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INCIDENTS
No incidents reported.

ARRESTS
No arrests reported.

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
INCIDENTS
Feb. 20
- third-degree burglary; person; CR 715; misc.; $2,610

Feb. 21
- leaving the scene of an accident; AT&T; Cherokee Ave. SW; telephone boxes; $1,500
- harassing communications; person
- fourth-degree theft of property; Cullman Power Board; Brunner St. NW; meter; $120
- second-degree theft of property; person; Olive St. SW; medication
- harassment; person; 2nd Ave. NE

ARRESTS
Feb. 21
Williams, Summer P., 25
- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana

Shikle, William C., 31
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Little, Zebulon P., 50
- GJ- first-degree theft of property (3 counts)

Jones, Kathy M., 52
- FTA- public intoxication

Overton, Brandon G., 28
- unlawful possession or receipt of a controlled substance
- second-degree unlawful possession of marijuana

Lyell, Keith B., 28
- DUI
- possession of drug paraphernalia

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
No incidents or arrests reported.

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

COMMUNITY CALENDAR
Feb. 23 - 26

Cullman County Democrats Monthly Meeting- Saturday, Feb. 23
Please join us as we hold our February meeting at the Colony Educational Complex in honor of Black History Month, featuring Mrs. Earline Johnson. This month also begins our series of educational programs geared toward serving the communities we live in. We will be presenting a program on avoiding financial scams such as calls saying you have won or owe money, recognizing tampered-with gas pumps and what to do if you have been scammed. During this meeting we will also be accepting donations to the Horace Culpepper Memorial. Mr. Culpepper passed away on Jan. 6. Food will be provided by Colony Mayor Donnis Leeth and the Cullman County Democrats. For more information, call 256-708-1334.
151 Byars Rd, Hanceville, Alabama 35077 from 10 a.m.-noon.

4th Annual Cullman EMS 911 Chili Cook-Off-Saturday, Feb. 23
Cullman Regional's Cullman EMS is hosting its fourth annual 911 Chili Cook-Off on Saturday, Feb. 23 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. with all proceeds benefiting The Link of Cullman County. The registration fee for entering a team is $20 and is open to all law enforcement, firefighters, EMS personnel and dispatchers. Tasting is open to the public for a $1 donation per sample. Community members are encouraged to attend and vote for their favorite chili. First, second and third place will be awarded by popular vote from the community, as well as the award for Hottest Chili. Attendees will also have a chance to win door prizes and enter a raffle for Rock the South tickets. The 911 Chili Cook-Off will take place at Desperation Church (202 Elizabeth Street NE, Cullman, AL 35055). For more information or to register your team, contact James Curtis at (205) 903-4486 or email at james.curtis@cullmanregional.com.

Holly Pond Lions Club Beans 'n Greens Supper- Saturday, Feb. 23
The Holly Pond Lions Club will host a Beans 'n Greens Supper at its clubhouse on Saturday, Feb. 23, from 4 to 7 p.m. Pintos, great (white) northerns, greens and all the trimmings for a suggested donation of $5. Contributions will help fund club projects associated with eye sight preservation, juvenile diabetes education and other core programs. The facility is located in the Holly Pond Lions Park, 221 Lions Park Road. For more information, contact Dewitt Sanford at 256-531-2167.

Cullman Historic Society Meeting- Sunday, Feb. 24
The Cullman Historic Society will meet on Sunday, Feb. 24, at 2 p.m. at the Cullman County Museum for "History of Cullman Blacksmithing" and "Iron Works" with Allan Kress.

Singing at Cross Baptist Church-Sunday, Feb. 24
Singing at Cross Baptist Church with Unity 4 from Iuka, Mississippi and Trusting Grace from Birmingham. Singing starts at 5 p.m. and love offering will be taken. Cross Baptist Church is located on Lacon Mountain in Cullman County. For more info, call 205-541-2504.

Daddy Daughter- Rainbow & Roses- Sunday, Feb. 24
Dads and Daughters are invited to join us for a fun night of dinner, dancing and friends. Cost is $35 for a dad and his daughters. RSVP: https://goo.gl/forms/p8Y05nwFHfo9rX2v1 5-7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church Cullman- 320 Third Ave. SE, Cullman

Good Hope City Council Meeting-Monday, Feb. 25
The Good Hope City Council meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Good Hope City Hall.

Cullman City Council Meeting-Monday, Feb. 25
The Cullman City Council meets twice per month, usually on the second and fourth Monday of each month, at 7 p.m. in the Cullman City Hall auditorium.

Berlin Town Council Meeting-Monday, Feb. 25
The Berlin Town Council meets on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Berlin Community Center. The meeting was rescheduled due to a holiday last week.

Cullman County Commission Meeting- Tuesday, Feb. 26
The Cullman County Commission meets every second and fourth Tuesday, except in cases where the meeting date falls on a holiday, in which case the meeting is moved to the following day. Meetings are scheduled for 10 a.m. in the Commission office conference room, first floor, Cullman County Courthouse, unless otherwise specified.

Lunch at VFW Post 2214- Tuesday, Feb. 26
Everyone come to Tuesday's lunch at the VFW Post in Cullman. Starts at 11:30, $5 per plate. We have carryout if you can't stay and eat with us. We always have a great time. Love to see new folks and enjoy the usual group. See you on Tuesday! 112 Veterans Drive SW in Cullman

TOPS - Take Off Pounds Sensibly- Meeting- Tuesday, Feb. 26
TOPS - Take Off Pounds Sensibly-meets every Tuesday at the Donald E. Green Senior Center, 1625 Cleveland Ave. SW Cullman
- Weigh-in 3-3:30 p.m.; Meeting 3:30-4:30; Contact- Candy Wachter 256-338-1272; Facebook- TOPS AI0073 Cullman

Colony Town Council Meeting-Tuesday, Feb. 26
The Colony Town Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6 p.m. at Colony Town Hall.

LOOKING AHEAD
West Point Band Boosters 36th Annual Stars and Stripes Rodeo-Friday and Saturday, March 1-2
A Double Creek Rodeo Production featuring some of the best Cowboys and Cowgirls in the Southeastern Professional Rodeo Association. Pre-sale tickets available at any Premier Bank location and Jack's Western Wear. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center, 17645 U.S. Highway 31 N

Cullman Lions Club Fish and Ham Dinner- Saturday, March 9
March 9 is the day for the Cullman Lions Club annual Fish and Ham Dinner. Fish/ham with all the trimmings, including homemade desert and drink all for a donation of $10. Cullman Middle School cafeteria from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.. Dine in with your friends, carry out or drive through. The donations will be used for community and eyesight projects.

St. Bernard Open House- Sunday, March 10
St. Bernard Preparatory School in Cullman is hosting Spring Open House - Sunday afternoon, March 10, 2019 from 1-4 p.m. Families are invited to tour the school and find out more information about St. Bernard Prep. St. Bernard Prep is operated by the monks of St. Bernard Abbey. Alabama's only Catholic boarding school, St. Bernard offers a quality education to students in grades 7-12. For more information visit www.stbernardprep.com or call the admissions office to schedule an appointment at 256-739-6682.

Obituary Announcements: Feb. 23 - 25

presented by



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Josh Timothy Pinkard, 37, of Aurora, Illinois, walked into the arms of his Lord and Savior on Feb. 15, 2019. Josh served the Lord faithfully with his wife and children. He was an unbelievable man – a loving husband, father, son, brother, nephew, cousin, and friend. Josh was always considered an exceptional leader in school and on the job. He graduated from Holly Pond High School, Holly Pond, Alabama, in 2000. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Mississippi State University in 2005 and a Master of Science degree in Operations Management from University of Arkansas in 2018. After receiving his B.S. degree, Josh worked at Heatcraft in Grenada, Mississippi. He then began working at Mueller Water Products, Albertville, Alabama, in 2006. In 2018, Josh accepted the position as Plant Manager at the Henry Pratt facility in Aurora, Illinois. Josh had an infectious laugh that brightened any room. There was no person he met whose life he didn't touch. His family and friends mourn the loss of their beautiful Josh, but they do not mourn without hope. They have the promise of reuniting with him in heaven one day. Josh was welcomed into the Lord's presence by his sister, Kateah Pinkard, and by his grandparents, G.W. and Opal Pinkard, and L.D. and Wynell Chambers. He is survived by his wife of 13 years, Terra (Taylor) Pinkard; 10-year-old daughter, Emilee, 7-year-old son, Ian, and 3-year-old son, Sawyer; parents, Tim and Bobbie Pinkard; twin sister, Gidget (Chad) Wright; In-laws Billy Ray and Sharon Taylor; brothers-in-law, Ronald Taylor and Billy (Kayla) Taylor; sister-in-law, Felicia (Bobby) James; nieces and nephews, Crimson, Lincoln, and Tatum Wright, Savanna and Liam Taylor, and Rob, Allie, and Bailey James. Friends may visit with the family on Saturday, Feb. 23, 2019, at 4 p.m. at Loft 212, 212 4th St. SW, Cullman, AL 35055. Josh will lie in state from 1 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2019, with funeral services following at 2 p.m. at Loft 212, with Zach Howard, Tim Pinkard, and David D. Chambers officiating. Burial will follow in the cemetery of Redan Baptist Church, Holly Pond, Alabama. Serving as pallbearers will be Zach Howard, Larry Cothren, Justin King, Josh Amos, Ryan Wilson, Billy Taylor, Chad Wright, Crimson Wright, and Lincoln Wright (Honorary). The "State" family has requested that you bring your cowbell to the funeral to ring in honor of Josh at the conclusion of the service.

Funeral services for Joe Yeager Brindley, 87, will be Saturday, February 23, 2019 at Moss Service Funeral Home in Cullman, Ala. A viewing begins at 10:30 a.m. with service at noon. Burial will follow at Cullman City Cemetery. Joe passed away Sunday, February 17, in Pensacola, Fla. He was born on June 7, 1931 to George Asa and Ettie Maude Brindley. He graduated from Cullman High School and obtained a Master's Degree in Business from the University of Alabama, where he played tuba in the Million Dollar Band. Joe married Frances Wamp and built a home in Cullman where they raised 2 kids, and were married for over 57 years. He worked at Brindley Market, served in the United States Army during the Korean War and then worked in civil service at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville for 37 years before retiring. He was an athlete and a member of the Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame. He was preceded in death by his parents; son, Ron; brothers, Hugh and Ed; sisters, Mauvaline (Fritz) Schuman and Nell (Millard) Buchmann. Survivors include his wife, Fran; children, Joy Brindley and Jay Brindley; his sister, Sue (Ted) Alverson; and his granddaughter, Bella Brindley.

Funeral services for Kenneth Denoy Kilgo, age 61, of Vinemont, will be at 2 p.m. on Sunday, February 24, 2019, at Ebenezer Baptist Church with Rev. Dennis Trimble officiating; interment in Ebenezer Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mr. Kilgo passed away on Monday, February 18, 2019, at Huntsville Hospital. He was born August 1, 1957, to Denoy and Edna Ruth Kilgo. He is preceded in death by his father, Denoy Kilgo, and sister, Sharon Perkins. Survivors include his daughter, Nicolette Kilgo; sister, Libby (Charlie) Youmans; brother, Shawn Kilgo; mother, Edna Ruth Kilgo; and a host of nieces, nephew, family, and friends. Visitation will be from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. on Saturday, February 23, 2019, at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Saving Forgotten Warriors, 1528 Peachtree Ln NW, Cullman, AL 35058. Also, the family would like for everyone to support the food pantry founded by Mr. Kilgo. Donations may be made throughout the year at the West Point Town Hall.

Graveside services for Joyce McAnnally Casey, 79, of Decatur will be 2 p.m. Monday, February 25, 2019 at Garden City Cemetery. Hanceville Funeral Home directing. Her family will receive friends at the funeral home beginning at 12:30 p.m. Monday, February 25, 2019. Mrs. Casey passed on February 19, 2019 in Decatur. She was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She was preceded in death by her husband Kennith and a daughter Kathy Lynn Casey. She and her husband founded WKAC Radio in Athens 1964 and it is still family owned today. Survivors include a son, Keith Casey; daughters, Kimberly Casey Davis and Karen Casey McTaggart all of Decatur. Also are grandchildren; Kristopher Casey, Ella Davis, John Davis IV, Anna McTaggart and Adam McTaggart.

Jettie A. Pope White, 88, passed away peacefully at The Hanceville Nursing & Rehab Center on February 20, 2019, after an extended illness. Jettie was born on April 15, 1930, in Leon, Kentucky, to Ellis and Pearlie Jane (McDowell) Pope. Jettie was one of twelve children and the last to be born behind a twin sister. At an early age, so the story is told, Jettie and her twin sister, Nettie, moved to Ohio and lived with an older sister who got them both jobs working in a factory, Sun Rubber, that manufactured dolls among other things. Sun Rubber is where Jettie met the love of her life which later became her husband of 61 years. In 1964 Jettie, along with her husband and four children, moved to Alabama where she has spent the rest of her life with her family. Jettie was preceded in death by her parents; siblings; husband, Roland E. White; and son-in-law, Charles M. Overstreet. Jettie was survived by daughters, Brenda Overstreet and Sherri (Byron) Hale; sons, Michael (Belinda) White and John (Tamatha Helms) White; grandchildren, David (Angie) Overstreet, Ashley (Chris) King, and John (Megan) Henry; great-grandchildren, Mackenzie (Caleb) Bonds, Landyn and Alyssa Henry, and Grayson and Isabella King; and great-great-grandchildren, Kennedi and Luke Bonds. Jettie had a love for life, her husband, her family and her flowers. Her rewards in life came from pleasing and putting others before herself, caring for others, and helping to care for her babies. She loved them babies. The family wishes to thank all of you that had a part in the care of Mom over the past few years. We will forever be grateful. Special thanks to everyone at Hanceville Nursing & Rehab and SouthernCare Hospice. You all hold special places in our hearts. No visitation is scheduled and burial will be at Valley Springs Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of the burial and arrangements.

Liam Connan Hampton, 3 months, of Nauvoo, Alabama entered into rest on February 20, 2019 at Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper, Alabama. Liam was born on November 18, 2018, at Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper, Alabama. He was a huge Momma's boy and loved to be held and cuddled. Liam loved to eat, was just learning to smile, and was the sweetest little bundle of joy. He loved his twin brother, big brother, and sister so much. Liam was loved by his siblings as well as everyone who was around him. Visitation will be held on Saturday, February 23, 2019 from 10am-12pm at Pleasant Hill #2 Baptist Church in Double Springs, Alabama, where services will be held at 12pm. Burial will follow in Pleasant Hill #2 Baptist Church Cemetery in Double Springs, Alabama. Liam is survived by his parents, Tyrei J. and Hailey W. Hampton; brothers, Tanner B. Harten, and Lennox J. Hampton; sister, Vannah R. Hampton; and a host of loving family and friends.

Larry Eugene Wilkins of Bremen passed away February 21, 2019 at the age of 61. He was born in Cullman May 9, 1957. He is preceded in death by his father Eugene Wilkins. Funeral services are Monday, February 25, 2019 at Moss Funeral Home Chapel at 11:00 AM with Rev. Ted Blalock officiating. Interment in Cold Springs Baptist Cemetery. Survivors are: wife Suszette Wilkins, sons Jason Wilkins, Daniel Wilkins and Adam Wilkins, step-daughter Christina Karrer, mother Dorothy Partridge Clayburn, sisters Pam Handley, Donna Womack, Becky Clowers, brothers Chad Wilkins and Harlan Wilkins, 17 grandchildren. Visitation is Sunday, February 24, 2019 from 5:30 PM until 9 PM at Moss Funeral Home.

Funeral services for Jerry Wayne Cheatham, 85, of Cullman are Sunday, February 24, 2019 at 2 p.m. at Cullman Funeral Home, Rev. Larry Brown officiating. The family will receive friends on Sunday from noon to 2 p.m. Interment in Fellowship Cemetery at a later date. Cullman Funeral Home directing. Mr. Cheatham passed away on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at the Floyd E. "Tut" Fann Veterans Home. He was born on August 4, 1933 to John Wesley and Elizabeth Cheatham. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Robert, Harold, Malcolm and Merle and sister, Jean. He is survived by his wife, Betty Cheatham; sons, Allen Cheatham and Wesley Cheatham; daughters, Leona Pagan, Sue Geoghan and Theresa Cheatham; stepdaughters, Karen Mack and Ruby Nichols; brother, Junior Cheatham; sister, Grace Echols; fourteen grandchildren; thirty great grandchildren and a host of other family and friends.

Graveside services for Charles Henry Knighten, 79, of Gardendale, will be held at 11 a.m. Monday February 25, 2019 at Garden City Cemetery, Reverends Philip Vaughn and William Vaughn officiating. Hanceville Funeral Home directing. Mr. Knighten's family will receive friends at the funeral home Monday morning beginning at 9 a.m. Mr. Knighten was a 1958 graduate of Hanceville High School, had served in the National Guard for several years and worked for Winn Dixie for 42 years. He is survived by his wife Burma N. Knighten of Gardendale, son Charles "Chip" (Maria) Knighten, Jr. of Manasass, Va., a daughter, Amanda "Manny" (John) Moody of Cullman, and a step daughter, Barbara Wengel of Shelby County, Alabama. Brothers include Joseph "Mike" (Sherry) Knighten and Paul "Tony" (Cissy) Knighten both of Gurly, Alabama. Surviving sisters are Betty (Robert, Jr.) Bradford of Oneonta and Carol (Philip) Vaughn of Blountsville, Alabama. Also surviving are 12 grandchildren. Pallbearers include Jacob Curtis, Jason Baker, Evan Curtis, Lee Baker, Joseph Knighten and Robert Bradford.

Funeral services for Janie Brossow, of Hanceville will be 11 A.M. Monday February 25, 2019 at the Hanceville Funeral Home Chapel. Family will receive friends at the Hanceville Funeral Home beginning at 5:30 P.M. Sunday February 24. Mrs. Brossow passed on February 22 at Woodland Village. She was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She was preceded in death by her son James "Jimmy" Brossow Jr. Survivors include her husband James L. Brossow, daughters, Jeanie Certain of Arab and Julie Boatright of Hanceville. Brothers include Bud Brossow and Kenny Brossow. Sisters are Judy Lamb and Joan. Other survivors include a host of grandchildren.

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The Cullman County Soil & Water Conservation District is now accepting applications for a $500 scholarship sponsored by the Alabama Conservation District Employees Association. Applicant must be a U. S. citizen, high school senior, and live in the state of Alabama.

Applications may be picked up at the District office located 501-B Fourth St. SW in Cullman. Deadline to receive completed applications in the District office is March 4, 2019.

For more information, please contact Kathy Holmes at 256-734-1431 or kholmes@cullmanswcd.com.

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LEGALS

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
SHIRELL CLYDE HYATT * CASE NO PC 2018-340
Deceased *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Testamentary of said deceased having been granted to **SHIRLEY JEAN ROBERTS,** as Executrix of the Estate of SHIRELL CLYDE HYATT, deceased, on the 22nd day of February 2019, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of 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.

Shirley Jean Roberts
Executrix

Nickolas R. Heatherly
Attorney for Estate
223 East Side Square
Huntsville, Alabama 35801
(256) 534-5049

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

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
ALMA JEAN HYATT * CASE NO PC 2018-339
Deceased *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Testamentary of said deceased having been granted to **SHIRLEY JEAN ROBERTS,** as Executrix of the Estate of ALMA JEAN HYATT, deceased, on the 22nd day of February 2019, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of 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.

Shirley Jean Roberts
Executrix

Nickolas R. Heatherly
Attorney for Estate
223 East Side Square
Huntsville, Alabama 35801
(256) 534-5049

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

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF)
RUDIE KEITH COOPER) CASE NO PC 2018-389
Deceased.)

NOTICE OF HEARING
PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL

TO: SONYA COOPER, AND ANY KNOWN OR UNKNOWN NEXT OF KIN OR INTERESTED PARTIES

The Petition of Angela Madrigal to admit to probate the Last Will and Testament of Rudie Keith Cooper, deceased, has been set for hearing on the 12th day of April, 2019, at 10:30 a.m.

All persons in interest residing or being without the state are hereby given notice to appear and contest said petition if they think proper.

Done this the 13th day of February, 2019.

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

To the Publisher: The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice three (3) successive weeks is said newspaper

June Brooks
Attorney for Angela Madrigal
P.O. Box 73
Cullman, AL 35056
(256)338-6855

Logan Volunteer Fire Department

4225 County Road 818
Logan, Alabama 35098

Date: February 19,2019

INVITATION TO BID
COMMUNITY SAFE ROOM

Sealed Bids shall be received for one (1) Community Safe Room by the Logan Volunteer Fire Department, until noon on local time by March 22, 2019 at 325 2nd Street SE, Cullman, Alabama 35055. The bids will be opened on March 25, 2019 at 10 a.m. at the Cullman County Economic Development office, located at 325 2nd Street SE, Cullman, AL 35055. At this time bids .will be opened and publicly read for an above-ground, pre-engineered, pre-manufactured, 1/4" steel plate safe room, with two (2) standard bathrooms, and an 8 KW generator and generator cover that complies with FEMA 361 (2015) and ICC 500 Community Shelter Design Criteria. The contract, if a bid is chosen, will be awarded at the regular Logan Volunteer Fire Department meeting after the March 25, 2019 opening.

The Community Safe Room shall meet the specifications in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Publication 361 and be able to house 86 people during inclement weather. Each bid must certify that the bid meets or exceeds FEMA 361 specifications. The successful bidder will also be required to provide a notarized Contractor/lnstaller form certifying this upon completion of the job, as well as an engineering peer review.

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

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

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

All bidders **must** use the attached form for submitting their bid. All bids must be sealed and marked - in the lower left-hand envelope **"BID #0319- Community Safe Room", with opening date and time. Late bids will not be accepted. All Bids must be submitted to Logan Volunteer Fire Department at 325 2nd Street SE, Cullman, AL 35055. The proposal package includes specifications, a copy which is available for examination from, Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:30pm at the Cullman County Economic Development Office, 325 Second Street SE, Cullman, AL 35055. For questions regarding this invitation to bid, please email, Ashley Graves, Project Coordinator at ashley@cullmanecondev.org or call at 256-775-6258 or contact Chief Toby Bates at logan01toby@gmail.com**

STATE OF ALABAMA,

CULLMAN COUNTY.

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE

Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness secured by that certain mortgage executed by **HEATHER LEE WELLS, an unmarried woman,** in favor of Cullman Savings Bank, on the 10TH day of February 2010, said mortgage recorded in the Office of the Judge of Probate of Cullman County, Alabama, in Mortgage Book 1619, Page 512; the undersigned Cullman Savings Bank as Mortgagee, under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said mortgage, will sell at public outcry to the highest bidder for cash, in front of the main entrance of the Courthouse at Cullman County, Alabama, on March 12, 2019, during the legal hours of sale, all of its right, title, and interest in and to the following described real estate, situated in Cullman County, Alabama, to-wit:

A tract of land being in the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 24, Township 9 South, Range 3 West, Cullman County, Alabama, described as commencing at the accepted Southeast corner of said SE ¼ of the NE ¼; thence South 1º53'57" East 26.40 feet to an existing ¾" pipe; thence South 00º05'56" West 180.60 feet to an existing 2" pipe; thence North 89º59'28" West 241.18 feet to an existing rebar; thence North 00º15'00" East 208.05 feet to an existing axle being the point of beginning; thence North 86º58'17" East 99.68 feet to an existing ¾" pipe; thence North 2º09'38" West 149.74 feet to an existing ¾" pipe; thence North 89º54'03" West 203.17 feet to an existing ¾" pipe; thence South 2º57'15" West 149.48 feet; thence South 87º04'49" East 117.13 feet to the point of beginning. Less and except all rights of way and easements of record. Also less and except an easement for ingress and egress 15 feet in width along the South line of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 24, Township 9 South, Range 3 West.

ALSO: A 15 foot easement for ingress-egress more particularly described as being 7.5 feet either side of the following described centerline: commencing at the accepted Southeast corner of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 24, Township 9 South, Range 3 West, Cullman County, Alabama; thence South 1º53'57" East 26.40 feet to an existing ¾" pipe; thence South 00º05'56" West 180.60 feet to an existing 2" pipe; thence North 89º59'28" West 241.18 feet to an existing rebar; thence North 00º15'00" East 208.05 feet to an existing axle; thence North 86º58'17" East 10.02 feet; thence North 24º46'42" West 8.59 feet; thence North 63º56'09" West 24.24 feet; thence South 86º54'02" West 101.37 feet to the point of beginning of said centerline; thence South 86º54'02" West 114.07 feet; thence South 83º01'59" West 77.94 feet to the Easterly right of way of County Road 1422.

This property will be sold on an "as is, where is" basis, subject to any easements, encumbrances, and exceptions reflected in the mortgage and those contained in the records of the Office of the Judge of Probate of the County where the above-described property is situated. This property will be sold without warranty or recourse, expressed or implied as to title, use and/or enjoyment and will be sold subject to the right of redemption of all parties entitled thereto. Alabama law gives some persons who have an interest in property the right to redeem the property under certain circumstances. Programs may also exist that help persons avoid or delay the foreclosure process. An attorney should be consulted to help you understand these rights and programs as a part of the foreclosure process. This sale is made for the purpose of paying the indebtedness secured by said mortgage, as well as the expenses of foreclosure. The purchase price must be paid in certified funds by close of business on the date of sale at the Law Office of Bland, Harris & McClellan, P.C. at the address indicated below. Bland, Harris & McClellan, P.C. reserves the right to award the bid to the next highest bidder should the highest bidder fail to timely tender the total amount due. The Mortgagee reserves the right to bid for and purchase the real estate and to credit its purchase price against the expenses of sale and the indebtedness secured by the real estate. This sale is subject to postponement or cancellation.

CULLMAN SAVINGS BANK
By: Nancy F. McClellan, Attorney for
Cullman Savings Bank
401 2nd Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055
(256) 734-4040

EDUCATION

Cullman Area Technology Academy showcases programs at annual open house

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmantribune.com

VINEMONT, Ala. - Faculty, staff and students at the Cullman Area Technology Academy (CATA, still known to many as the Career Center) braved the bad weather to showcase the school's programs for prospective students and their families at an open house Thursday night. All ninth graders in the county get an opportunity to take a brief tour of each department at the facility, but the open house gave them a chance to come back for extra time with the programs that interest them. Visitors had the chance to talk to instructors, see classrooms and equipment, and even try out a few things.

CATA's programs offer students the chance to get real hands-on experience in vocational fields that are in high demand and offer good job opportunities and a good living. Automotive Tech students perform everything from oil changes to custom paint jobs for real customers. Health Science and Mechatronics students use state-of-the-art simulation equipment to replicate real-world work situations. Construction students have taken on multiple building projects around the community. Precision Machining students are even manufacturing storage unit components that will be used on the International Space Station. In whatever field they study, CATA students can graduate high school with skills and credentials that can catch employers' attention and get them to work quickly.

CATA Principal Billy Troutman told The Tribune, "Every program is going to offer some kind of credential or at least articulated credit (advanced placement-type credits that can shorten the time needed in post-high school programs at Wallace State). It doesn't matter what it is, if you take any of the shops up here, you know, we work so closely with Wallace, anyway.

"But every program has an articulated credit-type agreement. Depending on what the shop is, if it's one of the--I call them the technology shops--the kids are actually getting credentialed in the NCCER (National Center for Construction Education & Research) core. I can almost go through every program and tell you what the credentials are. Culinary Arts kids have the opportunity to get ServSafe certified. My dual enrollment course with Wallace right now, that MSSC (Manufacturing Safety and Skills Credential) course, is awesome! It's there, and actually, kids can get a Certified Production Technician's credential there, which is a pretty big deal.

He continued, "The Toyota/Mazda group (for the new plant in Huntsville) that's coming in, they actually called a meeting a few weeks ago, and really stressed their liking and importance, and they're actually going to use that MSSC as a way to basically sort applications. There's going to be a box they can check off for that, so that's big. CNA students, they can get CNA certificates. They're actually getting some dual enrollment right now in a basic EMT course, too. So they're doing that. Of course, ROTC students get the ROTC certificate. There's certain levels that they have to do, that if the instructors will sign off one the certificate, it allows them to go in--if they do enlist in the military--it allows them to go in at a higher pay grade; so that's basically a credential. Of course, you know Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). There's several different ASE opportunities for kids to credential in, whether it be brakes and engines, or engines and performance, or whatever."

Continued Troutman, "In Horticulture, Mr. (Peter) Moore's bunch does turf and landscape management credentials. There's forestry credentials that are available, pesticide applicators' permits. Every program has something the students can get. Mechatronics up there, they get NCCER core as well; but they also cover a whole segment of that industrial maintenance sector that carries over awesome into our articulated credit arrangement at Wallace."

Brody Montgomery, a senior in the CATA Welding program who just signed with Wallace State's Welding program on Thursday, shared, "I love it. I mean, you get to come up here, and it's what I've always wanted to do since ninth grace. And I've come up here ever since I was able to, and I've learned a lot. Mr. (Jacob) Ayers, he helps us a bunch. I mean, it's a great program."

Thanks to his CATA training, Montgomery can complete his associate degree in one year, on his way to a planned career in pipeline welding.

CATA specializes in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and offers 15 career/technical programs, including:

- Auto Collision Repair
- Auto Service Technology
- Building Construction
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Drafting Technology
- Electrical Technology
- Engineering Technology
- Health Science
- Heating/Air Conditioning
- Horticulture
- JROTC
- Mechatronics Technology
- Precision Machining
- Welding

Learn more about CATA at http://cata.ccboe.org.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Kathy Wilson reports from Rescue Innocence Project Gala

Kathy Wilson, W.C. Mann

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - Kathy Wilson, chairperson of the Cullman County Human Trafficking Task Force, attended the second annual Rescue Innocence Project Gala Thursday night at The Club in Birmingham. The gala raised funds to help support the newly opened emergency shelter at UAB Hospital for child survivors of human trafficking/sexual exploitation. Statistics from UAB show that of all the victims of human trafficking in Alabama, 57 percent are children.

This new shelter is the first of its kind. The National Center on Sexual Exploitation supports Alabama's efforts and aims to continue the work of regional development in Alabama.

The following objectives were supported by this event:

- To help fund the emergency shelter
- To help raise awareness, educate schools and church-based prevention education services
- Most importantly, to enhance long-term care for adult and child survivors in Alabama

With the completion of these important projects, a tremendous impact will be made in the fight to curb sexual exploitation in Alabama and rescue lives from this plague that threatens to rob the children of Alabama of their innocence, dignity and mutual respect.

Tony Serra Nissan

MEET FRED CRUTCHER
GENERAL SALES MANAGER



Fred Crutcher has been with Tony Serra Nissan of Cullman since December 1, 2011. Fred says his favorite part of working at Tony Serra Nissan is being able to help customers who may be facing unique situations which would generally get the customer denied at other locations.

"I've spent the better part of 25 years in the car business, I would like customers to know that I have a unique set of skills working with credit challenges. I work really close with several banks and with the combination of the two, I have helped many customers overcome being denied. ***When others say no, we say yes.****"*

Though Fred has been in the business for over two decades he said "there is nowhere else I'd rather be. The loyalty from All my customers here is Amazing!"



"If you are in the market for a New or Newer vehicle, please let me know"
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BUSINESS

Merchants Bank welcomes veteran banker Samuel McCord

LaRue Brock
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. – The Board of Directors of Merchants Bank of Alabama is pleased to announce the addition of Samuel McCord, vice president/loan officer to its lending staff.

McCord comes to the bank from Marshall County, with a lending background in agricultural and commercial loans. McCord, a graduate of Auburn University in 2001, has a degree in Agricultural Business and Economics and has worked in th finance industry since graduating. His primary responsibilities at Merchants Bank of Alabama will be to develop new business, as well as service existing agricultural and commercial loan customers.

McCord has been involved in several professional organizations during his career, having served as chairman of the board of the Boaz Area Chamber of Commerce and president of the Albertville Civitan Club. He is looking forward to getting involved in the Cullman County community as soon as he has settled here.

McCord is married to Adrianna McCord and they have one daughter, Alannah.

He is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys hiking, backpacking, camping and golf. With this background, McCord will be a good fit for the Merchants Bank of Alabama team and especially for our annual Merchants Bank Charity Classic.



CONTRIBUTED

Samuel McCord

Charles NeSmith, president of Merchants Bank of Alabama said, "We are excited to have Sam on our team, especially with his experience and success in commercial and agricultural lending, both inside and outside of Cullman."

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE • ALABAMA'S OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY PUBLISHED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

"THE 67-COUNTY, ALABAMA GARDEN PARTY"

MONROE COUNTY

Maybe there's something in the very soil of Monroe County, Alabama that causes the best writers to blossom. It could be what the French wine appellations call "terroir" (from "terre," land), those unique factors in the place that give it a distinctive flavor.

Monroe County has produced more world-class storytellers than the Renaissance produced saints or the University of Alabama and Auburn University together have produced national football champions. This internationally acknowledged and state legislature-christened "Literary Capital of Alabama" nurtured the tender talents of Truman Capote, Cynthia Tucker, Mark Childress, Nelle Harper Lee and a wagonload of others. (Insider note: Cynthia Tucker is one of America's most gifted and recognized editorial writers, but in her hometown of Monroeville, she is still bragged on as Mary Tucker's smart, writing daughter. Mary is a beloved English professor and progressive leader of literature and arts in Alabama.)

This is Alabama timber and farm country as well as writer and word country. I visited the county many times during the almost 20 years my brother was president of the community college in Monroeville. As I exited the interstate and drove through lush, green pastureland and deep forested woodlands, the image my brain conjured was of those cartoons where a fellow is dragging himself across the land with his hand outstretched for water, except, my caption read, "A word, please, I need a word."

Monroe County was established in 1815, four years before Alabama became a state.

The most famous writer from this area during the 19th century was a schoolteacher and soldier, William Barret Travis, who traveled from his Alabama home to what is now Texas to help defend The Alamo.

Travis' important role was as a war correspondent and military recruiter. His impassioned words are a salute to the resilient character of people in this part of the world, most famously in a rousing letter known as "Victory or Death."

This former Monroe County man of letters died in battle at The Alamo.

Since this Bicentennial series of stories is celebrating how PLANTS + PEOPLE come together in Alabama, let me remind you that until the mid-1800s, the paper used by Monroe County writers was likely made from recycled linen and cotton rags.

Inks were made from the charred, native woods. People in these parts embraced sustainability and repurposing from the earliest days. (See, "200 WAYS TO SAVE ALABAMA FOR THE NEXT 200 YEARS") Writing paper since the American Civil War has mostly come from large plants called trees.

Thanks to my brother, who was instrumental in Monroe County celebrating its extraordinary literary heritage, I was able to meet Pulitzer Prize winners like Diane McWhorter and Rick Bragg, and this year's winner of The Harper Lee Award for Alabama's Distinguished Writer of the Year, Daniel Wallace, author of "Big Fish."

I also met wordstars (think rockstars but generally with less cash and carnality) like Winston Groom, Forrest Gump's godfather, and George Plimpton, who helped birth, "The Paris Review" and inject-yourself-into-the-plot "participatory journalism."

The patrician and plummy-voiced but good-natured good ole boy, Mr. Plimpton, was down to enjoy Monroe County hospitality and share recollections from a recent book he edited, "Truman Capote: In Which Various Friends, Enemies, Acquaintances and Detractors Recall His Turbulent Career." Speaking of this fertile part of Alabama, Mr. Plimpton shared this quote from Monroeville's Capote, "The true beloveds of this world are in their lover's eyes lilacs opening, ship lights, school bells, a landscape, remembered conversations, friends, a child's Sunday, lost voices, one's favorite suit, autumn and all seasons, memory, yes, it being the earth and water of existence, memory."

Folks, that natural and writerly beauty is in the soil and the soul of Monroe County.

To get the lay of the land since I was last in Monroe County and talk about PLANTS + PEOPLE in the area, I was told the "go-to" town ambassadors are Nathan Carter and Laura Richeson Harris, whom I could find perched in the middle of the historic Monroeville Downtown Square at the Old Courthouse Museum.

I reached Laura, who manages the museum's flocked to, much chirped about, Bird's Nest Gift Shop. Her enthusiasm for all things Monroe County was contagious.

Her son, Thomas, daycare-age but a true Monroe Countian, is already interested in books and storytelling. Laura regularly eats lunch in the, her words, "GLORIOUS GARDEN," on the Old Courthouse Museum lawn which has representative native plants from throughout the county. Her husband, Justin, works at Scotch Plywood Company in the Beatrice community.

I couldn't have talked with a more plant-centric person had I, well, cultivated the friendship and planted it in this story. YAY MONROE COUNTY PLANTS + PEOPLE! Surely there's a Monroe County sports team called "The Bookies." The Timberwolves? The Peckerwoods?

Here are some favorite PLANT + PEOPLE things for you to explore when you visit Monroe County and an original recipe my longtime, Monroeville resident, Martha Stewart-caliber hostess, chemical engineer, sister-in-law, Laurie Johnson, created for Monroe County Alphabet Pasta Soup, which exalts an array of fresh produce from the farmers' markets in Frisco City and the county seat, and locally-ground Monroe County Sausage.

The soup photo Laurie shared is a valentine to everyone in the county, cleverly written in alphabet pasta: just two, spooned up words—LOVE Y'ALL.

• **MONROE COUNTY FARMERS' MARKETS**—Savor the luscious, locally-grown produce sold at these farm stands (Frisco City and Monroeville), the Facebook pages with clever writing and beautiful images are enough to lure one to come gather a bushel basket of peppers, tomatoes, squash, potatoes, herbs, corn, fresh flowers, berries, eggplant, plums, cabbage, collards, purple hull peas, okra, zipper cream peas, broccoli, turnips, radishes and just about everything else an Alabama garden can grow as well as homemade preserves, vinegars, honey and Molly Makes baked goods, made from scratch by Molly MacCaughelty.

• **U PICK ORCHARD**—Hickory Hollow Vineyard (Frisco City) has 11 varieties of muscadines and is open seven days a week in prime plucking season, which is mid-August to late-September.

• **SOUTHERN FARM SUPPLY** is a local business owned by Ben and Lindsey Busby, a young, forward-thinking couple, who bought out the longtime garden shop and farmers' supplier, Central Farm Supply and reimagined it for 21st century plant lovers; BUY LOCAL, GROW LOCAL, EAT LOCAL, THRIVE LOCAL.

• **FRUITCAKE FESTIVAL**—Each fall this fundraiser, underwritten by the Old Courthouse Museum's dynamic endowment board, celebrates Capote's sweet memory of Monroeville from his timeless tale, "A Christmas Memory." For the past several holiday seasons, one of Alabama's most celebrated storytellers, Dolores Hydock, has delivered an audience-delighting, spell-binding retelling of the work.

• **THE ROOFTOP GARDEN OF THE PROP AND GAVEL**—Allows a bird's eye view of the historic Monroeville Downtown Square and is a prime place to sip a Tequila Mockingbird cocktail.

• **ALFRESCO DINING AT MEL'S DAIRY DREAM**—This cinder block local landmark (where writer Harper Lee's childhood home stood) serves yummy treats and encourages outdoor dining at its tables through all seasons since there are no inside tables... or you could get takeout and walk two blocks to the FREE picnic tables on the Old Courthouse Museum lawn.

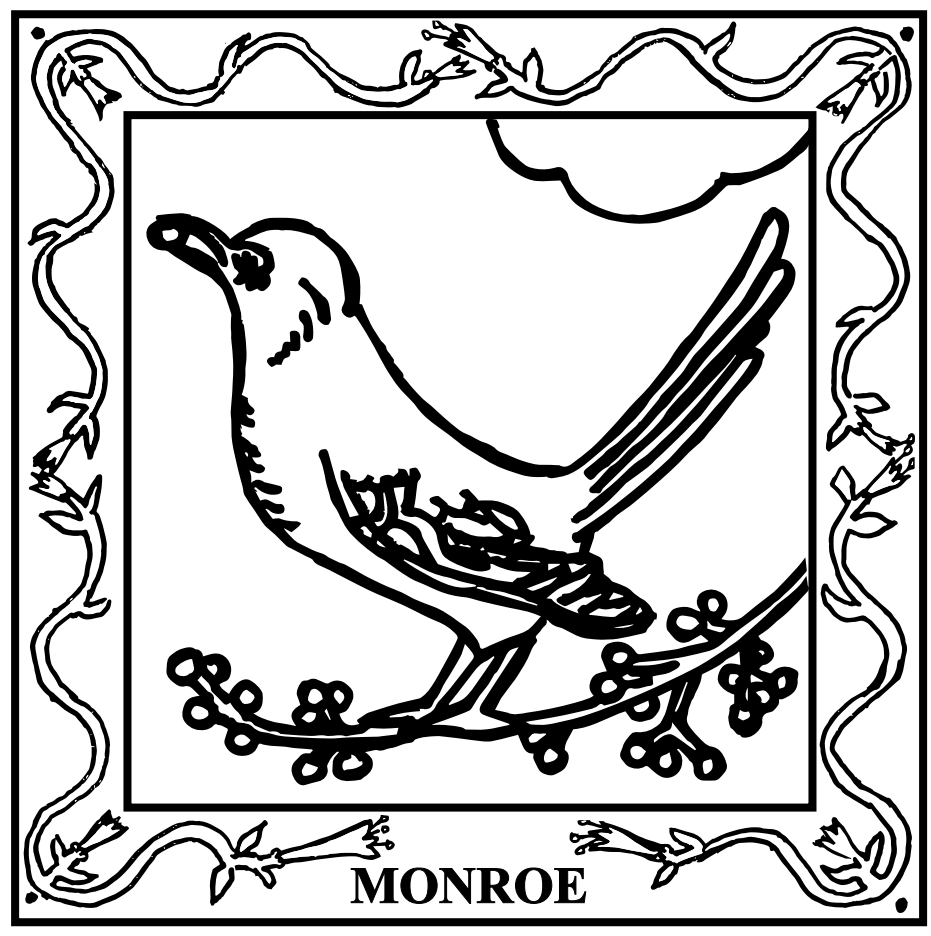
• **OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHY WITH AARON WHITE**—I asked this photographer, who has captured the landscape beauty and everybody's beautiful, family photos for four decades since hanging up his ballcap as sportswriter for The Monroe Journal, where, if a plant tourist wanted to photograph or paint the botanical bounty of Monroe County, he would send them; Mr. White had many suggestions, but his personal favorite view is on the ferry road leading to Haines Island. Last night at a book signing event at the North Alabama Agriplex, I spent some time with Ken Wills, the lead author of "Exploring Wild Alabama," which is a guide to all the state's publicly-accessible natural areas. Wills shares White's appreciation of the Haines Island area; Wills was rapturous about the ravines filled with beech-magnolias, maple-leaf viburnum, white ash and tulip poplars.

• **HIDDEN GARDEN**—Nathan Carter suggests "the old Faulk property owned by Truman Capote's kin, especially Jenny's fish pond and the japonicus," most any local can guide you.

• **RAILS TO TRAILS**—There are 2 miles of hiking and biking trails in the Tunnel Springs area with plans to extend this repurposed land to Beatrice.

• **BEST BOOK LOVER SHOPPING**—Richeson Harris offers a great selection of works by Alabama writers at the Bird's Nest Gift Shop in the Old Courthouse Museum. Also, the West Claiborne Marketplace has wonderful antiques, some crafted locally, and lots of books.

• **BEAUTIFICATION AWARD-WINNING DOWNTOWN SQUARE**—Monroeville is one of the prettiest, "book towns" in the "word world" thanks to the tireless efforts of the local garden club and Main Street Director, Anne Marie Bryan.



The Alabama honeysuckle border was inspired by an 18th century, Southern applique quilt.

MONROE COUNTY ALPHABET PASTA SOUP

This hearty, chunky, wordy soup is a delicious and nutritious celebration of Monroe County fresh vegetables and pork sausage.

Recipe created by Laurie Johnson for Monroe County



Ingredients

- 12 oz. Monroe Sausage, cut into small bite-sized pieces
- 1-2 tbsp. of olive oil
- 1 small onion
- 1 large or several small carrots
- 1 bell pepper or tri-colored equivalent
- 1 rib celery
- 1 small tomato
- (All of these vegetables chopped; add or omit based on your tastes.)
- Kernels from 2 small, fresh corn ears
- ½ cup fully-cooked black beans or other small bean of your choice
- 2 tbsp. minced garlic
- 4 cups chicken or beef broth
- 3 tbsp. tomato paste (optional depending on whether you like a more tomato-based broth)
- Raid your herb garden—fresh herbs or other seasonings to your taste—Italian seasoning, salt and pepper, smoked paprika, or others.
- ½ cup uncooked alphabet pasta
- Finely chopped collard or other greens
- Minced parsley or other fresh herbs for garnish

Instructions

- Saute' Monroe Sausage in large Dutch oven until browned. Remove sausage from pan and set aside, leaving the rendered grease in the pan.
- Add olive oil to the pan and saute' all the chopped vegetables (give the carrots a 3-minute head start since they are denser) until they are starting to soften.
- Add the corn kernels, beans and garlic and continue to cook for 1 or 2 more minutes, stirring frequently.
- Add the stock, tomato paste, season to your taste, and simmer covered for about 10 minutes.
- Add the cooked sausage and the uncooked pasta. Simmer for another 10 minutes or until the ABCs are tender, adding more stock if needed.
- Stir in the chopped greens and simmer for another 5 minutes until they are reduced. Garnish with minced herbs to serve.

Pairs well with a chunk of buttermilk cornbread with Rickard's Mill cornmeal

• **RICKARD'S MILL**—A water-powered grist mill built in 1945 where you can still watch corn and other Monroe County grain being transformed for cooking; take home a bag or five.

• **PUBLIC LIBRARY IS THE REPURPOSED LA SALLE HOTEL WHERE GREGORY PECK STAYED**—We're told the adoring local and tourist ladies didn't let the handsome, Hollywood actor get a lot of rest when he visited Monroeville to prepare for his career-making role as Atticus Finch in the 1962 film, "To Kill A Mockingbird" (screenplay written by Horton Foote), but the librarians promise not to pester you in this written and spoken word sanctuary.

• **PAUL NEILSEN HANDMADE FURNITURE**—This Monroe County wood artisan carefully selects beech, sycamore and cherry trees from local and south Alabama forests for his highly coveted tables and cabinets; young Mr. Neilsen, a local conservationist, also uses non-commercially desirable woods such as those salvaged from fruit and nut trees.

• **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**—Just opened on Broadway with a new, hit play written by Aaron Sorkin; the New York City stage actors coming to Monroe County to root themselves in their characters terroir, include Will Pullen (Jem), Gideon Glick (Dill) and Celia Keenan-Bolger (Scout), as well as sound designer Scott Lehrer.

• **BEST PLACE TO HEAR MONROE COUNTY SONGBIRDS**—Stroll around the lawn of the Old Courthouse Museum and then around town; mockingbird trilling and other birdsongs provide you an ideal soundtrack for your visit—they could sell CDs of this beautiful, natural music at the Bird's Nest, ask Richeson Harris, who is a true innovator and can conjure such wishes into reality.

• **PLANTING AN IDEA**—Monroe County, "The Literary Capital of Alabama" is an ideal location for an Alabama Wordgarden; I'm imagining an open-air writer's pavilion with great wi-fi connections; garden benches embellished with quotes from Alabama writers—how about "Mom was a flower of the south" by Mark Childress and "The thorns on every rose bush remind me of my father's sharp wit" by Jeremy Young; the beautifully worded stanzas of Alabama poet-laureate-in-the-making, Will Justice Drake; and walking stones with Alabama quotes from Hank Williams to the parts of "Gone with the Wind" Margaret Mitchell wrote when she lived in Birmingham.

Alabama words and writers could radiate from this rich soil.

Asian rice paper plants are a superb addition to an Alabama garden and perfect for the Alabama Wordgarden.

Y'ALL COME to Monroe County on your Alabama Garden Party tour.

This is one of the best places on the planet to celebrate the positive and pleasurable ways PLANTS + PEOPLE come together. Mark my word.

Many thanks to Laura Richeson Harris, Aaron White, Nathan Carter, and Ken Wills for all the Monroe County PLANTS + PEOPLE information and thanks to my favorite sister-in-law, Laurie Johnson, for the Hearty, Chunky, Wordy Monroe County Alphabet South recipe.

The Cullman Tribune is celebrating the Alabama Bicentennial (1819-2019) with statewide field reporting by Alabama Master Gardener/Botanical Artist Ben Johnson South. This year-long feature, "The 67-County Alabama Garden Party," will spotlight different counties each week.

Each county will get its own "quilt block," along with a historical profile, and we'll share a recipe specific to the area. At the end of the year, all 67 counties will be put in a book to commemorate the Bicentennial.

FUNNY THINGS FROM YESTERDAY

Shopping for my new suit

Robert N. Tidwell, Sr.
Tribune Contributor



(Originally published in the 1990s)

Last fall, Auburn had an early football game, and it was due to be over around 2 p.m.

Rudene my sweet little wife said, "Let's go back by Birmingham to Eastwood Mall and buy you a new suit which you need."

That suited me, because I did need a new one; the one I wore for our wedding had almost worn out.

After the game (which Auburn won, I'm happy to say), we rushed to the car and left the Plains in a tear.

We wove in and out of traffic, took all the shortcuts I knew, and drove through the residential section of Mountain Brook to get to Eastwood Mall. I was really looking forward to getting my new suit.

Finally, after about four hours of hard shopping, we headed home. Rudene had bought herself two or three new outfits, our daughter some things, a few items for our granddaughter, things for our son-in-law, our son and daughter-in-law. But nowhere among all those packages was there a suit for me.

Now, women are funny - they will use any kind of a trick to get their husband to go shopping. As the old saying goes, I had the wool pulled over my eyes that time.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

What day does Valentines fall on next year?

Bill King
Tribune Contributor



Valentine's Day 2002, was on a Thursday, just like this year. I don't think Jean has had a Valentine's Day date with me since then. That was the week I created my alter ego, Billy Bob Bohannon, to perform at a banquet at the church where I served as pastor. I couldn't have ever imagined back then, that seventeen years later I would still be doing Billy Bob programs. Every year since that humble beginning, Valentine's week has been one of my busiest of the year. Each year Jean gets her usual bouquet of tulips (she prefers them over roses), but she does not get me on the actual date of romantic dinner dates. That's because many churches have a banquet on Valentines, so I'm usually not home on the actual date. Jean and I have usually gone out for our special date either a day or two before, or a day or two after, the actual day. After all, it's just a date on the calendar. A special time together with the one we love is what really matters, whenever that happens.

This year Valentines fell on a Thursday again. I did not accept any invitations for that night. I informed my alter ego that he would be home on Valentines this year, because I was taking my sweetheart out on a date, on the actual date. This would not be a McDonalds or Krystal kind of night. A buffet place would not do. I envisioned a nice meal in a fancy restaurant, with candle lights, real silver, and stemmed glasses filled with iced tea. A week before Valentines, I called to make reservations at one of our favorite upscale restaurants in Opelika. I thought a week in advance would be plenty early enough. I thought wrong. My friend, who is the chef at the restaurant, said, "Bill we are booked solid until nine." That's only one hour before my normal bedtime! I said, "Nine O'Clock?" I hoped I had misunderstood. He said, "If you want to wait and come on Friday or Saturday night you can have your pick of time." Here we go again. Saturday night was not possible because I had a banquet scheduled for then, as well as Sunday night. I said, "Okay, put us down for Friday. We'll wait until 6:00 to eat!" Have you noticed that the older we get, the earlier we eat dinner?

So another Valentines evening not celebrated out. Jean stopped at one of the local chicken finger places on her way home from work and brought dinner home. She did get her tulips. Grilled chicken fingers, turnip greens, sweet potato souffle, and tulips! Friday came and we went out for that nice meal - on our usual after Valentine's date. I guess it's simply not meant to be.

Saturday came and I left; headed for Sand Mountain. I had the privilege of doing a program that evening at Union Grove Baptist Church in Albertville. I stayed over and spoke in the morning service on Sunday. They got both of me; Billy Bob and Bill. Sunday afternoon I loaded up and headed to Pisgah Baptist Church, in Pisgah, for a Sunday evening banquet. I had a delightful time at both places.

Well, there's always next year, I think. Next year, Valentines should fall on a Friday. Hey Jean, how about a date on Thursday?

Things don't always go as we have planned. Didn't the Bible say something about this? James said, "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city.... whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow."

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

Tribune Files from Yesteryear

FROM THE FILES OF 1950

The first bale of cotton was ginned at Trimble on Monday, September 25th.

A new addition is being built to the Sardis Baptist Church. Mrs. Arthur Calvert is on the sick list again. Mr. and Mrs. Roy Walls called on Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hill on Sunday.

Mrs. Louie Hill is doing fine after undergoing a serious operation at the Cullman Hospital. Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hyde and son, Billy and daughter, Judy Ann visited at Jones Chapel on Sunday.

G.W. Manley is spending a few days with his son, F.G. Manley, in Cullman.

Fairview News

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Collins, of Umatilla, Florida, visited Mrs. Collins mother, Mrs. T.N. Martin and other relatives and friends last week.

J.O. Hamner made a trip to Tuscaloosa on Monday of last week with his son, Don, who entered the University of Alabama.

Mr. and Mrs. Milas Haynes and children, of Birmingham, visited their parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Cummings on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Johnson, J.R. Haynes and Mrs. J.W. Wilkins visited relatives in Birmingham on Sunday.

Mrs. W.H. Butler and two of her sons, Jack and Bill, went to Bowden, Georgia last week and visited relatives there. W.E. Butler, father of W.H. came home with them and spent the week here with them and Mr. and Mrs. Hobert Baggett.

W.H. and Bill Butler and Wallace Yarbrough went to Fort Payne to take W.E. Butler to visit a brother, H.M. Butler.

Verbon Martin returned to Detroit on Tuesday to his work there. Garvis Helton went with him to seek employment.

Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Cummings, Larry and Judy, spent Sunday with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Cummings. Also, Mrs. J.O. Cummings and children and Freda Stringer were their guests.

Bill Andrews, of the United States Navy, is home on leave.

Bob Andrews ate supper with Darold Cummings on Sunday night.

Teen Chatter

Helping cheer Cullman to victory on Friday night over Arab were Dean Ponder and Zeck McNutt, Clarice Smith and Robert Buettner, Betty Johnson and Charlie Eidson, Jean Ann Owen and James Rowell, Jeanette and Bobby Joe Blalock, Sue Smith and Dub Jetton, Betty Mathews and Bill Rasco, Mary Tillman and Brice Sterling, Honey Moyers and Don Mitchell, Betty Buettner and Millard

Brannon, Jean Lawrence and Junior Jordan, Sue Copeland and Roy Glasscock, Melba Walling and Jackie Lindsey, Rosa Faye White and Wimp Montgomery, Miss Helen Hamilton and Kenneth Speegle, Anna Ruth McCravy and Lloyd Jones, Dot Cornett and Fred McNabb, Ava Dean Naylor and Skeets Glover, Mary Jo Kramer and Jay Aldridge, Anna Sue and Bob McClain, Carol Dean Bailey and Clyde Price and Barbara Woods and Charlie Thompson.

EDUCATION

A SWELL time at Vinemont Elementary

Christy Perry
christy@cullmantribune.com

VINEMONT, Ala. – Wallace State Community College nursing students brought their Safety and Wellness Education for Lifestyle Learning (SWELL) outreach program to Vinemont Elementary Thursday morning. The program included a puppet show skit and eight stations featuring different health and lifestyle topics. The SWELL program was presented by instructors Bonnie Bibb, Tara Richard and Alicia Standridge, along with more than 40 first-semester nursing students.

Vinemont Elementary is one of many schools the group has visited throughout the school year. It recently brought the program to Cold Springs, Good Hope and West Point primary and elementary students. The students participate in the SWELL program during their scheduled PE times.

In Vinemont, the fourth graders were the first class of the day.

The students watched an informative puppet show addressing dos, don'ts and misconceptions regarding controlling asthma. SWELL made it fun, keeping the kids engaged.

Following the puppet show, the kids were split into smaller groups as they rotated around to the eight stations, where the learned about sun safety, hand washing, poison control, fire safety, fitness, nutrition, helmet safety and seat belts.

Bibb said her favorite station is helmet safety, sharing, "We use eggs to show them how our brains are similar to eggs.

"Once you break an egg you can't put it back, and our brains are similar

" We drop an egg without protection and another that is protected to demonstrate how helmets protect the brain."

Kids also had the opportunity to wear goggles that demonstrate the symptoms they might expect to experience if they have a concussion.

At the hand washing station, the nursing students put different color paints on the kids' hands and had them shake hands and high fives, showing how easily the paint transferred, just as germs do.

Each student was given a goodie bag to take home with a toothbrush, toothpaste and a sticker with phone numbers to poison control.



CHRISTY PERRY FOR THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Vinemont Elementary School students react after seeing how easily germs are spread.

Said Bibb, "What we are planning on for next year is to add a station for dental and brushing teeth."

Pantry (from Front)

Christy Perry
christy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. - A free food pantry has been set up at the corner of Main Avenue and Sixth Street Southwest in Cullman, thanks to the youth of St. Andrews United Methodist Church. The pantry is stocked and open to community members in need. It is located in the north parking lot of the church.

The church's youth group wanted to give back to the church's neighbors and landed on the idea of a food pantry.

Through its backpack ministry, the church has been assisting West Elementary, and it has also been sponsoring children at Christmastime for many years.

The youth wanted to do their part as well.

Youth Director David Speegle and wife Rita helped the youth group with its plans.

Church member Ricky Nails built the pantry, and the church members keep the pantry stocked.

Rita Speegle said, "Our ladies' Bible study group has been bringing food every Sunday, and our cabinets in the fellowship hall are full.

"We don't need any assistance or donations right now.

"We just want to get the word out to families and kids in the neighborhood that the pantry is here to help them if they need it."

The youth group wanted the pantry to have easy, ready-to-eat items for kids.

It includes items like Beanee Weenee, packets of crackers with peanut butter and other snacks.

The pantry also has other items that don't require cooking, along with plastic eating utensils.

Added Rita Speegle, "If this pantry goes over well, we hope to add another larger pantry next to the small one we have now."

The youth group has also discussed adding hygiene items and other necessities.

"Our kids recognize the importance of ministering to those in the neighborhood, and we really hope people use it and it goes well," said Rita Speegle.

Poet's Corner

Red Rover

By: Randy C. Hale

When we were in elementary school our
biggest concern was what we were having
in the lunchroom and if the weather was
nice enough to go outside during recess.

Our teachers lined up in their chairs
creating a boundary line that we knew
not to cross. There was no required
agenda but to roamed free, running,
sliding, climbing, throwing an old
leather football and playing games.

"Red Rover," was a popular game. Teams facing one another would call, "Red Rover, Red Rover send David or Sandra right over," and the chosen would come running, attempting to break through the interlinking of hands that formed a small human chain.

On the playground, there might be a brief
fight between two boys and I'm sure the
girls thought we were subterranean slugs.
(crawled out from under a rock)
But there was no threat of gun-
man or exploding bombs.

I guess we thought our teachers had super
powers and as old as Methuselah could han-
dle anything like our parents did back home.
It was our responsibility to watch for
them when they stood to leave, and
we would quickly form our crook-
ed little lines to return to class.

"Red Rover" I understand has been
banned from most playgrounds
for being too dangerous and being
clothesline does come to mind.
So I won't even inquire about
"Piggy Back Fighting"
or a football game we called "Smear."

But as I remember, I just have to
say that those were the days.

Court (from Front)

it's really not going to work without the mentors. The mentors really are the heart and soul of this program, because they provide the tools that are necessary to help that individual that has run afoul of the law kind of navigate through the judicial system.

"Now, again, the mentors are very helpful; they're going to help navigate. They're not going to be therapists, they're not going to be lawyers, but they're still going to be instrumental, really, in helping the veterans court program succeed."

In many veterans courts across the country, mentors do not have to be veterans themselves, but the judges and local VFW post hope to see Cullman County's mentors come from the veteran community, believing that veterans and their families in times of crisis would benefit from having people with them who understand their experiences, are familiar with the military lifestyle and can speak the language.

Volunteers will undergo training led by instructors like Zimmerman from established veterans court programs.

What does the Veterans Treatment Court do?

Nicholas explained, "A Veterans Treatment Court is a specialty court that is designed to deal with veterans who have gotten into minor trouble with the criminal justice system, but individuals who are charged with more serious criminal offenses are not permitted to participate in the program. Veterans Treatment Courts hold individuals accountable for their wrongful actions, but also attempt to address the underlying reason for their aberrant behavior.

"Military service is a positive experience for most people, but for some, especially those who have served in combat situations, their military service has created or exacerbated mental health conditions such as PTSD, traumatic brain injury or substance abuse problems.

"Unfortunately, it's not unusual for these individuals who have returned from active duty to be arrested for drug possession, domestic disturbances or even stealing to support their drug habit. Historically, courts have adjudicated those individuals guilty and for more serious offenses have imposed jail or prison sentences. But eventually, the defendant is released from incarceration without the underlying cause of his (or her) criminal behavior ever being addressed. That cycle can go on for years and really doesn't rehabilitate the defendant or make our community any safer.

"Veteran Treatment Courts have specially trained judges, administrators and mentors that understand the specific mental health issues presented and are aware of the resources available through the VA that can be utilized. Generally, a defendant participating in a Veterans Treatment Court must appear before a judge at least once or twice a month so that his or her compliance with previous court orders can be monitored. Each defendant is also assigned a veteran mentor at the time he or she enters the program and the mentor offers encouragement and helps monitor compliance with the treatment recommendations that have been made.

"When a defendant has failed to comply with court-ordered random drug testing or treatment recommendations, sanctions are also immediately imposed by the Veterans Treatment Court judge. Because of this intensive supervision that is designed to address the underlying drug or mental health problem, those individuals who graduate from a Veterans Treatment Court are far less likely to reoffend in the future."

Doing right by veterans

In announcing the plan to form a Cullman County Veterans Treatment Court last fall, Nicholas said, "Here's the situation: we can always lock people up, and if locking people up was the only answer, we could do that. But what happens is we lock people up, and they're going to serve their time. They're going to be accountable, and they're going to be accountable even in the veterans court, because I think that's important for that individual and it's certainly important for our community that people be accountable for their choices.

"But by addressing the underlying problem, whatever that may be, if it's drugs, we can look at that; if the underlying problem is some kind of post-traumatic stress syndrome, if we address that problem, then they're not going to reoffend. So, community safety is going to be enhanced, and certainly that individual veteran's life is going to be better, because they're not going to have the same problems that they've experienced, if we give them the treatment that they, quite frankly, earned.

"They were serving us. In most cases, that's why they're in the predicament that they're in, because of their experiences, especially in a combat situation. I think it's important for us as a community to keep faith with those veterans that have really served us. I think it's our opportunity to turn around and try to make sure that we do right by them, as well."

Get involved

If you are a veteran and are interested in helping other veterans through the mentoring program, please come to Thursday's meeting at VFW Post 2214, 112 Veterans Dr. SW in Cullman, at 6 p.m. or contact Post Commander Will Harris at 256-739-6611 or twodogwill@hotmail.com.

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