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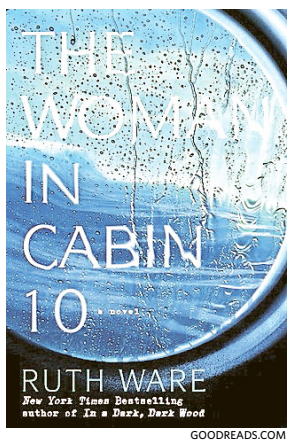
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WEATHER
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SOURCE: WEATHER.GOV
SLIGHT CHANCE THUNDERSTORMS AND AREAS FOG THEN SHOWERS LIKELY

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GOODREADS.COM

– BOOK REVIEW –

SHE READS:
'The Woman in Cabin 10' by Ruth Ware
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COURTS

Appeals Court rejects sentence in Meeks homicide conviction

W.C. Mann
craig@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — An Alabama appellate court, in a preliminary statement, upheld the conviction of Brad Meeks, 30, of Bremen, on the charge of criminally negligent homicide in the May 7, 2017, death of Curtis "Curt" James Wilson, 15, of Cullman, but rejected the 10-year sentence (the maximum available for the crime) imposed on him by Cullman County Circuit Judge Gregory Nicholas. The court labeled Nicholas' sentence "illegal" and called on the judge to hold a new sentencing hearing.

Meeks' attorney appealed his conviction on the grounds that blood alco- » PAGE 5



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Meeks, center, listens as Judge Nicholas instructs the jury during his 2020 trial.

– LIFESTYLE –

Cullman Florist visits essential workers for Make Someone Smile Week



ASHLYN GREY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cheerful recipients at Cullman Regional pose with their smile mug plants.

Ashlyn Grey
ashlyn@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Flowers can make someone smile, and this week, Cullman Florist is lighting up faces as part of Teleflora's annual Make Someone Smile Week. As part of the program, which runs July 18-24, Cullman Florist and its volunteers are delivering 500 plants in "smile" mugs to the many deserving recipients at Cullman Regional Medical Center and members of the community.

Each year during Make Someone Smile Week, thousands of florist volunteers from around the country participate. The program started in 2000 and has grown each year. According to Teleflora.com, the program will deliver 30,000 beautiful bouquets of flowers to help bring smiles across the country.

This year, priority has been given to flower deliveries to essential workers who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, such as hospital employees, first responders, emergency personnel, nursing home employees and recipients of Meals-on-Wheels programs.

Cullman Florist owner Stephanie Cook shared her sentiments on the event saying, "All of us at Cullman Florist love our community! It is like a prerequisite to work here. Cullman Florist is celebrating 55 years in business this year. We are here because of the community!"

She continued, "We are here to serve the community from beginning to end. Each day we get to see how important flowers and plants are in every way, and what an impact they make. Flowers and plants increase levels of positive energy and help us to feel secure and relaxed.

"Where we add flowers and plants to our work and home, we improve our mood and reduce our stress levels. So, we love this project because we get to go out in the community and make a difference. This year, we will hand out over 500 mugs to the employees at Cullman Regional. We are so thankful to them and everything they do for our community on a daily basis."

A parade fit for a princess

Community rallies behind Holly Pond's Lillie Handley



KARLIE PATTERSON/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Eight-year-old terminal cancer patient Lillie Handley, and her mother, Kelly, leave in style after a Disney princess themed parade in her honor. Look for the full story in an upcoming issue of The Cullman Tribune.

EDITORIAL

Hiding behind a screen - the negative impact of social media

» PAGE 8

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County Commission invites Colony Mayor to speak about inclusion of Colony Town Cemetery on Alabama Historic Cemetery Registry

Christy Perry
christy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — The Cullman County Commission welcomed Colony Mayor Curtis Johnson to their meeting Tuesday evening to speak about the Colony Town Cemetery's recent listing on the Alabama Historic Cemetery Registry. At the commission's June meeting, a proclamation was presented for the achievement, though Johnson was unable to attend.

Johnson thanked the commission for the invitation and the proclamation. "Our cemetery was created back in the 1860s on property designated to the Pleasant Grove Methodist Church. Since it was the first and only church in the community, everyone who died was buried at Pleasant Grove and through the years, it was known as Pleasant Grove Cemetery. When other churches were built, due to the lack of property because the roads had already been established, Pleasant Grove became known as the Colony Community Cemetery," Johnson explained.

In other business, the commission approved the following agenda items:

• Recognition of Kenneth Calvert who is retiring after 17 years of service with the Sanitation Department.

• Resolution 2021-28 authorizing the filing of a grant application for Alabama Department of Economic and Communi- » PAGE 2

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Commission (from Front)

ty Affairs funds for Stoney Lonesome OHV Park in the amount of $346, 244 and authorized Cullman County Commission Chairman Jeff Clemons to sign all related documents.

• Resolution 2021-29 authorizing the filing of a grant application for Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs funds for Stoney Lonesome OHV Park in the amount of $178,693 and authorized Clemons to sign all related documents.

• Ratified change order for two garage motors and associated electrical work from CH Harris, Inc. for CARTS Bus Wash in the amount of $4,105.

• Reappointment of Cliff Harris to the Health Care Authority Board for a six-year term expiring June 30, 2027.

• Reappointment of Perry Knight to the Health Care Authority Board for a six-year term expiring June 30, 2027.

• Surplus of a 2010 Chevy Malibu from the Cullman County Sheriff's Office to be disposed of on GovDeals.

• Surplus of a 2006 Canon Digital Copier from the Cullman County Commission Office to be disposed of on GovDeals.

• Surplus of 56 Automark handicap voting machines and dispose of by trade-in on new Express Vote machines.

• Additional allocation of $350 to the United Way of Cullman County to support the mission of serving the residents of Cullman County under the existing contract for services.

• Authorized Clemons to sign an agreement with Evan Terry and Associates to provide ADA Facilities consulting services.

• Purchase of three 2022 Ford Super Duty F-450 DRW (W4H) XL 4WD Crew Cabs under Sourcewell (formerly known as NJPA) Contract 120716-NAF in the amount of $55,596.10 each for the Cullman County Water Department.

• Purchase of two Takeuchi TB240 Compact Excavators from the Alabama County Joint Bid Program in the amount of $50, 983 each for the Cullman County Water Department and authorized Clemons to sign all related paperwork.

• Purchase of two Solar 24/7 flashing beacons for warning light and signs on Alabama Highway 69 at County Road 54 and Alabama Highway 91 intersections in the amount of $9,158 and authorized Clemons to sign all related paperwork.

• Chain link fence to be installed by Parris Fence Company at CARTS in the amount of $12,665.50.

• Authorized Clemons to sign a memorandum of understanding between the Alabama Department of Public Health and Cullman County Commission.

• Authorized Revenue Commissioner Barry Willingham to sign TransUnion agreement for the Cullman County Revenue Office.

• Authorized EMA Director Phyllis Little to sign grant agreement in the amount of $10,000 with the Alabama Department of Public Health to purchase supplies and/or equipment for mass fatality response and to provide training and/or exercises for the State Mortuary Operations Response Team.

• Authorized Clemons to execute an agreement with CDG Engineers for design, management and final inspection of Power Backup systems at five community storm shelters at a cost of $9,500.

• Proposed Plat Ebenezer Subdivision- a minor subdivision containing eight lots located on County Road 615.

• Proposed Plat Cotton Patch Estates- a minor subdivision containing 17 lots located on County Road 349.

• Proposed plat Eastern Shores Phase 2- a major subdivision containing 21 lots located on County Road 1452 and Orchard Drive.

• Bid #1355- Jail supplies for the Cullman County Jail--North Alabama Chemical for jail supplies in the amount of $126,061.20 and Central Paper for kitchen and laundry chemicals in the amount of $28,850.

• Bid #1358- Aggregate to Blount Springs Materials, Vulcan Materials Company, C.A. Langford Co. Inc. and Madison Materials Inc. Purchase will be based on vicinity and availability of materials.

• Extension of Bid #1356- Unleaded gasoline and diesel from B&B Petroleum for one year.

The next Cullman County Commission meeting will be Tuesday, Aug. 17, at 6 p.m. in the Commission Meeting Room.

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COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

Wednesday, July 21, COVID-19 update from the Alabama Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Dashboard Hub (https://bit.ly/3iVJwXK)

ADPH COVID-19 dashboard changes
Along with decreases in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths, ADPH will be updating its dashboard less frequently. Effective June 7, the Data and Surveillance Dashboard will update Monday, Wednesday and Friday; the Vaccine Distribution Dashboard will update Tuesday and Thursday and no weekend updates will be made. Additional information may be provided in the future as ADPH gathers more data on the pandemic.

Case details (Updated Mon, Wed, Fri)
• Total confirmed cases in Alabama: 432,812 (+ 1,986 since Monday)
• Probable cases in Alabama: 131,131 (+ 1,037 since Monday)
• Total confirmed deaths in Alabama: 9,143 (+19 since Monday)
• Probable deaths in Alabama: 2,319
• Total confirmed cases in Cullman Co.: 6,886 (+ 26 since Monday)
• Probable cases in Cullman Co.: 3,261 (+ 20 since Monday)
• Total confirmed deaths in Cullman Co.: 142
• Probable deaths in Cullman Co.: 62
• Total tested in Cullman Co.: 44,142
• Total tested in the last 14 days in Cullman Co: 1,824
• Cases in the last 14 days in Cullman Co.: 114
• Total tested in Alabama: 2,725,837
• Cases in the last 14 days in Alabama: 8,966
• Total tested in the last 14 days in Alabama: 91,372
• Currently hospitalized in Alabama: 602

Vaccine details (updated Tues, Thurs)
• Doses Delivered to Alabama: 4,705,155
• Doses delivered to Alabama providers: 3,178,035
• Doses administered: 3,359,162
• Number of people receiving one or more doses: 1,902,653
• Number of people who have completed vaccine series: 1,570,050
• Doses delivered to federal programs: 1,527,120

Alabamians in Phases 1a, 1b and 1c (including those 12 and older) are now eligible to receive a vaccine.

View the Alabama COVID-19 Vaccination Allocation Plan at: www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19vaccine/assets/adph-covid19-vaccination-allocation-plan.pdf

Variants of SARS-CoV-2
Variants of SARS-CoV-2 continue to circulate in Alabama and pose a significant threat of increased disease. Variants of concern reported, as of July 9, are Alpha (820 cases), Beta (2 cases), Gamma (31 cases) and Delta (56 cases). These variants are more transmissible, specifically the Alpha and the Delta, and some variants have less response to treatments such as monoclonal antibodies.

Percent positivity escalates
Alabama's current statewide percent positivity for COVID-19 has increased to its highest level since February 2021, at 7.7%. This is equal to the percent positivity recorded April 3, when vaccines had not been readily available.

Percent increase in COVID-19 cases
The number of COVID-19 cases reported in Alabama has risen 39% from June 26 - July 9. The best way to prevent getting the highly infectious and easily transmissible Delta variant or any other strain of COVID-19 is to get vaccinated as quickly as possible. The vaccines we have are highly effective and their benefits far outweigh any risks. Only a very small percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 are among the fully vaccinated population.

COVID-19 hospitalizations increase
As of July 14, 341 persons were reported hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 disease. On July 3, 179 persons were hospitalized due to COVID-19. Increases in numbers of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are the result of low vaccine rates and unvaccinated persons not following preventive measures for themselves such as wearing masks, good hand hygiene and social distancing. So long as Alabama has such low rates of vaccination, cases will continue to rise, posing risk of illness and death from COVID-19, as well as threatening the ability of our health care system to treat all Alabamians.

Make vaccination a priority
This July 14, 4,124 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered in the state. At the height of vaccine administration on April 8, 45,128 vaccine doses were given. Young people and others who are taking a wait-and-see stance on vaccination should be aware that they need to protect themselves, their families, friends and communities by getting vaccinated as soon as they can. Safe, effective and free vaccine shields vulnerable people and saves lives.

CRIME

Arrests and incidents reported July 21

Cullman Tribune staff
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Below are the arrests and incidents reported July 21, 2021. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

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

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
No incidents or arrests reported.

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
INCIDENTS
July 19
• unlawful breaking entering motor vehicle; person; Greenview Cir.; purse and contents

July 20
• third-degree criminal trespass; Denson Ave. Apts.; Denson Ave. SW
• fourth-degree theft of property; person; 5th Ave. SE; miscellaneous; $90
• harassment; person; 2nd Ave. NW

ARRESTS

July 20
Fairbanks, Jeffrey D.; 55
• unlawful possession/receiving controlled substance
• possession of drug paraphernalia

Stockman, Jessica R.; 34
• FTA- fourth-degree theft of property

Oden, Cary J.; 26
• third-degree criminal trespass

Graves, Kevin D.; 35
• criminal trespass (2 counts)

Parker, Roderick H.; 33
• FTA- fail to register vehicle
• FTA- insurance violation

Miller III, James T.; 42
• unlawful possession/receiving controlled substance; possession of drug paraphernalia

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
No incidents or arrests reported.

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

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your calendar items or public notices to olivia@cullmantribune.com

"Come to the Well" Community Women's Bible Study
• Tuesday mornings at 10 at the Hebrews Cafe at East Side Baptist Church, 1111 Third St. SE in Cullman
• Please wear a mask/face covering.

Baileyton Bargain Days
• First and third Saturday of each month from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at the old Baileyton fire station next to the town's park
• Beauty and health products, toys, home goods, pet items, food and many everyday items
• A donation of $20 will allow a shopper to fill up a bag, and for $40 a shopper can fill a large box. Some of the items of greater value will require a larger donation. There will be some restrictions and product limits on the items. Cash and checks accepted.
• Proceeds will be used for park improvements and capital improvements for the town.

Alcoholics Anonymous
The Grace of God group of Alcoholics Anonymous has open AA meetings (all are welcome) Monday and Thursday nights from 7-8 p.m. at the Carriage House, located next to Grace Episcopal Church, 305 Arnold St. NE Cullman. Contact phone numbers: 256-347-1097, 256-841-2209 or 256-708-1340

Church Services- Spirit Life Church of GOD
• Spirit Life Church of GOD, 1650 St. Joseph Dr. NW, Cullman
• Prayer meetings- Tuesdays at 10 a.m. Come and pray with us or come to receive prayer.
• Ladies' exercise classes- Wednesdays at 6 p.m. Children welcome.
• Classes- Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Children and youth classes. Adult class, "The Phases of Armageddon" by Pastor Bobby Dodd
• Sundays at 9 a.m. Van runs in 5 Points area. Call 256-841-2060 for pickup. Small group classes for adults, children and youth at 10 a.m. Praise and worship and message at 11 a.m.
• Mondays-Fridays- Free hot meals for children Mondays 11 a.m. – noon, Tuesdays 1-2 p.m. and Wednesdays-Fridays 11 a.m. – noon Cullman Housing Authority Community Center 1545 Vine Circle SW. Please call Kristie 256-636-5362 for more information. Eat in or take out. Sponsored by Kids Loving Kids, Raising Arrows Ministry, and Spirit Life Church.
• Sundays-9 a.m. Van runs in 5 Points Area. Call 256-841-2060 for pickup. Small group classes for children, youth and adults at 10 a.m. Praise and Worship and message at 11 a.m.
• No Talent Talent Show: July 31 - Saturday 7 p.m. No admission fees! Donations accepted. Free meal at 6 p.m. Everyone welcome! Fun and entertaining! Come see impersonations of some of your favorite singers. We hope "Elvis" will be there!

Free Community Dinner at Center Hill Baptist Church
• 5-6 p.m.- The first Wednesday of every month we will be offering a Free Community Dinner. Church members, community members, neighbors and friends are welcome. This will be takeout only. Please message or comment with how many plates you will need to help us prepare enough food for everyone. RSVP at http://bit.ly/centerhill.
• 13108 County Road 747, Hanceville, AL 35077

Miércoles de Despensas
• 6-7 p.m. ler. miercoles del mes, En Su Tierra Cullman FUMC
• Despensas para la comunidad. No requiere ID. Entrega en su vehículo. Por favor use mascarilla.

Festhalle Farmers Market
• 7 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Open every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from April – October
• Stop by to shop the freshest produce from Cullman-based farms.
• For more information, call 256-590-5009 or send an email to mgraveman@cullmanrecreation.org

Guy Hunt Library Summer Children's Programs
• July 22 – Soil and Water, Animal Tracks
• All programs start at 1 p.m. For more information, send an email to guyhuntlibrary@gmail.com or call 256-796-5226.

Agriplex Children's Summer/Fall Camp Programs
• Aug. 20 - 10 a.m., Little Farmers Farmer's Market: Run your pretend farm stand and then use tokens to shop with a local farmer.
• Aug. 26 - 9 a.m., Heritage Oct. 2 Solar Power: Celebrate the new solar panels producing electricity at the Agriplex with hands-on activities powered by the sun.
• Sept. 4 - 9 a.m., Farm Kids Club County Fair Crafts: Create handicrafts that can be entered in the Cullman County Fair and win prizes!
• Sept. 10 - 10 a.m., Little Farmers "The Very Hungry Caterpillar": Explore the miracle of the butterfly life cycle through the beloved Eric Carle classic.
• Sept. 30 - 9 a.m., Heritage Homeschool Harvest & Seed Saving: Harvest the falls bounty at the Agriplex and save seeds for your very own collection. We will pick, taste and learn how to preserve the harvest.
• Oct. 2 - 9 a.m., Farm Kids Club Pumpkin Patch: Pick a pumpkin out of our patch and join us for some fall-themed fun! We will play games, have snacks and carve a pumpkin.
• Saturdays, beginning at 9 a.m. at Festhalle Farmers Market, Power of Produce : Kids up to age 12 can sample fresh produce while earning market money (pop bucks) to buy produce from local farmers.

Agriplex Adult Programs
• July 21 - noon, Lunch & Learn presents Tomato Time: Cooking & Preserving Fresh Tomatoes. This is a free program, light lunch provided. Please call us at 256-297-1044 to reserve your spot.
• Aug. 10 - 6 p.m., Heritage Skills Beginning Brewers Class: The Cullman Brewers Guild will explain the process of brewing and demonstrate how to make homemade beer. See equipment and learn the science of brewing your own beer.
• Aug. 16 - 6 p.m., Learn to Sew Christmas in August: Get an early start on Christmas decorating and join us for felt ornament making for the tree using sequins and decorative thread.
• Aug. 18 - noon, Lunch & Learn presents Planting & Growing Fall Veggies. This is a free program, light lunch provided. Please call us at 256-297-1044 to reserve your spot.
• Aug. 31 - 6 p.m., Living Landscapes Growing Berries & Grapes: Retired Auburn Experiment Station Director Arnold Caylor will be back at the Agriplex sharing his vast knowledge on growing berries and muscadines best suited for our region.
• Sept. 9 - 6 p.m., Cowboy Cooking - Cooking with a Dutch Oven: Local ranchers Greg and Emily Anderson from Sullivan Creek Ranch will be demonstrating how to cook over an open fire.
• Sept. 13 - 6 p.m., Learn to Sew Projects for the Kitchen: This will be a fun class making things to use in your kitchen.
• Sept. 14 - 6 p.m., Heritage Skills Raising Pigs: Learn the basics of raising pigs for your family.
• Thursdays: noon – 1 p.m., Yoga under the Pavilion, Join us for a beginner yoga class in the serenity of nature. $5 per person, summer family special of $10 per family. Ages 10 & up, must be able to follow along with class. No registration required. Please bring your yoga mat & water.

Country Legends Rediscovered Exhibition
• Evelyn Burrow Museum at Wallace State Community College.
• Through Aug. 31. Tuesday-Friday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Cullman Woodworkers Meeting
• July 22 – The Cullman Woodworkers Meeting will be Thursday, July 22, at 6 p.m. at the Agriplex.
• Program: Repairing your Mistakes
• Everyone welcome!

Swamp John's Meal
July 23 – From 4-7 p.m. Friday, July 23 at Christ Covenant Church (1310 Saint Joseph Drive NW, Cullman, AL 35055). Dine in or carry out. Sponsored by Heartland Quilters Retreat Bunch

West Point High School Class of '62 School Reunion
July 24 – The Class of '62 School Reunion will be Saturday, July 24 at 1 p.m. at the Brandin' Iron Steakhouse in West Point (87 County Road 1242, Cullman, AL 35057). For more information, contact Linda Jordan 256-747-6883.

West Point Class of '67 Reunion
July 24 - The West Point Class of 1967 reunion will be held Saturday, July 24, at Brandin' Iron Steakhouse at West Point, from 4-6 p.m.

UNITE Summer Encounter at Church at the Well
July 30-31 - This weekend is dedicated to students encountering the power and presence of God. There will be powerful worship and dynamic speakers that will take us further into all that God has! Services are nightly at 7 p.m. with pre-service games starting at 6:30 p.m. at Church at the Well (708 Ninth Street SE, Cullman, AL 35055). Saturday morning service is at 10:30 a.m. followed by Orphan Run 4 Hope!! We hope to see you there! Get ready to ENCOUNTER!

Orphan Run 4 Hope
July 31 – Starting at 12:30 p.m. at Heritage Park. Orphan Run for Hope Project helps ordinary people do extraordinary things by participating in a 5K to benefit orphan children around the world. OR4H exists to be a bridge between churches and passion-driven people to orphans and orphanages that truly need our help! Join us for this year's OR4H and let's make a difference!

White City Junior High Reunion
July 31st – The annual White City Jr. High Reunion will be held July 31. It will be at the Johnson Crossing Fire Dept building at 1542 County Road 617 Hanceville, AL (old school location) and is for anyone who ever attended White City School. It will start at 9 a.m. We will furnish paper products, ice, water and tea. Bring your favorite food and all your memories!! Call Ronnie McElroy Crocker at 256-347-6976 for more info or visit our Facebook page.

Wallace State Diesel by Distance Open House
July-Aug. - Wallace State's Diesel by Distance program will host a series of open house events to learn more about the program, experience virtual reality lessons and more. Open house will be held from 3 p.m. - 7 p.m. in the Diesel Technology building on the Hanceville campus on the following dates: July 1, July 8, July 29, Aug. 5, Aug. 12 and Aug. 19. For more information, contact Anna Parrish Beard at 256-352-8356 or anna.parrish@wallacestate.edu or visit www.wallacestate.edu/dieselbydistance.

United Way of Cullman Designer Bag Bingo Fundraiser
Aug. 3 – United Way of Cullman County's Women United will host their 2nd annual Designer Bag Bingo fundraising event Tuesday, Aug. 3, at The Loft 212 (212 Fourth St. SW Cullman, Al 35055). Doors open at 5 p.m. and bingo starts at 6 p.m. Tickets are $35 each or $350 for a table of eight. Each ticket includes light refreshments and 15 games. Donate a gently used purse filled with personal care items for a chance to win a door prize. For more information and/or to RSVP, call 256-739-2948 or send an email at dmcdonald@uwaycc.org. To purchase tickets, visit https://www.uwaycc.org/.

Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame
Aug. 14 - The Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame will hold its annual banquet and induction ceremony Aug. 14, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Stonebridge Farms. Tickets can be obtained at First Southern Financial and are $20 each. For more information call 256-737-5120 or 256-736-4445.

WSCC Applied Technologies Open House
Aug. 17 – Wallace State Community College Dept. of Applied Technologies will host an Open House Tuesday, July 20 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Department tours and refreshments will be provided. Stop by the Bailey Center Lobby for campus maps, schedules and information. Call 256-352-8000 for more information.

Free Community Movie Night at Vinemont Community Center
Aug. 21 – Bring a blanket or chair and come enjoy "Toy Story 4!" Start time will be announced at a later date. Vinemont Community Center – 88 Ridgeway Street, Cullman, AL 35058.

UAB Football Preview: Blazers look to create dynasty in 2021

Ted Feeley
UAB Athletics

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — As much hype as there is surrounding Protective Stadium, the new home of UAB football, the hype is equally as high for the product that will be on that field this fall.

Coming off the program's second Conference USA Championship in the last three years, the Blazers had 11 seniors utilize their extra year of eligibility due to COVID-19. Because of that, UAB returns 17 total starters from last year's team and looks to become the first program in C-USA history to ever win a third league title.

UAB football talking points

• UAB has won two of the last three Conference USA Championships.

• The Blazers are the three-time defending C-USA West Division Champs, which is a Conference USA record.

• For the first time since returning to action in 2017, UAB was predicted to win the C-USA West in 2021 by the league's media.

• UAB's 34 wins since 2017 are the most of any team in C-USA during that span.

• Since The Return in 2017, UAB is 34-16 overall, 24-7 versus Conference USA and 18-3 versus C-USA West Division foes.

• Of the 17 total starters returning, nine are on defense and eight on offense.

• Five of the eight starters on offense are comprised of the entire offensive line returning in 2021.

• UAB finished seventh nationally in total defense last season. It marked the third straight season UAB has finished top 10 nationally in that category.

The players

• Senior All-American safety/linebacker Kristopher Moll is one of the 11 seniors who utilized his extra year of eligibility.

• He enters 2021 just 32 tackles shy of tenth place on UAB's career tackles list. He is a two-time First Team All-Conference USA performer.

• All-Conference USA performers who return to a defense that finished seventh nationally last season include DT Antonio Moultrie, DT Tyree Turner, LB Noah Wilder, CB TD Marshall, S Will Boler, S Damon Miller and S Dy'jonn Turner.

• Senior quarterback Tyler Johnston III enters his final year with a record of 13-5 as the starting quarterback. He has been under center for each of UAB's two Conference USA Championships.

• Johnston III ranks fourth all-time in career touchdown passes (35) and fifth in career passing yards (4,429) at UAB.

• True sophomore DeWayne McBride takes over as the featured back after the departure of UAB's career leading rusher Spencer Brown.

• McBride had 47 carries for 439 yards (9.3 yards per carry) and four touchdowns as a rookie. He also set the school record for the longest touchdown run (75 yards at Louisiana Tech).

• The offensive line is the deepest it has ever been. Highlighted by First Team All-Conference USA performers LG Colby Ragland and RT Sidney Wells, the Blazers also return 2020 starters LT Kadeem Telfort, C Andrew Smith Jr. and RG Matthew Trehern. UAB averaged 200.0 rushing yards per game last season and allowed the nation's fourth fewest sacks (4).

• Veteran Jakoby Jones has made 11 career starts, while redshirt sophomore center Will Rykard made three starts last season. Newcomers Keshawn Moore, Quincy McGee and Eli Richey also look to make an immediate impact.

• Kicker Matt Quinn and punter Kyle Greenwell highlight the specialists. Quinn had an outstanding freshman campaign, going 11-of-12 on FG, 31-of-32 on PAT and leading the team with 64 total points. Greenwell averaged 42.6 yards per punt in 2020 and was selected to the 2021 Conference USA Preseason Watch List.



UAB ATHLETICS

The UAB Blazers will be going for their third C-USA championship in four years this season.

The schedule

• UAB is playing one of its toughest schedules in program history.

• Due to construction at Protective Stadium finishing soon, the Blazers play their first four games on the road (Sept. 1 vs. Jacksonville State in Montgomery; Sept. 11 at Georgia; Sept. 18 at North Texas; Sept. 25 at Tulane).

• UAB's Grand Opening of Protective Stadium is set for Oct. 2 and is a marquee non-conference matchup against Liberty. The Flames finished 2020 ranked No. 17 with a 10-1 overall record.

• The following week features a home game against Florida Atlantic, which pairs the winners of the last four Conference USA Championships against each other (UAB in 2018 and 2020; FAU in 2017 and 2019).

'Truly amazing': Auburn's Rachel Dincoff blazes trail to Tokyo Olympics

Tucker Cleverdon
AU Athletics

AUBURN, Ala. – Letter-winner, All-American, record-holder. The list of accolades for Auburn track and field alum Rachel Dincoff is something to behold, and come July 30, she will add "Olympian" to her already impressive resumé when she competes in the discus throw at the Tokyo 2021 Summer Olympics.

If that isn't enough, Dincoff will make Auburn history as the school's first female track & field athlete to represent the United States at the Olympic Games.

"I am so excited and so honored to represent Auburn in this way," Dincoff said. "It's truly amazing. I can't wait to see who follows in my footsteps because I know there is so much talent at Auburn each year."

Growing up in a small town in northeastern Indiana, Dincoff invested all her time in sports. As a multi-sport athlete in basketball, volleyball, soccer and track & field, she learned that effort equals opportunity, and if she put in the work, sports could take her to places she had only dreamt of.

Her dedication earned her a scholarship on the track & field team at Purdue University Fort Wayne where she spent her freshman season before deciding to look for a new home that could give her greater opportunity to reach her goals.

Ultimately, that new home was Auburn University.

"When I transferred to Auburn, I just fell in love with it," Dincoff said. "Using the resources and tools we were blessed to have, I proceeded to become the best athlete I could be."

After making her way to the Plains, Dincoff competed for the Tigers in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 seasons, earning All-America honors each year. She still stands as the program's discus record-holder with a mark of 183-1.

Upon graduation, Dincoff followed her coach, Doug Reynolds, to New Mexico where she currently resides and trains. After years of self-reflection and preparation, she knew she wanted her crack at representing the Red, White and Blue in Tokyo, and when June rolled around, she made her way to Eugene, Oregon for the USA Track & Field Olympic Trials.

"I knew I was physically ready," Dincoff said. "I had to mentally prepare. I had never been in this experience before. I knew I could become an Olympian that weekend, so I was doing my best to not let my emotions take hold of me. I knew it was going to be a highly emotional event, but I didn't want to let those emotions ruin it for me."

Dincoff earned her way to the women's discus finals after locking down the seventh of eight spots that were guaranteed three more throws in an effort to get to Tokyo.

The performance was not up to her standards, though, and she knew she needed to push herself into the top three if she wanted to make the team.

"I knew it was getting closer to the moment where I could turn my dreams into reality," Dincoff said. "I just had to do what I know I am capable of doing. If I did that, I knew I could make the team."

On her fifth throw, Dincoff reached that magic number. She threw for 60.21m, a mark that catapulted her into third place and would eventually punch her ticket to her first ever Olympic Games.

Dincoff still had to wait out her competitors and hope her mark was enough to secure a spot.

"Watching the competition, you can't tell who beat who," Dincoff said.

"We were all pretty close in distance, so I just had to wait for the numbers to pop up on the screen.

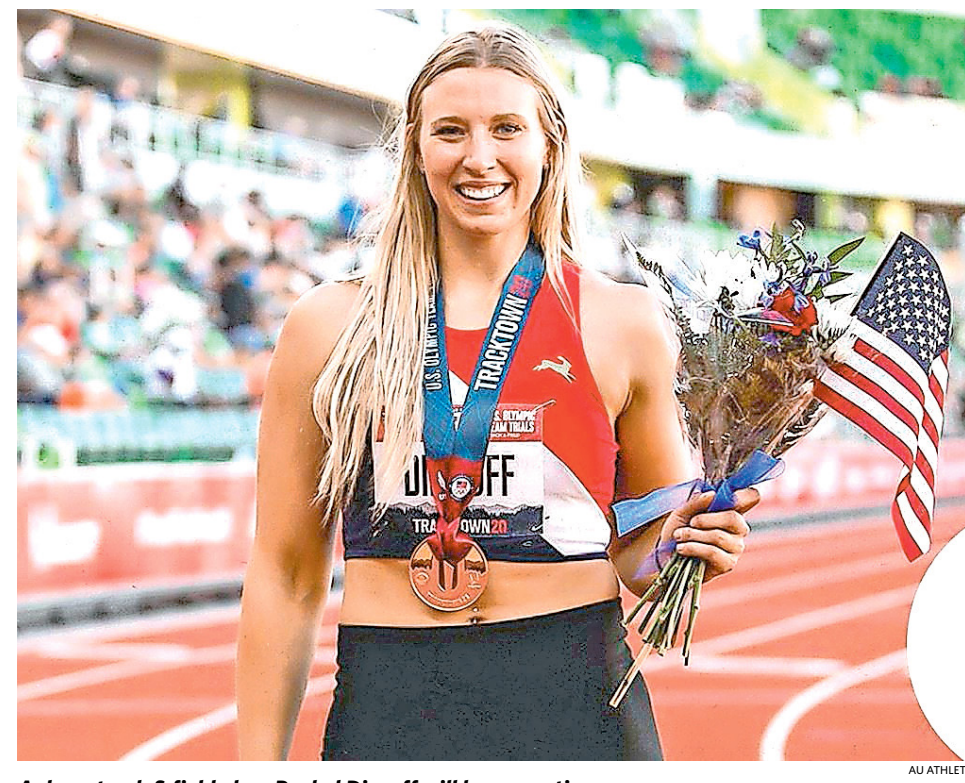
"When the last number popped up and I was still in third place, it was just pure, raw emotion. It all poured out of me. I dropped to my knees and thanked God for this opportunity."

Dincoff is more determined than ever to make the most of this opportunity and represent both Auburn and the United States on sports' biggest stage.

The Olympic qualifying round for the women's discus will begin on July 30 at 7:30 p.m. CT, and if Dincoff performs well, she will advance to the finals on August 2 at 6 a.m. CT.

After competing in the 2020 games, Dincoff plans to take some well-deserved time off to rest and recuperate, but she already has her sights set on the possibility of going back to the Olympics with Team USA in 2024.

"I just want to see how far I can throw a discus," she said. "I now know that takes time. I have time, and I have so much to give to this sport."

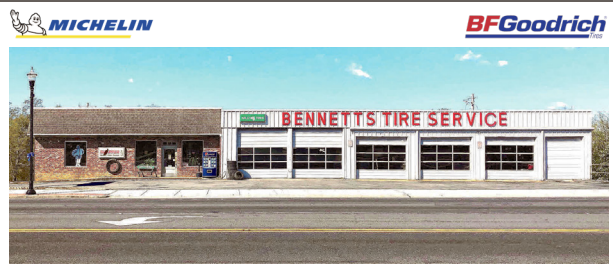


AU ATHLETICS

Auburn track & field alum Rachel Dincoff will be competing at this year's Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

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BOOK REVIEW

She Reads: 'The Woman in Cabin 10' by Ruth Ware

Ashlyn Grey
ashlyn@cullmantribune.com

Last week, I wrote about how I had greatly enjoyed Ruth Ware's work on, "Into A Dark, Dark Wood" and this week, I have decided to bring you another story of hers called, "The Woman in Cabin 10." I have said it before and I will say it again, I absolutely love thrillers and books that make me think. I often stray away from storylines that I can guess too quickly, or to be entirely honest, most romance novels. I think that often times, reading a thriller or a book that is somewhat of a brainteaser reflects the way we might deal with things in day-to-day life. In these stories, there are more commonly experienced emotions.

We experience uncertainty, indecisiveness, anxiety and sometimes, even panic. It is normal, natural and purely human to feel these things. The way these books are written can provide release to these feelings, as yours build with the characters as you move through the story. There is something comforting in knowing that although there might be chaos, it will come to an end as the book does.

We begin this novel meeting Lo Blacklock, a young up-and-coming travel journalist who sees an opportunity to take on more responsibility when her boss gives her an assignment on a small luxury cruise ship called the "Aurora," whose maiden voyage is planned in the North Sea, in hopes to catch glimpses of its namesake.

There are only 10 cabins aboard the Aurora and decks below containing the ship's staff, the kitchens and the spa.

On the first night of this weeklong dream assignment, Lo is hurrying to dinner with the other select, esteemed guests. She feels strikingly out of place amongst those she has glimpsed so far, and These feelings only grow when happens to knock on the door of cabin 10 hoping there might be someone to lend her some mascara. As the door opens, Lo finds herself face to face with a beautiful, dark-haired, young woman in a band tee who also appears to be getting ready for the evening. The woman is abrupt and borders on being rude as she shoves the mascara in Lo's direction and snaps for her to, "Just keep it," as she shuts the door in her face.

Her uneasiness peaks later that evening, as she steps out onto her cabin's balcony and sees someone pushing a body overboard from the balcony of cabin 10. She immediately reports the sighting to the ship's head of security.

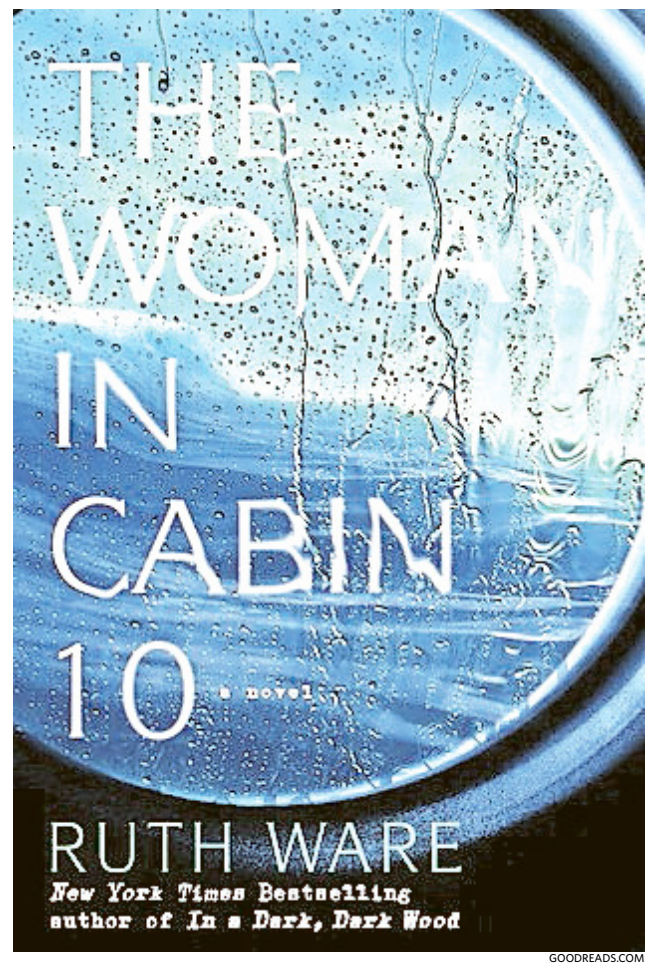
When she does, she is informed that there was a cancellation in cabin 10 and was never occupied to begin with. After taking accounts of the staff and all on board, she finds that every single person is accounted for, and nobody seems to know a thing about someone being in the cabin in the first place.

While Lo is desperately trying to piece everything that happened that night together, she cannot so much as contact the mainland due to the spotty Wi-Fi.

With the boat nearing its first destination at Trondheim, Norway, she can feel the passengers snickering behind her back, and the head of security making her feel like she could have imagined it all.

As Lo's investigation grows more and more invigorating and dangerous, finds something much, much darker than she could have imagined.

I truly hope you all enjoy this review and possibly even go further to read the novel yourself. With such a slow burn style to this book, Ruth Ware allows you to find comfort in even the smallest of moments just so she can take your breath on the very next page.



GOODREADS.COM

Meeks (from Front)

hol evidence was inadmissible due to chain of custody issues. The appellate court ruled against that argument, but noticed the sentence and decided to address it while reviewing the case.

Criminally negligent homicide involving DUI is a Class C felony and carries an official sentence of from one year and one day up to 10 years. Pointing to the Presumptive and Voluntary Sentencing Guidelines published by the Alabama Sentencing Commission though, the appellate court said that a 10-year Class C felony sentence for a defendant who is not a "habitual felony offender" must result in actual prison time of no more than two years, followed by probation of no more than three years. Including time in prison since conviction and credit for time served in jail prior to the trial, Meeks has already been incarcerated for over two years.

Meeks has a history of arrests on felony charges but has never been convicted of a felony. Two, including a 2015 charge of Attempted Murder of a Cullman County law enforcement officer, were pleaded down to misdemeanors. One Madison County felony case was dismissed when the District Attorney's Office there was informed that "Defendant has been convicted of an offense in Cullman County and received a 10-year sentence."

Meeks currently faces a felony charge in Cullman County of possession of a controlled substance for methamphetamine found while he was being arrested on other warrants in 2019. The Cullman County District Attorney's Office has requested that Meeks be arraigned on this charge the same day he appears for resentencing in the homicide case.

The appellate court did not address the two other charges for which Meeks was convicted and received separate one-year sentences. Since the case is active pending resentencing, Judge Nicholas did not comment.

The appellate court must still issue an official statement on the case before resentencing can be scheduled.







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LEGALS

IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF)
)
A.R.S.)
) Case No. JU 2021-194.01
Date of Birth: 1-20-14)

NOTICE OF TERMINATION HEARING

Kameron Smith, whose whereabouts are unknown, must answer the Petition for Termination of Parental Rights filed by the mother of the child in regards to the above reference child born on January 20, 2014 by the 26 day of August, 2021, or thereafter a judgment terminating his parental rights may be entered against him in the Juvenile Court of Cullman County, Alabama.

Done this the 19 day of July, 2021.

Lisa McSwain
Circuit Clerk

Petitioner:
Megan Nabors
127 Buettner Drive
Cullman, AL 35055

Sara T. Baker
Attorney for Petitioner
100 Fifth Street S.E.
Cullman, AL 35055
Telephone: 256-737-7181

FILED IN OFFICE
JUL 19 2021
LISA McSWAIN
CIRCUIT CLERK
CULLMAN COUNTY

NOTE: Publish this item once a week for 4 consecutive weeks beginning 7/22/2021.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
IN AND FOR
CULLMAN COUNTY,
ALABAMA

CV-2014-028

IN Re: the Guardianship/Conservatorship of :
EILEEN R HOOK, an alleged incapacitated person
NOTICE OF FILING OF MOTION TO DISMISS

YOU WILL TAKE NOTICE THAT
the appointed Conservator/Guardian
for the Estate of EILEEN R HOOK,
an adult incapacitated person
files this notice of Dismissing the Conservatorship
is set for a hearing on August 19, 2021 at 1:15 p.m.
on the third floor of the Cullman County, Alabama.

Judge Gregory Nicholas

Andria Sims, Esq, LEE015
300 1st Avenue, SE Suite 104
Cullman, AL 35055
256-775-7757

Lisa McSwain
Circuit Clerk
7-19-21

MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE NOTICE

Default having been made in the terms of that mortgage executed on June 11, 2020 by Trula Otey, aka Trula Ann Otey, to EvaBank, which said mortgage is recorded in Book MTG 1917, Page 71 in the Probate Office of Cullman County, Alabama, and default continuing, and by virtue of the power of sale contained in said mortgage, the following described property will be sold at public outcry, for cash, to the highest bidder, in front of the Courthouse door of said County, in Cullman, Alabama, during the legal hours of sale on August 12, 2021:

Begin at a stake on the south line of the NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 32, Township 8 South Range 2 West, which stake is located 630 feet east of the southwest corner of said forty; thence north 595.0 feet; thence east 146.43 feet; thence south 595.0 feet to a stake on the south line of said forty; thence west 146.43 feet to the point of beginning.
ALSO: Commencing at the southwest corner of the NW ¼ of the NW ¼, Section 32, Township 8 South, Range 2 West; thence N 89°00' E distance of 526 feet, more or less, to the point of beginning of the lands herein conveyed; thence continue N 89°00' E a distance of 104.0 feet, more or less, to a point; thence N 00°30' W a distance of 342.5 feet to a point; thence S 62°53' W distance of 104 feet, more or less, to a point on the east line of the R. V. Russell and Sherlene Russell tract; thence S 00°30' E to the south line of the NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of said section and the point of beginning hereof.
ALSO; A right of way and easement for ingress and egress, said easement going over and along the following tract of and being more particularly described as follows:
Commencing at the southwest corner of the NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 32, Township 8 South, Range 2 West; thence N 89°00' E a distance of 630 feet to a point; thence N 00°30' W a distance of 342.5 feet, which is the point of beginning of the easement herein; thence continue N 00°30' W for a distance of 497.5 feet, more or less, to a point on the right of way of County Road No. 35; thence S 62°53' W along said right of way a distance of 15 feet to a point; thence S 00°30' E distance of 497.5 feet, more or less, to the north boundary line of a tract of land owned by Donnie T. Banks and wife, Loretta Banks; thence along line a distance of 15 fret to the point of beginning of the easement granted herein. Said lands lying and being in Cullman County, Alabama.

This conveyance is made subject to matters of survey and other matters of record, if any.

The following manufactured home to be auctioned separately and together with the real estate:
1980 mobile home, unknown make and model. Serial Numbers GEO065157 and GEO065158.

Said sale is made for the purpose of paying the mortgage debt and cost of foreclosure.

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 part of the foreclosure process.

EvaBank, Mortgagee
Dewayne N. Morris
Attorney for Mortgagee
2131 Third Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
The Cullman Tribune-July 22, 29, August 5, 2021

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of Cullman will hold a public hearing on August 9, 2021 at 7:00 o'clock p.m. in the Lucille N. Galin Auditorium at Cullman City Hall located at 204 Second Avenue NE, Cullman, Alabama 35055. At this time, anyone wishing to be heard in favor of or in opposition to the adoption of Ordinance No. 2021-41 (set forth in full below) will be given an opportunity to speak.

Wesley M. Moore, City Clerk

ORDINANCE NO. 2021 - 41
TO AMEND THE CITY OF CULLMAN ZONING ORDINANCE

SECTION I. PURPOSE. The purpose of this Ordinance is to modify, amend, or delete portions of the current Zoning Ordinance.
SECTION II. Table 8-3: Parking Lot Dimensional Requirements of Section 62-112 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Cullman, Alabama, is hereby deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Table 8-3: Parking Lot Dimensional Requirements

Parking Angle	Stall Width (A)	Stall Length (B)	Stall Depth (C)	Curb Length (D)	Aisle Width (E)		Interlock (F)
					One-Way	Two-Way	
0°	9 ft	20 ft	9 ft	20 ft	12 ft	20 ft	n/a
30°	9 ft	18 ft	17 ft	18 ft	15 ft	20 ft	3.9 ft
45°	9 ft	18 ft	19 ft	12.8 ft	15 ft	20 ft	3.2 ft
60°	9 ft	18 ft	20 ft	10.4 ft	20 ft	24 ft	2.3 ft
90°	9 ft	18 ft	18 ft	9 ft	20 ft	24 ft	n/a

SECTION III. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE. Each and every provision of this Ordinance is hereby declared to be an independent provision and that holding of any provision hereof to be void and invalid for any reason shall not affect any other provision hereof and it is hereby declared that the other provisions of this Ordinance would have been enacted regardless of any provision which might have been held invalid. This Ordinance repeals any prior Ordinance in conflict therewith.
SECTION IV. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall be effective following its passage, approval and publication as required by law.
Submitted by Wesley M. Moore, City Clerk

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of Cullman, Alabama, will hold a public hearing on August 23, 2021 at 7:00 o'clock p.m. in the Lucille N. Galin Auditorium at City Hall, 204 Second Avenue NE, Cullman, Alabama 35055. At this time, anyone wishing to be heard in favor of or in opposition to the adoption of Ordinance No. 2021-42 (set forth in full below) will be given an opportunity to speak.

Wesley M. Moore, City Clerk

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-42
TO VACATE AND SURPLUS PROPERTY NOT NEEDED FOR ANY PUBLIC OR MUNICIPAL PURPOSE
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CULLMAN, ALABAMA, AS FOLLOWS:
1. The City of Cullman is the owner of the right-of-way located behind St. Joseph Drive NW, Cullman, Alabama 35055.
2. The Cullman City Council finds and determines that this property is not needed by the City of Cullman for public or municipal purposes and hereby vacates the property and declares it surplus.
3. The City Council hereby authorizes the Mayor to sell this property for its fair market value.
4. This ordinance shall become effective upon its passage and publication as required by law.

Submitted by Wesley M. Moore, City Clerk

Obituary Announcements: July 21

McKenna Grace Sharpton, 20, of Logan

McKenna Grace Sharpton of Logan, Alabama passed away July 19 at the age of 20. She was born May 17, 2001 in Cullman to Bobby Wayne and Rhonda Hill Sharpton. A celebration of life graveside service will be Saturday, July 24, at noon at Livingston Chapel Methodist Cemetery in the Crane Hill community. Survivors are parents: Bobby Wayne and Rhonda Hill Sharpton; sister: Kassie Smith; brothers: Destry (Rachel) Sharpton and Ben Autrey; grandparents: Joetta (Jerry) Speegle, Paul (Connie) Sharpton and Steve (Sheiler) Hill; niece: Jordan Shinn; nephews: Austin Barrett and Kythan Sharpton and a host of aunts, uncles and other family. Visitation will be at Moss Service Funeral Home Saturday, July 24, from 10-11:30 a.m. Please share fond memories and expressions of love and condolences with the family at www.mossservicefh.co. Moss Service Funeral Home directing.

Irene Fruendt, 80, of Haleyville

Irene Fruendt, 80, of Haleyville met her Lord and Savior on Monday, July 19, in Huntsville surrounded by her loving family. Mrs. Fruendt was born Aug. 13, 1940, in Palmerton, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Irene loved her husband of 49 years, Dale. She also loved her kids and grandkids and loved taking care of people. The family will receive friends on Saturday, July 24,from noon - 2 p.m. at Nichols Funeral Home in Haleyville. Mrs. Fruendt is survived by her sons: David (Angela) Fruendt, Mark (Kay Bishop) Fruendt and Michael (Becky) Fruendt; a daughter: Darlene (Dale) Davis; grandchildren: Jessica, Alex, and Hillary; great-grandchildren: Macie, Callie and Aiden; a sister: Joan Williams and a sister-in-law: Marlene Eberts. She was preceded in death by her husband: Dale Martin Fruendt and parents: Alex and Irene Bohonos.

Teddy Russell Carter, 64, of Centreville

Teddy Russell Carter, 64, of Centreville entered into rest Monday, July 19, at Bibb Medical Center. Mr. Carter was born March 28, 1957, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Teddy was a good husband, dad, son and brother who loved his family, especially his grandchildren. He was outgoing and never met a stranger. If you needed him, he was there for anything. He enjoyed fishing, raising chickens and anything outdoors. Visitation will be held Friday, July 23, from noon – 1 p.m. at Nichols Funeral Home in Double Springs, where the service will begin at 1 p.m. Brother Daniel Morrison will officiate and the burial will follow in Fairview Cemetery in Double Springs. Teddy is survived by his wife: Mary Lynn Carter; sons: Timothy Carter (Candice) and Todd Carter (Jessica); daughter: Bridgette Smitherman (Kevin); stepsons: James Burt (Carol), Steven Burt (Crystal), Owen Burt (Jody) and Jamie Burt (Angela); stepdaughters: Sandra Burt and Olivia Wheat (David); 19 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; brothers: Thomas Freeman (Connie), Billy Carter (Sandra) and Allen Carter (Angela); sisters: Retia Walker (Tim), Anita Benford and Freda Salter (Timmy) and a host of nieces, nephews and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents: O.D. and Christine Carter; grandson: J.C. Burt and brothers-in-law: Ronnie Speer and Lonzo Benford.

Mia Paige Hunt, 56, of Cullman

Mia Paige Hunt, age 56, of Cullman, passed away Tuesday, July 20, at UAB. She was born Nov. 2, 1964, in Cullman, Alabama to Odean Garland and Doris Garland Heron. She was preceded in death by her parents and sister: Portia Givens. Survivors include her husband: Steve Hunt; daughter: Robin (George) Pavolini; sons: Stephen Hunt, Zane Hunt, Jason Hunt and Mason Hunt; granddaughters: Shelbie Pavolini, Halie Pavolini and Grace Pavolini; brother: Jerry (Nelda) Garland; sister: Linda McCarty; niece: Kristy Bradford; mother-in-law: Betty Hunt; sisters-in-law: Tammy (Tommy) White and Julie (David) Elliott and a host of other nieces, nephews, family and friends.

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JULY 22, 2021 - BOATS

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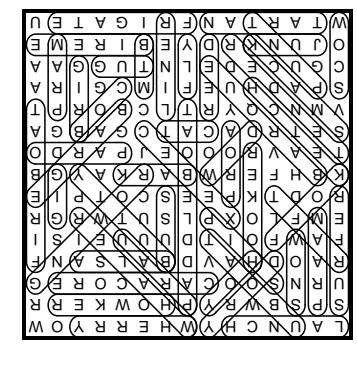
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CULLMAN TRIBUNE SUDOKU

JULY 22, 2021

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Impact (from Front)

Christy Perry
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When will I ever learn? I know better, but it's so hard to fight the urge. I'm talking primarily about indulging in the horrible comment section under pretty much any post on social media. Have people always been so hateful? Why has the internet given people the idea that they can be so viciously cruel?

It's really crazy to me the nastiness that social media perpetuates. Here in the South – the Bible Belt – I would expect more grace and decency when interacting online. It struck me while I was driving to Walmart and back home the other day that we are living in two different realms.

I saw people waving as they passed each other, signaling for the other driver to go first through a four way stop, allowing a stranger to pull in front of them in traffic. At the store, people were friendly and demonstrating politeness and courtesy. A stranger let me go ahead of her because I only had a few items compared to her full cart. One person offered us an umbrella as we stood staring out the doors during a passing rain shower.

Not one person called me stupid for something as simple as not having an umbrella, but I am willing to bet that the keyboard warriors would have been tripping over themselves trying to share their opinions. In face-to-face interactions, most people show restraint, patience, understanding and empathy. Why are we not as neighborly online?

My thought as I observed all the nice things going on around me was, "Are these the same people who have called me an idiot or said I should find another job for misspelling one name after covering a toddler beauty pageant? Are these the same helpful people who yelled, 'fake news, die' when I showed up to take pictures at a weenie dog race?"

I don't know what the solution is. My fear is that the internet has become a place to freely fling insults in an attempt to mask our own insecurities, and this behavior is a source of entertainment for many. It's the proverbial train wreck that we all flock to see. It's as though we have forgotten our words are being received by real people and they hurt. It is a playground for bullies and as adults, if we don't want our children to be bullies or to be bullied, we have to stop.

I've had to reprogram my own way of thinking as I am also guilty of being negative. Now, I ask myself before I comment, "Is this helpful or encouraging? Will debating accomplish anything other than beating my own chest?"

I have also learned with age that everyone's life experience is different, and how we prioritize issues are unique to our own experiences. It's OK if others don't prioritize the same things as me. We are shaped by our experiences and if they are all different, we are all going to see the world through our own unique lenses. There is absolutely no reason to have a meltdown when others don't think differently.

We are also capable of caring about many, many issues. I see people make the "what about" comment almost every time there is an instance of donations of time or money made to an upstanding cause.

If somebody donates money to Cause A, but your heart is more sympathetic to Cause B, that does not mean no one cares. Recognize the generosity shown, in whatever capacity – its a positive thing. Maybe their next donations will be to the cause for which you advocate. Politics! Ugh, this one is the worst. The stone-cold truth is that not a single person is going to change their minds politically because you post an insulting and divisive meme. I have never seen one argument about politics on social media result in anything other than a name-calling fiasco that managed to bring out the absolute worst in those participating. I have no need for Billy Bob from Idaho to agree with me but throwing insults his way would certainly be the worst response if I wanted his positive affirmation.

Local politics are even more cringeworthy, as I see good people and their families being ripped on social media. People say terrible things that they would never dream of saying to someone's face. The false sense of bravery is interesting considering its cowardly nature. I don't always agree with every decision made by our local officials, but I do know them and I like them. Disagreeing with a decision or stance is possible without verbal assault.

I have challenged myself and I want to challenge others to show a little grace. Try to empathize with one another and consider how others are burdened. Discuss the positives. I was recently at a council meeting in South Vinemont and afterward, I was speaking to a council member. She had mentioned a sermon where her pastor asked the congregation if everyone on social media knew what they liked or only what they disliked?

Do people only know what you hate? Do people see you as a positive or a negative? Do you inspire and lift up others? Despite the old saying about sticks and stones breaking bones but words never harming, hurtful words may actually be the most painful. The decision to be kind can be exactly what someone else needs. It can even have a tremendous ripple effect and an ever-moving wave of kindness is exactly what is needed right now.



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