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information & inspiration

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Coming In March -- The 7th Annual Wells Clayton Whitworth Memorial Pheasant Shoot

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

June, 2018: Chad and Kelley Whitworth check in to Huntsville Main for a routine C-section delivery of their second child. His name was Wells Clayton; the pregnancy had been normal, no red flags for mama or baby, but Wells had been a bit

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The Whitworth Family today:
Chad, Kelley and their two sons Miller (l) and Tuck (r)

Dottie Jewel Clothing: A Delight And A Joy In Athens

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

When Oxford, AL native Kerrie Greenhaw was a little girl, her Grandmother Dot would take her shopping for clothes on Saturdays, and it was their special time together. Sometimes Grandmother Dot would take her "all the way to Birmingham" so they could peruse the larger department stores, and

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The Greenhaw Family (l) to (r) London, Sophie, Kerrie and Chad

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holiday season*

*** Collin ***

DALY

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Merry Christmas



Happy
Hanukkah
2024



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
2025**



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information & inspiration

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Publisher's Point

“Horton” For The Holidays

Not to be confused with *Horton Hears A Who*, or the venerable Christmas classic, *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* (both of which are wonderful children’s books written by Dr. Seuss, and full of life lessons), this is a different type of *Horton*. It is the tale of an unscripted, delightful adventure that I think is part of the purpose of the holiday season. Mind you, not as intense as the shepherds hearing and seeing angels, or the Magi arriving at their divinely-orchestrated destination many months later (courtesy of a godly GPS system better known as the original “On-Star,”) this falls squarely into the “peace-on-earth-toward-men-of-goodwill” category, and is yet another entry into my personal “Awesome Alabama” file.

Those of us who live in Athens or Decatur are hopefully aware that we are home to some of the most important Civil Rights history of the 20th century. In 1933, Judge James Horton set aside the rape conviction of Haywood Patterson, one of a group of young black men who had been wrongfully accused of rape by two women, Victoria Price and Ruby Bates. In the second trial, Ruby admitted to lying about the incident.

Judge Horton’s bold move to stand for the truth at all costs caused death threats for him as well as his family, the end of his career as a judge, and resulted in a rather remarkable personal re-invention involving a whole new life

raising prize-winning Angus cattle and field crops. Enter the Horton house, that once stood on the exact site of today’s Athens City Hall before it was disassembled, moved to Greenbrier, reassembled, and became home for several decades to the Horton family while Judge Horton poured into farm and family. Mayor Ronnie Marks surmises that his office in City Hall is located where Judge Horton moved downstairs once he was bed-ridden and was cared for by his family at home until he passed in 1973 at the age of 95. Judge Horton is buried in Athens City Cemetery.

In 2023, the antebellum house was donated to the City of Decatur, miraculously moved across the river from Greenbrier, and settled on property in Old Town that had once been owned by the family of Frances Tate. It is now in the process of being repurposed into a civil rights museum that will commemorate the Scottsboro Boys’ trial and the bravery of Judge Horton.

John Horton, one of the grandkids who gathered around the dinner table and learned important truths from Granddaddy Horton, has been an *Athens Now* client, has helped me when I have written about his granddaddy in other columns, and has become a friend. When I found out that Decatur was hosting a historical homes tour for the holidays, and that the Horton house would be open, I called John and



said, “I gotta see where you slid down the banister.” He replied, “And, the snakes in the closet?” “All of it,” I said, happily, and we met at Granddaddy’s new “home” on December 14.

Here is where it gets good. Unbeknownst to John, his cousins were already gathered in the kitchen, and there was an unplanned and precious family reunion that started in the kitchen and ended out on the street. I got to meet the cousins, see all the nooks and crannies, and hear the stories. But what made it the best for me was that throughout the house and then on the street, people of different races, back-

grounds, and beliefs gathered to celebrate courage, Christmas, what happens by following God when it’s hard, and unapologetically wish each other “Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.” I think that Granddaddy Horton and our Savior smiled at the sight of it.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year, dear readers!

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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The Battle Of The Bulge, 80 Years Later



by Ali Elizabeth Turner

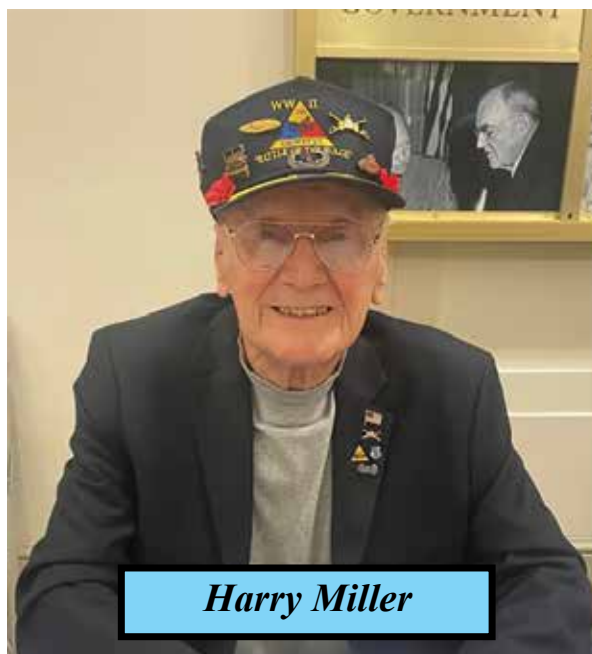
We are smack dab in the middle of the 80th anniversary of what many historians consider to be the most important battle of WWII, often referred to as the Battle of the Bulge. It was fought from December 16, 1944, and ended January 25, 1945. Allied Supreme Commander Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower hated the nickname because it seemed to emphasize our strategic and intel weaknesses. The “Bulge” was the visual picture of the Germans nearly breaking through the line and winning the war, and that was anything but a morale booster.

It was also the battle that scared the bazotts out of Ike due to the dreadful accounts from the front that poured across his desk. First of all, it was

a surprise attack, and started at 0530 hours on December 16. It was colder than cold, and the Germans had the home court advantage. When it ended, 19,000 American soldiers were KIA, 47,500 were wounded, and 23,000 went missing. However, the Greatest Generation prevailed by the grace of God, and this *Soldier* wishes to honor two men who were there and are still with us.

Their names are Harry Miller and Frank Cohn.

Miller was a mere 16 years of age when he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a member of the 740th Tank Battalion, and had been in the field for about a month. The



Harry Miller



Frank Cohn

740th somehow managed to piece together 3 Sherman tanks and a M-36 tank destroyer that they got from a supply depot in Sprigmont, Belgium. Giving a presentation in November, he mentioned that everyone was so scared that “their eyes bugged out.” He added, “And it was just so cold, wet, damp, and foggy. It was so hard to see because the fog was one thing that was really bad. You couldn’t see very few feet in front, but you had to keep your eyes open, because if you didn’t, it meant you were going to get hit by an anti-tank gun.” In addition, the 740th decided

to go into battle with their tank hatches open in case they needed to get out quickly, and this added to the cold. To this day, 96-year-old Miller still takes long, hot showers or baths, and says, “Whenever I have a shower or a bath, I remember the Battle of the Bulge.”

Ninety-eight-year-old Frank Cohn is Jewish, born in Germany, and his family escaped to America in 1938, when he was only 13. Five years later, in 1943 he was drafted and since German was his first language, quickly became involved in intelligence. He does describe his ini-

tial foray into the intelligence world with a bit of dry humor: “I had one week of training, and I became a full-fledged intelligence agent, well-trained.”

Both men continued their military careers after WWII ended. Miller served in Korea and Vietnam, and retired as a senior master sergeant. After the war Cohn joined the Army Reserve, and was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant. He also served in Korea as well as Vietnam, and retired in 1978 as a colonel.

It is estimated that to date there are about 120,000 soldiers who fought in WWII who are still with us, and anywhere from the hundreds to perhaps a few thousand who were “in the Bulge.” Let us give thanks for these men who gave everything that we might be free, and may our gratitude warm their hearts more than a bath or shower ever could.


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Dugger's Florist: Ready To Bring Beauty To Your Holiday

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

When I first met Melinda Dugger in their shop in Tanner back in April of 2011, we were both in a similar situation. I was new to the newspaper industry, and we had just purchased Athens Now the previous month. Melinda was new to the floral industry, and was facing down her first Mother's Day as a florist. Mother's Day is one of the busiest holidays of the year for florists, and she survived. I think it is safe to say that back in those days we felt like our hair was on fire most of the time. For several years, we have been members of Limestone Leaders, a BNI Chapter here in Athens, and it has been a joy to watch Melinda "bloom" with experience, creativity, confidence, and outstanding customer service. She has even taught me a little bit about floral arranging, and I have enjoyed learning from her.

Melinda has a certain skill, which is truly helping the customer figure out what they are looking for, and respecting their budget. Over time, people have gotten to the point that they can say, "Just do what you want, I trust you and know that it will be beautiful." I have experienced that firsthand; when my mom turned 99, I traveled to Seattle to cel-

brate along with my family. Somehow Melinda managed to communicate to a florist there in the Northwest what I wanted, and the arrangement certainly exceeded my expectations. I truly felt that my floral gift for my mom was the prettiest in the room, and my mom loved it.

Melinda received her training at an institute in Louisiana. She chose a school in that state because it was one of the few places in the nation that required florists to be certified, and Melinda felt they had higher standards as well were more professional.

One of the services Melinda started out of necessity during COVID was letting people bring in their own vases. The supply chain had been disrupted during the pandemic, and getting ahold of vases became a real challenge. Melinda let people know that if they could bring in the vase, she would only charge them for flowers and labor. She still does that today.

One of the ways Melinda feels she serves her customers well is when they are bereaved. Losing someone is so very difficult, and dealing with all the details of a funeral can be overwhelming. Melinda feels a great sense of accom-



plishment when a bereaved customer comes in, looks at a casket cover or cemetery arrangement and says, "Oh, if he/she were here, they would just love that." I had an experience like that myself. A teammate was getting close to passing, and our upline sponsor, who lived in St. Louis had tasked me with getting to Melinda to have her make a last arrangement to be enjoyed on this side. By grace, Melinda moved heaven and earth, and I took the flowers to the house, where the daughter was tenderly caring for her mother in the last hours. What was remarkable was that the flowers were exactly what the daughter had seen in a dream, and I will never forget the look on her face when she opened the door. I don't claim to know how all that worked, I just know that "teamwork made the dream work," literally, and it would not have happened without Melinda.

Which brings us to Christmas. There is still time to order a beautiful centerpiece for your table, and Melinda will see to it that it is just the right size. She does live wreaths, as well as silk everything, and popular flowers for the season are ros-



Melinda Franks of Dugger's Florist & Gifts, LLC



es, hydrangeas, and, of course, lots of evergreens and holly. Flowers come from Holland, South America, and California this time of year, and supply is good.

Dugger's Florist also customizes teddy bears for all occasions, and Melinda has a solid bear business that goes all over the world. Speaking of "all over the world," Melinda absolutely loves to travel, and that is one of her goals in 2025.

Right now until the end of the year, everything that is pre-made and on display in the shop is 10% off. This applies to pre-arranged flowers, along with gifts, but not to any special orders. If you are still trying to figure out what

to get for the person who has everything, perhaps flowers would speak beautifully and well, and Melinda knows the language! Come to Dugger's Florist today and bring beauty to your holidays.

Dugger's Florist will be open Christmas Eve until 2 p.m., closed on Christmas Day, and will be open 8 a.m.-noon on December 26.

Dugger's Florist & Gifts

800 Hwy 72 East, Suite A
Athens, AL 35611
256 232-5777

Hours: M-F 8-5, Sat 8-2
duggersflorist@gmail.com

Facebook:
Dugger's Florist & Gifts
Instagram: Dugger's Florist
www.duggersflorist.com



Calendar of Events

2024 Athens-Limestone Tinsel Trail Thru December 31

Big Spring Memorial Park in Athens. This is a month-long OUTDOOR event, and we take every precaution to protect Big Spring Memorial Park, its users, and its animal inhabitants. Athens Police Department will increase patrols in the park the duration of the event. Thank you to Athens City and Limestone County for arranging for temporary power poles this year!

Feed The City Huntsville: Making Meals for People In Need December 21, January 18, February 15

Feed The City is a monthly volunteer opportunity where individuals come together at a local venue to make lunches for people in need. Mellow Mushroom Huntsville, 470 Providence Main Street Northwest, Huntsville. TangoCharities' Feed The City simplified instructions: Before the event: Buy the products listed below for making sandwiches. Aim to bring supplies for 25-30 sandwiches. Don't divide items among group members; everyone should bring everything. Each Person Brings: Deli Meat, Sliced pre-packaged cheese, Sliced wheat/white bread, Yellow mustard, Halos or Cuties, large bags of chips, ziploc sandwich bags Event Day: Arrive between 8:30-9:00 AM; the event starts at 9:00 AM. Wear orange (optional), tie your hair back, and wear bleach-safe clothes. Can't attend? Drop off packed lunch sacks with: One bottle of water, One granola bar, Two tangerines or one apple in a Ziplock, One tuna pouch or applesauce cup. Write/Draw a positive message on the bag. Unpacked food donations are also accepted. FAQs: No registration is needed; RSVP on Facebook is appreciated. Bring as many people as you want. No age limit. We prefer product donations over money.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service December 24

3pm. St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 207 E Washington St., Athens, AL. Join us for a traditional Christmas Eve service, complete with carols, scripture, and a message of hope and joy.

New Student Information Sessions December 30

10am. Athens State University. This session is for newly admitted students to help them get started at Athens State. You may sign up for through the MyAthens Portal link below or at the link provided in your email from the Student Success Center. Registration: myathens.athens.edu/pages/new-student-info-session

Coffee Call January 4

8am - 9:30am. Alabama Veteran's Museum, 100 Pryor St W, Athens. Veterans and their families are invited for breakfast and fellowship from 8:00AM-9:30AM at the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archive. 256-771-7578.

UAH Constellation Series: Amalia Osuga, soprano & Aimee Fincher, piano January 14

Amalia Osuga, soprano, and Aimee Fincher, piano, perform a program featuring the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay @ 7:30pm. By UAH Department of Music. Roberts Recital Hall, 1510 Ben Graves Drive, Huntsville. The duo performs Let the Dancing Drink Your Sorrow, a program exploring the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elinor Wylie. Song settings by Mary Howe, John Duke, Jodie Goble, Joshua Burel, William Bolcom, Julianna Hall, Judith Lang Zaimont, and Eric Ewazen. \$10 Gen Ad // \$5 Senior/Student. Live-stream Access: \$10. Information at uah.edu/music/events

White Azalea Estate Open House & Vendor Fair January 26

Join us for a tour of our venue and meet with some of our favorite vendors! 12 - 4pm. White Azalea Estate, 2659a Jeff Rd NW Harvest, AL. We will be giving tours of the venue as well as The Columns, which is the house on property that is available to rent for onsite accommodations for wedding parties. We are very excited to show off our new expansion that will increase our capacity and allow us to have a permanent ceremony space - that means no more flipping in between the ceremony and reception! This year we are showcasing our decor packages with a theme, Winter Wonderland. We are asking our vendors to participate in the theme, so come prepared to experience a magical time! Guests can expect gift bags, door prizes, food samples, cocktails, and special rates from vendors attending.

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.



Adams Western Wear: 25 Years Of Service

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Kenny and Marie Adams are both Huntsville natives, having attended Huntsville High and the former Butler High schools. They met and married as kids, literally. Marie was 15 and Kenny was 16, and they met each other through mutual friends. This March they will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

They moved to the Ardmore area to be near Kenny's dad, and opened Adams Western Wear in 1999. The western wear shop is for folks who are serious about horses, and a few years later they added feed and other supplies. They are an outlet for Nutreena, and I know more than one serious horse person that is happy to frequent their shop.

Adams Western Wear is one of those places where you need to save time when you visit in order to "jaw a bit." By that I mean, you are not treated like a customer; these people really want to know how life is treating you and how they can help. There are cats outside and dogs inside, and Kenny says with a smile that the dogs rule. The Adamses also own a 12-acre spread in Ardmore, and are themselves true "horse and cattle" people. All told, they have six cows, seven horses, two mules, three minis, and one walking horse. The walking horse is purebred, but not registered. Marie



and I talked horses for a bit. I had the chance to ride a walking horse once on a horse trip with my kids, and that walking-horse gait is marvelous to experience. Their horses include quarter horses, quarter/walking cross, and others, and the cattle are beef cattle -- Charolais/Angus mix. The minis originally come from a European line that goes back to royalty of the 1600s. The Adamses have a slew of kids and grandkids, and their son James Adams and grandson J.J. Roper have helped out at the shop, especially during COVID.

Everyone has their "COVID story," and the Adamses went through an especially tough time. Kenny very nearly died, and had to be on oxygen for five months. The shop hours had to be reduced to 3-6 p.m. during the workweek so that J.J. could help out at the store

with the literal heavy lifting after he got home from school. Marie says of James and J.J., "They helped out a lot, and we couldn't have done it without them. Kenny is back in the store, and everyone is glad."

In 2002, they added on to the shop, which is located at 28100 Hwy 251, Ardmore, AL 35739. It is right across the street from the recently remodeled and re-opened C-Mart gas station, and you will know that you are in the right place when you see the cat dish on a table to the left of the entrance.

What can you expect to find at Adams Western Wear? Just about every type of cowboy hat loved by cowboys, and all of the merchandise is reasonably priced. When it comes to hats, some of the brands are Tony Lama, Resistol, and Stetson.

It's the same with jeans. Adams carries regular jeans as well as cowboy cut, mostly by Wrangler, and some in the George Strait brand. These cuts of jeans were originally designed in the late '40s for rodeo contestants, both male and female, and have more room in the seat and thighs, are a slightly higher cut, and have a slight flare at the leg.



Naturally they're STETSON HATS



Liberty overalls with their distinctive green zipper are present in abundance, as are hunting camo for kids to adults, and waders.

Cowboy shirts as well as cotton shirts for farming, and a few "glitzy" pieces for show riding are on display in the original part of the store.

Now for the boots. They range from classic cowboy to pink rodeo boots. There are sturdy lace up work boots, fleece-lined boots and more. The brands include Ariat, Dan Post, and others.

Carhartt denim jackets, sturdy coats, coveralls, and overalls are most welcome when it is cold.

I asked Marie why, when I have several choices of western wear shops in the area, should I come to Adams? I liked the fact that she paused

for a moment to really think about her answer, and then said, "I think it's because we are personable and treat our customers like family. We like to make everybody feel at home." If this is what you are looking for in a western wear store, make the trip to Ardmore and visit Adams. And when you do, be sure to pay attention to the dogs and cats that are part of the family. They will love you for it!

Adams Western Wear

28100 Hwy 251
Ardmore, AL 35739
Hours: Tue-Fri 10-6,
Sat 10-1, Closed Sunday
and Monday
Phone: 256-423-5868
Email:
adamswesternwear@
hotmail.com
Facebook:
Kenneth Marie Adams

What Makes Ronnie Roll

Gifts For The City

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



We met for the last time in 2024, and as always, it was hard to believe. The year had flown, and there was much to celebrate. I told Mayor Ronnie about the joy of going on December 14th to the Horton House (see page 3) and it was during our time together that he told me that as far as he knew, he was sitting in the spot that had been his Honor's first floor parlor room when the house had been standing on the City Hall spot. The house was moved to Greenbrier in 1935.

We celebrated the fact that in the last year there have been massive sewer system improvements, greenspace projects are moving forward, and the city is fiscally sound. "We have had a great 2024, and expect that 2025 will be, too," said the mayor. While we got coffee in the boardroom, Mayor Ronnie showed me an artist's rendering of the new Swan Creek Park, also known as Make-A-Way which is currently being renewed and is one of the

"gifts" that everyone will be able to enjoy for generations to come.

Make-A-Way is part of the master development plan that is designed to give residents what they say is one of the most important items when surveyed, and that is green space and privacy. Make-A-Way will feature pickleball courts, baseball fields, and more.

Along with Make-A-Way, Sunrise Park on Pryor Street where the old Pilgrim's Pride chicken plant is coming along. "Materials are starting to be gathered, and we are making progress," said Mayor Ronnie. The City of Athens was able to remove the old substation on 5th Ave, clean up the area, and add a basketball facility.

"I am meeting with community members from the Lincoln-Bridgeforth community to discuss upgrades to the Lincoln-Bridgeforth Park," said the mayor. Speaking of upgrades, he mentioned that many people have come up



to compliment the city on the 2024 Tinsel Trail in Big Spring Park. Now the trees are stunning both passersby and strollers on three sides of the park's pool and fountain, and it is indeed beautiful. The city made it possible to upgrade what had previously been referred to as the North Pole Stroll by providing electricity. He also wanted everyone in-

involved in making the Tinsel Trail so wonderful to know how much he appreciated their efforts. Of special poignancy was the tree sponsored by Relay for Life, and those honoring people who had passed this year. He mentioned how he and Quinton had been to Trash Panda field, and there was a line all the way around the field to get in to see their light show.

"Sippin' Cider was packed," said Mayor Ronnie. "It was," I agreed, and

told him a story of doing one of my favorite things in downtown Athens, and that is swinging on the swings at Athens Alehouse before I headed for home. He showed me a winter scene painting he had done at High Cotton Arts, and I said, "Wow! I didn't know you could paint!" He grinned, and there was just one thing left to do, which was to pray. So, for the last time in 2024, we did just that, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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Carissa's Corner

The Three B's Of Christmas

by Carissa Lovvorn

Decorate the house, attend performances, plan family gatherings, organize Christmas events, buy gifts, sing carols, make picture perfect memories, move that crazy Elf, and do all of this while smiling and wearing a festive sweater. Busyness abounds at this time of year. We try to cram every activity imaginable into a few short weeks to make it a festive holiday season. Every year I fall into this trap, but this year has been especially busy. Between our daughters' theater and ballet productions that occurred at the same times, a trip for my husband, an out-of-town concert for myself, and a community event, we had absolutely no room for error.

Cue the unexpected... Several weeks ago, I was hit by a wall -- literally. This wall just happened to be 10 ft. off the ground while I was four rungs up on a ladder. The accident left me with several injuries including a neck sprain, a bone contusion, full-body soreness, and the inability to put weight on my left foot. Are you serious? I had no time to deal with these injuries. There were places to be, things to plan, performances to watch, and all of them required a mommy who could walk!

Not only was this bad timing as far as busyness goes, but painful memories also surround the month of December. It feels like I should be planning a one-year-old's birthday party but instead, I'm left with not one but two

days that coincide with pregnancy loss. Guess what happens when you take grief, add in a lot of holiday busyness, and then add a mobility limiting injury to the mix? You get bitterness!

Life is hard sometimes. It can feel like you are drowning. During those valleys, it is easy to slip into discontentment which ultimately affects your view of the world. I can attest that being bitter is hard to overcome, but there is hope. The final B in my "Three B's of Christmas" saga is a blessing.

After several late nights at performances and a hard day of physical therapy, my youngest daughter, Ella, and I plopped down on the couch. I looked at the Christmas decorations thrown about all over the floor and



the half-decorated tree and thought in frustration, "What a mess! How am I going to get everything done?" It was then that Ella noticed our nativity scene. She ran to gather its pieces, the angel tree topper, and a small lantern. She turned off the lights, found a Christmas carol on my phone to quietly play, and began to act out the story of Jesus' birth. There, in the dark and among my

pain and the mess, I realized what I'd been neglecting this year. Christmas is not about the busyness of the season, and it is not about our earthly feelings including bitterness. It's about our Savior, and the hope and promise that comes from His birth. I pray that you can pause and reflect on the true meaning of the season.

*Many blessings,
Carissa*

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Slinkard On Success

Plan Of Attack

by D. A. Slinkard

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

What do you do when you have so many things that need to be done but you just do not know where to start? Does this sound familiar to you? This is an issue plaguing many people throughout the entire world. They know what needs to get done, but for whatever reason it may be, they are just paralyzed when it comes to getting started on their task. Sometimes life can be daunting like that, but no matter what, we still need to have a plan of attack. We still need to be productive each day, and this article is going to help you be even more productive with your time.

It is no surprise I am a huge fan of the written "To-Do" list because I am just like everyone else who has a ton of things going on in their life. The reality is we all have 168 hours per week, but the difference comes down to how we spend our time. The biggest lie I hear being told is there is not enough time in the week, yet I am able to look at two people who are getting completely different results. The one person does not have more time than the other, as every one of us only has 24 hours in a day. It comes down to the personal decisions we make in how we spend our time each day.

Too many people carry around in their head what needs to be done,

and I personally think this is a bad idea. How easy is it to forget things, especially when you are busy? Let me phrase this another way -- how easy is it to forget things as you get older? Get into the habit of writing things down. When I have a lot of things going on, I know that a generic list will not do, and I need to be a little more detailed. I make my detailed list, and then I prioritize the tasks by what will be the easiest to get done first.

I am motivated by being able to mark things off my list and go to the next item. If I get stuck on one task for too long, I can tell you I will begin to grow impatient, and before I know it, my attitude changes. When my attitude changes, then my day changes and the downward slope begins. Does this sound familiar to anyone? I have found that being the most efficient I can be requires me to be mindful of my attitude. When I am getting things marked off my list, my attitude is on top of the world. When I notice a mood change, it is then time for me to prioritize from my list



something that is going to give me some momentum.

I like this method, but there are other people who would rather do their most difficult task first that way they have it out of their way. The thought process behind this is the remaining tasks will be easier to do because they have gotten the "tough one" out of the way. This approach may work for you, but it does not work for me. My brain is screaming, "Mark something off the list," and so I respond by looking at my list and saying, "Okay, I am go-

ing to do this one right now."

Speaking of "now" – this is another area that hinders people. Too many people want to wait a few more minutes before they get started on a task or wait until later, but I am going to encourage you to get started right

away. The next time you are looking at your list, go ahead and decide right then you are going to get started, and then get started. For whatever reason, it seems human nature will have us watch one more episode of our favorite show or just one more YouTube video, and then we will get started. My challenge for you is to push all of this off to the side and just get busy. Besides, your list is not going to work itself, right?

Maybe there is something you like to do that helps you stay motivated on your task. Maybe there is a certain order in which you like to do things. I would love to hear from you, and my email address is listed at the top. Now, go grab your list of things to be done and get started right away!



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Clean, Green And Beautiful

A Little Mud On The Tires

by Claire Tribble - Executive Director, Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful

Lukas Bartlett Geiger, a thirteen-year-old student from West Limestone, has gone above and beyond to serve his community. His grandfather, Byron Geiger, took him to a spot at the Elk River that was safely accessible and in what is now apparent, desperate need of attention. Not only did he take a day of his weekend to help Limestone County, but he also initiated the project. Let's all take a moment to appreciate this young man and his dedication.

Since the river had receded, Lukas took the initiative to muck out as far as he could to

remove tires that were once submerged. Going as far as he could, he pulled 28 mud-filled tires from the Baker Hill Rd. side of the Elk River. I'm sure you know how heavy a tire is on its own, so imagine adding the extra weight from the mud. Lukas drug each of the tires up the embankment to the side of the road for District 4 Commissioner LaDon Townsend to pick up.

Commissioner Townsend loaded the tires from the side of the road and took them back to the District 4 Tool Shed. Why did he do this? Because thanks to the Alabama Depart-

ment of Environmental Management's Scrap Tire Program, Limestone County residents can take up to 4 (regular car or truck tires) at a time to a District Tool Shed to be recycled for FREE. That's 28 times when someone chose to throw a tire in that area of the river instead of dropping it where it could be properly recycled without costing a dime to them. And let's all be honest; we know there are probably hundreds more out there.

It's important to understand the toxicity of tires and the effects they have on the environment. Tires are a major source of microplastics, which are a component of urban stormwater runoff. According to a report from the Pew Charitable Trusts and Systemiq, more than three-quarters of microplastics entering the ocean come from tires. That means these chemicals are also found in fish and other animals that we consume. Think about that...we consume chemicals like benzene, toluene, and arsenic that leak from these worn down tires. These chemicals can cause more specific health problems, such as cancer, cognitive dysfunction, and organ failure. I don't know if Lukas knew this when he embarked on his mission, but knowing this makes me even more appreciative of his hard work.

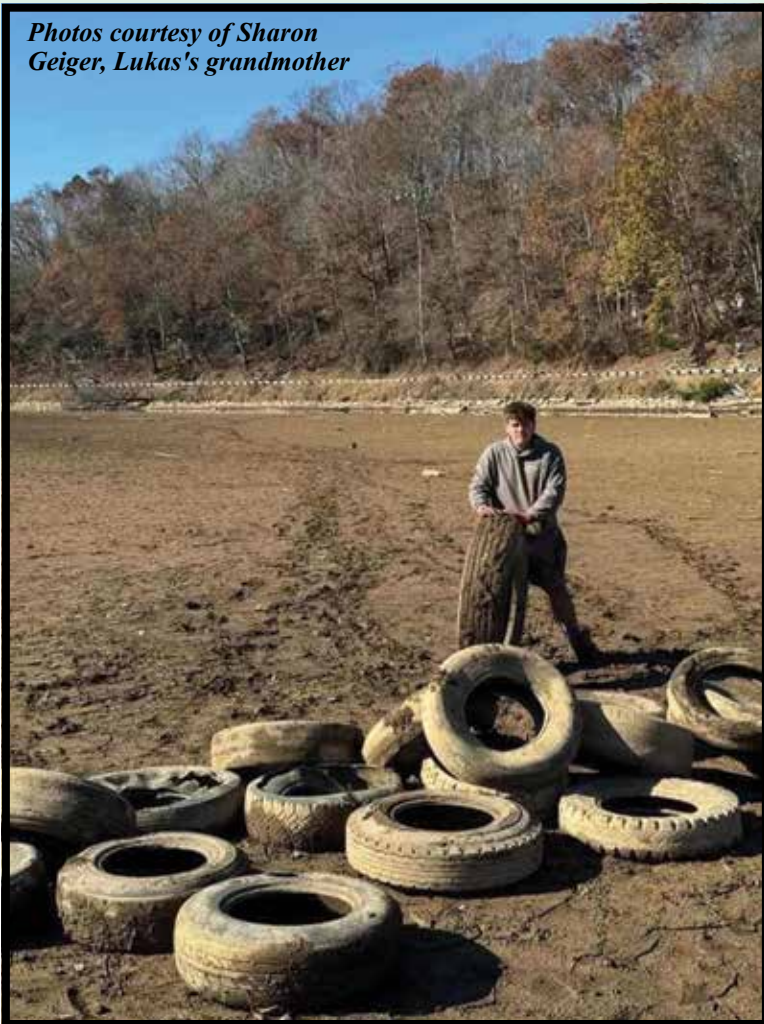
When I made a Facebook



post to brag about Lukas, it spread like wildfire. Josh Hopper from JH Performance Lawn Care, Maintenance & Pressure Washing reached out to reward him for his outstanding volunteer work. I don't know what the reward was, but I am thankful that a Limestone County business was able to reach out to acknowledge Lukas and his mission. We hope

more people are inspired to help improve our community and environment. We are beaming with pride that this young man worked so hard for our community, and we hope it inspires you as much as it has us. If you happen to know him or his family, be sure to say thank you!

Photos courtesy of Sharon Geiger, Lukas's grandmother



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Cooking with Anna

H.O.P.E.

by Anna Hamilton

I am ending this year clinging to hope. The year 2024 has been the hardest year of my life and to be honest, since my brother's death, there were some days I didn't know if I would make it to the next. There have been moments when just making it to the next five minutes is all that I could muster. Thankfully, my faith and hope is rooted in Jesus. Without Him, I would have surely fallen. Hope to me, means "Holding On to God's Promises Every day.

I have been holding on to God to get me through every situation. I have not wanted to get out of bed most days. When John

died in July, I felt my world stop spinning. Without him here, nothing seemed to be right anymore. Without the help of my dear husband, I think I would still be unable to move. He kept reminding me of both John's faith and the hope I have in God's word. The hope and promise that I will see John again in heaven has been enough to keep me going. Hope is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen -- a feeling of trust. When you are a Christian, you place your hope in the Lord. We know

continued on page 23

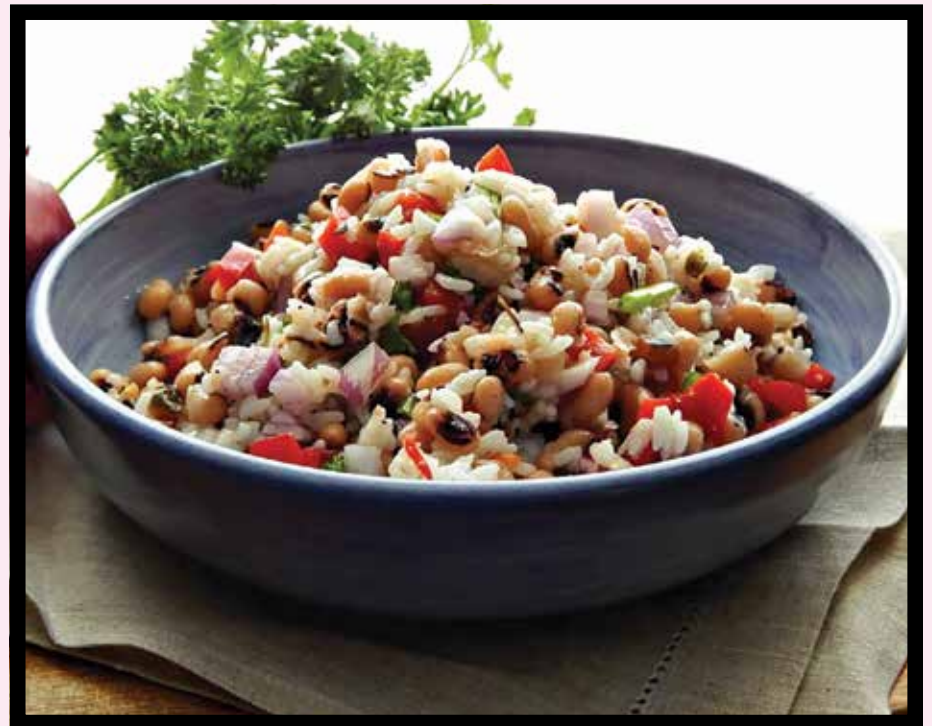
Southern Black-Eyed Peas and Rice Salad

Ingredients:

- 2 cans (14.5oz) chicken broth*
- ¼ cup water*
- 1 cup long-grain rice, uncooked*
- 1 (16 oz) can black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained*
- 1 cup green, yellow, and red bell peppers diced*
- 1 cup celery, thinly sliced*
- ¾ cup green onions, thinly sliced*
- ½ to ¾ cup bottled Italian vinaigrette dressing*

Directions:

Bring the broth and water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Stir in the rice and cover the pan. Reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the rice is tender and the broth is absorbed.



Combine the peas, bell pepper, celery, and green onions in a large mixing bowl. Add the warm rice and the vinaigrette and toss gently to combine. This is great served warm, cool, or at room temperature.

Stay Active During The Holidays With Crossfit

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



The holiday season is often filled with joy, family gatherings, and plenty of delicious food. But it's also a time when many people let their fitness routines slide. Between the parties, travel, and tempting holiday treats, staying active can feel like an uphill battle. However, maintaining your fitness during this busy time of year is not only possible but essential for your overall well-being.

Engaging in regular

physical activity, such as CrossFit, can help you manage stress, maintain energy levels, and counterbalance the extra calories from holiday indulgences. CrossFit's functional fitness approach—which combines strength, endurance, and flexibility—makes it a perfect choice for staying active during the holidays, no matter your fitness level.

Why Stay Active Over the Holidays?

1. Boost Your Mood

and Energy: The holidays can be stressful, but exercise releases endorphins that naturally elevate your mood. Staying active can help you feel more energized and less sluggish, even after big holiday meals.

2. Maintain Your Routine: Consistency is key to long-term fitness success. Taking a break from your workout routine during the holidays can make it harder to get back on track in the new year. Even short

workouts can help you maintain momentum.

3. Support Healthy Habits: Staying active helps balance the extra calories from festive foods and reduces the likelihood of weight gain. Plus, keeping your fitness routine intact can inspire healthier choices throughout the season.

4. Enjoy Guilt-Free Indulgence: Let's be honest, the holidays are meant to be enjoyed! By staying active, you can indulge in your favorite treats without feeling like you've derailed your fitness goals.

CrossFit and Holiday Fitness

One of the great things about CrossFit is its scalability. Whether you're a seasoned athlete or just starting out, CrossFit workouts can be adapted to meet your needs. And you don't need access to a gym to stay active. Many CrossFit workouts can be done at home with little to no equipment, making them perfect for the hectic holiday season.

A Beginner-Friendly Bodyweight CrossFit Workout

This quick and effective workout can be done anywhere, whether you're at home, visiting family, or traveling. It's designed for beginners but can be scaled up for more experienced athletes by increasing the

intensity or reps.

Warm-Up (5 minutes):

- 30 seconds each of:
 - High knees
 - Jumping jacks
 - Air squats
 - Arm circles

Workout (10-15 minutes): Complete as many rounds as possible (AMRAP) in 10-15 minutes of:

- 10 air squats
- 10 push-ups (modify to knee push-ups if needed)
- 15 sit-ups (or crunches)
- 15 seconds of a plank hold

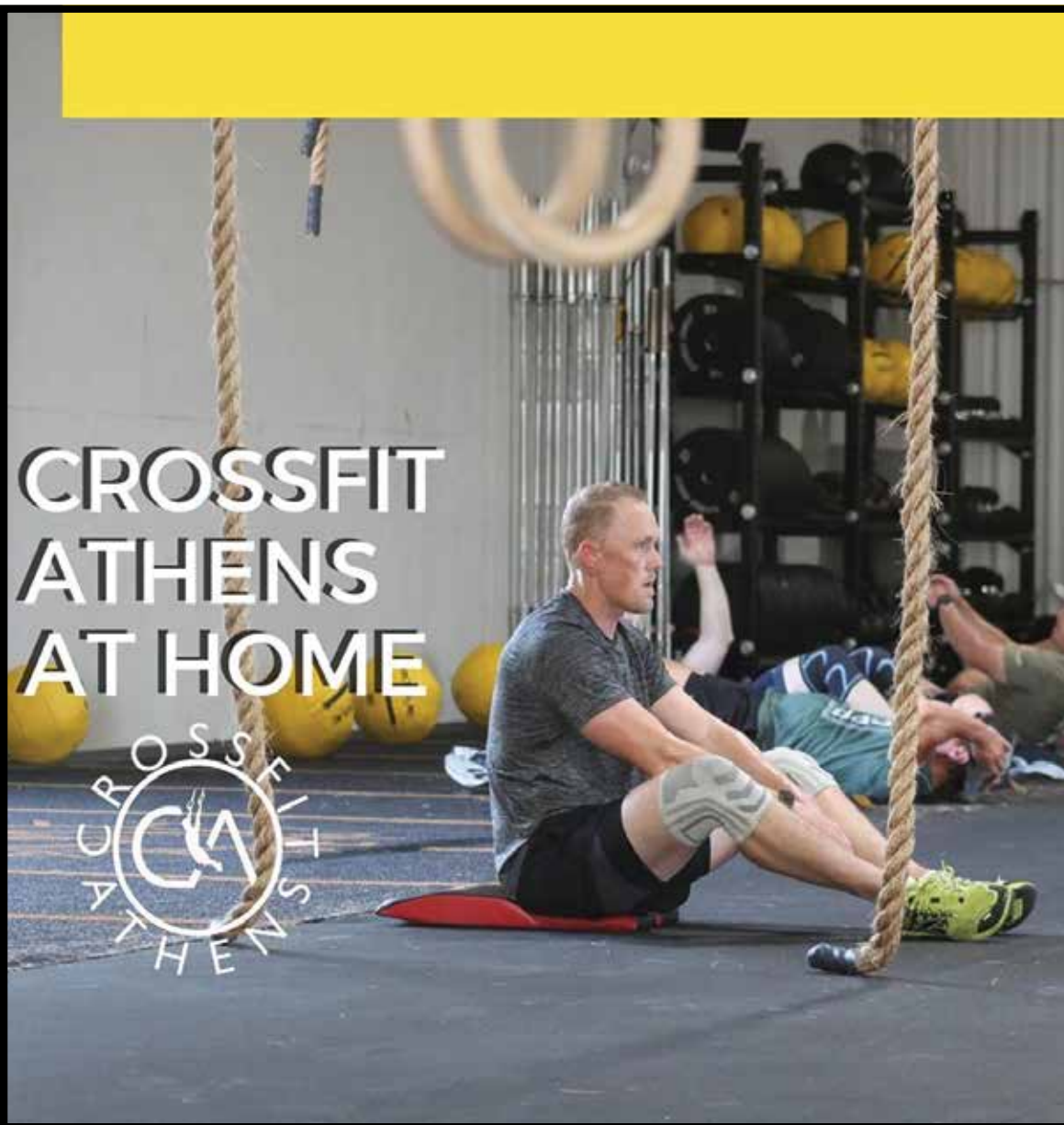
Cool-Down (5 minutes):

- Stretch your hamstrings, quads, and shoulders.
- Perform deep breathing exercises to relax your body and mind.

Final Thoughts

Remember, the goal during the holidays isn't necessarily to make huge fitness gains but to maintain your routine and stay consistent. Even a short workout like the one above can make a big difference in how you feel and help you start the new year on the right foot.

So this holiday season, don't let your fitness take a backseat. Use CrossFit to stay active, healthy, and energized—and enjoy every moment of the festivities!



Coming In March -- *The 7th Annual Wells Clayton Whitworth Memorial Pheasant Shoot*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

quiet the morning he was supposed to get here. No one was worried, and then, for reasons known only by God, Wells quietly passed away within the safety of his mother's womb. He weighed seven pounds and some change, was perfect, and his parents, brothers, friends, and family are going to have to wait 'til heaven to meet, know, and love him forever. Wells has an older brother named Miller, and a younger brother named Tuck. It is important to Chad and Kelley to have their boys grow up in a culture where people give and help in a time of need, and the boys are now a part of this, too.

When Wells passed, Kelley and Chad immediately came under the extraordinary care of professionals, families, strangers, friends, and their own kin. They were overwhelmed by the support that flooded them, including the fact that their family covered the cost of Wells's funeral. So, they decided very quickly after Wells died to start a fund to help other parents and families facing the same thing. "We wanted to give to other families

what our family had given to us -- the ability to focus on healing, and each other," Kelley told me.

This is how the Annual Wells Clayton Whitworth Memorial Pheasant Shoot came to be, and on March 1st of 2025, for the seventh time, members of the hunting community as well as non-hunting supporters will gather together to hunt pheasants in a controlled setting. All proceeds will go to the foundation. It will be held on the Whitworth family farm, and there will be food, raffles, fun, community building, and more, all dedicated to a most critical, worthy, and fragile cause.

The mechanics of the shoot are these: people "purchase" bales for \$750, and the round bales are set strategically out in the field. Only two guns per bale, but there can be four people occupying the bale as long as just the two guns are used at a time. Kelley told me that people also use this opportunity to train bird dogs as well as give their kids a chance to learn to hunt in a designed environment.

So, what if you don't hunt? Well, while the price of a bale includes lunch, you can come and just purchase

lunch, cheer on the hunters, participate in the raffles, and check out the merchandise. T-shirts, hoodies, hats, and more will be waiting for you.

In the beginning, there were about 80 people involved in purchasing a bale from which to hunt. Chad said, "Last year there were over 700 people who came to the shoot," and to date, the Wells Clayton Whitworth Memorial Fund has raised over \$600K to help bereaved families. It is bittersweet to note that since 2018, they have been able to help over 350 families. The Whitworths lost Wells at Huntsville Hospital (Main), and now 13 hospitals in the TN Valley have joined the cause. "We want to help make sure families at each of these facilities experiencing a loss get the support they need," said Kelley.

The Whitworths have seen things full circle. Kelley mentioned, "We have been able to help families we are forever connected to. We have even been able to collaborate with other loss families for fundraisers and events to help those experiencing similar circumstances. We have seen this loss firsthand, while also wal-



king alongside other friends and families suffering similar losses. The statistics for stillbirth are overwhelming, and we are grateful to have a community of people who love and support what we do. "

Since the inception of the WCWMF, options have increased for sponsorships. Now you can donate toward the purchase and release of the pheasants, the cost of the meal, and the auction items

are fascinating. Last year's auction included a gun safe, a King Charles Cavalier puppy was donated, along with a Highlands cow. "You can expect a variety of fun items at the auction for this year's event," said Kelley.

Save March 1, 2025, for the opportunity to help heal the broken-hearted, bring home the pheasant you bag for your family, and have a wonderful day with like-minded people while building memories that will last a lifetime.



WCWMF 7th Annual Pheasant Shoot

Mar 01 2025

**Chad Whitworth
256 509 5259**

**wcwmf@gmail.com
wcwmf.com**

McGhee On Management

It's A New Year Coming!!! Are You Ready?

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

Just about this time every year, most people start looking at a year nearly gone, and the prospects of a new year on the horizon. Even if we don't want to make those pesky "New Year's Resolutions," and would readily admit they probably won't last anyway, we find ourselves thinking about what needs to change in the coming year.

Well, let's try something a little different first! Are you game? Get out your trusty pen and paper.

In looking back on 2024, list at least 20 things that went WELL. Twenty things that made you smile, or brought a feeling of accomplishment. They don't have to be BIG things to be IMPORTANT things. Sometimes they can be things you did for OTHERS that perhaps even cost you a sacrifice of sorts. Challenges met, or successes experienced. Perhaps you learned how to put up with a difficult co-worker and even found they are not so bad after all. Maybe your car DIDN'T break down like it has so many other years. Perhaps your nemesis moved to another job/state. Did



you quit biting your fingernails? Has your child started sleeping through the night...at least sometimes? Did your new boots prove surprisingly warm? When that "stupid" driver cut you off, did you offer praise that no wreck occurred? Are you thankful for gloves when the steering wheel is below freezing? No need to stop at 20 if you're doing well.

Some years it seems I have had to look a little harder for positive affirmations. Sometimes I have discovered that what I thought was a problem was actually a blessing

in disguise. But I had to work through the problem to uncover the blessing. Many life-events are mixed with both blessings and problems. Chinese wisdom then comes in handy. The Chinese use symbols for words more than letters...so new words may be made by combining two "word-symbols" to make the new word/thought. Take CRISIS, for instance. It is made of two symbols – one for the word "danger" and the other, the symbol for "opportunity."

So, a crisis does carry elements of both danger and opportunity. Have

you trained yourself to see BOTH the danger and the opportunity present in each of life's crises? Do you take the situation as it is and think like Jesse Stone (played by Tom Selleck), I will "sift through the words for partial truth"? I have found great benefit from "sifting through" the happening of life and looking for the truths, benefits, blessings, and opportunities in each one.

A NEW YEAR! It's nearly here. No one knows what it will bring. But I do have a couple of suggestions. 1. Pick your "Word of the Year 2025"

and proclaim it daily. I'm vacillating between "Intentional" and "Focus." (Mmmm...maybe a two-word year lies ahead: Intentional Focus!) 2. Make your NY Resolutions few and far between. Then keep them. 3. Put people ahead of projects. 4. LOOK daily and diligently to define and proclaim your blessings. 5. Exercise, eat smart, drink plenty of water, and smile.

NOW>>>>>>> My challenge is to take my own advice and see how well it works for 2025! Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy New Year, and general blessings to you all!

Detri would love to hear from you! How do you develop your EI? Especially your thoughts on how to handle criticism, or problems you would like to get feedback on from others. Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com or Facebook: Criticism Management by Detri. Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismmanagement.com

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Dottie Jewel Clothing: *A Delight And A Joy In Athens*

BY Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

it was these excursions that served to birth a love for finding just the right fashion item in Kerrie's heart. Dot was a stay-at-home mom, and raised her own as well as "everyone else's" kids. Dot was every inch the lady, and hails from the era when women wore dresses, hats, gloves, and never went downtown in slacks.

By contrast, Kerrie's Grandma Jewel was a single mom, worked outside the home, supported and raised two kids on her own; was a strong survivor and also a lovely woman of the South. Kerrie wanted to honor both of these ladies and their legacy, and when the opportunity came to open up a clothing boutique at 127 N Marion St in Athens, Kerrie named her shop after Dottie and Jewel.

Kerrie has spent a goodly amount of her career in the fashion industry, and managed Shoefly in Madison for five years. She especially loves shoes, and will be going to market in Dallas in January to select special clothing, accessories and shoes for

Dottie Jewel. She told me that she loved her job at Shoefly, and didn't want to leave. "I know this might sound strange, but I felt like I was being led to leave. I prayed for two years, feeling that I was supposed to open my own place, but nothing happened. Then I took a weekend where I fasted from all social media as well as my phone, spent time praying, and the next week, this place fell in my lap. I have a 'praying friend' who helped me, as did my husband and other people, and we were able to get the shop ready for Christmas Open House. It was a miracle," she said. Kerrie added, "My husband had a work-related trip scheduled in the middle of getting the shop ready, and even though it didn't make any sense to do it, I went with him. When I returned, 'this' was given to me." The "this" is a whimsical painting by local artist and retired Athens High School art teacher Jennifer Hooper. It features a smiling, bespectacled lion and was a surprise "shop-warming" gift made possible by a couple of Kerrie's dear friends.

I asked Kerrie, "What is the Dottie Jewel vibe?" She



thought for a moment and said, "Classic. Contemporary. High Schoolers clear up to my mom." There are a lot of natural fibers that are soft. There is a whole rack that has glitzy dresses for parties, and my personal favorite is a denim jumper that is shaped by several tucks. It is a washed black denim, and there was a time close to 50 years ago that I had something similar. There are casual jeans and shirts; DJ carries its own line of earrings and accessories. There are pajama sets that come in their own little triangular pouch. The candle fragrances are softly inviting.



There are fun accessories for pickle ball, as well as some select choices of stationery. Among Kerrie's favorites are some custom tea towels that show a cartoon map of Athens. She had them commissioned by a friend.

We talked at length about our shopping trips with our grandmothers; (mine having occurred in the '50s and '60s), and my grandmother also was a true Southern lady who hailed from Louisville. One thing that Kerrie would like to restore is the feeling that used to accompany dress shopping, and that was someone who worked where you were shopping, that was skilled in striking the balance between letting you just browse and functioning as a personal wardrobe assistant; and that genuinely wanted to help. We have become so accustomed to big box stores where you are completely on your own that one rarely has the experience of having a true professional help you make your choice. It's got to be someone who takes pride in their work and has a desire to help you find what will

make you look smashing. Kerrie says she gets such pleasure in helping a customer find "it," and she also enjoys stocking items that are high quality as well as affordable. If this is what you are looking in a women's clothing boutique, then you need to come to Dottie Jewel and enjoy the legacy along with the love behind it.

Dottie Jewel Clothing

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256-262-4082

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*Grandmother Dot
(yes, in the polka dotted dress)*



*Grandma Jewel in the red pants,
and little Kerrie in the overalls*

Learning As A Lifestyle

The Enduring Power Of Discipline Over Motivation

by Eric Betts, Assistant Professor | Course Developer, Hampton University School of Religion



Motivation is often heralded as the driving force behind success, inspiring leaders and teams to strive for greatness. While motivation can spark enthusiasm and initiate action, its effects are fleeting and unreliable. It ebbs and flows, subject to emotions, circumstances, and external influences. Leaders who rely solely on motivation, whether for themselves or their teams, risk building a foundation that crumbles under pressure. Instead, it is discipline—consistent, intentional effort over time—that sustains long-term growth and achievement.

Sacred ancient texts often emphasize discipline as a cornerstone of wisdom, character, and spiritual growth. They recognize that fleeting emotions, like motivation, cannot sustain the depth of commitment required for en-

during success and faithfulness. In the Christian tradition, the Apostle Paul highlights the importance of discipline in achieving goals and spiritual maturity. In 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, Paul writes, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever... I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." This passage reflects the principle that discipline, not mere motivation, is essential to finishing well.

Discipline creates the structure and habits necessary for enduring success. Unlike motivation, discipline is not dependent on feelings but on commitment. It thrives on small, deliberate actions repeated

daily, forming habits that eventually become second nature. For leaders, this means fostering routines that prioritize growth, productivity, and accountability. When leaders model discipline, they establish a culture that values persistence over fleeting bursts of inspiration, encouraging teams to adopt the same mindset.

Relying on motivation to engage others within an organization can lead to inconsistent results and frustration. Teams motivated by external incentives may perform well temporarily but falter when challenges arise or rewards dwindle. Discipline, on the other hand, equips individuals with the resilience to persevere through setbacks and the consistency to deliver results regardless of external conditions. Leaders must, therefore, shift from inspiring momentary



enthusiasm to cultivating disciplined practices that enable their teams to function effectively over the long haul.

Ultimately, discipline outlasts motivation because it builds character and fortitude. It enables leaders to make tough decisions, endure challenges, and lead with integrity, even when the path forward is uncer-

tain. Leaders who emphasize discipline over motivation create a legacy of sustained excellence, equipping their teams with the habits needed to thrive in any circumstance. In the words of Aristotle, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." Let discipline, not motivation, be the cornerstone of your leadership journey.

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Answered Prayers

by Jackie Warner

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



We must not forget that we are all limited! No matter how smart we think we are. We are extremely limited, but sometimes we have to be reminded -- God is limitless. Let that part sink into our hearts and minds for a moment.

Have you ever prayed and prayed and then your prayer was answered?

Well, I prayed to God for a cake. In my mind it had icing and was beautifully decorated. My prayer was answered, and I got a cake...but it didn't have any icing. I almost dropped it on the floor, but it landed right side up, crumbled all inside the pan. Thank you, God, for an answered blessing! Whatever your "cake" may be...family, job, health, mental, financial...keep-

ing praying and when he answers, thank HIM!

Over the years, I have journaled my thoughts from time to time and written down my prayers. I have gone back to reflect on what prayers I have written down and some were answered soon or maybe months or even years later, but, yes, God answered my prayers...in his time and in his way.

When we pray and receive an answer from God that doesn't align with our expectations, it means that God's plan for us might be different than what we initially envisioned. This is often signifying that we need to trust in His greater wisdom and timing, even if the answer initially feels disappointing or downright unexpected.

The Bible verse Isaiah



55:8-9 reminds us that God's thoughts and plans are often beyond our understanding, and what seems like a "no" to us could be a much better outcome in the long run. "For my thoughts are not

your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Even when the answer isn't what we hoped for, believe that God is still working for our good and has a purpose behind it. Keep the faith and hope in God's plan for your life -- while you may not have received the exact outcome you were hoping for in your prayer, God still answered it in a way that was ultimately best for you, through unexpected means, addressing a deeper need for your life journey to HIM.

Remember my cake? Well God's promise to be with us means that sometimes he will be with us through our struggles and difficulties and not always there to rescue us from the situation because the answer may be in the struggle or the difficult situation.

Realign your perspective: Sometimes, our prayers might be motivated by our own desires rather than God's will, so it's important to examine our motives and be open to receiving an answer that might require a shift in perspective

Trust in God's goodness:

Until Next Time, Be Sincere, Kind and Intentional

Jackie Warner, Community Outreach Specialist

Email: thebridge.us@gmail.com

Check out upcoming events: <http://thebridge-us.yolasite.com/>



“Merry Christmas”

by Deb Kitchenmaster



In the midst of changes, even when the world or our circumstances change, there's the good news of Christmas - the message of Christmas is timeless. Christmas is about the birth of God's son - Jesus. How he came to give gifts of love, hope, and joy. This Truth does not change from year to year, “Merry Christmas.”

At the core level or heart of Christmas, is the Spirit of giving and connection. Horses, through the reflections of stories, carols, and decorations, remind us of the importance of these values. The mere presence of a horse symbolizes unity, empathy, and the joy of sharing cherished moments.

How would you handle a moment in time, in the midst of culture, society (humanity)? Through

your loving connection with Elohim (plural name for the One, True Living God); these words come forth out of your very mouth. “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel (God with us). Isaiah 7:14

Can you imagine? Seven-hundred (that's right), 700 years after these words were spoken from a godly man's lips, a virgin by the name of Mary was overshadowed by the Spirit of the living God, conceived in her womb, and spoke out of her mouth, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”

Now would be a good time to look at the meaning of the word ‘BEHOLD’ since a MAN DECLARED, “Behold a virgin” and a VIRGIN DECLARED,

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” The word “behold” is used over 1200 times in the King James Version of the Bible. It means, “BE SURE TO SEE.” Or as I like to think of it - don't miss this! Do you wonder how many people judged Isaiah as ‘a crazy ole man?’ For sure, this declaration tilted human understanding to the max. Yep, faith, trust, and waiting in quietness were certainly required of one's heart. History tells us the beginning of the words “Merry Christmas” dates back to 1534 in a letter from a bishop to Henry VIII's chief minister. Records show a timetable of when Virgin Mary conceived the son of God in her womb in the month of December and gave birth to the Son of God, Jesus, in the month of September. This would give credence to the question as to when life begins...con-



ception.

Yet another man of God declares, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! BEHOLD your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). The Son of God, Jesus, is born from a virgin's womb, born in a place that sheltered animals, his

crib was a manger for a while, and now grown, he's riding on a donkey.

Donkeys are subspecies of the African wild ass. They are known for their ability to carry heavy loads. A donkey is the offspring of a male donkey (jack) and a female donkey (jenny). A mule is the offspring of a male donkey (jack) and a female horse (mare). A hinny is the offspring of a stallion horse mating with a female donkey. Ever been called an ass before? Don't worry about it. Just keep carrying the Presence of the Lord.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant; being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

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Rightside Way

Bad Shopping = Big Blessings

by Phil Williams

make it a “season.”

Charlene and I had a quiet Christmas Eve together last year and decided to open presents from one another by ourselves so that we could focus on everyone else later. I was pretty pleased with my shopping acumen...until she opened some of them. When you've celebrated 37 Christmases together, you learn to read the signs. The slightly raised eyebrows - the slower than usual removal from the package - the effort not to wrinkle the packaging so it can go back in the box it came in.

Sometimes I nail it! But all those occasional shopping victories do is give me a false sense of confidence for future shopping. So Charlene and I worked out system. Every year now she sends me her list, complete with online sizes and colors. It guarantees she will get something she actually wants. I just click the links, and the perfect gifts magically appear for me to wrap and place under the tree like I've really done something.

Of course, there was that one year when unbeknownst to me things went awry. As my wife and daughter unwrapped a string of identical presents complete with colors and sizes. That's odd, surely not, what could this be? What Christmas grinchery is this?

It turns out that scrolling down the list would have revealed that Charlene's items were at the bottom. Being the awful man-shopper that I am, I had ordered everything on my daughter's list for my wife. Awesome!

But I've been known to be headstrong. I like to know I've contributed in some meaningful way to my wife's Christmas joy. That my friends is what we at the Williams' house lovingly call “freelancing”! That moment when I stray from the wish list and take a chance that some other shopping notion might be that present of presents that brings the look to her face that I've seen, oh, I don't know, maybe a couple of times during our 38 years of marriage! A mix of wonder, surprise, and delight! A bit of awe that I could gift something she didn't even know she wanted and now can't live without! I am the man! An awesome husband and a prolific freelance shopper! Stand and be amazed!

In that vein I was delighted last year to find that her favorite online store had a new way of coaching husbands. I noticed the checkout page said, “Because you bought that one, you'll love this one,” followed by actual suggestions of other things that my wife of 37 years would be sure to love! Clothes, shoes, accessories...it was a revelation! I could freelance without really freelancing!

Yeah, about that: the shoes were the wrong size; the pants almost got a snicker as if she had opened someone else's gift; and the blouse, well, she's a Southern lady so she almost said, “Bless your heart,” but she held back.

Three and a half decades of



Christmases have taught me that keeping the receipts is top priority.

But it occurred to me in the aftermath of my freelancing, what a blessing it is that I can be a bad shopper. It sounds weird, but it's true. It is an absolute blessing to know that I live in a nation where the choices for gift giving are so prolific, so abundant, that there are probably more chances to get it wrong than there are to get it right.

Charlene and I are not rich, but I am aware that we are blessed indeed. So much so that I can be a bad shopper. When we were newlyweds, I didn't have the luxury of being a bad shopper. We were poor as church mice and every dime counted. You didn't take a chance on getting it wrong. There was careful attention to sizes, a call to the mother-in-law for advice, and you thought twice before any freelancing.

Money was put aside in envelopes to ensure we didn't overspend. Focus was on the kids first, and we made sure they had no clue that times were tight. Was I just a better steward then? Maybe. But I also recognize that the stewardship of the past has yielded the blessing of grown kids who never went without, and a table that always had food on it, and a gratefulness now

that is far deeper. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

So, yes, I'm not always a great shopper. In reflection, I'll work to tighten that up a bit. But I also take that to mean that I am very, very blessed.

Sometimes bad shopping is a sign of big blessing.

Phil Williams is a former state senator, retired Army colonel and combat veteran, and a practicing attorney. He has served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute and currently hosts the conservative news/talk-show Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 p.m. on multiple channels throughout north Alabama. (WVNN 92.5FM/770AM-Huntsville/Athens; WXJC 101.FM and WYDE 850AM - Birmingham/Cullman) His column appears every Monday in 1819 News. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to www.rightsideradio.org. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of 1819 News. To comment, please send an email with your name and contact information to Commentary@1819News.com.



Christmas is upon us! 'Tis the Season my friends! The gifting and the gatherings should never overshadow that Jesus is the reason for the season, yet those are a grand part of the celebration. I don't believe we offend God in our celebration if we keep the focus on Him.

Christmas was magical as a kid. No school, pajamas all day, a glittering Christmas tree, presents wrapped in colored paper. I am certain I heard reindeer on the roof one year. I was sure of it.

And the wish list...epic. Every year Granny had the Sears Wish Book for the grandkids to pore through. We'd find it, circle it, put our names by it, and dog-ear the page. Granny and Granddaddy lived a simple life on a steelworker's pension in West Birmingham. But one of those selections always showed up specially wrapped.

These days our family is a bit spread out. Our son, daughter-in-law, and perfect grandkids come in from out of state the day after Christmas. Our daughter is married and lives a few hours away. We recognize we are sharing time with the in-laws but that just helps





The Alternative Approach

Merry Christmas And Happy New Year

by Roy Williams

In America and many places around the world, we celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25, which is very appropriate because Christ was actually conceived on that date. Many people don't appreciate that statement but it is verified in the Bible in the book of Luke. With that said please allow me to say that I believe it is perfectly okay to celebrate His birth on that date or any other date you wish.

The birth of Christ is the most important birth in the history of the world. He is our Savior, the one that was willing to take the sins of the whole world upon His shoulders and pay a price for all who will believe in Him. His birth changed humanity forever. He set an example of how we should live our lives and how we should treat one another, and His message has spread to every country on earth.

The odds of Him surviving even the first year was slim to say the least. His first 12 years were mostly hidden from the public, and then He made a spectacular appearance at the temple and even the most religious people of that day were mesmerized at His knowledge. Of course, they did not realize that He was actually the Son of God.

At the age of 30, He made His next appearance and began to build the church for the Christian community. His message slowly spread all over that part of the world and has never been stopped. Although, Satan and his followers tried to destroy the movement, it is the most recognized religion of all time. When studying the Bible, one of the things that stands out for me is that Satan began trying to stop Christ from being born with Adam and Eve. Satan knew that that bloodline was the one that God chose for His birth.

Ever wonder why the Bible was so specific when telling the story of the Hebrew race, revealing who begat whom for generations? In the Garden of Eden, the Bible says that Satan beguiled Eve in an attempt to destroy that bloodline. When that didn't work, Cain killed Abel to stop that bloodline. God appointed Seth to replace Abel so that bloodline would continue. From there you go to Noah where the fallen angels came to earth to procreate with the Hebrew women, whom they found to be so beautiful. That, of course, led to the flood, which God specifically did to keep the bloodline pure.

Then we go to Abraham,



Isaac, and Jacob whose sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. Even in Abraham and Isaac's day, Satan was using every trick in the book to stop the birth of Christ. The bloodline continued through David, who Christ is a direct decedent of.

Do you ever notice in the Old and New Testaments, for God to accept a blood sacrifice, it had to be without spot or blemish? That actually meant from a pure bloodline, not mixed with any other bloodline. Are you beginning to understand why the begats were so important? The birth of Christ was so important because not only was He from a pure bloodline; He never sinned, making Him the

only human sacrifice that could wipe away all sins. And Mary, His mother, had the bloodlines of both the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Levi, making Him (Christ) the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Now, I hope you can see just how important the story of Christ is. He took the stripes, even though He was innocent, so we can receive the healing. The greatest gift is when one person freely chooses to give their life so that another can live. God loved all of His children so much (all humanity) that He gave His only Son who became the ultimate sacrifice to wipe away of all sins for those who choose to believe in Him.

All that is required is for us to recognize that we are not capable to live a perfect life as Christ did. But through repentance and belief in the Son of God, all our sins can be blotted out. In other words, we can be justified, which means, "Just as if I never sinned."

Thanks for another successful year. We are so thankful for all who choose to shop with Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, and online at nhcherbs.com. May God bless each of you with the Merriest of Christmases and the Happiest of New Years.

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Abbie Cooper



Cooking with Anna (continued from page 13)

Mind Your P's!

by Anna Hamilton

that no matter what happens to us in this world, we have an eternal home with God. We have a heavenly Father that only wants best for his children. We have a God that will always make a way for us even in the midst of a world that is crumbling before our eyes.

Not only am I clinging to hope at the end of 2024, but I will continue to cling to it to start 2025. The prophet Isaiah told us, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."(Isaiah 40:31) In the craziness of this life, when our hope is firmly planted in the Lord, we will continue to work and never be discouraged because we know God will sustain us. He will make us soar like eagles above the world that is falling apart.

The apostle Paul, tells us in Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." When we fully put our hope in God, we will be filled with joy and peace. Our hope in Him will overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are fully trusting in God and our hope is in him, that will show to others around us. The world will be able to see who your faith is truly in and can come to know the Lord, simply by your faith in God.

These past few months, when I have needed encouragement and refreshment for my soul, I have had to turn to the Scriptures from both

the Old and New Testaments. They have been such a source of hope and a renewal of faith. I am trying to the best of my ability to live the verse of Romans 12:12, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer."

I pray that your 2025 will be filled with days of hope and love and joy. I know that no matter what the devil may try to use to weaken your faith, when you are firmly planted in the Lord, you will be okay. You will prevail. You will be able to soar on the wings of eagles.

This week's recipe uses one of the South's traditional New Year's foods. Black eyed peas are traditionally eaten at New Year's to bring good luck and prosperity in the coming year. This is a yummy twist on just eating a bowl of plain peas. I know my family loves this recipe and I am sure yours will too.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."(Isiah 41:10)



Space For What's Important: *Holiday Decluttering Made Easy*

by Sonya Fehér



The holiday season is upon us, bringing with it joy, celebration, and often, an influx of gifts and decorations. But all too often, this season can also bring clutter and be overwhelming. Instead of starting the new year feeling buried under a mountain of stuff, why not take a proactive approach to your space? With a little preparation and some quick decluttering strategies, you can create a more inviting home and enjoy a smoother transition into the new year.

The holidays often inundate our homes with gifts, decorations, and other seasonal items. Without a plan, this can lead to overcrowded spaces and stress. Decluttering ahead of time allows you to welcome new, meaningful items without feeling overwhelmed. By tackling common clutter hotspots, you'll create a more inviting environment for holiday gatherings and set the stage for a

peaceful start to the new year. With Christmas and Hanukkah just days away, here are quick, actionable tips to help you get your home holiday-ready.

Involve the Whole Family

Decluttering doesn't have to be a solo project. Get everyone in your household involved. Encourage kids to make room for new toys by letting go of ones they've outgrown. Teach them the joy of giving by donating items to children in need. Beyond toys, consider donating gently used items to local shelters or charities that might appreciate holiday gifts and winter gear.

Do a Pre-Holiday Quick Declutter

Focus on high-traffic areas that are likely to receive new items:

- **Coat Closet:** Remove outdated or unused jackets, hats, gloves, and scarves.

• **Kitchen Cabinets:** Let go of dishes, serving pieces, or appliances you rarely use. Retire duplicate or rarely used gadgets.

• **Bookshelf:** Donate books you've already read or no longer enjoy.

• **Clothing Drawers and Closets:** Create instant space by removing items that don't fit, are damaged, or no longer bring you joy. Note: If you're saving sizes for hand-me downs, or that you hope to fit into or that you think you might need again, move them into bins and only keep your current size and good condition clothing in the closet.

• **Toy Bins:** Sort through and donate toys that are broken, outgrown, or no longer played with.

• **Electronics Drawer:** Recycle old chargers and donate outdated gadgets.

This pre-holiday reset will

create room for new arrivals and make your spaces feel lighter and more organized.

Process Gifts and Reset after the Holiday

Set aside time after the holidays for a focused decluttering session.

- Keep an empty box or bag handy for outgoing items.
- Process new gifts and decide where they'll live in your home.
- Donate duplicate or unnecessary items.
- Reset your living spaces so you're ready to start the new year feeling refreshed.
- As you take holiday decorations down, discard broken ornaments or lights and donate decor you no longer use.

Bonus Tip: Do Some Digital Decluttering

While you're in the organizing mindset, don't forget your digital spaces. Take a

few moments to:

- Clear phone photo storage.
- Unsubscribe from unnecessary email lists.
- Delete unused apps.
- Organize digital files and photos.

The goal of decluttering isn't to create emptiness but to cultivate intentionality. Instead of letting your home overflow with things you don't love or use, you're choosing to prioritize what truly matters. By embracing this mindset, you can enjoy a calmer, more organized holiday season and enter the new year with clarity and purpose.

Happy decluttering, and happy holidays!

Sonya Fehér

Organizer, Coach, Author, & Speaker

<https://spacewiseorganizing.com>



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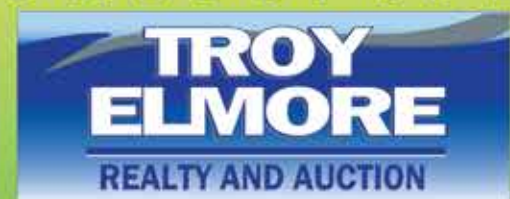
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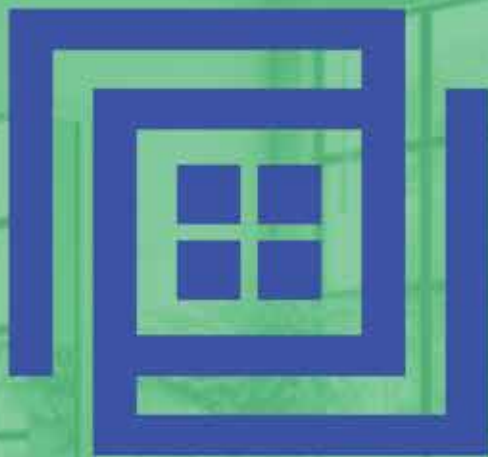
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