

March 18 - March 31, 2022

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Vote For Fred Sloss For Limestone County Sheriff On May 24

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

From the time he was a kid, former Limestone County Chief Deputy Sheriff Fred Sloss has always wanted to serve people, and has made his career out of doing so. First, it was being a member of East Limestone High School's football team, where he played cornerback as well as tailback. Then, it was honorably serving his country as a member of the US Navy. He was in cryptology and intelligence, and spent several years in Japan, which is where he met his wife, Marsha. Marsha was a service member as well, and they were married in 1994. When he left the Navy as a

Continued on pages 16-17



Fred Sloss served as Limestone County's Chief Deputy Sheriff and Marsha Sloss is the Director of Human Resources for the City of Athens



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Publisher's Point

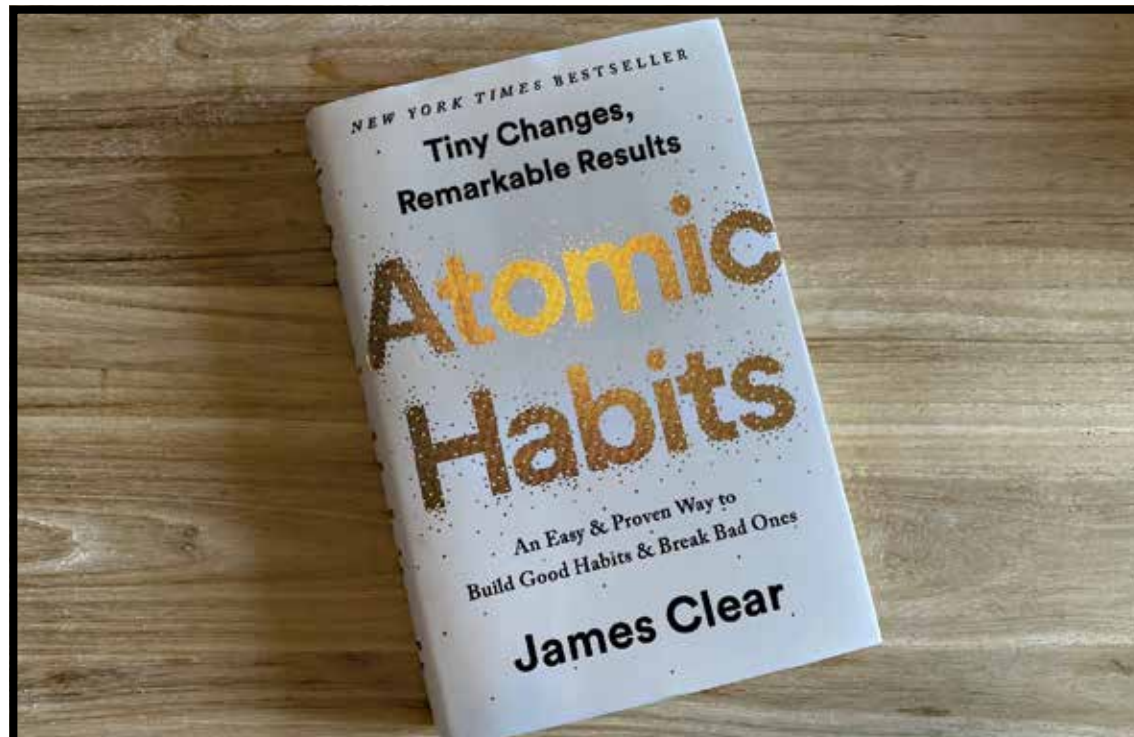
Atomic Habits - An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones

James Clear was a true lover of baseball, and played it from the time he could swing a bat. Then came the day when someone accidentally let go of a bat after a swing and hit James right between the eyes. It nearly killed him, and he had to learn how to do just about everything all over again.

It is often the worst stuff that brings forth the best stuff in our lives. And the process James went through to regain his life forced him to learn the art and science of making and breaking habits. This has garnered him a New York Times bestselling book with 5 million copies sold, and a fierce following of people who swear by his research and methodology.

Frankly, I have rarely read something that has made so much sense. It is practical, and when Clear talks about "easy," he is not implying that things change somehow by osmosis or without effort, but that anything broken down to the "atoms" that make it up can be manageable and changeable.

The success stories are impressive, but not unrealistic. For example, one woman lost close to 100 pounds by continually asking the following question: "What would a healthy person do in this situation?" The "situation" to which she was referring was the zillion cues she would encounter throughout the day that normally would inspire her to eat everything in sight. She did not diet in the clas-



sic sense, followed no particular eating plan; she just continually put herself out there as a person who could manage her relationship with food, and she became just that.

There are four components that make up the things we do unconsciously, like brushing our teeth. They are cue, craving, response, and reward. Just learning how to identify them and being more aware of what we are doing at any given moment go a long way toward helping our brain construct a feedback loop, that evidence of an internalized habit that we just do without a whole lot of willpower. Most people don't have to "push back from the table" or exert tremendous willpower in order to brush their teeth on a regular basis, and what James discovered on his journey back

to functionality is that the same principles can apply to our most obstinate and challenging behaviors.

Here is a review for Atomic Habits:

"I've read a lot of books on changing behavior and building habits and James Clear's Atomic Habits is my new favorite. This book is different from others in the way it covers an enormous amount of ground in the larger area of self-improvement while seamlessly tying all these ideas back into the central theme of habits.

"One of the core concepts in Atomic Habits is to focus on the small improvement. The impact a 1% improvement per day can make may appear negligible at first, but Clear makes a compelling argument that in the case of habits, thinking small produces the biggest

results over time. "Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement," explains Clear.

"Over the months and years, the accumulated effect of small habitual daily behaviors is staggering. Early in the book we are also warned that this compounding works both ways, so we'd better make sure we're making it work in the positive direction, not for the negative."

I hope you find this book as helpful as I have, and trust that the idea of habits being "atomic" brings you hope.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Stolen Valor, Stolen Honor

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Few things “frost” me more than when a civilian who never served pretends to have been a service member, claims to have been “medaled” for having been injured, falsely claims to have been sexually assaulted by a superior officer, and then cyber-panhandles to get money for supposed service-related disabilities. Call me sexist (and I have no rational reason for this feeling) but to me it’s worse when it’s a woman who does so. And if you want to move “frost” to “FROST,” then make sure the woman used to work for the Veterans Administration.

Such is the case with a woman by the last name of Cavanaugh from Rhode Island who was charged on Monday with “using forged or counterfeited military discharge certificates, wire fraud, fraudulently holding herself out to be a medal recipient

ent with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefits, and aggravated identity theft.” In addition, there is no record of her having served in the Marines or any other branch of the military.

Sarah Jane Cavanaugh, 31, worked at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Providence, Rhode Island. Allegedly she accessed the records of a Marine who legitimately receives VA services and used those records to create a false set of military discharge papers. She then used her official VA office email address to obtain a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, which were displayed on a US Marine dress uniform that she wore at VFW events. She claimed to have been in the USMC from 2009 to 2016.

Cavanaugh’s purpose in the scheme was to obtain financial assistance for a number of “needs,” which had supposedly arisen from being exposed to burn pits in several combat zones, and which resulted in her having been “diagnosed with cancer.” In addition, Sarah Jane claimed that she had been in close proximity to a bomb explosion, and had



breathed in ordnance particulates.

Here is what Cavanaugh received from her fraudulent claims: \$207,000 from the Wounded Warrior program to pay for physical therapy and groceries, about \$18,500 in financial assistance from an organization located in Virginia called “Code of Support” which went toward everything from mortgage payments, repairs to her home furnace, to a gym membership and other bills, as well as \$4,700 from a fundraising website. But wait, there’s more! She used the Purple Heart/Bronze Star recipient designation to receive

\$16,000 from CreatiVets, which provides art therapy for wounded vets. That is close to a quarter million dollars -- money that should have gone to those who deserve it. No price can be put on the damage done to well-meaning soldiers and civilians who were moved to help her.

Here’s how Cavanaugh got caught: ironically, a true Marine who also happened to be female thought something was fishy when she heard about Cavanaugh’s Purple Heart/Bronze Star claims from being in combat. Why? Because, according to the tall tale, Cavanaugh and the true female leatherneck would have been in the same place at the same time, and no one had any memory of Cavanaugh. As a result, another charity that specifically deals with vets and cancer canceled a \$3,000 check, and a full-blown investigation is

now under way. There had been a number of “stand-alone red flags” that no one wanted to pursue, and when several vets compared notes, it was clear that something just was not right.

A nurse who had treated Cavanaugh put it this way: “I was in pain for her. I listened to her, everything a nurse should do,” she said. “She (Cavanaugh) not only abused that, she took my compassion and lied. Meanwhile, we could have put our services elsewhere. That’s what bothers me.”

That bothers me, too. But what makes it worse is that Cavanaugh herself was supposed to be helping vets, and it takes a special type of low to plan and execute something like this that depends on purloining the pain of those who genuinely served. May they throw the book at her, and may God have mercy on her soul.

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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.

Digital Literacy Classes

Athens-Limestone County Public Library will host a series of Digital Literacy Classes in conjunction with Calhoun Community College & Drake State Community & Technical College. Classes will boost your digital confidence & provide you with skills and training needed in today's job market. Courses include: Computer & Internet Basics, Email, Windows OS, & Microsoft Word®. M-W 9:00 – 12:00 or M-W 1:00 – 4:00. Classes start January 24th. Call us at (256) 306-2830 to learn more.

FREE Yoga Wednesdays at Noon

Come join us for FREE Yoga at The Library! Sponsored by North Alabama Area Health Education Center. Just bring your yoga mat & some water! Wednesdays @ Noon
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The Sound for a Southern Gospel March 18

Mar Berea Baptist will host The Sound for a Southern Gospel singing at 7PM. No cost, love offering will be received.
16779 Lucas Ferry Rd, Athens AL 35611.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection March 19

Athens Middle School (100 Hwy 31) in the north parking lot. This will be the third collection that KALB has hosted since 2020. 8am to noon. Residents of Limestone County may bring items such as paint, mineral spirits, turpentine, paint thinner, transmission fluid, brake fluid, anti-freeze, lawn and garden poisons, old gasoline, household cleaners, ammonia,

bleach, pool chemicals, fluorescent tube lighting, and more. This is a safe and convenient way to dispose of these items that are unsafe to place in your regular trash. Drive thru drop off. KALB is thankful for our partnerships with the Limestone County Commission and the Limestone County Solid Waste Authority that make this much needed event possible.

Ardmore Spring Cleaning March 25

The 6th Annual Ardmore Spring Cleaning needs volunteers. For more information, call United Pest and Turf Control at 256-423-7378.

2nd Annual AMVETs Post 21 Horse, Pony, and Mule Fun Day April 2

Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena. AL-99 on the right past the Elm Street Intersection in Athens from 9:00AM-6:00PM. Open to riders of all ages. Come join the AMVETs of Post 21 for a day of fellowship and games. Class Fees are \$5.00 per class - cash only. Admission is \$5.00 non-riders; Children under 5 free. Concession available. For registration information or other questions: amvetsalpost21@gmail.com

Athens Historic Walking Tours April 2

Join the Athens-Limestone County Tourism Association at the Athens-Limestone Visitors Center, 100 North Beaty Street in Athens. 9:45AM for check-in and tour selection. Expect a 1-2 hour long tour which begins at 10:00AM. Comfortable shoes and a light jacket are suggested. Free. Donation Welcome. For more information: 256-232-5411.

Author Talk April 7

Athens-Limestone County Public Library. 6pm. Join us as we hear from local author and retired Athens State Professor Ron Fritze whose newest book, "Hope and Fear" was just released March 11th. "Hope and Fear" is an exploration of fringe ideas, conspiracy theories, modern myths and pseudo-history.

2nd Annual Chicken Stew April 9

The VFW 4765 Auxiliary is having it's 2nd Annual Chicken Stew on April 9. All proceeds will go to help Veterans in need in the area. We will take pre-orders this year. If you would like to pre-order please call (256) 503-4855. Stew will be ready at approximately 12 noon. All pre-orders will have to be picked up by 2pm on the 9th. \$30 for a gallon and \$10 a quart.

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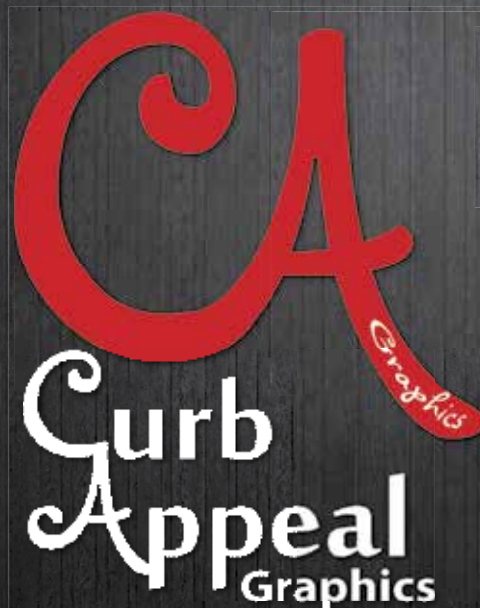


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What Makes Ronnie Roll

Life Lessons From March Madness

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Mayor Ronnie came into his office excited about several things -- the Tennessee Vols Men's Basketball team had taken the SEC title and as of this printing were in "The Big Dance," and both Auburn and Alabama had done well in this collegiate season that has affectionately come to have been called "March Madness." What the mayor and any sports fan know is that a player can have tremendous talent, but it takes a coach to make a player into a team player, and a team into a winning team. So it is with cities, and for this edition we are once again talking about some life lessons that, if applied, will last way longer than an Icy-Hot, pizza, or insurance endorsement.

The focus of this edition of "Ronnie" is the late, great Pat Summitt, the coach of Tennessee's Lady Vols for 38 seasons. Pat coached from 1974, when she was the ripe old age of 22, and she did so un-

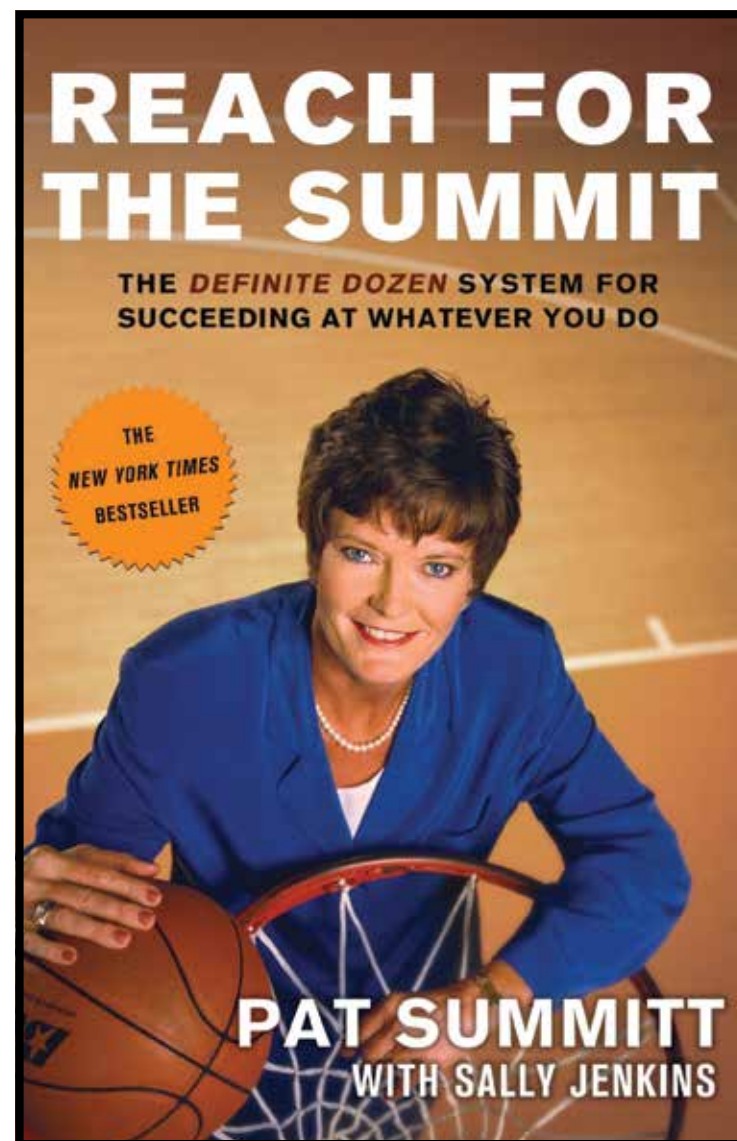
til 2012. When she first started out, several of the women on her squad were only one year younger than she was. Pat's Lady Vols won 8 NCAA titles, and she changed women's sports forever. At the time of Pat's retirement, she and the Lady Vols had racked up a stunning 1098 wins, more than any other collegiate basketball coach of either gender. John Wooden's record was 885, Bobby Knight's was 902, and to my knowledge, Pat never threw a chair onto the court when she was angry with a ref for what she considered to be a poor call! Holly Hollman, who is the Communications Specialist for the City of Athens, went to Tennessee when Pat was there, and has regaled us with "Pat stories" that illustrate why Mrs. Summitt is truly considered to be a GOAT-Greatest Of All Time. Pat said of herself in her book, *Reach For The Summit*:

"I'm someone who will

push you beyond all reasonable limits. Someone who will ask you not to just fulfill your potential but to exceed it. Someone who will expect more from you than you may believe you are capable of. So, if you aren't ready to go to work, shut this book."

We are in a season in our city where in so many ways we need to "go to work." The State of the City address was given last week, and Mayor Ronnie illustrated that so many things on several fronts are happening in Athens-Limestone County that it just about makes one's head swim. We need to make a team in our town that is worthy of being a part of our own "Big Dance." We need to not only make our city the best it can be, but be an example for other cities as well.

Pat had 12 principles called "*The Definite Dozen*" that she drilled into her players that if applied, can make for a winning team in a town



or on the court: "*Respect yourself and others; take full responsibility; develop and demonstrate loyalty; learn to*

be a great communicator; discipline yourself so no one else has to; make hard work your passion; don't just work hard, work smart; put the team before yourself; make winning an attitude; be a competitor; change is a must; and handle success like you handle failure." Any one of these could be a theme for this column for months to come, but we had run out of time to talk about them. So, once again we prayed, and it was time for Ronnie to roll.





Winter-To-Spring Sports Transition

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

Local winter sports seasons wrapped up since our last column. The James Clemens boys won their first regional tournament, turning back Thompson 56-38 and Oak Mountain 59-55. The Jets defeated top-ranked Baker 80-66 in the state semi-finals before falling at the last second in the finals to number five Enterprise 66-64. The Elkmont girls defeated Carbon Hill in the regional semi-finals 64-23 and were eliminated in the finals by Susan Moore 59-31.

At the state wrestling meet, Athens' Will Anderson won his Class 5A-6A 120-lb. weight class; James Clemens' Sebastian Davis finished third in the 7A 170-lb. division.

Congratulations to East Limestone's Jordan Gardner for his football signing with LaGrange College and Clements' Dylan Patrick, who signed a basketball scholarship with Birmingham Southern.

Spring sports highlights:

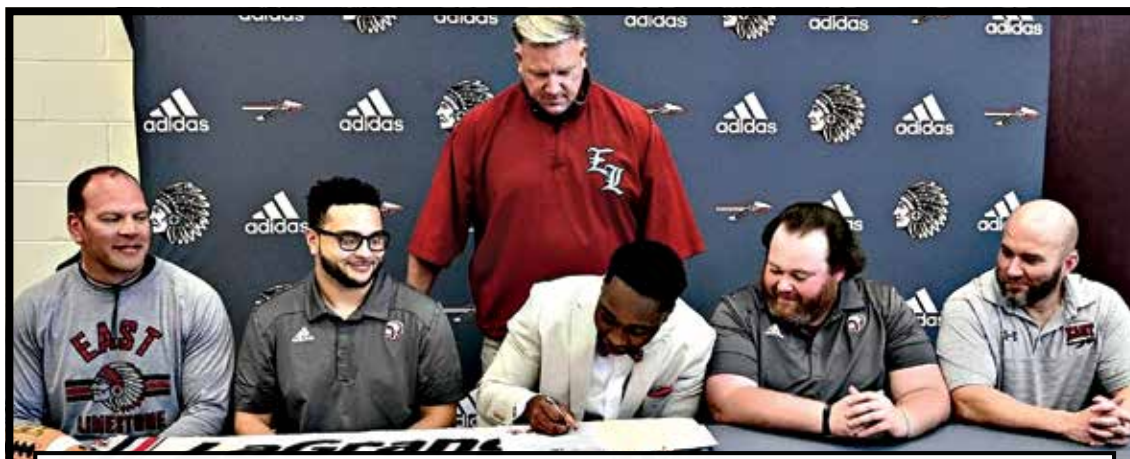
Baseball

- ABS 9, Clements 2
ABS 12, Whitesburg Christian 2
ABS 5, Danville 1
Ardmore 5, New Hope 2
Ardmore 13, Rogers 4
Ardmore 10-19, Mae Jemison 0-9
Athens 8, James Clemens 5
Athens 14, Westminster 6
Athens 10, Priceville 0
Athens 4, Arab 3
Athens 11, Brooks 5
Athens 4, Decatur 1
Athens 14, Austin 0
Athens 7, Arab 0
East Limestone 6, West Morgan 5

- East Limestone 15, Brewer 3
East Limestone 3, Austin 2
East Limestone 11, West Limestone 7
East Limestone 10-11, Mae Jemison 0-1
East Limestone 10, Elkmont 7
East Limestone 11, Lindsay Lane 0
Elkmont 8, Rogers 5
James Clemens 8, Scottsboro 4
James Clemens 6, Hazel Green 1
James Clemens 6-5, Cullman 4-6
James Clemens 8, Buckhorn 4
Lindsay Lane 22, Shoals Christian 0
Lindsay Lane 7, Elkmont 5
Lindsay Lane 6, West Limestone 0
Lindsay Lane 16, Elkmont 10
Lindsay Lane 21, Pisgah 0
Lindsay Lane 4, Decatur Heritage 1
Lindsay Lane 11, Clements 0
West Limestone 15-11, ABS 5-0
West Limestone 8, Randolph 5
West Limestone 4, Lexington 1

Softball

- ABS 18, Clements 3
ABS 13-20, Tanner 0-2
Ardmore 16-23, Mae Jemison 0-0
Athens 1, Austin 0
Athens 11, Decatur 1
Athens 7, Helena 6
Athens 10,



East Limestone's Jordan Gardner signs football scholarship with LaGrange College (Courtesy photo)

- Hillcrest-Tuscaloosa 6
Athens 12, Hazel Green 6
Clements 10, Lindsay Lane 0
East Limestone 11, Lindsay Lane 7
Elkmont 7, ABS 4
Tanner 17, Mae Jemison 6
West Limestone 10, Lauderdale County 4
West Limestone 5, Lauderdale County 4
West Limestone 12, East Limestone 3

Soccer

- Ardmore VB 11, ABS 1
Ardmore VB 4, East Limestone 3
Ardmore VB 11, ABS 1
Athens VB 3, Madison Academy 1
Athens VG 6, Tanner 0
Clements VG 2, Elkmont 1
Clements VB 3, ABS 1
Clements VG 5, West Limestone 1
East Limestone VG 11, Ardmore 1
Elkmont VG 11, Haleyville 1
Elkmont VB 10, Clements 0
Elkmont VG 2, Priceville 1
Elkmont VB 4,

- East Limestone 3
Elkmont VG 5, Hamilton 0
Elkmont VB 4, Mae Jemison 4
Elkmont VG 8, Mae Jemison 0
Elkmont VB 4, Ardmore 4
Elkmont VG 7, Ardmore 1
James Clemens VB 2, Huntsville 2
James Clemens VG 4, Athens 1
James Clemens VG 3, Sparkman 0
James Clemens VG 3, Grissom 0
James Clemens VG 2, Florence 0
James Clemens VB 4, Bob Jones 1
James Clemens VB 7, New Hope 2
James Clemens VG 6, Alma Bryant 0
Tanner VB 1, St. John Paul II 0
Tanner VB 10, Lee 0
Tanner VB 2, Cullman 2
Tanner VB 4, Athens 1
Tanner VB 10, ABS 0
Tanner VB 13, ABS 1
West Limestone VB 4, Madison Academy 3
West Limestone VB 7,

Track and field

At the James Clemens Early Bird Battle Royale meet, first places went to the Lady Jets' Ayana Lee in the girls' 300m; Kayla Willett in the 500m; Madison Ciszczon in the high jump; Tramani Osley in the long jump; Alayna Langston in the shot put, the girls 4x300, 4x1600m relay, and 2x100m shuttle hurdle teams. Athens High's Kylie Rinke won the discus. Top boys' finishes included James Clemens' Chad Coulter in the 150m, Crish Willingham in the 300m, Dylan Dryer in the 500m, Brexton Hathaway in the 1000m, and Cole Robinson in the 2000m steeplechase, along with the 4x300m, 2x110m shuttle hurdle and the 4x250m Swedish relay teams. Athens' Jack Tregoning won the boys' shot put. At the Florence County Schools Invitational, Ardmore's Addison Tiemann finished 1st in the girls' 800m and 3200m. Carter Richardson came in first in the 3200m. Chase Sims won the shot put. The Tigers' 4x10m and 4x800m relay teams also won their events.





From the Alabama Veterans' Museum

Meet SH3 (Ship's Serviceman) Richard Perry "Rick" Roberson Sr.

by Sandra Thompson, Director, Alabama Veterans' Museum

Rick was born May 16, 1946 in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. Rick's family had one of the first television sets in the neighborhood. His favorite show was Victory At Sea and from the first program he watched, he was hooked on the Navy! So right after graduating high school he enlisted.

Rick was assigned to the deck force on the USS Repose. While he was busy chipping paint one day, the word came down that they needed someone in the ship's store office to type and thanks to his seventh grade typing class, the Navy decided Rick would be a great Ship's Serviceman. Ship's Servicemen are in charge of

the retail stores, laundry, and barbershops. When he reported to the USS Iwo Jima, he assumed the responsibility for ordering all of the supplies for the ships next Westpac deployment, even though he was a brand new 3rd Class, "I never had so much responsibility, but I got the job done!"

During his four years in the Navy, Rick was assigned to four different ships. He was on the USS Enterprise for months waiting for "A" (A School is a continuation of a sailor's training beyond boot camp.) He was then assigned to the USS Repose AH16, a Navy hospital ship, for sixteen months. He was a "plank owner," or an individual who is a mem-

ber of the crew of a ship when that ship is placed in commission. He was then assigned to the USS Ogden for two short days and then spent the rest of his time in the Navy on the USS Iwo Jima, which was fifteen months.

Although he had many memorable moments in his Navy career, Rick has unforgettable memories of the sights and sounds of one time in particular. "It was December 1967, and we were back off the coast of Vietnam (it reminded me of the TV show MASH) and for the first time I was not going to make it home for Christmas. I was feeling down when I received a Christmas card from my Uncle Mac; at the bottom of the card he had writ-

ten, "Dick, my Christmas many years ago was spent at the Battle of the Bulge!" After receiving that card, I realized that maybe it wasn't so bad spending the holidays with my shipmates and a thousand Marines!" He says he still has the card today.

After his enlistment was up in June of 1968 and he was honorably discharged in 1970, he decided to go to accounting school. At that time he was working part time in an accounting office, and that's when he decided that office work just wasn't for him. He then started working as a construction laborer and carpenter's helper. He was in the construction business for about 10 years,

working himself up to superintendent/project manager. He then felt another change was in order and went to work for his father in the awning business making fabric awnings and canopies. Rick took over that business in 1983 and stayed with it until he retired in 2006.

Rick is a member of the Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA) and a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW.) He wanted to find a way to connect with other veterans and felt it would be a good way to meet people with like interests, so he became a volunteer at the Veterans Museum. Rick played an instrumental part in our recent move; we could not have imagined trying to move without him! Rick says Athens is "the most veteran-friendly area I have ever lived in," and he would like to see some way to reach out to younger veterans to get them involved in the museum. "If you look at the average age of our volunteers, we are all getting up there?"

Rick has been married to the lovely Cynthia for 45 years; "Cindy" is a Navy brat whose father spent 20 years in the Navy. They have four sons who are all married and three grandsons. Their closest son lives in Hazel Green and the others are scattered in the Pacific Northwest.

Welcome aboard Rick!!!





Slinkard On Success

“F” Is For Fight

by D. A. Slinkard

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

If you have been consistently reading “Slinkard on Success,” you know we have been going through the alphabet and we have come to the letter F. There were many choices I thought about going with, but ultimately I decided our word will be “fight.” Growing up I would oftentimes hear the quote, “It’s not the dog in the fight; it’s the fight in the dog that matters.” I could not agree more with this statement because life is all about fighting to get what we want.

I have found in life that you do not get what you want, but you get what you work for. Many people are unable to achieve success in their life because they want

the millionaire’s bank account with the poor man’s work ethic. It is not going to happen. A person needs to have some fight in their life. There needs to be a hunger for success, and too many people feel entitled to achieve that which they have not worked for.

Thomas Edison once said, “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” How many people fail to achieve success because they were not willing to try one more time? It comes down to the fight in the person’s life. There are some things worth fighting for and there are some things worth letting go. The

true test comes into figuring out what we should fight for and what we should let go.

The other side of this spectrum is the number of people who are motivated for success when they are standing on the shoreline, but the first moment of rocky times they are willing to give up. Life is going to be difficult. There are going to be storms in life. In fact, everyone is either in the middle of a storm, coming out of a storm, or about to go into a storm in life. There is no middle ground, and the only people who do not have problems are the ones found in the cemeteries.

How does a person learn how to fight? How does a

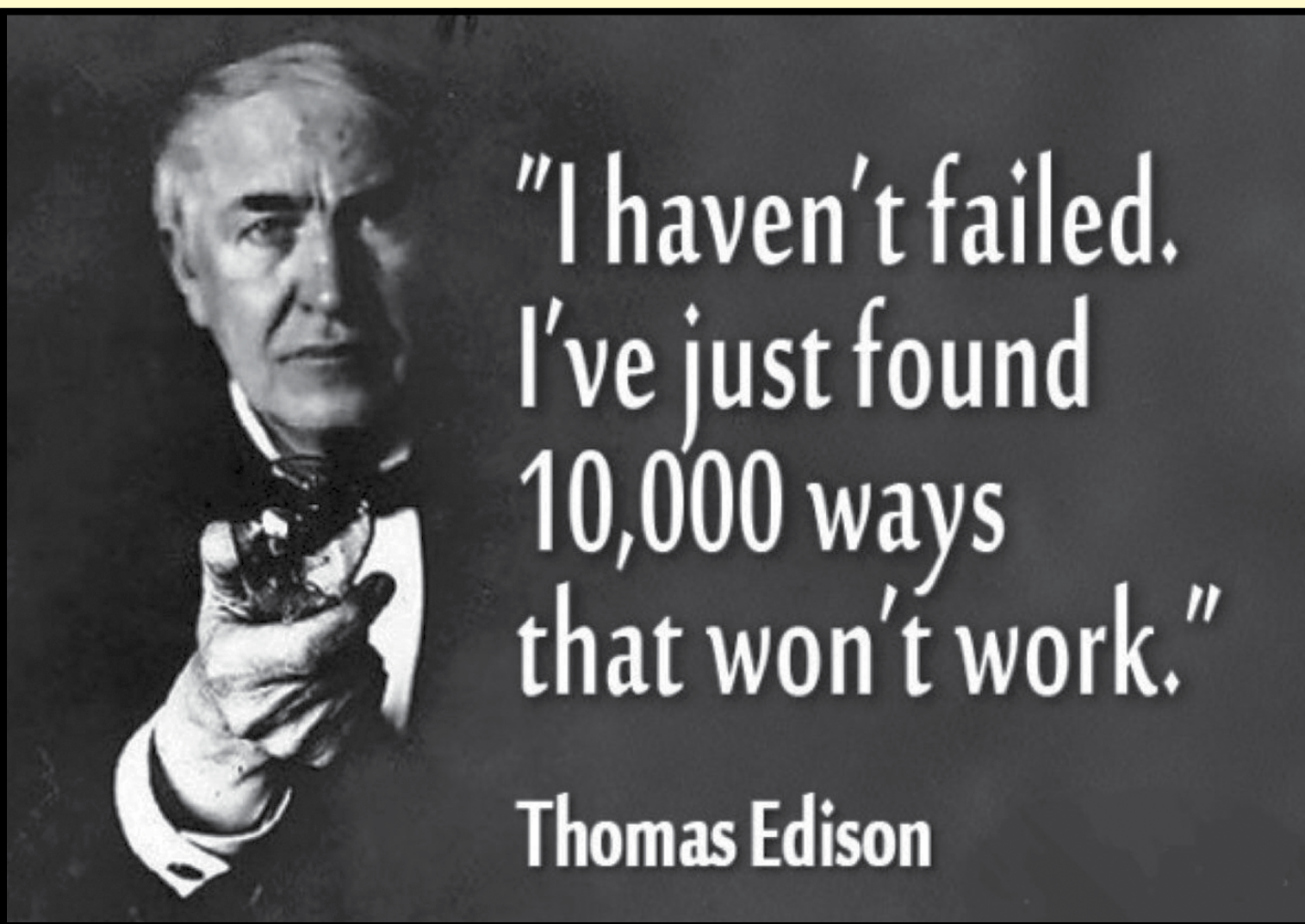
person learn how not to tuck their tail and run at the first sign of trouble? So many people have written about this topic and so many people have their own advice regarding what works and what does not. I have found what works for some does not work for me, and what works for me does not work for others. It is going to take trial and error until you can find what suits you. I quoted Edison earlier, and I find it intriguing that some people questioned him about failing in life and his response was epic -- “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

Edison failed 10,000 times before he made the electric light. Do not be discouraged

if you fail a few times. Another example would be Abraham Lincoln. In 1832, he was defeated for the state legislature. In 1833, his business failed; in 1835, his sweetheart died; and in 1836, he had a nervous breakdown. In 1838, he was defeated for Illinois Speaker of the House. In 1843, he was defeated for his nomination for Congress and lost his renomination in 1848. In 1854, he was defeated for the U.S. Senate and in 1856 he was defeated for the nomination for Vice President. In 1858, he was once again defeated for the U.S. Senate. However, in 1860, he was elected the President of the United States.

I wonder how many other people would have quit after the first couple of defeats. Who else would have said there is no use continuing because they were probably just going to lose? That is our mentality, and it is running rampant throughout our society. We have too many people saying, “Woe is me; woe is me,” and we need some people to grab their bootstraps and pull themselves up.

We live in the greatest country known to man, yet we are on the verge of losing this great nation because we have allowed the fight to go out of the dog. It is time to dig from within and find that which is worth fighting for. Success can happen, but it will take work. What are you willing to do to find your success? What will it take? It is all about the fight in the dog. What is inside of you?





Clean, Green And Beautiful

Mrs. Laverne Receives National Recognition

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

Athens' very own Mrs. Laverne Gilbert has gone national! She was recently interviewed via Zoom by Keep America Beautiful Director of Communication, Abby Turpin. Laverne began cleaning up litter in her neighborhood in 2020, and her passion for cleaning up Athens has continued to grow from there.

Her story began after she retired from Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). She had travel plans that were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Laverne was prayerfully trying to figure out how to use her newfound free time and noticed a ditch in her neighborhood that needed mowing. The ditch was city property, so she called to ask about having it mowed. The next day a city worker showed up with a tractor to mow the grass in the ditch, but he was reluctant to cut it because of the litter that was in the ditch. Understandably, he didn't want to make a bigger mess. She offered to clean it up if he

would cut the grass, and that's exactly what she did!

Laverne then approached Mayor Ronnie Marks about the litter problem in our city, and asked for cleanup supplies. He then sent her to KALB. I remember the day she first came in to our office. Lynne Hart (previous executive director) and I were so happy to meet her, and were glad to provide her with the supplies needed to pick up litter, including litter grabbers, vests, bags, and gloves.

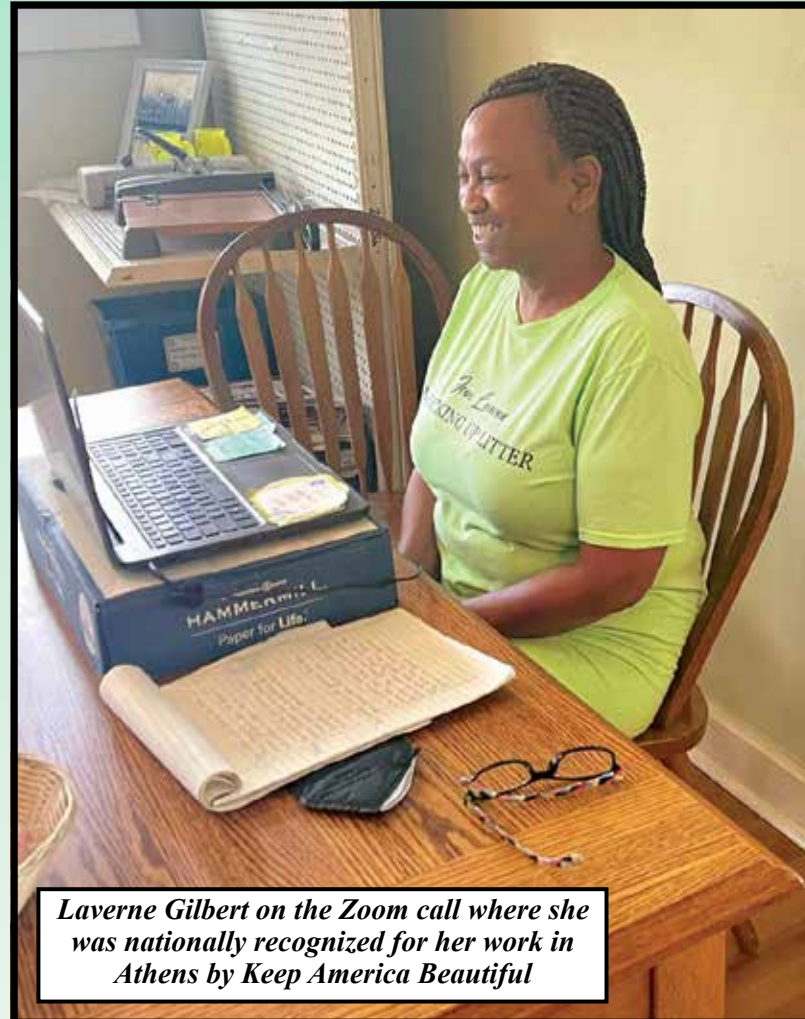
From that day forward, she has been an inspiration to us all. She has recruited friends and other volunteers to help along the way. She has piqued the interest of those who have observed her in action, so much so, that there have been multiple community cleanup events as a result of her visibility in cleaning up litter.

One of those events was named after Laverne herself. Jerome Malone, minister at Oasis: Christ's Church at Athens, along with

several other organizations, hosted the "Mrs. Laverne's Clean My Block Party" in May of 2021. This was such a fun event and many volunteers came out to help clean and to fellowship with one another.

Laverne continues to work hard to clean up our town by picking up litter, and bringing attention to blighted areas as well. She is now a very active board member of the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful Commission. She also attends Athens City Council meetings and speaks to the council regarding problem areas within the city. Mayor Marks even mentioned her in his annual State of the City address on March 10.

We are so happy to celebrate Mrs. Laverne in her accomplishments over the last two years! Her commitment is truly an inspiration to us all. To view her story and video interview with Keep America Beautiful, please visit the Keep America Beautiful website at www.KAB.org. Hover over the "What's Happening" tab, and click "Affiliate Updates." Scroll down and look for the picture with Laverne and Jerome Malone holding a t-shirt that says, "It's Our Community, It's Our Neigh-



Laverne Gilbert on the Zoom call where she was nationally recognized for her work in Athens by Keep America Beautiful

borhood, It's Our Job." Click the picture and that will link you to the article and video.

Laverne's motto is something that we should all take to heart as we think of how we can serve our community better. It's our community. It's our neighborhood. IT'S OUR JOB! If you are interested in helping, con-

sider KALB's Adopt-A-Spot program. Adopt a stretch of roadway and commit to keeping it clean! For more information about this program, please visit our website at www.KALBCares.com or call 256-233-8000.

KALB UPCOMING EVENTS

Elk River Cleanup

Saturday, April 2

8 a.m. to noon

Hatchery Road Boat Launch, West Limestone

Earth Day and Outdoor EXPO

Saturday, April 23

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Athens State University



Become a Fan



(256) 233-8000

KALBCares@gmail.com

www.KALBCares.com



Cooking with Anna

Love Is Not Proud

by Anna Hamilton

By far, this has been the hardest part of 1 Corinthians 13 to write about. My toes are sore, and my pride is bruised, no pun intended. I've known for a long time that one of my biggest struggles is pride. Not in the puffed-up, boasting sort of pride, but in the too-proud-to-ask-someone-for-help pride.

Maybe it is a trait of being the first born, maybe it is a trait of being female, maybe it is just a fatal flaw, but I suffer with being too prideful to ask for help. There have been times in my life that I have been struggling physically, emotionally, financially, but I was too worried about what someone would think if I asked for help. I was supposed to be self-sufficient. I was supposed to be strong. I was not supposed to fail. I am the person that other people come to for help; I

don't ask for help.

Pride is a funny thing. You should be proud of your accomplishments in life. You should be proud of your children, proud of your spouse, proud of yourself. But too much pride will cause you to be lonely and just sad, and no one wants to be lonely and sad.

This article is causing me to step out of my warm cozy blanket of pride and step into the uncomfortable vulnerability of telling you that I am someone who needs help. I am someone who doesn't have it all together. When I leave the house, my makeup is always on, my hair is brushed, my clothes are clean, and I try to keep up with what is fashionable. I put on jewelry, I carry a nice handbag...the outside picture of my life looks all nice and wrapped up with

continued on page 23

Chicken Florentine

Ingredients:

*1 ½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast
¼ cup all-purpose flour (use almond flour to make this gluten free)
6 Tbsp. butter, divided
1 Tbsp. garlic, minced
1 (6 oz.) pkg baby spinach
½ cup chicken broth
1 cup heavy cream
Salt and Pepper to taste*

Directions:

Pound chicken to an even thickness. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper; dip chicken in flour.

Cook chicken, in batches, in 1 Tbsp melted butter over medium heat.

Once chicken is cooked, melt remaining 4 Tbsp of butter in skillet. Add garlic, spinach, salt, and pepper. Cook until




spinach wilts, around 5 minutes.

Whisk together broth and cream. Add to spinach mixture. Cook until sauce is thickened. Serve over chicken.

Swim Upstream

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



I think salmon may be my favorite fish for many reasons, but right out of the gate, I love that they go against the flow! Because the best nutrition or fitness choices may not always be the popular/easy ones, I am familiar with the feeling of “swimming upstream.” However, for now, let us focus on how packed this fish is with health benefits!

Salmon is one of the most nutritious fish/proteins which can be consumed. Wild salmon has an excellent omega-3 fatty acid content. By keeping a good amount of omega-3 fatty acids in one’s daily diet, there will be a reduction of inflammation. This is a huge benefit because inflammation is the base of many health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, some types of cancers, and arthritis. Some research even shows that omega-3 fatty acids have the potential to help slow cognitive problems such as Alzheimer’s disease.

Salmon has virtually zero carbohydrates making it perfect for those with diabetes. It contains tryptophan, the precursor to serotonin, which helps combat depression. This, combined with being an excellent source of vitamin D, makes it a natural mood booster.

When it comes to actually picking out salmon at the store, there are few things to keep in mind. First, salmon can be consumed without fear of excess contaminants, such as mercury, which can be a concern with other seafood. This means it can be eaten multiple times a week without hesitation. Wild salmon is usually best, but some farmed is not a totally bad thing. There is such a wide range of ways to purchase and prepare salmon that it is easy to keep variety while still gaining

the rich nutrients the body craves daily. Salmon can be purchased fresh, frozen, smoked, or canned. There are also several varieties of salmon including king, Atlantic, sockeye, coho, pink, and chum. The biggest difference tends to be texture, which can be a choice that varies based on the preparation and cooking plan.

Salmon is a sturdy fish which holds up to many cooking styles and seasonings. It can easily be grilled, baked, poached, broiled, or pan seared. Since health

is the focus here, be sure to keep your seasonings in that category as well. Using olive oil and staying clear of heavy, creamy sauces is best. Think of fresh herbs, spices, and lemons as great options to add and switch up flavor, maybe even including some fresh garlic or Dijon mustard and honey on occasion. The fattiness of the salmon helps when cooking it, however be careful not to overcook it -- simply cook until it is flakey and changes to an opaque light pink color throughout.

This should keep it moist, flakey, and very tasty. Pair it with some fresh cooked green veggies and brown rice or quinoa for an amazing healthy meal. As an added tip, cook a bit extra and save it for lunch or dinner another night. And when needing a way to cook fresh single servings, the air fryer is awesome!

For more information regarding a personalized general or sports nutrition plan contact me at Prime Performance 423-805-0870.



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Vote For Fred Sloss For Limestone County Sheriff On May 24

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

Petty Officer Second Class, he had a number of additional training certifications under his belt, including having graduated from the US Navy Recruit School and the US Army Intelligence School. He enjoyed living in a completely different culture, the personal growth and increase in his own commitment to discipline, the satisfaction of helping folks, and meeting people from every walk of life and place from all over the world.

In 1996, Fred joined the Limestone County

Sheriff's Department, having graduated from the Alabama Criminal Justice Center. He also holds an associate's degree in police science from Calhoun Community College, which he completed after joining LCSO. Fred is a big believer in setting goals, so from the beginning of his law enforcement career he made it a point to help five people a day in some way. He loves kids, and for years Fred made kids, especially at-risk ones, part of his "five-a-day" focus. He completed DARE training in Mississippi and worked in several Limestone County Schools.

The kids called him "Deputy Fred," and at his campaign kick-off event in November, there were former students with teenaged kids of their own who, decades ago, passed Fred in the halls of their schools as he greeted and protected them. They spoke at the event telling what a difference Deputy Fred made in their lives. There were also teachers and school staff who told from the front of the room how much they had enjoyed working with Fred.

Fred Sloss has been the Chief Deputy Sheriff of Limestone County since 2016. Prior to that he

was our Deputy Sheriff, Lieutenant Director of Youth Services, and Patrol Captain. Throughout his career he has pursued advanced training in a number of areas. Through the University of North Alabama, he completed their public safety leadership and management program. Because North Alabama experiences major natural disasters on a fairly regular basis, Fred is certified through the Emergency Management Institute on their Incident Command System, the Advanced Incident Command System, and the National Response Plan. In addition,

he completed the National Association of School Resource Officers Training Course as well as the State of Alabama's New Sheriff's Orientation Program. After a quarter century on the force, in December of 2022, Fred retired from his current position to campaign for the 2022 election. There are a number of things about this particular election that are historical, the most interesting being that for the first time in more than 40 years there is no one running from the Democratic party. Fred told me, "People have come up and told me that for the first time in their lives they are voting as Republicans." And, that's not because there is no one else to choose from. It's because over the years they have gotten to know Fred, and they have come to appreciate and trust him.

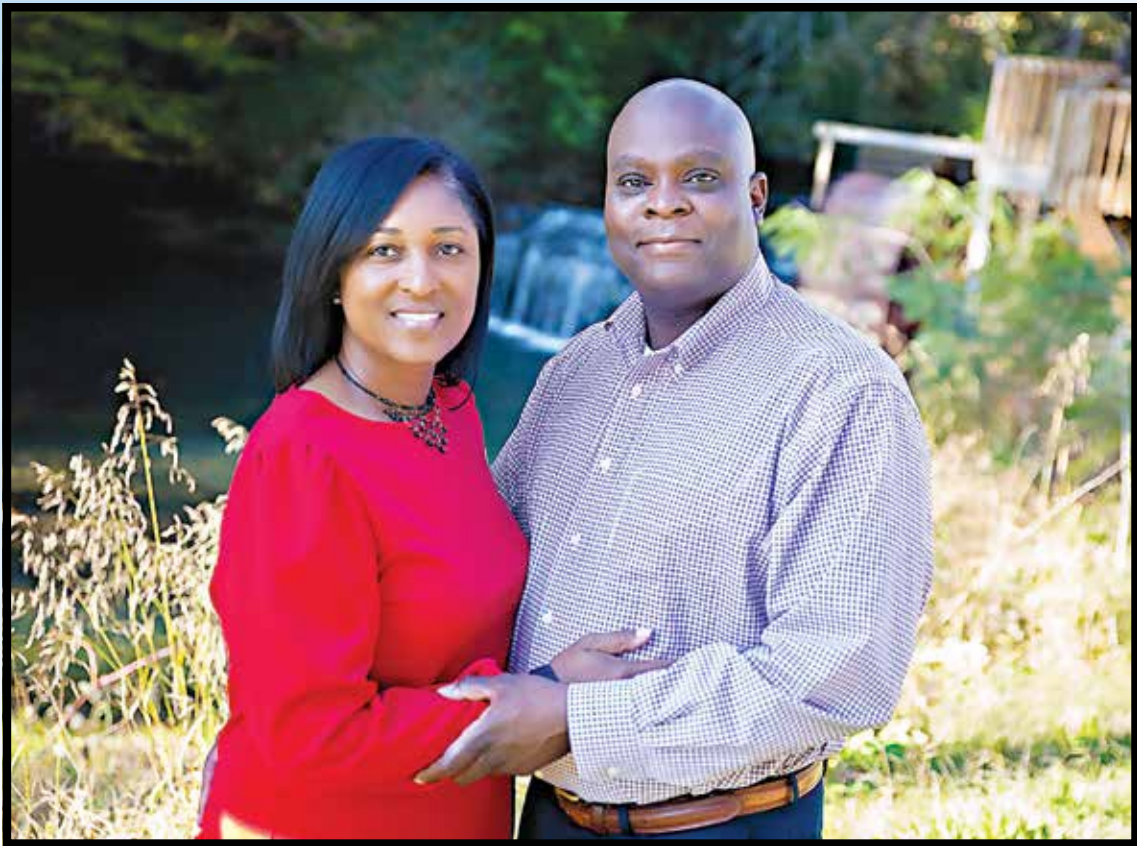
Fred told me that he has experienced mostly positive feedback and support about the prospect of his becoming our sheriff. "In general, it has not been a negative campaign, and I am thankful for that," he said. He also added that the thing that has been the most powerful has been "word-of-mouth advertising." People who have not known him personally now feel that they do, due in part to the "Friends of Fred."



Fred and Marsha Sloss both served abroad in the US Navy

For the last several years of his career with the LCSO, Chief Deputy Sloss was the one who oversaw all of the logistics and operational aspects of the sheriff's office. In addition, Fred has always been involved in the community. He and Marsha are members of New Beginnings Church. He has served as the Vice President of the 20th District of the Alabama Peace Officers Association, a member of the American Veterans Alabama Post 21, the American Legion, and as part of the board of directors of Hospice of Limestone County.

Fred is a man of faith, and has been publicly honored for being a public servant. He has walked people through the aftermath of death in a domestic abuse situation and protected



people from others who are genuinely dangerous. People still tell him to this day how grateful they are for both his skill and professionalism in the trial, as well as his support through-

out the process. I asked Fred why, when there are so many candidates, I should choose him to be our next sheriff. His response was refreshing. He said, "People who know me know what I

stand for. If you want to know about Fred Sloss, don't ask Fred Sloss, ask the people who know Fred Sloss." He has a personal goal as well a professional one: he wants to "outwork the

criminals." In addition, he wants to "make Limestone County the safest one in the State of Alabama."

Fred fully understands that we need to gear up for the growth that we are experiencing in our county, and is looking forward to the challenge. He also said, "My door will always be open." What does that mean? That there will be a communication lifeline between the LCSO and the people of Limestone County, and that there will be an open invitation to express concerns as well as listen to ideas on how to improve our county's sheriff's department.

If this is the type of man that you are looking for as the next sheriff of Limestone County, then vote for Fred Sloss on May 24.

FRED

SLOSS

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Learning As A Lifestyle

Zelensky -- An Icon Of Courageous Leadership

by Eric Betts

Assistant Director, Curtis Coleman Center for Religious Studies and Ethics at Athens State University

Our prayers and heart-felt concerns are with the Ukrainian people and the protesters in Russia. On February 24, 2022, the Russian military launched a major ground invasion against Ukraine. The sad reality about this unnecessary and inhumane invasion of Ukraine is that Russia has a large Ukrainian population, and a significant portion of ethnic Russians are citizens of Ukraine. This alone should cause the Russian government to value the humanity and aspirations of its neighboring country. There were tens of thousands of Russians who courageously took to the streets in Russia to protest the inhumanity of its own government's invasion and occupation of Ukraine.

Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine, born in 1978 during the era of the former Soviet Union, was an actor and comedian. The idea that he would ever become president was unthinkable a decade ago. One journalist said that it would be the equivalent of John Stewart or Will Ferrell being elected president in the US. He was elected as president in 2019 with promises of reforming a corrupt political system. The idea of Zelensky becoming president of a major country is as unlikely as Amy Shumer becoming president of the United States. Regardless of the odds, Zelensky be-

came president. Little did he know that in addition to bringing reform to Ukraine, three years later he would be fighting against the second strongest military power in the world.

Many national leaders, facing similar odds would have fled the country in order to preserve their lives as heads of State. Zelensky has not only refused to flee, but has regularly appeared on video in military style, street clothing. He has become David-like in his fight against a regional Goliath. He has been seen on the streets encouraging civilian and military fighters in their efforts to repel the Russian tanks.

As of this writing, Zelensky has declared that

he remains in the Ukrainian capital. The Americans and Europeans offered him assistance to escape the country. He responded by saying, "I don't need a ride out; I need artillery." Courage is always infectious, and by showing this level of courage, the president of Ukraine has inspired both his population and protesters in Russia. The bravery, perseverance, resilience, and faith of a former comedian president against almost impossible odds stands in stark contrast to an adversary who appears desperate, deranged, and inhuman. As a result of Zelensky's display of bravery, he has unwittingly transformed himself into an international leader admired around the world. Within a few

days, he has become an icon of defiance and boldness in the fight for his people's freedom and self-determination, while his adversary is being viewed in the same light as oppressive European dictators of the last century. He is no longer a mere president of a little-known country, but destiny has made him a global icon admired on all continents. He has become a household name in countries that heretofore had no knowledge of him, and millions are rooting for him and his countrypersons.

His courage has had an infectious effect on the people he leads. Ukraine has allowed women and children to flee, but all men from 18—60 years old must remain and fight for their country. Most

are happily inspired to do so because of the holy boldness of their leader. As a result, even women are remaining to help with the fight. The people of Ukraine, as of this writing, have been able to repel the Russian invaders within their capital city for several days. This temporary success, inspired by their leader, has made the Ukrainians even more determined to stand up for their rights as human beings on this Earth. Let us all pray for a swift end to this unjust attack on a sovereign people and for the survival of this budding democracy in the world. Let us also seek to emulate the courage of president Zelensky as we seek to do good for others in this world.





The View From The Bridge

Here's To Godly, Strong Women, May We Know Them, May We Be Them And May We Raise Them!

by Jackie Warner

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

Every March since 1987, in the United States, Women's History Month is observed and recognizes the contributions and achievements women have made to history, culture, and society. This year's theme is "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope."

There is strength in unity. During this month we have the opportunity to recognize

how women helped shape our shared culture, ideas, progress, and lives. Diversity and inclusion is proven to drive better outcomes in workplaces and in our communities.

During this month, let's celebrate!

- Take time to learn more about women's history within the US and globally
- Identify groups and

associations to support women initiatives in your area

- Shop at women-owned businesses
- Attend a workshop or seminar scheduled for Women's History Month
- Acknowledge and write a thank you to women who have helped shape you along the way
- Sit back and enjoy

movies made by women for women

And Reflect on Godly women who did incredible things:

1. Loyal, like Ruth.
2. Worshipping spirit, like Miriam
3. Obedient, like Mary
4. Favor, like Esther
5. Joyful, like Elizabeth
6. Generous, like Joanna.

7. Forgiven, like Mary Magdalene

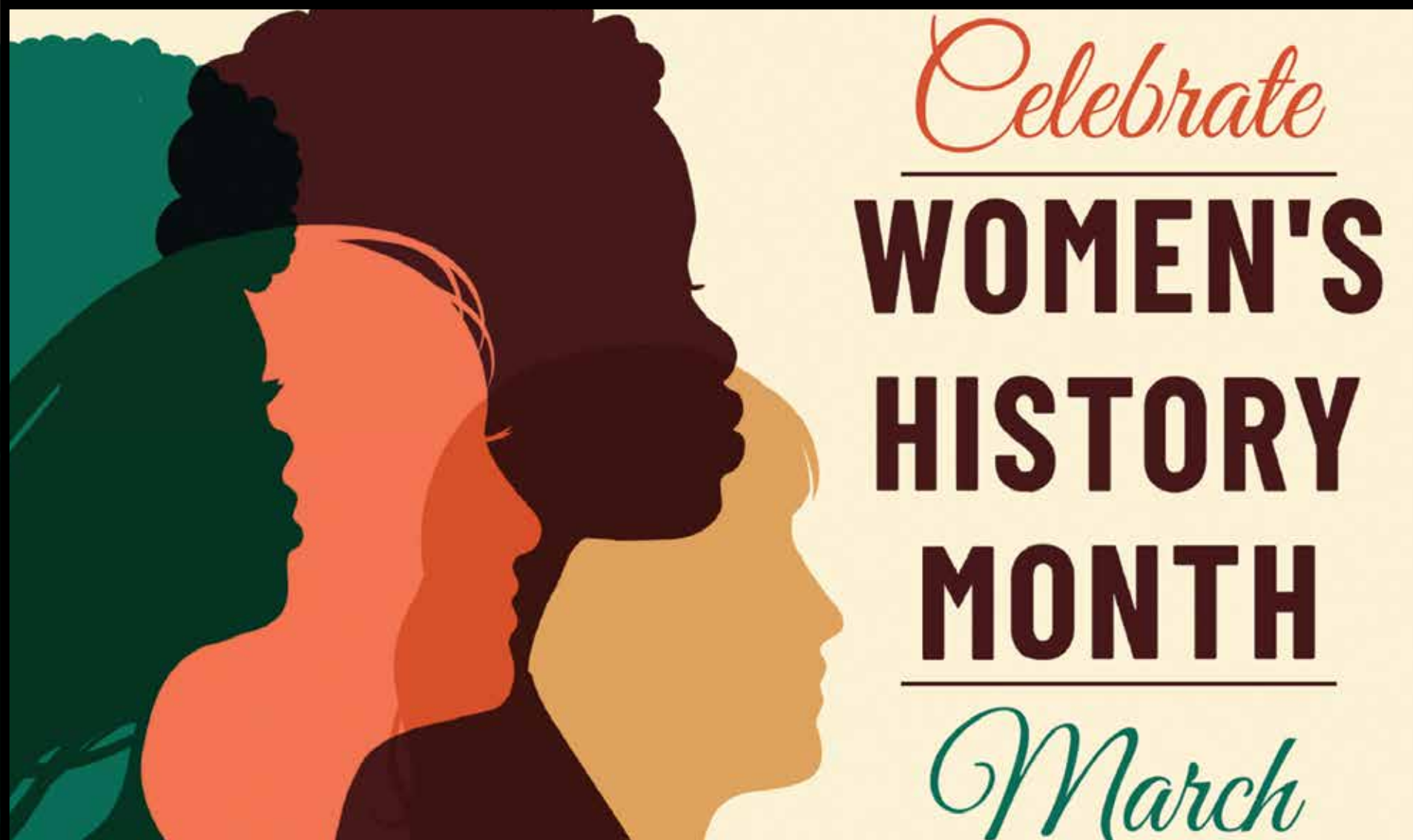
8. Wise, like Deborah.

*Until Next Time,
Be Sincere, Kind and Intentional*

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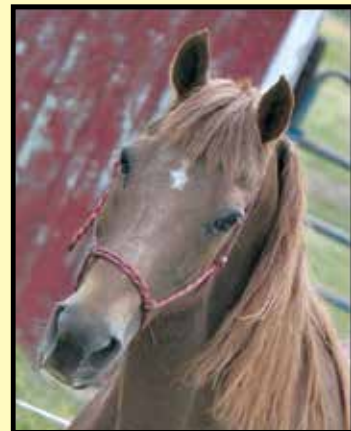
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And The TRUTH Goes 'MARCH'ing On

by Deb Kitchenmaster



Are we at war? What kind? Are we asking questions or are we complacent? Are we involved or are we saying, "Let someone else, there's nothing I can do?"

Separating truth from facts, I was exposed to two factual events that occurred right here within our boundaries. One is where a person was convicted of a crime who was doing her job. A fine of \$500,000 cash bond was set. No crime; not a criminal. Doing her job, which in the big picture exposed crimes against the very people who voted her in for their county. The second one was a businessman with several accounts at a bank that he had done business with for decades not want to do business with him anymore. Had he committed a crime? No. Had he broken any of the bank's policies? No. The bank confirmed

both. They simply shut him down. For what? He had created a free-speech platform talking about the November 2020 election. He talked about voting machines. He mentioned Dominion. He talked about our news. Really! Are these two people exposing THE BIG LIE? People, this very nation was founded on the TRUTH. Yes, we are at war! War between truth and lies. If you recall, I wrote an article about COWBOYS FOR TRUMP. It was the spring and summer of 2020 when people rode their horses across America, carrying American flags, and peacefully talking to people. We have needed the horse during times of war. Let's look at a couple.

Warrior. He was the beloved charger of General Jack Seely (1915-1918). Seely wrote in his book *My Horse Warrior*, "There were many dead horses lying about

which had foundered in the mud and could not be extricated. All of a sudden Warrior went deep into the mud up to his belly." With the help of three other men, Seely was able to help Warrior reach solid ground, but he deemed the event "a narrow escape." Warrior was a Thoroughbred gelding that carried Seely safely through all the major battlefields on the Western Front. He was one of the very few horses that survived the Great War. According to the horse's obituary which ran in the Times of London, "Warrior had so many narrow escapes from death in the last war that the Canadian cavalry used to call him 'the horse the Germans can't kill.'"

Split Ear was a horse that showed us a strong bond between horse and soldier. Johnston recalled one instance in which he and his saddle horse, Split Ear, came upon heavy shell fire: "When

I decided to stay, there was still a lot of shelling going on and I tried to get my horse to follow the other horses, but he would not leave. Two or three times I led him a short way and when I turned to go back, he would follow, like a dog would do. At last, I got a piece of stick, and gave him a couple of slaps and he walked away. When one realizes that a horse is terrified of shell-fire, they must have a lot of confidence in a man, or whatever feeling you want to call it. Guess it was mutual and we did not want to be parted.

Here are portions of a poem entitled, "A Visitor from the Past." Anonymous

I had a dream the other night, I didn't understand,

A figure walking through the mist, with a flintlock in his hand.

His clothes were torn and dirty, as he stood

there by my bed.

He took off his three-cornered hat, and speaking low, he said

"We fought a revolution to secure your liberty.

We wrote the Constitution, as a shield from tyranny.

For future generations, this legacy we gave.

In this the land of the free and the Home of the Brave."

"People of the Republic, arise and take a stand!

Defend the Constitution, the supreme law of the land!

Preserve our great Republic, and God given rights!

And pray to God to keep the torch of freedom burning bright!"

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

Corral Connections

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*Animal B.E.S.T. practitioner
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Limiting Beliefs That Sabotage Your Confidence

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

"If you accept a limiting belief, then it will become a truth for you."

- Louise Hay

The annoying thing about confidence is how simple and effortless it looks in people who have it. And while some people may well be naturally confident -- at least in certain situations -- it's always possible to improve your own confidence. I have found that we struggle to feel confident because of our beliefs about confidence itself. So, let's take a look at three limiting beliefs that may be holding you back from developing more confidence.

By identifying them, we can be well on our way to replacing them with healthier, more confidence-promoting beliefs.

Limiting belief #1: I need to feel confident to act confident. No, you don't. And in fact, that's completely backward. You'll only feel confident once you start acting confident, despite not feeling it. Whatever thing it is that you'd like to feel more confident about doing, it's literally untrue that you need to feel more confident to do it. Have you been thinking about suggesting a new idea to your team but are terrified what people will think? It would be wonderful if you felt confident that everyone

would be on board, but that has absolutely nothing to do with your ability to present. Feeling confident is great, but not necessary for action. No matter how you look at it, you'll only be able to start doing the hard things if you embrace the belief that you can do those difficult things without feeling ready. Remember: Actions, not words, change beliefs. If you want to feel more confident, make your actions more courageous.

Limiting belief #2: I care too much about what other people think. Our culture is infected with the idea that to be confident and genuine you shouldn't care at all about what other people think. That's rub-

bish! Humans are fundamentally social creatures. Our advantage in this world is our ability to form complex social relationships and coordinate together. And we are good at this relationship organization because we have the ability to understand (and sometimes feel) what other people are thinking and feeling. Thus, it is completely normal to care about, and feel anxious about, other people thinking badly about you. What is holding you back from confidence is the belief that you shouldn't feel anxious about what others think. If you lack confidence in social situations, the most important thing you can do is not judge yourself for caring about what other people think! Initially, you can't control whether you feel a little anxious or indecisive, but you can control where you go from there. The secret to being socially confident is the willingness to accept some anxiety at first as part of our humanness.

Limiting belief #3: I'm not as confident as peo-

ple think I am. In other words, your confidence depends on other people's beliefs about how confident you are! Many people refer to this as imposter syndrome. But here's where people go wrong with this. Imposter syndrome isn't a lack of confidence. It's the belief that your confidence (not necessarily your abilities) isn't good enough compared to your peers. The solution is to resist the impulse to use external standards and other people as a yardstick for your own confidence. Instead, allow yourself to be the one who decides what confidence really is. You are the final authority on your own confidence. Don't outsource the job to someone else.

Hat tip to Nick Wignall at nickwignall.com

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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 13)

Love Is Not Proud

by Anna Hamilton

continued from page 13

a bow. Most days, I am able to navigate the world without feeling as if I am about to fall on my face. But there are days that right under the surface of my curled eyelashes and gold earrings is a girl that is falling apart. Her pride doesn't allow her to reach out and say, "Help me." She just raises her head high while she is secretly weeping inside. That need to keep up a certain appearance can be my ultimate downfall and never allow true love to be part of my life.

Today, as I nervously write this article, imagining that you reading this are judging me for not being perfect, I am deciding to ask for help. When I have seen someone else ask for help, I have never thought of them as a weak and imperfect person. I have viewed them as strong and envied them at the same time. My husband is the one person in my life that sees through my tough exterior. He can always tell when I am struggling and helps without me having to ask. I am so thankful for his constant support.

Not asking for help is not a Biblical concept. The Bible is full of examples of people that asked for help and the Lord helped them and provided them comfort. No where does it say the people around them all cast judgement and thought less of them because they sought out help. God did not design us to be "island people." We were designed to be part of a community, to be there for each other, and to asked each other for help. From the very beginning, God knew that we would need each other. In Genesis 2, God created woman because, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Asking for help is also a commandment for Christians. In Galatians 6:2 the Scripture

says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." The beauty of being part of the body of Christ is that there is always someone able to provide help. All of us have different talents and strengths. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 it describes how the church is to function, "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." We are designed as Christians to provide support for each other.

God wants us to turn to him for help. He is our father and desires that we bring him everything troubling our hearts. In asking for help, we can show others the grace of God. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God's power of healing is made perfect by us asking for help. The world around us tells us that asking for help is weakness, it is just the opposite! Asking for help is strength because it gives glory to the ultimate helper -- God.

I will no longer be so prideful. I will ask God for help. I will ask my fellow Christians for help. In my seeking help, I will show the world that God's grace is enough for me, and I will bring Glory to Him. So, here I am, asking you, to help me be vulnerable and ask for help when I need help.

This week's recipe is fancy Chicken Florentine. Even the name sounds fancy! It's the perfect dish to serve your family for super or for a dinner party. I sure hope you enjoy this delicious classic.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

Second Chances

by Mae Lewis

Have you ever wanted a “do-over” in life? You wouldn’t be a human being if you didn’t make mistakes. As we get older, it is easy to look back and see the one choice we made (or didn’t make) that would have changed everything -- the choice to...smoke the first cigarette...stay in a toxic relationship...have one too many drinks...eat too much...not go to college...get married...not get married.

Sometimes we don’t see the consequences of a choice for many years. Sometimes the consequences are so far reaching that we feel like there is no way to come back from it. It’s easy to get stuck in a rut of thinking that this is how life is going to be, and there is no way to fix the mistake.

If you fell down in the dirt, would you stay there? No. You would get up and dust yourself off. But how many of us have stayed “in the dirt” because we think we’ve messed up too badly to move forward?

Time travel isn’t possible, but second chances are. The good news is that “do-overs” can happen. Every day that you live is another chance to get it right. No matter how far down the rabbit hole you have gone, there is always an opportunity to turn around and set things right.

It’s not a mistake if you learned something from it! There are valuable lessons to be learned from our mistakes, but there is no point in staying where you are if it’s not where

you want to be. It doesn’t mean there aren’t consequences. Some things can’t be undone. You may not be able to undo the choices that got you here, but you can change how things end up. It was your choices that got you here. And it is your choices that can move you out of this.

Where do you want to be? Are you making progress toward your goal? Progress means getting closer to your destination. If you made a wrong turn somewhere, then don’t keep going forward. Sometimes progress means that you have to go back and find the right road.

That is the story of the prodigal son. He finally reached the point where he had to give up and turn around. He wanted a do-

over. Sometimes you have to go back to the beginning and start over again. That’s what he did.

That is really the message of the gospel, the message of Christianity -- that everyone gets a do-over. No matter how many times you fall down or mess up, there is always an opportunity to get up again and move forward. So many Christians feel like they can’t admit their mistakes or their struggles because they aren’t acting “like a Christian.”

But we are ALL sinners who struggle with the temptations and weaknesses of life. The mark of a Christian is someone who keeps moving forward and doesn’t keep playing in the dirt.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

“I know all about the despair of overcoming chronic temptations. It is not serious, provided self-offended petulance, annoyance at breaking records, impatience, etc. doesn’t get the upper hand. No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep on picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean linen clothes are in the airing cupboard. The only fatal thing is to lose one’s temper and give up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present to us: it is the very sign of his presence.”

NO AMOUNT OF FALLS WILL REALLY UNDO US. The point is to not

give up and to keep moving forward. As long as we keep moving forward, it doesn’t matter how dirty we get. Keep getting nearer to where you want to be. Even one step is nearer than you were.

Maybe you struggle with an addiction. Maybe you regret a choice you made 20 years ago. Maybe your life hasn’t turned out the way you want it. Maybe you have broken relationships that need healing. You have a chance today to make a change, and if you mess it up today, you can get it right tomorrow. There are ALWAYS second chances.

There is ALWAYS hope.

Every day that you live is another chance to do it right.



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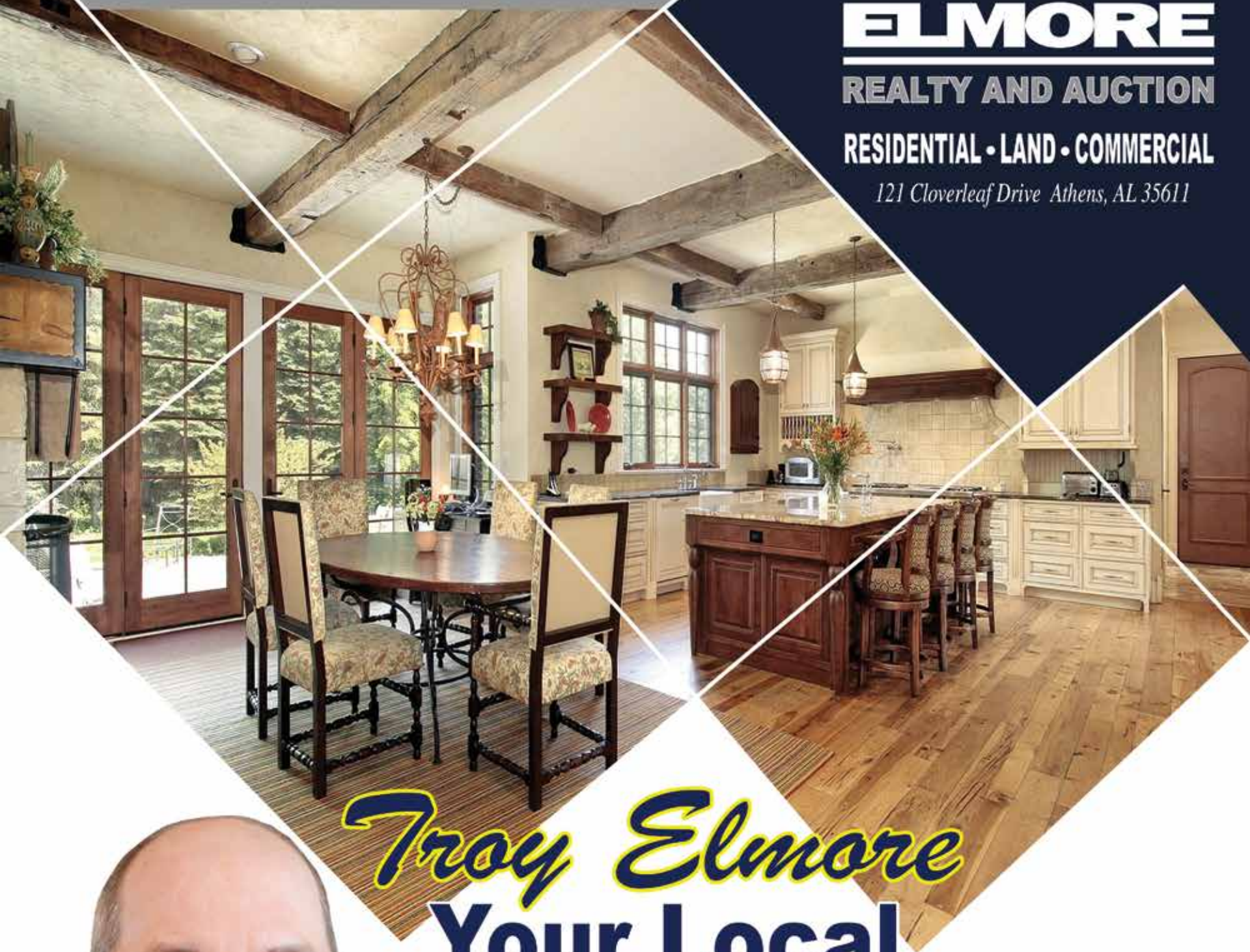
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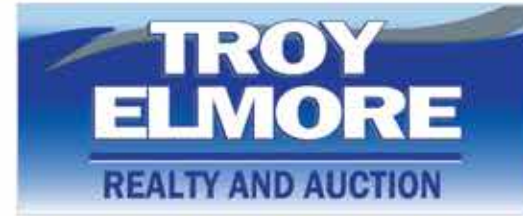


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doing the
right thing,
even when
no one is
watching.



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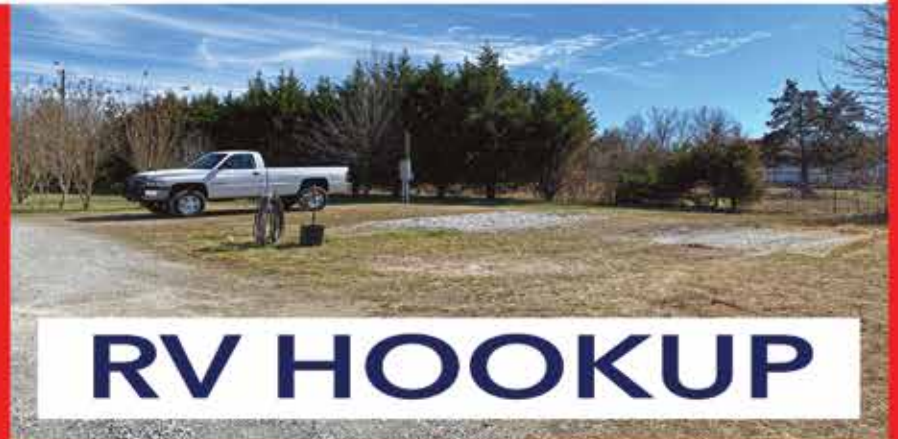
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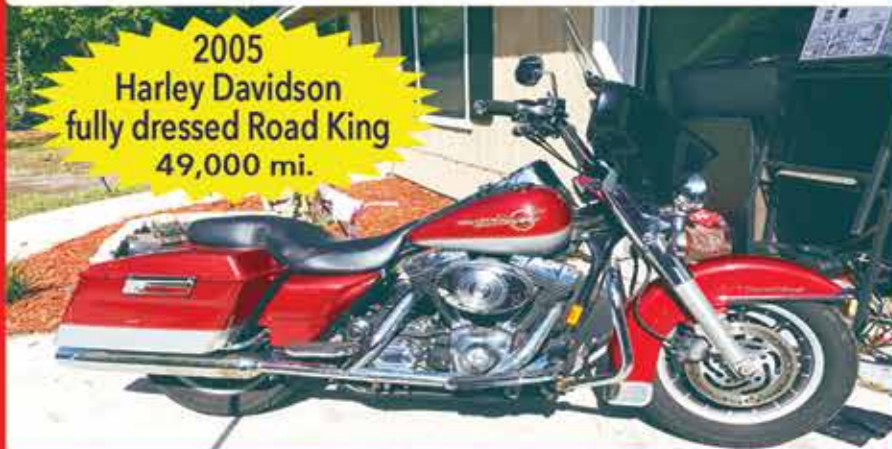
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