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information & inspiration

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E-MAIL: info@athensnowal.com

ADVERTISING:

Ali Elizabeth: 256-468-9425

Degan Wilder: 256-426-2493



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Alliance HR Services: Starting Afresh In 2022

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

In January of 2020, *Athens Now* had the privilege of telling the story of Alliance HR Services, which at that time was temporarily housed in the Athens State University Center for Lifelong Learning, located on the Square. Everyone on staff was excited about gearing up to serve our community by providing opportunities for employers and those seeking employment to find each other. Then COVID hit, the Center shut down for a while, and the Alliance staff had to learn to work at home and find a way to meet the needs of businesses that needed staff, and find the fit for those who could and

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Jason Sowash, (l) and Marijo Braddy, (r) do the honors at the recent Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting

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Publisher / Editor
Ali Turner

Copy Editor
Yvonne Dempsey

Sales & Distribution
Degan Wilder

Graphic Design
Jonathan Hamilton

Web Design
Teddy Wolcott

Contributing Writers

D. A. Slinkard
Lisa Philippart
Leigh Patterson
Anna Hamilton
Sandra Thompson
Deb Kitchenmaster
Nick Thomas
Jackie Warner
Tim Lambert
Mae Lewis
John F. Kvach, Ph.D.

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Send Inquiries to P.O. Box 428, Athens, AL 35612, or call (256) 468-9425. Emails are preferred, send email to info@athensnowal.com

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Publisher's Point

The Christmas Concert And Why Music Must Be In Our Mix

On Saturday, December 11, North Alabama was given a gift in the midst of the Season of Giving in the form of the Athens Middle and High School Christmas Concert. Held in the Athens Performing Arts Center, a beautiful room with marvelous acoustics located on the west side of the new Athens High School, it was superb. First of all, a team of dedicated band parents spent more than eight hours on Saturday decorating the building. The result was that peaceful feeling you get at nighttime driving around Mooresville during the holidays when you see trees, greenery, and understated lights that don't zip and zap while they accost you with Madonna singing, "Santa Baby."

But it was the music and the music makers that grabbed me. As a parent, teacher, and musician myself, I have come

to expect that if a middle or high school band is going to give a concert, one must largely endure it with the hopes that practice will eventually make perfect. And just as my parents endured my years of piano practice and the faux pas that accompany music acquisition, I am happy to steel myself against pitches that are less than perfect. However, Saturday night, there was no need because the middle school kids blew me away with their precision as well as their musicality. Athens Middle School band director, Ronnie Griffin, has done a remarkable job with kids who are sometimes smaller than their instruments, and they played with a maturity beyond their years. The best part was the way it had, in part, come about. Ty Parker, who is the high school band director, would freely go and sit with Ronnie's kids

during class and play the trombone with them as though he were a student. I have never seen such a level of cooperation and friendship amongst music teachers, and I attended a cut-throat conservatory of music that, while excellent, made me want to leave because of pandemic pettiness. Ty, when it was his turn to conduct the high school kids, warmly expressed his appreciation for his fellow teachers, and how honored he was to have them in the ensemble. Teresa Edwards, who is the choir director for Athens High School, sat in and played the clarinet. There was also a man who sat with a disabled child, and together they made an important contribution to the percussion section. It moved me deeply.

The result was a community doing one of the most important things it can do to make itself strong, and

that is make live music for real people in close proximity. And, I might add, there was no one objecting to music that included the Christ of Christmas. There are many places in our country that have to call these kinds of concerts "Winter Celebrations," but a haunting Celtic version of "What Child Is This?" juxtaposed against "We Three Kings" playfully re-named "Three Guys" with solid jazz riffs was refreshing.

Speaking of the Jazz Band, who performed wonderfully at Rotary the day before the concert, Ty has "pulled it out of them" until they essentially need no director except to cue the opening bars of their respective pieces. I asked Ty afterwards if he had cut them loose to do their own improv, and he smiled as he simply replied, "Yes." The result? Excellence, pure and simple, and it was entirely appropriate for the room to give a standing O and holler their approval. And, don't get me started on how good music is for your brain, because we'll be here all day and night. In a word, "Bravo, y'all!"

Ali Elizabeth Turner

Ali Elizabeth Turner
Athens Now
Information & Inspiration
256-468-9425
ali@athensnowal.com
Website:
www.athensnowal.com



Go, Cajun Navy, Cowboys, Please Stay Home!

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



In 2011, when our area was hit so hard with twisters, we all became deeply thankful for “the kindness of strangers.” Of course, our first responders of every type were heroic in ways that have become a part of our Athens-Limestone culture and lore, and they will always have our undying admiration for their undying determination to get us through that time safely. However, the focus of this article is to underscore the impact of other organizations with specific reference to the current crises in Kentucky. It is also a cautionary tale, should you choose to become involved, boots-on-the-ground.

There is a group known as the Cajun Navy, which started out as a flotilla of private boat owners who rescued Louisiana citizens after Katrina at the request of the governor. They have been in action with every major storm since, and are currently being “deployed” in Kentucky. Here is why it is fitting to have them in the *All Things Soldier* column: the lion’s share of them are ex-military, and many of them have served in combat. They have become a 501(c)(3), and have “branches” that in addition to *navy*, include *army* and *air force*. They are legit; they were honored in the post-Harvey Houston Thanksgiving Day Parade with a float that sported several of those involved in the rescue, and as we speak, they are making a difference.

I spoke about the Cajun Navy with Marty McIntyre, who served for 20 years as an NCO (non-commissioned officer), was in Des-

ert Storm, retired from the Army, and went back to Iraq as a DOD contractor. He had been hired to take care of Saddam’s swimming pools which our soldiers were able to use in the 130-degree weather, but in reality, that was his cover story. Marty was more importantly what is known unofficially as a “plat daddy.” A plat daddy is someone who has a God-given ability to look after everyone around them, especially the youngsters. Marty did that in spades, and during Hurricane Harvey, worked alongside the Cajun Navy with another organization

whose fierce boating skills come from bowfishing. So, I called him to make sure that the Cajun Navy was worth working with or donating to. He said, “They do an awful lot of good.” What then ensued was a lively discussion about the “cowboy quotient.”

The “cowboy quotient” has to do with people who go and volunteer in a disaster and act like “cowboys,” in that they want to be the Lone Ranger—not exactly a team player, not so good at following directions, and maybe doing it for the glory, which is counter to everything a real soldier

stands for. After Hurricane Camille, the cowboys were such a problem that they ended up having to be rescued themselves. Marty told me there were a few of those kinds of guys with the Cajun Navy, but only a very few. His sentiment was, “Cowboys, stay home!” So, if you are looking for a different way to give and receive this Christmas, and most importantly, you are someone who does well in a disaster and knows how to work with a team, then consider going and helping. Or, you can donate to the Cajun Navy and help them to do it. We know what it was

like for folks to help us, so consider paying it forward to our neighbors two states up. But please, cowboys, go ride a mechanical bull if you can find one, and just send your bucks. Merry Christmas to the Cajun Navy, and thank you for your service!

Those who would like to volunteer or storm victims who need assistance can learn more at <https://crowdrelief.net/>. Those who would like to help financially can donate at <https://cajunrelief.org/donations/donate-cajun-navy-foundation/>

The Cajun Navy Ground Force Advance Team came from six states to set up their SAFE Camp (Swift Action Force Emergency Camp) near Mayfield, KY



Calling All Entrepreneurs: Applications Now Open for Inaugural Singing River Trail Launch Tank

by John F. Kvach, Ph.D.

(December 7, 2021) It's time to dream big, hone your pitch, and get started on the next great business endeavor in North Alabama!

The regional planning organization Launch2035, in conjunction with Singing River Trail, is pleased to announce the inaugural Singing River Trail Launch Tank business competition. Winners will receive up to \$20,000 in cash in addition to resources from business support agencies from across the region. The Singing River Trail Launch Tank is a Shark Tank-style event for regional entrepreneurs!

The Singing River Trail Launch Tank is open to aspiring and existing entrepreneurs residing within the eight counties encompassed by the Singing River Trail footprint including; Jackson, Marshall, Madison, Limestone, Morgan, Lawrence, Lauderdale, and Colbert Counties.

"The Singing River Trail Launch Tank is a demonstration of the true power and potential of regionalism. The support and collaboration offered through the inaugural event's planning committee will make all the difference in how we can provide entrepreneurs in every corner of North Alabama an opportunity to participate in shaping our community's culture and economy." said John Joseph IV, Lau-

rence2035 Entrepreneurship Chair.

"This is your chance to be part of something bigger, something that makes a positive difference, and like the Singing River Trail, something that we all can be proud of as we work together to make North Alabama a better place to live, work, and play in," said John Kvach, Executive Director of the Singing River Trail. "Our vision is to have as many of Launch Tank's winners connected to the trail as possible."

Business ideas submitted may be for new or existing businesses of any type in our region. Winners will be awarded a cash prize and business support resources from regional organizations and agencies including: Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center, Urban Engine, Shoals Business Incubator, Greater Limestone County Chamber of Commerce, Lawrence County Chamber and Marshall County Economic Development Council, TARCOG, and Business Council of Alabama. The program is sponsored by Booz Allen Hamilton.

To learn more and apply visit: <http://launch2035.org/launch-tank>

About Launch2035: Launch 2035 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit working to strengthen the North Alabama

region through entrepreneurship, land use, and workforce initiatives. Created in 2014, the non-profit is united by the belief that our region's prosperity depends on North Alabama counties working and planning together, committed to fostering regional economic growth and an enviable

quality of life for all our residents.

About Singing River Trail: The Singing River Trail is a proposed 200+ mile greenway trail system that will link the people and communities of North Alabama. As a center of inclusive health and wellness, tourism, economic de-

velopment, quality of life, and community development, the Singing River Trail relies on regional collaboration and working together to build a pedestrian trail system that will connect Jackson, Marshall, Madison, Morgan, Limestone, Lawrence, Colbert, and Lauderdale Counties.

Presented by: **LAUNCH 2035**
Sponsored by: **Booz | Allen | Hamilton**

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SINGING RIVER TRAIL LAUNCH TANK

The inaugural Singing River Trail Launch Tank is a regional business pitch competition presented by Launch2035. It was developed to showcase regional entrepreneurs and highlight the spirit of regional collaboration that has become an essential element of the Singing River Trail. Together, as a region, we can aspire to connect the people and communities to a more diverse, equitable, and connected future.

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Calendar of Events

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Yesterdays Senior Lunch Matinee

December 17

Yesterday's Event Center. 15631 Brownsferry Road in Athens. \$15.00 per person -- includes meal and show featuring Kevin Adams for an Elvis Christmas. Individuals and Groups welcome. Bus parking available. No show and cancellation fees may apply. For more information or to RSVP required -- email info@yesterdaysevents.com.

Athens North Pole Stroll

Thru December 31

In Big Spring Memorial Park, 100 North Beaty Street in Athens. Open until Midnight. Bring the family and stroll among the beautifully and creatively decorated trees that twinkle to life as the sun goes down. Santa's coming to town on TBA for photos and wish list too! Free and Open to the public. Information: 256-232-5411.

"The Christmas Story" Drive-Thru

Thru December 31

"The Christmas Story" Drive-Thru Story of the Birth of Jesus at Emmanuel Baptist Church. 1917 U.S. Highway 72W in Athens. From 6:00PM-8:30PM. Enjoy the story of Christ birth from the comfort of your car and the audio provided as you drive by the carefully crafted vignettes featuring animals and people from the Bible. Free and open to the public.

New Year's Eve Party

December 31

Joe Wheeler State Park. 4401 McLean Drive in Rogersville. Must be 21 and up. Party only tickets available at the front desk night of event. Cash bar available. For reservations: 256-247-5461.

Ardmore Tinsel Trail

Thru January 1

On Ardmore Avenue near Bryant House/Ardmore Town Hall & Museum. 26494 1st Street in Ardmore, AL. Enjoy

an array of trees decked with amazing collections of baubles and lights decorated by area businesses and organizations. greaterardmorechamber.com/tinsel-trail

Master Gardener Spring Classes

begin 2/3/22

Classes are available Live (Morgan Co location), by Zoom, or video at your convenience. Application and payment online at <http://www.aces.edu/go/2022springMGclass>. Cost increase on Dec 29th, so sign up now! For information: 256-614-3530 and jhunt9155@gmail.com.

Play Outside Day

January 1

Families everywhere are encouraged to get outside the first Saturday of every month and play in public parks, enjoy trails, hit the waterways, explore greenspaces and just play! Limestone County offers over 20 trails to explore including walking, cycling, horseback riding and kayaking – perfect for all ages. For more information: 256-232-5411

First Day Hike

January 1

With Joe Wheeler State Park. 4403 McLean Drive in Rogersville. At the trailhead between the Day Use Area and the Lodge starting at 10:00AM. Meet in the parking lot at 9:00AM for a walk. Social distancing in effect. Click here for a map of the trails. For more information: 800-544-5639.

Southern Gospel Singing

January 9

Berea Baptist Church will host Athens native Bradley Walker for a night of southern gospel at 6PM. The church is located at 16779 Lucas Ferry Rd, Athens, 35611. Free admission, a love offering will be received.

Martin Luther King, Jr Day Observed

January 18

Local governments, area agencies, attractions, restaurants and shops may be closed or have modified hours of operation in observance of this holiday. Please call ahead to confirm availability and hours.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Program

January 18

With the Limestone County NAACP, City of Athens and Limestone County Commission featuring student essay winners, special presentations, and presentation of awards starting at 10:00AM. For more information: Bernard Simelton 256-426-6406 / 256-444-1300.





Fall Sports Reclassification Announced By The AHSAA; Winter Sports Highlights

by Tim Lambert

Tune in for the PlayAction Sports Update, three times each weekday on 1080 AM WKAC. Visit us online at www.pasnetwork.net/ email: playactionsports@hotmail.com

The Alabama High School Athletic Association announced their reclassification for fall sports for the next two school years. Local schools stayed where they were except Lindsay Lane, who will debut in Class 2A for football and will move up to 2A in volleyball. ABS will go back to Class 1A for volleyball.

This season's first basketball rankings have the James Clemens boys at the sixth spot in Class 7A, the Clements boys at the number seven position in 3A and ABS ninth in 1A. The Clements and Tanner girls are 10th in Class 3A and 2A respectively.

Basketball highlights:

ABS VB 79, Cherokee 47; ABS VG 54, Cherokee 21; ABS VB 4, Woodville 39; ABS VG 39, Woodville 34; ABS VG 47, Oakwood Academy 18; ABS VB 65, St. Bernard 4; ABS VG 57, St. Bernard 28

Ardmore VG 47, Clements 45; Ardmore VG 66, ABS 28; Ardmore VB 42, Oakwood Academy 36; Ardmore VG 63, Oakwood Academy 16; Ardmore VB 57, Tanner 53

Athens VG 42, Austin 22; Athens VB 60, Ardmore 32; Athens VG 54, Decatur 31; Athens VG 53, Florence 37

Clements VB 48, Tanner 35; Clements VB 45, Ardmore 32; Clements VB 59, Oakwood Academy 40; Clements VG 39, Danville 24; Clements



VB 62, ABS 55; Clements VB 47, East Lawrence 36; Clements VG 56, East Lawrence 23; Clements VB 59, Colbert Heights 43; Clements VG 47, Colbert Heights 20; Clements VB 48, Whitesburg Christian 47; Clements VG 42, Whitesburg Christian 18

East Limestone VB 58, Priceville 56; East Limestone VB 50, West Limestone 46; East Limestone VG 47, West Limestone 45; East Limestone VB 62, Brewer 42; East Limestone 43, Columbia 27; East Limestone VG 40, Mae Jemison 39; East Limestone VB 67, Ardmore 50; East Limestone VG 52, Ardmore 32

Elkmont VB 59, Lindsay Lane 48; Elkmont VG 61, Lindsay Lane 28; Elkmont VB 61, Tanner 46; Elkmont VG 62, Tanner 58; Elkmont VG 43, Section 21; Elkmont VB 50, Whitesburg Christian 45; Elkmont VG 50, West Limestone 49; Elkmont

VB 54, Ardmore 42; Elkmont VG 48, Ardmore 44; Elkmont VB 50, Clements 49; Elkmont VG 43, Clements 31;

James Clemens VG 50, Grissom 46; James Clemens VB 63, Westminster 55; James Clemens VG 53, Pinson Valley 36; James Clemens VB 60, Stewart's Creek 56; James Clemens VB 63, Muscle Shoals 52; James Clemens VB 63, Madison Academy 51; James Clemens VG 42, Madison Academy 40; James Clemens VG 51, Grissom 33; James Clemens VB 54, Sparkman 52; James Clemens VB 56, Muscle Shoals 49

Lindsay Lane VG 56, Woodville 25; Lindsay Lane VG 50, Sheffield 24

Tanner VG 61, Clements 58; Tanner VB 49, West Limestone 40; Tanner VB 61, Lindsay Lane 48; Tanner VG 58, Lindsay Lane 30; Tanner VG 74, Hatton 50; Tanner VG

57, Ardmore 35; Tanner VB 58, Whitesburg Christian 42; Tanner VG 63, Whitesburg Christian 27; Tanner VG 49, West Limestone 36

West Limestone VB 55, West Point 47; West Limestone VG 53, Section 39; West Limestone VB 37, Elkmont 35; West Limestone VG 37, West Morgan 36

At the north sectional swim and dive meets, James Clemens was third in the men's 6A-7A 200-yard medley relay; men's and women's teams both finished fourth in the 400-yard freestyle relay. John Choung won the 200-yard intermediate medley and 100-yard breaststroke, Nathan Johnson was runner-up in the 200-yard and 500-yard

freestyle, while Cade McComb was second in the 50-yard freestyle and first in the 100-yard freestyle. Lindsay Lane's Grant King finished third in the 1A-5A 200-yard intermediate medley. At the state meet, James Clemens' John Choung won the 6A-7A boys' 100-yard breaststroke and finished third in the 200-yard intermediate medley. Cade McComb was first in the 50-yard freestyle and third in the 100-yard freestyle. The Jets were fourth in the 100-yard medley relay.

The Athens varsity wrestling team defeated Decatur and Hartselle.

East Limestone's bowling teams defeated Randolph. Lindsay Lane also swept Westminster.



What Makes Ronnie Roll

It's A Small World, If You Let It Be

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Mayor Ronnie had just had the opportunity to “Zoom” around Europe and celebrate with our twin city, Stonehaven, Scotland, along with cities with which Stonehaven had “twinned” that were located in France and Germany. He was quick to once again thank Deborah Baird, who got this whole twin city relationship started a few years ago, and through technology, people from several countries were able to come together and celebrate Christmas. “We had such a good time,” he said as he showed me the photo of the participants on the Zoom chat. They had a tech glitch that took about ten minutes to get straightened out, but when they got together, as the

mayor said, “Think about this: we’ve got Germany, France, Aberdeen and Stonehaven in Scotland, and we are all getting a chance to fellowship.”

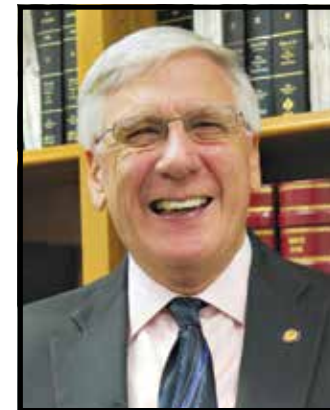
In most European countries, the tree is an important part of the festival, and the Zoomers from each country showed off their area’s official tree. Our tall tree, a beautifully decorated one out in the lobby of City Hall was put on display, and then the cities got to hear the Grinch, er Scrooge story of the live tree that is in the foyer just outside of the boardroom near the mayor’s office. Kim Glaze, the secretary to the mayor; Amy Golden, our customer relations manager/ “one-stop-shop” facilitator; and Holly Holman, the communications

and grant coordinator had wanted to get a live tree for the inner foyer area. Mayor Ronnie basically said, “Nothing doing,” as least as far as the possibility of the city credit card being used. Undaunted, the three women got permission to go to APD Chief Floyd Johnson’s farm to do it the old-fashioned way and cut down a live one. They came, they saw, they conquered (read that cut it down) dragged it back, put it up, and decorated it. More importantly, the story made the others laugh.

Scotland showed their ornaments, and on a serious side, they talked about their respective challenges with COVID as well as the role of first responders. Stonehaven had experienced freak storms and

winds which had knocked out the power, and the American South had just had the killer twisters. “It’s a small world,” said the mayor, and I added, “If you let it be.” They were glad to be able to give holiday greetings, cheer each other up and on right there in the minute, and communicate with each other from across the miles.

In his neighborhood, Mayor Ronnie is known by the kids as “Pop,” his grandson Quinton’s name for him. Down the block a bit from the Marks’ house is a four-year-old by the name of Lennon who came up to Ronnie and said, “Pop, I haven’t seen you for a while, and I haven’t seen your office.” So, Pop made it possible for Lennon (who was armed with



a light saber) to come and put his feet up on the desk, and Lennon informed him, “I’m going to be mayor someday, and YOU are going to be my assistant.” The mayor looked at me and said, “And he actually used the word, assistant!” We laughed as I replied, “Good luck with that, Mr. Mayor!”

The Athens High School Jazz Band had played at Rotary on Friday, and as I had just heard them at the Saturday night concert, we both commented on how good they are. “Speaking of Rotary,” said the mayor, “read this.” And so, we closed our time with a quote from the recent edition of *The Rotarian* which said,

““Empathy is central to who we are as human beings. I talk about it as the centripetal force of storytelling. It’s also the centripetal force of community. It’s what holds us together; it’s what binds us. It’s part of what we are as humans, but it takes some effort. It’s not as if we’re naturally inclined to think of ourselves as somebody else. It takes a leap of imagination.”--- Alex Kotlowitz

We briefly talked about the fact that this was the last article of 2021, and what a year it had been. Then we prayed, and it was time for Ronnie to roll. “See you next year,” he said. “Merry Christmas,” I replied, so grateful that I get to do what I do, and that’s collect stories.



Merry Christmas
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

From the Marks Family!
- Ronnie, Sandra and Quinton



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Thank You For A Stellar Year!

by Sandra Thompson, Director, Alabama Veterans' Museum



Well it's hard to believe another year has come and gone, but here we are in December already. It has been quite the stellar year for our veterans and the Alabama Veterans Museum. I wanted to take this time to say "Thank You" to everyone who made this last year a dream turned reality. Even among the pandemic, we pressed on and accomplished a goal that we have been working on for years! If you would have asked me a couple of years ago if I thought we would ever be here today, I would have said, "Yes, eventually," but surely not this soon! So here goes my attempt to say Thank You to all who made it possible -- if I leave someone out, I do apologize but there have just been so

many!
First and foremost, thank you to Limestone County Commission Chairman Colin Daly, Commissioner Darrell Sammet, Commissioner Danny Barksdale, Commissioner Jason Black, and Commissioner LaDon Townsend, and former Commissioners Steve Turner and Ben Harrison for their generous donation of our new home. When Commissioner Daly first came to us and said he would like for us to have this building, we were, of course, hopeful but a little skeptical, we had been told in the past we would "NEVER" get this building! Hah! But look, here we are, their generous donation started the train rolling! We also are so appreciative of their continued support; we could not do

what we do without it.
Thank you to Senator Tom Butler, Senator Arthur Orr, Senator Tim Melson, Representative Lynn Greer, Representative Parker Duncan Moore, Representative Danny Crawford, Representative Andy Whitt and Representative Mac McCutcheon for their funding donation which financed the construction that was needed.
Thank you to Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks, and to City Council members Chris Seibert, Harold Wales, Frank Travis, Dana Henry, and Wayne Harper for their generous donation and continued support.
We held our ribbon cutting/grand opening on July 1, and while we expected a decent showing, we could not have dreamed of the over-

whelming community support. We are so grateful to the honorable Governor Kay Ivey who was our guest speaker and cut the ribbon signifying the start to our new journey!
I would like to thank my wonderful volunteers; the museum really could not function without them. And last, but certainly not least I want to say a big "Thank You" to my Board of Directors. I would like to say a special shout out to our board president Jerry Crabtree. I always know I can count on Jerry for support! I could not do what I do without the support of each and every one of you.
So, as good a year that this has been, stayed tuned for 2022! We hope to start Phase II of our project and enjoy the con-

tinued support of our friends and family! And remember, we rely on monetary donations and museum memberships to maintain what we have and continue to grow. So please consider making a tax-deductible donation, getting yourself a museum membership, or giving a membership as a gift to someone special.
Every day we honor our veterans and convey the incredible sacrifices and intensity of a world at war. Everyone should learn that our freedom is not free...it was bought by men and women, many of whom paid the supreme sacrifice. Throughout history and even today, ordinary individuals have given their life for this country; we owe these individuals a debt that can never be repaid.




Slinkard On Success

Impacting The World Around You

by D. A. Slinkard

D.A. Slinkard would love your feedback. You can contact him at da.slinkard@gmail.com



What impact do you want to make on the world? It was an interesting question that was posed to me that has really got me thinking. If you ask this question to a ten year old, the answer is going to be more heroic than if you were to ask this same question to a thirty year old.

Sadly, somewhere between the lines of being a child and being forced into adulthood, we go from looking at life with a “no-holds-barred” mentality to one that stifles our inner-childhood dreams. Becoming the CEO of a company or the person who finds the cure for cancer succumbs to being a person worried at the dinner table because there is more month left than there is money.

We go from living a potentially glorious life ahead of us where we can be anything we want to be, to living a life where we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. If this is you, then now is the time to make the change in your life necessary to be the person you were meant to be.

What’s the difference in your life now compared to when you were a child? Would the younger you be satisfied knowing the life you are living on a daily basis? If not, then why? I hear all kinds of answers as to why people cannot be the person they want



to be because of varying reasons, but rest assured these responses are only excuses.

I knew a man growing up who decided he wanted to be a pastor and was going to live his childhood dream of bringing people closer to God. There were many naysayers who thought the man was ludicrous. How could he leave his comfy job to take up his cross and spread the word of Christ? He had put in nearly 20 years working for the local factory, and he was nearing retirement age. This career move would be detrimental to his financial stability.

Other people, who had given up on their dreams, were trying to get the man to give up on his. After all, he was 55

years old and wasn’t getting any younger, so why would he make the career move? Here’s where I want to challenge your thinking, though. The average life expectancy of a person living in the United States is just over 78 years. Now do the math; if the person finally went after their passion at 55 years of age, and lived the average life expectancy, this means that person would spend 23 years living out their passion.

Many people get up day-in and day-out to go to jobs they really don’t like to only come home and complete the rat race they have burrowed themselves into. Does this sound familiar to you? I want you to take out a pen and piece of paper, you can even use the side margin on

this article. At the top I want you to write down what impact you want to have on the world. The answer you write down to this question is what you are passionate about and is what you need to aggressively go after in your lifetime. Below this answer, I want you to calculate how many years you have left being able to live out this passion.

If you are someone reading this passage and are above the expected life expectancy, this article is for you too! We never know when our number is going to be called, and we should live each day as if it is our last...because it may be. I have continuously heard people talking about living life with no regrets, but the more I think about the impact being made

on the world, I have to question how many people are just lying when they say they have no regrets.

The time to start living life needs to be today. We all have consciously said we would start something tomorrow only to find an obstacle or two get in our way. Before we know it, tomorrow has turned into next week, next week into next month, and next month into, “If I were only younger.”

We get one shot at life, and there is only one person standing in the way of our dreams and passions. The person standing in the way of your dreams is you. What impact are you going to make on the world? You miss 100% of the shots you do not take.

Clean, Green And Beautiful

Beautification And Recycling During The Holidays

by Leigh Patterson - Executive Coordinator - Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful



Old Town Cemetery

Christmastime is here and the Athens-Limestone Beautification Board has once again done an outstanding job beautifying the Old Town Cemetery and dressing it up for the holidays. Our volunteer board spent time back in November at one of the oldest cemeteries in town making sure that it was decorated in time for the Christmas Open House.

New wreaths were purchased this year and were decorated by Barbara Newman, a very dedicated board member. Other board members helped with placing the wreaths along the fence line and on some of the monuments. If you haven't noticed the decorations yet, I would encourage you to drive by if you have the opportunity. The Old Town Cemetery is located on Washington Street between East Street and Beaty Street.

This is just one of the many working projects performed

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Rita Aaron, Owner

by the Beautification Board. If you are interested in finding out more information about the work that they do around town, please reach out to the KALB office by phone or email.

Recycling During The Holidays

During this time of year, most of us are bombarded with more paper, cardboard, and other recyclables than usual. Trying to figure out what to do with all the extra "garbage" can be a challenge. This is a great time to recycle many of these items, including some that you may not have realized are recyclable! To help with this, here is a list of common holiday items that the Athens-Limestone Recycling Center accepts at our facility on Lucas Ferry Road. **(PLEASE NOTE: Some of these items CANNOT be placed into your BLUE RECYCLING CARTS as city curbside recycling goes to a different recycling center. Please visit AthensAlabama.US for information about curbside recycling.)**

- **Cardboard boxes** – Please remove all Styrofoam, or other materials before taking them to the center, and remember to break down boxes before placing them in the bins at the center.
- **Wrapping paper, gift boxes, and paper gift bags** – Please remove all bows before recycling. Bows are not recyclable unless made of paper. If it doesn't tear, it's not recyclable. Be sure to place these items in the CARDBOARD bin.
- **Tissue paper**
- **Greeting cards and paper gift tags**



- **Electronics** – Bring your old electronics that have been replaced (string lights included!) to be recycled to keep them out of the landfill. The center will accept most electronics with a cord or battery for recycling. There is a \$10 charge for televisions, and all other electronics are accepted for free. Children's riding toys are NOT recyclable at our center; however, the batteries are.
- **Plastic bags (grocery and retail) and film** – Please make sure that bags and film are clean and dry before bringing them to the Recycling Center.
- **FOG (fats, oils and grease) recycling** – Holiday cooking means more fats, oils, and grease to dispose of in your kitchen. To recycle these, just pick up a free FOG container from one of the cages located at the Athens-Limestone Recycling Center, at the KALB office, or at the Athens Utilities Building. Fill your container

with fats, oils, and grease from your kitchen. Return the full container to the bottom shelf of any of the FOG cages and take an empty one. Let's keep those FOGs out of our drains and sewers!

For a list of all other items that ALRC is currently accepting, please visit www.KALBCares.com. Under the Recycling tab click "Athens-Limestone Recycling Center Services and Information."

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING HOLIDAY HOURS FOR THE ATHENS-LIMESTONE RECYCLING CENTER. No bins will be in place at the center while closed.



(256) 233-8000

KALBCares@gmail.com

www.KALBCares.com

Community Collection Centers located at different Limestone County Schools (locations are listed at KALBCares.com) will be in place. NO DUMPING PLEASE.

- Thursday, December 23 – see KALBCares.com for hours
- Friday, December 24 through Sunday, December 26 – CLOSED
- Monday, December 27 through Thursday December 30 – 6 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Friday, December 31 through Sunday, January 2 – CLOSED

The KALB office will be closed from Friday, December 24 through Sunday, January 2. We look forward to getting back to work in January, as we have many things already planned for 2022, and there is much work to be done, so stay tuned!

I, along with the KALB Commission, Athens-Limestone Beautification Board, Athens-Limestone Recycling Board, and the Athens-Limestone Recycling Center Staff would like to wish you a Happy Holiday Season, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!



KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE



Cooking with Anna

A Year Of Possibilities

by Anna Hamilton

During the month of December, my husband and I are running like hamsters on wobbly wheels.

*Trying to manage your own business will make you do things like that. Everywhere you turn there seems to be impossibilities behind every corner. Even though it is full of hustle and bustle, we still try to take time to be together and watch Christmas movies to help us stay in a festive spirit. This year we watched a new Christmas film on Netflix, *A Boy Named Christmas*. It was just precious. It made me laugh, it made me cry and it left me feeling all warm inside.*

One of the main characters had a line towards the end of the movie that has stuck with me over this past week. "An impossibility is just a possibility you don't understand yet." What a powerful statement! Over and over again in the Bible, we are reminded of this truth. When you lean on yourself for

Christmas Fruit and Nut Bark

Ingredients:

*24 oz dark chocolate
6 oz white chocolate
2/3 cup freeze-dried raspberries
1/2 cup sliced almonds (or nut of choice)
2/3 cup freeze-dried strawberries
1/4 cup raw pumpkin seeds
2 tsp chia seeds
1/8 tsp sea salt*

Directions:

Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and set aside. In a double boiler or microwave, slowly melt the dark chocolate over low heat. Making sure to stir the chocolate regularly. Meanwhile, repeat the same procedure with the white chocolate. Pour the dark chocolate on the prepared cookie sheet, spreading with a spatula to smooth evenly. I like to spread the chocolate thin because of the richness of the chocolate. Drizzle large spoonfuls of the white chocolate on top of the dark chocolate, then use a butter knife to swirl through the chocolate. Sprinkle with raspberries, strawberries, almonds, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, and sea salt on top.

strength and understanding, all things will look impossible but when you learn to trust fully in God for all things, the possibilities of life will be amazing.

Before April of 2020, I never thought that my husband and I would be running our own successful business that would allow me to leave my corporate job. We had dreamed of being our own bosses, but we were scared and didn't fully think it would ever happen. We prayed about it but hadn't jumped off the ledge with full faith. God helped us see the possibility in His own special way by closing doors we had been using as crutches. He forced us to see the possible in the impossible. The number of blessings that have been poured into our laps is overflowing. Trusting God with the impossible has made our possibilities explode.

So, with 2021 coming to an end, think about the possibilities that lie ahead for 2022. Don't focus on what you feel is impossible but pray and meditate on God's word. Ask that God intervene in your life and help guide your decisions. He

continued on page 23



Let sit at room temperature until set, about 1-2 hours. Then, break into individual serving size pieces and enjoy!

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Caleb Lawler
 Financial Advisor

1795 Hwy 72 E
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 Athens, AL 35611
 Bus. 256-232-9120 Cell 256-577-9100
 caleb.lawler@edwardjones.com
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Leigh Patterson
Executive Director

125 East Street
P.O. Box 1089
Athens, Alabama 35612

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and
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from these local businesses!


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Alliance HR Services: *Starting Afresh In 2022*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

would work for the right business in the middle of the pandemic. This was no small task, but they pulled together, rode out the storm, and managed to grow to the point that they have recently purchased two buildings in Athens to prepare for the unprecedented growth we are experiencing in our city and county.

Earlier in December, it was my joy to attend the Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting event for Alliance HR, who has taken over the old SouthTrust Bank on the corner of Forrest and Jefferson, as well as the former Limestone County Water and Sewer building right across the street. The small building will be the site where candidates will apply and undergo their hiring process, and the three-story building will be renovated and serve as Alliance’s corporate headquarters.

Jason Sowash heads up Regional Sales, and Marijo Braddy is over

Regional Operations for Alliance HR, and they are now enthusiastically open for business. Two more team members round out the Athens branch, and their names are Elizabeth Hernandez and Aliza Leon. Elizabeth is the office manager and Aliza is a recruiter. Both Elizabeth and Aliza are professional, warm-hearted, and wonderful translators as well.

My first question to Jason was, “Why these buildings?” He replied “Basically, because they are on busy streets.” Alliance wants both buildings to function like a hub both for the corporate headquarters as well as the staffing site, and they have specific plans to improve both buildings that will help serve our area well. The smaller SouthTrust site is going to have the drive-through canopies removed to make it easier to park, and because it was formerly a bank, there are a number of built-in security features that are already in place for everyone’s safety. The large building was originally a bank and

has a tornado shelter; the first floor will be remodeled for corporate headquarters, the second floor freshened and hopefully rented out as office space, and the third floor will be available as a community event center. If you have ever been up on the third floor, there is a beautiful bank of windows on the south side and a large open space, and a limited-use kitchen. The room would be suitable for all kinds of meetings, events, and celebrations. There is elevator access to both the second and third floors.

I met Jason two years ago when we did the first Alliance article, and he honorably served our country as a medic in the Navy. He is married, has a 17-year-old, a 14-year-old, and a one-year-old. He genuinely loves helping people and mentioned that few things feel better to him than “putting someone to work.” Jason under-



Marijoy Braddy, the Chamber's Pammie Jimmar, and Jason Sowash celebrate Alliance's opening together

stands that one of the most important functions of a staffing service is a consultative one—making sure that the needs of both the employer and employee are well met. “We are diverse in every way. We have filled positions from secretary to lineman, and recently in the Madison office we actually filled a need for a cryptography software engineer,” he said.

Marijo is married, has two 16-year-olds and a four-year-old, and is an

adoptive parent. She has been in the staffing profession for ten years, and loves what she does. “Athens brings an opportunity for growth, and to spread our footprint,” she said. One of her favorite success stories is that of a homeless man who now is gainfully employed in the automotive field. She continued, “We understand the value of an employee, and we know what we have to offer.” Alliance HR of-

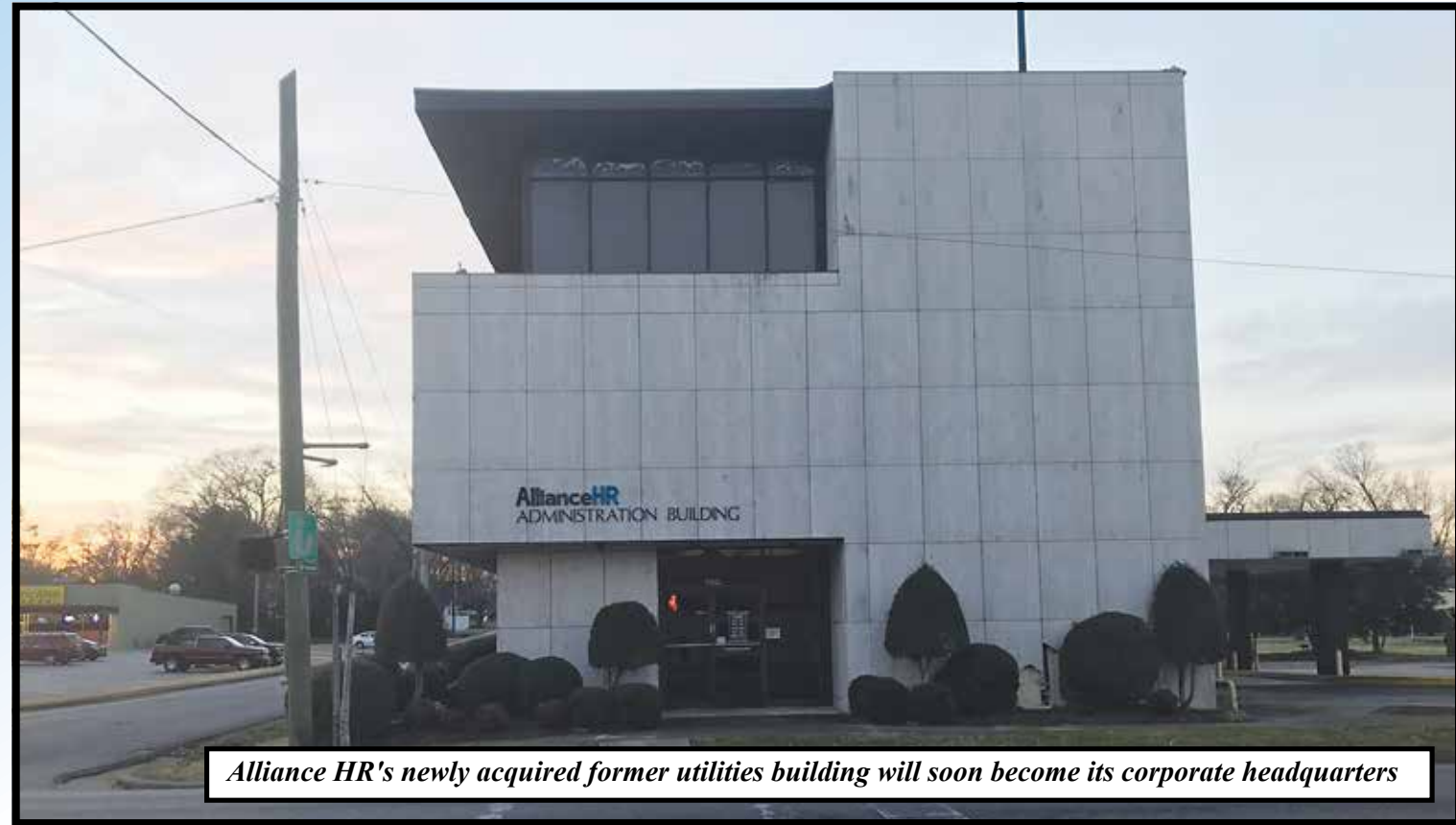


fers a host of services to those potential employees, including the opportunity to brush up on interview skills ahead of in-person meetings with area businesses.” “The staff is glad to assist candidates with résumé polishing, explain any required equipment or apparel, and set reasonable expectations for the interview and hiring process.”

Drug testing is of course required, and Alliance knows that they are competing for skilled workers. They also do a national background check which helps potential employers as well as candidates for hire. Because of the odd shortage of workers we are experiencing in our culture, Alliance HR understands more than ever how important it is for everyone to get it right the first time. They make sure everything is in order when it comes to workman’s compensation, and each employer signs a clearly communicated service agreement.

Alliance HR wants people to know that “whether your need is short-term or long-term, temporary or permanent, full-time or part-time, Alliance HR can provide even the hardest to find employees. Outsourcing is simply a better way to run your organization.

Alliance HR is comprised of a team of professionals with over 68-combined years of experience and is locally owned and operated. An “alliance”



Alliance HR's newly acquired former utilities building will soon become its corporate headquarters

with us will solve your employment related hassles. We know when selecting an HR partner your concerns are quality, service and price. These are just a few of the ways we can deliver for you. The professionals at Alliance know what it takes to best evaluate and recruit talent in human resources and pass this benefit directly to our customers.

As the employer of record, Alliance HR guarantees full compliance with all Federal employee laws and state payroll tax reporting requirements, including FICA and unemployment taxes. In addition, all employees are fully covered by workers’ compensation and comprehensive general liability insurance.

Our outstanding service has earned us the reputation as the leading human resource executive search and staffing firm. Our unmatched service quality is deeply rooted in our strong commitments to the success of



The staffing office is located at 601 S Jefferson in Athens, right across the street from the corporate headquarters

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We provide unique skill matching process and career advancement guidance.

Alliance HR is also looking to hire staff for their own organization in the region. Call them today if you are either looking for a job,

or have jobs for people. Jason Sowash and his staff will carefully work to find the fit that is best for both of you.

Alliance HR Services

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Athens, AL 35611
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Merry Christmas

From all of us at

Athens Now



The View From The Bridge

Last Minute Gift Ideas... That Won't Disappoint!

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator "Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters

1. God's Word - The Gospel
2. Patience
3. Love
4. Smiles
5. Joy
6. Time
7. Rest
8. Peace of mind
9. Attention with listening ears
10. Gratitude, thankfulness
11. Forgiveness, confession
12. Prayer
13. Friendship
14. A written note
15. Time
16. Expression of love and actions of kindness
17. A telephone call; in-person conversation
18. Hug
19. Walking partner
20. Compliment



"Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8)

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

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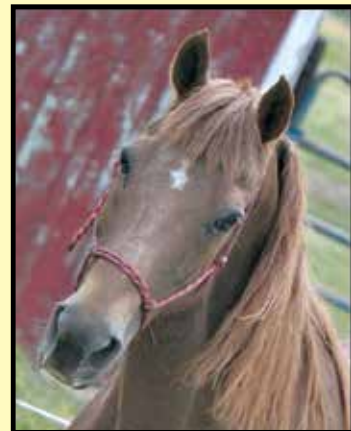
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Merry Christmas, Herd!

by Deb Kitchenmaster



In the midst of Christmas activities, programs, schedules, practices for plays, shopping, and gift wrapping do you find yourself refreshed or tired? “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.” (Isaiah 40:29) We are social beings; some more than others, depending on our personality. As social beings we are drawn to group/fellowship activities to connect with people. In the midst of a group of people, do you feel alone? Are you able to stay authentic as an individual amongst a group of people? Are you open to a good leader in this area of social life? Are you willing to learn from a leader without an agenda? One that forgives but usually doesn't forget? If this piques your interest, let's look at nature as our teacher -- specifically THE HORSE.

Horses are social by nature and really do express individual preferences. Be careful not to use human motivation to explain the behavior of a horse. Horses have their own reasons for doing the things they do.

Horses in the wild organize themselves into herds. In the herd they understand their place because they have one. When you observe the 'herd' mentality one thing is quite clear, you must check your ego at



the gate. The challenge we are presented with is how to be confident in our own dreams and talents while remaining responsive to the needs and gifts of others. There is one horse in the herd that proves essential to the others' sense of well-being, yet appears for the most part that she is doing absolutely nothing. Just by being in the herd, her presence grounds and balances the herd. You don't notice her much when she's there, but everyone panics when she's gone. This horse would be understood as an alpha or lead horse. In a group (herd) of people, we call this individual a leader.

Since communication is

the heartbeat to every relationship, how do horses communicate with each other? Four ways: tail, legs, facial expressions, and ears. What does that tell us? When the tail is high, the horse is alert or excited. When the tail is low, it means the horse is exhausted or experiencing fear, pain, or submission. When the tail is high over its back (we see this in foals), they are playful or are very alarmed. If the horse is swishing its tail, it is irritated. Pawing is communicating frustration, one front leg lifted can be a mild threat or a normal stance sometimes when eating, a back leg lifted is often a more defensive threat and stamping (if

not getting rid of insects or flies biting their legs) indicates a mild threat or protest. Snapping is when foals are showing submission to an older horse. They will open their mouths and draw back the corners, then open and shut their jaws. Jaws open with teeth exposed shows aggression or possible attack, flared nostrils mean they are excited or alert, showing white around the eyes usually means they are angry or scared (white around the eyes is also a normal trait of the Appaloosa breed), and the flehmen response, where they stick their nose in the air and curl the upper lip over their nose, is caused by an intense or unusual smell. Horses'

ears are a unique source of communicating. Pricked ears held stiff with openings pointed directly forward mean the horse is alert. Airplane ear (ears flopped out laterally with openings facing down) means the horse is tired or depressed; dropped ears means tiredness or pain. Ears that are angled backwards (with openings directed back towards a rider) usually mean attentiveness to the rider or listening to commands, and ears that are pinned flat against the neck means WATCH OUT! -- The horse is angry and aggressive.

We have four ways also: our arms, legs, facial expressions, and posture. Don't lose yourself; we need YOU. When we trade leadership roles in our group (herd) according to who's calmest, clearest, and most creative in a given situation, the entire community benefits. This is not a job description, it's an improvisation! (making do, managing, getting by, invention, creativeness, ad-libbing, and lateral thinking).

Wishing ya'll a MERRY CHRISTMAS.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster
Corral Connections*

256-426-7947

*Animal B.E.S.T. practitioner
horsinaround188@gmail.com*

The Link Between Hope And Mental Health

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“Hope isn’t the alleviation of fearful risk, or the sidelining of anxiety. It’s the choice to see beyond the current circumstances to something better despite the presence of those feelings.”

- Ron Carucci

As we look toward 2022 and leave the challenges of 2021 behind, my “hope” for you is that you will move forward in your life journey, striving to become a new and improved you. According to Christopher Reeve, “Once you choose hope, anything is possible.” Hope is an “individual’s goal-oriented expectations that include both the desire to achieve goals and finding ways to achieve them.” Hope can help motivate behavior in the face of obstacles, as well as provide the psychological and spiritual resources to help you respond to anything life throws at you, with resilience. What if you are not a hopeful person by nature? That’s okay because we all can strengthen our “hope muscle,” and therefore increase our positivity and resilience, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. There is actually a Hope Theory formulated by positive psychologist, Charles

Snyder. Snyder believes that hope gives people the will, determination, and sense of empowerment that allows them to reach their goals.

Research over the past decade shows that people who are hopeful are more likely to attain their aspirations. These people perform better in school and at their jobs. They most often choose healthier lifestyle habits and are able to cope with and recover better from illness. These hopeful people experience higher life satisfaction and have a stronger sense of meaning and purpose. A 2020 study by Matthew Gallagher at the University of Houston on the connection between hope and mental health actually looked at college students who suffered from high rates of depression, anxiety, and stress. The study found several recurring themes regarding the role hope plays in mental health. Gallagher discovered that hope is associated with improved coping strategies. Depression and negative life events are less intense for those who are more hopeful. Having hope is a protective factor against suicide and negative self-talk and thinking. And a hopeful person is more likely to engage in healthy behaviors.

Resilience is the key to the connection between hope and mental health.

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back more quickly after adverse experiences, and to learn from those experiences. Resilient people don’t ignore or suppress difficult emotions; they process them, learn from them, and take those lessons into the next phase of their lives. Hope and optimism are closely associated with resilience. The most resilient people, those who can recover quickly from experiences of fear and move toward reasoned action, actively practice hope and optimism daily.

Let’s look at some ways to cultivate hope toward improving mental health:

1. Spend time with hopeful, optimistic people. When you surround yourself with people who are hopeful and positive, you’re more likely to feel that way yourself (emotional contagion.) You can “catch” both positive and negative emotions from others, so choose your friends wisely!
2. Limit media exposure. News and social media tend to focus on extremes...the most frightening and sensational aspects of what’s happening, which can make us more vulnerable to vicarious trauma. And, while social media can make you feel more connected, it can also increase feelings



of anxiety and distress.

3. Focus on your strengths. If you are naturally creative, think about how you can use that strength to overcome difficulties as you move forward in life. If connecting with others is one of your strengths, reach out to friends and loved ones as a way to build hope and positive emotions.

4. Reframe negative thoughts. When you feel afraid or hopeless, try zeroing in on what’s scaring you and looking at it in a different way. For example, if you’re thinking, “I’m never going to stop feeling anxious about everything that’s going on,” you could shift it to, “It’s natural to feel anxious right now, and there are things I can do to make it better.”

5. Practice gratitude. I truly believe that gratitude is more effective than self-control, patience, and forgiveness in creating hope for the future. Try keeping a gratitude journal... and at the end of every day, think back on three things for which you are grateful.

Hope and mental health are intricately linked. And we can strengthen both by taking small daily actions that will help us thrive even in the midst of uncertainty.

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who divides her time between her own private practice in Huntsville and providing personal counseling services at Athens State University.

Lisa Philippart LPC LLC
NCC, BCPCC, BC-TMH
 Licensed Professional Counselor
 Living Life Counseling Center

44 Hughes Rd, Suite 1050
 Madison, AL 35758
 256.326.0909 cell
 256.631.7898 office
 256.542.3366 fax

urlifematters@hotmail.com or
 Lisa.P@livinglifecounselingctr.com
 livinglifecounselingctr.com



Key Words – Part 2

by Nick Thomas, owner of Prime Performance Training, and Certified Sports Nutritionist



If the desire is to surpass the masses and achieve big dreams, it takes discipline and focus DAILY! I addressed discipline a few weeks ago so now it is time to talk about its counterpart - focus.

What is focus? Focus is the center of interest, the state or quality of having or producing clear visual definition.

When it comes to what keeps things going, what allows personal goals to be set which are different from everyone else, focus is a huge factor. You get what you focus on, so it is important to focus on what you want. The world we live in is full of distraction and fast pace changes daily. Everyone has their own life and most are doing well just to keep up, staying in a constant state of survival. I believe this does not have to be the perpetual state of life!

The journey should be enjoyed, even the grind of hardships along the way as well, because the goal is clear, driven by defined focus with passion in the lead. This will never cease to keep the path to improvement go-

ing strong. Stay focused on having a set plan of attack each day, even putting pen to paper and writing down the steps needed every morning. These simple actions lead directly to personal dreams becoming reality. Having a proactive approach gives edge and clear positive outlook, instead of just reacting to what is happening; there is enough control to be ahead of the majority of events keeping

an offensive mindset as opposed to a defensive mindset. Cut out any interaction or task which is not positively supporting the set goals; it does not matter what others are doing, it matters what you are doing. Starve distraction and feed focus. Where your focus goes, your energy will follow.

After figuring out the right course of action, the key is to follow it consistently until suc-

cess is achieved. This takes patience, discipline, and a positive attitude which is unaffected by the world. Do not let emotions determine your actions. It also takes an incredible amount of self-awareness and evaluation to remain on the course so that any minor corrections needed can be made along the way. This is an inevitable reality, no one is perfect and adjustments will be needed. Be bold, take

risks, and be willing to learn from mistakes. Put on blinders and stay on your path, looking dead ahead at your goals. By focusing on YOUR path, it removes the element of competition, remember your only competition is you!

Let your passion fuel you, do not be dependent on others. No one will have the desire or ability to achieve your goals more than you!



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Cooking with Anna (continued)

A Year Of Possibilities

by Anna Hamilton

continued from page 13

tells us all we must do is ask with faith. The Lord wants what is best for his children and will provide exactly what we need; even when we don't know we need it. When you begin to trust in the possibility of God, you will see the blessings He has provided all throughout your life. Your path will become clear. It will not always be the easy path, but it will be worth the walk. All the things you thought were impossible will be possible as your dreams come true.

This week's recipe is a festive Christmas bark that is loaded with yummy fruits and nuts. It will be beautiful on your Christmas table or to bring to a Christmas potluck with friends. It also makes a great, homemade gift to give to friends and neighbors. This delicious Christmas bark makes you feel as if you are eating something decadent, but it is loaded with good-for-you ingredients. I hope this one makes a debut on your Christmas buffet.

"Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'" Mark 10:27

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!



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The Importance Of Margin

by Mae Lewis

Life comes at us fast and hard. Between kids, school schedules, groceries, meals, household chores, work, family responsibilities, and bills, it can often feel that the days slip by like grains of sand. Our days so quickly fill up with the unimportant that sometimes we must be reminded to live our lives with purpose and intention. One of the best ways to do this is to create margin in your life - time to pause, reflect, live, and move forward. It is the difference between being overwhelmed with “life” and truly enjoying life.

If your budget is 90% of what you earn, then your financial margin is 10%. It’s the amount of “wiggle room” that you have to succeed or fail. If you succeed, then you have 10% extra income to invest. If you fail, then you have a 10% margin to fail by, and still come

out ahead. This is not just true of money but of time and energy and emotion. Budgeting only 90% of your time will give you the mental and emotional margin needed to live life with purpose.

Margin is the difference between your load and your limit. It is the difference between what you are currently carrying and what you CAN carry. Living life with intentional margin will make your life fuller, richer, and easier.

Planning margin into your life is wise, and the rewards are great. If you do not have margin, you will eventually crash, either financially, spiritually, or physically. If you always use 100% of your resources, you will have nothing left when you really need it. Crisis WILL come upon all of us. As one wise man said, “Trouble is a communist, everyone gets an equal share.”

You can only deal with crisis out of the margin that you create for yourself.

In order to create margin, you first need to know what your focus is. What are you chasing? If you are a housewife, your focus might be to make sure that your family is provided for and that their needs are met. If you are a business owner, your focus might be to be the number one provider of services in your area. If you are having trouble determining your focus, take a tip from Simon Sinek and ask, “Why?” Then ask why again. Then ask why again. Then ask why again.

Once you have your focus, you can manage every other thing in your life by aligning your calendar. Do your actions and calendar match your focus? Whatever is taking you away from your focus is

where you can create margin.

And here is where it gets tricky. In that difference between your limit and your load, there will come temptations that are disguised as opportunities. Don’t be misled by opportunities, unless they are taking you directly to your focus. Ask yourself, is this taking me toward my mission and life priorities?

Author Benjamin Hardy says, “We are kept from our goals not by obstacles, but by a clear path to a lesser goal.” In other words, we often settle for something that is easily within our grasp, rather than taking the more difficult path toward what we really want.

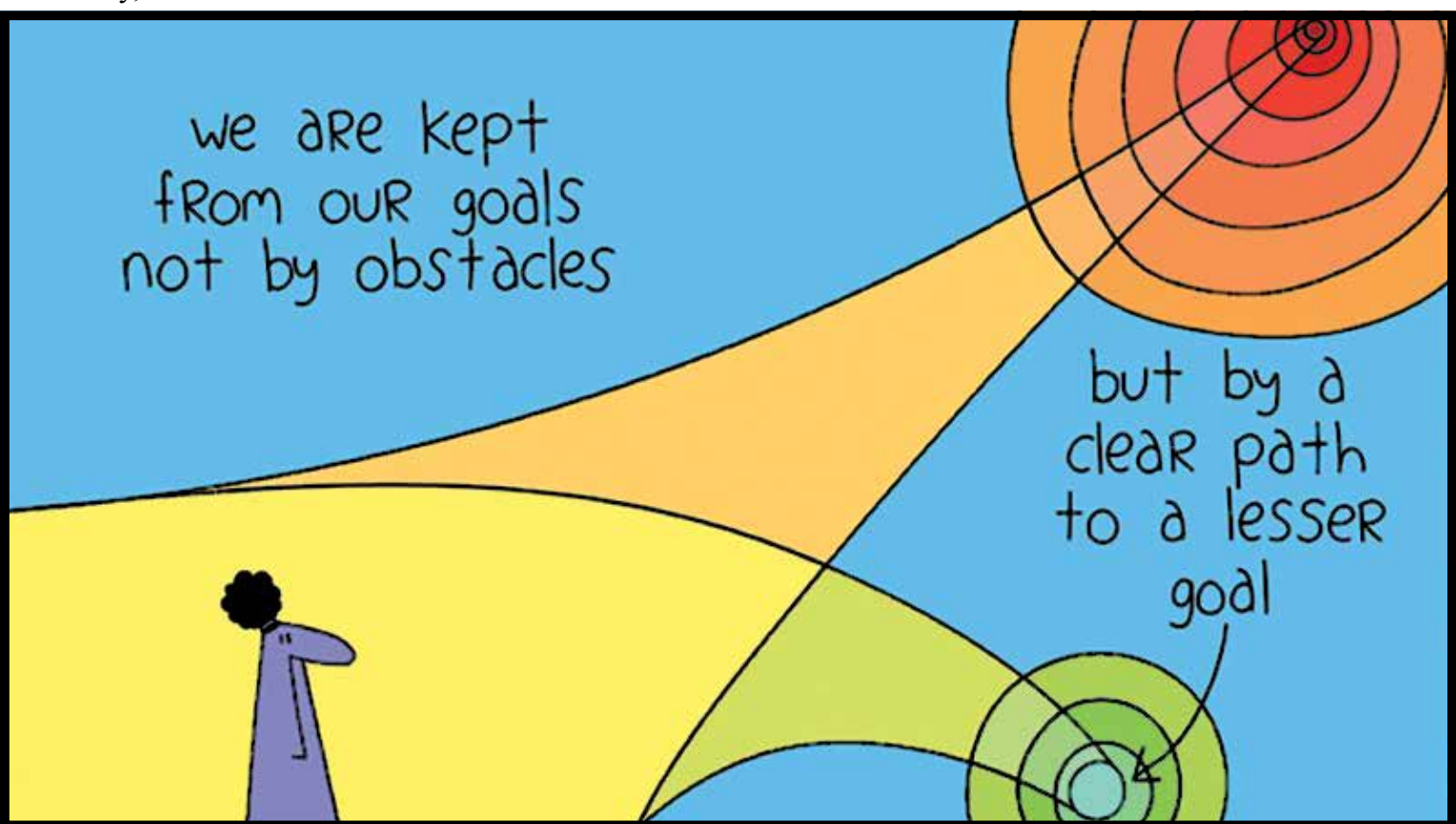
Creating margin in our everyday lives allows us to handle the “difficult” path. Difficult requires more energy. Margin allows you to pursue the difficult,

without jeopardizing the rest of your life.

Most things that we spend our time on are not as important as they seem. It is easy to get distracted by the seemingly urgent. There is a little fireman in us that wants to put out fires, to check off a list, or to feel needed. Sometimes we need to take a step back and take a longer look at what is really happening. The story of humanity is thousands of years old, and there is nothing new under the sun. Each of us plays a tiny part in shaping the story of humanity, but sometimes we need to be reminded that we are not as important as we think we are.

Spending time on what is important (and not urgent) will lead to a more productive life. The key is to be proactive about how you live life. You CAN build the life you want to live. It takes time, but remember that glaciers always outperform avalanches. A glacier moving steadily over time can change landscapes! An avalanche only impacts a small area. Life is a marathon, not a sprint, and if you are sprinting, you are going to burn out, quickly.

Take the time to set a pace for yourself. Build space into your life for rest, reflection and doing nothing. Margin will enable you to enjoy the beauty and wonder of life, grow through challenges, handle the unexpected crisis with ease, and move you towards the things you really want in life.



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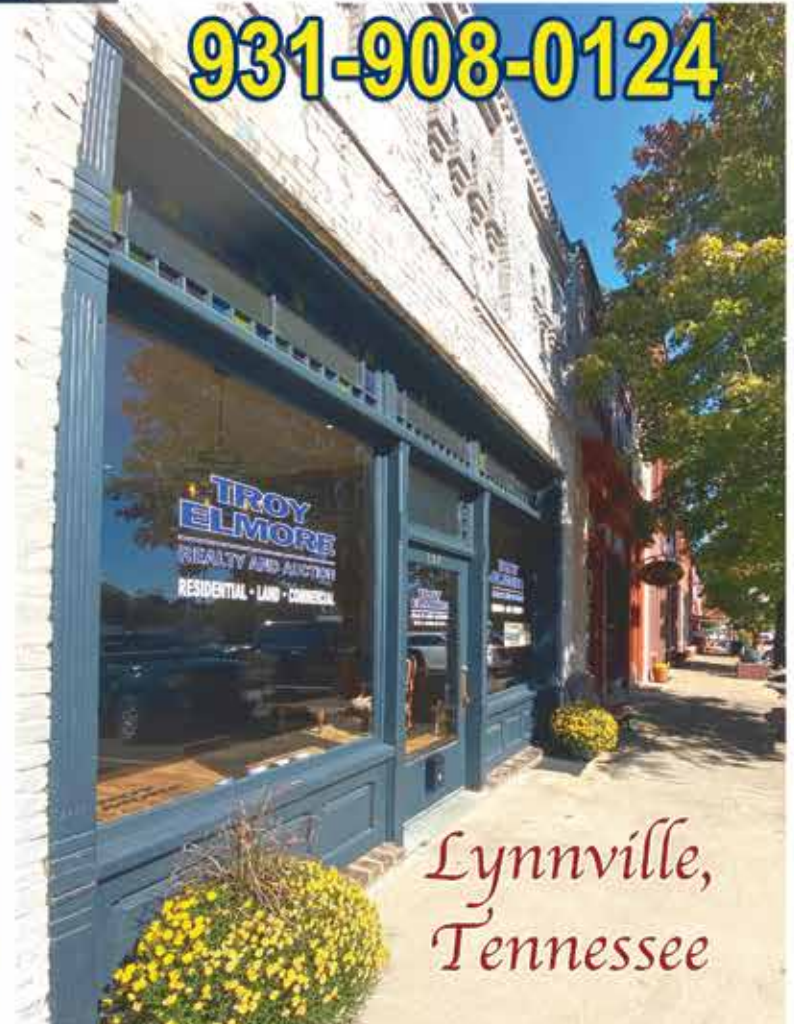
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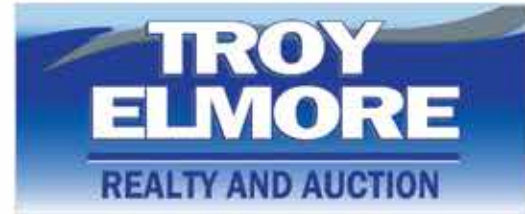
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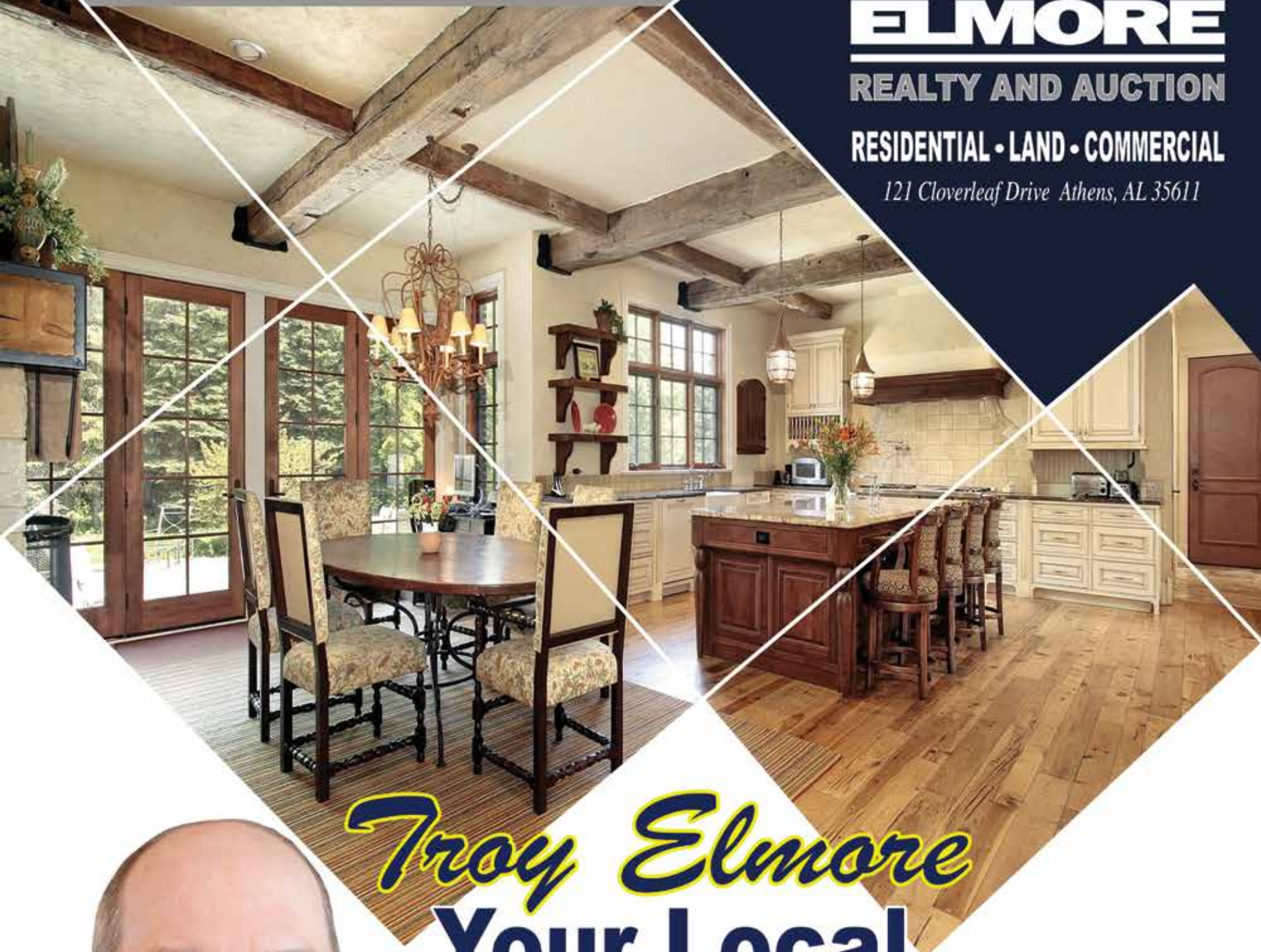
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