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WEATHER
51 37
SOURCE: WEATHER.GOV
MOSTLY SUNNY

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LUCAS GRAY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

–SPORTS–

Lady Eagles win 45-42 thriller over Belgreen to take the NW Region, head to Birmingham

» PAGE 4

7 93888 98541 4

South Carolina man charged with attempted murder in Cullman stabbing

Lauren Estes
lauren@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — A South Carolina man has been charged with attempted murder in connection with a stabbing that occurred behind Publix in the Cullman Shopping Center on Saturday, Feb. 21.

The Cullman Police Department identified the suspect as Michael Athanasius Helring, of Hanahan, South Carolina.

The victim, who has not been identified, was airlifted to a regional hospital. No updates have been given about the victim's condition or the severity of their injuries.

Cullman Police Chief Joey Duncan said later Saturday, "(I) would like to commend our patrol officers, investigators, the Cullman County Sheriff's deputies and District Attorney Champ Crocker for their swift response and strong partnership in this case. Through teamwork, professionalism and a shared commitment to public safety, their coordinated efforts led to a quick arrest. We are grateful for their continued dedication and service to our community."

Originally, two » PAGE 3



CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
Michael Athanasius Helring

'You are worth the help'

Stride for Sophia 5K seeks to raise awareness and open conversation about mental health struggles – March 7

Gauge Day
gauge@cullmantribune.com

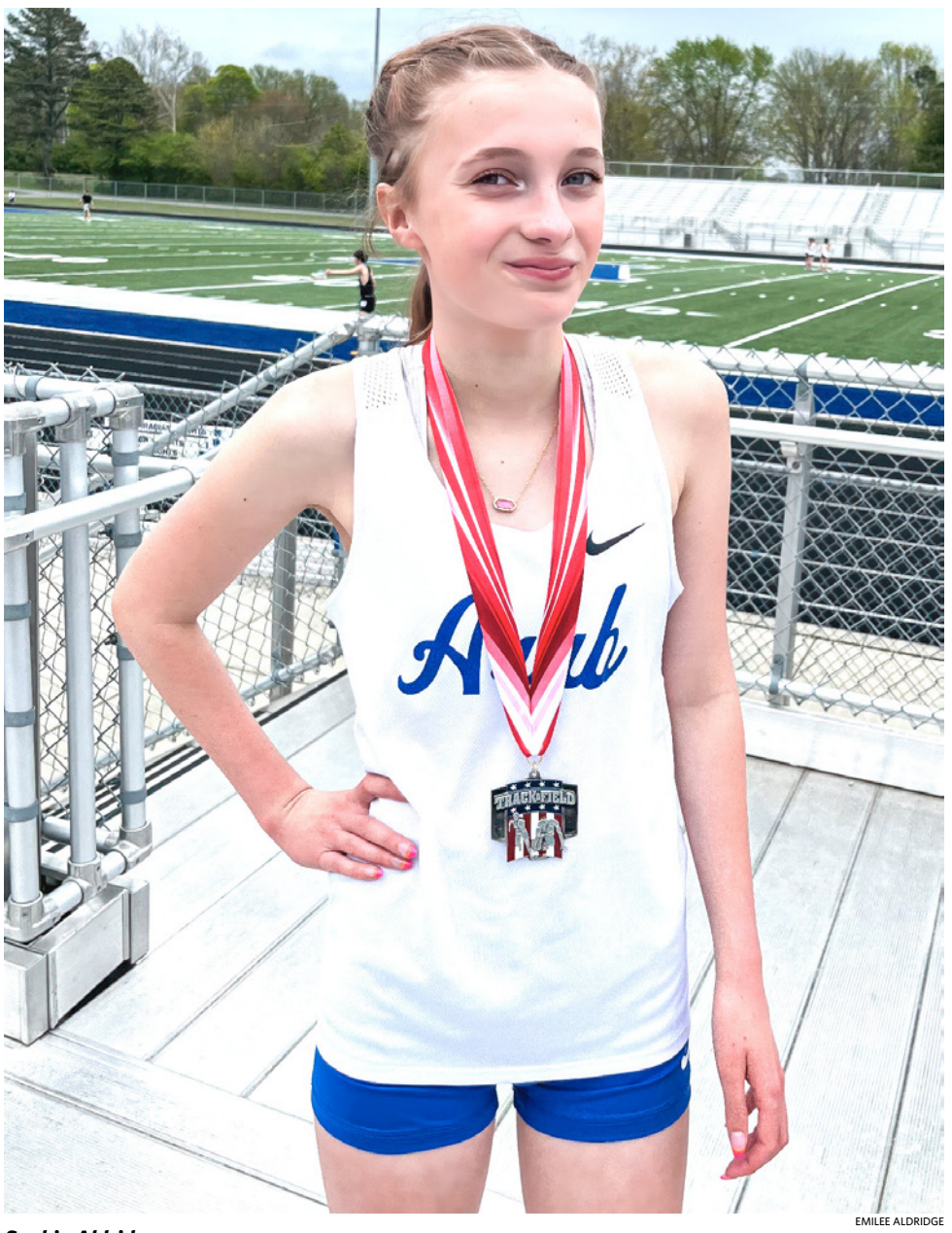
ARAB, Ala. — The Stride for Sophia 5K will take place Saturday, March 7, at 9 a.m. at Arab City Park, inviting the community to celebrate the memory of 15-year-old Sophia Aldridge while raising awareness for youth mental health.

The race will not be officially timed, allowing participants to walk or run at their own pace. Medals will be awarded to the top four female runners, the top four male runners and the top four runners age 10 and younger. Participants are encouraged to wear pink, Sophia's favorite color. Registration is $30 per participant, with all proceeds benefiting WellStone Inc., a north Alabama mental health organization that provides services to youth, adults and families.

The race was created by Sophia's family one year after her passing due to mental health struggles. Sophia's family says the race is both a tribute to Sophia's life and a way to help ensure other families have access to the resources and support they need.

"Sophia was an energetic teenager who loved other people," said her mother, Emilee Aldridge. "Sophia loved being around others and wanted others to feel important. She would see someone sitting alone in PE or walking in the hallways and she would go up and start talking to them because she didn't want them to feel alone. Sophia was kind, sweet, funny, loving, happy, considerate and overall, a beautiful person to be around."

Sophia, a student from the Arab/Joppa area, was also a



EMILEE ALDRIDGE
Sophia Aldridge

dedicated runner with all the natural talent one could hope for, competing in cross-country and track for Arab Schools alongside her twin sister, Madelyn. With varsity coaches recognizing that talent, Sophia earned a spot on the varsity team in seventh grade and reached a personal goal in eighth grade by running a mile in 5:57. Sophia was well on her way to greatness within the program.

Yet even with all of that talent and success, it was Sophia's heart that stood out the most to her mother.

"Sophia was always on the sidelines cheering others through their events," Aldridge said. "She was so supportive of her team and loved being a part of her team."

"On one of the cross-country races, Sophia was running her best and she passed a younger girl who looked lost," she explained. "Sophia passed her, then decided » PAGE 3

Q&A with Alabama Public Service Commissioner Jeremy Oden



CONTRIBUTED
Alabama Public Service Commissioner Jeremy Oden
» PAGE 7

Local artist Gary Chapman wins Alabama Arts Impact Award



CONTRIBUTED
Gary Chapman lives and operates his studio in Cullman.
» PAGE 5

Cullman Community Theatre production coming in March; Community Choir, Camp Cullman signups underway

» PAGE 5

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CRIME

Arrests and incidents reported Feb. 23

Cullman Tribune staff
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Below are the arrests and incidents reported Feb. 23, 2026. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

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

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INCIDENTS

Feb. 19

- domestic violence; CR 1352
- possession of marijuana; possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 222
- theft of property; CR 788
- assault; CR 558
- assault; CR 1141
- theft of property; CR 222
- attempt to elude law enforcement officer; CR 1194
- criminal mischief; CR 488
- unlawful breaking and entering motor vehicle; criminal mischief; obstructing governmental operations; resisting arrest; CR 1285

Feb. 20

- domestic violence; CR 1500
- possession of controlled substance; possession of drug paraphernalia; Hwy. 91
- theft of property; trespassing; CR 520
- possession of dangerous drugs; possession of marijuana; possession of drug paraphernalia; Hwy. 69S
- burglary; CR 703
- harassment; CR 1393
- theft of property; CR 312
- harassing communications; CR 38
- possession of dangerous drugs; tampering with physical evidence; I65SB MM 291

Feb. 21

- possession of marijuana; possession of drug paraphernalia; I65SB MM 304
- domestic violence; CR 781
- domestic violence-criminal mischief; CR 1447
- domestic violence; Hwy. 91
- violation of protection order; CR 1043
- menacing; Patton Dr.

Feb. 22

- burglary; Chad Dr.
- permitting dogs to run at large; CR 607
- dog bite; CR 1486
- burglary; CR 373
- possession of controlled substance; possession of marijuana; possession of drug paraphernalia; I65NB MM 299

ARRESTS

Feb. 19-22

Armstrong, Steven N.; 31
- possession of hallucinogen
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Baker, Stacie M.; 47
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs (2 counts)
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia (2 counts)
- FTA – illegal possession of prescription drugs
- FTA – driving while license suspended

Batemon, Alexis F.; 22
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia

Brenton, Brandon W.; 28
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia

Clemons II, James T.; 22
- assault-domestic-simple assault-family

Cupp, Hilton W.; 58
- possession of methamphetamine
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Flores-Miranda, Samuel J.; 35
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- possession of drug paraphernalia

Hulsey, Crate L.; 26
- assault-domestic-harassment-family

Humphries, Nathan S.; 32
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – possession of dangerous drugs
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – assault-child abuse-simple-family (2 counts)
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – possession of drug paraphernalia

Jackson, Joshua B.; 44
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs

Lackey, Christopher G.; 47
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree

Lamb, Johnny L.; 52
- FTA – DUI (alcohol)

Martin, Dannal J.; 42
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – burglary-residence-no force
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – theft of property-2nd degree, $1500-2500
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – buying/receiving stolen property

Raymond, Robert A.; 46
- FTA – assault-harassment (harassment/intimidation)

Smith, Daniel S.; 31
- possession of dangerous drugs (2 counts)
- tampering with physical evidence

Smith, John D.; 48
- FTA – driving without drivers license

Taylor, Charles J.; 18
- burglary-residence-force
- unlawful breaking and entering a vehicle (no theft of damage)

Tomlinson, Jarrett D.; 24
- resisting arrest
- obstruction-governmental operations
- burglary of auto (no theft)
- criminal mischief – damaged property

Tubbs, Colton M.; 35
- VIOLATION OF RELEASE ORDER – burglary-residence-no force

Williams, Jr., Jeremy L.; 20
- burglary-residence-force
- unlawful breaking and entering a motor vehicle

Wright, Dale C.; 49
- possession of methamphetamine
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- possession of drug paraphernalia

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

INCIDENTS

Feb. 17
- identity theft; person

Feb. 19
- duty upon striking unattended vehicle; person; damage to '18 Toyota; Marktplatz Ctr. SW

Feb. 21
- domestic violence; person
- harassment; person
- theft of property-4th degree; Wal-Mart; general merchandise; $61; Olive St. SW

Feb. 22
- theft of property-4th degree; person; wallet & contents; 4th St. SW
- criminal trespass-3rd degree; person; Swafford Rd. SW
- criminal mischief-1st degree; duty upon striking features; Seventh Street Baptist Church; damaged property; $3,000; 7th St. SW

ARRESTS

Feb. 20-22

Raymond, Robert A.; 46
- FTA – theft of property-4th degree (2 counts)

Mathews, Robert R.; 42
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – driving while suspended

Eddleman, Dustin S.; 41
- financial exploitation of elderly-1st degree
- home repair fraud
- fraudulent use of credit/debit card (2 counts)

Swafford, Christopher J.; 48
- FTA – theft of property-4th degree (4 counts)
- FTA – criminal trespass-3rd degree (3 counts)
- FTA – resisting arrest
- FTA – attempt to elude
- FTA – switched tag
- FTA – driving while revoked

Morgan, Austin L.; 29
- theft of property-3rd degree

Harris, Hagen L.; 31
- GJ – forgery-3rd degree

Helring, Michael A.; 37
- attempted murder

Campbell, Kim M.; 52
- theft of property-4th degree

Smith, Daniel S.; 31
- criminal trespass-3rd degree

Falcon, Jr., Mark A.; 49
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- possession of drug paraphernalia

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

No arrests or incidents reported.

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

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Obituary Announcements: Feb. 21-23

Shirley Beasley, 71

Funeral service for Shirley Beasley, age 71, of Cullman, is Tuesday, Feb. 24,2026, at noon at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home chapel, with Andy Heis officiating. Visitation was Monday, February 23, 2026, from 5-7 p.m. at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home chapel and Mrs. Beasley will lie instate on Tuesday from 10 a.m.-noon prior to the service. Graveside service will be at Cullman Memory Gardens. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is honored to direct her service. Shirley was born May 13,1954, to James and Gladys Bagwell Pair. She passed away at her residence, surrounded by her loving family, on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026. She is preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Charles Beasley; daughter, Diana Beasley; infant great-granddaughter; one sister; and three brothers. She is survived by son, Anthony Ray Beasley (Janet); daughters, Julie Boyles (Ricky), Betty Gomez (Juan), Crystal Royster (Wesley), Jessica Rodriguez (Fernando), Esmarelda Rodriguez, and Dayana Royster; grandchildren, Stephine Beasley (Stephen), Kimberly Organista (Raul), Charlie Beasley (Kristi), Felicia Cordova (Jeff), Jessie Boyles (Tasha), Lorrie Guffey (David), J.J. Gomez (Jalana), Kayla Gomez, Michael Peralta, and Jordan Royster; great-grandchildren, Abigail Orozco, Charles Borrallas, Xavi Borrallas, Karina Cordova, Lilly Garrison, Joshua Garrison, Matthew Cruce, Jeffrey Prince, Dallas Guffey, Kaylee Guffey, Avery Guffey, Chole Beasley, Carson Moore, Bryson Moore, Lindsey Moore, Aiden Organista, Sofia Organista, Abigail Organista, Isaiah Organista, and Gabriella Organista; four brothers, Bobby King, James Pair, Billy Pair, Wayne Pair; three sisters, Linda Bryant, Dot Hyde, and Joyce Taylor; and a host of family and friends.

Tim Scott, 60

Graveside service for James Timothy Scott, age 60 of Cullman, will be at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026, at Cullman City Cemetery with Rev. John Richter officiating; burial at Cullman City Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Mr. Scott passed away on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026, at Cullman Regional. He was born, July 17, 1965, to Johnny Lloyd "Tooter" Scott and Carolyn Scott. Tim proudly served as a member of the Cullman Lions Club for 38 years and was honored to serve on the Cullman County Fair Board for more than 25 years. Tim's heart was happiest in the chicken houses. He had a deep love for the land and a passion for helping farmers through his work with RC&D and the Cullman County Soil and Water Conservation District. His legacy will forever be remembered at Duck River Reservoir, where his dedication, hard work, and friendships left a lasting mark. His dedication to Cullman County was sincere. Tim instilled the values of integrity and hard work in everyone he met. He believed in work, hard work — the kind that ensured Zane could run the farm and Arleigh and Kadie could tend their gardens. Though he wore many hats throughout his life, his favorite was being an 'Auburn Dad'. He will be deeply missed, but his legacy will live on at Scott Farms and in the countless lives he touched. He was preceded in death by his parents; uncle, James "Shorty" Scott; grandparents, James and Francis Heinl Scott and Clyde and Kathryn Coker; father-in-law, Tommy Moses. Survivors include his wife of 26 years, Jessica Scott; children, Arleigh Grace, Zane, and Kadie Scott; brother, Todd (Rhonda) Scott; nephew, Adam (Kelsey) Scott; niece, Ashley Scott; great nephew, John Paul Scott; and mother-in-law, Jane Moses. Pallbearers will be: Zane Scott, Adam and John Paul Scott, Doug Doggett, Steve Murphree, Steve Newton, Cody Butler, Bennett Boyd and Al Davis. Honorary Pallbearers will be the Cullman Loins Club. Lieu of Flowers: Please make donations in memory of Lion Tim Scott to the Cullman County Fair Association P.O. Box 562 Cullman, AL. 35056.

Gary Leon Warden, 78

Funeral services for Mr. Gary Leon Warden, 78, of Cullman will be at 1 p.m., Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Valhalla Memory Gardens, Pastor Matt Smith and Johnny Martin officiating. The family will receive friends from noon-1 p.m. on Friday prior to the service. Mr. Warden passed away Feb. 21, 2026, at his home surrounded by his family. Gary was a 1965 graduate of the original Butler High School in Huntsville. Gary retired after 23 years as a telecommunications engineer in Atlanta with the state of Georgia. He resided in Smyrna, Georgia, for 30 years, with his wife Diane, where they raised their two children. He was an avid fisherman and never passed up a chance to catch, as he would say, "anything that will bite the hook." A devout Christian, Gary was a member of East Side Baptist Church in Cullman. He enjoyed watching college football and was always torn when Alabama and Georgia played one another. Gary's greatest love was for his wife, children, and especially his grandchildren. Mr. Warden was preceded in death by his parents, Daniel Leon and Kate Warden. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Diane Reid Warden; his children, daughter, Nan Green (Shannon) and son, John Daniel Warden; and three grandchildren, Ella Kate Green, Andrew Green, and Kyler Warden; a sister, Gail Parker of Huntsville, Alabama; brother-in-law, Bob Reid (Janet) of Pensacola, Florida; and two nephews, Bob Reid (Michele) of Seattle, Washington and David Reid of Washington D.C. Cullman Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Friends may sign the online guestbook at www.cullmanfuneralhome.com.

Mary Elizebeth Woods, 73

Funeral service for Mary Elizebeth Crane Woods, 73, of Cullman will be at 2 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026, at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel, Rev. Steve Rodgers officiating. The family will receive friends at the funeral home from noon-2 p.m. Cullman Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Mrs. Woods passed away Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at her residence. She was born Oct. 9, 1952, to Willie Alfred & Irene Hyatt Crane. She was a homemaker. She loved soap operas and spending time with her family. She was always the loudest in the room. She will be missed. Mary was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Phillip Lynn Woods; her brothers and sisters. Survivors include her daughter, Ashley Denise Woods; brothers, Jim Crane, Jake Howard; sister, Betty; grandchildren, Justin Turner, Jacob Turner, Morgan Turner, Haley Woods, Kaley Woods; family and friends. Friends may sign the online guestbook at www.cullmanfuneralhome.com.

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Sophia (from Front)

to turn around and help this girl find her way back on the path and stayed with her the entire race. Sophia knew she wasn't going to finish first or second this time, but she stopped to help a fellow teammate. This was Sophia."

Now, it's that same heart for others that fuels the purpose behind Stride for Sophia. In addition to honoring her life, the race is intended to help families access mental health support and resources that can sometimes feel difficult to find. Partnering with WellStone became an easy decision for the Aldridge family.

"WellStone is a well-known mental health resource in the Cullman and Huntsville areas who has a great impact on mental health," she said.

"When researching who we wanted to raise money for, I saw the growth they have had recently in helping out teens. They have a center, Kids in Crisis, which helps teens with all levels of mental health.

"Unfortunately, I did not know about this resource when Sophia was struggling," she added. "As a parent, it's hard to find the resources out there for mental health. We need to get information out to all families on what resources they have to help their teens. It seems the information is hard to find, and it should not be."

The family hopes that the race will help open up honest conversations about mental health in young people's lives and remind them that they have a greater worth than they give themselves.

"We want people to know they are perfect the way they are," Aldridge said.

"Every person is important, worth something, loved and they deserve to have the resources available to help them when they are struggling so much.

"We want to help in some way be able to get information out to people, to encourage the need for kids to talk and feel loved.

"No matter how depressed you may be, you are worth the help."

She added, "We need to start talking about mental health and illness and not hide it. We should not be ashamed of mental illness. Our teenagers are surrounded with negativity all day at school, social media and friends and we as community members need to fill our lives with positivity and love."

For those interested in registering may scan the QR code on the event flyer or visit https://runsignup.com/Race/AL/Arab/StrideForSophia5k. Registration will remain open through March 5.

For additional information about Sophia's story, race registration or available mental health resources, contact stride4sophia@gmail.com. Arab City Park is located on City Park Drive Northeast in Arab.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

The Poetry of Recovery: Recovery Support Group
Every Saturday at 10 a.m. at 514 Cleveland Ave. SW in Cullman. Facebook/The Poetry of Recovery. Contact Jeff at 727-542-6413 or John at 256-636-0612.

Cullman County Historical Society Meetings
We meet the fourth Sunday of the month from 2-4 p.m. at the Cullman County Museum. Each meeting features a specific program or speaker. Join us!

Attention Senior Citizens
If you are 60 or over, please come to the Cullman Senior Center at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road NW and have some fun with us and eat lunch. Good fun, good friends and good food. Different things going on Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-noon. Volunteers needed to deliver meals to homebound. Call Commission on Aging for info. 256-734-1241.

Cullman County Republican Women Monthly Meetings
Second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Cullman VFW. President Cathi Bradford: "We are going to begin training to track legislation in Montgomery. If you need information, you can directly message me on Facebook." Full meals at 5:30. Meetings start at 6.

The Crossing Food Bank
The Crossing is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m.-noon and 1-3:30 p.m. We are located at 1503 Second St. SW, Cullman (in the Housing Authority).

Cullman Low Vision Support Group Meetings
Third Tuesday of every month, from 10-11:30 a.m., at the Alabama Career Center, 1201 Katherine St. NW in Cullman. Contact Olivia Wade, case manager, at 256-389-2502.

Baileyton Bargain Days
First 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) Mondays and Thursdays 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

Alcoholics Anonymous
Sundays, 3 p.m. at Cullman First Church of the Nazarene, 5415 Alabama Highway 157. CLOSED literature study. Handicap accessible.

TOPS (Take off Pounds Sensibly) Meetings
Fridays, 9:30-11 a.m., at the Donald E. Green Adult Active Center, 1625 Cleveland Ave. SW. The first meeting is free. TOPS, a national program, is a hands-on/pounds-off approach to weight loss and management through weekly meetings providing information, accountability, support and encouragement where you make the changes that make sense to you.

Cullman NAR-ANON Group Meetings
The NAR-ANON family group meetings are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by someone else's addiction. We offer Help by sharing our experiences, strength and hope. We carry the message of hope by letting others know that they are not alone by practicing the 12 Steps of NAR-ANON and changing our own attitudes. We Respect Your Anonymity. Our program is not a religious one, but a spiritual way of life. Meetings will be held at The Ruehl Building (Family Life Center of St. John's Church) Tuesday evenings at 6 p.m. Contact Jamie Weathersby Smith 256-708-7122 or Don or Nancy McKenzie 256-736-3327 or 256-736-3470 for more information.

Cullman Al-Anon Meetings
• The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of friends and family whose lives have been affected by alcoholism. The Cullman Serenity Al-Anon Group meets each Monday at noon at 1519 St. Joseph Dr. NE.
• There is also a Zoom meeting each Tuesday at noon. The Courage to Change Al-Anon Family Group meets on Thursdays at 6 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church at 305 Arnold St. NE in the Carriage House, located between the church and the Arnold House on the corner. For more information call 256-734-2231 or 256-531-4429.

The Pantry at The Link
• 708 Ninth St. SE, Cullman, AL 35055
• Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
• Closed for lunch noon-1 p.m.

Church Services: Spirit Life Church of GOD
• 1650 St. Joseph Dr. NW, Cullman
• 256-739-3326
• spiritlifechurchcullman@gmail.com
• FB-Spirit Life Church Cullman
• Wednesday, Feb. 25 – 7 p.m. Children and youth classes. Adult worship, teaching and testimonies in the sanctuary. Free pizza at 6:30. Van runs in the 5 Points Area 5:15-5:30. Call Betty Hays at 256-338-3728 for pickup.
• Friday, Feb. 27 – Celebrate Recovery. Fellowship and testimonies. Hurts, habits and hang-ups are a part of everyone's life. Come and see how to overcome these and more! Dinner at 6 p.m. Meeting starts at 6:30. Childcare provided.
• Sunday, March 1 – 8:15 a.m. Van runs in 5 Points Area. Call Betty Hays at 256-338-3728 for pickup. Breakfast at 9:30. Bible study classes for children, youth and adults at 10. Praise and worship and message by Pastor Bobby Dodd at 11.

Shirley Burden Public Library in Hanceville
February is Love Your Library Month, and we are having a BOOK SALE the entire month. The proceeds assist our children's program. The library is open Tuesday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (closed from noon-1 p.m.) and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Join us on Facebook for weekly details or please feel free to call us at 256-352-0685. Follow Facebook/Hanceville Public Library for event details.
• Wednesday, Feb. 25, at 10 a.m. North Alabama Agriplex storytime "Freddie the Fish" and book club led by Briana Taylor
• Tuesday, March 3, at 11 a.m. Spanish class with Alejandra Pena, a 16-year veteran in Spanish instruction with a bachelor's in bilingual education
• Wednesday, March 4, at 10 a.m. Summer with the Cullman Soil and Water District will read Dr. Seuss' "Mr. Brown Can Moo, Can You?"
• Wednesday, March 11, at 10 a.m. Storytime
• Saturday, March 14, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Hanceville Irish Festival and BOOK SALE
• Tuesday, March 17, at 11 a.m. Spanish class
• Wednesday, March 18, at 10 a.m. Storytime
• Saturday, March 21, at 10 a.m. Book club
• Wednesday, March 25, at 10 a.m. Lisa L. Ellard, MSN CRNP, RN instructor, Department of Nursing Education at Wallace State Community College, will present a program on first aid for children
• Friday, March 27, at 6 p.m. Poetry Night is back! Calling all amateurs, song writers, performers to share their talents with us!

Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church Knights of Columbus Annual Lenten Fish Fry Dinner
Friday, Feb. 27, from 5-7 p.m. in the Family Life Center. Join us for a Lenten tradition with great food and fellowship! This event is open to the public, and everyone is invited! Dinner will be served in the church's Family Life Center and includes your choice of fried or baked fish, baked potato or French fries, coleslaw, hush puppies, drink and dessert — all for just $12 per plate. Stations of the Cross will follow at 7 p.m. in the church for those who would like to participate. All proceeds from the evening support church projects through the Knights of Columbus. The Family Life Center is located behind Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church at 205 Third St. SE, Cullman. Bring your family, invite your friends, and come enjoy a delicious meal for a meaningful cause during this Lenten season!

Cullman Lions Club Fish & Ham Dinner
Saturday, Feb. 28, from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at the Cullman Middle School lunchroom. Cost is $15. Club supports vision, diabetes and local charities.

67th Annual Chittlin' Supper
Saturday, Feb. 28, from 4-8 p.m. in the Meek Elementary School gymnasium. We will have great food, great entertainment and political candidates from across the state. Brought to you by the Meek High School Band of Champions and the Winston County Chittlin' Eaters Association. $15 per plate. Chicken will also be available.

Casino Night Benefiting Hope Horses
Saturday, Feb. 28, from 6-10 p.m. at Cotton Creek, 417 Third Ave. SW in Cullman. Let's go all-in for a fun-filled casino night benefiting Hope Horses! Tickets are $100 and include dinner, drinks and starter chips! Hope Horses, Inc. is a nonprofit organization. All donations made payable to Hope Horses are tax deductible. For more information, please email us at krice@hopehorsesinc.com.

Men of the Covenant Men's Conference
• Sunday, March 1, from 5-7 p.m. at Seventh Street Baptist Church, 708 Seventh St. SW in Cullman. Men, you're invited to a powerful and timely gathering designed to strengthen your walk, sharpen your leadership and renew your commitment to Christ and your family.
• We are honored to welcome two dynamic speakers: Jason Simpson, north Alabama meteorologist and faithful deacon at Valleydale Church in Hoover; and Christopher Smith, longtime Men's Ministry Team Member at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.
• This evening will be filled with strong biblical teaching, real-life encouragement, worship and authentic brotherhood. Our theme is rooted in the bold declaration of Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." - Joshua 24:15
• Whether you are a husband, father, grandfather, young professional or student, this conference is for you. Be challenged to lead your home with conviction, courage and commitment. Bring a friend. Bring your son. Bring your small group. Stand as a Man of the Covenant.
• Register at www.7thstreetba-12tist.com.

Cullman County Master Gardners Native Azalea and Wildflower Sale
Saturday, March 21, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at the fairgrounds at Sportsman Lake Park

WWA Wyld Wrestling Alliance Event to Support Cullman County Relay For Life
Saturday, April 11, at noon at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center. Doors open at noon. Bell time 6 p.m. General admission is $10, ring-side $15 and kids 5 and younger get in free. Get ready to rumble for a cause! The Cullman County Relay For Life Team Sassy Ladies is teaming up with WWA Wyld Wrestling Alliance for a high-energy fundraiser you won't want to miss! These wrestlers know a thing or two about strength, grit and fighting back — and together, we're channeling that same power straight into our mission to kick cancer's butt. Live music, wrestling and food.

Cullman County Master Gardners Spring Plant Sale
Friday and Saturday, April 17-18, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at the fairgrounds at Sportsman Lake Park

Stabbing (from Front)

"suspects of interest" were detained following the incident. Both were seen being taken into custody near Hardee's in the same shopping center.

One was cleared of any involvement and released.





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PREP BASKETBALL

Lady Eagles win 45-42 thriller over Belgreen to take the NW Region, head to Birmingham

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HANCEVILLE, Ala. — In her first year at the helm, Paige Adams is taking the Lady Eagles to Birmingham.

Opening up the NW Regional Championship games on Monday morning, the no. 10 Lady Eagles played a feisty Belgreen team for a trip to State Semifinals. It was a tone-setting, gritty matchup, with Belgreen knocking Cold Springs off their axis in the first half, but Lady Eagles' star Ella Dickerson righted the ship in the second, eventually sealing a 45-42 victory with a pair of free throws. Dickerson continued racking up her senior season accolades, adding NW Regional Tournament MVP to her resume after a 28 point, four rebound performance.

Cold Springs' first half was uncharacteristic, to say the least. A usually steadfast, consistent offense was playing ahead of themselves, missing open looks and turning the ball over.

After a back and forth first quarter, featuring beautiful feeds from Paizley Whitlow to Dickerson for layups in addition to two threes, the Lady Eagles trailed 11-10. It took some time for Belgreen to get their feet under them, only hitting one shot in the first four minutes, but once they did, they rode that momentum right into the second.

A layup by Belgreen guard Randi Terry opened the period, and Lady Bulldogs head coach Chad Green sent his team into a hard press defense. Again, uncharacteristically for Cold Springs, they were rattled, coughing up the ball on three straight possessions, two of which led to scores. The run led to a quick 17-10 lead for Belgreen, which was broken up by a Whitlow deep ball and a timeout that calmed the team down. A three from Aleah Addison and a bucket from Dickerson, who scored 11 in the first half, combatted a well-oiled Bulldog offense that continued to find their shots and took a 25-20 lead into halftime.

A shaky start to the second half followed for Cold Springs who gave up two steals early, leading to a quick three buckets and a 31-22 lead for Belgreen. With three first half fouls, senior Hollyn Bruer started the half off on the bench, with Kaydence Williams filling in. Williams, who had a quiet but extremely impactful seven-point and six-rebound performance, finished off an old-school three point play after being fouled on a layup to break the streak. Cold Springs grabbed some momentum of their own, with Dickerson hitting three layups and nailing a deep three to take the lead, but Belgreen's Makenna Fisher would tie the game back up at 36 with just eight minutes of basketball to go.

The fourth quarter was a low-scoring slow burn, with Belgreen once again taking the lead, and Cold Springs responding with a run to jump ahead 43-40 that was capped off by a Whitlow three. Tight defense and a pair of Dickerson threes would seal the 45-42 win and a trip to Birmingham for Cold Springs.

"Well, I'm glad it's over. I thought we battled, got in our head a little bit made some risky mistakes that could've cost us late. But, I thought we were dogs on defense, executed our game plan well, and proved in the end that they wanted it. I'm just really really proud of how we finished. It wasn't pretty but we'll take it," Adams said after the win.

Dickerson led the game with her 28 points on 10-16 shooting, including 3-3 from deep. Upon sinking the winning free throws and receiving the Regional Championship trophy, Dickerson was visibly emotional.



LUCAS GRAY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cold Springs' Ella Dickerson

"Our ultimate goal is to get to Birmingham, especially for the seniors you know- this last ride. I'm just so thankful for coach Adams for pushing us so hard the last few weeks, making us better every day and, just my teammates, for pushing each other and encouraging one another and I'm just so proud of how they played today," Dickerson said.

The Lady Eagles move on to play Lanett on Monday, March 2 at 3 p.m. at the BJCC in Birmingham for a shot at the State Championship game.

PREP BASKETBALL

Big second quarter helps no. 3 Red Bay get past no. 6 Cold Springs, 64-52, clinches a spot in Birmingham

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HANCEVILLE, Ala. — The first NW Regional Finals in the Class 2A varsity boys' division featured a pair of top-ten teams, as sixth-ranked Cold Springs faced off against third-ranked Red Bay. It was tied at 16 after one, but Red Bay doubled up Cold Springs in the second quarter, outscoring them, 24-12, to take a double-digit lead into the half. The Eagles battled the Tigers hard in the second half, but Red Bay was a little too much for them at the end, as the Tigers would go on to defeat the Eagles, 64-52.

Cash Dickerson found Breydon Hallmon down low for two on Cold Springs' opening possession, and Dickerson connected with Lindan Hill on a hook shot to give the Eagles an early 4-2 lead. Back-to-back driving layups by Ayden Black put Cold Springs ahead, 9-2, almost midway through the opening period.

Hallmon drained a three from the top of the key to stretch the Eagle lead to 12-4. Five quick points by Red Bay made it a 12-9 game, but a hook shot by Wyatt Barker gave Cold Springs a 14-9 lead. The Tigers went on another 5-0 run to tie it up at 14. Both teams traded baskets to end the first quarter, and it remained a tie game at 16-16 going into the second.

Ethan Day laid it in with his left hand to tie it up at 18 early in the second quarter, but Red Bay went on a three-point barrage after that, though.

They drained a pair of treys to take a 24-20 lead. Ayden Black knocked down a pair of free throws to cut it to 24-22, but the Tigers drilled four threes as part of a 16-0 run to stretch their lead to 40-22. Free throws by Hallmon and Black, plus a basket by Hallmon, trimmed it to 12 at 40-28 at the half.

Black knocked down a three from the left wing to cut it to 40-31 to start out the second half. A rebound and putback by Hallmon kept it at a nine-point game at 42-33, but a 5-0 run by the Tigers was punctuated by a thunderous one-handed dunk, as that gave Red Bay a 47-33 lead. Hallmon put in a basket down low, and Black knocked down another driving layup to trim the Eagle deficit to 12 at 49-37. A late basket by the Tigers gave them a 51-37 lead going into the fourth quarter.

Hill put in a shot down low, and Day laid it in to cut it to 53-41 early in the fourth. Hill added a pair of free throws, and Black drained a three from the right wing to make it a 58-46 game. Red Bay kept them at arm's length the rest of the way, though, as they ended up knocking off Cold Springs, 64-52, to clinch a spot to Birmingham.

Black finished with 16 points, three rebounds, and a steal in his final game at Cold Springs. Hallmon wasn't too far behind with 14 points, six rebounds, and a block. Hill put in eight points, three rebounds, and a steal for the Eagles.

First-year head coach Drew Adams still had plenty to be proud of, making it to the Elite Eight and having both Hallmon and Black named to the All-Tournament team.

"Going in, we knew there was a lot of talent coming up, a lot of young talent. Ayden Black was actually with me at Good Hope, and he moved to Cold Springs as a 10th grader, mostly for football. I never thought I would get a chance to coach him again, but my wife got the girls' job, so I took the boys' job over the spring, and I got to coach Ayden one more time. He and Tycen are our only two seniors, so we're going to miss them a lot. We were really young. We started an eighth grader, a 10th grader, and a couple of juniors, so, the fact that we got to this point this year was really impressive. Getting to the Elite Eight is tough to do, so we can't take it for granted," Adams said.

PREP BASKETBALL

No. 7 Lady Tigers' postseason run ends at the hands of no. 3 Marion Co. in 68-51 loss

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HANCEVILLE, Ala. — An inspiring season for Meek's young Lady Tigers has come to an end.

In the third matchup of Monday's NW Regionals, the no. 7 Meek Lady Tigers met no. 3 Marion County, led by three-level scoring senior Jolie Kate Cox. After going into the half with a commanding lead, Marion was able to fend off any comeback attempts in the second half and Cox finished with 31 points to earn Tournament MVP after the 68-51 Marion County win.

A thrilling first quarter with back and forth scoring from both ends ended in a 20-20 tie. In the second, however, the Raiders began to take charge.

It began much like the opening frame, with Meek's Zarah Harden going back and forth with Cox in scoring. Mid-way through the quarter, mistakes began to pile up for the Lady Tigers, and a seasoned Marion County took advantage. On three straight Meek possessions, errant passes sailed out of bounds or were picked off by Raiders and taken the other way, giving Cox opportunities in the paint and guard Bekah Junkin space to hit a mid-range jumper. The run would propel the Raiders to a 41-28 lead at the half, with 11 points scored off turnovers and 24 coming in the paint.

In the second half, Marion County would defend their lead until the very end, out-rebounding and out-shooting the Lady Tigers. A strong rebounding team, Marion County notched 37, with Meek out-rebounding them in the end with 46. The Raiders were led in both scoring and rebounding by Cox, who finished with a 31-point, 14-rebound double-double.

"I feel like rebounding definitely hurt us. We had more turnovers than we usually do- Marion County's number 55 (Cox) was hard to stop, I feel like we did a good job taking away the threes, she usually hits a lot of threes, we did a good job of taking away that as well as some of their other outside shooters," head coach Britney Williams said after the loss.

In 2024-25, the Lady Tigers went 11-15 and failed to make the postseason. They turned it around this year, finishing with a 25-5 record and made their first Elite Eight appearance since 2020. With the emergence of Harden, who will return alongside Addi Cate Henderson and Zoe Hearn among others, Meek's varsity girls should be a force for years to come.

"We've got a lot of girls who put in a lot of time outside of the season, playing travel ball and training. We keep telling them to put in that extra work, that it's paying off. We had players that came back, stayed invested, we had seniors that invested in our program. It's a good group of girls, they love each other and that makes a difference," said Williams.

Harden finished the game with an 18-point, 12-rebound double-double and Henderson ended the game with nine points and six rebounds, with both being selected for the All-Tournament team.

PREP BASKETBALL

Addison's season ends in NW Regional Final to fourth-ranked Hubbertville, 82-54

Sammy Confer
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HANCEVILLE, Ala. — The Class 1A NW Regional Championship matchup featured the Addison Bulldogs and the fourth-ranked Hubbertville Lions in a rematch of last year's Sub-Regional game. Hubbertville's defense smothered Addison's offense in the first half, and also hit seven threes to take a 40-18 lead at the half. It would be more of the same in the second half, as Hubbertville stretched their lead out to 30 at one point in the second half, and would go on to defeat the Bulldogs 82-54, ending Addison's season.

Hubbertville drained a three for the first points of the game. A pair of free throws by Elijah Roberts cut it to 3-2 early in the game. The Lions, though, went on a 7-0 run to take a 10-2 lead. The Bulldogs had a hard time hitting a basket, as they didn't hit one for a little over five minutes, before a Roberts basket in the paint cut it to 10-4. A pair of treys by the Lions stretched their lead to 16-6. Conner Lane laid it in on the other end, and Joey Wilson added a free throw to make it a 16-9 game going into the second period.

Roberts drained a pair of free throws to trim it to seven at 18-11. Behind a trio of treys and a three-point play, Hubbertville quickly widened their lead to 30-13. Lane stopped the bleeding with a short jumper, but the Lions continued to pull away in the first half, as they went on a 10-1 run to give them a 40-16 lead. Roberts put in a small floater to make it a 40-18 game at the break.

Addison continued to struggle to hit shots, while Hubbertville continued to add onto their lead in the second half. A quick 7-0 run by the Lions gave them a 47-18 lead. Scout Flynn hit a shot in the paint to start a 10-4 run by the Bulldogs. Flynn and Wilson each knocked down a pair of baskets, and Roberts added a driving layup to cut it to 51-28. Hubbertville countered with a 9-1 run to put them ahead, 60-29. Flynn drained a three before the buzzer to make it a 64-33 game going into the final period.

Threes by Flynn and Kiah Lake, and baskets by Wilson, Lane, and Roberts cut it to 67-48. Hubbertville, though, quickly put a halt to Addison's comeback plans, as they went on a 15-6 run to end the game, and the Bulldogs' season would end in the NW Regional Finals to the Lions, 82-54.

Roberts finished with 17 points for Addison. Flynn put in 15 points. Lane collected nine points, and Wilson ended up with eight points.

PREP BASKETBALL

No. 4 West Point's season comes to a close after dropping NW Regional Championship

Lucas Gray
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HANCEVILLE, Ala. — In the Class 5A Girls NW Regional Championship on Monday evening, no. 4 West Point met no. 2 Guntervsille at Tom Drake Coliseum. The Lady Warriors, still riding their active 28-game winning streak faced off against another fast-paced team in the Wildcats that were coming off a blowout win over no. 1 Scottsboro in their previous matchup.

After grabbing momentum early, Guntersville took a nine point lead into the half and fought off any comeback attempts in the second half, with star eighth grader and eventual Tournament MVP Kenna'd Buie dropping 26 points in Guntersville's 57-42 victory.

Guntersville's scoring poise showed up quickly, with the Wildcats sinking shots early while forcing the usually-composed Lady Warriors into uncomfortable positions on offense. West Point caught up by the end of the first quarter, however, and trailed 15-14 heading into the second frame.

While Buie and the offense were still rolling, their 6-4 freshman anchor in the middle, Bristol Cook, was a problem for West Point's offense.

Cook and Warriors' center Laklin Shadix traded blows early, with both sinking baskets or getting to the line as Guntersville took an early 20-16 lead.

After a Jaelyn Faulkner driving lay, the Lady Wildcats would respond with an 8-2 run to close out the half with a 28-19 lead.

In the third, it looked like West Point had found new life, with the Faulkner twins connecting on a cross-court hook pass that led to a three for Camryn to cap off a seven point run to open the half, with the Warriors now only trailing 29-26. Shadix and the Faulkners finally found some rhythm, but Buie began to take over on the other end, nixing their comeback attempt for the third quarter. Heading into the final frame, West Point trailed 42-34 after Buie sunk a buzzer-beating jumper to close the third.

Buie continued her takeover in the opening moments of the fourth, sinking a quick layup, completing an and-one sequence and sinking a three from the elbow to take a commanding 18-point lead for Guntersville with five minutes remaining. Realizing the urgency, West Point picked up, with Shadix hitting a three, Kealie Harbison sinking a floater and Jaelyn Faulkner putting in three free throws.

It was too little, too late, however, as Guntersville went on to finish the game with a 5-0 run to win 57-42 and advance to the State Semifinals.

"I'm proud of my girls. I had five seniors that have been with me a long time and I've said it from the beginning, we play with our own girls," head coach Tom Welborn said after the game. He added, "I can't make excuses, we didn't shoot the ball good, we didn't score enough. As far as rebounding, got out-rebounded, which is expected. We won 28 games in a row, I can't complain about my team, they did all they could do."

Jaelyn Faulkner led West Point with 15 points, three rebounds, and assist and two steals. Shadix followed with 14 points, eight rebounds and four blocks, and Camryn Faulkner ended with 11 points and four rebounds. Both Faulkner twins were named to the All-Tournament team.

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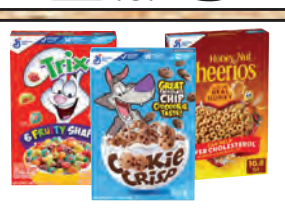
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Chasady Woods
chasady@cullmantribune.com

In April 2024, my husband and I discovered a dog sleeping under a tree at the end of our dirt road. There was a "missing dog" sign a few roads over with a picture that looked similar to this dog. We called and they stated their dog was male. So the female dog hiding on our road wasn't theirs. We thought maybe it was our neighbor's dog, and we just hadn't noticed her before.

A few days later we saw her lurking in the pasture with a small puppy. When we tried to approach them they wagged their tails, but barked and ran off. That's when we knew they were strays.

"We can't keep them," my husband told me, but I knew I had to at least help find them a home.

I came home from work, and as I turned onto our dead-end road, they were under that first tree sleeping. They were in the shade, but it was insanely hot that day. I felt my heart ache as I saw the little black-and-white puppy curled into its mother.

I parked my car at my house and changed out of my work clothes before heading down the road to give them a few treats. They barked at me as I approached, my shoes crunching the gravel underneath with each step. Though when I tossed the treats on the ground beside them from a safe distance they ate them quickly and wagged their tails.

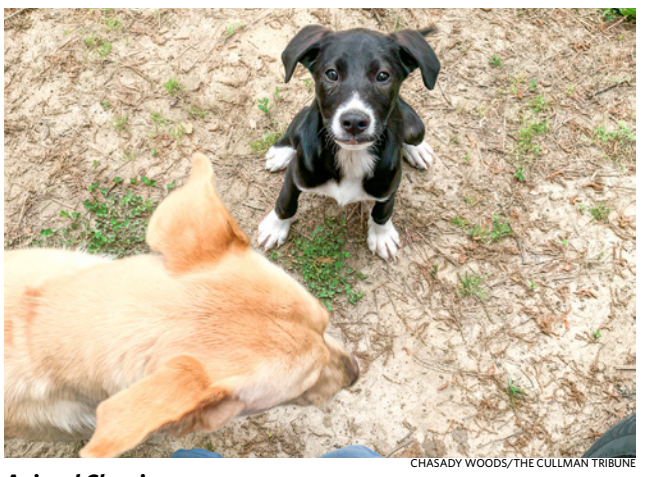
Once I had given them all I had I began to walk home. I didn't want to try to pet them in case they thought to follow me home. I must have made it 5 feet down the road before I felt the puppy playfully bite at my pants leg. His mother was right behind him. They never left our side from that point on. They flashed us those sweet puppy dog eyes and it was over.

My husband and I had been watching "Star Wars" when we found them. So we named the mama dog Ani, short for Anakin. And the puppy was named Chewie after his talkative Chewbacca sounds. Though he was also very fond of chewing up my shoes in particular, serving as a very comical double meaning.

On May 4, 2024, Chewie was shot by one of our neighbor's children. After discovering him whimpering outside with Ani trying to console him, I scooped him up in my arms and rushed him to the emergency vet. I didn't know I could drive so well with one arm until that day. I was assured by the vet tech that he was in shock, but would be OK. That didn't stop me from crying the whole way home. Leaving without him felt illegal.

When we got him back we were unsure if he would be able to use his right leg ever again. It was up in the air if the nerve damage from the gunshot wound would heal. Though the Force was with our little Chewie! He hobbled around on three legs and after medicine and time he began to use his paw! He walked a little funny, but he did it! Our sweet, strong boy did it.

They are the happiest, sweetest dogs. To think that we found them under a tree!



CHASADY WOODS/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Ani and Chewie

Production (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism has announced several upcoming programs and events, including a spring musical, community choir signups and summer day camp registration.

Here is what families and community members need to know.

"Matilda the Musical" set for March 5-7

Cullman Community Theatre will present "Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical" March 5-7 at the Cullman High School Auditorium.

Evening performances will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 5, and Saturday, March 6. On Sunday, March 7, audiences will have two opportunities to attend, with a 2 p.m. matinee and a 7 p.m. evening performance.

Tickets are limited and available online at cullmancotheatre.ludus.com. Tickets will also be available at the door. Children ages 3 and younger are admitted free.

The family-friendly production features local performers and is part of CPRST's ongoing support of community arts programming.

Cullman Community Choir seeking singers

The Cullman Community Choir is currently welcoming singers of all vocal ranges for its upcoming performance at the Alabama Strawberry Festival. The choir performs at several major local events each year, including the Alabama Strawberry Festival, Cullman Christkindlmarkt and Cullman Oktoberfest.

Community members interested in joining may sign up at https://forms.gle/KJcDRQVPUHkqFUXT6.

Camp Cullman 2026 registration open

Registration is now open for Camp Cullman 2026, the city's summer day camp program for children aged 6-13.

Camp Cullman runs Monday through Friday from June 1 through July 31, with a scheduled break June 29 through July 3. Camp hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and activities are based at the OmniPlex.

Throughout the summer, campers will participate in arts and crafts, games, sports, swimming, waterpark activities and field trips.

Families may register at https://cullmanrecreation.recdesk.com/Community/Home.

Officials encourage parents to register early, as spots traditionally fill quickly.

For more information on these and other programs, visit www.cullmanrecreation.org.

Chapman (from Front)

Staff Reports
Contributor

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Every other year, the Alabama State Council on the Arts shines a spotlight on exceptional Alabamians and their contributions to arts and creativity in the state, across the nation and beyond. The agency recently announced the names of seven individuals who will be honored during the 2026 Celebration of Alabama Arts awards ceremony in May. Acclaimed artist Gary Chapman, who lives and operates his studio in Cullman, is among the honorees.

Chapman is a 2026 recipient of the Alabama Arts Impact Award.

This award honors individuals who have made unique and meaningful contributions to arts and creativity in Alabama and is the state's highest arts honor.

Chapman is professor emeritus of painting and drawing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Chapman has an extensive career marked by more than 90 solo exhibitions with institutions such as the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, the Arts Center of St. Petersburg, Florida, the University of Cincinnati and the Indianapolis Art Center.

He has also participated in numerous group and invitational exhibitions with regional, national and international venues.

His paintings have been purchased for the collections of numerous museums across the Southeast, as well as for many corporate and private collections nationwide.

In 2013, Chapman was named a Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) Artist by the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

He is the recipient of numerous grants and artist fellowships, including a 1996 painting fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts/South Arts (formerly the Southern Arts Federation) and two visual arts fellowships from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Learn more at garychapmanart.com.

This year's full list of award recipients and categories is as follows:

- **Eric Essix,** guitarist, recording artist, photographer – Alabama Distinguished Artist Award

- **Scott Wright,** musical artist – Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award

- **Ralph Frohsin Jr.,** arts patron – Albert B. Head Legacy Award

- **Gary Waldrep,** old-time musician, teaching artist – Alabama Folk Heritage Award

- **Debbie Bond,** musician, teaching artist – Alabama Arts Impact Award

- **Gary Chapman,** artist, professor emeritus – Alabama Arts Impact Award

- **George Culver,** arts administrator, producer – Alabama Arts Impact Award

"This program highlights our appreciation for the artistry and creativity that abounds within our state – and the people who make it possible," said Elliot Knight, executive director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. "Through their tireless dedication and remarkable achievements, each honoree in the 2026 cohort has played a vital role in shaping Alabama's cultural landscape."

The work of these remarkable individuals will be recognized and celebrated with mini-documentaries and memorable tribute performances during a free event on the evening of Thursday, May 14, 2026, at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) in Montgomery.

Tickets are complimentary but must be reserved through the ASF box office.

Visit https://tickets.asf.net/15397/15398 or call 334-271-5353 for ticketing details. For more information about this year's event and honorees, go to arts.alabama.gov/celebrate.





THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Introduction to the gym

Chasady Woods
chasady@cullmantribune.com

Do you want to go to the gym, but don't know where to start? You're in the right place! The gym is intimidating initially, but I will break it down for you.

Should you get a gym membership or pay for instructor led classes?
If you do better learning at your own pace a gym membership is a better fit for you. This will allow you to go when you want and with a more flexible schedule. This is for more self-disciplined individuals.

With classes such as Pilates, spin and more, you can do your workout with a group. This can be great for more social individuals to make connections as well as be shown how to perform the exercise. If you aren't the best at making yourself honor commitments, such as a 5 p.m. gym session after work, this is a great way to hold yourself accountable. There's no room for slacking when you're in a room full of people doing the same thing as you.

Now, I suggest trying both and not depriving yourself of one or the other. You may enjoy going to the gym, but with one class biweekly or vice versa. A big part of going to the gym is finding what works for you.

Dress comfortably!
You don't have to have expensive athletic clothing on in order to go to the gym. I've seen people go in jeans and a button-up shirt. I don't recommend this because it won't be comfortable to wear while using certain equipment — especially in the summertime when the air feels like it just hasn't kicked on all day.

The point is, whether you look like you jumped out of a Lululemon catalog or you're auditioning for an Adam Sandler movie, it doesn't determine how effective your workout is. A simple T-shirt and sweatpants will do!

Getting started and need a routine?
The best way you can ease into the gym is by having a routine! Aim to go 2-3 times a week at first and divide your workouts into these categories to allow proper recovery time:

- Push: Chest, shoulders and triceps
- Pull: Back and biceps
- Legs: Quads, hamstrings, glutes and calves
- Cardio: Treadmill, bikes, etc.

Know that you don't have to go in this order! It's your routine and you know what's best for you. If you get to the gym after anticipating a lengthy leg workout, but find you're too sore from your hike the day before, settle for 30 minutes on the treadmill.

Cardio can be a good option for active rest days. When you know you're too sore to do anything, a walk on the treadmill will raise your heart rate, but will still allow optimal recovery time.

Why "diet culture" won't help your fitness journey.
I had to break the habit of thinking that eating less would show better results. Depriving your body and mind of nutrients will only hurt you in the long run. Reach out to your health provider to discuss the best route for you.

If you work out, but don't stretch...
If you go to the gym and don't stretch, you are disrespecting your body. Stretching is important! By stretching everyday you improve your flexibility and prevent injuries. Stretching also improves joint range of motion.

I suggest stretching before and after every workout. Though stretching every day or every other day is the best way to take care of your body in your fitness journey.

Things to consider!
Everyone's gym journey is different, just as every person is different. Don't be discouraged at someone else's results compared to your own.

As Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Comparison is the thief of joy."



LEGALS

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: The Estate of *
TAMELIA R. KILPATRICK LEMONS, * CASE NO. PC 2026 - 042
Deceased. *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE: Letters Testamentary having been granted to Jerry W. Kilpatrick as Personal Representative of the Estate of Tamelia R. Kilpatrick Lemons, deceased, on the 9th day February, 2026, all persons having claims against said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Jerry W. Kilpatrick
Personal Representative

Shay Persall
SHAY PERSALL LAW, LLC
611 Seventh Street, SW
Cullman, AL 35055
Telephone: (256) 841-7800
Attorney for Personal Representative

TO: The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune:

Please publish the foregoing notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an affidavit of publication to the Judge of Probate.

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: The Estate of)
MICHAEL ANDREW LEE) CASE NO.: PC 2026 - 055
Deceased.)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters of Administration have been granted to Robert W. Lee, as Administrator of the Estate of Michael Andrew Lee, deceased, on the 13th day of February, 2026, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate, and that all persons having claims against said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Robert W. Lee

Shay Persall
SHAY PERSALL LAW, LLC
611 Seventh Street, SW
Cullman, AL 35055
(256) 841-7800

Attorney for Administrator

TO: The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune:

Please publish the foregoing notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an Affidavit of Publication.

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE

STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
*
CULLMAN COUNTY * CASE NO.: PC 2026- 088

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF MARY REID, DECEASED

Case# PC2026-088
PB MIN Book 240 Page 994
Recorded in Above Book and Page
02/20/2026 2:00PM
Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate
Cullman County, AL
1 Page(s)

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

Notice is hereby given that a verified Petition for Summary Distribution has been filed by James Reid on 2/13/2026.

Thirty (30) days after the notice of publication hereof and pursuant to the law of the Alabama, the Court shall be requested to enter an order directing summary distribution of the estate of said decedent.

Dated this the 20th day of February, 2026.

Tammy Brown
Probate Judge

TO: PUBLISHER OF *The Cullman Tribune:*

Please publish the above notice **one time** in said newspaper, and thereafter file with the Court a copy of the notice so published and an affidavit of publication.

Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Steven C. Smith
Attorney for Petitioner
Smith & Smith Attorneys, LLC
P.O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
(256) 734-4721

IN THE PROBATE OFFICE OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: KELLEY *
COMMUNITY CENTER *
PRECINCT NO. 30 * RESOLUTION 2026-14

NOTICE

Designating and equipping voting places; county voting center pursuant to *Ala. Code* §17-6-4 (b) for the following voting precinct change:

FORMER NAME AND ADDRESS:
KELLEY COMMUNITY CENTER
PRECINCT 30
1270 COUNTY ROAD 1435
VINEMONT, AL 35179

NEW NAME AND ADDRESS:
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH
PRECINCT 30
1104 COUNTY ROAD 1435
CULLMAN, AL 35058

TO: The Publisher of The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice **ONE TIME** in said newspaper and thereafter file a copy of the notice so published and an Affidavit of Publication.

DONE this the 20th day of February 2026.

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: The Estate of *
DAVID TALLEY, * CASE NO.: PC2025-465
Deceased. *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters of Administration having been granted to Anna Cluxton, as Personal Representative of the Estate of DAVID TALLEY, deceased, on the 20th day of February, 2026, by Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate Court.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that all persons having claims against the said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Anna Cluxton
Personal Representative

Melvin Hasting
Attorney for the Petitioner
407 2nd Ave SW
Cullman, AL 35055

TO: Publisher of THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

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

DONE this 20th day of February, 2026.

TAMMY BROWN
JUDGE OF PROBATE

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF
MARY KATE MECHAW, AN INCAPACITATED PERSON
now deceased. CASE NO. PC~~2023-197~~ 2025-013

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Case# PC2025-013
PB MIN Book 240 Page 722
Recorded in Above Book and Page
02/12/2026 2:15PM
Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate
Cullman County, AL
1 Page(s)

THE ESTATE OF MARY KATE MECHAW, DECEASED.

Letters of Administration of said deceased have been granted to Judy Gray on the 12th day of February, 2026, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate of Cullman County. Notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by law or the same will be barred.

Judy Gray, Personal Representative (Administrator),

TO: Publisher of *Cullman Tribune*:

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

Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Steven C. Smith
Attorney for Petitioner
SMITH & SMITH ATTORNEYS, LLC
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
Phone: (256) 734-4721
Fax: (256) 734-4774
e-mail: steve@smithandsmithllp.com

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
JAMES ERVIN CHUMLEY, * CASE NO.: PC2026-080
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

Notice is hereby given that *Petition for Summary Distribution of Small Estate* has been filed by Lucinda Ray, Petitioner, on the 17th day of February, 2026, and that thirty (30) days after the notice of publication hereof and pursuant to the law of the State of Alabama, the Court shall be requested to enter an order directing summary distribution of the estate of said decedent.

Lucinda Ray
Petitioner

Todd McLeroy
Attorney for Petitioner
McLeroy Law Firm, LLC
P.O. Box 205
Cullman, AL 35056

To: PUBLISHER OF ***The Cullman Tribune*** :

Please publish the above notice **ONE TIME** in said newspaper, and thereafter file with the Court a copy of the notice so published and an affidavit of publication.

DONE this the 20th day of February, 2026.

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

STATE OF ALABAMA
COUNTY OF CULLMAN

NOTICE is hereby given that a bill substantially as follows will be introduced in the 2026 Regular Session of the Legislature of Alabama and application for its passage and enactment will be made:

«Project»**DRAFT DOCUMENT: NOT OFFICIAL LEGISLATION**

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to Cullman County; to amend Section 45-22-70.01, Code of Alabama 1975; to further provide for when meetings of the county commission shall be held; and to make conforming changes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Section 45-22-70.01, Code of Alabama 1975, is amended to read as follows:

"§45-22-70.01

(a) Effective for the term of the Associate Commissioners of the Cullman County Commission commencing in November 2022, the Cullman County Commission shall be composed of a chair and four associate commissioners who shall be nominated and elected by the qualified electors of the county at-large.

(b) One associate commissioner shall be elected for each district defined in this subsection and each associate commissioner shall be a resident and elector of the district that the member represents. The districts of the county commission shall be designated Commission District One; Commission District Two; Commission District Three; and Commission District Four. In order to stagger the terms of the

associate commissioners, the associate commissioner initially elected from Commission District Three and Commission District Four shall be elected for an initial term of two years and the associate commissioners elected from Commission District One and Commission District Two shall be elected for a term of four years. Thereafter, successors shall be elected for terms of four years. The associate county commissioners shall serve on a part-time basis.

(c) The Chair of the Cullman County Commission shall continue to be a resident and elector from anywhere in the county and shall serve on a full-time basis. The chair of the county commission shall serve a four-year term.

(d) The powers, duties, terms, and manner of election for the members of the county commission shall be the same as now provided by law, except as provided otherwise in this section. The chair of the county commission may not vote except in the case of a tie vote of the associate commissioners.

(e) The county commission shall establish and holdmeetings as required by Section 11-3-8, and shall post and publish the days, times, and places of their meetings. The commission, by resolution, may alter the regular meeting days as necessary, and may schedule a special meeting when determined necessary in writing by a majority of the members of the commission or, in case of an emergency, at the call of the chair."

Section 2. This act shall become effective on October 1, 2026.

Oden (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

EVA, Ala. — The following is a transcript of an interview from Alabama Public Service Commissioner Jeremy Oden, in which he answers a range of questions he has been asked during his reelection campaign for Alabama Public Service Commission, Place 1.

From Oden's campaign:
"Disclaimer... I am currently the Commissioner for Alabama Public Service Commission Place 1 and would be considered an expert on the matter. The following is from Commissioner Oden and does not reflect the staff or the other commissioners at the Public Service Commission and is solely the response of Jeremy Oden.

"There have been many articles, calls, posts and so forth concerning the Alabama Public Service Commission. The following is transcript in interview form from Commissioner Oden answering some of the questions he has been presented."

Question: Talk about why you don't answer some questions to media? Some say that you don't disclose enough information. Many times, you just stay quiet.

Oden: Let me first state, the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Commissioners are under rigorous internal and external ethics, Alabama laws, rules, policies and there's many times that we cannot respond simply due to these rules and laws. We as Commissioners must be very careful because of these rules and laws that we fall underneath, especially the Ex-Parte rules where we cannot discuss things that may come before us, maybe currently before us, and in some cases even past decisions. The Commission and Commissioners cannot discuss matters that are before the courts, like a lawsuit. We also have the 2-1 rule on open meetings, no two commissioners can be together and discuss issues pertaining to the actions of commission, two commissioners make a quorum. If we do, that violates the open meeting act. We cannot by law disclose anything deemed confidential that is submitted to us. This is the law!

Question: With that in mind, generally go through some of the processes which you use at the PSC. Can you discuss issues such as transparency?

Oden: It has been said that we do not review Alabama Power or other companies we regulate and that we have not reviewed Alabama Power in 40 years. This is probably the biggest false narrative being said in today's debate. Actually, we review the company on a daily basis, a weekly basis, every month and every year. We are continually looking at them and not just one company, all the companies that we regulate. In particular, the question is on Alabama Power. We have a full-time dedicated staff that continually monitors Alabama Power alongside the Attorney General's Office. The staff at the PSC is always willing to answer questions, if they legally can answer. I have always answered questions that are ask if I can without breaking any rules.

Question: Can you talk here about transparency?

Oden: It has been said that we do not have public meetings or release information. The Public Service Commission has a monthly-called legal meeting on the first Tuesday of every single month, we do not miss this, it is mandatory. This meeting is online and recorded. It is done live at the time of the meeting. Anyone can go to our page and see the link for the meeting or previous meeting. In this meeting we review all rule changes, laws, policy changes, customer relations, complaints, judicial actions, legal actions, PSC orders, and every PSC director reports what their department did for the reporting month. This is done on all the companies that we regulate!

Question: and Alabama Power?
For Alabama Power we report every single month on Rate Stabilization and Equalization (RSE) and Energy Cost Recovery (ECR). We also cover rate changes, production requests, power agreements and anything that will affect the rate payer or that will affect the operation of the company during the last month or future regulations. We report every single month on Spire Gas as well, both subsidiaries. These meetings also cover telecommunications, railroad safety, pipeline safety, water, wastewater companies or any other regulated entity that has had or may have requested action. Sometimes these may appear in a month's delay, simply because the data takes that long to process. But these reports are given at every single "open to the public" monthly meeting that we have.

Question: Next let's talk about how the ratepayers have a voice. It has been stated that the PSC doesn't hear the people, is there a process for public input?

Oden: In the mid-80s a lawsuit was filed and went through a court action about the advocacy position. At that time the advocacy position was in the PSC. The general ruling by the Supreme Court was that PSC had a conflict to be the advocate and setting policy. The advocacy position was moved or actually done away with inside the PSC. As anyone can see, this would be a conflict of interest. The Attorney General's office became the permanent intervener/advocate for the rate payer in all decisions at the Public Service Commission. The Attorney General's office has a seat at the table in all rate discussions, policy changes, or other matters that may affect a regulated entity. As a matter of fact, this position is a permanently filled position within the AG's office. Any citizen group, environmentalist, or whoever that may be, can contact this office and have their views expressed. Remember this is not a ruling by the Public Service Commission, this is based on a Judicial ruling/order.

Question: You said earlier that people are saying you have not looked at Alabama Power openly or transparently in 40 years. Legislators and some advocacy groups are calling for annual meetings or open meetings, what is your response to them.

Oden: This is another false narrative spread by these so-called people's advocates and has been for a long time. Groups like Energy Alabama, GASP, SELC. You must understand who these people are. Their goal is to wreak havoc on whatever process is done. They want to do this in public view; you must understand this is how they make their money. Bashing the company and the regulators. And they do this all over the country.

Oden: Sorry I get riled a little by them. As mentioned earlier we do an everyday look and every month we report on Alabama Power. We also have an annual report. Every single December the company must appear before the Public, before us as Commissioners, the PSC staff, the AG's office and any other intervenors. They are mandated to report on RSE, CNP and other matters that can be brought up in that meeting. Unlike what is being said, these same groups that want a "Public" Rate Case, do intervene and testify, ask questions about the company, and bring up matters about environmental issues, power production, and other related interests at this meeting. These meetings are transcribed and a court reporter is present. These are legal binding meetings. The testimony is recorded and placed in a file. They are usually even placed on our website for the public to have access.

Question: You said outside groups can intervene? Does this include Energy Alabama and Southern Environmental Law Center?

Oden: Energy Alabama, Southern Environmental Law Centers, GASP, River Keepers and other groups have the opportunity and the privilege to ask the company questions concerning the mentioned topics. Yes, they are at these meetings, and they ask questions and intervene. Unlike what they are saying.

They also bring lawsuits against the PSC on a regular basis. This allows them to talk all day in the media, on social media, or on other avenues about what they are suing over. Because of the ethics and laws, we are under, we cannot say anything. Remember they are not under the same ethics and rules. But I will say this, it is a purely false narrative that we do not hold public meetings, or we do not oversee the company. In plain terms we are in their face every day.

Question: Your opposition and others I should say are requesting Open Hearings? What is that?

Oden: I guess what they are asking for is a Formal Rate Case. I don't think some people asking the question even knows what a Formal Rate Case is. Alabama, due to a lawsuit, again in mid-1980's, was sued continually by intervening parties. The lawsuits were filed in Montgomery Courts and appealed to the Supreme Court. They were sued for their rates and the request for rates. My understanding is that the Judge in the case got fed up with both sides and made a declarative statement for them to fix the problem. What came out of that was the Rate Stabilization and Equalization formula, RSE is what we call it. That is simple, the regulated entity is given a formula to operate in. The formula has a percentage range with a low number and a high number. They must operate in middle of that formula or range. It has many different factors that go into what rates and accounting measures the company can use, it is very detailed and very strict on the company. Again, simply put, I can get into the weeds but simply they operate in this range, if they go above the range the rate payer receives a give back to their rate payments. If they go below, then the company can request an increase in rates. That is the outcome of that judicial decision in the 1980's, it is policy and law. I had nothing to do with that implication; I was in high school when that was enacted. In 2014 we did review and had multiple hearings all over the state and we did update the formula to include multiple other factors. It is a very detailed list.

Question: What is a Formal Rate Case that is being called for or wanted?

Oden: What is supposedly being called for is a Formal Rate Case. These are legal proceedings done at the request of the utility asking for either a rate increase or a new production or other matters that may affect the operation of the company. They are a once in time request. The topic is fully described in the request for hearing, and the topic must be maintained throughout the hearing process. You cannot stray into other areas that are not requested or related to the hearing request. The process goes something like this:

1. Application/ Request Phase. A Rate hearing is requested by utility, usually termed an application. In this application the utility lists all information concerning the request. If this is a rate request, change in a current rate or production request a hearing is opened in most cases automatically.

2. Discovery Phase is opened. This is the testifying, intervention or input phase of the request. Normally this is where intervenors, public comments and experts testify only to said request. Questions are asked on the application only. Company records pertaining to the application can be examined. This process involves lawyers, expert witnesses, investigators, or other professionals deemed necessary for discovery.

3. Deliberation Phase. After all evidence, testimony, and public comments are gathered, the regulatory commission enters a deliberation phase. An Administrative Law Judge often oversees the proceedings and may issue a recommended decision based on the record. The commission reviews all submitted information, analyzing the utility's proposed revenue requirements and the arguments from all sides. Then the commission votes and issues an order.

Question: What is the difference then in what you said about Alabama's process and this Formal rate process? Why not do it?

Oden: As stated, the Alabama Public Service Commission has the review process always going on. With the AG office present, there is intervention and advocacy continually. If there is an application to be brought for consideration such as rates or production, a separate public hearing can be called. I have set in these separate meetings multiple times over my career. In our process, the company does a similar procedure as above. They present a request to the PSC, the PSC reviews the Request, and the filing is made publicly available. Then we enter questions and discovery over the requested application. The Commission, the Attorney General and the Company requesting are present in all of these conversations. If there is any intervention by concerned advocates or citizens, then they can submit an intervention, usually by a legally filed statement, deposition or testimony. Any individual has the ability to file with the AG's office as an intervenor. I'd like that emphasized. They can also file a request for standing with the Administrative Law Judge personally, not going through the AG's office but directly to the ALJ handling the case. It is what is term as having "standing". The Administrative Law Judge looks at their application for intervention and then rules if they can proceed to the intervention. If they have reasonable cause, then they can be included in the hearing

In a Formal Rate Case, all of this is done as a legal court room procedure. Everyone gets paid. This cost can and does most often run into the millions. The regulated entity, in most cases, gets to recover any cost related to the request. That's right in these proceedings the expense of the rate case can be recovered by the rate payer. As stated, in Alabama the PSC has dedicated paid employees that handle these requests. The AG's office has dedicated paid employees of the AG office. The regulated entity usually has dedicated paid employees and attorneys. The regulated entity can incur a lawyer or witness expense from outside of the company, but it is rare. The AG's office can also incur experts, and the AG pays for that. The PSC usually does not hire outside and uses staff and all internal means, so no additional cost to the taxpayer. Whereas the Formal Rate case can cost millions of dollars and a lot of time.

Just to be honest, the ultimate decision is most likely the same outcome in both scenarios.

In my opinion, and to me this is an important fact, a Formal Rate Case is only heard upon request. You do not examine the company until and only then when the application is submitted. A review only happens when a request is made, that can be 2 years, 3 years and I have seen even 4 years before a review of the company. Whereas the Alabama Public Service Commission can request and discover at any time for information from the company and the Attorney General Advocacy is always allowed to be present.

I'd like to ask, why would an intervenor, legislator or candidate want to call for a Formal Rate Case? Because of the money they will make. There are Rate Case Lawyers, Energy Intervention Experts, and Environmental Intervenors all over the country who get paid millions of dollars to come in and intervene in rate cases. I did say Millions! And of course, the media has a story every day. I would question any candidate, legislator or individual that calls for this type of hearing. They are in it for money, contribution or publicity. In Alabama that cost is not there!

Speaking of money, let me make it clear here, as a commissioner I cannot take any contributions from the entities we regulate. I cannot make any investments in any company that we regulate. It is against the law.

Question: This is the final and possibly the most controversial. What about rates? Everyone says that we have the highest or third highest...

Oden: Well, I guess it is the conversation piece. Understand what I said earlier about not being able to disclose confidential information, being under lawsuits etc. I am going to answer as best as I can and generally. Also understand we must develop this by being reasonable and reliable by law. We must protect the rate payer but do it in a way that allows the company to reasonably and reliably conduct their business. They must be allowed to make a reasonable profit but also, they must be reliable.

First, we have to distinguish what is being said, the cost of energy or the cost of your bill?

Cost of energy is what it costs to produce that power. That is the kilowatt charge and that is what we deal with. The components of that cost are fuel cost, production cost, transmission and a few other smaller rate factors. This is the real cost to the ratepayer; this is the main factor we can influence. This is where we look at production, how the power is made, the cost of transmitting that power, and the fuel factor involved. The fuel factor is directly transferred, meaning the actual fuel cost is automatically included. This is also where the federal rules and regulations come in and there are many.

The bill cost includes the energy charge, but the amount of your bill is based on your usage of that power. It also covers some environmental costs. In some jurisdictions other things are added to your bill like possible sanitation, water, sewer and state taxes. These should be all itemized on your bill. The PSC does not regulate these cost. But usage is the issue. Alabama has one of the highest usages in the country. I think EIA said 30% higher usage above the average.

Energy Cost, we are not the highest. According to a national monitoring agency, Choose Energy. Our cost of kilowatts of production is below the national average and is ranked 30 out of 50, 50 being the highest. Our kilowatt charge ranges from 14.8 to 17.3, currently for the month it is 16.08. The statements "we are the highest" is being used to get attention and make headlines. Some media are careful in saying the word bill verses the word rate, some do not distinguish and that is the rub. Low rates don't make headlines or get Facebook post. Again, the issue is usage. Our homes in Alabama use electricity where in other states they use other sources of energy like natural gas. We are in a winter peaking state, what that means is we use more energy to heat our homes than to cool them. Also, we have issues with efficiency, we have older heat pumps, and many homes have inadequate insulation etc. Why don't these advocacies groups do like some do in other states and educate the public on efficiency and usage instead of suing us. I can tell you the answer, they don't make money off that.

Question: You say in some of your Facebook post and speeches the blame is on the Biden administration or Liberal policies. What does that mean?

Oden: Just that. We are living under the Obama and Biden energy policies. Obama issued a ruling in the EPA that put all these regulations, federal regulations on Coal, Fossil fuels and air quality. That was the 'war on coal'. I tried to fight it over the years. This is the push and we all have heard the term used" New Green Deal". As Trump would say this is the biggest scam we have ever seen in our country. It was a way for alternative energy companies to mandate changes to energy production. Why? Because alternative energy is very expensive and did not compare to the cost of fossil fuels like coal. So, they started regulating coal out of business and making capture rules, air quality rules, environmental studies, etc. These rules and policies apply to utilities and states, especially fossil fuel heavy utilities. Alabama Power was one of those utilities. So why? They wanted to make money, and they could not do it with coal and gas being as cheap as it was, so they made coal higher by mandating these standards. Eventually putting so much stress on the utilities that they had to close coal plants and start opening approved green energy production. These are always higher in cost and very less reliable. We now have states that have blackouts and do not have enough energy for the use they have.

We had a reprieve under the first Trump term. In his first term we gave back millions to the rate payers due to the changes in policies and tax structures. Then Biden, man I say this loudly, we were under more energy regulations and federal mandates I think in the history of our country. He pushed the new green deal in all of his policies and regulations. Fines were issued, mandates were given, all on energy. Across the country utilities and regulators had to make adjustments. I don't think there was single utility that did not face some sort of adjustment. Even those that use so called green energy. I really think he was trying to destroy our energy production in our country to be fully reliable on other countries, like the northeastern United States is to Canada today.

Question: Why haven't we seen a change since Trump is in office?

Oden: You have. The commission placed a moratorium on rates increases this last November. This will be in place for two years, until 2028. I have a one-page explanation on it. I can get that to you. But simply the rate cannot increase, there is nothing in there about decreases. The company is assuming a lot of costs, and it is not being paid for by the ratepayer. This is more of a stability issue. Keeping the rates stable until some of these Trump revisions can take place. We also can then have the time to adjust and if possible lower rates or give back to the rate payer. If I am correct the administration and EPA just did away with the EPA standards rule that was passed by Obama that started this whole mess. So, we are going to get some relief. It just takes time to implement. And by the way we are not going to carry over cost or additions etc. to 2028. That is purely false. Our process will resume as normal in 2028.

Question: Rates will be lowered?

Oden: We will be looking at rates, all the measures and implications presented so we can lower rates. I know for a fact that we will be getting some returns to benefit the ratepayer. This may apply to cost to keep stability, or it may even be in a full rebate or return, but none the less, the benefit will be to the rate payer.

Question: That will be good...Ok, this has been a long one. I think that is all for now, anything else you may want to briefly say or wrap up.?

Oden: I think it is important and I appreciate you allowing me to answer some of these questions. Look I try to do the best I can. I realize I am not perfect. But I have always tried to look at everything presented to me and make the best decision I can based on that.

Again, thank you for your time. You have my contact details and remember you can contact me and ask for clarification or anything else.

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Tribune info

Key dates

- Primary Election: Tuesday, May 19, 2026
- Primary Runoff Election: Tuesday, June 16, 2026
- General Election: Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026

Publisher's note: Any candidate on the ballot is welcome to submit a Q&A transcript. We will publish one per candidate to ensure equal coverage.

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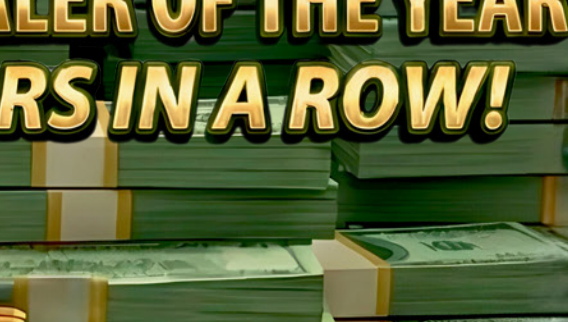
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