

January 03 - January 16, 2025

Athens Now

information & inspiration
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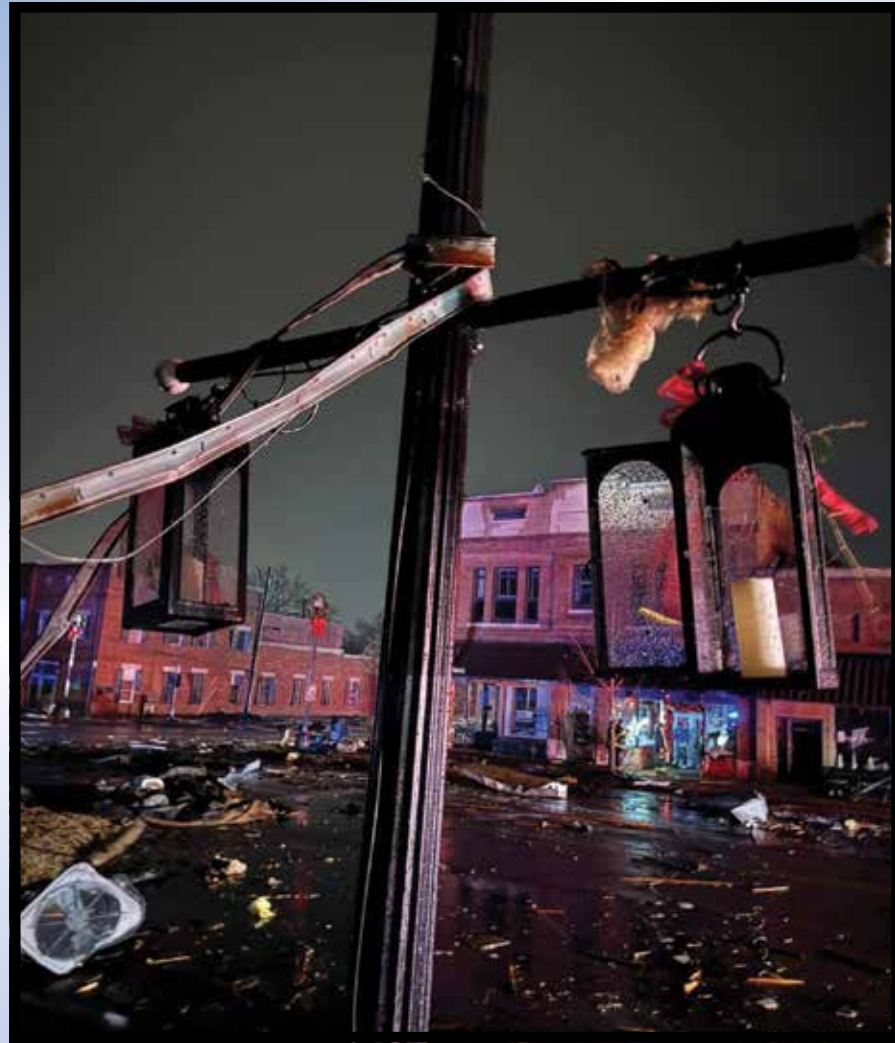
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EF-1 Tornado Hits Downtown Athens

By Tere Richardson

In the wake of the recent tornado's impact to our historic Courthouse Square, Athens Main Street Executive Director Tere Richardson issued the following statements:
12/29/24 – 1:38 PM
"On December 28, 2024, our beloved downtown Athens (Alabama) faced a significant challenge as storms swept through our area, leaving a path of damage and uncertainty. The heart of our community—the shops, restaurants, and gathering spaces that bring us together—felt the storm's

Continued on pages 16-17



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Publisher's Point

**“Coat Of Many Colors”
Keeps My Heart Warm**

A week ago, I experienced the surprise blessing of a whirlwind trip to Dollywood, a place I had never been, and one to which I definitely want to return. I am old enough to remember when Dolly became a star, and while I didn't “get” the wigs, the bling, and all the rest, it was clear that the woman could sing, that she had a heart and faith as big as the sky, and she was proof that with God, anything was possible.

In 1969, Dolly wrote a song called, “Coat of Many Colors,” and it is a story about overcoming poverty, bullying, and reveling in the secure love of a resilient mother as well as one of my favorite Bible stories-- the coat of many colors given to Joseph by his father, Jacob. Dolly's “Coat” is considered one of her best, and she has written more than 3,000. It happens to be Dolly's favorite song that she has composed, and Dolly describes herself as a “Song-teller.” She wrote the song on the back of a dry cleaning receipt, which is on display at Dollywood along with a replica of the coat Dolly's mom, Avie Lee Parton, made for her daughter. Avie Lee made the original one by hand, and eventually it was repurposed. Avie Lee made the replica for her daughter decades later with the same love and care as the first. Here are the lyrics:

*Back through the years
I go wonderin' once
again
Back to the seasons of
my youth
I recall a box of rags
that someone gave us
And how my momma put
the rags to use
There were rags of many
colors
But every piece was
small
And I didn't have a coat
And it was way down in
the fall
Momma sewed the rags
together
Sewin' every piece with
love
She made my coat of
many colors
That I was so proud of
As she sewed, she told a
story
From the Bible she had
read
About a coat of many
colors
Joseph wore and then
she said
Perhaps this coat will
bring you
Good luck and happi-
ness
And I just couldn't wait
to wear it
And momma blessed it
with a kiss
My coat of many colors
That my momma made
for me
Made only from rags*



*But I wore it so proudly
Although we had no
money
I was rich as I could be
In my coat of many
colors
My momma made for me
So with patches on my
britches
And holes in both my
shoes
In my coat of many
colors
I hurried off to school
Just to find the others
laughing
And making fun of me
In my coat of many
colors
My momma made for me
And oh, I couldn't un-
derstand it
For I felt I was rich
And I told 'em of the
love
My momma sewed in
every stitch
And I told 'em all the
story
Momma told me while
she sewed*

*And how my coat of
many colors
Was worth more than all
their clothes
But they didn't under-
stand it
And I tried to make them
see
That one is only poor
Only if they choose to be
Now I know we had no
money
But I was rich as I could
be
In my coat of many
colors
My momma made for me
Made just for me
I am grateful to have got-
ten a glimpse of pure love
that has warmed my heart,
and I wish all of you a
New Year that is full of the
same.*

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Operation Grow - Vets And Veggies

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



When God made Adam and Eve the tenders of the Greatest Garden of All Time, there was no such thing as PTSD; that is, until the Great Deceiver appeared and put the original couple...and the rest of us...in a place where we would need a savior as well as the therapy of getting our hands dirty in literal soil.

Now, if you don't consider the above account to be actual or factual, you cannot deny that growing stuff from the ground is a good thing; so good, in fact, that several states have ingenious programs designed just for veterans that involve farming, beekeeping and more. They have names such as Armed to Farm, From Farm to Fork, and AgrAbility. In the state of Alabama, the name of the program is simply called



Operation Grow.

From their website:

Operation Grow, in partnership with the Alabama Department of AG and Industries, provides special emphasis on the training needs of military veterans interested in agriculture for health and employment benefits. Alabama Beginning

Farmer is led by the Alabama Extension commercial horticulture team. Overall, Operation Grow supports grassroots educational and networking efforts that are inclusive of all veterans and their families with universal access to information and resources.

There are a number of benefits for the veterans, their families, and the communities that participate. Not in order of importance, but near and dear to my heart is the therapeutic aspect of farming. There is a substance found in soil that has found to be a natural anti-depressant and helps to release serotonin. It is called *mycobacteri-*

BEGINNING VETERAN FARMER
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ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE & INDUSTRIES

um vaccae, and even the State of Nebraska's Extension Service will tell you "playing in the dirt" is good for you. Then there is good ol' fashioned sweat. Perspiration helps your body detox, which is why people pay for saunas. Sunlight, of course, has also been proven to help with depression and a number of maladies. All of these can be of benefit to veterans whether or not they are struggling with PTSD, re-entry, or transitioning back into civilian life. There is a community of veterans-turned-farmers that bond not only over their former military service, but in the various "boot camps" and train-

ing programs where they are grunts together once again. In the program that is sponsored by the State of North Carolina, to date seven veteran suicides have been prevented.

The economic benefits to both veterans as well as consumers are substantial. Training is free, there are loans and grants of all kinds for everything from land to equipment. If you are interested in becoming an organic farmer, there is a specific training program for making that transition. If you are interested in beekeeping, you can learn how to "grow" honey. It also needs to be remembered that many farmers are reaching retirement age, and even with all of our technological advances, we still need folks out in the field, literally.

All in all, this is a good thing for veterans, their families, and us. If you are interested in more information, go to <https://www.operationgrowinc.org>, or on Facebook to Alabama Operation Grow.

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Year-End Destruction At The Alabama Veterans Museum

by Yvonne Dempsey

The end of December 2024 was eventful for Athens, Alabama. An EF-1 tornado brought devastation to our beautiful city. Lasting just under 5 minutes, the tornado unleashed its fury shortly after 11 p. m on Saturday, December 28, damaging or destroying buildings, uprooting trees, and destroying much along its path. Thankfully, no one was injured, but the storm's impact on our historic Courthouse Square and the Alabama Veterans Museum was a sad ending for the year. But in the true spirit of small-town America, within minutes of the tornado leaving the area, people emerged and began the

cleanup.

The new day dawning brought the extent of the damage to light. Around the Square, trees were down, some storefront windows were blown in, roofs ripped off or peeled back, water and wind damage to the contents of businesses. But in the strange manner of tornadoes, Christmas decorations and awnings in adjacent buildings were left unscathed.

Sadly, the Alabama Veterans Museum complex suffered damage. In the dark of night, it was hard to see just how much damage had been done, but the sight of the area in the daylight was shocking. Most noticeable at first glance,



besides the large pieces of tin and debris everywhere, was the damage to the new military park which recently had been completed and was dedicated on November 2. It was heartbreaking to see what Mother Nature had done to our lovely park.

The helicopter that was poised over the south end of the park was blown off its pedestal, landed onto the neighbor's driveway, and shattered; so it had to get moved. The fence was mangled and on the ground, the flagpoles are bent, some of the landscaping uprooted, and dirt and debris covering the ground. The monuments, benches, and missile launcher seem to be undamaged, just very dirty.

Unfortunately, the brick warehouse across the street upon which our mural was painted was completely destroyed.

The depot building across the parking lot that had been our first museum had major roof damage and windows blown out.

Our current museum building did sustain damage, mostly confined to the event venue where the roof and south wall was damaged and the large roll-up door was blown down and crumpled. A temporary closure is in place and the area is secured. The military vehicles and the missiles in front of the building sustained some damage. The outer layers of the double-paned glass doors leading into the museum foyer were shattered but the inside layer of glass is unbroken. Thankfully, there is absolutely no damage to any of the contents and displays in the museum side of the building! The damage truly could have

been so much worse.

We are thankful for all the offers to help clean up the debris, but the County and City have tirelessly worked to get it done for us. We have been touched by the outpouring of love and concern from our community. We are truly blessed and appreciate everyone's generous support of our veterans and our museum. We hope that the museum building repairs can be made soon and that we can resume Coffee Call on February 1.

For everyone who has been asking about helping, your monetary donations are always greatly appreciated. The museum is closed until it is deemed safe, but your tax-deductible donations can be mailed to: Alabama Veterans Museum, 114 W. Pryor St., Athens, AL 35611.



Calendar of Events

Coffee Call - **Cancelled**

The January 4th Coffee Call at the Alabama Veterans Museum has been canceled due to tornado damage. We hope to resume events at the museum as soon as the damage is repaired.

VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 Meeting **Cancelled**

The monthly VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting scheduled for Monday, January 6, has been canceled. The next meeting is planned for Monday, February 3, 2025.

Bradley Walker On Tour January 5

Berea Baptist Church, 16779 Lucas Ferry Rd, Athens, AL. 6pm. Join us for a night of worship, fellowship, and music by Bradley Walker.

Athens-Limestone County Public Library Meeting January 6

The Board of Trustees will have a special called meeting on Monday, January 6th at 4:00 pm. The meeting will take place in the Community Room. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the creation of a joint City-County Library Board. This meeting is open to the public in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Athens-Limestone County Public Library, 603 S. Jefferson St, Athens

Gettin' Dirty At The Library: Tinctures And Medicinal Plants January 14

11am-12pm. Presented by BluButterfly Botanicals by Rachael Bailes. Rachael is a passionate health care provider and nutritional wellness advocate. She has curated a haven of nature's finest remedies to elevate your journey towards vibrant health and balance. She specializes in tinctures combining functional mushrooms and herbalism. Free and open to the public. Athens-Limestone Public Library, 603 Jefferson Street, Athens.

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. \$10 Gen Ad // \$5 Senior/Student. Live-stream Access: \$10. Information at uah.edu/music/events

In Concert: Kenny & Amanda Smith January 16

7pm. McCandless Hall, Athens State University. Winners of the IBMA's prestigious "Emerging Artist of the Year" award in 2003, the Kenny and Amanda Smith Band combines gutsy, heartfelt vocals, brilliant instrumental talents, and a powerful, contemporary sense of song choice and arrangement into one of the most compelling new sounds in bluegrass today. This event is brought to you by the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention Steering Committee, the Livingston Concert/Lecture Series, and Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, with funding made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts, a federal agency. Tickets \$15, kids under 18 are \$5.

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.

2025 Home & Garden Show Save The Date! February 15-16

Athens Middle School. Sat 8am-4pm. Sun 12pm-4pm. More details to come.

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.



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Start 2025 off bright!

Saturday, January 11th, 2025

Board Room

10 am - 12 pm

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What Makes Ronnie Roll

“We Are Athens. We Are Together.”

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



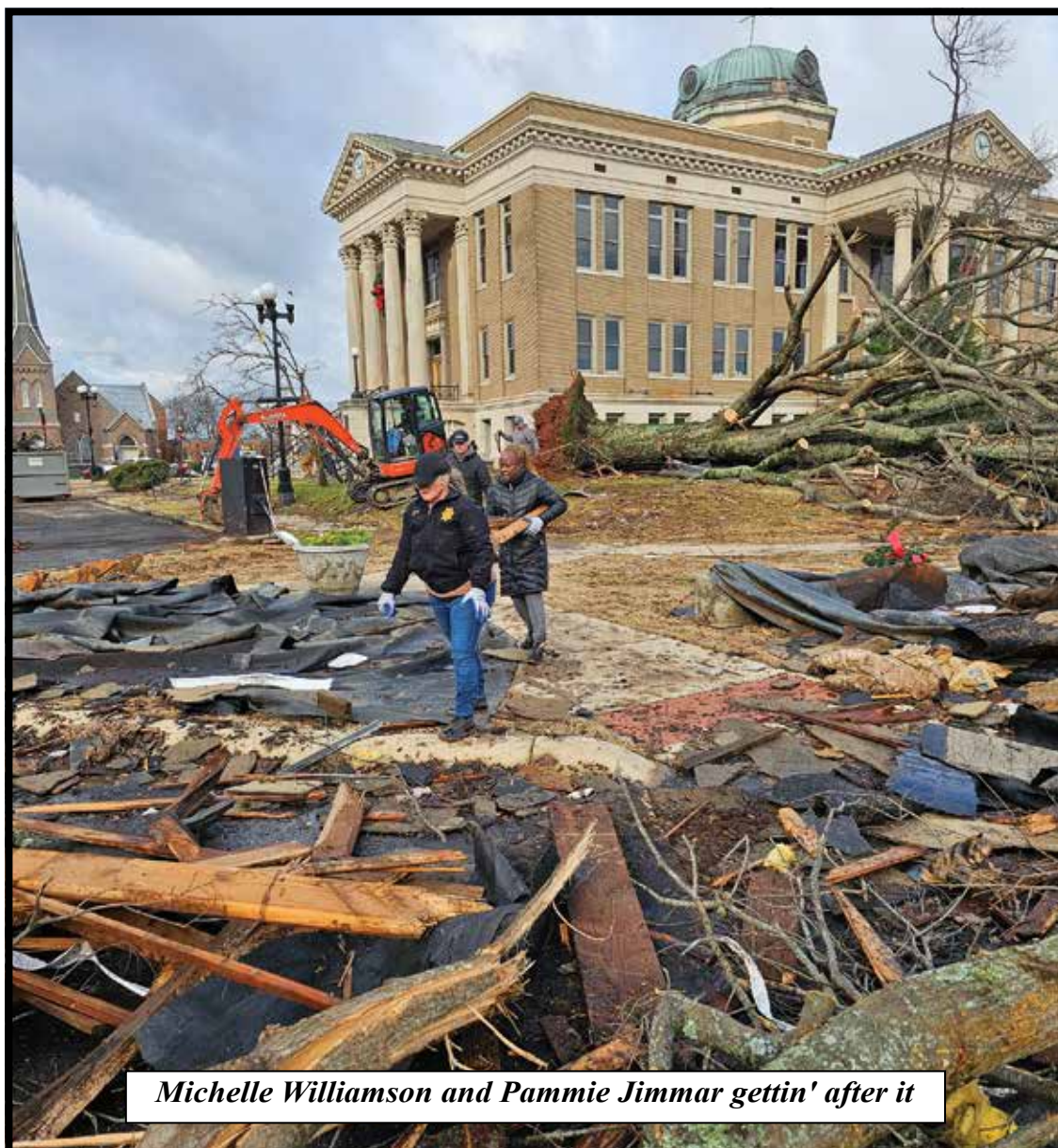
I “rolled” in per normal on a day that was anything but. The “Christmas Twister” that struck late Saturday night on December 28 had “dun its bad bidness” in the downtown core of Athens, and to anyone’s knowledge at the moment, it was the first time that a tornado had hit in the historic area. Phones were ringing, and the fact that we were able to do an interview at all, however brief it might be, was an unexpected blessing.

Mayor Ronnie had fielded EF-rated storms of varying intensities in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and just last spring, and there have been some straight-line wind storms that had caused some damage on or near the Square, but nothing like this.

Lots of mayors from all over the Southeast had called to check on Mayor Ronnie as well as us, and he wanted to start off our time together with a shout out; a celebration of “Athens-under-fire” along with the remark-

able response. “Our utilities crews worked around the clock. The police, first responders, private citizens, everyone has been amazing.” I then said my usual statement that I make whenever we have one: “I hate storms, and I love them. I don’t want anyone or anything hurt, and I love how we come together.” He smiled and said, “We are Athens. We are together.” “Amen to that,” I replied.

The rest of our time together was a crazy quilt of concern and celebration. With regard to the trees that fell from the southeast corner of the courthouse across Marion, the mayor said, “The trees got towed away starting Sunday morning, and not by a tree service, but a wrecker.” The Athens First Methodist nativity scene had the wise men tip over, but Joseph, Mary, and Baby Jesus were unscathed. One of the monuments on the courthouse lawn had gotten nearly buried, and has now been retrieved. On Thursday, there was



Michelle Williamson and Pammie Jimmar gettin' after it

a meeting scheduled with several state legislators and officials, including AL State Rep. Danny Crawford, Mayor Ronnie, Chairman Collin Daly, Speaker of the House Nathaniel Ledbetter, and Senate President ProTem Garlan Gudger. EMA Director Eddie Gilbert was planning to show aerial footage of the tornado path. Some of the planned focus was going to be what can be done to repair damage to the Veterans Museum and Veterans Park. The day after the storm, Rep. Dale Strong came

to Athens, and Senator Katy Britt reached out as well.

Mayor Ronnie expressed deep thanks that no one had been hurt, and deep hurt for those who have spent decades building their businesses and may have lost them to the storm. He told me stories of people showing up to pick up debris. Mind you, the heavy equipment and street sweepers did the lion’s share of the actual work, but it was people who knew that they could not face themselves in the mirror if they didn’t haul mess

by the armload, or rake debris that had nails in it.

Mayor Ronnie mentioned that Slim Chickens called and said they were bringing food, and bring it they did. So did Pepsi, church organizations, on and on it goes. Concern, prayers, provisions, and celebrations. All of it made up what makes God so good, and Athens so amazing.

So, there was only one thing left to do, and that was pray, give thanks, ask for wisdom, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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Captain's Log

Ice Cream Heart... Melted

by Brenda Wilkerson

"Here you go, this is for you." This sweet voice came from my 1st-grade rider ready to exit at her stop. Nestled in her 6-year-old hand, was a brand new necklace. I was confused at first, thinking it was something she found to be returned to the owner. There it was, a half of an ice cream heart with a tiny silver charm that read BFF. "See?" she said, proudly showing the other half of the ice cream heart necklace secured around her neck. She leaned forward to show me that the two pieces fit perfectly together. It took just a little while to register that this was the coveted double best friend necklace sold at the book fair in the school library only hours before.

My brain swirled. "This is for me? You want me to have this?" She giggled and responded, "Yep!" It doesn't happen often, but I was speechless. Of all the people in her little world to give her heart to, she chose her bus driver. To be honest, 99% of my mind wanted to refuse this gift and convince her to give it to a friend or her momma. But God impressed upon me how special the heart of the giver is, and who am I to deny her that right to follow her generosity? So, I hugged her tight, then looked her in her eyes and said, "Thank you so much! This means the world to me!" She beamed, turned, and disappeared down the four steep steps to her driveway.

Melted

As the kids were loading up after an exciting school day of creative costumes and painted pumpkins, I welcomed a sweet visitor to my captain's chair. "Ms. Brenda?" My heart smiled. It was my ice cream heart BFF. I reached for my necklace to show her I was wearing it. "Yes?" She hesitated and looked at her feet. "Can I have my necklace back?" I immediately reached behind my neck to unclasp the hook. "Of course, sweetie, what's going on? Are you okay?" Her eyes never left the floor as she explained that her momma was upset that she gave her necklace to me. Carefully probing a little further, it seems her mom demanded the neck-



lace be returned because, you see, Momma declared herself as her daughter's best friend, not the bus driver. I curled my pointer finger and tucked it up under her chin to lift her eyes to mine. "I am so thankful for you. I will always trea-

sure the fact that you wanted me to have this." I took her petite hand in mine and turned it palm up to drizzle the now priceless treasure into her nervous hand. "I'm not mad at you, and you are still just as special to me as you were yesterday." My words didn't seem to help much while she struggled to make a half smile and fought back tears. My heart shattered for her -- absolutely to bits and pieces. When I slowed to stop and pulled my brake at her house, she again paused at my captain's chair and gifted me the warmest and squeeziest six-year-old teddy bear hug ever in the whole wide world. "I love you so much," I whispered in her ear. "You mean the world to me!" Her eyes sparkled a bit and her familiar smile returned. Then, just like yesterday, she beamed, turned, and disappeared down the four steep steps to her driveway.

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Slinkard On Success

“A” Is For Ambition

by D. A. Slinkard

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



A few years ago, I took the time to go through the ABCs of Slinkard on Success, and after much thought on the success of this a few years back, I decided to do the same thing in 2025. It is my goal to go through the entire alphabet and write an article for each letter, and the very first article for 2025 is going to be ‘A’ for Ambition. This word means the strong desire to achieve something significant, often requiring determination, hard work, and focus. I believe too few people in society have ambition going for them, which is why many people fail to succeed in life.

To have success requires a person to work at it. Too many people are not willing to put forth the effort because they have no drive, they have no desire to better themselves, and it boils down to them lacking the ambition needed to have success. Ambition begins with a clear idea of what you want to accomplish. How many people are living their life without a clue as to what they want to do with their life? Having ambition means they are able to see beyond their present circumstances and imagine a better, more fulfilling future for themselves.

Ambition provides the inner fuel that keeps people motivated and moving forward, even when obstacles pop up which may make it hard for someone to stay motivated to finish the course. Staying motivated to finish what you start, teaches a person how to be committed, and true ambition involves dedica-

tion and persistence oftentimes requiring a person to sacrifice in order to achieve long-term goals. Ambition pushes people out of their comfort zones encouraging them to develop new skills, expand knowledge, and overcome limitations.

We must understand that limitations only become limitations when we allow them to be limitations. If we say we cannot do something because of a limitation, then we will not be able to. However, if we decide not to allow our limitations to hinder us, we can find a way to succeed. Many people have had success in life when the odds were stacked against them. Ambition helps people achieve this kind of success in life.

Ambition is able to have an enormous positive effect in a person’s life. Ambi-

tion has the ability to drive innovation and progress while inspiring others to pursue their dreams. Ambition helps individuals realize their full potential and allows for a person to understand what their sense of purpose and direction is in life. Too many people are walking around aimlessly because they do not know where they want to go, where they need to go, or how they need to get headed in the right direction.

Although ambition can have a huge positive effect on people, there is also the possibility of pitfalls arising from it. Ambition can lead to people being overworked or even suffering from burnout because all they are looking at doing is completing what they started. This mindset can negatively impact relationships, especially if these

relationships are neglected or people fail to take care of their personal well-being. Having ambition can drive some people to the point at which they get so caught up in what they want to achieve that they lose all other values that may have been important in their life.

To build ambition in your life, it is important we start with self-reflection because, sadly, too many people do not take the time to get to know their true self. We have too many pretenders walking around acting as if they are something they are not. We need to be honest with ourselves in order to see who we truly are. We need to be able to identify our passions, our strengths, and even our weaknesses. We need to properly assess where we are at when it comes to what we want to

achieve.

It is important to set achievable goals, while surrounding ourselves with supportive and motivated individuals who can help fuel our ambition to achieve the success we desire. Over time, consistency is key, and people learn how to transform their ambition into a powerful force for growth and achievement.

As we embark on this journey through the ABCs of success in 2025, let “A” for Ambition be your starting point—a reminder that with the right mindset, determination, and support, there is no limit to what you can accomplish. Make this year the year you embrace ambition and begin shaping the life you’ve always envisioned.





Clean, Green And Beautiful

Cheers To 2025!

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

We ended 2024 able to report great successes, and we are planning on 2025 being even better! The year 2024 brought us new opportunities to work with our community in many ways. We had amazing opportunities to work with students, volunteers, and businesses, and we are hoping to do even more in the new year. We have so many ideas, projects that are in various stages of completion that we can't decide what our favorite new endeavor is. We had so many cleanups and volunteers, and we are very proud of the hard work that was put into Limestone County! We are excited to begin a new educational pro-

gram, hopefully starting in February. We will be offering a MOBILE PLANETARIUM that will travel to any and all schools in Limestone County for FREE! We will be focusing on environmental education movies with fun programs and games to go along with the movies. We are in the process of getting all the components and getting it started now. We are hoping for a February roll out for this project. We can't wait to see the results of this new program.

In 2024, we were also lucky enough to be chosen (by students) from Athens Renaissance School to partner with them for community service. After a presentation to the ARS middle school



students, we had five different groups chose to volunteer for litter cleanups. These kids worked hard to remove LARGE amounts of litter from different spots in Athens. After their hard work with us, they went on to create art pieces and projects to present to the community. There was such variety in the art projects they completed; it was quite eye-opening. We are hoping to work with them again this year, and more students as well.

Community involvement is our next goal! We are excited to be partnering with new businesses here in Limestone County for more litter cleanups, fundraisers, and more! Just a few weeks ago, we saw a local business reach out to Lukas Geiger to reward him for his hard work of removing tires from the Elk River. We hope to see

more of this in the coming year. We are so proud of Lukas, a teenager from West Limestone, for taking such great initiative, and we were even more surprised to see a local business,

JH Performance Lawn care, Maintenance & Pressure Washing reach out to him to reward him for his work. We hope that Lukas inspires more people (especially young people) to get involved with their local community and environment.

We have had such great

luck with our local businesses taking an interest in Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful, and we hope that everyone is starting to realize how important a healthy environment is. As Limestone County continues to grow at a rapid pace, we are hopeful that community awareness and involvement grows rapidly as well! We hope that your 2024 was great, but hope your 2025 will be bigger and better!



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Cooking with Anna

Six Easy Ways To Make 2025 Amazing!

by Anna Hamilton

The book of Galatians in the New Testament has six chapters and each of them contains a reminder that will help you make 2025 the best year yet. These six chapters each give us ways to help not only make our lives better but also help us become the best Christians we can be. I hope to put these reminders into practice this year, and I hope you do as well.

Reminder 1: Don't live for the approval of others. "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10) As Christians, we should never

live our lives to try and impress others around us. Our focus should always be on pleasing God. When you make God the focus of how you live, everything else will fall into place.

Reminder 2: You are not defined by your past. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) Thank goodness we aren't defined by who we used to be! Once we accept Christ as our Savior and surrender to Him, we are made

continued on page 23

15-Minute Healthy Roasted Chicken and Veggies

Ingredients:

- 2 medium chicken breasts, chopped*
- 1 cup bell pepper, chopped*
- ½ onion, chopped*
- 1 zucchini, chopped*
- 1 cup broccoli florets*
- ½ cup grape tomatoes, chopped*
- 2 Tbsps olive oil*
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning*
- ¼ tsp paprika*
- Salt and pepper to taste*



Directions:

Preheat oven to 500 degrees.

Chop all the veggies into large pieces and place them on a sheet pan. Chop the chicken into cubes and place on same roasting pan with the vegetables. Add the olive oil, salt, pepper, Italian

seasoning, and paprika. Toss to combine.

Bake for 15 minutes, stirring half-way through. Bake until the veggies are charred and the chicken is cooked through. Enjoy with rice, pasta, or a salad.

New Year Solutions, Not Resolutions

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



The start of a new year brings a sense of renewal, motivation, and the ever popular New Year's resolutions. Whether your goals include weight loss, building muscle, improving endurance, or simply leading a healthier lifestyle, one thing is certain: the journey to achieving your resolutions is far easier with the right support system. At CrossFit Athens, our coaches are dedicated to helping you not only

set your goals but also achieve them—and then some.

Personalized Guidance And Expertise

One of the biggest reasons people struggle to stick to their resolutions is the lack of a clear plan. With so much fitness advice available online, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. This is where a coach at CrossFit Athens comes in. Our coaches are highly trained and experienced

in functional fitness, nutrition, and overall wellness. They work with you to create a personalized plan that aligns with your goals, fitness level, and lifestyle.

When you have a coach, you're not just guessing which exercises will work for you. Instead, you're guided through scientifically backed programming that ensures every workout moves you closer to your goals. Whether

you're a beginner or a seasoned athlete, having a coach means having a fitness expert in your corner.

Accountability To Keep You On Track

Motivation tends to wane after the initial excitement of New Year's resolutions fades. This is why accountability is crucial. At CrossFit Athens, our coaches ensure you stay committed by providing regular check-ins, tracking your progress, and celebrating your wins—no matter how small they may seem.

In addition to your coach, the supportive CrossFit Athens community plays a huge role in keeping you accountable. When you're surrounded by like-minded individuals who cheer you on and share in your victories, you'll find it much easier to show up, work hard, and stay consistent.

A Safe And Inclusive Environment

Starting a new fitness journey can be intimidating, especially if you're new to CrossFit or haven't been active in a while. At CrossFit Athens, we pride ourselves on creating an environment where everyone feels welcome. Our coaches prioritize proper form and technique to ensure you're working out safely, reducing the risk of injury while maximizing re-

sults.

No matter your age, fitness level, or experience, our coaches will meet you where you are and guide you toward where you want to be. Their focus is on progress, not perfection, and they'll help you build confidence every step of the way.

More Than Just Workouts

A coach at CrossFit Athens isn't just someone who runs you through workouts; they're a partner in your fitness journey. Our coaches provide education on proper nutrition, recovery strategies, and mindset—key elements for achieving and maintaining long-term results. They'll help you establish healthy habits that extend beyond the gym, ensuring that you're set up for success in every area of life.

Start The Year Strong At Crossfit Athens

This year, don't let your resolutions fizzle out by February. Finding a coach at CrossFit Athens is the key to turning your aspirations into achievements. With expert guidance, unwavering accountability, and a supportive community, you'll be unstoppable.

Take the first step toward a stronger, healthier, and more confident you. Join CrossFit Athens today, and let's crush your New Year's resolutions together!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**IF YOU ARE
LOOKING
FOR YOUR
FIT FAMILY,
THIS IS THE
PLACE FOR
YOU!**

CROSSFIT ATHENS

A Fresh Start With Your 2025 Imagining Practice

by Sonya Fehér



Happy New Year!

The end of a year offers us a clean slate, a springboard, a new start. Or, it can just be another day. I know so many people who aren't resolutions people, and I get it. Resolutions can feel like pressure or a reminder of previous years when the resolution went unresolved.

Whether you're a resolutions person or not, reflecting on the past and dreaming about the future can be a powerful exercise. Last night, a friend and I did a simple imagining practice, and I found it so insightful and fun that I wanted to share it with you.

Download this New Year Imagining.pdf for your brainstorm, or create your own in your journal or on blank sheets of paper.

1. Lessons from 2024: In the first section, you'll brainstorm things you

learned in 2024 that you'd like to carry forward. These don't have to be hard lessons. It might be something as simple as Trust yourself or Rest.

2. 2024 Accomplishments: In the second section, write down a list of your accomplishments from 2024. This section is to acknowledge and celebrate what you got done last year. On my list, for instance, I listed getting passports for my teenager and me. Though we didn't get out of the country last year, getting the passports was a step towards a 2025 goal of international travel.

3. 2025 Goals: What do you want to do in 2025? Who do you want to see? Where do you want to go? This list might include decluttering your garage, hosting a monthly game night, or starting a new life chapter. Whatever comes



to your mind, large or small goes here.

4. 2025 Wants & Wishes: Some goals are things that we can put on a to-do list and take the steps to get done. Others are things that we wish might happen, but might not have full control over. Let yourself dream

here. What do you wish for yourself, your loved ones, your business, or home this year? Anything, anything!

5. I'd love to hear what you discover from this practice! Feel free to reply and share your lessons, accomplishments, or dreams for 2025.

May all your beautiful imag-

inings come to pass. Wishing you a year filled with joy, growth, and connection.

Sonya Fehér

Organizer, Coach, Author, & Speaker

<https://spacewiseorganizing.com>

Reflect
on 2024



Prepare
for 2025



EF-1 Tornado Hits Downtown Athens

by Tere Richardson

continued from page 1

impact. But if there's one thing I know about downtown Athens, it's this: we are a resilient community. Time and time again, we have faced adversity and emerged stronger. This moment will be no different.

Downtown Athens has always been more than just buildings; it symbolizes who we

are. It's where we celebrate milestones, create memories, and share our lives. Now, as we begin the process of rebuilding, we need your support.

Here's how you can help. Many of our businesses are navigating disruptions. Continue to support them in any way you can—shop online, buy gift cards, or share their posts and stories.

The City of Athens asks

everyone to stay clear of affected areas as crews continue working diligently on cleanup efforts. Your safety and the efficiency of the cleanup are our top priorities.

We appreciate the outpouring of support and willingness to assist. Public volunteers will be able to contribute to the efforts, and we'll share more details about how you can help very

soon.

Together, we can turn this setback into a story of strength and unity. Downtown Athens will rise again, better and brighter than ever—because that's what we do. Thank you for your love, resilience, and unwavering commitment to our downtown community."

12/31/24 – 1:45 PM

"On behalf of Athens Main Street, I want to thank our community for its outpouring of support following the EF-1 tornado that impacted downtown Athens on December 28, 2024. Our community is already hard at work rebuilding and getting to reopen for our guests.

Downtown Athens is open for business! Many of our local shops, restaurants, and services are ready to

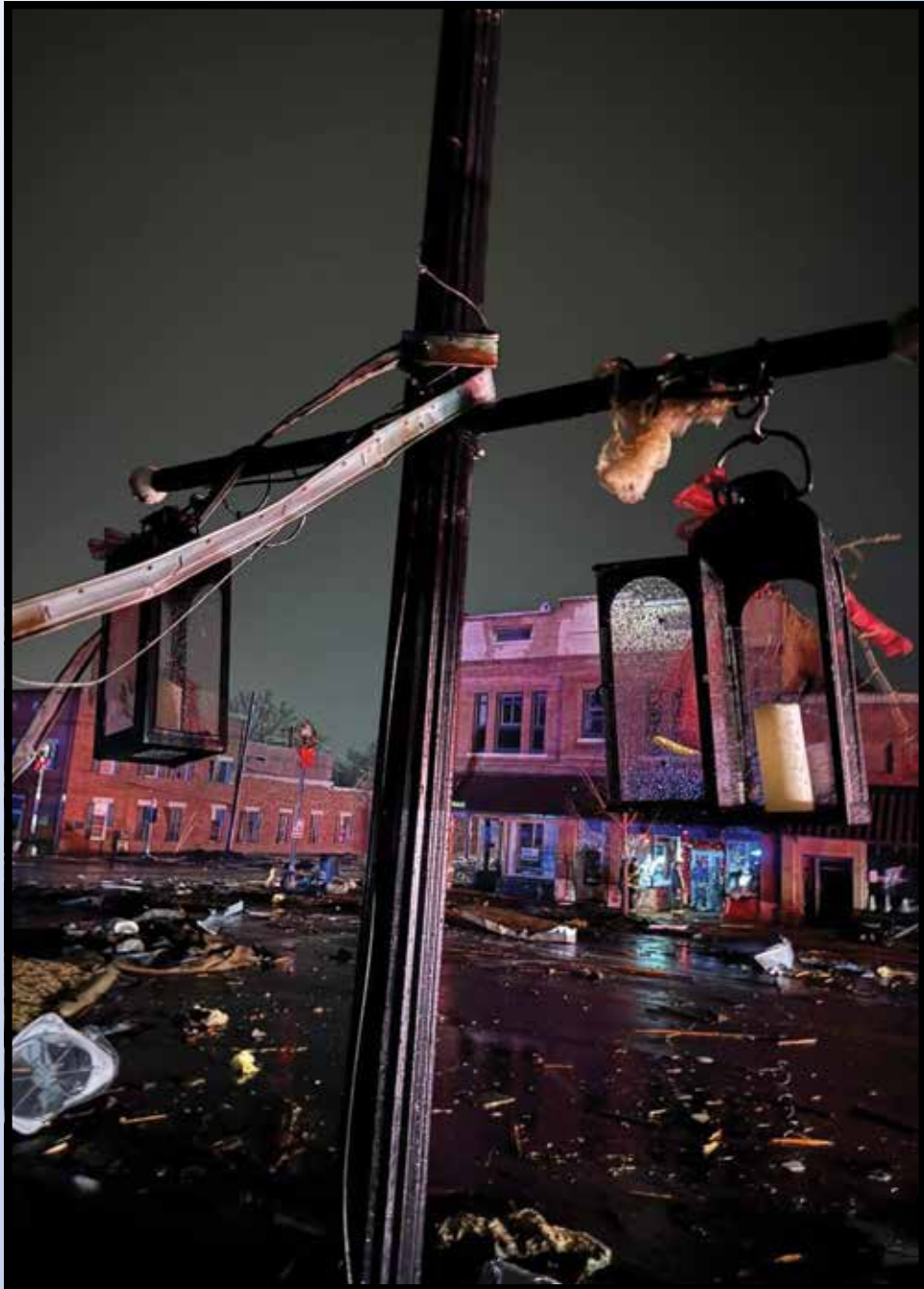
welcome customers. However, some businesses are still recovering from storm-related disruptions, and they will need our support in the coming days and weeks. Our small businesses are the heart of our community, and together, we can help them overcome this storm.

I also want to express my gratitude to the City of Athens, Limestone County Commission, first responders, and volunteers for their quick response and tireless efforts in restoring our beautiful downtown.

Let's continue to rally together and show the resilience and spirit that makes Athens truly special."

Donations can be made at <https://athensmainstreet.org>





Is Rudeness Realness?

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



As we step into the new year, many of us are setting intentions to cultivate more honest and authentic relationships. However, a popular meme often seen on social media captures a troubling mindset: "People are so used to being fake that when someone is unfiltered, it's mistaken as an attack." This sentiment might resonate with those who pride themselves on being candid, but it often misses a key truth. The discomfort some feel when their "unfiltered" behavior is met with pushback isn't necessarily because others can't handle candor—it's because they themselves aren't used to receiving the same energy they project.

Unfiltered Isn't Always Real

The idea that rudeness is mistaken for an attack often stems from a misunderstanding of authenticity. Some people equate bluntness with realness, but when others respond to them in the same unfiltered way, they interpret it as hostility. This highlights an important distinction: being authentic doesn't



mean disregarding how your words or actions affect others. True realness requires self-awareness and emotional maturity, not just saying whatever comes to mind without accountability.

Realness Requires Self-Awareness

Authenticity is more than bluntly saying what you think. It requires self-awareness and a willingness to examine the impact of your words and actions. The meme's critique of "fake" interactions often oversimplifies the complexity

of human relationships. Pleasantness and politeness aren't inherently dishonest—they can be vehicles for expressing truth in a way that builds trust and understanding. A truly authentic person balances honesty with a sense of responsibility for how their energy affects those around them.

Realness Requires Accountability

Authenticity is more than simply expressing your thoughts without a filter. It's about living with integrity, which includes being willing to accept

feedback and reflect on how your communication impacts those around you. A truly authentic person doesn't see a mirrored response as an attack but as an opportunity to grow. By contrast, mistaking politeness or tact for "fakeness" often reflects an inability to see that kindness can co-exist with honesty. Being real isn't about avoiding all discomfort, it's about fostering connections built on mutual respect and understanding.

The New Year's Call To True Authenticity

In 2024, let's embrace a deeper understanding of authenticity. Rather than equating unfiltered speech with honesty, let's prioritize authenticity that includes accountability and empathy. True realness isn't about always "speaking your mind," but about being intentional in how we engage with others. Let's embrace a realness rooted in self-reflection and care for others. True authenticity doesn't seek to shock or attack; it seeks to connect. When we reject the idea that rudeness is a sign of strength, we can build relationships that are not only genuine but also uplifting. This year, let's strive to be real in ways that create connection, not division, and remember that authenticity, at its best, uplifts everyone involved.

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Gracious On The Way Down

by Mae Lewis

Al Andrews is not just any counselor. He has a very special niche – specifically, recording artists – and his client list looks like a red-carpet roll call. He counsels artists on the problems that fame and fortune can bring, and he helps his clients stay grounded with wisdom. In a recent interview with Author Donald Miller, Andrews gave a list of "10 Things Powerful People Can Do To Not Screw Up Their Lives."

Even though you or I might not be celebrities, this is a wonderful list of wisdom for anyone who is in a position of authority or working in a creative field. I have summarized it here:

1) Create your own Central Park. Set aside time for rest, recreation, and resto-

ration. Carve out space that contributes to your overall health.

2) Bridge the distance. Help people to see that you are a real person, with failures and flaws. Let down your guard and don't try to always be an amazing, flawless person.

3) Read poetry. Not only is poetry beneficial in helping how you think and in encouraging creativity, it helps you to meditate on deeper matters, matters of the heart that address the whole human being. It helps you to slow down and see things in a new way.

4) Sometimes decline the perks. Powerful people are privileged, and if you aren't careful, you can end up with an attitude of entitlement. Andrews reminds us that it is easy

to turn from "How can I serve you?" to "Do you know who I am?" As a proactive approach to staying humble, you don't have to accept every perk that is offered.

5) Share your platform. Always invite other people to share your audience. This is a good way to promote generosity and to teach yourself not to be possessive.

6) Know your story. Know where you come from and where you are going. If necessary, find counseling for unhealed traumas. If you don't know your story, your story will take you places you never wanted to go.

7) Be sent out and welcomed home. Always have a community of friends that you connect with at home – People who will send

you off when you are traveling, look out for your family when you are gone, and welcome you home when you return. It's important to be connected to a larger community...to "have people." You will be alone at times and you need to know that you have people to come home to.

8) Get help. Don't buy into the lie that you have to be perceived as someone who has it all together. Seek support and embrace the idea that sometimes you need to rely on someone other than yourself. "As leaders, you have your eye on the goal. You're designed to win. But you need to realize you're not designed to get there by yourself. You need someone to help you along."

9) Walk behind. "Leaders are often pushed...

to the front of the line metaphorically or physically." It's okay to let other people walk in front. Take a new position, fall back. Stay humble and allow others to lead. This gives you room to breathe, and it teaches your team how to lead.

And my favorite, which I think sums up many of Andrews' points:

10) Gracious on the way up. Gracious on the way down.

Be kind to everyone you come in contact with. "If you're in a coliseum, be gracious to the person checking hats and coats. If you're at a party, spend some time chatting with the person with the tray of hors d'oeuvres."

Never forget that every person that you meet is just as interesting as you are. If you are gracious all the time, people will remember that, and grace will follow you wherever you go. "And you're going to need it someday."

Life is full of ups and downs, and you will have times in your life that are up and times that are down. "In the everyday world, small kindnesses happen between people all the time. It's only as you rise in power that your world becomes hierarchical." If you live genuinely, humbly, and graciously, and learn to care for yourself as a leader, you will be able to lead from a position of strength and confidence.



It is nice to be important, but
it's more important to be nice.

John Templeton

Winter Is Here!

by Joel Allen



Hello, folks! Happy New Year! I have a question for everyone. I wonder: How many people are ever prepared for severe weather when it comes to our “fur babies”? I see it all the time on the news where families leave their dogs during a hurricane or extreme weather. How many of us are prepared or have prepared our fur babies for winter? It disgusts me how many people leave their fur babies outside in the cold and never even think about how cold they get. I know, I know, “Dogs have fur. They can stay warm.” Well, if anyone thinks that way strip on down to your “skivvies” as we say in the Army and march your tail outside. If it is too cold for anyone who takes my challenge, then it’s too cold for those fur babies!” Unless your dog likes the cold, and there

are breeds that do, then they need to be brought in on extreme cold days and nights.

I see dogs tied or chained outside during the winter and most people say things like, “They have a doghouse,” or “It’s just a dog,” and blah blah blah. You’ve all heard me say, “What’s the maximum effective range of an excuse?” -- “ZERO!” I have done a lot of push-ups for that saying! No, there is no excuse anyone can give that would justify letting a dog freeze outside.

So, let us talk alternatives for our fur babies. Let’s say a doghouse is provided and your area has severe cold weather. Is the doghouse insulated or did you buy one of those igloo doghouses believing the sales person when they told you that since it is shaped like an “Eskimo igloo,” it should keep your dog

warm? SMH(Shaking My Head). Here are some suggestions for that mistake:

-Place a good bed of straw down, at least an inch, but more if the weather is going to be freezing.

-Hang a blanket on the walls, internally; staple one to the roof above too. This will hold the heat in.

-Install a door flap that will help hold the heat in.

-This is optional, but I would think about an electric blanket, if your dog can be trusted not to chew it up and get electrocuted. If that happens, their name should be changed to Sparky... LOL.

If the family objects to a dog being brought in out of the cold, then maybe it would be good for the dog to be rehomed. There is nothing worse than

a person who neglects their dog just because it cramps their way of life. They were given to us by God, in my opinion, and we should be thankful for the love they give to us. Back to not wanting to let them inside to stay warm; bring them into your kitchen area if anywhere. Keep them babies warm! Get some old blankets and let them curl up in them. The blankets can be washed, so stop whining.

Another rule to consider, depending on the cold, use the 5-to-15 minute rule. Let them go outside to do their business for no less than 5 minutes and no more than 15 minutes because they can get hypothermia too.

A luxury I give mine sometimes is run a dog blanket in the dryer while they are outside and use it to warm them when they return in from outside. Nothing more satisfying than watching my fur babies curl up on their warmed-up blankets on their bedding. They will almost immediately sigh and fall asleep.

I have booties for my dogs too. If y’all want a good laugh, get your cameras out for the first time they wear their booties and watch their reactions. It will be worth the investment too. They can wear them everywhere and during any of the seasons too. Works great on icy ground or hot pavement too.

Do I give them long

sleeves to wear during the cold? I keep sweat-shirts and long sleeves on hand for my fur babies. A lot of people laugh when they see my babies wearing them, but it keeps them warm.

To everyone else who has a service dog, always carry a good thick blanket for indoors when visiting restaurants or other places with cold floors during the winter. Always keep their booties and any extras you might need on hand.

If you plan on taking your fur babies into town in winter and leaving them in the car, and if you can leave the vehicle running without risk of your vehicle being stolen, then leave the heater on and one window open. Why? Because anything can go wrong and “Murphy” loves a complacent person.

Now we have covered some ideas for winter warming and keeping our fur babies safe. I hope this article has been somewhat helpful. Until next month...

“Remember to love your dogs because they love you. Maybe not the way you want them to, like chewing up your favorite shoes or what not, but that is just love chewing. Be thankful for the time you have with them always.”

Joel Allen
ABC Certified
Dog Trainer
256-651-2211





Panama Canal – U.S. Vision

by Phil Williams

One of my favorite passages in Scripture comes from 1 Samuel 14. The passage tells a battlefield story of heroism against the odds. It illustrates what happens when a leader will see it, know it, start something, and go all in.

The Philistines were at war with Israel. King Saul’s army was outnumbered, poorly led, and despondent. But Saul’s son Jonathan couldn’t abide by what he was seeing. Looking across the valley at the Philistines Jonathan got a notion, turned to his armor bearer, and said, “Let’s go over to those uncircumcised and see if the Lord will work for us. For God is not restrained to save by many or by few.”

What it boiled down to was Jonathan saying, “I have an idea. Let’s go pick a fight and see if it works.” Two men went up against an army, not even sure yet if they fully understood the outcome. But they started.

The story goes that teeth and hair were soon flying as Jonathan and his aide wiped out the entire garrison of Philistines. The ruckus caught the attention of Saul who could see and hear the fight across the valley. The victory galvanized the nation of Israel whose army rose up with a renewed sense of purpose.

The broader victory was huge, though the outcome was originally uncertain. The desire was great, the talent was strong, the need was there, but it all originally made no sense. The difference between Jonathan and everyone else in the entire nation of Israel was that he was bold enough to see it, and just start.

And that my friends is what happened with the Panama Canal. President Teddy Roo-

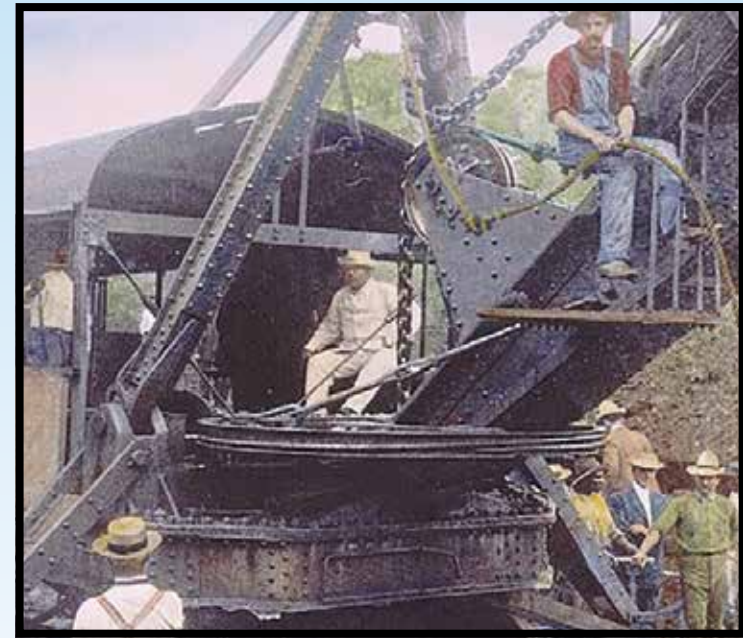
sevelt had a notion. Congress, the press, and the public all thought it was crazy. The French had already tried to dig the canal and lost an estimated 22,000 men during their failed attempt.

The debate raged. Roosevelt said that he knew if he gave the project over to the debate of the naysayers, it would be 50 years before dirt was moved. He determined to start the canal and let the naysayers debate him instead. He could see it, and he started.

There were 5,609 men who died during the American construction of the canal. The U.S. Government spent \$375 million to build it, making it the most expensive project in U.S. history to that time, and the equivalent of \$15.2 billion in today’s dollars. The outcome was uncertain, but they started.

Today the Panama Canal is the gateway to commerce in the Western Hemisphere. It is so important that the ship-building industry uses the scale of the Panama Canal to determine the ship size using a standard known as “Panamax.” Six percent of all global maritime trade travels through the Panama Canal with seventy-three percent of that to and from U.S. ports. Forty percent of all U.S. shipping goes through the canal. Over \$270 billion dollars of cargo transits through the canal that was started by a crazy idea from an American president.

The Panama Canal has become the world standard. It changed global commerce by opening up trade and removing barriers. For nearly a century, the United States built, paid for, and maintained the Panama Canal. It all hap-



pened because Roosevelt just started.

But in 1977, U.S. President Jimmy Carter agreed to give away what had been built by the U.S. In 1999, the Canal Zone had been turned over, and within a few years, China began initiating the next phase of its “Belt and Road” initiative with new port operations, infrastructure, and influence. In recent years, the U.S. Navy and commercial shipping have been forced to pay exorbitant fees for the right of passage through the canal that we built – even going so far as to auction entry to the highest bidder.

Trump’s “mean tweet” is just a leader putting the world on notice that we will not be taken advantage of. Not in our own backyard. Not in the canal that we built. Not in a way that impairs our economy and impedes our military. He is absolutely right. We started it. We went there. We built it.

Sometimes in the midst of the siege, a leader has to step out and see what happens. It might mean going across the way and getting skint up a mite. But in the seeing, and knowing, and starting, and

going that leader might get neck deep and find that God is in it. The people might get roused up from their siege mentality. It might just change the world.

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.



The Alternative Approach

Osteoporosis - What I Would Do

by Roy Williams



Osteoporosis or bone loss is affecting more people today than ever before in history. Not because the ability to diagnose is better, but because the Standard American Diet (SAD) is lacking the minerals necessary to maintain healthy bones.

When diagnosis of bone loss began years ago, predominately women over the age of 70 had any bone loss. Today the average woman will have the beginning stages of bone loss by age 36 and full-blown osteoporosis by 48. Men now diagnosed with osteoporosis is at an all-time high.

What has changed over the last few decades? In 1931, the U.S. Senate had the farm lands tested and proved that the soils were over 80% depleted of the minerals that were necessary to maintain good health. The scientists warned us then that if we didn't figure out a way to replenish the soils, we would see degenerative disease increase to epidemic proportions.

We did not replenish the soils; instead, we began using fertilizer, which is only 3 of the 79 minerals needed. The results are degenerative diseases, such as

heart disease, type II diabetes, cancer, stroke, arthritis, bone loss and many more that are all tied directly to mineral deficiencies. Over time, your body becomes more and more acidic.

Acid is the enemy of your bones, teeth, and most major organs of the human body. Americans drink too little water and too many liquids that are acidic. We drink coffee, which has up to 208 forms of acid in the coffee bean itself; tea, especially black tea which is acidic; and alcohol, which turns to acid in the body. But the worst of all liquids Americans consume are soft drinks.

Most soft drinks fall in a range of 2.3 to 2.4 on the pH scale. When you understand that 7.00, on the pH scale, is neutral and everything below that number becomes more acidic, you begin to understand just how dangerous soft drinks can be to your bones and overall health.

It is estimated that it would take 32 eight-ounce glasses of water with 12 pH alkalizing drops in each glass to overcome the acid in just one 10-ounce soft drink. Remember, cancer loves acid.

Your blood must maintain a pH of 7.3 or you will



die very quickly. In order to maintain a blood pH of 7.3, your body will pull alkalizing minerals from your bones and use them to maintain 7.3. Over time, your bones and other organs become weak. Osteoporosis is simply weak bones which are lacking minerals. Remember, most diseases are deficiency disorders.

What I Would Do

Now that you know what causes osteoporosis, let's cover what I would do if I were diagnosed with it. The first thing that I would do is stop consuming coffee, black tea, alcohol, and most important of all, stop all soft drinks. I would also take the following products:

Ultra Bone Health: To balance my pH I would replenish the minerals that make up bone density with **Ultra Bone Health**. As the name implies **Ultra Bone Health** contains all the most impor-

tant minerals that your body needs to grow strong bones.

Humic Minerals: To make sure my body has every mineral I may choose to take **Hu-Minerals**, either in liquid form or capsule. This will assure me that I am getting all 79 minerals and trace elements that are necessary for overall health. It will also help me maintain alkalinity and at the same time support my organs, hair, skin and nails.

HGH Liquid Spray or Cream: For those who wish to go the extra mile, research has shown that the human body will build stronger bones and reverse many symptoms of aging when you increase your human growth hormone levels.

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Remember, it takes 2 years to grow healthy bones. Be patient and follow these instructions for best results. God designed your body to maintain strong bones throughout your life provided it has the raw materials that are necessary to do so. These products will most-definitely support bone health and help maintain a healthier pH.

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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 13)

Six Easy Ways To Make 2025 Amazing!

by Anna Hamilton

new. We get to start fresh and get to live this life knowing that we are a child of God. What a wonderful feeling to know that you don't ever have to worry about who you used to be.

Reminder 3: Your worth is in Christ, not in your job or education. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27) Do you remember in high school what a tragedy it was when you didn't have just the right pair of jeans? Or being at a party and not wanting to tell the person you see as a success what you do for a job? Well guess what? None of that matters in Christ! Once you are a Christian, your worth is in Christ. It doesn't matter a hill of beans what diploma you have on the wall or if you are the most successful person from your graduating high school class. As a follower of Christ, you are more valuable than anything else this world deems important.

Reminder 4: You are no longer a slave to this world; you are now a child of God. "So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir." (Galatians 4:7) No matter what your family life has been in the past, no matter who your parents are, no matter where you were born, once you have become a child of God, you become a child of God. You are an heir to all of his promises. You have a home in Heaven and a place by God's side. What a comfort to know, that no matter your status in this life, you are a child of God and will always be taken care of.

Reminder 5: Don't be led by feelings and emotions, be led by the spirit. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25) As a child of God, God's heir, we are required to not let ourselves be overwhelmed with feelings and worldly emotions. This one is a tough one for me. Anxiety and fear sometimes can be crippling for me, and it has gotten worse

since my brother's death in July. My husband has been a constant reminder to lean on God's spirit and to let God's love and support guide me. With Christ, all things are possible. God will help you overcome everything, even a spirit of fear and anxiety.

Reminder 6: Don't grow weary while doing good. When the time is right, you will reap what you've sown. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9) This world wants to make us believe that the good guy finishes last, that if you want to succeed, you have to step on those around you to get to the top. This is one of the most dangerous lies that the devil, the enemy, tells us. We are called to take the high road, to continue doing good in the face of adversity. We are required to do good because by doing so, you become the only Jesus that some people will ever see. As Christians we are asked to sow the good news of the kingdom and God will reap the harvest. By telling others the good news of Christ, we are giving the greatest gift we can give to our fellow men. Live the life of a child of God, the reward of Heaven is worth it.

These six simple reminders will be an amazing guidebook to live by in 2025. I am going to do my best to put them all into practice, and I hope that you do as well. If I follow these reminders, I can't wait to see how 2025 will be; it will be the best year yet!

This week's recipe is a simple, one-pan, dish that is not only healthy but delicious. It is perfect for those crazy weeknights and sure to be a crowd-pleaser. I love it and I hope your family does as well.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Therapy Metaphors

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



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

- Shamash Alidina

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

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

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

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

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

Tug of War with a Monster. Imagine you are in a tug of war with some



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

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

The Mountain. Whatever the weather, or whatever happens on the sur-

face of the mountain, the mountain stands firm, strong, grounded, permanent. We can be like that mountain—observing thoughts, feelings, sensations—knowing inner stillness and strength.

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

The River. Sometimes it feels like we're being carried away downstream, struggling to stay afloat among the mud, filth, and debris. The muck is

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

Join me next time for more therapy metaphors.

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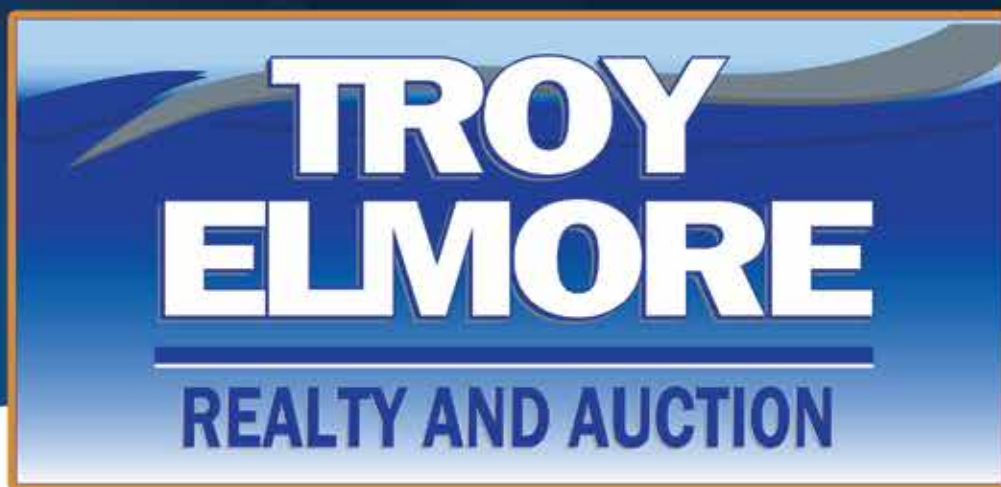
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