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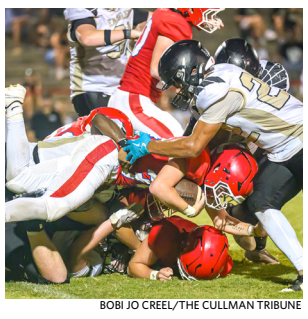
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BOBI JO CREEL/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

— SPORTS —

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Former Cullman County detention deputy alleges illegal phone seizure after cybersecurity report

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — A former Cullman County detention deputy has filed a federal lawsuit alleging Sheriff Matt Gentry and Capt. Phillip Harris illegally seized and searched his personal cellphone after he reported a cybersecurity vulnerability affecting a law enforcement information system.

Gentry has since called the lawsuit "frivolous" and said the sheriff's office acted in accordance with the law.

Payton Rohrscheib filed the complaint April 29 in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama. The lawsuit names Gentry, Harris, Capt. Rex Sorrow, Capt. Todd Reynolds, Lt. Rebekah Cash and Cullman County as defendants.

The case, Rohrscheib v. Gentry et al., has been assigned case number 5:26-cv-00718-HDM and is before U.S. Magistrate Judge Harold D. Mooty III.

Rohrscheib is represented by Scott Morro of Morro Law Center in Gardendale. Morro told AL.com Aug. 12 that he planned to amend the complaint to remove Sorrow, Reynolds and » PAGE 7

Beneath the surface, part 3:

What the claims about Vista Lago get right, wrong and leave unanswered
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Cullman named Top 25 finalist in Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town contest



CULLMAN PARKS, RECREATION & SPORTS TOURISM

Cullman has officially been selected as one of the Top 25 finalists in Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town Contest, placing the community among a select group of towns from across the United States competing for the national title of Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town.

Staff Reports
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Christmas in Cullman has captured the attention of families from across the country, and now it has caught the attention of Hallmark. Cullman has officially been selected as one of the Top 25 finalists in Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town Contest, placing the community among a select group of towns from across the United States competing for the national title of Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town.

Now, Cullman needs the community's help to bring the title home.

"This is something our entire community should be incredibly proud of," said Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs. "Christmas in Cullman has become special because so many people believe in it and work together to make it happen. To now have Hallmark recognize Cullman among the top Christmas towns in America is a tremendous honor. I hope everyone in Cullman County and across Alabama will get behind us and vote."

"Cullman County has always taken pride in showing up for one another," said Cullman County Commission Chairman Jeff Clemons. "What happens in Cullman every Christmas season reaches far beyond the city limits. It draws people into our county, supports our businesses and gives families a tradition worth driving hours for. For Hallmark to recognize that says a great deal about the people who live here, and now it is on all of us to vote."

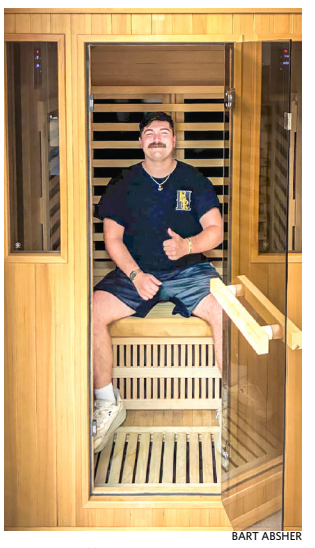
In recent years, Cullman has emerged as one of the South's most distinctive Christmas destinations. Each holiday season, the city's historic downtown is transformed with glowing rooftops, decorated storefronts, a towering Christmas tree, holiday events and the Cullman Christkindlmarkt, an authentic German Christmas market honoring the heritage of the community's founding families.

Last Christmas season, more than 415,000 visitors from across the country experienced Christmas in Cullman.

"Christmas in » PAGE 3

Cullman Police Department adds Bell Jet Ranger to aviation fleet
» PAGE 6

Hanceville Fire Rescue introduces new sauna



BART ABSHER

Hanceville Fire Rescue now has a Good Health Sauna to help keep its firefighters safe. » PAGE 2

Colony Town Council addresses road concerns, funding
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Commission on Aging seeks volunteers to deliver meals to homebound seniors
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17-year remembrance event planned for missing Cullman woman Tabitha Franklin: Aug. 22
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Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids seeks support for new school year
» PAGE 9



CRIME

Arrests and incidents reported Aug. 14

Cullman Tribune staff
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Below are the arrests and incidents reported Aug. 14, 2026. All persons are innocent until proven guilty.

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

CULLMAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

INCIDENTS

Aug. 10
- trespassing; CR 703
- theft of property; CR 1082
- harassment; Clint Warren St. NE
- assault; CR 433
- assault; Colony Rd.
- unauthorized use of motor vehicle; CR 1492
- harassment; US. 31

Aug. 11
- harassing communications; Boyd St.
- possession of dangerous drugs; attempt to elude law enforcement officer; CR 216
- reckless endangerment; attempt to elude law enforcement officer; CR 515
- criminal mischief; CR 1614

Aug. 12
- harassing communications; CR 565
- domestic violence; CR 1059
- theft of property; Old Hwy. 31S

ARRESTS

Aug. 10-12

Batemon, Alexis F.; 23
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of marijuana-2nd degree
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs
- FTA – theft-miscellaneous, less than $500
- FTA – retail theft-2nd degree
- FTA – illegal possession/use of a credit/debit card
- unauthorized use of auto-no force (joyriding)

Cagle, Brian K.; 50
- permitting dogs to run at large

Cooper, Cody B.; 34
- FTA – counterfeiting
- FTA – forged instrument

Ferguson, Amanda L.; 44
- FTA – forged instrument
- FTA – identity theft

Gann, Steven G.; 23
- assault-reckless endangerment
- attempting to elude a police/law enforcement officer-serious injury or death/speed exceeds 20 mph over limit

Godwin, Brittany C.; 43
- PROBATION VIOLATION – receiving stolen property
- PROBATION VIOLATION – DUI (other substances)

Green, Christian B.; 34
- PROBATION REVOKED – assault-domestic-harassment-family
- PROBATION REVOKED – violation of a domestic violence protection order

King, Sherman H.; 58
- assault-domestic-simple assault-family

Naramore, Jerry D.; 44
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs

Norris, Joseph M.; 24
- assault-domestic-simple assault-family

Powell, Angela D.; 58
- FTA – possession of drug paraphernalia
- FTA – possession of dangerous drugs
- FTA – promote prison contraband (other)

Reeves, Kandace M.; 58
- criminal trespass

Reid, James W.; 33
- possession of dangerous drugs
- attempting to elude a police officer

Tanner, Britton N.; 49
- FTA – assault-domestic-harassment-family

CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Aug. 12
- identity theft; person
- organized retail theft; Wal-Mart; general merchandise; $475; Olive St. SW
- domestic violence-3rd degree; person; Denson Ave. SW
- harassment; person
- theft of property-4th degree; criminal trespass-3rd degree; Wal-Mart; general merchandise; $90; Hwy. 157

ARRESTS

Aug. 12-13

Colburn, Dakota C.; 31
- FTA – fail to register vehicle (2 counts)
- FTA – insurance violation
- FTA – expired tag

Morales, Ruth M.; 58
- theft of property-4th degree
- criminal trespass-3rd degree

Naramore, Jerry D.; 44
- FTA – public intoxication

Layfield, Christina A.; 44
- FTA – theft of property-4th degree

Goff, Dexton W.; 20
- FTA – insurance violation

HANCEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

No arrests or incidents reported.

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



Cullman City Schools among Alabama's best in 2025–26 ACAP results

Staff Reports
Contributor

CULLMAN, Ala. — Cullman City Schools "continues to demonstrate what is possible when resilient students, supportive families and dedicated educators work together toward a common goal: helping every student succeed," the school said in a statement Friday, Aug. 14.

Recently released results from the Alabama State Department of Education show that Cullman City Schools remains among the highest-performing school systems in Alabama on the 2025–26 Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP). "The results provide an opportunity not only to celebrate student achievement, but also to recognize the people and partnerships that make that achievement possible."

Across all three major academic areas, Cullman City Schools ranked among the top 10 school systems in the state.

- In English Language Arts, 83.5% of Cullman City students scored proficient or advanced, ranking the school system fourth in Alabama.
- In Mathematics, 62.5% of students scored proficient or advanced, placing Cullman City ninth in Alabama.
- In Science, 75.6% of students scored proficient or advanced, ranking Cullman City fifth in Alabama.

Said the system:

"Those numbers are certainly worth celebrating. But behind every percentage is a student who worked hard, a family that provided encouragement and support and an employee who showed up each day committed to making a difference.

"Cullman City students deserve tremendous recognition for their resilience, perseverance and willingness to rise to the challenges placed before them. Assessments measure academic performance, but they do not fully capture the determination, curiosity and personal growth that students demonstrate throughout a school year.

"Families also play an essential role. Parents and guardians are our students' first and most important teachers, and their encouragement, partnership and support make a tremendous difference. Strong schools are built on strong relationships between educators and families, and Cullman City is fortunate to have families who believe deeply in the importance of education.

"Most of all, however, these results are a reflection of the dedicated employees of Cullman City Schools."

Hanceville Fire Rescue introduces new sauna

Emily McMunn
emily@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — Hanceville Fire Rescue now has a Good Health Sauna to help keep its firefighters safe, thanks to the Hanceville City Council and Mayor Nolan Bradford approving the sauna in its last budget.

Firefighters face one of the highest occupational cancer risks due to exposure to carcinogens like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. The Firefighter Cancer Alliance reports that cancer is the second leading cause of deaths for firefighters in the U.S.



BART ABSHER/EMILY MCMUNN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Firefighters can reduce the risk with proper PPE and routine care such as showering immediately after a call, cleaning PPE and gear regularly, separating contaminated gear to prevent second-hand exposure and taking a relaxing rest in a sauna.

Assistant Fire Chief Bart Absher said sauna use can support cancer-prevention efforts for firefighters by helping remove contaminants through sweating, reducing dermal absorption after fires and improving recovery.

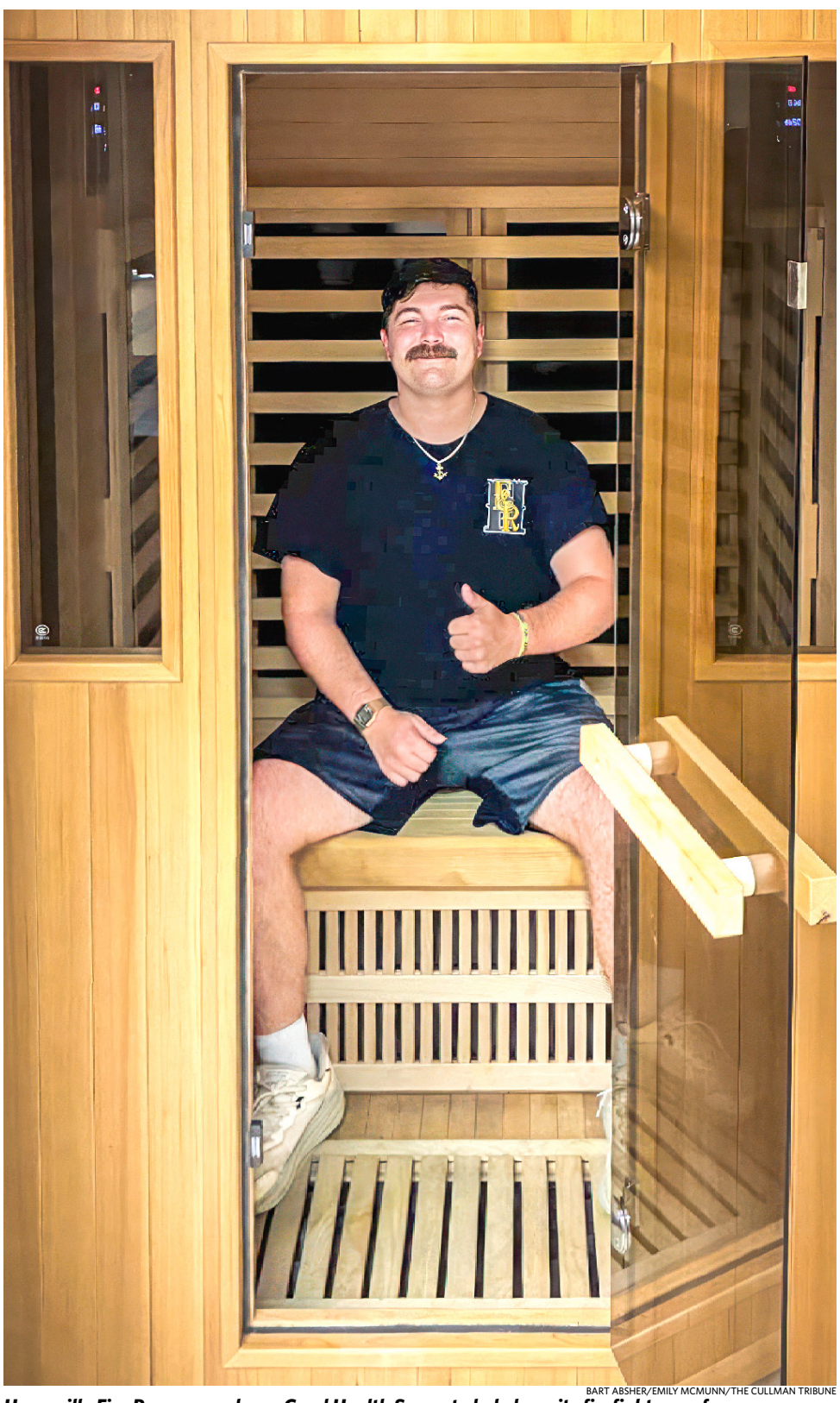
"It was something that we had been working on for several years, when (Former) Chief (Roger) Green was here," said Absher. "It was something very much to his heart because he had cancer. So we wanted to do everything we could do to prevent it."

He continued, "Even though our firefighters are dressed in proper equipment and separating that equipment from the cab of the fire engine, that still doesn't protect them fully. During a fire you're wearing everything – your turnout gear – you're wearing everything to protect you, but it does not protect you from the carcinogens and stuff that is in the air. So your pores are extremely opened up."

Toxic chemicals can still penetrate or transfer through firefighter turnout gear; research suggests that while PPE is designed to block many hazards, certain toxic substances can pass through the breathable membranes in the middle layer of turnout gear, especially when the firefighter's body is cooler than the surrounding environment.

The CDC says that hazardous chemicals from burning materials like benzene and formaldehyde can coat the outer surface of PPE. These can then be absorbed through the skin much like how a frog's skin is highly permeable, so too are humans under different conditions. These toxins can be inhaled, or ingested if not removed promptly, and contaminants trapped in gear can off-gas over time, especially during storage or transport, leading to secondary exposure.Using a sauna adds an extra layer of insurance. Saunas promote heavy sweating, which may help remove surface contaminants and some absorbed toxins after proper decontamination. Absher stated that before the sauna, they would still smell like smoke even after a shower. "My wife would always say, 'You still smell like smoke,' and it'd be like two days later from the fire because it is trapped in your pores."

Using a sauna after showering and gross decontamination may reduce continued absorption by clearing residual contaminants from pores. Relaxing muscles and improving circulation is a nice added bonus. Absher and his crew are excited to be the first fire department in Cullman County to have an infrared sauna installed and are eagerly trying it out. Absher said he hopes it will encourage other towns and fire departments to look into the opportunity.



BART ABSHER/EMILY MCMUNN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Hanceville Fire Rescue now has a Good Health Sauna to help keep its firefighters safe.

Contest (from Front)

Cullman is the reason people are putting us on their holiday travel list," said Cullman Area Tourism Director Harmony Heard.

"We welcome visitors from nearly every state who fill our hotels, restaurants and shops during a season that was once quiet downtown. Being named a Top 25 finalist puts Cullman in front of a national audience, and every vote helps keep us there."

But local leaders say the Hallmark recognition is about more than lights, decorations or attendance.

"We have said from the beginning that what makes Christmas in Cullman special is Cullman itself," said Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism Executive Director Nathan Anderson. "This is a community that knows how to come together and accomplish extraordinary things. To make the Top 25 is an incredible honor, but now we have an opportunity to show the rest of the country just how much pride we have in this place. We need everyone to vote, share and help us tell Cullman's story."

The next phase of Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town Contest will be determined through public

voting.

Residents, former residents, visitors, businesses, schools, churches and friends of Cullman everywhere are encouraged to participate and help spread the word.

Vote for Cullman and help bring Hallmark's Merriest Christmas Town title home to Alabama.

Voting information and contest details are available at Hallmark's official Merriest Christmas Town Contest website at https://merriest-christmastownscontest.hallmarkchannel.com. Voting is open through Sept. 4, and community members can vote once every day between now and then.

"Making the Top 25 is already something worth celebrating," Anderson added. "But if there is one thing I know about our Cullman, it's that when this community gets behind something, incredible things can happen. We're in the Top 25. Now let's finish the job together."



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

• The Cullman County Special Education Program is seeking to locate children with disabilities ages 0-21 within the Cullman County School District. Ages 0-3 call Kristie Smith, 256-734-3253. Ages 3-21 call Katie Meigs, Special Education Coordinator, 256-739-0486, Ext 2.

• The system is also seeking to locate intellectually gifted and talented children, with the emphasis on second-grade students.

• Contact Special Education Coordinator Katie Meigs at 17600 U.S. Highway 31 N, Cullman, Al 35058.

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

• 1650 St. Joseph Dr. NW, Cullman

• 256-739-3326

• spiritlifechurchcullman@gmail.com

• FB-Spirit Life Church Cullman

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.

• Saturday, Aug. 15, 10 a.m. Adult book club

• Tuesday, Aug. 18, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Teenage club art project

• Wednesday, Aug. 19, 10 a.m. Storytime with college volunteer

• Wednesday, Aug. 26, 10 a.m. Children's book club and storytime with Briana Taylor and Angelyn Riggs

• Wednesday, Sept. 2, 10 a.m. Storytime with teenager Savannah Kesick reading "Frog & Toad"

• Wednesday, Sept. 9, 10 a.m. Storytime with Suhana, board member

• Thursdays, 1-3 p.m., Crochet class

• We are looking for community volunteers to read storytime on Wednesdays. Contact Teresa Rivera for details. Volunteers make our library successful, so we thank our local community.

Holly Pond Lions Club All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, Aug. 15, from 6-9 a.m. at the Holly Pond Lions Club Building. For a donation, guests can enjoy pancakes, bacon, sausage and coffee, available for dine-in or takeout. All proceeds will support the HP Lions Club Project Fund and the local food pantry. Thank you community for supporting your local Lions Club.

Sacred Heart Church Christmas in September

Saturday, Sept. 19, 7 a.m. -7 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 20, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Shop for gently used holiday decorations in the Sacred Heart Church gym. Proceeds go to St. Vincent DePaul.

Sacred Heart Church German Dinner

Wednesday, Sept. 30, 4-7 p.m. in the Sacred Heart Church gym. Traditional German food, $15 per plate. Dine in or take out.

Little Pink Dress Benefit

Tuesday, Oct. 6, from 6-9 p.m. at The Venue at Stone Bridge Farms. Tickets on sale now! www.cullmanbosombuddies.com/service/little-pink-dress-event

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THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
AUGUST 15, 2026

PREP FOOTBALL

Vinemont High hosts showcase jamboree games vs. East Lawrence

Ryan Guthery
Tribune Correspondent



BOBI JO CREEL/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Vinemont High's Caleb Slain being tackled by an East Lawrence defender on August 13's jamboree game

VINEMONT, Ala. — Vinemont welcomed in the East Lawrence Eagles in a Thursday night jamboree, which kicked off with the Middle School teams getting two possessions a piece.

Vinemont got the ball first, and quickly jumped ahead 8-0 when Grayson Robinson raced 47 yards on fourth down. Vinemont's offense quickly got the ball back after East Lawrence turned the ball over on downs, but this time, Vinemont was unable to convert on fourth. After East Lawrence managed to move the chains a couple of times Vinemont's defense stepped up to force three straight negative plays ending the Middle School portion of the jamboree.

Next, it was junior varsity's turn, and the same as the Middle School, they would only play two possessions. A fumble on Vinemont's second play set up East Lawrence on first and goal. Vinemont came up big, as they forced three negative plays and then an incomplete pass on fourth and goal. On the first play from scrimmage Karson Arbet outran the defense for an 88-yard touchdown to put Vinemont up 8-0. Then, East Lawrence was forced to punt after a holding penalty put them behind the chains.

Finally it was the Varsity's turn, and after an interception on their first possession Vinemont's defense stepped up to force a three-and-out. Another interception gave the ball back to East Lawrence, but two plays later the clock ran out in the first half.

East Lawrence took 6-0 led midway through the third quarter on a long touchdown pass. Vinemont's offense seemed to have found their groove until East Lawrence took a fumble back for a touchdown to push the led to 12-0 late in the third quarter. Early in the fourth quarter Vinemont cut into the deficit when Josh Rhodes found the endzone from three yards out to make the score 12-8. On the ensuing possession a costly penalty on fourth down gave East Lawrence a first down and they quickly took advantage, scoring a touchdown to put the led at 18-8 midway through the fourth quarter. Down two scores the clock became an issue for Vinemont, and after a three-and-out, Vinemont got another shot after recovering a fumble, but the clock would run out on the home team as they were unable to overcome three turnovers, one of which directly resulted in a touchdown.

Franklin (from Front)

Stacey White
Tribune Correspondent

CULLMAN, Ala. — Family, friends and supporters will gather on Saturday, Aug. 22, 2026, at Sportsman Lake Park to honor the life and memory of Tabitha Franklin, who has been missing since Aug. 13, 2009.

The remembrance event will be held from 2-4 p.m. and will provide an opportunity for the community to come together, remember Tabitha and renew awareness of her unsolved disappearance. The event will feature a casual barbecue gathering, remembrance activities and opportunities for attendees to share memories and show support for Tabitha's family. Cullman's own Jesse Priest will perform live.

Tabitha Franklin was 28 years old when she disappeared from Cullman County. She was last seen in the West Point area on County Road 1136. Despite the passage of 17 years, her family continues to seek answers and remains committed to keeping her story in the public eye.

"We want people to remember that Tabitha is more than a missing person's case. She is a daughter, sister, aunt, friend and loved one whose absence continues to be felt every day," said family members organizing the event.

The family invites members of the media to attend the event and help bring renewed attention to Tabitha's case. Any coverage of the remembrance event may help generate new leads or encourage someone with information to come forward.

Event details

- What: 17-Year remembrance event for Tabitha Franklin
- When: Saturday, Aug. 22, 2026, from 2-4 p.m.

Where: Sportsman Lake Park, 1544 Sportsman Lake Road NW, Cullman

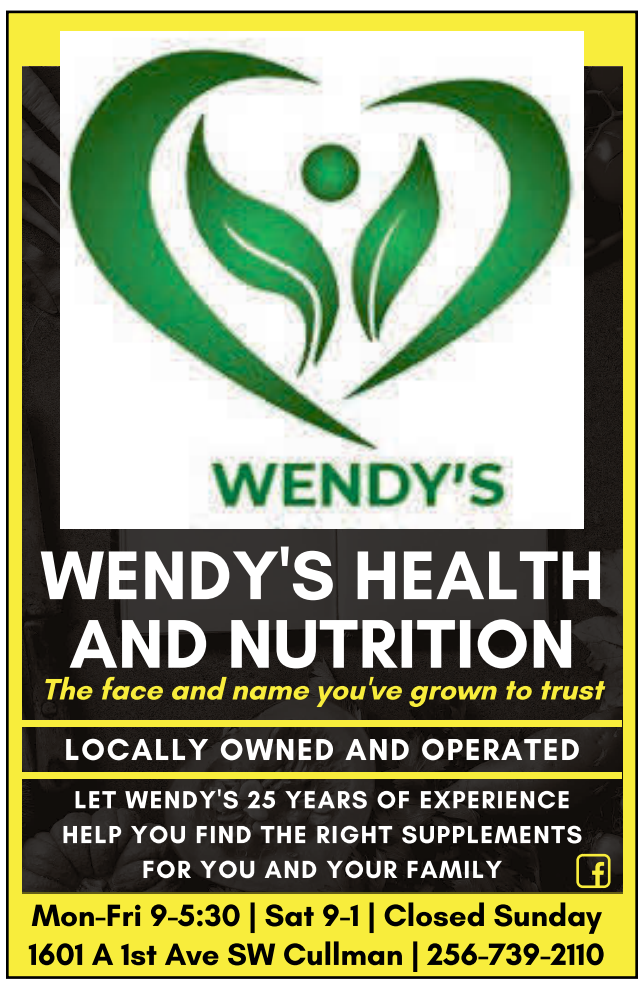
- Who: Family, friends, community members, advocates for missing persons and supporters

Anyone with information regarding the disappearance of Tabitha Franklin is encouraged to contact the Cullman County Sheriff's Office at 256-734-0342 or Secret Witness at 256-734-0210.

The family said it appreciates the continued support of the community and all efforts to keep Tabitha's story alive.

Read more at www.cullmantribune.com/2026/06/23/17-years-later-tabitha-franklins-family-still-searches-for-answers.







Get to Know: Zach Lee

Chasady Woods
chasady@cullmantribune.com

Zach Lee is a Cullman native who volunteers on several local boards and participates in many charitable efforts.

He started his education in Cullman City Schools, but transferred to Vinemont around middle school and went on to graduate from Vinemont High School.

He said his favorite thing about Cullman is the community and how people are quick to help one another out.

In an interview with The Tribune, he shared, "When there is a need, we join in and help each other. Even when people don't ask, we're good about donating out time. It doesn't have to be monetary value, just time."

Roughly seven years ago Lee became a volunteer board member of the Pilot Light Home, a foster and emergency care facility licensed by the Department of Human Resources. It helps children who are abused, neglected, abandoned or without other forms of parental care.

Lee said this was the first board he was part of and it made him realize, "I can do more for the community and be a part of something bigger."

He found himself gravitating toward those who struggled through financial insecurity and life burdens. Helping them through harder times inspired him to continue with similar work and involvement.

He has been a part of several boards since. In addition to Pilot Light Home he was also a part of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and helped with Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism activities.

He is currently chairman of the Cullman City Zoning Board of Adjustments and Appeals, vice chairperson at the Cullman Housing Authority and board member for the Good Samaritan Health Clinic in Cullman.

Lee has been an operations manager at Lowe's since March 2004.

When asked what he does to relax when he isn't working, he replied, "My relaxation is when I'm on the boards and putting in work. My downtime is 50 hours a week at my job and I'm serving the community. Or even going and helping a neighbor."

He bragged about his daughter, Kayleigh Lee, for pursuing nursing and recently graduating from Wallace State Nursing School.

A good day to Lee is putting in the work to give back. Whether it's for friends, family, neighbors or someone he's never met. "I'm always finding myself trying to serve my neighbor and give back. I've never met a stranger," he remarked.

He and his wife, Jessica Lee, enjoy thrifting and it normally ends up with him striking up conversations with numerous people.

He explained, "When we go out I have to talk to everybody."

When he isn't browsing thrift stores, he enjoys cooking at home.

"I'm a big foodie!" Lee said enthusiastically.

He enjoys trying new recipes and cooking food to serve his friends or family, but his favorite food is Mexican.

"I also make an excellent chicken and steak taco," he smiled.

While he enjoys making good food for those closest to him he reiterated that the best part is seeing those there to share the meal with him "tear it up."

His favorite movie could not be narrowed down to anything specific. He said, "I love anything scary or within the horror genre."

He works on Halloween props when he isn't managing his bonsai trees or working on cars with friends.

Halloween is also his favorite holiday. He and his family participate in Nightmare on Woodland Street every year and have for 17 years. They will also be attending a horror-con in Tennessee toward the end of August.

Though this doesn't stop Chair Peggy Harris of the Pilot Light Home Board from



ZACH LEE

Zach Lee

appointing him as Santa Claus every year.

"I told her, 'You've got the wrong guy,'" he laughed.

A lot of Lee's motivations are credited to his mother. He reminisced that when growing up, she never let him or his family see or know of any hardship.

"She just made it happen," he said.

He also credited the community that gathered around him as his mother struggled with health complications years ago.

"In the five to seven or so years my mother had gotten really sick, and I guess it was almost a coping mechanism, but giving back and serving was filling an emotional void," Lee explained. "The more I was giving back to the community, I was receiving double of what I gave out in love, support and emotion."

Lee said that at the end of the day, contributing to the community doesn't require being on any board or committee.

"If you want to get involved and be a better human being then that's your right as a human being. If you really want to get involved, you can do it and be a good person," he said. "If it's your neighbor or it's a person at the gas station – it's everywhere. You choose your day to day and if you're going to be a good person or not. Do we fail? Sure. We fail. I fail a lot more than I succeed somedays, but it's those days where we can be a good human being that keeps us rollin' and keeps it movin' forward."

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Colony (from Front)

Emily McMunn
emily@cullmantribune.com

COLONY, Ala. — The Colony Town Council at its Aug. 11 addressed local roads.

The Council announced that the town was not awarded a grant from the Rebuild Alabama Act Annual Grant Program this year.

The Alabama Department of Transportation says of the program: "The RAA Annual Grant Program is an ALDOT administered transportation infrastructure grant program for projects of local interest created in the Rebuild Alabama Act of 2019. Projects may be submitted for improvements to any classified road or bridge open to public traffic."

The Council discussed worsening local roads, including problem with potholes. Members said they plan to have a special meeting with the Cullman County Commission to address issues with Fields Road.

The Council approved a $1,940 expenditure to repair windows at the Tom Bevill Library and Colony Educational Complex.

The Council provided the following town financial information:

General funds as of July 31,2026

- General Fund: $41,922.52
- One Cent Gas: $10,790.77
- Capital Improvements: $34,378.64
- Escrow (Savings): $114,311.65

Total: $201,403.58

Park and Recreation

- $1,974.77

Road Department funds as of July 31,2026

- Four Cent Gas Tax: $19,145.88
- Seven Cent Gas Tax: $5,124.77
- Rebuild Alabama Act: $105,837.14

Total less committed: $130,107.79

Available balance: $30,107.79

Fleet (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — The Cullman Police Department has unveiled a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter as the newest addition to its fleet, providing officers with another aerial resource for searches, emergencies and major incidents.

The department introduced the aircraft Friday with a new black-and-gold paint scheme matching its patrol vehicles. CPD said the paint and labor were donated, allowing the department to update the helicopter's appearance without paying for that work. The donor was not identified in the announcement.

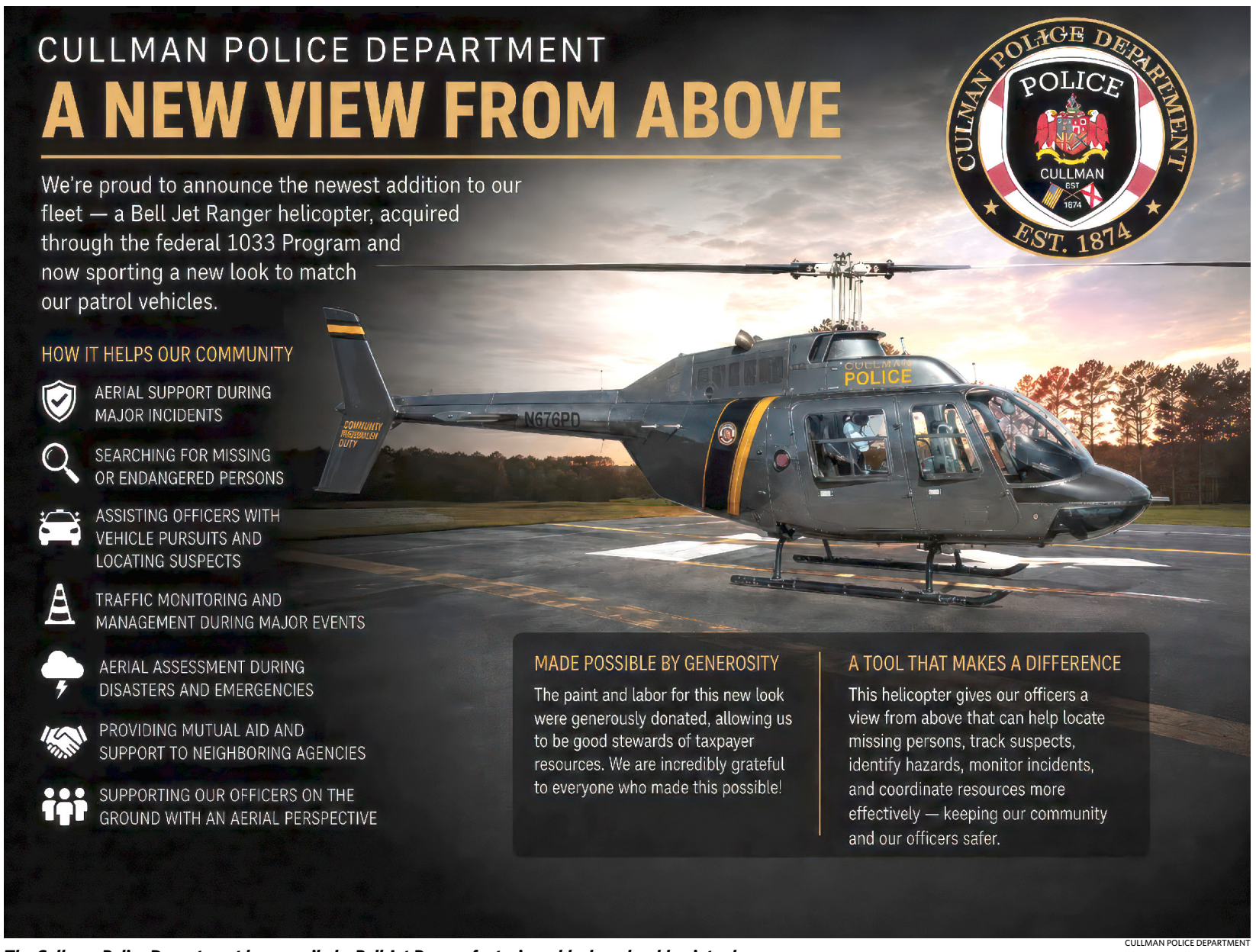
According to CPD, the helicopter will provide aerial support during major incidents, assist in searches for missing or endangered people and help officers during pursuits or searches for suspects.

The aircraft may also be used to monitor traffic during major events, assess damage following disasters and provide mutual aid to neighboring law enforcement agencies.

"It's another tool in our toolbox that gives our officers a view they simply can't get from the ground," the department said.

The helicopter was obtained through the federal Law Enforcement Support Office, commonly known as the 1033 Program. The program is a surplus-property transfer system rather than a conventional grant.

Managed by the Defense Logistics Agency, the program conditionally transfers excess federal military property to eligible law enforcement agencies. Aircraft are considered controlled property and remain on the federal property inventory.



CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Cullman Police Department has unveiled a Bell Jet Ranger featuring a black-and-gold paint scheme matching its patrol vehicles. CPD said the paint and labor were donated.

DLA's most recent public inventory, dated June 30, lists two recent rotary-wing aircraft transfers to the Cullman Police Department. The aircraft were shipped June 4, 2025, and Jan. 15, 2026. Each carries an original federal acquisition value of $1.2 million.

The federal database does not identify the models or indicate which entry corresponds to the Bell Jet Ranger unveiled Friday.

DLA cautions that original acquisition value represents what the federal government initially paid for an item.

It is not a current market appraisal and does not represent what Cullman paid.

Law enforcement agencies do not pay for the transferred property itself.

However, participating agencies are responsible for transportation, possible storage, maintenance and other expenses associated with accepting and operating the equipment.

A federal shipment record for the aircraft transferred in January states that it was requested for search and rescue, natural disaster response and surveillance connected to drug enforcement.

The department's announcement did not disclose transportation, outfitting or anticipated annual operating costs.

The addition continues an aviation program that has operated in Cullman for decades.

A 2018 Tribune feature reported that CPD then operated a Bell OH-58A Kiowa/Jet Ranger and a Hughes OH-6A Cayuse, both acquired through the federal surplus program.

At the time, the aviation division used its helicopters for suspect searches, major-event security, Project Lifesaver operations and mutual aid. The division then averaged two flights per week and answered approximately 40 to 60 requests annually from outside agencies.

CPD did not state whether the newly unveiled helicopter replaces an older aircraft or expands its operational fleet. The department also did not announce when the aircraft will begin regular missions or what specialized equipment it carries.

"Serving Cullman from the ground, and now, from above," CPD said.

Obituary Announcements: Aug. 13-14

Patricia "Patsy" Ann Walden, 82
Funeral service for Patricia "Patsy" Ann Walden, age 82 of Cullman, is Saturday, Aug. 15, 2026, at 2 p.m. at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home, with Dan Hopper officiating. Visitation will be held at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home on Saturday, Aug. 15, 2026, from noon-2 p.m. Burial will be at Bethel Methodist Cemetery. Cullman Heritage Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. Patsy was born on Oct. 8, 1943, to Lama Hopper and Izella Nichols Hopper. She passed away on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2026, at Folsom Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center, surrounded by her loving family. She is preceded in death by her parents; husband, Clyde Walden; siblings, Pauline, Marvin, Christine ("Teena"), Willard, J.L., Alta and baby Gladys. She is survived by her two daughters, Sheila Haney (Geoff), Paula Looney (Jason); grandchildren, Cassidy Haney (Austin), Ethan Looney (Allison), Anna Grace Looney, Carissa Looney; sister, Wilda Ellenburg; a host of nieces and nephews, cousins, family and friends.

Wilma Wiginton, 93
Wilma Sue Watkins Wiginton, age 93, of Gardendale, Alabama, was welcomed into the loving arms of our gracious Heavenly Father on Aug. 8, 2026. She was born on July 13, 1933, in Detroit, Alabama. Sue was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who loved and cared for her family with wisdom and grace. She met her beloved husband, James, in high school when they were 15, and the two became sweethearts. James loves to tell the story of the first time he saw her through a window at a party. He turned to a friend and said, "I'm going to marry that girl." They married on Aug. 3, 1950, when they were both just 17 years old, only days before James left to serve in the Korean War. It was the beginning of a true love story that would span more than seven decades. On August 3rd, Sue and James celebrated their 76th wedding anniversary together. Sue was preceded in death by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hollis Watkins; and her siblings, Avis Watkins Twitty, Mary Watkins Creamer, and Travis Dee Watkins. Sue is survived by her loving husband, William James Wiginton; her three children, Cathy Wiginton Allen (Bob), Karen Wiginton Machen (Mike), and James Michael Wiginton (Kim); her grandchildren, Heather Allen Brown (Barry), Susannah Allen Boulware (Thomas), Sophia Marie Machen, Rachel Kate Wiginton, and Sam McDaniel; and eight great-grandchildren, Anna Catherine, Hall, Sara Allen, Brayden, Christopher, Chace, Collier, and Caleb, who brought her endless joy. Sue will be remembered for her unwavering devotion to her family and the deep, enduring love she shared with James. A devoted follower of Jesus, she reflected His love in the way she treated others. She will also be treasured as a wonderful storyteller, full of warmth, wisdom and gentle grace. Her family will carry her memory and that love forward. Sue will be laid to rest at Oakwood Memorial Gardens in Gardendale. Family will gather privately to honor and celebrate her life on September 4 at Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, or to a charity of your choosing.

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COLUMN

Don't pay the stupid tax

Joe Hobby
Contributor

For those of you who have been reading my column for a while you know I occasionally write about stupidity. More specifically, my stupidity - a subject I am an expert in. You know what they say, "Write what you know."

Well, yesterday I turned in another Hall of Fame performance. I'm not sure what kind of award it deserves. An All-American certificate? A Heisman? An Emmy? An Oscar? The Darwin Award is probably the front-runner. Whatever the highest honor is for doing something unbelievably dumb, I was on stage accepting the prize because I had earned it.

Despite a heat index of 105 degrees, this 72-year-old genius decided it would be a wonderful idea to play nine holes of golf...beginning at two o'clock in the afternoon. You know, the exact moment the sun is actively trying its hardest to melt asphalt.

This says two things about me.

First, my judgment is occasionally questionable - emphasis here is on the word "occasionally."

Second, my attachment to the game of golf can be best described as a long-term, mutually destructive relationship.

By the time I got home, I looked like I had been swimming in a swamp. Every square inch of my body was soaked, including a few places polite newspaper columns shall not describe.

Then I began to feel funny. Not "ha-ha" funny. The weak, dizzy, light-headed kind of funny. Clearly my body was filing a complaint with management, specifically my brain. Unfortunately, I am both the employee and the problem.

My wife Carol suggested I check my blood pressure. For those of you who know such things, 120 over 80 is considered the gold standard. Mine was 80 over 50, which I believe is approximately the blood pressure of a department store mannequin.

Naturally, I did what every stubborn man does. I checked it again. And again. And again. Then one more time, as if repeated denial might eventually qualify as a medical treatment. It did not.

It didn't take a degree in medicine to figure out what had happened. I was badly dehydrated and flirting with heat exhaustion - though "flirting" feels like too charming a word for what was essentially my body staging a protest.

I immediately started drinking water mixed with an electrolyte powder we had on hand. I was still thinking clearly. I was drinking. I was peeing. I was not, as far as I could tell, auditioning for a role as a sick patient in a medical drama.

But my blood pressure stubbornly refused to come back up, as if it had decided to teach me a lesson about my lifestyle choices.

And that's how I found myself sitting in an emergency room the following morning.

I was poked, prodded, interrogated, had my blood work run and was given an EKG and an x-ray of my chest. I felt like a biology project. Finally, they gave me an IV.

My wife, observing these goings on, so eloquently said, "You are definitely paying the stupid tax."

I nodded in agreement and replied, "This is one time I didn't want to be a hottie."

However, sometimes curses can be blessings. The doctor walked in, introduced himself and then dropped a bomb on me.

"You're in a-fib," he said.

For those of you who don't know, a-fib is not like a little white lie. Atrial fibrillation, or a-fib, is a condition in which the heart beats with an irregular rhythm. Left untreated, it can increase the risk of serious problems like stroke.

"I've already called and left a message with your cardiologist and you need to get in to see him next week."

Oddly enough, there was a silver lining to my stupidity. Had I not ignored the heat and wound up in the emergency room, there's a good chance the a-fib would have gone undetected for who knows how long.

However, I still feel tired, I have a headache and my blood pressure apparently hasn't forgiven me yet. Perhaps worst of all, when I asked the nurse who was going to peel off the sticky tabs on my chest, she said, "You are." Those electrodes are held on with an adhesive made by Gorilla Glue. And just in case you are wondering, they didn't bother to shave me first. If you want to know what removing them was like, go check out the "The 40 Year Old Virgin." By the time I finished, I looked like I contracted mange.

So let me save you a trip to the emergency room. Drink plenty of water. Stay out of the hottest part of the day if you can.

Listen when your body starts complaining. Heat exhaustion isn't something to shrug off. Take it from someone who just made a sizable payment – don't pay the stupid tax.

Joe Hobby is a barbecue-loving comedian from Alabama who wrote for Jay Leno for many years. Find more of Joe's stories on his blog: www.mylifeasahobby.blogspot.com. Follow him on Facebook at Joe Hobby Comedian-Writer.

Allegations (from Front)

Cash, leaving Gentry, Harris and Cullman County as defendants.

A free public docket index reviewed by The Tribune on Friday still reflected the original six-defendant complaint and had not been updated since May 13. The index did not show an amended complaint.

Although Sorrow, Reynolds and Cash appear in the original complaint's caption and factual allegations, none of its eight legal counts is expressly directed against them.

The lawsuit contains Rohrscheib's allegations and represents one side of the dispute. The allegations have not been proven, and the court has not ruled that any defendant violated Rohrscheib's rights.

Gentry responds

In a statement posted on his personal Facebook page Wednesday after reports began, Gentry said he was limited in what he could say about the case but disputed the lawsuit and criticized Morro.

"I am limited at this time on what I can say about the merits of this case. However, I will say this frivolous lawsuit was filed by an attorney known for filing outrageous and bogus lawsuits aimed at trying to extort local governments out of money," Gentry said.

"We hold all of our deputies, detention deputies and staff to the highest standards when it comes to following the law. The full facts and truth will come out promptly which will show we acted in accordance with the law," Gentry said.

Gentry's statement did not address the complaint's specific allegations concerning the timing of the search warrant, the initial search of Rohrscheib's cellphone, the compelled disclosure of the passcode, the later forensic extraction or the unpaid overtime claim.

Gentry's description of the lawsuit as frivolous represents his position. Nothing in the publicly available docket reviewed by The Tribune reflects a court ruling on the merits or a judicial determination that the lawsuit is frivolous.

DA declines comment; county attorney not representing Gentry

The Tribune also sought comment from Cullman County District Attorney Champ Crocker.

"I have a policy of not commenting on matters under investigation. Therefore, I have no further response at this time," Crocker said.

Crocker did not specify which matter he described as being under investigation or provide additional details.

The Tribune also confirmed Friday that Cullman County Attorney Bradley Wilson is not representing Gentry in the federal lawsuit. The confirmation concerns Gentry only and does not establish who will represent Harris, Cullman County or the other defendants.

Reported cybersecurity vulnerability

Rohrscheib worked for the Cullman County Sheriff's Office for approximately five years as a detention deputy, according to the complaint.

The filing says he was not certified by the Alabama Peace Officers' Standards and Training Commission, had no arrest authority outside the jail and held no policy-making or supervisory authority.

On or about Jan. 23, Rohrscheib allegedly discovered a vulnerability while helping another deputy access the CJIS/ALACOP certification portal.

According to the complaint, accessing the portal through a Google Chrome browser history caused the system to authenticate the user under the credentials of the employee who had most recently logged in. Rohrscheib claims the process bypassed the normal username, password and two-factor authentication requirements.

The filing alleges that anyone with access to the browser history on a sheriff's office computer could potentially enter another employee's account without providing credentials.

Rohrscheib says he verbally reported the issue to a shift supervisor in January but saw no indication that additional action had been taken.

On March 26, Rohrscheib completed an NCIC recertification test that he says instructed certified employees to report security breaches and suspicious activity.

At approximately 7:30 a.m. March 27, Rohrscheib sent an email from his sheriff's office account to an Alabama Law Enforcement Agency CJIS address describing the vulnerability. The complaint says he copied Charlie Gibbs, a sheriff's office IT employee, on the email.

Rohrscheib alleges he received a telephone call from Reynolds approximately 50 minutes later directing him to report immediately to the sheriff's office because of the email.

Alleged warrant claim and phone search

According to the complaint, Rohrscheib activated the audio recorder on his personal cellphone before entering Gentry's office.

The meeting allegedly included Gentry, Harris, Reynolds, Cash and Timothy Kerber.

The filing says Gentry accused Rohrscheib of "backdooring" CJIS for personal gain and questioned what other systems he might have accessed. Rohrscheib says he denied accessing any system without authorization and explained that his email was intended as a cybersecurity report.

The lawsuit alleges Gentry then told Rohrscheib that he had a search warrant for Rohrscheib's personal cellphone and that Rohrscheib was required to surrender the device and provide its passcode.

No warrant had been issued at that time, according to the complaint.

Rohrscheib alleges he disclosed the passcode and surrendered the phone because he believed he was legally required to comply and would be terminated if he refused.

The complaint says Harris entered the passcode and searched the phone for approximately five to 10 minutes.

Rohrscheib claims the device contained three recordings of meetings with sheriff's office supervisors, including the March 27 meeting and an earlier meeting concerning a workplace complaint.

Gentry then suspended Rohrscheib pending an investigation, according to the lawsuit.

The filing says Rohrscheib's mother, Cindy Rohrscheib, contacted the Cullman County Courthouse and Cullman County District Attorney's Office and confirmed that no warrant had been issued.

Rohrscheib and his mother allegedly returned to the sheriff's office later that day. The complaint says Gentry acknowledged that he did not have a warrant but said he intended to seek one and was retaining the phone under "exigent circumstances."

Search warrant obtained three days later

The complaint says Harris submitted an application and affidavit for a search warrant March 30, three days after the phone was seized.

The application was filed under Cullman County case number 260303385 and sought authority to search a red Samsung cellphone for evidence of computer tampering under Alabama law.

Rohrscheib alleges the affidavit falsely stated that he declined to report the vulnerability to a supervisor or the IT department and wanted to fix it himself.

The complaint argues that the statement was contradicted by Rohrscheib's reported January conversation with his supervisor and the March 27 email copying Gibbs.

The lawsuit also alleges Harris incorrectly claimed Rohrscheib had breached a computer system. Rohrscheib maintains that he discovered and reported an existing vulnerability rather than gaining unauthorized access.

According to the complaint, the warrant's issuance fields did not contain a date or time. Rohrscheib also claims he was never given a copy of the warrant, although the return indicated that a copy had been provided.

The lawsuit says Harris conducted a full forensic extraction, described on the return and inventory as a "phone dump," at approximately 1 p.m. April 6. The return was filed with the Cullman County court April 7.

Rohrscheib argues that the warrant did not identify the particular files, messages or categories of digital information officers were permitted to search.

The state search-warrant application, supporting affidavit, warrant and return were not attached as exhibits to the federal complaint. The Tribune has not independently reviewed those documents and is seeking copies from the Cullman County court file.

Retaliation allegations

In addition to his claims concerning the phone, Rohrscheib alleges Gentry retaliated against him for reporting the vulnerability and because members of Rohrscheib's family supported Tim Creel in the Cullman County sheriff's race this year.

The lawsuit alleges sheriff's office employees were threatened with termination if they publicly supported a candidate opposed by Gentry. The complaint does not include supporting emails, messages or other exhibits documenting those alleged threats.

Rohrscheib claims the sheriff's office changed the password to his work email account, collected his uniforms and issued equipment and directed other employees not to communicate with him.

The complaint also alleges the sheriff's office stopped providing police reports and daily arrest and inmate lists to the state probation office where Rohrscheib's mother worked. The lawsuit characterizes that action as retaliation against the family.

Rohrscheib accepted a position with the Morgan County Sheriff's Office and resigned from the Cullman County Sheriff's Office effective April 23, according to the filing. He contends the circumstances amounted to a constructive discharge.

Claims and requested relief

The complaint contains eight counts.

Three counts allege violations of the Fourth Amendment arising from the initial seizure of the phone, Harris' alleged search of its contents and the later forensic extraction.

A fourth count alleges Gentry and Harris violated Rohrscheib's Fifth Amendment protection against compelled self-incrimination by requiring him to disclose the passcode.

Two First Amendment counts accuse Gentry of retaliating against Rohrscheib for reporting the vulnerability and because of his family's political activities.

The final two counts allege municipal liability against Cullman County and unpaid overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The filing says Rohrscheib earned $17.66 per hour and was not paid for work performed March 7, March 23 and March 24. The three periods listed in the complaint total approximately nine hours. A later paragraph, however, describes the total as approximately 4.25 hours.

The complaint contains other apparent drafting errors, including inconsistent pronouns, duplicate paragraph numbers and bracketed notes directing counsel to confirm or develop portions of the case through discovery.

Rohrscheib is seeking compensatory and punitive damages in amounts to be determined at trial. He also asks the court to order the return of his phone, require the destruction of forensic copies and extracted data, award unpaid overtime and legal fees and prohibit additional retaliation.

He has demanded a jury trial.

The Tribune will update this report as additional responses, federal filings and state court records become available.





Legal Notice

Surplus property of Wallace State Community College (Hanceville Campus) will be offered for sale on the website www.govdeals.com Various sales will occur on this website, please check the www.govdeals.com website weekly to see any current sales. This is a government auction website and you MUST be registered on the website to bid on any items. You may view the surplus property to be sold without registration. The govdeals.com website will contain detailed information including descriptions and photos. Items may be inspected by APPOINTMENT ONLY: Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Contact Wesley Sams at inventory@wallacestate.edu to schedule any appointments. All items listed are to be sold "AS IS, WHERE IS". Wallace State Community College reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

STATE OF ALABAMA * IN THE PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF CULLMAN * CASE NO. AD2026-038

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION PETITION OF GARY DEWAYNE REID and TAMMY BOHLER REID.

NOTICE OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS

Notice to: Rodric Carr and Marilyn Carr
whose whereabouts and location are unknown

Please take notice that a Petition for Adoption of J.S.C., a minor child born on February 2, 2015, to Cedric Dewayne Carr and Jaclyn Suzanne Shaeyfelt Carr, was filed on the 29th day of July, 2026, in the Probate Court of Cullman County by Petitioners Gary Dewayne Reid and Tammy Bohler Reid. If you should contest this adoption, you must file a written response within thirty (30) days of the date of the last publication herein with counsel for said Petitioners, whose name and address are as shown below, and with the Clerk of the said Probate Court of Cullman County, Alabama, 500 2nd Avenue SW, Cullman, Alabama 35055.

DONE this 6th day of August, 2026.

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF * JOHNNIEE LOU LEIGEBER, * Deceased. * CASE NO.: PC 2026-294

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters Testamentary having been granted to Tracy L. Hartwig and Derek Arthur Leigeber, as Personal Representatives of the Estate of Johnnie Lou Leigeber, deceased, on the 5th day of August, 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.

Tracy L. Hartwig and
Derek Arthur Leigeber
Personal Representatives

Shelbie G. Hankey
Attorney for Petitioner
200 Second Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055

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

Please publish the above Notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

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

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF

DOUGLAS IRVIN FARLEY, DECEASED. CASE NO. PC 2026-307

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

THE ESTATE OF DOUGLAS IRVIN FARLEY, DECEASED.

Letters of Administration of said deceased have been granted to Dorothy Farley Faulkner and Raymond Ellis Faulkner on the 6th day of August, 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.

Dorothy Farley Faulkner and Raymond Ellis Faulkner,
Joint Personal Representatives

TO: Publisher of *The Cullman Tribune*:

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

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Sherry H. Barrett
Smith & Smith Attorneys, LLC
Attorneys for Joint Personal Representatives
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
Phone: (256) 734-4721
e-mail: sherry@smithandsmithllp.com

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF

RANDY JAMES WATKINS, DECEASED CASE NO. PC 2026-260

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

THE ESTATE OF RANDY JAMES WATKINS, DECEASED.

Letters of Administration of said deceased have been granted to Betty Dean Smith on the 28th day of July, 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.

Betty Dean Smith, Personal Representative (Administrator),

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 Personal Representative
P. O. Box 398
Cullman, Alabama 35056-0398
Phone: (256) 734-4721
e-mail: steve@smithandsmithllp.com

1 Page(s)

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

In Re the Estate of)
Juanita Jackson,) Case No. PC 2026-393
Deceased)

Notice to Creditors

TAKE NOTICE that Letters Testamentary having been granted to Lamarr A. Jones as Personal Representative of the Estate of Juanita Jackson, deceased, on the 6th day of August, 20 26, by the Hon. Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate,

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

Personal Representative
Lamarr A. Jones

To the Publisher of the Cullman Tribune:
Please publish the above Notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

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

G. Edward Coey
Attorney for Personal Representative
P.O. Box 834
Hanceville, Al 35077
256-352-2090

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF * VIVIAN DRUSILLA BUCKELEW, * Deceased. * CASE NO.: PC 2026-234

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE that Letters Testamentary having been granted to NICKY WAYNE BUCKELEW AND PAULA MARIE BUCKELEW PERRY, as Personal Representative of the Estate of VIVIAN DRUSILLA BUCKELEW, deceased, on the 6th day of August, 2026, by the Honorable Perry D. Knight, Special 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.

Nicky Wayne Buckelew
Paula Marie Buckelew Perry
Personal Representatives

Betsy M. Harrison
Attorney for Petitioners
P.O. Box 339
Double Springs, AL 35553

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

Please publish the above Notice once a week for three consecutive weeks and send an affidavit of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF)
SHERRY HODGES,) CASE NO.: PC2023-182
Deceased.)

NOTICE OF HEARING
VERIFIED MOTION TO COMPEL FINAL SETTLEMENT OF DECEDENT'S ESTATE

TO: DEVAN HODGES, BETH WOOD, MONICA ROBERTS and all Known and Unknown Heirs of the estate of SHERRY HODGES, deceased.

The *Verified Motion to Compel Final Settlement of Decedent's Estate* has been set for hearing on **22nd day of October, 2026, at 10:00a.m.** before Tammy Brown Judge of Probate, Room 101.

All persons are hereby given notice to appear, and contest said Petition if they see proper.

DONE this 6th day of August, 2026.

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

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
STEVE LUTHER SUTTER, * CASE NO.: PC 2026-215
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF HEARING
PETITION FOR PROBATE OF WILL

TO: STEPHANIE PHILLIPS, LAYLA QUIN, STEVEN SUTTER and ANY KNOWN OR UNKNOWN NEXT-OF-KIN OR INTERESTED PARTIES OF GEORGE CARROLL COLE

Petition for Probate of Will, filed by Debbie Sutter f/k/a Debbie Kay Travis Davis, Personal Representative, through Attorney Dan J. Willingham has been scheduled for the 10th **day of September, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.,** before Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate, Cullman County, 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 28th day of July, 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 Proof of Publication to the Judge of Probate.

Dan J. Willingham
Attorney for Personal Representative
413 First Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35056

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
RONALD HANKEY, * CASE NO.: PC 2026-289
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT TO BE PUBLISHED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

THE ESTATE OF RONALD HANKEY, DECEASED.

Letters of Administration of said deceased have been granted to Tyler Hankey on the 28th day of July, 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.

Tyler Hankey, Personal Representative (Administrator),
and
Steven C. Smith, Attorney for the Estate

TO: Publisher of *Cullman Tribune*:

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

Tammy Brown
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

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

Legal Notice
In accordance with Chapter 1, Title 39, Code of Alabama, 1975, as amended, notice is hereby given that Blalock Building Company, Inc., Contractor, has completed the Contract for the Interior Renovations for Cullman Middle School located at 802 2nd Avenue NE, Cullman, AL 35055 for the State of Alabama and Cullman City Board of Education, Owner(s), and have made request for final settlement of said Contract. All persons having any claim for labor, materials, or otherwise in connection with this project should immediately notify, Lathan Associates Architects, P.C., 300 Chase Park South, Suite 200, Hoover, AL 35244.

Blalock Building Company, Inc.
7309 Gadsden Highway
Trussville, AL 35173

DISTRICT COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY
500 2nd Ave SW
Room 303
Cullman, Al 35055

Caitlyn Robinson
(PLAINTIFF)
VS CASE NO: SM-2026-900433
David Keith Chandler III
(DEFENDANT)

NOTICE OF FILING OF LAW SUIT

DEFENDANT(S), David Keith Chandler III, whose whereabouts are unknown, must answer the complaint brought against him/her by the PLAINTIFF, Caitlyn Robinson, for $3,400.00 plus court cost, cause of action being: Money provided defendant for rent

ANSWER TO THE COMPLAINT MUST BE MADE BY THE SAID DEFENDANT on or before the 5th day of September, 2026, or a default may be rendered against him/her in the above styled cause.

DATED THIS THE 24th DAY OF JULY, 2026.

LISA MCSWAIN
CIRCUIT COURT CLERK
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Case# AD2025032
PB ADT Book:74 Page:605
Recorded in Above Book and P
07/22/2026 2:03PM
Tammy Brown
Judge of Probate
Cullman County, AL
1 Page(s)

IN THE MATTER OF THE
ADOPTION THE PETITION OF
WILLIAM JOHNSTON and
LOIS JOHNSTON,
FOR THE ADOPTION OF

X.I.P. A MINOR.
D.O.B. 8/23/2012

CASE NO.: AD 2025-032

NOTICE OF PETITION FOR ADOPTION

TO: LUCAS EDWARD PAYNE, BOILOGICAL FATHER WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN

Please take notice that a *Petition for Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption of Child* to adopt X.I.P. a minor child born on August 23, 2012, to Melissa Leigh Bates Wilson, was filed in the Probate Court of Cullman County, Alabama by William Johnston and Lois Johnston, Petitioners. If you should contest this adoption, you must file a written response within Thirty (30) days from the date of the last notice of publication. Your response must be filed with Counsel for said petitioner, whose name and address are shown below, and with the Clerk of Probate Court, 500 2nd Avenue SW, Room 101, Cullman County, Alabama.

DONE THIS 22nd DAY OF July, 2026.

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Pamela E. Nail
Attorney for the Petitioners
200 2nd Avenue SW
Cullman, Alabama 35055

CULLMAN COUNTY, AL
1 Page(s)

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: THE ESTATE OF *
MAXIE T. HUDSON, * CASE NO. PC2026-314
DECEASED. *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

TAKE NOTICE: Letters Testamentary having been granted to Daphne Paige Faulk and Maxie Scott Hudson as Co-Personal Representatives of the Estate of MAXIE T. HUDSON, deceased, on the 13th day August, 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.

Daphne Paige Faulk

Maxie Scott Hudson

Gaynor L. St. John
Attorney for Co-Personal Representatives

ST. JOHN & ST. JOHN, LLC
108 3rd Street SE
Cullman, AL 35055
Telephone: (256) 734-3542

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
Tammy Brown, Judge of Probate

Mullins Body Shop
11042 US Hwy 31 South
Cullman, AL 35055
256-734-1353

Sale Date: 10/06/2026
Time: 9:00 a.m.

VIN #	Year	Make	Model
19VDE1F76DE012303	2013	ACURA	ILX
WBABW334X6PX86166	2006	BMW	325Ci
1G1AT58H197211451	2009	CHEVROLET	COBALT
2G1WB57K391138909	2009	CHEVROLET	IMPALA
1GNEC13V34J321399	2004	CHEVROLET	TAHOE
3C4PDCAB3ET102195	2014	DODGE	JOURNEY
3C4PDCAB8FT617453	2015	DODGE	JOURNEY
3FAHP07Z28R271355	2008	FORD	FUSION
1FA6P8TH3J5114039	2018	FORD	MUSTANG
1FTCR10A7VTA93865	1997	FORD	RANGER
1FMZU67K14UA22346	2004	FORD	SPORT TRACK
JHMCP26898C010214	2008	HONDA	ACCORD
JHLRE38367C005885	2007	HONDA	CR-V
5NPE34AF1KH814512	2019	HYUNDAI	SONATA
KMHHM65D13U072517	2003	HYUNDAI	TIBURON
5XXG64J27MG038205	2021	KIA	K5
KNDJT2A57D7764913	2013	KIA	SOUL
JKAENVC145A189868	2005	KAWASAKI	MOTORCYCLE
JM1BK12F381813297	2008	MAZDA	MAZDA 3
1YVHZ8DH4C5M11524	2012	MAZDA	MAZDA 6
1N4AL2AP5CN436892	2012	NISSAN	ALTIMA
2G2WR554461239030	2006	PONTIAC	GRAND PRIX
2G2WP552961277339	2006	PONTIAC	GRAND PRIX
JS1GN79A362102162	2006	SUZUKI	600
5TDZK3EH6CS076082	2012	TOYOTA	HIGHLANDER
5TDYK3EH6DS139033	2013	TOYOTA	HIGHLANDER
5TDYK3DC4FS612484	2015	TOYOTA	SIENNA
3H3V532C7FT594164	2014	HYUNDAI	53 FT TRAILER
77154723512	UNKNOWN		53 FT CONTAINER TRAILER
1JJV532W93L837530	2003	WABASH	53 FT CONTAINER TRAILER
NO VIN	UNKNO	WABASH	53 FT CONTAINER TRAILER
1JJV532WXWL475003	1998	WABASH	53 FT TRAILER
77154723512	1997	CONTAINER	CONX BOX
1GRAA062X6W706043	2006	GREAT DANE	53 FT TRAILER
YV1FA8847L1460293	1990	VOLVO	740
JYAVM01E76A095577	2006	YAMAHA	V-STAR

Support (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — As students begin the 2026-27 school year, Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids is asking the community to help ensure local children have food when they leave school for the weekend.

The program packed 3,800 bags during a 30-week period last school year. That equals an average of approximately 127 bags each week.

Items in each bag averaged $12, giving last year's distributions an estimated total value of $45,600.

"As the new school year begins, we at Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids would like to thank all of you for your continued support of the program," the organization said.

Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids has added Cash App as a new way to contribute. Donations of any amount can be sent to $knapsacks4.

Donors may also sponsor a child for a specific period:

- $48 provides four weekly bags, covering approximately one month
- $180 covers one semester
- $360 provides one child's knapsacks for the entire 30-week school year

A $12 donation covers the average cost of one bag.

Checks and other mailed donations may be sent to:

Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids
c/o Nancy Horton
P.O. Box 255
Hanceville, AL 35077

The program was established to address the weekend food gap faced by children who receive meals at school during the week but may not have dependable access to food at home on Saturdays and Sundays.

Previous Tribune coverage described each weekly package as containing two breakfasts, two lunches, two suppers and six snacks. Specific foods can vary according to availability and donations.

Volunteers have traditionally gathered on Thursdays at the Hanceville Civic Center to prepare the food. The City of Hanceville has provided the organization with space for its packing operation.

Once the bags are prepared, they are delivered to Hanceville schools. School counselors and staff privately distribute the food to participating students before they leave school for the weekend.

The program has also used inconspicuous backpacks and oversized food-storage bags to protect the privacy and dignity of participating children.

Hanceville was among several Cullman County school communities that established local Knapsacks for Kids programs around 2015. When The Tribune first profiled the Hanceville effort in 2016, it was distributing food to approximately 50 students each week at an average cost of $5 per child.

The program's output last year, averaging approximately 127 bags per week at $12 each, demonstrates how both its reach and operating costs have grown.

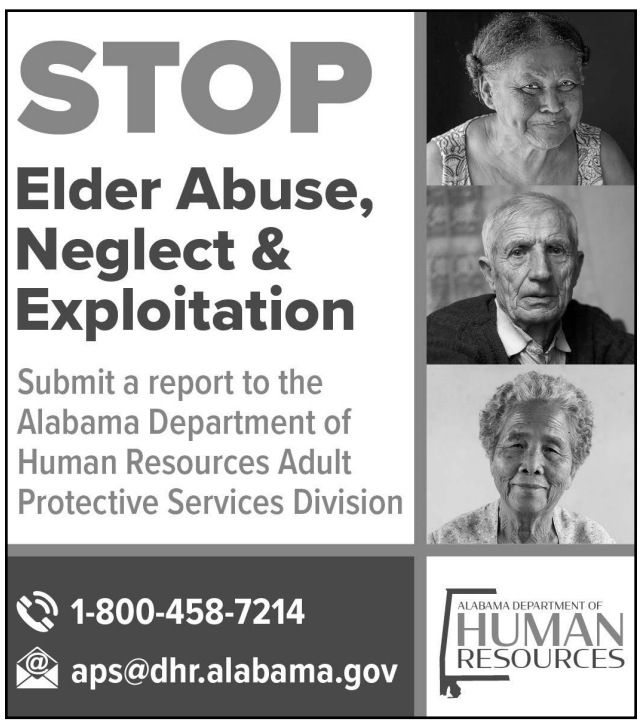
Churches, civic organizations, businesses and individual residents have provided food, financial contributions and volunteer labor throughout the program's history. Participating groups rotate packing responsibilities so the work does not fall on a small number of volunteers.

"We all pull together as one to feed the children of Hanceville Schools," program volunteer Amy Gable told The Tribune in 2018. "We know a hungry child cannot learn."

The organization thanked everyone who supported the program last year and said it looks forward to welcoming its volunteers back as weekly packing resumes.

Those interested in volunteering or learning more may contact Hanceville Knapsacks for Kids through the organization's Facebook page.

Its mission remains simple: "Feed the need" while "helping end hunger one knapsack at a time.









LEGALS

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

IN RE: * **CASE NO.:** PC 2026-283
BETTY FAYE HANCOCK, *
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

A Petition for Summary Distribution of the estate of BETTY FAYE HANCOCK has been filed by CHRISTOPHER HANCOCK on the 22 day of July, 2026, in the Probate Court of Cullman County, Alabama. Notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within the time allowed by the law or the same will be barred.

CHRISTOPHER HANCOCK
Petitioner

PERRY D. KNIGHT
Attorney for the Estate
412 First Avenue SE
Suite 101
Cullman, AL 35055
256-734-4090

TO: The Publisher of THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Please publish the foregoing notice ONE TIME 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 * CASE NO.: PC 2026-301
SAMMIE AUDREY JONES, *
Deceased. *

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION of said deceased having been granted to **SETH B. THOMPSON** on the 12th day of August, 2026, by the Honorable Tammy Brown, Probate Court Judge of Cullman County. Notice is hereby given that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same within six months after the granting of Letters or within five months from the first publication of this notice, whichever is the latter to occur of the same will be barred.

Seth B. Thompson
Personal Representative

The Thompson Law Firm, LLC
201 Second Avenue Southeast
Cullman, Alabama 35055
Phone: 256-73-4591
Fax: 866-826-4785

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

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

TAMMY BROWN, JUDGE OF PROBATE
CULLMAN COUNTY, ALABAMA

ORDINANCE NO. 2026 – 45
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CULLMAN, ALABAMA, AMENDING CHAPTER 62, ARTICLE II OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF CULLMAN BY ADOPTING A NEW SECTION 62-38 REGARDING FENCES AND WALLS

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Cullman, Alabama, as follows:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose.
The City Council finds that clear, enforceable standards for the construction, maintenance, and appearance of fences and walls are necessary to protect public safety, preserve property values, ensure aesthetic consistency, and promote the general welfare of the citizens of Cullman. This amendment updates and clarifies the regulations governing fences and walls.

Section 2. Amendment.
Section 62-38 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Cullman, Alabama, is hereby repealed in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Sec. 62-38. Fences and walls.

"Fence" means any structure, barrier, or partition that encloses, divides, or borders property.

"Wall" means any structure or barrier that creates an enclosure, division, or border of property.

A building permit shall be obtained prior to the erection, placement, or repair of any fence or wall.

Fences and walls shall be constructed in a uniform and consistent style and shall be composed of materials manufactured, designed, and intended for such purposes.

Fences and walls shall not include scrap materials, pallets, doors, or other such salvaged materials, which create a potential fire hazard and safety risk.

Fences and walls containing natural materials, such as rock or stone, shall be in a uniform and consistent style, free of loose or missing materials, and properly maintained to not create a potential safety risk.

Fences and walls must be properly maintained. All wooden portions of fences and walls shall be a decay resistant wood (not salvaged materials which create a potential fire hazard and safety risk) and be covered with paint, stain, or other substance, which preserves the wood from deterioration, dilapidation, or decay.

It shall be unlawful to erect or maintain any barbed wire, concertina or razor wire, or electric fences or walls on a residentially zoned property.

Fences and Walls are not permitted to be erected, placed, maintained or grown in any manner that impedes the natural flow of stormwater or obstructs a motorist's line of sight (see section 62-32(d)).

Section 3. Severability.
If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is held to be unconstitutional or invalid for any reason, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have passed this ordinance, and each section, subsection, clause, or phrase hereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, and phrases be declared unconstitutional or invalid.

Section 4. Repealer.
All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Section 5. Effective Date.
This ordinance shall become effective upon its passage and publication as required by law.

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL this the 10th day of August, 2026.

President of the City Council

ATTEST:

City Clerk

APPROVED BY THE MAYOR this the10th day of August, 2026.

Mayor

THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE
AUGUST 15, 2026

Vista Lago (from Front)

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

Read part 1: www.cullmantribune.com/2026/08/11/beneath-the-surface-part-1-adem-says-vista-lago-permit-is-first-direct-npdes-discharge-to-smith-lake

Read part 2: www.cullmantribune.com/2026/08/13/beneath-the-surface-part-2-4-wastewater-permits-operate-in-smith-lake-watershed-but-none-discharge-directly-to-lake

CULLMAN, Ala. — In the public campaign surrounding Vista Lago Smith Lake Development, the argument has often been reduced to two sharply different descriptions.

Opponents have warned that sewage will be pumped into Smith Lake.

Vista Lago has publicly stated that its Alabama Department of Environmental Management permit "does NOT" authorize a direct discharge into Smith Lake. The developer's July 17 statement also says treated effluent will be released about one-third of a mile inland.

The records support parts of both arguments, but not their broadest formulations.

Two facts remain consistent throughout The Tribune's review:

- The wastewater is required to be treated before discharge.
- ADEM considers the permit the first direct NPDES discharge to Lewis Smith Lake.

Much of the controversy lies in the broader claims surrounding those facts.

ADEM confirms the precedent claim

Eddie Hand formally raised the precedent question with ADEM during the permit's public-comment period.

In an April 16 email, Hand asked whether Vista Lago would represent the first sewer-discharge permit in the Lewis Smith Lake drainage area and requested a list of existing permits if it was not.

Hand later asked ADEM to have the development redesign its wastewater system to conform with non-discharge systems he identified elsewhere around Smith Lake.

ADEM drew a distinction.

Vista Lago was not the first wastewater permit within the Smith Lake drainage area.

It was, ADEM said, the first NPDES permit to directly discharge to Lewis Smith Lake.

That is the central precedent established by the agency's own response.

Permit authorizes treated wastewater, not raw sewage

Nothing reviewed by The Tribune authorizes Vista Lago to routinely discharge untreated sewage into Smith Lake.

The system has a 0.060-MGD, or 60,000-gallon-per-day, design flow. Its NPDES permit establishes limits for bacteria, suspended solids, biochemical oxygen demand, ammonia, chlorine, dissolved oxygen and other parameters.

The application reports one treated-effluent outfall and zero untreated-effluent outfalls.

That does not mean equipment cannot fail, an overflow cannot occur or permit limits cannot be violated. The permit contains requirements addressing sanitary sewer overflows, treatment failures, monitoring and enforcement.

A potential malfunction and the discharge ADEM affirmatively permits are different issues.

Describing the permit itself as authorization to dump raw sewage would be inaccurate.

Application lists outfall 100 feet from shore

Another figure cited by opponents appears in the permit application.

Vista Lago's EPA Form 2A identifies Outfall 1 as 100 feet from shore, lists the depth below surface as 0 feet and gives a 0.060-MGD average daily flow designation. The discharge is characterized as continuous rather than seasonal.

Landmark Engineering Group's map identifies a wastewater-treatment-plant discharge to a drainage way and a second point labeled "Outfall 01 draining into Smith Lake."

The map states, "Receiving water is Smith Lake."

Those records create an unresolved difference between the permit file and Vista Lago's public explanation.

In its July 17 statement, Vista Lago said its permit does not authorize direct discharge into Smith Lake. It said treated effluent would be discharged into an approximately 30-acre wooded parcel about one-third of a mile inland from the lake.

ADEM uses different terminology.

Its response to public comments calls Vista Lago the first NPDES permit to directly discharge to Lewis Smith Lake.

One possible explanation is a regulatory distinction between the physical location where treated effluent leaves the treatment system and the receiving water assigned to the permitted outfall.

The record reviewed by The Tribune does not establish that explanation clearly enough to reconcile the two descriptions.

That remains a question for ADEM and the project engineer.

Permit materials describe a multi-stage treatment system

Vista Lago's public statement emphasizes the level of treatment proposed for the development.

Landmark Engineering submitted the project to ADEM as a decentralized extended-aeration wastewater treatment plant.

Engineering drawings depict multiple treatment stages, including:

- Flow equalization
- Aeration
- Anoxic zones
- Clarification
- Chlorination
- Phosphorus treatment

Vista Lago publicly describes the system as a commercial STEP septic system and a scaled version of a municipal wastewater treatment plant.

Those descriptions are not necessarily inconsistent because a treatment system can contain multiple collection and treatment components.

For purposes of the NPDES permit, ADEM describes the facility as discharging treated domestic wastewater to Ryan Creek (Smith Lake).

Permit file does not substantiate "5X cleaner" claim

Vista Lago's July statement says effluent standards for the system will be "5X cleaner than required by ADEM."

The permit reviewed by The Tribune does not contain a single measurement called "cleanliness." Wastewater is regulated through individual parameters.

ADEM sets limits for E. coli, CBOD, ammonia, suspended solids and residual chlorine and establishes monitoring requirements for nitrogen- and phosphorus-related parameters.

The application contains projected removal percentages, but The Tribune found no calculation in the permit file demonstrating a blanket fivefold comparison between Vista Lago's anticipated effluent and ADEM's required limits.

That does not establish the developer's claim is false.

It means the claim cannot be independently verified from the permit documents reviewed.

A pollutant-by-pollutant comparison identifying expected effluent concentrations and corresponding regulatory limits would allow the claim to be evaluated.

The same standard applies to comparisons between the proposed plant and conventional septic systems. Whether one system presents less environmental risk depends on engineering, soil, hydrogeology, operation and maintenance, among other factors.

Developer describes additional wooded bioretention area

Vista Lago says treated effluent will enter an engineered bioretention area with vegetation intended to absorb surface water not absorbed by the surrounding wooded area.

The developer describes that measure as outside ADEM's required scope.

The operative ADEM materials reviewed by The Tribune identify the permitted receiving pathway as a local drainage way to Smith Lake and identify Outfall 01 draining into Smith Lake.

The documents reviewed do not establish the approximately 30-acre wooded parcel or broader bioretention description as an enforceable condition of NPDES Permit AL0084516.

That distinction is significant because a voluntary project feature and a permit requirement are not necessarily the same thing.

Final engineering plans may provide additional clarity. The permit requires plans and specifications to be submitted to and examined by ADEM before construction of the wastewater treatment facility.

Permit records address sludge and SSO planning

The permit file addresses two additional points raised in public criticism.

Sludge:

- The application estimates approximately 1.5 dry metric tons annually.
- Dewatering is identified as part of the process.
- Landfill disposal is selected.
- The final landfill was not identified in the material reviewed by The Tribune, leaving the destination unresolved.

Sanitary Sewer Overflow Response Plan:

- Maverick must develop the plan within 120 days of the June 1 permit effective date.
- The plan must be fully implemented within 180 days.
- Once completed, it must be made available to the public within 30 days of a written request, subject to limited security-related redactions.

The absence of a completed plan immediately after permit issuance therefore does not establish a missed permit deadline.

303(d) listing is for mercury

Opponents have correctly pointed out that the portion of Ryan Creek (Smith Lake) containing the discharge is on Alabama's 303(d) impaired-waters list.

The pollutant identified in the permit file is mercury.

ADEM requires annual mercury monitoring so information will be available for future total maximum daily load development. The agency says no existing TMDL affects the Vista Lago discharge.

The listing is relevant environmental context.

It is not evidence that Vista Lago caused the existing impairment, nor does the permit identify the segment as impaired because of Vista Lago wastewater, nitrogen, phosphorus or E. coli.

No recognized "third cleanest" ranking located

Hand told ADEM that Smith Lake "builds itself as the cleanest lake in Alabama," and public material reviewed by The Tribune has repeated variations of claims that Smith Lake ranks among the cleanest lakes in the country.

The Tribune has not located a recognized state or federal ranking system supporting a specific national placement such as "third cleanest lake in America."

The claim is unnecessary to establish the regulatory precedent.

ADEM's own response provides the narrower, documented point: no NPDES permit previously identified by the agency directly discharged to Lewis Smith Lake.

ADEM says it lacks authority to require a non-discharge design

The public campaign has repeatedly called for Vista Lago to use a non-discharge alternative.

Hand made essentially that request directly to ADEM.

The agency declined.

ADEM said the permit was developed according to applicable regulations, water-quality standards and technology-based requirements. It also said it does not have regulatory authority to require a particular treatment-system design or a non-discharge system.

That does not prevent the developer from voluntarily choosing another system.

That distinction is central to Rep. Cindy Myrex's position.

Myrex calls for voluntary alternative

Myrex has not publicly characterized the permit as illegal or presented herself as an environmental specialist.

Instead, she has framed her position around finding another solution.

In one statement reviewed by The Tribune, Myrex said she had "appealed on multiple levels for the developers to consider an alternative option."

She said she is not an environmental specialist and has listened to constituents, stakeholders and experts as the issue developed. She also said discussions involving the Smith Lake community and the developers were taking place and that she had offered to participate.

In a more recent statement, Myrex said she remained focused on a resolution addressing residents' concerns "while giving the developer an opportunity to pursue a responsible alternative."

That position is separate from ADEM's regulatory decision.

ADEM has determined that the discharge can be permitted under the conditions imposed.

Myrex is asking the developer to consider another option despite that authorization.

Permit allows future ADEM action if standards are violated

Vista Lago has an effective NPDES permit.

ADEM states that compliance with its terms and conditions should assure compliance with applicable water-quality standards.

The permit also provides for future action if circumstances prove otherwise.

If the discharge causes or contributes to a violation of state water-quality standards, ADEM may require abatement, modify the permit or, in an emergency, prohibit the discharge until the permit is modified.

ADEM has also acknowledged that no Smith Lake-specific water-quality model currently exists. Its Water Quality Branch relied on best professional judgment in establishing initial limits, and the permit rationale says a future Smith Lake model could be used to determine whether those limits should be revised.

What the record establishes, and what remains unresolved

After reviewing permitting documents, public comments, maps, public statements and wastewater records, The Tribune's findings are narrower than many of the arguments circulating around Smith Lake.

The record establishes:

- Vista Lago has not been permitted to routinely discharge raw sewage into the lake.
- ADEM identifies the permit as the first NPDES permit to directly discharge treated wastewater to Lewis Smith Lake.
- Existing wastewater plants operate within the lake's drainage area, but ADEM says none directly discharge into the lake.
- Vista Lago's permit contains enforceable treatment and monitoring requirements.
- The permit addresses sludge and sanitary sewer overflow planning, although the eventual sludge destination remains unresolved.

Other questions remain:

- The permit application lists the outfall as 100 feet from shore while Vista Lago says treated effluent will be discharged about one-third of a mile inland.
- ADEM calls the permit the first NPDES permit to directly discharge to Lewis Smith Lake while Vista Lago says the permit does not authorize direct discharge into Smith Lake.
- Vista Lago says its effluent standards will be five times cleaner than ADEM requires, while the permit file reviewed by The Tribune does not provide the pollutant-by-pollutant calculation needed to independently verify that statement.
- The permit materials reviewed do not establish the approximately 30-acre wooded parcel or broader bioretention system as an enforceable condition of the NPDES permit.
- ADEM issued the permit without a completed Smith Lake water-quality model, relying on best professional judgment while leaving open the possibility that future modeling could result in revised limits.

None of those unresolved questions establishes that the permitted system will harm Smith Lake.

The issuance of the permit also does not, by itself, answer them.

For the first NPDES permit ADEM says will directly discharge to Lewis Smith Lake, the remaining issues are measurable: the exact relationship between the physical discharge point and permitted outfall, pollutant-specific performance data, the status of the proposed bioretention area in final plans and how future Smith Lake modeling could affect permit limits.

Those are the questions the public record now leaves to be answered.

BILLY BOB'S STORIES AND STUFF

Man's best friend

Bill King
Tribune
Contributor



I am a dog man! No, that is not a super hero; however, I have had a couple of dogs that were heroes...at least to me. I like cats, too, but I have not had one for quite some time. I do prefer dogs because they will usually come when I call them, instead of looking at me and saying, "Are you talking to me?"

Actually, I love almost all animals, except the ones that bite or sting. Over the years, and especially in my boyhood days, I've had a variety of pets. I have had more cats than I can name or number. I've had rabbits, guinea pigs, a goose, a duck, an orphan opossum named Junior, turtles, terrapins, frogs, a dessert horned toad and even a pet alligator.

One of my brothers had a pet squirrel, and my other brother gave me one of his baby alligators.

That brother was in Mama's dog house for a while, and my gator ended up in a rabbit coop. Yes, the rabbits had already vacated the premises. Mama would not allow me to put my gator in our pond or bring him in the house.

On the tamer side of sense and sensibility, I have had at least one dog at all times most of my life except when I was away in college and seminary. God must love animals, too, because He created them, and He did so even before he created mankind. Noah had the best collection of animals and his all lived inside!

I think I've had 15 dogs. The first one I ever had was a great American dog named Sport.

I think he must have been older than me because I can't remember him not ever being there. Sport was a hybrid...a Heinz 57, if you will. He was an outdoor dog who would not come inside the house for any amount of calling, coaxing or even bribing with a dog treat. Our dog treats back them were biscuits...literal biscuits.

Sport was my 50-ish pound, by-my-side body guard. My parents discovered early on that Sport did not vote in favor of any physical disciplinarian actions carried out on his boy.

I did not vote in favor of such actions either, but I didn't growl and show my canines at my disciplinarians like my canine friend would. Sport also did not like to swim or get a bath, even for a biscuit.

At a young age, I realized exactly how much Sport loved me and was my protector. He had crossed the bridge over our creek and walked up on the other side for a pretty good distance.

My family was trying to get him to come back around on our side, but he was having nothing to do with it. He just stood on the other bank, looked at us like a cat might and barked at us.

That's when we discovered how to get him to cross the creek, swim and take a bath, all at the same time. My brother pretended to spank me and before you could say, "He won't swim or he won't bite," Sport was soaking wet and showing my brother his pearly whites! That was the day Sport became more than my dog...he became my hero. Lassie had nothing on my dog!

Yes, they say a dog is man's best friend, but I believe God, who created us all, is actually man's very best friend. I cannot number the circumstances when I have found myself in times of trouble, only to realize that God was right by my side giving all the guidance and protection needed.

Bill King can be reached at bkpreach@yahoo.com.

HISTORY

Files from Yesteryear: Aug. 15, 1935

From the files of Aug. 15, 1935

New Improvements Made in Cullman

The store of Geo. W. Ponder is undergoing a complete change of both inside and out at the present. Windows have replaced solid walls, more room for the display of merchandise inside the store and show windows are being installed. The store will be completed in a few weeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ponder are constructing a modern brick bungalow in the northeastern section of the city. The home will contain eight rooms.

The Cullman Motor Company is building a foundation for a modern brick building on the corner of 5th street and 3rd avenue west.

A new filling station is being built on the corner of the Bee Line highway and 7th street west.

A new building is being completed on the new viaduct on 4th street between the court house and West Cullman. J. M. Kilpatrick owns the building and it will be occupied by a pressing and cleaning shop.

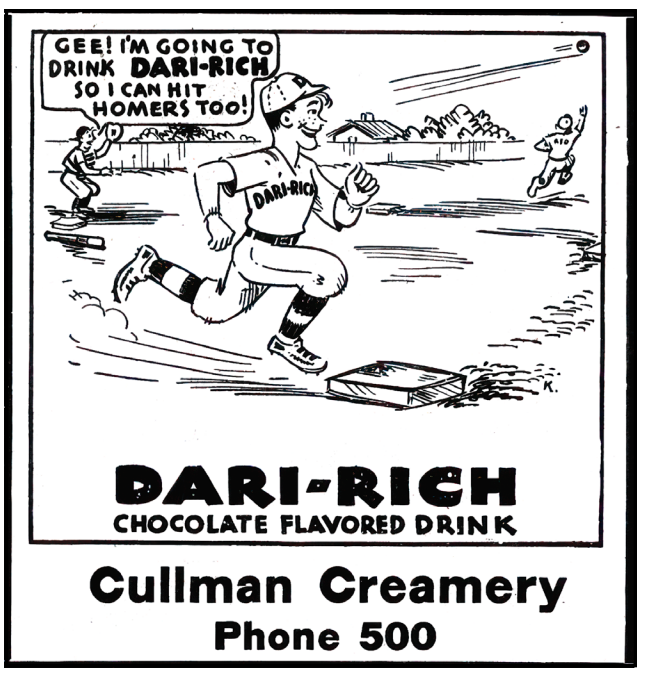
Several homes in all parts of the city are being repainted and redecorated and rooms added on to them for more space and more comfort.

Sacred Heart Academy to Open September 4th

The Sacred Heart Academy will reopen for the fall term on September fourth. Although the Academy is primarily for high school pupils, provisions have been made whereby students who have completed the seventh grade will be accepted this year.

Improvements during the summer here have provided for an up-to-date gym and recreation rooms in St. Joseph's annex. The refectory, private rooms and classrooms have all been renovated and are in cheerful readiness for the coming year.

The faculty requests that registration be made on Wednesday, September fourth, in order that classes may be resumed on Thursday, September fifth.



Bees and Butterflies

Alex Evers has returned from a trip to Chicago.

Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Bright spent Sunday in Arab.

Mrs. Essie Scheuing spent Wednesday in Birmingham.

Mrs. Lavert Freeman spent Wednesday in Birmingham.

Dr. and Mrs. M. S. Whiteside and family are visiting in Ohio.

Mrs. Maud Comfort and Mrs. Fred Swift spent Monday in Decatur.

Misses Freda and Elsie Hartung spent Wednesday in Birmingham.

Judge A. A. Griffin is holding court in Lawrence County at Moulton this week.

Mrs. A. A. Griffin and Mrs. J. C. Norwood spent Wednesday in Birmingham.

Rainey Martin is spending this week on the Gulf Coast of Florida fishing.

Dr. Alvie Culpepper is spending this week on the Florida Gulf Coast fishing.

Attorney Marvin Scott spent Monday in Decatur looking after legal business.

Miss Edith Simms of Athens is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Simms this week.

Dr. Phillip Hartung is spending this week on the Florida Gulf Coast fishing.

Thermon Guthery is spending a month at Camp McClellan with the C. M. T. C.

Mrs. Henderson Gutherie and son, Spencer Speegle, spent Monday in Atlanta.

Mrs. J. C. Norwood and son, Maurice Norwood, spent Monday in Birmingham.

Miss Doris Turner is the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Mixon in Hartselle this week.

J. E. McLendon and E. C. Kinney, Jr., spent Tuesday in Chattanooga on business.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Taylor daughter, Miss Wynelle, spent Monday in Birmingham.

POET'S CORNER

Mid-Summer

By: Randy C. Hale

It's midsummer, and the grandkids are starting back to school, reminding me of the time when I was in school and how I dreaded those back-to-school commercials.

That meant Mother would take me into town to the upstairs of our local department store to try on and buy new shoes and clothes.

How I hated the feel of those new jeans, mother checking the waist for room to grow. Mashing the ends of my toes when trying on the new shoes. I was always relieved when the day was through, and I was back at home enjoying the few days left of summer.

In comparison, I am now past mid-summer in the seasons of my life, perhaps late fall or even early winter. No more rush to buy new clothes, no more yellow school buses to catch, no requirements to learn. Times in life that seem minor to the things that complicate it now.

CULLMAN TRIBUNE WORD SEARCH

AUG. 15

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E	S	U	S	T	A	I	N	A	B	L	E	K	X	F	Y	A	R	P
T	T	I	N	P	L	U	T	O	N	I	U	M	E	B	Z	E	L	L
Z	X	H	O	T	S	P	R	I	N	G	A	V	O	H	T	K	A	S
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M	W	M	Q	P	G	L	Q	N	H	E	I	E	H	I	A	P	O	Q
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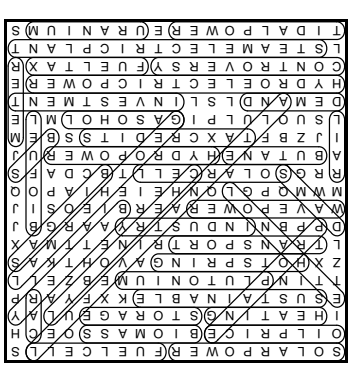
Alternative Fuel
Battery
Biofuel
Biogas
Biomass
Bus
Butane
Car
Chernobyl
Controversy
Dams
Demand
Ethanol
Fuel Cell
Fuel Tax
Gasohol
Geothermal
Heating
Hot Spring
Hydroelectric Power
Hydropower
Industry
Investment
Meter
Oil Price
Plutonium
Propane
Rail
Solar Cell
Solar Power
Steam Electric Plant
Storage
Sustainable
Tax Credits
Tidal Power
Transport
Uranium
Wave Power

CULLMAN TRIBUNE SUDOKU

AUG. 15

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		9						
						4	5	
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ANSWERS:



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2	4	6	5	8	1	7	3	9
5	8	7	9	3	6	2	1	4
3	9	5	7	1	4	8	2	6
4	6	8	3	2	5	9	1	7
1	7	2	8	6	9	4	5	3
8	2	9	6	5	7	3	4	1
7	1	4	2	9	3	5	6	8
6	5	3	1	4	8	9	7	2

Commission on Aging seeks volunteers to deliver meals to homebound seniors

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — The Cullman County Commission on Aging is asking individuals, churches and businesses to give approximately one hour a week to help deliver meals and companionship to homebound seniors in the city of Cullman.

Volunteers are needed one day a week during the meal delivery window of 10 a.m.-noon. Those interested can call the Cullman Senior Center at 256-734-0145.

Prepared meals are picked up and delivered along an assigned route using the volunteer's own transportation. Mileage reimbursement is available but optional.

Volunteers also deliver the Cullman County Senior Magazine, helping homebound clients remain informed about programs, services and events in the community.

"For many homebound individuals, our volunteers are the only connection they have," Cullman County Commission on Aging Director Stephanie Lawson told The Tribune during an earlier recruitment effort.

In addition to providing food and information, each delivery gives someone an opportunity to check on the senior's well-being. Volunteers report concerns or clients they are unable to reach to center staff after completing their routes.

"They are also providing a daily wellness check and some socialization to our homebound, which is very important as well," Commission on Aging Nutrition Coordinator Laurie Knight previously told The Tribune.

The center's latest appeal highlighted Pat, a volunteer who has delivered meals for more than 20 years. Officials said the program could not continue serving homebound seniors without dedicated volunteers like her.

The Cullman Senior Center is one of seven full-time senior centers operated through the Cullman County Commission on Aging. The others are in Colony, Crane Hill, Fairview, Hanceville, Holly Pond and West Point.

Each center serves lunch Monday through Friday, except holidays, and coordinates homebound deliveries within its service area.

The latest countywide figure publicly reported by the Commission on Aging showed the seven centers serving approximately 140 homebound seniors. The figure was reported in late 2025, and the number can change as seniors enter or leave the program.

Lawson previously said the service helps seniors remain in their own homes longer while giving their families reassurance that someone is checking on them during the day.

To qualify for homebound meals, a person must be 60 or older and meet the program's homebound eligibility guidelines. Meals are provided without charge, although donations are appreciated and returned to the nutrition program.

Funding for the meals from the Alabama Depart ment of Senior Services, Cullman County Commission, North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments, United Way of Cullman County and donations from individuals, churches and businesses.

Some volunteers serve the same route each week, while others help once or twice a month or fill in when a regular driver is unavailable. Church groups and businesses are also encouraged to form teams and rotate volunteers according to members' availability.

The Cullman Senior Center is located at 1539 Sportsman Lake Road NW.

To volunteer, call 256-734-0145. Those interested in homebound meal routes elsewhere in Cullman County may contact Knight at 256-734-1241 or lknight@co.cullman.al.us.



THANK YOU TO OUR ADVERTISERS!