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–SPORTS–

Former Cullman star accepts invite to Indianapolis Colts Rookie Minicamp
» PAGE 4

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Remembering Johnny 'The Flash' Thornton

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Long before Johnny Thornton became known across Cullman County as "The Flash," he was a Good Hope Raider with a love for the game, a mind built for remembering details and a voice that would one day become part of the sound of local sports.

Thornton, 64, a longtime sports journalist, broadcaster, basketball coach, official and Wallace State athletics contributor, has died, leaving behind a legacy that cannot be measured only in games called, stories written or statistics kept.

His life was woven into the rhythm of » PAGE 7



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO
Johnny Thornton

Cullman teams make pulling a tractor look easy



KATELYN DEMPSEY
Cullman Fire Rescue took the Fastest Pull award on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at the Pulling for Survivors event to benefit The Willow Path.

Gauge Day
gauge@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — On Saturday, April 25 at the Alabama Strawberry Festival, local titans united in a contest of strength, pulling a colossal John Deere tractor in support of The Willow Path, Cullman County's domestic violence resource center.

The annual Pulling for Survivors pull event serves to raise funds for The Willow Path, which provides a wide range of services to individuals and families affected by domestic violence, including emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy and recovery support. After pulling a firetruck last year, competitors got to test their mettle by pulling a new beast, a tractor. This year, the turnout exceeded expectations.

"Our Tractor Pull brought the community together in a way we truly didn't expect and we're still in awe of the turnout, the energy and the support shown for The Willow Path," said Executive Director Jessica Atchley. "From the very first pull to the final round, the crowd showed up strong, » PAGE 3



KATELYN DEMPSEY

ELECT
Mike PITTS
CULLMAN COUNTY
REVENUE COMMISSIONER
DEDICATION
EXPERIENCE
LEADERSHIP
VOTE MAY 19TH

Alabama Strawberry Festival draws estimated 70K



JANET CHANDLER/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
The 2026 Alabama Strawberry Festival drew an estimated 70,000 attendees over two days. » PAGE 2

State of Education: Students, teachers honored



LAUREN ESTES/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
Fairview High School's Jack Haynes was named the 2026 Student of the Year at this year's State of Education community breakfast, held April 24, 2026. He is pictured with Cullman County Schools Superintendent Dr. Shane Barnette. » PAGE 2

Fairview High Principal leaving at end of school year



CULLMAN COUNTY SCHOOLS
Dr. Brad Stapler » PAGE 2

Pilot Club holds annual fashion show » PAGE 5

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CRIME

Arrests and incidents reported April 27

Cullman Tribune staff
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Below are the arrests and incidents reported April 27, 2026. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

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

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INCIDENTS
April 23
- domestic violence; CR 1282
- reckless endangerment; Hwy. 91
- domestic violence; CR 64
- harassment; CR 578
- harassment; Hwy. 91

April 24
- assault; CR 490
- harassing communications; CR 1759
- burglary; 1st Ave. N Garden City
- possession of drug paraphernalia; CR 1030

April 25
- assault; CR 384
- assault; CR 489
- possession of drug paraphernalia; illegal possession of prescription drugs; CR 1352
- criminal mischief; CR 1384
- domestic violence; CR 1669
- attempt to elude law enforcement officer; resisting arrest; obstructing governmental operations; CR 1114
- burglary; CR 633
- menacing; CR 747

April 26
- harassment; Main St. NE Hanceville
- theft of property; CR 1386
- assault; CR 1368
- assault; CR 717
- obstructing governmental operations; attempt to elude law enforcement officer; resisting arrest; criminal mischief; I65SB MM 311
- criminal mischief; CR 1114
- violation of protection order; Hwy. 91
- criminal mischief; Self Ave. NE
- harassment; CR 1497
- criminal mischief; CR 532
- possession of dangerous drugs; Main St. NE Hanceville

ARRESTS
April 23-26
Alexander, De Erika M.; 28
- FTA – criminal mischief-damaged property
- FTA – criminal mischief-damage to private property

Ballard, Michael C.; 50
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs

Blackmon, Joshua D.; 40
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs
- FTA – attempting to elude a police officer
- FTA – improper lights
- FTA – operating vehicle without insurance

Brewster, Vickie K.; 66
- FTA – violation of registration of rabies
- illegal possession of prescription drugs
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – negotiating worthless instrument
- FTA – public intoxication
- FTA – disorderly conduct

Bright, John S.; 55
- FTA – permitting dogs to run at large

Christensen, Devin M.; 25
- damaged property-cm criminal mischief-damage to private property

Clay, Jeffery L.; 51
- FTA – retail theft-2nd degree

Green, Terry J.; 50
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs

Gregory, Michael B.; 42
- FTA – criminal mischief-damaged property
- mandatory release-to knowingly alter, disable, deactivate, etc. any device used to facilitate electronic monitoring
- FTA – menacing-aggravated assault

Hernandez, Christopher; 29
- DUI (alcohol)

Hollenack, Lyndsey N.; 32
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs
- FTA – attempting to elude a police officer

James, Latosha M.; 43
- failure to make child attend school

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

Lanier, Mikeal S.; 31
- attempting to elude a police officer
- resisting arrest
- obstruction-governmental operations
- FTA – driving while license suspended
- FTA – exceeding reasonable road speed

Lee, Christy E.; 48
- DUI (alcohol)

Maddox, Matthew S.; 47
- sex offense-adult sex offender-violation of employment restrictions

Martinez, Rocky J.; 24
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- possession of dangerous drugs

Myrick, Brandi M.; 49
- possession of dangerous drugs
- public intoxication

Richter, Morgan B.; 23
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- public intoxication

Roth, Tyler J.; 36
- FTA – using false identity to avoid arrest/hinder prosecution

Smith, John D.; 48
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- possessing stolen property

Smith, Wendell; 32
- criminal mischief-damage to private property
- attempting to elude a police officer
- resisting arrest
- obstruction-governmental operations
- public intoxication

Tworkowsky, John M.; 55
- promote prison contraband (drugs)

Vargas, Daniel R.; 33
- FTA – driving under the influence of alcohol and/or 0.08 percent or more by weight of alcohol in blood

Waldrop, Auburn B.; 19
- criminal mischief-damage to private property

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
INCIDENTS
April 21
- criminal trespass-3rd degree; Wal-Mart; Olive St. SW
- theft of property-4th degree; Wal-Mart; general merchandise; $107; Olive St. SW

April 24
- domestic violence-harassing communications; person
- duty upon striking unattended vehicle; person; damage to '18 Buick Enclave; Lee Ave. SW
- assault-2nd degree; person
- leaving the scene of an accident; person; damage to '22 Tesla; 2nd Ave. SW

ARRESTS
April 24-26
Cochran, Joshua A.; 39
- FTA – driving while suspended

Argo, Douglas W.; 55
- GJ -retail theft of property-1st degree

Young, Owen G.; 23
- DUI

Holloway, Elizabeth J.; 19
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – speeding

Smith, Jeffery W.; 37
- FTA – public intoxication
- FTA – driving while revoked (2 counts)
- FTA – fail to signal

Cabanas, Ignacio S.; 23
- DUI
- certain person forbidden to possess a firearm

Brooks, Alexander L.; 27
- obstructing governmental operations

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
No arrests or incidents reported.

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



Fairview High Principal leaving at end of school year

Staff Reports
Contributor

FAIRVIEW, Ala. — Fairview High School Principal Dr. Brad Stapler will be leaving Fairview at the end of the school year to pursue a new opportunity with Guntersville City.

"We are excited for Dr. Stapler's new opportunity and wish him the best," said Dr. Shane Barnette, Cullman County School Superintendent. "We appreciate the work he has done at Fairview and we will miss him."

The search for a new Fairview High Principal will begin immediately.

Below is a statement from Dr. Stapler.

Dear Fairview Community, Teachers, Staff, and Students,

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Barnette and the Cullman County Board of Education for the opportunity to serve as principal of my alma mater, Fairview High School. It has been a privilege I have never taken lightly.

I want to share that I will remain at Fairview for the remainder of this school year, and I look forward to finishing strong together as we graduate this outstanding class of seniors.

It is difficult to put into words what Fairview means to me. This school is home. It is where I grew up, where so many memories were made, and where relationships were built that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. To return and serve in this role has been a humbling experience, and one I will always be thankful for.

Thank you for the way you welcomed me and my family. Your kindness, support, and encouragement have meant more than I can adequately express. While this is emotional for me, I am also grateful for the opportunity ahead. This transition is a step forward in my professional journey and a meaningful career advancement for my family, and I trust the path that has been placed before me.

I have enjoyed watching our students grow and represent Fairview so well in extracurricular activities, from band performances and theater productions to pageants and more. These moments reflect the dedication of our students, teachers, and families and are memories I will always value.

Our students are the heart of this school. It has been a privilege to serve them, and I will miss them greatly.

I have been given the opportunity to work with Superintendent Dr. Brad Cooper at the Central Office of Guntersville City Schools as Chief Administrative Officer. I am thankful for the chance to continue learning and growing as an educational leader.


CULLMAN COUNTY SCHOOLS
Dr. Brad Stapler

I believe God guides our steps, and I am grateful He allowed me the blessing of coming home to Fairview. While this next chapter is important for my family, Fairview will always be a part of me. I look forward to staying connected through the Alumni Association and supporting this special school in any way I can.

Thank you again for your support, your encouragement, and the many memories. It has truly been an honor to serve.

Purple and Gold Forever, and Go Aggies!
Dr. Bradley Thomas Stapler

Festival (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Rain concerns and an uncertain forecast did little to slow the Alabama Strawberry Festival, as large crowds filled downtown Cullman Friday and Saturday, April 24-25, for what organizers described as one of the event's strongest weekends yet.

Festival Director Daniel Wyatt said final attendance data is still being compiled, but early estimates show the festival drew around 70,000 people over two days.

"We're still waiting on all the data to come in, but we're confident we hosted somewhere around 70,000 people over the two-day event," Wyatt said. "We'll have a clearer picture on the geographic breakdown, counties and states represented, once that's finalized."

The turnout was especially noticeable Friday, Wyatt said, when attendance increased 40% year over year.

He said improvements made ahead of this year's festival helped the event handle the larger crowd with relative ease, though organizers are already looking at areas to refine before next year.

"We made significant improvements this year to accommodate the growing crowd, and we feel they paid off," Wyatt said. "Friday saw a 40% increase in attendance year over year, and the festival moved through it with relative ease. We still see some bottlenecking during peak traffic on Saturday, and that's where we'll keep our focus, refining queue line efficiency and continuing to evaluate options like shuttle service as we grow."

The festival, organized by Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism, brought together farmers, vendors, entertainers, family attractions and thousands of visitors in and around Depot Park.

CPRST Executive Director Nathan Anderson said the weekend carried a noticeable sense of momentum despite weather concerns leading up to the event.

"This year had a different energy from the start," Anderson said. "The crowd was bigger, the atmosphere was even more festive and the whole weekend had that sense of a festival hitting its stride, especially given the rain and the less-than-desirable forecast we'd watched all week."

Wyatt said the growth of the festival has been driven not only by attendance, but also by continued improvements in the overall guest experience.

"Our attractions and entertainment continue to get better every year, and our vendors keep raising the bar on what they bring to the festival," Wyatt said. "That ongoing commitment to a better guest experience is what's driving the event's success year after year."

Anderson credited the festival's continued growth to Cullman's reputation, the work of the festival team and the larger community effort behind the event.

"It's the charm of our community, and countless hours of preparation and hard work from a creative team comprised of staff, vendors, sponsors and volunteers that genuinely love Cullman," Anderson said. "Our location, our reputation as a safe and clean destination – that drives confidence with visitors of every age. People know what they're going to get when they come to a Cullman festival, and they keep coming back."

Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs said the festival reflected the work of city staff, volunteers, vendors, farmers, entertainers and the CPRST team.

"From the farmers to the vendors and the entertainers, this festival did not disappoint," Jacobs said. "I want to thank the CPRST team and everyone who worked behind the scenes to make this weekend possible. A festival of this size doesn't happen without an enormous amount of planning and hard work, and our city staff from all departments and volunteers make it look easy."

Jacobs also thanked those who attended the festival and said the city is already looking ahead to next year.

"To the visitors who joined us, thank you for choosing Cullman," Jacobs said. "This festival is one of the things that makes our community special, and we're already looking forward to welcoming everyone back next year."

Organizers said additional data, including a more complete breakdown of where visitors traveled from, is expected once final attendance information is reviewed.

State of Education (from Front)

Lauren Estes
lauren@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Multiple students and educators were honored at the 2026 State of Education Breakfast community breakfast hosted by the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce on Friday, April 24.

"We were honored to host our recent State of Education Community Breakfast, bringing together educators, students, and community leaders to celebrate the impact of education in Cullman," the Chamber said in a statement. "We were proud to award scholarships to outstanding students and honor teachers for their dedication, leadership, and commitment to shaping the next generation."

Award recipients
Students
- Jack Haynes (Fairview) – Student of the Year
- Brayden Moody (Cold Springs) – CTE Student of the Year
- Jacob Chaviers – Wallace State Student of the Year

Cullman County Teachers of the Year
- Lauren Bentley – Elementary
- Mary Lauren Hartline – Secondary

Cullman City Teachers of the Year
- Lacy Cameron – Elementary
- Michelle Greenlee – Secondary

Wallace State Teacher of the Year
- Lisa Ellard

Other student nominees included Laney Johnson (West Point), Melissa Williams (Holly Pond), Charlie Ashley (West Point), Kyndall Hamilton (Hanceville), Halli Joiner (Vinemont), Campbell Koch (Good Hope), Aiden Freeman (Cold Springs), Abygail Robertson (Cullman Christian), Kylie Calvert (Cullman), Parker Powell (Cullman), Reese Hopper (Cullman) and Sarah Woods (St. Bernard).

Teams (from Front)

cheering on every team and creating an atmosphere that was nothing short of incredible."

Teams of 10 were given the chance to begin the day with a practice pull, followed by two official pulls that would be combined for an overall score. Cullman Fire Rescue claimed the Fastest Pull, while Haven Counseling earned recognition for Most Team Spirit. The Slowest Pull, and one of the most fun to watch, was earned by the Cullman Elks Lodge.

"This event would not have been possible without the support of so many," Atchley shared. "We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to TriGreen Equipment for sponsoring the tractor, as well as Cullman Parks and Recreation, Cullman Fire Rescue, Chambers Farm and Garden Supply, Haven Counseling, 3Sixty Jeep Club, United Way of Cullman County, Crooked Creek Band and The Cullman Elks Lodge for their help before, during and after the event." She added, "Most of all, thank you to our community. You showed up, you cheered loud and you helped make this event something truly special."

For more information on The Willow Path, visit www.thewillowpath.org or contact Jessica Atchley at 256-775-2600 or jessica@thewillowpath.org.

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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, April 29 – 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, May 1 – 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. Special guest speaker – Larry C. Hill Sr.
• Saturday, May 2 – 8 a.m. Men's breakfast. 10:30 Cook and serve lunch at The Foundry Farm.
• Sunday, May 3 – 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. Prayer service at 2 p.m.

Shirley Burden Public Library in Hanceville
• 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.
• In April we continue the Poetry Contest! Please look at Facebook for contest details. We thank the Hanceville community for their book donations in helping us raise money for the children's programs. We also thank Jennifer and Tonya, owners of Southern Party Specialists LLC, for the $300 donation for a June presenter! We thank HanceVegas Coffee for sponsoring the Adult Book Club. We also thank the many library volunteers who help service the community.
• April 28, 11 a.m. Spanish Class with Mrs. Alejandra Pena
• April 29, 10 a.m. Storytime and Children's Book club led by Briana Taylor
• May 23, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Grilled Cheese Festival and Library BOOK SALE
• May 27, Start of Summer program!

Large Community Yard Sale
Friday, May 8, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. and Saturday, May 9, from 8 a.m.-noon, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 505 Commercial St. in Hanceville. Proceeds go to the (CCC) Committee on Church Cooperation and First Source for Women.

2026 Women's Conference: Joy in the Journey
Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m.-noon at Seventh Street Baptist Church, 708 Seventh. St. SW in Cullman. Ladies, you're invited to a special morning of encouragement, connection and worship at Seventh Street Baptist Church! Join us as we hear from Martha Pullen, Kelly Garner and Suzanne Crocker – three incredible speakers who will inspire and challenge you in your walk with Christ. Pastries and coffee provided. No matter where you are in your journey, this is a space for you to be refreshed and reminded of the joy God has for you. Register now at www.7thstreetbaptist.com/event-registration. Invite a friend and come – we'd love to see you there!

Holly Pond Lions Club Pancake Breakfast
Saturday, May 16, from 6-9 a.m. at the Holly Pond Lions Club Building. Enjoy pancakes, bacon, sausage and coffee, eat in or take out, for a donation. The proceeds will benefit the Holly Pond Cemetery project fund. Come join us! Thank you in advance for your support.



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PREP BASEBALL

Addison's Kiah Lake signs scholarship to play at Bevill State

Todd Walker
Tribune Correspondent

ADDISON, Ala. — Addison senior Kiah Lake signed a scholarship with Bevill State in front of a large group of family and friends at Addison High School. Kiah will play baseball for the Bears whom seem to grab a Bulldog every year.

"I am just grateful to be able to continue to play baseball, a game that I love, and be able to further my education. I hope to make the starting pitching rotation my freshman year but it will be difficult because of the talent that Bevill has. Even though I am primarily a pitcher, I can also play third base and first base so I do bring a little versatility," Lake said. He added, "I know when I visited Bevill's campus, it was nice and I really felt at home. I have some friends on the team right now and Head Coach (Steve) Woodard played pro ball (MLB) so I can learn a lot from him, especially about the art of pitching and what mindset you need to have day in and day out."

When asked about what he brings to the Bears, Kiah said, "I am a hard worker and absolutely love the game. I will do whatever the Coaches need me to do and will try and be the best teammate that I can be."

"I would like to thank Coach (Lee) Williams for all that he has done for me while I have been at Addison. He took a young kid that didn't have a lot of confidence in my abilities and helped me believe in myself. The coaches and teachers here really helped me grow as both a player and as a person. We (the baseball team) still have some things to accomplish here so this year is not done yet. We play South Lamar on Thursday and I hope to pitch well in the second round of the playoffs," Lake said.

"I just want my parents (Heath and Mandi) to know how much I appreciate them. I mean they have sacrificed so much for me to be able to live out my dreams. They gave up their time and money to drag me all over the state to play ball. I just want them to know that it didn't go unnoticed and I want to thank them. They both are great," Kiah said.



BRYN LAKE

Addison's Kiah Lake with family and coaches



LUCAS GRAY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman's Jonah Inman (right) celebrating with teammates

PREP BASEBALL

Inman's grand slam finishes off Southside, Bearcats win 11-0 to move on to round two

Lucas Gray
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CULLMAN, Ala. — After a blowout game one win over Southside followed by a stunning loss in game two, Cullman hosted the Panthers for a series-deciding third game on Saturday afternoon. Like the first game, the Bearcats struck quickly and built a lead. In the bottom of the fifth, designated hitter Jonah Inman slapped a grand slam to center field to end the game and the series with an 11-0 win.

Taking the mound for the Bearcats was Landyn Henry, who had not previously thrown in the series. With a fresh arm, Henry blanked the Panthers, throwing five scoreless innings where he only gave up three hits while striking out four batters.

Backing up his performance on the mound, Cullman's bats gave Henry quick run support. In the top of the first, two of the first three batters made it on base. Cross Bowen, batting fourth, lived up to his cleanup spot in the lineup by driving home a run with a single to open scoring. Next up, Colt Colvard knocked a grounder to the outfield that scored one, and an errant throw allowed Bowen to touch home. On a pick off attempt, another error allowed Colvard to score to make it 4-0 Cullman after just one inning.

In the bottom of the third, Bowen lead off with a line drive triple and made it home just moments later thanks to a grounder from Colvard to make it 5-0.

After a scoreless fourth, the Bearcats lit up Southside's starting pitcher Abe Martin, leading off the inning with three hits and a walk. An error on a grounder from Bowen and a single from Jake Weathersby scored two more, then, with bases loaded, one out and seven runs on the board, Inman ended the game and series with his grand slam.

Inman finished 2-4 from the plate with four RBIs and one run scored, and Bowen went 3-3, highlighted by his triple.

Cullman will move on to round two to face 2025 6A State Champion Hartselle (25-11 this season), who defeated Buckhorn 14-8 and 6-3 in their round one matchup.



UNA ATHLETICS

Former UNA tight end Kaleb Heatherly

Former Cullman star accepts invite to Indianapolis Colts Rookie Minicamp

Lucas Gray
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CULLMAN, Ala. — After going undrafted in the 2026 NFL Draft, former Cullman Bearcats tight end Kaleb Heatherly accepted an invite to participate in the Indianapolis Colts' Rookie Minicamp on May 8-9.

"The Colts had shown a lot of interest in me since I played at the Dream Bowl, and going into the weekend I was hoping I'd receive a call from Indianapolis," Heatherly told The Tribune. He continued, "Saturday was a very long day, and I knew that was the day I'd be expecting some calls but when they called me I knew I was ready to be an Indianapolis Colt and am super excited to get to work at minicamp in two weeks."

The 6-foot-6 end played four years at North Alabama in Florence, catching 17 passes for 223 yards and two touchdowns for the Lions in 2025. While his frame makes him a receiving threat, his value as a rookie will be in his blocking and special teams abilities.

As the league shifts back towards big-bodied blocking tight ends, evident by the selections in this year's draft, Heatherly's strengths and violent style of play could land him a spot on the Colts' training camp roster later this summer.







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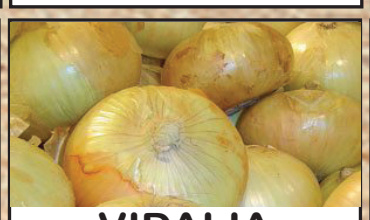
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Pilot Club holds annual fashion show

Anabelle Howze
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CULLMAN, Ala. — The Pilot Club of Cullman held its annual fashion show and luncheon last week, raising money for several local organizations.

Pilot Club President Brenda Allison said one of the best parts of the day was seeing people come in and reunite with friends they might only see once a year at the event, saying the event helps create a sense of tradition and community.

The fashion show gets strong support from the community every year. Allison said people start asking about tickets well before the event.

Money raised at the event will go to several organizations the club supports, such as Project Lifesaver, the Margaret Jean Jones Center and The Pilot Light Home. Allison said the proceeds will help the club do even more for these groups.

This year's event, held at The Venue at Cotton Creek, had a lively atmosphere, with a packed room and an energetic crowd.

"The room was filled with excitement and laughter. It was something that we wanted, everyone coming together, working together to make this event a success," said Allison.

The show also had a patriotic theme to honor America's upcoming 250th anniversary. Allison said the theme made the event more meaningful, especially by honoring veterans who attended.

"It was not only a celebration of America's 250th anniversary, but we were excited to celebrate our veterans who gave so much to our country," she said. "We were honored to welcome all veterans and the wives of veterans who were in attendance."

The Pilot Club of Cullman is still accepting donations to support its community projects. Donations can be made out to the Cullman Pilot Club and mailed to P.O. Box 1439, Cullman, AL 35056.



ANABELLE HOWZE/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The Pilot Club of Cullman held its annual fashion show and luncheon April 22, 2026, at The Venue at Cotton Creek.

Captivate Learning Center gearing up for Summer Experience

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CULLMAN, Ala. — A local alternative education program aims to combine academics with life skills and give families more time together.

Lauren Rainwater, who founded and owns Captivate Learning Center, said the program offers a different approach than traditional schools by using a part-time schedule and hands-on learning. Captivate runs three days a week, meeting Monday to Wednesday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Students spend part of each day on academics like reading and math, and the rest on life skills such as financial literacy, gardening, professionalism and interview practice. Rainwater said this setup helps students get focused instruction and gives families more time together at home.

"All of our lessons are engaging and hands-on. We want students to enjoy learning while also gaining the skills they'll need to be successful as adults," she said.

The program keeps class sizes small, with one teacher for every eight students, so kids get more individual and small-group attention. Captivate also focuses on teacher-led lessons, choosing direct interaction and hands-on activities instead of using tablets or computers.

Besides its homeschool program for students ages 4 through fifth grade, the center also offers after-school tutoring. This includes help with reading and math, coaching for executive functioning and dyslexia therapy. Daily dyslexia support will grow with a new specialized instructor joining the team.

Captivate is getting ready for its Summer Experience, an eight-week program in June and July. It will offer academic review to help prevent learning loss, plus enrichment activities and themed events. Enrollment is open now, but there are only a few spots left.

Families who want to join need to do an interview and a trial day, so both sides can see if the program is a good match.

Rainwater said the program has already helped many students, especially those coming from traditional schools. "And for families, having more time together has been just as important."

Captivate Learning Center is located 207 Third St. SW, Cullman. To get more information, call 256-798-2218 or visit Facebook/Captivate Learning Center.



ANABELLE HOWZE/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Captivate Learning Center is located 207 Third St. SW, Cullman.

WSCC: More than 150 inducted into National Society of Leadership and Success

Special to The Cullman Tribune

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — More than 150 Wallace State Community College students were inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) during the 2025–2026 academic year, marking a milestone in their leadership and personal development journeys.

"Each student member here has gained meaningful leadership insight and perspective through the steps leading to induction," said Kristen Holmes, vice president for students. "Along the way, you made commitments — to yourselves, to one another and to your communities — to create positive change."

NSLS is a national organization that provides a comprehensive leadership program designed to foster personal growth, career success and community engagement. The Wallace State chapter supports these goals through service projects each year. Most recently, members partnered with the Cullman County Animal Shelter by delivering donated supplies and spending time caring for the animals.

The induction ceremony featured guest speakers Drew Morton, a success advisor at Wallace State, and Jacob Chaviers, president of the Wallace State NSLS chapter.

Morton encouraged students to take responsibility for their goals and outcomes.

"Taking responsibility means to own what your next step is going to be and take charge of what end result you want to achieve," Morton said. "Despite the cards you have been dealt, despite the pain you might have brought on yourself by bad decisions, it means to take charge of the end result you want to achieve."

He emphasized the importance of perseverance, accountability and avoiding the temptation to blame others or choose the easiest path.

Chaviers shared how his own college experience has been shaped by learning from mistakes and embracing hard work.

"Through making mistakes and doing hard work...I truly learned, and Mrs. (Karen) Downs helped me grow as a person and as a leader," Chaviers said.

He also highlighted the determination of fellow NSLS member Jennifer Couch, who continued meeting her academic and leadership commitments while recovering from open heart surgery.

"Even though she just got through surgery, she went through and finished her essays and did all of her homework on time and went to the training despite her health," Chaviers said. "She did not make excuses."

Students inducted into Wallace State's chapter of the NSLS include:

- Alabaster: Alecia Cruse
- Altoona: Amanda Hammond, Tonya Lithgow, Fabian Zavala
- Arab: Max Cooper, Brittany Mote
- Arley: Amy Farmer
- Ashville: Kristi Hale
- Athens: Jessica Spears
- Baileyton: Caden Maddox
- Bessemer: Toccara Corgin
- Birmingham: Rolonda Burks, Ariel Ernest, Brittany Givan, Rakell Mahogany, Kariana McAdoo, LaDarius Williams, Lashunta Wilson
- Blountsville: Katelyn Hopson, John Pullins, Misty Wadsworth, Hannah Washburn
- Boaz: Jayden Johnson
- Bremen: Isabelle Howell
- Cherokee: Libby Collum
- Childersburg: Heavenly Lawson
- Cleveland: Ellee Culpepper, Mariana Tafolla
- Cordova: George Limberakis, Katrina Thompson
- Crane Hill: Tiffany Haynes, Kayla Keeton
- Cullman: Thatcher Armstrong, Dalton Bryan, Morgon Burdeshaw, Collin Cooner, Aubrey Corry, Reagan Duke, Jacob Fales, Illora Goodwin, Jacy Guthrie, Sophia Helms, Zoe Hudson, Reese Hutson, Joel Jr Jasso-Robledo, Juliaunna Koloski, Ann Marie Land, Brayden McKinney, Hannah McKoy, Tallulah Nassetta, Ella Payne, Emmaline Powell, Eduardo Rodriguez Rodriguez, Owen Rust, Leslie Sanchez, Mason Shelton, Quinn Teichmiller, Zander Veal
- Danville: Charlie Jones
- Decatur: Alexus Howlet
- Eva: Alodie Hill
- Fairfield: Ashley Boyd
- Falkville: Hailey Carrington, Kaylie Curvin, Peyton DeFoor, Tiffany Fagan, Christian Lamar
- Florence: Dani Gilliam, Tyrekia Pride
- Fort Payne: Daniella Castillo
- Fultondale: Kayla Speights
- Gardendale: Michael Jones, Jenny Kennedy, Avery Tipler
- Guntersville: Emily Frazier, Eunice Wambura
- Gurley: Mary Key
- Haleyville: Cadence Rivera
- Hanceville: Elizabeth Brooks, Gracie Collins, Cheryl Gill, Ashlynn Massey, Emma McMahan, McKenzlie Myers, Devan Ponder, Paige Trent
- Hartselle: Molly Cowart, Ellie Merrell, Kristina Moore
- Harvest: Erica Johnson, Priscila Pulido
- Hayden: Destinee Byrd, Caylee Grace Chappell, Reagan Lumpkin, Joshua Mauldin, Jordan Mayo, Caitlin Pritchett, Lyla Quinn, Emma Stewart
- Helena: Courtney Brown, Alexandra Maddox
- Holly Pond: Jose Aguilar, Neida Kimberly Bamaca Ambrocio, Tessa Jones, Amelia Pamplin
- Hoover: Niyjah Tate
- Horton: Claire Maze, Emily Phillips
- Hueytown: Daniel Clark
- Huntsville: Bethany Abbott, Sydney Gurley, Teagen Harmon, Blanca Pahua-Pio
- Jack: Carlee McAllister
- Jasper: Krista Atkins, Savanna Estes
- Jemison: Jocelyn Guadalupe
- Laceys Spring: Estefani Garcia
- Lincoln: Kedrick Tamauze Carmichael
- Logan: Tammy Aderhold, Jessie Knott, Hailey Pike, Lane Shedd
- Madison: Sawyer Griffin
- Millport: Shae Slane
- Moody: Gabrielle Holloman
- Morris: Samuel Myers, Kynsey Register, Samuel Sansing
- Moulton: Sydney West
- Mount Olive: Hannah Courington, Memphis Stephens, Lillian Woodard
- Odenville: Sania Peterson
- Oneonta: Joshua Arreguin, Abril Arriaga, Adriana Chacon, Caroline Chacon, Angelica Maria Gaspar Juan, Divani Guerrero, Jackson Gunn, Armando Nunez, Maria Zavala Gonzalez
- Pinson: Arieona Rosebud
- Rainbow City: Lorie-Brooke Kilgore
- Russellville: Cassandra Patrick
- Somerville: Matthew Garner, Cade Mims
- Toney: Anthoney Turner
- Trafford: Kaitlyn Allegood, Alyssa Moody
- Trussville: Kellyn Cox, Maleah Mitchell
- Vinemont: Addison Adcock, Brayden Cullifer, Annaliese Dunn, Nolan Dyer, Bryant Eastman, Brayden Johnson, Zoey McMahon, Kylie Raney, Zeke Spradlin, Arianna Turbeville
- Warrior: Savannah Pritchet, Mary Schifanella, Aaliyah Watkins
- Woodstock: Amileah Flannagan
- Belden, Miss.: Brookelyn Morgan
- Amarillo, Texas: Camdyn Clifton
- Troiisdorf-Sieglar, Germany: Artur Beifuss



WALLACE STATE

Students inducted into the Wallace State Community College National Society of Leadership and Success pose for a photograph.

THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
APRIL 28, 2026

Obituary Announcements: April 25-27

Judy Yates Nelms, 72

Judy Yates Nelms, 72, passed on April 23, 2026. Judy was a resident of Cullman, Alabama. Judy was born in Franklin, Georgia, to the late Glenn Dewey Yates and the late Eloise Cummings Yates. Judy was raised in a home filled with lots of love and even more laughter, thanks to the many siblings, cousins, and other family members who frequented the Yates family home. It was during those years that she found a love for Jesus during family devotions every evening and endless hours spent at Happy Valley Baptist Church. Her youth laid the foundation for a lifelong love of dominoes, tomato sandwiches, and gospel music. In 8th grade, Judy was introduced to the young man with whom she would share her remaining years, Jerry W. Nelms. Shortly after graduating from Troup County High School, Judy and Jerry married, and she became his biggest supporter as he completed engineering school at Auburn University. During those early years of marriage, Judy worked hard to make their single-wide trailer a happy home, always having a grilled cheese sandwich at the ready for late-night study sessions. Upon graduation from Auburn, Judy and Jerry moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina, for a short stint, but Georgia was always on their mind. Judy and Jerry then returned to Georgia, where they settled in Newnan. Early on in their marriage, they developed a love for riding motorcycles, a hobby that culminated in a two-week excursion up the Atlantic coast, where they both learned what it truly meant to be freezing cold. It was also in Newnan where they first became parents with the birth of their son, Jeremy. Shortly thereafter, the growing Nelms family relocated to Watkinsville. As an Auburn family, they found the proximity to Athens challenging at times for the whole gang. It was Watkinsville where the Nelms family was completed with the birth of their daughter, Katie. In 1995, the Nelms family moved to Cullman, Alabama. Shortly upon arriving, Judy obtained her Associate's degree from Wallace State Community College, achieving a long-held goal of her own. It was also around that time that Judy reentered the workforce after years of nurturing her young family, but she found the transition to a typical 9-5 less than fulfilling. Fortunately, her husband encouraged her to think outside the box, and with that newfound freedom, she embraced her more creative side and developed her first alter ego, Chloe the Clown. Equipped with new balloon animal making skills, a magic kit, and a handmade costume, she made memories for kids and families all across North Alabama. It was through Chloe that she was first introduced to the party store, It's My Party. In 2000, Judy became the owner of It's My Party and thus began a nearly 25-year passion project. Over the years, she was instrumental in creating thousands of memories, equipping others for bridal showers, graduations, birthdays, costume parties, holiday festivities, and any other event where you might need fake vomit, silly string, or any other manner of mischief. To say she loved her job would be an understatement. It was also during her tenure at It's My Party that she developed her other alter egos, through which her singing telegram service was sure to make any event, including interrupting a court proceeding and stopping a wedding, one for the record books. Her characters included Henrietta the Chicken, Deidre Death, and her most notable character was Lulu the Gorilla in the Pink Tutu. After helping to be a part of so many memories being made over the years, she became an indispensable part of the Cullman business community. It was her love for her customers and for those who would just stop by and pull up a stool to chat that kept her going each and every day. After retiring from her store, she devoted her remaining years to loving her grandchildren, who were her greatest joy, and of course, pulling out Lulu the Gorilla in the Pink Tutu when duty called. Judy is survived by her husband, Jerry W. Nelms; her son, Jeremy Nelms (Elizabeth); her daughter, Katie Fine (Jacob); her sister, Glenda Brooks (Lamar); her brother, Glenn Yates (Cynthia); her grandsons, Bradlee Nelms, Cooper Fine, and Milo Fine; her granddaughters, Mara Nelms and Eloise Fine; and numerous nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews. Judy was preceded in death by her mother, Eloise Cummings Yates; her father, Glenn Yates, Sr.; her sister, Vickie Davis (Paul); and her niece, Kimberly Traylor. Visitation will be held at Desperation Church, 510 Fifth Street SW, Cullman, AL 35055, on May 2, 2026, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., followed by a Celebration of Life at Desperation Church beginning at 1 p.m. A Committal Service will take place at Cullman City Cemetery, Ninth Street SW, Cullman, AL 35055, on May 2, 2026, following the Celebration of Life. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Desperation Church Cullman children's ministry, Desperation Kids, in Judy's honor. Moss Service Funeral Home is directing.

Robert Leon 'Bob' Chaney, 79

Mr. Robert Leon "Bob" Chaney, age 79, of Cullman passed away on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at Cullman Regional Medical Center, surrounded by his loving family. A memorial service will be held in his honor on Sunday, May 17, 2026, at 2 p.m. at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home. Family would like to welcome all who knew Bob to attend. Bob was born on Feb. 26, 1947, to Mr. and Mrs. Chesley Chaney. He is preceded in death by his parents; sister, Carolyn Heatherly. He is survived by his wife, Patricia Leverett Chaney; nephew, Curt Heatherly; nieces, Pam Froshour, Lisa Guerrero, Jami Kuykendall (Todd), Brandi Evans (Brian), Elizabeth Harper; sister-in-law, Sondra Harper (Anthony); his loving fur babies, Nikki, Bailey, and Macy; a host of great nieces and nephews; a host of great great nieces and nephews. Bob was a well-known businessman in the community, owning Bob Chaney & Associates, Inc. for over forty years. He was a member of St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church and was a lifetime member of the Elks Lodge as well as serving many years in Lion's Club. He was a humble and caring man, who loved his family, fur babies, and his hometown, diligently helping others every opportunity he had to do so Family, friends, clients, and colleagues will feel the loss of this wonderful man as the days and years pass by. But, knowing Mr. Bob Chaney's legacy of servitude, kindness, and love will remain always, giving comfort to those he loved and cherished.

Jackie Wayne Needham, 70

Jackie Wayne Needham, of Blountsville, Alabama, passed away on April 23, 2026, at the age of 70. Mr. Needham was born in Cullman County, Alabama, on Jan. 10, 1956, to the late Elbert Leon and Mildred Irene Stancil Needham. Mr. Needham is preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife, Patricia "Starr" Needham; and his siblings, Rayford Needham, Rayburn Needham, Gearld Needham, Kenny Needham, and Pam Malin. Those left to cherish the many memories of Jackie include his children, Alicia Davis, Janice Needham, Belinda Johnson, Ronald Reaves; nephew, Shannon Needham (Bobby Sue); sister-in-law, Diane Williams; dear friend, Charlene Burns; a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren; many nieces and nephews; and his best friend and cherished companion, his dog Roxie. Jackie worked for many years as a crane operator where he built bridges across the south. Mr. Needham loved God and enjoyed attending worship at Zion Grove Baptist Church, and he liked to visit with the church family at Bethlehem Baptist Church too. Jackie served several years as the cemetery sexton for Zion Grove Cemetery where he helped many families choose a final resting place for their loved ones. In his free time, Jackie enjoyed listening to Bluegrass music, fishing, woodworking, and cooking. He was an amazing cook whose skills were second to none. He was an expert with the grill, producing meals anyone would consider restaurant quality. Mr. Needham was also a proud supporter of President Trump, and he enjoyed political discussions with his family and friends. Mr. Needham was a kind man who was known to all as a very caring person, always available to help anyone who might need him. Jackie did have a stubborn streak (Needham blood), but most people never saw him lose his temper. He was a good person who was always there for his family and friends. His big heart and compassion for people will be missed by all who have had the honor of knowing him. Friends are invited to join the Needham family on Monday, April 27, 2026, in the Holly Pond Funeral Home Chapel for a time of visitation from noon-2 p.m. Funeral services will begin at 2 p.m. with Pastor Brad Hadley officiating. Mr. Needham will be laid to rest in Zion Grove Cemetery following services. Holly Pond Funeral Home is honored to serve the Needham family, and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time.

Mary Anita Fleischamel, 78

Funeral service for Mary Anita Fleischamel, 78, of Arab will be at 1 p.m., Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Bethsadia Cemetery, Rev. Kevin Jenkins officiating. The family will receive friends at the funeral home from noon-1 p.m. on Wednesday. Cullman Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Mary passed away April 25, 2026, at Arab Diversicare. She was born Aug. 20, 1947, to Emory Williford and Anna Bellefleur Weathersby. She was a writer and was currently writing a novel when she passed. She was a bookkeeper, helped with her husband's business, played the piano and guitar, and was the church pianist for a good while. She was preceded in death by her parents and a son, John MacNeil. Survivors include her husband of 49 years, Bill Fleischamel; daughter, Karen Rigsby (Brian); brothers, Jerry Weathersby (Julia), Randy Weathersby (Derinda), David Bellefleur; grandson, Dylan Rigsby; family and friends. Friends may sign the online guestbook at www.cullmanfuneralhome.com.

Jerry Marlin Cornelius, 84

Memorial Service for Mr. Jerry Marlin Cornelius, age 84, of Addison, is Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 2 p.m. at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home, with Bro. Tim Lipsey and Bro. Patrick Cleghorn officiating. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Jerry was born on Oct. 24, 1941, to Marlin Cornelius and Opal Cantrell Cornelius. He passed away on Thursday, April 23, 2026, at his residence surrounded by his loving family. He is preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Dorothy Cornelius; brother, John Tim Cornelius; brother-in-law, Bob Cort. He is survived by his sons, Christopher Cornelius (Tammy), and Bryan Cornelius; brothers, Don Cornelius, Ronnie Cornelius (Jennie), Robert Ken Cornelius (Glenna); sisters, Patti Hershey, Velva "Cookie" Cort, Ruby Cornelius, and Bunny Adams; a host of nieces and nephews, cousins, and family and friends. Family remembers Jerry as a loving husband and father. His greatest joy in life was his family and his love talent of designing, building, and flying aircraft. He will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him.

Shelby Ann Barker, 65

Funeral service for Shelby Ann Barker, 65, will be at 2 p.m., Thursday, April 30, 2026, at Cullman Funeral Home Chapel with interment in Fairview West Cemetery, Rev. Steve Rodgers officiating. The family will receive friends at the funeral home from noon-2 p.m. Cullman Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Mrs. Barker passed away Sunday, April 26, 2026, at CRMC. She was born Dec. 6, 1960, to William Riley Day and Bertie Mae Waldrop Day. Shelby loved all animals, gardening, yard sales and thrift stores. She loved her Mountain Dew drinks. Her family, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren were loved and were her life. She was preceded in death by her parents; and her brothers, Edward, Donald, and John Day. Those left to cherish her memory are her husband, Larry Barker; son, Wesley Cason (Jennifer); daughter, Misty Quick (Michael); brothers, James Day (Wanda), Allen Day (Sue); sisters, Judy Freeman, Annette Stapler, Vickie Quick (Jeff); grandchildren, Demi Bishop (Jonathan), Austin Cason, Tony Cason, Joey Cason (Kaley), Shane Goodno, Desiree Goodno, Bradlee Quick (Haley); great-grandchildren, Jada, Haven, Rosealee, Kyde, Nyla, Kipp, Zee, Coleden, Alainie, Anthony, Melony, Serenity, Hunter, Makayleigh; family and friends. Pallbearers will be Jonathan, Michael, Joey, Tony, Bradlee, Austin. Friends may sign the online guestbook at www.cullmanfuneralhome.com.

Kenneth Lavon Willoughby, 61

Kenneth Lavon Willoughby, 61, of Crane Hill, Alabama, passed away on April 25, 2026. Born Aug. 28, 1964, in Alabama, Kenneth was a beloved presence to those who knew him—remembered with deep respect for the warmth he brought to everyday moments, the generosity he showed without fanfare, and the steady humor that could lighten a room when it was needed most. Kenneth enjoyed driving truck, a line of work that suited his straightforward nature and the quiet pride he took in an honest day's effort. In the miles he traveled and the routine he kept, family and friends recognized someone dependable—someone who gave freely of himself and whose laughter often arrived at just the right time. Kenneth is survived by his daughter, Heather Willoughby; his son, Austen Willoughby (Kaylee Keller); his parents, James and Betty Willoughby; and his grandchildren, Izaya Willoughby and Aurora Willoughby. A committal service will be held on April 28, 2026, from 2-2:30 p.m. at External Service Location, 16609 County Road 222, Crane Hill, AL 35053, US.

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Hanceville, Alabama 35077
(256) 352-3130

Thornton (from Front)

Cullman County athletics. He was there for the big games and the quiet ones, for championship moments and early-season matchups, for media days, regional tournaments, Wallace State broadcasts, county rivalries and student athletes still learning how to step into the spotlight.

To many, Thornton was not simply the person covering the game. He was part of the game-day landscape itself.

He was a fixture along the sideline, in the press box, near the scorer's table or behind a microphone, often with a memory ready, a question prepared and a story already forming. He knew the names, the records, the old gymnasiums, the rivalries and the moments that mattered to families long after the final horn sounded.

Thornton's public sports story traces back to Good Hope High School, where he played basketball and graduated in 1979. WKUL noted that Thornton was a point guard on Good Hope's 1978-79 team, playing alongside Jeff Speegle, who went on to a long broadcasting career of his own.

Those Good Hope roots remained part of Thornton throughout his life. Even as his work took him across Cullman County and into broader Alabama high school sports coverage, Good Hope remained the place where his relationship with local athletics first took shape.

From there, Thornton built a life around sports.

He began his professional media career with The Cullman Times, where he worked in sports reporting. Over the years, his work also included The Cullman Tribune, CATV Channel 2 and WKUL, where he became one of the station's familiar sports voices.

Thornton's television work also left an impression on those who worked with him during the Channel 2 years. Dennis Borwick, former owner of the station, said his friendship with Thornton went back to the days of Channel 2's "Today On 2."

"We have been friends since our Channel 2, 'Today On 2' days," he said. "Johnny recorded numerous interviews with local coaches. We have continued to see each other at baseball and basketball games. Truly a legend for area sports."

Former Cullman Tribune Sports Editor Nick Griffin, who worked with Thornton at The Tribune and remained friends with him after Thornton left, said Thornton treated every local sports assignment as something worth preserving.

"Whether it was a spring scrimmage, a summer exhibition, a state championship game or just a matchup between county rivals, every event was important to Johnny. It didn't matter what the event was, if it concerned Cullman County sports, Flash was there early, front and center, making sure he didn't miss anything," Griffin said. "If I didn't know where a tournament was, what time an event would start or who won a game 15 years ago, I could always count on Johnny to share some knowledge. He was a constant presence on the sidelines all across the county and when you saw him in action, it was a constant reminder of how important each of these events are to so many people in our community. It was a pleasure to cover sports alongside him as a friend for eight years, and I know Cullman County athletics truly won't be the same without Flash off to the side taking notes."

WKUL remembered Thornton as a mainstay of the local sports media landscape, someone who cared deeply about the full game experience, from pre-game coverage to post-game wrap-ups. The station also remembered him as an advocate for girls' basketball, someone who worked to make sure local female athletes received attention, coverage and respect.

That mattered because Thornton's work was never just about scores.

It was about people.

It was about the student athlete whose name appeared in print for the first time. It was about the coach trying to build a program. It was about the family listening from home. It was about the small school athlete getting the same care and attention as anyone else.

Cullman County Schools said the school system was deeply saddened to hear of Thornton's passing, noting his love for Cullman County Schools and his years of coverage of student athletes. The system also offered condolences to Thornton's family and his work family at WKUL 92.1 FM.

Superintendent Dr. Shane Barnette said Thornton's connection to local athletics went far beyond showing up with a microphone or notepad.

"Johnny Thornton lived and breathed Cullman County athletics. He was a walking encyclopedia of sports knowledge who cared deeply about our student athletes and the success of our programs. We could always count on Johnny to be present at our media day events, engaging our students with questions that helped prepare them for the spotlight and for future opportunities," Barnette said. "He covered all sports with passion, fairness and a genuine appreciation for the effort and dedication of every athlete. Johnny's presence will be greatly missed, but his impact on our schools and community will not be forgotten."

Thornton's career also included a long association with Wallace State Community College. He served as Wallace State's sports information director from 1982-97, providing publicity for the college's athletic programs and working as statistician for basketball, softball and volleyball. He later broadcast Wallace State home basketball games on WKUL 92.1 FM and remained connected to the college through athletics, broadcasts and public address work.

Wallace State Community College President Dr. Vicki Karolewics said Thornton was part of the Wallace State family for decades.

"Wallace State Community College joins our community in mourning the loss of Johnny 'The Flash' Thornton, a beloved voice in local sports and a cherished member of the Wallace State family. Johnny's impact on our college spans decades, from his service as sports information director to his continued role as a champion for our student-athletes and programs," she said. "Even after he left Wallace State to pursue a career in radio, he remained deeply connected to our campus as a longtime broadcaster and public address announcer for our athletic teams and the AHSAA Northwest Regional Basketball Tournament we annually host. He was widely known for his encyclopedic knowledge of sports, especially the statistics, history and stories of Wallace State and area teams and athletes, which made him a trusted voice and a treasured resource for generations of fans. His passion for sports and his commitment to telling the stories of others defined a remarkable career. We extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends and all who had the privilege of knowing him."

Alabama Senate President Pro Tem Garlan Gudger, R-Cullman, said Thornton's impact reached beyond the court and microphone.

"Johnny 'The Flash' Thornton was a sports icon in Cullman County and throughout the state of Alabama! He was a friend to all who met him and only wanted Cullman County's young men and women to achieve their goals in and out of the sports arena! He will be greatly missed, and there is now a void in Cullman County as one of the greatest radio personalities has announced his last final game, but we will remember his legacy will still be with us forever!"

Wallace State inducted Thornton into its Sports Hall of Fame as a contributor in 2016. He had previously been inducted into the Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame in 2009.

Those honors reflected only part of the story.

Thornton's life in sports was unusually wide. He was a player, writer, coach, broadcaster, statistician, official and mentor. He spent 18 years coaching AAU girls basketball, guiding young athletes to more than 150 wins, according to WKUL. He also worked as a referee, seeing the game from yet another angle.

Through all of it, he became known simply as "The Flash."

The exact origin of the nickname was not immediately verified, but the name became inseparable from Thornton's identity. In Cullman County sports circles, "The Flash" was shorthand for a man who seemed to always be moving toward the next game, the next athlete, the next broadcast and the next story.

WKUL credited mentors and broadcast partners, including Bill Shelton, Ron Mosley Sr., Rich Jesse, Ken Burcham, Pete Kirby, Ron Mosley Jr., Steven Sutter and the late Grant Smith, as part of the sports media family that helped shape Thornton's career.

Thornton had a motto that reflected the sweep of his interests, even if his heart stayed close to home: "Spanning the globe to give a constant variety of sports."

For Thornton, that globe often looked like Cullman County.

It was a county tournament. A Good Hope game. A Wallace State broadcast. A Friday night football assignment. A volleyball match. A softball game. A state championship event. A media day where nervous student athletes learned how to answer questions, speak clearly and understand that their effort was worth noticing.

In recent years, Thornton continued working through WKUL and the NFHS Network, helping bring high school sports to radio listeners and online viewers. In 2024, Thornton and Rich Jesse called AHSAA soccer championship matches for the NFHS Network after previously working AHSAA track and basketball championship coverage.

"The NFHS and the AHSAA have built something that serves as a valuable purpose for championship play with these games," Thornton said in a WKUL story about the assignment. "Plenty of people may not be able to be in person for the championship games and now, the AHSAA and NFHS gives them a chance to see the games, through the new technology of streaming via the internet."

For Thornton, the technology mattered because the athletes mattered. Streaming was another way to make sure someone's game, season and achievement could be seen.



BILL PIPER

Gary McGriff and Johnny Thornton

"I know this for myself and Rich, we were honored to be the announcers to call the Good Hope girls' victory in the 4A Northwest Regional at Wallace State in February," Thornton said in the same WKUL story. "Those are moments that have great meaning to the performers and also to the broadcasters and those who produce the games for radio listeners and internet followers."

Even late in his career, Thornton kept showing up.

In February 2026, WKUL reported that Thornton called eight AHSAA Northwest Regional basketball games in one day for the NFHS Network at Wallace State. The same report said he had seen 205 high school basketball games during the 2025-26 season, with his 200th coming during the Class 7A girls regional championship between Hillcrest Tuscaloosa and Bob Jones.

That kind of endurance said something.

He was still watching. Still working. Still taking notes. Still following teams. Still telling people what happened and why it mattered.

Thornton's passing leaves a wide space in Cullman County sports because his work was never confined to one job title. He was part journalist, part broadcaster, part historian and part encourager. He understood that local sports are not small to the people living them. They are memories, milestones, family stories and chapters in the lives of young athletes.

He helped preserve those chapters.

A graveside service for Thornton will be held at Cullman City Cemetery on Tuesday, April 28, at 1 p.m. Pastor Steven Sutter will officiate.

For those who knew him, listened to him, played for him or saw him seated courtside with a microphone, camera or notepad, Johnny "The Flash" Thornton's final season does not erase the seasons that came before it.

It reminds people why they mattered.

And for more than four decades, Thornton made sure they did.

LEGALS

NOTICE SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION
Democrat and Republican Primary
And Constitutional Amendment Election May 19, 2026

State of Alabama
Cullman County
Probate Office Elections
TO: All Cullman County Voters

There will be a School of Instruction held for all election workers in Cullman County on April 28th, 29th, & 30th between the hours of 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM, pursuant to *Ala. Code* §17-8-9 *(a)*. All election workers selected by the Appointing Board are required to attend one of these schools.

Thank you for your service.

Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate
Cullman County

STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
*
CULLMAN COUNTY * CASE NO. PC 2026-132

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF MARGARET ANN KLEIN BAUMGARTNER, DECEASED.

NOTICE OF HEARING OF PETITION FOR PROBATE OF THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF MARGARET ANN KLEIN BAUMGARTNER

TO: YANCY LAURENS VAN PATTEN

The Petition of Patrick L. Klein to admit to probate the Last Will and Testament of Margaret Ann Klein Baumgartner, deceased, has been set for hearing on the 21st day of July, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

TO: PUBLISHER OF *The Cullman Tribune:*

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

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate

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

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
TERRY DALE KEY, * CASE NO PC 2025-363
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF HEARING
PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL and
AMENDED PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL

TO: **DEL ROBERTS a/k/a DALE ROBERTS, BAYLEE ELISE MAREK, JOSHUA BRIAN GARNER, AND ANY OTHER NEXT-OF-KIN AND HEIRS**

Petition for Probate of Will filed by Dustin Key, Petitioner, through Attorney Matthew K. Carter for the Estate of Terry D. Key and *Amended Petition for Probate of Will* filed by Matthew K. Carter, Attorney. A hearing is scheduled on this matter for the **21st day of July, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.** before Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate, Cullman, Alabama.

All persons are hereby given notice to appear and contest said petition if they think proper.

Cullman County Courthouse
500 2nd Avenue SW
Room 101
Cullman, Alabama 35055

Done this the 27th day of April, 2026.

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

To the Publisher: The Cullman Tribune

Please publish the above notice three (3) successive weeks is said newspaper and send an affidavit of Publication to Judge of Probate

Matthew K. Carter
Attorney at Law
413 1st Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055

IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF *
D.L.S., * **CASE NO.: JU 19-341.05**
a minor, DOB: 12-22-2009. *

NOTICE OF TERMINATION HEARING

MICHAEL NEAL STACKS, whose whereabouts are unknown, must answer the Petition for Termination of Parental Rights filed by the Cullman County Department of Human Resources in regards to a minor child born on December 22, 2009, to Julie Lynn Massey by the 12 day of May, 2026, or thereafter a judgment terminating his parental rights may be entered against him in the Juvenile Court of Cullman County, Alabama.

Done this the 27 day of March, 2026.

Lisa McSwain
Lisa McSwain
Circuit Clerk

Petitioner:
Cullman County Department of Human Resources
P. O. Box 990
1220 St. Joseph Street NW
Cullman, AL 35056

Perry D. Knight
Attorney for Petitioner
412 First Avenue SE
Suite 101
Cullman, AL 35055
256-734-4090

FILED IN OFFICE
MAR 27 2026
LISA McSWAIN
CIRCUIT COURT
CULLMAN COUNTY

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: The Estate of)
)
ORVELENE FULENWIDER,) CASE NO. PC 2025-234
)
DECEASED.)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters Testamentary having been granted to Bernard Delaine Fulenwider as Personal Representative of the Estate of Orvelene Fulenwider, deceased, on the 24th day of April, 2026, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate.

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.

Bernard D Fulenwider
Bernard Delaine Fulenwider
Personal Representative of the Estate of
Orvelene Fulenwider, deceased

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

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

Beverly Paschal Poston (PAS001)
Attorney for the Estate of
Orvelene Fulenwider, deceased.
201 2nd Avenue SE
Cullman, Alabama, 35055
bposton@beverlypaschalposton.com
(256)739-3970

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate
Cullman County, Alabama





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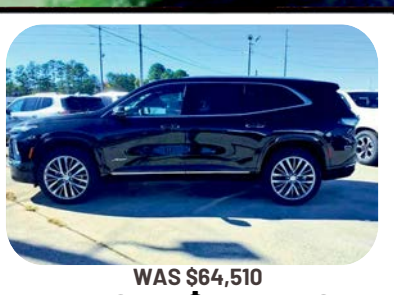
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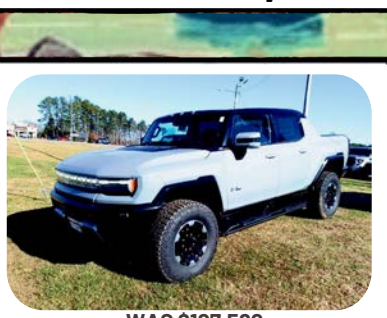
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