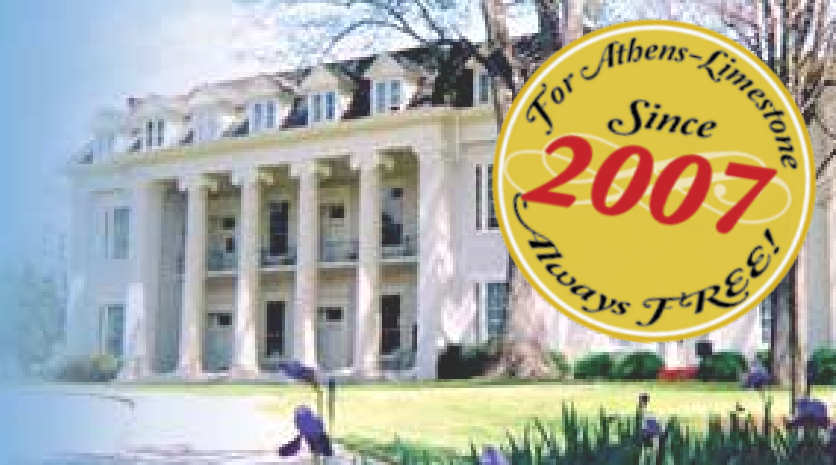


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All Things Soldier



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By Lt. Col. Dixey
Behnken, US Army
Chaplain (Ret)...*
Lt. Col. Dixey Behnken
was one of the best
"things" about my
time in Iraq, and was
a chaplain with a true
shepherd's heart...
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Athens Athletics: *Serving You In 2022*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

The new year is upon us, and Athens Athletics is getting ready to start its 19th year with hardly a breather, even after having endured the pandemic as well as training a new crew prior to the Christmas rush. For the last several months, owner Randy McKinney has practically lived at the shop, and soon will be preparing for the spring and summer sports seasons.



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Caleb Lawler And Edward Jones: *Financial Planning Made Friendly*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Caleb Lawler of Edward Jones Financial Services in Athens is someone who loves to take complex monetary and financial concepts and make them simple for his clients. He believes this is what he was made to do, does so with a passion, and I have
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Publisher's Point

De Overwinnaar In 2021

Around 15 years ago when I was in Holland, I had the deep pleasure on two occasions of visiting the home of Corrie ten Boom, the Dutch woman who, along with her family, hid Jews in their home and ended up in a German concentration camp. The Jews survived, many members of her family perished, and she spent the rest of her life traveling all over the world letting people know that "there is no pit where God's love is not deeper still." She called herself "A Tramp For The Lord," and her experience learning how to forgive the monsters who murdered her family put a whole new spin on "Father forgive them, they know not what they do."

Every aspect of the ten Boom home is quintessentially Dutch -- full of treasured heirlooms,

spotless, proper, comfortable, and quaint. I got to hold the giant family Bible, and my gaze was held by a framed embroidered piece of needlework that can be viewed from both sides. It is painstakingly, meticulously crafted, and is a crown. When you look at the front, it's beautiful, when you look at the back, it's a hot mess. It's known as de overwinnaar, Dutch for "overcomer." Corrie has this to say about what it symbolizes: "Although the threads of my life have often seemed knotted, I know, by faith, that on the other side of the embroidery there is a crown."

It is the beginning of a new year, and I am genuinely excited. I believe that this year is going to be extraordinary for reasons that I can only describe as being revelatory. I also believe that this year is going to be agonizingly difficult, and I want to be prepared

for both.

This past year on so many levels could have looked like the "back side of the crown." Three days after Christmas 2020, my 100-year-old mother died. She was in Seattle; Seattle was crazily locked down due to COVID, and I could not get near my "Mutti." Her death was and is somewhat surreal, and most days I am fine with the wild animal that is grief, and then there are others...

A few months later I was bitten by a brown recluse spider. I was minding my own business doing hydroponic/aerobic gardening, got bitten, waited a few hours to scratch it while driving, and the next morning had a streak going up the inside of my thigh. It was the weirdest bite I have ever had, got treated, left a scar, but thankfully none of my flesh was consumed.

Then, in August I got COVID, and while I was definitely sick, I certainly have been sicker. I am grateful that I had it and for the lessons I learned, I am grateful that I recovered, and I will be "uber-grateful" when my sense of taste and smell return to me.

There have been a lot, perhaps even "2,021" knots and tangles, to be sure. But my faith and experience over the past 50-plus years of being a believer tell me that on the other side of the frame, there is a crown. And so with a full heart, I wish all of you a Happy New Year.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Corrie Ten Boom, the "Tramp for the Lord"



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Marked By Miracles, By Lt. Col. Dixey Behnken, US Army Chaplain (Ret)

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Lt. Col. Dixey Behnken was one of the best "things" about my time in Iraq, and was a chaplain with a true shepherd's heart. I was part of the worship team formed by his soldiers, and we "had church" in what had been Saddam Hussein's fishing lodge. I so appreciated the freedom he gave us to select, practice, and play the music that we felt was fresh for the soldiers on any given Sunday, as well as his commitment to the soldiers, civilians, and Iraqis that were under his care. In December of 2006, I visited Darmstadt, Germany, where his soldiers were based after their tour in Iraq was over, and Dixey and his wife, Julie,

opened their home to me at Christmastime. I will never forget their generous hospitality nor my time there.

Dixey and Julie have had a life of adventure, including being involved with Youth With A Mission Mercy Ships, being in such far-flung places as Hawaii and the Soviet Union, and living for several years in Germany. They were involved, along with their actor/film producer son, Lukas, in the making of a film entitled, *Mulli* in 2015. It is a true story of Charles Mulli, an orphan in Kenya who becomes wildly successful financially, and who now runs an orphanage for more than 2,000 children.

In 2020, Dixey was my "Travis Manion Hero," which means every year when we do the 9/11 Heroes' Run, we are encouraged to select a service member from any branch, active duty or ex-mil in whose honor we run. It was especially my honor to "run" for Dixey, because he no longer could. A stroke had nearly taken him out, and he fought back. This is where it gets really good.

Part of his "clawing back" has been to write a book, and it is my great pleasure to announce that *Marked By Miracles: A Journey With The Divine* is finished! In about a month, on February 8 at 4 p.m. EST, there will be a virtual book launch via Zoom, and you are invited to attend. The Zoom link will be mailed out by request, and can be received by emailing Dixey at dixey-behnkenbooks@gmail.com. I hope you will join me.

Not long after Dixey had the stroke, we had a chance to talk on the telephone, and it was painful to hear him struggle to communicate. But his voice was unmistakable, and since then much restoration has occurred. He can even drive again! Dixey has had the chance



Julie and Dixey Behnken have both been "Marked by Miracles"


to speak to several varied audiences about his journey, and has come to the place where he can thank God for what happened, not that God enjoys having His children suffer, but can work far more good out of a disaster than the disaster could ever think of being. Below is one of his favorite Scriptures that has served to see him through this tough time.

He said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weak-

ness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.

I hope you will take the time to get and read this book, which is available on Amazon.com. It will give you hope, and every word of his story is true.

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Abbie Cooper



Cooking with Anna

A New Type Of Resolution

by Anna Hamilton

I do not make New Year's resolutions. I did for many years and by the time July rolled around, I would always find myself disappointed

and disgusted with my inability to keep whatever ridiculous goal I had set for myself. For 41 years, I have been so hard on myself. I have compared myself with others around me and allowed others' opinions to hold me prisoner. As 2022 begins, I am grieving the time I have lost trying to be "perfect" in the eyes of others around me.

This year I am making a different type of resolution. I have decided to treat myself with kindness, forgiveness, acceptance, and joy. If the scale is not down 5 lbs. from one week to the next, it is okay. That number on the scale will no longer define my happiness, and I will no longer allow what others think my number on the scale should be to control the narrative in my mind. I understand that when people in my life have made comments about my weight, they weren't meant as hurtful or harmful but unfortunately, my perception has always been that I am not good enough in that area of my life.

A friend on Facebook posted a beautiful quote from "Faith Over Fear" that is really my inspiration for 2022. "God did not put your beautiful soul on this planet so that you could listen to the enemy in your mind tell you that you aren't good enough." That quote is me! I have allowed the enemy, Satan, control of my inner dialogue for so long that I feel as if I am lesser because of my outward appearance. How horribly sad is it to live your life in the shadow of a lie! Wake up Anna! God has made you perfect in every way, and by taking on Christ and the Holy Spirit, your soul has been made clean. I am a

3-Ingredient Bacon and Egg Breakfast Muffins

Ingredients:

8 bacon slices

8 eggs, large

2/3 cup green onions, chopped, green part only

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat muffin pan with nonstick spray. In a large pan, over medium heat, cook bacon until crisp. Drain cooked bacon on a paper towel and allow to cool. Once cooled, crumble into small pieces.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk eggs together. Add bacon and chopped green onions. Mix ingredients until well combined. Add salt and pepper if desired.

Pour mixture into prepared muffin tin until each tin is about halfway full. Place muffin tin in oven and bake until edges of muffins are golden brown, about 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven and enjoy.

child of God's, and Satan will no longer control my inner voice.

That was really hard to say out loud. My precious husband tells me all the time to stop putting myself down, that it is wrong. I am taking his advice. I can not wait to see how my entire outlook on life will change if I am positive with myself and give myself grace. The notation of giving myself the same grace I give others in life seems ridiculous. Why would you not love yourself?

Most of us are familiar with the love passage in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. We tend to hear it often at weddings or in reference to loving others around us; and yes, it is a wonderful passage of scripture for those very purposes. But, this year, I am also going to apply it to loving myself. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away."

I will learn to be patient with myself and kind. I will not boast or be proud. I will not dishonor others or myself. I will not become easily angered at myself and I will not keep a record of my wrongs. I will not delight in evil but will rejoice in the truths about myself. I will always protect, trust, hope, and persevere.

So, I am asking all of you to go on this year-long journey of self-forgiveness and self-love with myself. I hope that, if like me in the past, you have been your worst critic and have not loved yourself, that you come with me on this walk to learn to love yourself again. To grow into the person that God has meant for you to be.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:8-39

This week's recipe is an easy, fast, and delicious breakfast recipe for anyone on the go. And while, eggs are traditionally eaten at breakfast, these are equally as good for supper when served along a side salad. This recipe calls for only 3 ingredients, but feel free to add whichever veggies you love, whichever protein you prefer, and for good measure, throw in some cheese. Enjoy!



Calendar of Events

Silver Sneaker Flex™ Classes Every Tuesday and Thursday

Strength and Balance classes meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 9:00 a.m. beginning 12/7/21. Classes are open to all. No signup needed. Classes will meet in the Lighthouse Building behind Emmanuel Baptist Church at 1719 Hwy 72W. All equipment will be provided. Donations accepted. For information: jhunt9155@gmail.com or 256-614-3530.

National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (Nationwide)

January 9

A big "Thank You" to all of our law enforcement officers in Athens-Limestone and beyond. We greatly appreciate your service and sacrifice for us. If you get a chance, please thank an officer today. If you find yourself on the Limestone County Courthouse square, stop by the north side on Market Street and view the End of Watch Memorial honoring those who have died in the line of service in Limestone County.

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.

Benefit for Dan Totten January 9

At Mac's Sports Bar and Steakhouse. 1733 Jefferson Street SE in Athens. 1:00PM-5:00PM. Come enjoy the live music with Daniel Jones; Donald McNeese; Mollie Cole's Band Straight Broke; Lanny Williams, Lesley Garris and Michael Honea, Tim Dugger and Justin Wilbanks of Section 8 and Southern Ground as they take over the stage at Mac's. 50/50 Raffle and bake sale/silent auction to help offset the medical expenses for Dan Totten after 6 weeks in the hospital.

Vietnam Veterans Spaghetti Lunch January 17

17915 W Elm St, Athens. Dinner is 11:00AM-2:00PM. Meal includes Spaghetti, Texas toast, salad or coleslaw, dessert and

a beverage for \$8.00. Eat in or take out. All proceeds go to High School Scholarship. Delivery available within the City Limits.

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.

Ask A Master Gardener February 1

Athens-Limestone Public Library. 603 South Jefferson Street in Athens. 10:15AM-2:15PM with the Athens-Limestone Master Gardeners. For more information about the Master Gardeners, you can contact them at limestonemg@yahoo.com.

Play Outside Day February 5

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.

Coffee Call February 5

Veterans of all wars and their families are invited for breakfast and fellowship from 8:00AM-9:30AM at the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archive (114 West Pryor Street in Athens). 256-771-7578.



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What Makes Ronnie Roll

“All In With Athens,” 2022

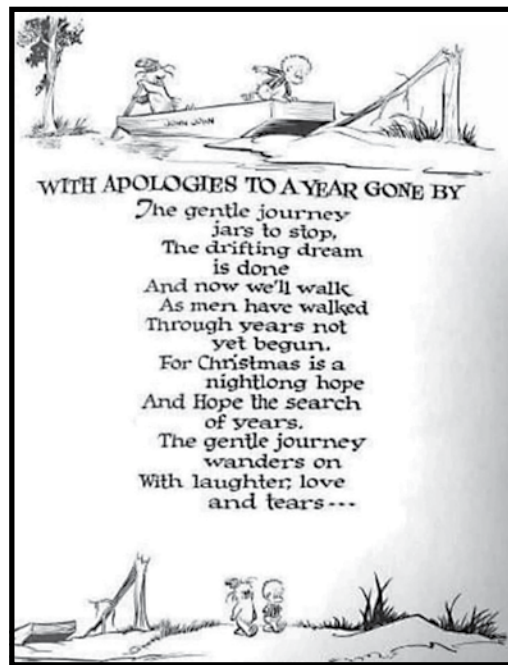
by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Last Monday, we met literally hours after North Alabama had 70+ degree weather first, followed by a tornado, and then 5+ inches of snow, all in less than 24 hours. “Weather Gone Wild” was the word of the day. “Our guys from Utilities have been up all night restoring power,” said the mayor as he flew in and sat down. As he settled in, he commented about a number of people who were battling cancer. “It’s been a tough year, and they need our prayers,” he said, right after he wished me Happy New Year.

Mayor Ronnie then moved to what he called “major developments.” This is code for all kinds of commercial development projects that he can’t talk about, discuss, or even hint at. He did smile and tell me that “they are all good, and I am excited about them.” He could, however talk about Buc-ee’s and the progress they are making. One of the great challenges there has been determining what kinds of services are reasonable to expect from the city and/or the county. “Continued growth and continued challenges,” he said.

The mayor popped up for a moment and asked if anyone could send him the picture that had been tak-



en by a jogger that morning of the Judge Horton statue. He then showed it to me, and said, “This gives me chills, in a good way.” I agreed. The contrast of the snow against the rest of the statue is like a symbol of unity. He then mentioned that the Youth Commission kids had come up with a theme for a podcast they have been producing entitled, All In With Athens. Athens-Limestone County Librarian Jennifer Baxter has been helping them, as has Jerome Malone of Oasis Worship Center. “They did this,” said the mayor, and added, “and they are really good.” The podcasts are all about what a wonderful town and time they are in.” From the beginning, the Youth Com-



mission kids have inspired and strengthened their mentors and instructors in ways that they will probably never understand. They light up everyone around them, and it is a joy to see class after class make their own personal mark on our community.

The hope is that they will do so for many years to come.

We moved on to the topic of the State of the City address coming up on January 25, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. “I literally have over 100

projects and subjects I could talk about, and I only have about 40 minutes,” said the mayor. In honor of the Youth Commission kids, he is naming the speech, “All In With Athens,” and is still in the process of focusing on the most important topics; not an easy task.

“I am excited about this year, I really am,” said the mayor. “My goodness, what a community we have,” he said as he prepared to attend another meeting. We prayed, like we always do, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Slinkard On Success

'A' Is For Attitude

by D. A. Slinkard

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



It is a new year and time for a new beginning. It does not matter what you did last year because last year is history! What are you doing with this year? That is the question you need to focus on and also, "How are you going to make this year different than last year?" We cannot control everything that happens to us, but we can control how we respond and how we handle certain situations. With that said, I have decided to do things differently when it comes to my articles.

"Slinkard On Success" is about to hit five years of being printed in the *Athens Now* publication and I am quite thankful for the impact Ali Turner has had on our community and on me personally. Major kudos goes to her and the tireless determination she offers to so many people. If you ever need a person to pick you up when you are feeling low, Ali Turner is the perfect person for the task. I do not believe she will ever truly understand the thousands of people she has impacted with this newspaper.

All the mushy stuff aside, "Slinkard On Success" is going to make an adjustment to how articles are written this year. I am truly appreciative for the kind words and compliments so many people have given me over the

years, so I have decided to develop the "ABC's of Slinkard On Success" and I feel this year is going to be the best year ever. I am planning on using the alphabet pertaining to each topic I write about with each article.

For instance, "A" is for attitude. If you want to have the best year possible, it is time to check your attitude and see how it checks out. What does your attitude say about you? If you were to be honest and really evaluate the impression you give out, what does that vibe say about you? You might be thinking to yourself, "I really don't care what others think of me..." and I just want to stop you right there. It has been my experience that if you comment that

you do not care what others think about you, you tend to be the person with the vilest attitude of all.

If that is you, then 2022 needs to be different for you, and that is the end of the story. Time to change your way of thinking if you want success this year. So many people are walking around with a bad attitude and they have become blinded to the negative attitude they have. They cannot figure out why people do not want to be around them. They cannot figure out why people do not want to associate with them, and they cannot figure out why everyone seems to be against them. Life comes down to the attitude you have.

I have said it before, and

I will write it here – one of the hardest things in life is to have a positive attitude. It is so much easier to think negatively than what it is to think positively because it takes less work to be negative. It is a battle and if you struggle to control your attitude, it will be a battle every day of your life. It takes work to have a good attitude. It is not easy and if it was easy, then everyone would be doing it. We cannot worry about others. We cannot control what others do to us, however, we can control how we respond and how we handle certain situations.

I want this year to be different for you just as I want it to be different for me. This is going to be our work in progress,

and we are going to attack life together with this column. The first step is going after our attitude towards life. Starting today, I want you to make a list of the attributes of the person you want to be. Write down each attribute, name them one by one and be descriptive. I want you to take time to reflect on how you can achieve each attribute of the person you want to be when it comes to your attitude.

This will not be something that happens overnight, but with each day you will be making the necessary adjustments to winning in 2022. It is going to take effort and it is going to require work, but if you stick with it, you can have success. "A" is for attitude.



Hello 2022 – Walk This Way!

by Cayce Lee

Social Media Specialist, Athens-Limestone County Tourism Association



It's 2022 – we have a new year before us that we can make as great as we want it. The past couple of years have taught us about strength – not only in ourselves but our community. We've gathered, garnered and grown with perseverance. We've come together to mourn our lost loved ones, celebrate the new additions, and to embrace our differences that actually make our community unique, blessed, and ours.

Athens-Limestone Tourism wants to encourage you to claim your paths – your history, your heritage, and the actual trails, tracks, and treks that add to the fiber of Athens-Limestone this year...from our trails that herald the history of roots like the Columns and Culture Antebellum Home Driving Tour, Beaty Historic District, and the Athens-Limestone Civil War Driv-

ing Tour, Athens-Limestone African-American Heritage Trail, and Driving Forces-the History Behind the Street Names in Athens.

Explore the music scene with our Athens-Limestone Music Guide and check out the live music, karaoke and other nightlife on scene. Maybe you'd rather take on the Athens-Limestone Q-Crawl for a little culinary adventure highlighting all our purveyors of barbecue smokin' throughout our county. Stroll downtown with the Guide to the Square for a little shop small, eat small, and have a big time. Be sure to mark your calendars to come visit Athens and Mooresville in April as the Saturday Historic Walks return to town each Saturday with tales of history, homes, and local families led by local volunteer guides whose passion for history and storytelling will keep you entertained.

Maybe you'd rather become one with nature. Immerse yourself in nature with the Noah Bike, Motorcycle, and Car Trail and wind the roads of Athens and northern Limestone County passing historical sites and cemeteries and visiting our smaller places and spaces along the way. Lace up your walking shoes, air up your trail bicycles, or saddle up the horse for an adventure on the Richard Martin Rails to Trails as it winds from the Tennessee border in Veto through a Civil War battlefield, passing through the quaint Town of Elkmont and finishing on the edge of Athens at Mitchell-Coffman Park. Limestone County stops of the North Alabama Birding Trail dotting the shores of southern Limestone County are great places to observe birds of an amazing variety. Want to hit the water?...Well, paddles up! The Limestone County

Canoe & Kayak Trail has Class 1 waters with elevations controlled by TVA, making them a big draw all year round. The Marbut Bend Accessible Trail, which lays in northwest Limestone County near Salem-Lester, is a great way to explore the flora and fauna of our county and state with the whole family as the crushed, fine stone and elevated wooden boardwalk were made with our wheeled-explorers in mind.

An urban escape more to your liking? There's the Athens' Greenway along the babbling Swan Creek stretching from the Athens SportsPlex past the middle school to U.S. Highway 72 that offers an almost Zen-like relaxing atmosphere most days. Or maybe the Athens Historic Volksmarch that meanders amid the historic homes and structures of Athens' many historic districts will fill your day and allow you to spend your evening exploring the nightlife of the places you passed on your stroll. Don't forget your camera as you may spy eagles, egrets, cranes, owls, waterfowl, deer, foxes, and more as you paddle, stroll or roll your way along any of these or our other trails, tracks, and treks.

Athens-Limestone Visitor Center (100 North Beaty Street in Athens) has a variety of brochures featuring trails in Limestone County and North Alabama. Whether you run, walk, bike, ride horseback, or just want to get out and explore in the family car, you'll find a variety to choose from. The visitor center is open 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday (except holidays). You can also find

some of the trails at VisitAthensAL.com/plan-your-trip under Trails, Track and Treks.

Whatever your plans or resolutions are for the new year, maybe from getting fit to traveling more, from shopping small to being more adventurous, we hope you can join us in Athens-Limestone.

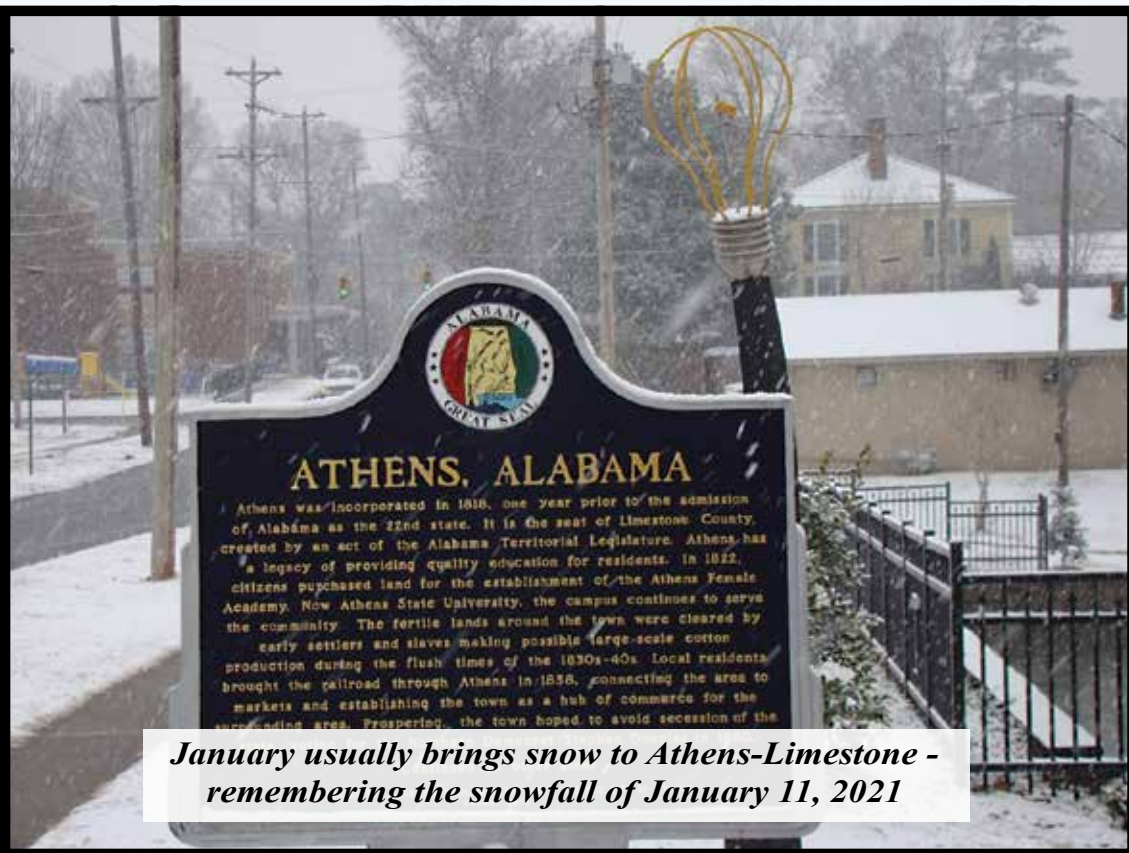
Martin Luther King Observance...

Just a reminder: Schools, municipal offices, and other businesses may be closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. on January 17, 2022. Each year, the Limestone County NAACP hosts an annual walk on this date around the downtown Athens Square and concludes at Alabama Veterans Museum Event Center for a presentation of area school children's themed reports and artwork.

And The Music Continues...

The Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention Concert Series 2021-22 continues its tradition of great music on January 20 as Kenny and Amanda Smith come to McCandless Hall for its inaugural concert of 2022. Don't wait long to get your tickets for this highly attended concert series or better yet, purchase a season pass for all of the concerts and included is admission to the Fiddlers Convention October 6-8 too.

For details on these upcoming even or if you want to take a peek at the year ahead, please go to VisitAthensAL.com/events.



January usually brings snow to Athens-Limestone - remembering the snowfall of January 11, 2021

Athens Athletics: *Serving You In 2022*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

In addition, they will be providing shirts, caps, and merchandise for new businesses that are flooding North Alabama.

Athens Athletics, located at 701 US-31 S in Athens, was started after Randy had worked at Steelcase for two decades. He had always longed to own his own business, put himself through a crash course on how to ply his new trade, and the last near twenty years have literally flown by as he has served the people of Athens-Limestone County.

Upon entering Athens Athletics, you will quickly see that Randy especially loves baseball. There are old posters of Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth on the walls, and one of the things Randy enjoys doing when he actually gets a well-deserved break is travel to baseball stadiums all over the country. He and his family are down to about 10 that are still on their “to-visit” list, and his favorites so far have been Wrigley Stadium and Fenway Park.

Athens Athletics specializes in several types of sporting goods and T-shirts. They are well known for their timeliness as well as quality, and can produce shirts that have up to six colors, which (thankfully) rarely happens. Recently Target ordered 2,000 shirts, and their quality and service stay the same whether it’s one shirt, or 2,000 and one! Randy is a long-time member of the Limestone Leaders Business Network International chap-

ter, and has given several presentations explaining how he does what he does. I have taken more than one tour of his shop and am impressed with the care he puts into everything he and his team create. I have also heard several testimonies of how he came to the rescue of people who have been given a deadline that seemed impossible. For over ten years, Athens Athletics has been one of my favorite Athens Now clients, and I am personally looking forward to ten more!

While T-shirts for everything from teams, businesses, causes, or family reunions are the mainstay of Athens Athletics, they offer several other services. One of their most popular is custom embroidery. Randy showed me the computer-driven machine that produces and embroiders the logos for shirts, jackets, hats, and more, and he has made several custom hats for my husband. Randy especially loves doing the embroidery but doesn’t get to do it as much as he would like because of the demands of producing T-shirts. The shop also has an engraving machine that can do wood, metal YETI-style cups, and plastic. You can see a local example of the wood laser-craft work on the wall of Frame Gallery Off The Square on Marion Street, and they can engrave all manner of trophies which can be seen throughout the shop.

Another custom personalization product offered by Athens Athletics is what is called sublimation. An example of sublimation is

a shiny front license plate with names, dates, and hearts, which would make a great Valentine’s Day gift. Sublimated items are created by a heat process where the design materials actually go into the metal and bond with it. The result makes the colors bright for years, and they stay free of rust and corrosion.

Getting through COVID was a challenge for Randy and his crew, as it also was for the rest of the businesses in our area. Randy had to get really good at



The Athens Athletics Team--from left, Randy McKinney, Mandy Marks, Kelly King, Holliee Gatlin, and Stacy King



Antique baseball memorabilia



Getting the embroidery machine to cooperate

attending Zoom meetings while steering the shop through uncharted waters. One of the things that turned out to be a blessing for Athens Athletics during that time was the fact that they are a U-Haul rental franchise (which early in 2020 was deemed an “essential business”) so they

didn’t have to shut down. I can tell you that we have used their U-Haul services to go pick up people and their stuff more than once, and they have always treated us like VIPs.

I asked Randy why I should come to Athens Athletics for all my U-Haul, T-shirt, embroidery,

sporting goods, laser, and sublimation needs. His answer was simple: “We have always tried to make the customer number one, and we want people to leave here satisfied.” I can say from experience that this is what they do, and I invite you in 2022 to let them serve YOU!

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

Looking Back At 2021 With Gratitude

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

Happy New Year, everyone! The year 2021 was another wild ride wasn't it?! As society was trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic, we used phrases like "new normal" and mastered the art of zoom calls as people continued to work from home, trying to just make do in this weird new world.

Even though 2021 was far from normal, I am very pleased to report that KALB had a great year, and was able to accomplish many good things in our community despite the pandemic. The main reason we were able to do so much is because we had an outpouring of community support, without which we would have accomplished little to nothing.

One of the areas where we saw so much growth last year was in our clean-up efforts. There were at least ten cleanup events throughout the year that KALB either hosted or supported. Nearly 600 volunteers total were actively engaged at these events, and over 75,000 lbs. of litter and debris were removed from roadsides, public lands, and waterways in Athens and Limestone County. We are truly grateful for all of the volunteers and partnerships who helped to make these cleanup efforts successful.

In March of 2021, we hosted our second Household Hazardous



Waste Collection event in Limestone County. This event gave residents another chance to dispose of household chemicals, old paint, fluorescent bulbs, fertilizers, gasoline, and more in a safe way, keeping these items out of the landfill and our waterways. We appreciate everyone who worked together to make this event possible, including the Limestone County Commission, City of Athens, and the Huntsville Solid Waste Disposal Authority.

KALB was thrilled to bring back our Earth Day and Outdoor EXPO in 2021, after having to cancel it in 2020. Big Spring Memorial Park was filled with vendors and exhibitors who showcased earth friendly products, handmade items, or educated the public about various environmental topics. Steve Trash, an eco-magician, performed three shows, and taught about the importance of recycling while interact-

ing with the audience in a fun way. We are thankful to the Limestone County Water and Sewer Authority for their sponsorship to bring Steve to Earth Day! Limestone Pediatric Dentistry sponsored a petting zoo for the event as well. A great time was had by all!

We also partnered with the Athens-Limestone County Public Library and held a Pollinator Day program, focusing on the importance of pollinators and native plants. Part of the program was held in the new Library Gardens, where KALB had a part in providing some of the native plants in the pollinator garden through funding from Keep Alabama Beautiful/Toyota.

Through the Limestone County 4-H program, KALB was able to get back into the classroom this fall! We went into the 5th and 6th grade classes in the county schools and played Environmental Jeopardy with each class. The students had a

good time, and hopefully learned a few things too.

By the end of 2021, the Athens-Limestone Recycling Center (part of KALB) was able to bring back recycling to a mostly normal state again, and for this we are truly grateful. For residents living in the county, our recycling center is the only means that they have to recycle, and we appreciate the continued support of those residents that utilize the center and the community collection trailers.

We are also very thankful for those that supported our fundraising efforts last year through sponsorships, membership, donations, or volunteering. Being a non-profit, we rely on these fundraising events to keep us go-

ing. Without community support, we could not continue to do what we do, which is helping to keep our city and county a cleaner, greener, and more beautiful place to live, work, and play.

We look forward to 2022, as we already have events on our calendar. Be on the lookout for what is coming up in the new year, including another Household Hazardous Waste Collection, River Cleanup, Earth Day, and more! Please visit KALBcares.com for more information on our upcoming events, projects, and programs.



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www.KALBCares.com



Caleb Lawler And Edward Jones: Financial Planning Made Friendly

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

had the privilege of hearing several people thank him personally for helping them get on track with their money.

Caleb grew up in Florence, Alabama, and graduated from UNA with a degree in computer information systems. As a kid he was involved in sports, music and his church youth group, and also describes himself as having a bit of a “nerdy” side. When he was getting his degree, he greatly enjoyed studying finance and accounting, but never dreamed it would become his actual career. He interned with TVA at Browns Ferry, and later, a DOD contracting firm out of California hired him to work in their Huntsville office. He loved the work, but soon realized that being all alone in a huge building day in and day out in front of a computer screen with no human contact was not how he wanted to work at all.

When Caleb and his wife, Angie, were newlyweds, they attended a well-known biblically based financial education course that Caleb now teaches at his church. They were spared years of what statistically is the number one marriage killer: fights over finances. Caleb knew he wanted to help others avoid the pitfalls that are so common in our culture, and both the Lawlers very much wanted Angie to be able to stay at home once they became parents. The question



The Lawlers -- Caleb and Angie, daughters Mia, 7, Zoey, 5 and Sophia, 4 months



was, could Caleb make such a huge change in his career and fulfill their goals for their family? The answer came at a BBQ held in his own backyard. Caleb had a friend he had known from kindergarten and was literally cooking burgers when he opened up to his friend, who happened to have several family members in the finance industry. “You need to look into it,” said his friend.

Enter Edward Jones, which is a privately held, solid, reputable financial advising corporation well known for how it gives back to the community and teaches its advisors to do the same. I asked Caleb for an example, and he said, “When I was taking my training, they had seasoned, veteran agents come in on their own time and teach us how to help our clients

-- what to say to say to them, how to ask the hard questions. That’s how they do business, and that’s why I took the ‘leap of faith.’ I was finally getting to really help people.” Edward Jones has a rigorous ten-point hiring process which Caleb passed, and he has never looked back. On a personal note, I met Caleb two years ago at our Limestone Leaders BNI meeting, and I am in a weekly book club with him. I send everyone I can to him because I trust him; I have seen him in action, and was especially impressed with his skill in answering money questions during the madness of the pandemic.

Caleb describes Edward Jones as a company that concentrates on getting to know clients by finding out their needs, goals and dreams, and then developing a strategy that meets those needs. Once Caleb finds out what is important to them, he asks, “Is this goal attainable? If not, how can we change things so that it can become attainable? How can we get them back on track?”

Caleb shines at illustrating how making small changes can make a huge difference in the long term. “If you spend four

dollars a day, five days a week on coffee, that’s a thousand dollars a year. That thousand dollars could really help you leave a legacy,” he said. Essentially, when you hire Caleb Lawler, and by extension Edward Jones, you are hiring a financial accountability partner as well as educator. That does not mean living a life of nothing but tight purse strings, it means gaining a friend who is trained to see the trusted strategic possibilities that will help you get where you want to go.

On the lobby wall of Caleb’s office, which is located at 1795 Hwy 72 E, Suite 101 in Athens, there is an engaging black and white photo of Edward D. “Ted” Jones, the founder. He is with his horse and his dog, and it contains a quote that was Jones’ response years ago to being questioned why he hadn’t taken the company public. To me it illustrates in this new year why you want to schedule a no-obligation appointment with Caleb Lawler:

I am the richest man in America.

I have a wife who loves me in spite of my faults.

I have four dogs. Two love only me. One loves everybody. One loves no one, but still is very loyal and follows me everywhere I go on the farm.

I have a horse I love to ride around the farm, and best of all, she comes to me when I call her.

I have too much to eat and a dry place to sleep.

I enjoy my business.

I love my farm and my home.

I have a few close friends, and money has never been my God.

*Edward D. “Ted” Jones, Jr.
1925-1990*

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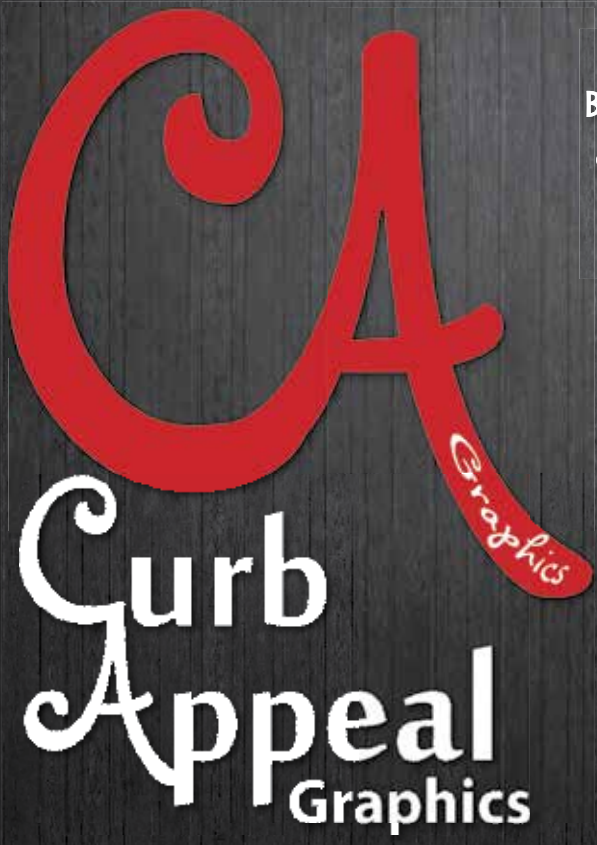
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Therapy Metaphors

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“Your mind is the sky. Thoughts and feelings merely weather.”

- Shamash Alidina

Therapy metaphors use a story or illustration to see alternative ways of looking at something. Every culture and religion uses these types of stories, analogies, or parables to improve understanding, make a point more memorable, and hopefully help us to make positive changes. In my January articles, I will be sharing metaphors that help us to see thoughts (their nature and role) in a different light. Just this alone, seeing thoughts differently, allows us to create a space between us and our thoughts, which leads us to see things a bit more objectively. Once we are able to do this, we can make wiser and more helpful decisions about how to respond (not react) effectively.

The Quicksand is used by Stephen Hayes to introduce his clients to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT.) When we are stuck in quicksand, the immediate impulse is to struggle and fight to get out. But this is exactly the opposite of what you should do -- because as you put weight down on one part of your body, it goes deeper. The more you struggle, the deeper you sink. The only option for survival is to

spread your weight over a large surface area, laying down. It goes against all our instincts to lay down and be with the quicksand. So, it is with distress. We struggle and fight against it, but we have perhaps never considered just letting it be. If we considered being with the distressing thoughts and feelings, we'd find we get through it and survive...much more effectively than if we'd fought and struggled.

Passengers on the Bus. You are the bus driver. You can be driving while all the passengers (thoughts) are being critical, abusive, negative, distracting, and shouting directions. Some passengers (thoughts) may be kind, considerate, friendly, helpful, and encouraging. Either way, keep your attention focused on the road ahead, driving the bus towards your goal or purpose.

The Beach Ball. We try to stop thoughts, but that is really impossible. It's like trying to constantly hold an enormous inflatable beach ball under the water. It keeps popping up in front of our faces. We can allow the ball to float around us, just letting it be. So rather than stop the thoughts, we can stop fighting them, and let them happen, without reacting to them.

Tug of War with a Monster. Imagine you are in a tug of war with some huge anxiety (depres-



sion, etc.) monster. You have one end of the rope and the monster has the other end. In between you, there is a huge bottomless pit. You're pulling backward as hard as you can, but the monster keeps pulling you ever closer to the pit. What's the best thing to do in that situation? Pulling harder comes naturally, but the harder you pull, the harder the monster pulls. You're stuck. Dropping the rope means the monster's still there, but you are no longer tied up in a struggle with it. Now you can do something more useful.

The Tunnel. When we get anxious driving through a tunnel, the best option is to keep going rather than stop or try to escape. This feeling will pass...there is an end to this tunnel.

The Mountain. Whatever the weather, or whatever happens on the surface of the mountain, the mountain stands firm, strong, grounded, perma-

nent. We can be like that mountain—observing thoughts, feelings, sensations—knowing inner stillness and strength.

Thought Train. We can sit on the train, watching the scenery (our thoughts, feelings, and sensations) go by, or stand on the platform, watching the thought train pass through. We don't have to jump on it.

The River. Sometimes it feels like we're being carried away downstream, struggling to stay afloat among the mud, filth, and debris. The muck is negative thoughts and feelings, and the river is our distress as we drift helplessly downstream. But

we can stand on the riverbank. You might watch individual items as they pass. For example, you might picture a negative thought floating on a tree branch or a troubling event as an old bicycle tire. You can stand and watch without being caught up in the flow.

Join me next time for more therapy metaphors.

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.

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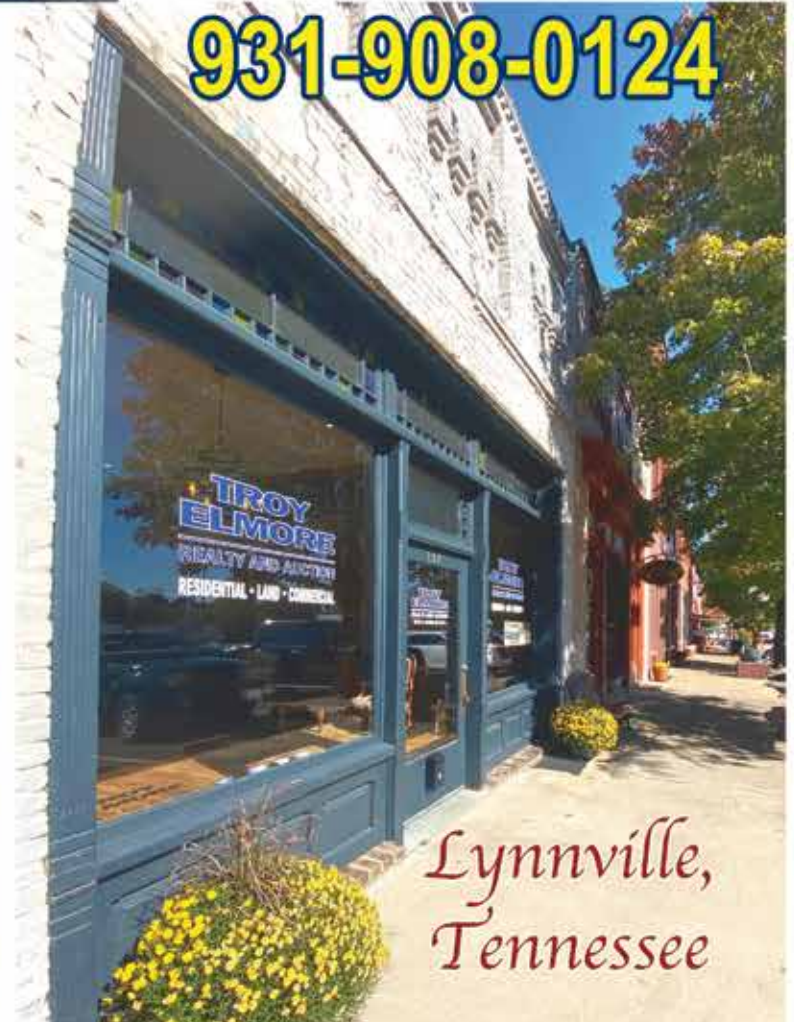
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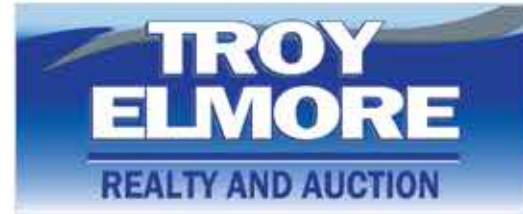
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