

May 2 - May 15, 2025

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They Call This Thing A Rodeo

By Anna Hamilton

The 43rd Annual Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo is scheduled for May 16-17, 2025, at the Limestone Sheriff's Arena. The address is 18118 County

Road 99 Athens, AL, and gates open at 6 PM with competition starting at 8 PM. Tickets can be purchased online at www.limestonesheriffrodeo.com or at the Limestone County Sheriff's Office.

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Publisher's Point

When It's Tough To Be A "Praiser"

There is a song out right now that I find to be so encouraging when I would just as soon roll up and staple the covers over my head. It is called "Hard Fought Hallelujah," and it is a raw reminder of the need to praise God even when it's tough to do so, or more importantly, to be so. The most viral version is a duet performed by two young men who have "been there, done that," and have lived to tell the tale. They are Brandon Lake and a fellow whose stage name is Jelly Roll. Brandon wrote the song, and Jelly just knew that he needed to do the song with Brandon. So, they collaborated, and have also become the best of friends. Jelly did some serious prison time as a young man, having been arrested 40 times before the age of 22, and has no problem talking about the fact that his drug-related crimes were heinous. He has testified in Congress

about his activities dealing drugs, about which he openly said, "I was part of the problem, and now I want to be part of the solution." Below is the song in part, and I hope it helps you not just praise, but become a "praiser."

Hard Fought Hallelujah
Yeah, I don't always feel it
Yeah, but that's when I need it the most
So, I'ma keep on singing
'Til my soul catches up with my song
There's times when my hands go up freely
And times that it costs, oh-oh
There's days when a praise comes out easy
Days when it takes all the strength I got
Chorus
I'll bring my hard-fought, heartfelt
Been-through-hell hallelujah (ooh, ooh)

And I'll bring my storm-tossed, torn-sail
Story-to-tell hallelujah, oh
'Cause God, You've been patient
God, You've been gracious
Faithful, whatever I'm feeling or facing
So I'll bring my hard-fought, heartfelt, it-is-well hallelujah, whoa-oh
Hallelujah, hallelujah
I've wrestled with the darkness
But I'm tryin' to reach for the light
Yeah, the struggle keeps me honest
And it breaks down the walls of my pride
'Cause faith isn't proven like gold
'Til it's been through the fire, eh-eh
My head, heart, and hands are feeling heavy
But that's when I lift them

just a little higher

Brandon also has a similar background to Jelly when it comes to drugs and dealing, but without the incarceration. He went through a 12-step program, and completed 11 steps. The 12th, which is about sponsoring and mentoring someone else, is what helps people through all kinds of life's difficulties. It is proven that if you are going through a tough time, helping someone else strengthens you to get through your own tough time. And, Brandon learned the hard way that the 12th is crucial, because he relapsed. However, the people he loved intervened, and it was that love that would not give up on him that caused him to complete the program and stay clean and sober.

The point is, you don't have to be strung out to have serious struggles. We were told that we would absolutely have tribulation on this side of heaven, and they are typically substance-free struggles. However, I have found that choosing to be a "praiser" when it is the very hardest is the quickest way I know to alter my internal landscape and plant something beautiful that will make my Maker smile. I invite you to join me, and together, let's get good at it.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Photo by Alan Poizner/for The Tennessean



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All Things Soldier

The Plight Of Many Veterans And Their Families

by Yvonne Dempsey



In recent years, we've seen a growing list of military bases with chemical contamination. PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a group of man-made chemicals used in products to make them resistant to heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. Perhaps, the most familiar incorporation of PFAS into a consumer product is non-stick cookware. Unfortunately, exposure to high levels of these chemicals have been linked to disorders within our immune systems, asthma, decreased fertility, thyroid disease, developmental delays, liver damage, and cancer.

We all have trace amounts of these forever chemicals, but for the military, the risk of exposure to PFAS is of much greater concern because they tend to use products containing higher volumes of PFAS at a much greater frequency than the average consumer ever would. Once PFAS are released into the environment, they can cause contamination to the soil and the groundwater. This contamination then spreads through the consumption of local water and food sources by mem-

bers of the military and their families.

It's estimated that 80% of U.S. military bases are known to have elevated levels of PFAS contamination in both soil and water supplies. The issue is significant because that means more than 600,000 service members and their families could have been exposed to PFAS through on-base drinking water.

There are 710 military bases that have contaminated water and soil. England Air Force Base, a former base located near Alexandria, Louisiana, which was closed in 1992, is currently the most contaminated former or current military site in the country. One of the most recognized in recent years is Camp Lejeune, NC. Not only service members but their families who also lived and/or worked on this base from August 1, 1953 - December 31, 1987, are now suffering from a plethora of diseases caused by these chemicals. Lawsuits are being filed on behalf of those suffering from the many diseases caused by this contamination. Many veterans in our area are victims currently suffering

from any number of these diseases.

My youngest son, Joshua, a Marine gunnery sergeant, has befriended a local Marine veteran who is battling cancer from the contaminated drinking water on bases where he served. Michael Keyes (Lance Corporal) was diagnosed in July 2014 with stage-4 head/neck cancer. After undergoing 35 rounds of radiation and chemo, he got the 'all-clear' in March 2015. Unfortunately, that September, the cancer returned, resulting in numerous surgeries over the years. Michael's first claim for VA benefits was denied, but after seeking help from Congressman Dale Strong's office and Still Serving Veterans, he was given 10% in November 2024. And this was for a surgery scar on his neck, not his service-related cancer. Why?... because his cancer is currently in remission. He has suffered and is still suffering...with much more than a scar. Veterans like Michael need compensation, recognition, and also our support.

If any of you veterans or your family members who may be suffering from any of the following diseases that could be related to your service or working/living on one of the contaminated bases, please seek help. Some long-term health effects include, but are not limited to: immune system damage, cancer, developmental issues, nervous system damage, decreased fertility, birth defects, liver, kidney, and



thyroid damage

Veterans commonly develop: Cancers - Exposure to toxic substances on military bases, such as Agent Orange, burn pits, and radiation, is linked to various cancers; Respiratory Conditions - Veterans exposed to airborne toxins frequently develop chronic respiratory illnesses; Neurological Disorders - Toxins such as Agent Orange and industrial chemicals can damage the nervous system.

Many military bases are classified as Superfund sites due to their history of hazardous contamination. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) started the "Superfund" program in 1980 when Congress enacted the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). This program is an effort to clean up land that the EPA has deemed contaminated by hazardous waste

and poses a risk to human health and/or the environment.

Over the years, many more bases have been identified as having high rates of contamination. Strides have been made to clean up these areas, but it will take many years and money to do so. However, the effects on veterans has been widespread and many veterans and their families are not aware of the damages that these chemicals cause and many have died without knowing the real cause of their disease.

Let's spread the word. If someone is denied benefits, don't take 'No' for an answer. Get re-evaluated, especially if you feel that you deserve more compensation. Do research, document every doctor visit and test result. Ask for help like Michael did. And please support those who are suffering from service-related disabilities. Don't let them go it alone.



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Calendar of Events

2025 Summer Camp Registration Open Now

Your child will participate in a variety of fun activities designed by the North Alabama Zoological Society to promote awareness of our Alabama biodiversity, ecosystems and conservation. Campers will enjoy include art projects, games, hands-on experiences, and lots of time enjoying the Alabama outdoors. www.nalzs.org/nature-camp-pnp

Camp Helen Baptist Camp

14477 Baptist Camp Rd, Harvest, AL 35749

June 2-6, 2025 (ages 6-11) \$295 9:00am - 4:00pm

July 7-11, 2025 (ages 6-11) \$295 9:00am - 4:00pm

BIO QUEST: June 2-6, 2025 (ages 12-14) \$295 9am - 4pm

Spring Fling May 8

9am-2pm. Athens Activity Center. 912 W Pryor Street, Athens. Games, crafts, food, fun, door prizes, and live music. Complementary lunch at 11am (hamburgers and hotdogs, chips and cookies). Open to all senior citizens 50+. No charge.

Limestone County Relay For Life May 9

At the Sportsplex, 1403 US 31, Athens. Survivor's Dinner at 5pm. Event from 6-10pm. All the county teams will be out for a night of remembrance and celebration. You don't have to be on a team to come out and honor survivors, donate and celebrate. This is a night to remember those taken too soon, cheer on those who are battling or have battled cancer, and raise funds while having a great time. There will be an opening ceremony, first laps, Zumba, dancing, live music, food and more.

Mental Health Pop-Up Event May 14

10am-2pm. Athens-Limestone Library is hosting a mental health pop-up event for Mental Health Awareness Month. Local counselors and mental health professionals will be on hand to promote their services and help people get access to mental health resources. Pearl Behavioral Health Services, National Alliance on Mental Illnesses, Bradford at Madison, and Recovery Organization of Support Specialists in attendance.

Act of Congress In Concert May 15

7:00pm. McCandless Hall, Athens State University, 367 E Bryan St. Act of Congress has been touring as a band for over 15 years, but it feels like they're just getting started. Dave Higgs of NPR's Bluegrass Breakdown called them "one of the freshest sounding, exuberant bands in all of the known acoustic universe." This genre-bending acoustic quartet's unique blend of pop, folk, gospel, and bluegrass shines on

their latest release, The Hymns That Made Us. The state of Alabama has proven to be rich soil for the creative growth of Act of Congress. They have consistently been voted a "Must See Live Act of Alabama" and were the featured artist in the state's "Keep Alabama Beautiful" campaign. Adult tickets are \$15. Kids under 18 are \$5.

Fridays After Five - JUICE Party Band May 16

5:00 pm to 9:00 pm in Downtown Athens. 200 W Washington Street. Due to inclement weather, Fridays After Five was rescheduled from April 25 to Friday, May 16. But here's the good news - we're doubling the fun in May! You'll now have TWO chances to enjoy Fridays After Five with us: May 16 and May 30. That means twice the live music, twice the food truck goodness, and twice the opportunity to shop, dine, and explore downtown Athens. On May 16, we'll be bringing in Juice Party Band, DJ J Dawg, and all your favorite food trucks, shops, and restaurants for a high-energy night you won't want to miss. The highly anticipated Fridays After Five Music Series, presented by The Orthopaedic Center - Athens, is back and better than ever! The party starts at 5 PM, with DJ J Dawg setting the mood. The main act JUICE party band will take place at 7 PM. Pro Tip: Arrive early for some retail therapy, bring a lawn chair, grab a bite from a local restaurant or food truck, and make a night of it! Supporting Sponsors: Ming Commercial Real Estate Group, FirstBank, T-Mobile, and Launchbox at Athens State University. athensmainstreet.org/fridays-after-five

Tea Honoring Dr. C. Eric Lincoln May 17

2pm-5pm. Pincham-Lincoln Community Center, 606 Trinity Circle, Athens. Come join us for a special event celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. C. Eric Lincoln at the Pincham-Lincoln Community Center. This in-person gathering will feature heartfelt tributes, engaging conversations, and of course, plenty of tea! Let's come together to honor and remember the impact Dr. Lincoln had on our community. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with others who share a deep appreciation for his work. See you there!

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.



Slinkard On Success

“I” Is For Impact

by D. A. Slinkard

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



We are to the ninth article, and we have come to the letter “I”; our word is “impact.” I have written in the past about having an impact on other people, and I can tell you many people have greatly impacted my life. Who is someone in your life who has impacted you? It may be a teacher, a coach, or even a neighbor, but we all have someone who has impacted our lives.

Sometimes the impact is positive while other times the impact is negative. Unfortunately, we all have people in our lives who have impacted us negatively. I look back at my days in retail, and I had two former bosses who impacted me the most. One showed me how to be a leader and guide people while the other showed me how not to be a boss. Yes, you read that correctly -- one person was a great example of how I should be, while the other was an even better example of what I should avoid doing. I can look back now and laugh, but the reality is we can learn from everyone.

We also need to pay attention and think about who we are impacting around us. It could be our children, our neighbors, our friends, people in our church, social clubs, etc., but we cannot take for granted the fact we are impacting people around us. The question then becomes -- “Are we a good impact or are we a bad impact?” A tough thing to think about is whether

or not the people are better off having us in their life or are they worse off? Even though this may be a sobering thought -- it is something that we must truly take the time to reflect upon.

I would hate to think that I could possibly bring out the worst in someone, but we need to see how we are impacting the lives of those around us. Too often we like to blame others for what ultimately are our own downfalls, and this is where we need to take the time and properly reflect upon who we are as individuals. I believe if we focus on being a positive impact on others, we can find a greater success personally in who we are as individuals. The more we try to grow and develop ourselves, the more likely we are to have a lasting positive impact on those around us.

It has always been my goal for someone to eventually think about D.A. Slinkard and say to themselves, “Because of D.A. Slinkard, I did not give up.” I want to be a positive impact in the lives of those around me. I want to be a positive impact on those people I have never truly spoken to. I want to be a positive impact in a world that is filled with so much negativity. We can find success in life, but it takes work to do so. Building a better version of yourself will not be easy but it can be done if you will commit to it.

The only time you will find success before work is in the dictionary. Sadly though, we live in a society that would rather become the next viral sensation versus having some goals and aspirations and working hard to achieve results. What will you do

with this article? Is this going to be words you read while passing the time or is this going to be the moment when you decide what impact you want to have on the lives of others?

If you desire to have an impact on others, I want to encourage you to do so in a positive manner and leave out the negativity. We live in a time in which people are searching for hope. We live in a time in which people are searching for answers. We live in a time in which people do

not know which way to go. You have the opportunity to greatly impact those around you, but will you? Think about the person you want to be and the impact you want to make. Write down who it is, what you want to achieve, and then take the steps to make an impact. Make your list into actionable steps so you have a higher chance of success. You do not have to eat the entire elephant whole, you just need to take it one bite at a time. Life is the exact same way!



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What Makes Ronnie Roll

Poke That Bear

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



What bear are you talking about, Mr. Mayor? Well, for openers, the desire for everyone that is a part of the annual Relay for Life team here in Athens wants to do way more than give cancer a poke. It's more like put cancer out of its -- and everyone else's -- misery... forever. As far as "poking the bear" where Mayor Ronnie is concerned, that was an affectionate throw down to all of the Celebrity Waiters against whom he would be competing for tips. He laughed as he told me that back in the day, Athens City Councilman Jimmie Gill would send out postcards to all kinds of folks before the annual event and ask for their "vote," or perhaps more accurately, their tips. We then both talked about how much we missed Jimmie, and how it did not seem possible that it had been nine years since he passed. "He fought cancer," said Mayor Ronnie, and I added, "He fought hard for a long time." The main Relay for Life event will be held at the Sportsplex on May 9 beginning at 6 p.m.

One of the things that makes Celebrity Waiters' Night so fun is the teams and how much fun they have. This year we had the Val Kilmer version of Batman, the Pink Ladies in



matching cowgirl hats, a football coach, and more. Everyone was "out to get" Mayor Ronnie, which he didn't mind at all. The night's take in tips was a grand total of \$5,368, and my favorite part was watching everyone have such a good time.

The "team roster" for this year's Celebrity Waiter's Night included Matthew Jimmerson, owner of Athens Florist; Mayor Ronnie Marks; Athens Police Department Officer Michael Stainbrook; Athens Fire Department Firefighter Brinten Barclay; Jackie Jackson; Coach Cody Gross; Kay Burlingame; and Emma Prier. Emma is

the granddaughter of the late Kathy Cothren, another fierce warrior against cancer who has passed on.

We talked about how the year had absolutely flown by and that high school graduation is fast upon us. That also means that this year's graduates from the Mayor's Youth Commission will be heading out as well. I asked, "How are you doing with that, Mr. Mayor?" He replied, "You know those TV commercials where the parents are dropping their kids off at their college dorm and then they drive down the road for a little bit so that they can pull over and get through it?" "Yep," I said.



"That's how," he said.

The mayor had received a request that was going to be entitled, "Chalk It Up For Mental Health," and it will be held from May 1

through May 12. This is the second year, and the purpose is to raise awareness for the need for upgraded mental health resources in our area. "The artwork on the sidewalks is amazing," he said, and I agreed. He continued, "Some of that stuff almost looks like it is 3-D," he said.

The mayor had to get going, as did I, and so we did what we always do, and that is pray. The once again, it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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Cooking with Anna

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Made New*

by Anna Hamilton

How many times in your life have you tried to reinvent yourself, tried to make yourself into a new person? I mean, just the number of different diets I've been on alone is enough to make your head spin. As humans, we are always trying to make ourselves into something different and new to "fit in" with what seems to be the "cool kids." As a teenager you want so desperately to fit in with the crowd, and you think that as an adult it will be better. Why doesn't anyone tell you that the feeling of wanting to fit in never goes away? You want to be liked and included with your work friends. You want the people at church to include you in the invitation to go out to lunch after service. You want the other moms at the Little

League field to let you sit with them. This feeling of wanting to be made into someone everyone will like seems to never go away.

When we take on Christ and become a Christian, we are immediately accepted into God's family. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." When we accept Christ and truly become His, we are made into a new and perfect creature. This doesn't mean that everything in our lives will fall into place and be perfect, but it does mean that God has taken us and is making us into a perfect being. What a peaceful feeling knowing that we don't have to struggle to

continued on page 16

Herbed Cottage Cheese Dip

Ingredients:

2 cloves garlic

2 cups cottage cheese

½ cup plain Greek yogurt

1 tsp dried dill

1 tsp dried basil

½ tsp dried thyme

1 Tbsp dried parsley

½ tsp garlic powder

Salt and pepper to taste

Vegetables for dipping such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, and bell pepper.

Directions:

Peel the garlic cloves and add them to a blender or food processor along with all other ingredients.

Blend until smooth. If the dip seems too thick, add a tablespoon of water to help thin it out.

Chill until ready to serve.





Captain's Log

Biggest Bus Turnaround

by Brenda Wilkerson

Since the very beginning of the school year, there was a particularly large and angry fifth grader who didn't think my bus rules applied to him and bullied kids often. When I had my fill of this behavior, I wrote him up. I expressed my concern to the administration about his behavior towards me and the rest of the kids. Both the principal and vice principal took this report very seriously and had a 'Come-to-Jesus' talk with this young man. He was then assigned the very front seat of the bus until further notice.

His behavior and demeanor have made a marked improvement in the last two weeks, which granted him a pass to sit with a friend each Friday moving forward, as long as there were no more incidents and improvement continues. Last Friday was his first time to sit with his friends since he got in trouble, and before the route was over, he was asking me to come sit up front again. This morning, after picking up the last student, I grabbed my mic and began to talk to the kids



about the possible jobs of the juniors and seniors on my bus (4 and 5th graders).

I opened the floor to discuss what jobs we needed and who would be a good fit. Jobs presented were typical things like the nurse, the babysitter for the pre-K, the garbage taker out, the magnet mayor who puts any fallen magnets from the floor back on

the walls of the pre-k seats, the pop toppers - the ones who pop open the bus top hatches for ventilation after the morning route, the body checker (makes sure no one is asleep or left behind), the bus secretaries who help limit my distractions and answer endless questions and requests when hands get raised, etc.

But there was yet another suggestion. The chaplain. The prayer warrior. The one who would start our day with a few requests and heartfelt gratitude. There were several suggestions of what to pray for like, safe travels, our families, our teachers, a clear head for focus, expressing gratitude that the

Lord woke us up this morning, etc. But when I asked who wanted that prayer position, there was a long silent pause. Then, I saw it. My little angry man on the front seat slowly lifted his head as his dreads parted to reveal his once angry eyes staring back at me in the large rearview mirror. He raised his hand just high enough to be noticed and gave me a solid nod. My face didn't flinch, and I met his nod with mine. My heart skipped a beat as I watched and felt the transformation of this precious soul evolve in real time. When I asked if he would like to start his job today, his face lit up and he nodded 'yes'. Since he was on the front row, the spi-

raled microphone cord could easily reach him. Y'all. He took that mic in his hands and said the sweetest sincere prayer I've heard in a long time. "Heavenly Father," he began. The kids were quiet as church mice with their heads bowed in respect. When he concluded with an "Amen," the entire belly of the bus responded with a hearty, "Amen!" All of my riders inside Ol' Yeller began to clap and cheer. As my preacher dad used to say, "If that don't light your fire, your wood's wet!"

May your day be full of patience, second chances, kindness, and gratitude. I know my day was already full of these things by 7:05!

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

Household Hazardous Waste

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

It's May, so you know what that means...it's time for the Household Hazardous Waste Collection! Because of the Limestone County Commission, we are once again able to host the annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection. Not only do they help to fund the event, but they also come out and work with us. If you've ever been, you know how hard we all work! We are excited to have this partnership because this event is the **ONLY** opportunity to dispose of most hazardous materials in Athens. This year, the collection will be on May 17 from

8 a.m.-noon in the parking lot of Athens Middle School. As always, this will be a drive-through event, just drive up and we'll take care of the rest!

We will be accepting paint, paint products, lawn chemicals, pool chemicals, household chemicals, and automotive chemicals (transmission fluids, brake fluids, DEF, etc., just **NO motor oil**). We will have the bulb cruncher there for fluorescent bulbs, we will accept medications, pesticides, and propane tanks. No commercial loads will be accepted at this event. And as always, **NO medical**



waste!

There will be some changes again this year to what we are accepting. The biggest change is we **WILL NOT** accept motor oil. This is because the Limestone County Recycling Department accepts motor oil now! They have a large white tank on the lot that you can either leave your containers near or pour your oil into. If you choose to pour your oil, please make sure that you put the lid back on the tank and on your containers. You can always leave your containers there to be emptied and recycled! The Limestone County Recycling Department is located at 1301 North Jefferson Street. They are open Monday-Thursday from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Another change this year- **we will only be accepting tube televisions** (the old ones with the large backs). This is the only time that you can dispose of this type of TV in Athens! These televisions contain mercury, so they must be handled with caution! The transfer station will not accept them, and they will not be picked up with bulk trash! We will not be accepting flat screens or plasma televisions or other electronics this year because they can be recycled in Athens now! You can call Keri with Limestone

County Recycling (256-871-0674) to find out more details. This is the only way to dispose of these televisions in Athens as well.

If you have any questions about what will or will not be accepted, please call Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful at 256-233-8000, or email us at KALBCares@gmail.com. We will see you there -- hopefully with sunny skies this year! Spread the word -- it will be another year before we have another event!

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Saturday, May 17, 2025 8am-12pm

Accepting:	Not Accepting:
Paint, Paint Products	Motor Oil
Lawn Chemicals	Flat Screen/Plasma TV's
Household Chemicals	Mercury
Automotive Chemicals	Medical Waste
Fluorescent Bulbs	Electronics
Tube TV's	
Medication	

KALB
Limestone County
ALABAMA
Athens Middle School Parking Lot
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Athens, Alabama 35611



(256) 233-8000
KALBCares@gmail.com
www.KALBCares.com

They Call This Thing A Rodeo

by Anna Hamilton

continued from page 1

Proceeds raised during this event help secure training and equipment for the deputies of the Limestone County Sheriff's Office.

Considered the largest outdoor rodeo east of the Mississippi, the Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo takes place on the third weekend in May each year. As cowboys and cowgirls compete for over \$50,000 in prize money, families are entertained with all the makings of an unforgettable rodeo, including professional clowns and specialty acts. There are two days of rodeo competitions each year.

There is amazing talent of all kinds on horseback as well as on the dirt, and it is a great family event. A slew

of professional rodeo events such as bareback and saddle bronc riding, calf roping, cowgirls' breakaway roping, steer wrestling, cowgirls' barrel racing, bull riding, and chuck wagon races. Beyond the competition, you will find all kinds of activities, food, games, and special appearances. And who can forget the rodeo clowns, they have always been my favorite!

This rodeo is part of the Lone Star Rodeo Company. For over 70 years, Lone Star Rodeo has brought the authentic spirit of rodeo to communities all across America. Founded on a legacy of skill, resilience, and heart, their mission is to celebrate the cowboy way and to connect audiences to the true roots of the rodeo.



The rodeo is a full sensory experience—rowdy, rugged, and electric with energy. The sounds, sights, and smells of the rodeo will create lasting memories that your family will cherish for years to come. It can even become an annual family tradition.

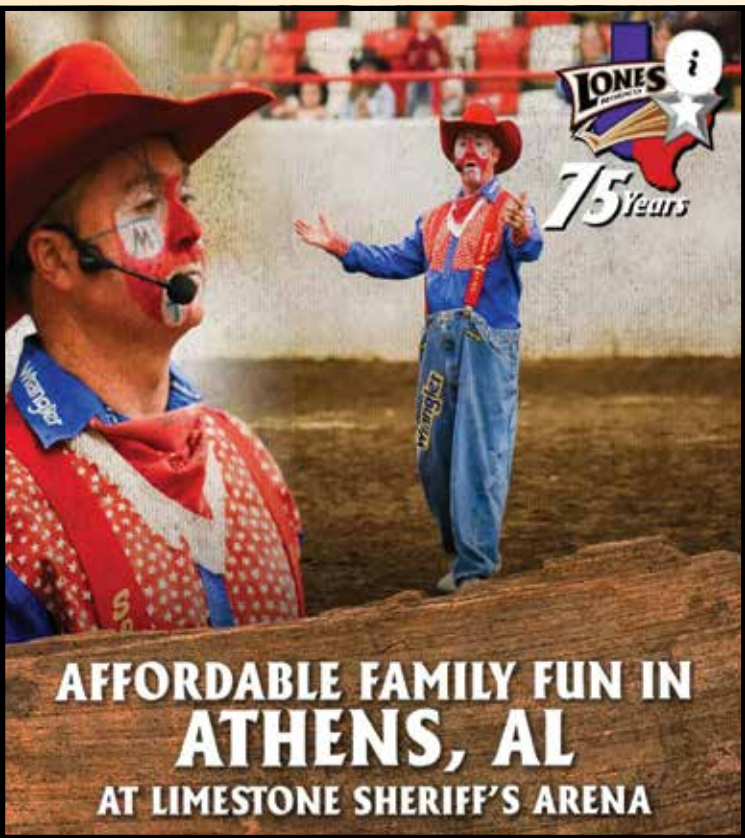
You will hear the sound of thunderous hooves pounding the dirt as bulls and broncos charge into the arena. The buzz of the crowd, with cheers,

gasps, and shouts rising with each daring ride. The crackling loudspeakers blaring The National Anthem and the announcer's booming voice. The sharp snap of the ropes, clanging gates and the buzzer. The snorts and bellows from restless animals in the chutes, mixed with the creak of saddles and leather.

The sights will delight your eyes! There are cowboys and cow-

girls in bright shirts, fringed chaps, and wide-brimmed hats, sitting tall on gleaming horses. The dust clouds rise under galloping hooves. The mud flies as the bulls kick up the dirt mid-buck. There is the glitz of spurs, polished belt buckles, and the flutter of flags during the opening ceremonies. The muscular bulls and broncos, wide-eyed and powerful, lunging and twisting in the cool, crisp night air. The colorful barrels, banners, and blinking arena lights under a wide sky.

The aroma will swirl into your nostrils creating a memory of smell that will bring you back to the rodeo every time you smell these smells again. A pungent mix of animals, hay, leather, and sweat. The delightful smell drifting from



the concession stands -- popcorn, hot dogs, peanuts, and my personal favorite—the funnel cake. The earthy scent of dirt baked under the afternoon’s sun. The hints of horse liniment or saddle soap, lingering from the rider’s gear.

It's gritty, thrilling, and deeply rooted in Western and American heritage. The rodeo is an American experience you'll never forget. I grew up listening to country music in the '90s and Garth Brooks had a classic song about the American rodeo. The chorus beautifully describes the true magic of the rodeo.

*“Well, it's bulls and blood
It's the dust and mud
It's the roar of a Sunday crowd
It's the white in his knuckles
The gold in his buckle
He'll win the next go 'round
It's boots and chaps
It's cowboy hats
It's spurs and latigo
It's the ropes and the reins
And the joy and the pain
And they call the thing rodeo”*

Now that you all are singing the chorus too, I hope to see your family at the 43rd Annual Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo on May 16 and May 17. So, dust off those boots and shine up those buckles and come join us for an amazing good time!

43RD ANNUAL LIMESTONE SHERIFF'S RODEO MAY 16★17

FRIDAY **8:00** **SATURDAY** **8:00**
MAY 16 **PM** **MAY 17** **PM**

LIMESTONE SHERIFF'S ARENA | HWY 99 | ATHENS, AL

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TICKET PRICE AT GATE
ADULT \$20 | CHILD \$12
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Health and Fitness

Taking Care Of Your Health Isn't Selfish — It's A Gift To Everyone Around You

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

In today's busy world, it's easy to feel guilty for taking time for yourself — especially when it comes to health and fitness. Parents, workers, caregivers, and students often put their own well-being at the bottom of the list. There's a common belief that prioritizing exercise or healthy meals is somehow selfish. But the truth is, taking care of your health and fitness isn't selfish at all; it's one of the most generous things you can do.

When you prioritize your health, you're investing not just in your own life, but in the lives of everyone who depends on you. A healthy lifestyle leads to more energy, better mood, and a stronger immune system — all things that help you be more present and capable in your relationships, your

work, and your community. Whether you're a parent chasing after toddlers, a teacher standing in front of a classroom, or a neighbor always lending a helping hand, being healthier allows you to give more and give better.

Think about it: when you're not constantly run down or dealing with preventable health issues, you're in a better position to care for others. You can show up with a smile, tackle challenges with a clear mind, and inspire those around you to take care of themselves, too. Children learn from what we model, not just what we say. When they see us making movement and nutritious food a priority, they learn to do the same. That's not selfish, that's leadership.

Health and fitness also



have a powerful effect on mental well-being. Regular physical activity helps manage stress, anxiety, and depression. It clears your head and lifts your mood, which helps in every interaction you have, whether you're resolving conflict at work or simply being more patient with a loved one. The better

you feel, the better you treat others. And that ripples outward in ways you might not even realize.

We understand that getting started can feel intimidating. That's why community-focused gyms like CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness Athens are here. Our qualified, compassionate coaches are ready to meet you where you are and guide you every step of the way. Whether you're brand new to exercise or looking to reignite your fitness routine, we offer programs designed to build you up, not break you down.

At CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness Athens, you'll find more than just workouts — you'll find a

supportive environment full of people just like you: people who want to feel better, live longer, and give more. You'll laugh, sweat, learn, and grow with a community that understands that self-care isn't about vanity or ego, it's about being your best for the people who matter most.

So let go of the guilt. Take that first step. Come see us and discover how investing in your health is one of the most selfless acts you can make. Your family, your friends, and your future self will thank you.

Stop by CrossFit Athens or ROAR Fitness Athens today — let us help you become the strongest version of yourself.

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she'll build her dreams upon it.

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McGhee On Management

From Where Does Your Wisdom Emminate?

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

Socrates. Plato. Albert Einstein. King Solomon. Jesus Christ. All acclaimed by the world as among the wisest men to ever have lived.

Socrates: "The only true wisdom is knowing you know nothing."

Plato: (Father of Western Philosophy: Student of Socrates, Teacher of Aristotle.) "Books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything."

Aristotle: "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

Albert Einstein: "Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous."

King Solomon: "Words kill. Words give life. They're either poison or fruit. You choose."

Jesus Christ: "I am The Way, The Truth and The Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me."

Mankind from all walks of life, every nation, tongue and tribe, have benefitted from the words of the wise. Although while researching these men, I did find one I must disagree with before I get to my main point. Aristotle taught much around the principle insight he "discovered" -- "Knowing yourself is the beginning of wisdom." Uh... sorry, friends, but I have personally disproven that idea. The more I know MYSELF, the less content and happy I am. Certainly, the less impressed I am with me...and everyone else! I have found

that knowing my God is far more comforting, blessed, enlightening, and profitable I consider the far superior wisdom on this topic to be given by the Apostle John: "This is eternal life, that they may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." Or, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10-12).

Today, I had the privilege of speaking with the widower of one of the wisest and most interesting authors of the 20th century. While I began to thumb through six of her books, I was hit with a thought I wish to share here. Sometimes we relegate our learning to either the very old supposedly wise, or else we seek out the most current thoughts to hit the market. We would be wise to look at those in-between authors, too. I am rethinking the books from my l-o-n-g past, recalling those that helped me to become more the person I want to be. Among her books, I recommend My

Blue Blanket: Choosing To Put It Away by Joyce Landorf Heatherley. It is valuable to both women and men. Dealing with significant choices we make in our lives, she offers insight on:

1. True Self: Choosing to accept responsibility for my past rather than trying to maintain the glittering (or macho) image I want others to see.

2. Escape Hatch: Choosing not to depend on the blue "security" blanket of destructive behaviors as the solution to my problems and hurts.

3. Power of Prayer: Choosing to pray for wings to soar rather than for crutches to lean upon

Joyce Landorf Heatherly faced some unassailable hardships of life, opening her heart and life in a deeply personal narrative of suffering, deep healing, and recovery.

Another book that deeply affected my attitude toward irritating and difficult people in my own

life was Joyce's book, **IRREGULAR PEOPLE**. Not only did it immediately bring immense understanding into my life, but understanding and applying the truths in this book have enabled me to understand the nature of my irregular person -- why he/she behaves in that maddening way, then to developing a strategy for coping, on to handle negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and bitterness, and also to keep forgiveness and reconciliation active in my own life.

If your "irregular person" is breaking your heart with insensitivity and rejection, this book points the way to spiritual and emotional healing. Again, it is invaluable to both men and women.

Just a couple of quick thoughts to consider:

1. Think of the books/teachers who have meant the most to your positive maturity, and share those with others, especially those who may be fight-

ing heavy battles that you have passed through more successfully because of the wisdom gained there. (By the way, quite probably every person you know or see or hear about IS fighting one or more Heavy Battles!)

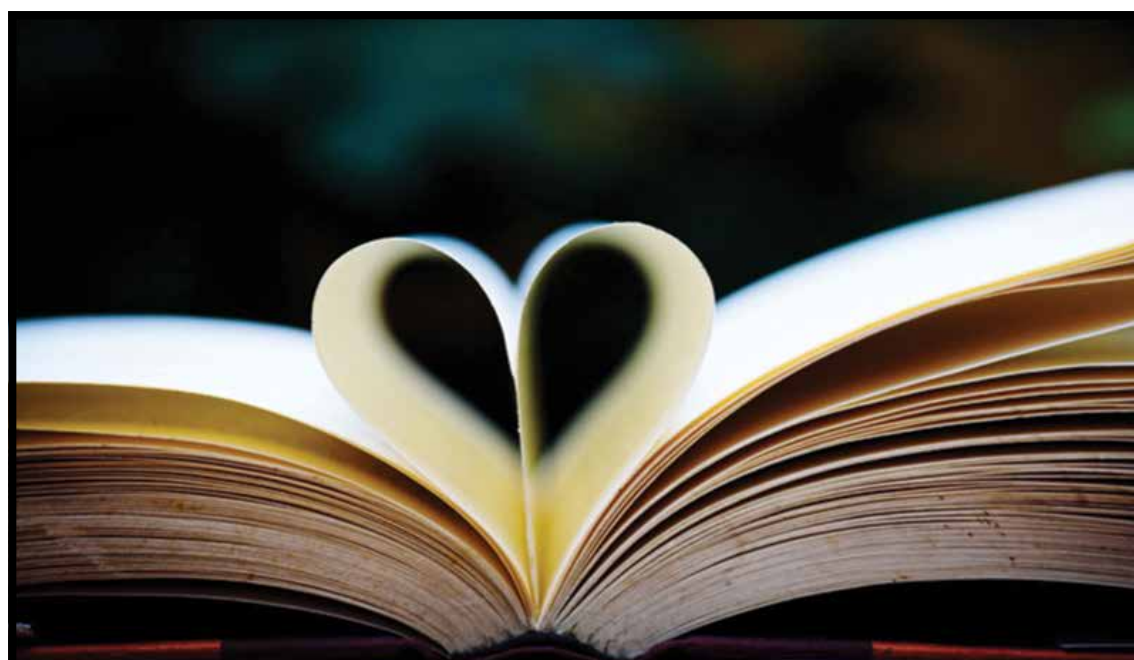
2. Ask yourself and the most successful people you know, "WHO influenced you most positively/profitably in their walk of life so far? What were the most meaningful books?"

And, finally:

3. Don't overlook the elderly in your life. The younger you are, the more likely you are to look down on the elderly. But, I can promise you that every one of them you take time to know can teach you something of great value. Perhaps it's professional wisdom, or life lessons, or even "what NOT to do"! Share your wisdom/insights, but be sure you listen, also. I've been reminded several times in my life that God gave us TWO EARS and ONE MOUTH for a reason.

Blessings, unmet friends! I'd love to hear from you.

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





Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Made New*

by Anna Hamilton

find somewhere to fit in anymore. We have already been made perfect.

Sometimes we find ourselves in a season of despair and lost hope. When you are in a place of sadness, it is difficult to always see how God is using that time to perfect you. My brother has been dead almost a year now, and I still find myself in that hospital room. I can't seem to move past that feeling of helplessness and sadness as I watched him slip away and go into the arms of Jesus. I know that God will use my deep sorrow for my good and maybe to help others who also find themselves in the grips of sadness. Isaiah 40:31 tells us, "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." This time of sadness I find myself in, is the perfect time to sharpen my love for Christ and to learn to rely solely on God to sustain me.

I gave the eulogy at my brother's memorial service, and I ended with one of my favorite passages in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Even in the darkest times in our lives, God is making us into a new person. He is using our darkest times to mold and perfect us. He is making us into a new creation, one perfect for our eternal home with Him in heaven.

Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us, "To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." When we decide to commit our life to God, we must put away our old ways of life and allow him to mold us into a

"new self." We tend to think this just happens when you first become a Christian, but as I have found out this past year, it can also be used to help mold us into the person we are truly meant to be. Just as we grow and change in this life, our spiritual life also is a constant time for growth and change to help mold us into what Christ truly wants us to be.

This week's recipe is perfect for all the graduation parties coming up this month. It is a yummy classic vegetable dip that uses whipped cottage cheese as the base instead of sour cream. This swap alone drastically increases the protein and gives the dip yummy, extra flavor. My family loves it and I'm sure yours will too.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell in the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland" (Isaiah 43:18-19).

Therefore if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature:
old things are passed away;
behold, all things are
become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17



Checking Our Ego, Amigo

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



Even professionals make dumb choices sometimes. Even professionals think, “Eh, I got this; this is easy.” We all let ego and self-consciousness get in our way.

In my last article, I recounted the tale of my, ahem, temporary misplacement. Now people get lost. I remember when grocery stores stopped saying over the intercom, “We have a lost child,” and instead started saying, “We have a lost parent,” so the child didn’t get scared. Brilliant.

In the grocery store or in the mall, you can get lost and be safe. However, on the trail, the stakes are a little higher. You really aren’t likely to get caught in a sudden snowstorm in Macy’s. You probably

aren’t going to twist an ankle in Buckle. If you get attacked by a bear in Publix, we all have bigger fish to fry.

But on the trail, you have stepped into nature -- something that is determined to do its own thing regardless of our confidence in our “mad trail skills.”

We can all let our egos, gambling nature, impatience, or embarrassment take over. It sounds an awful lot like: “Eh, I got this,” or “Probably nothing will go wrong,” or “People are going to laugh if they see me going on this little trail with a bunch of gear.” And you are right, they might laugh! But they won’t be laughing when the rain starts falling and the temps drop and they are

shivering and you are happy, warm, and eating delicious trail snacks, right?

I remember reading a meme a few years ago from a guy making fun of a couple going up a trail with full gear. He said, “My five-year-old went up this trail in Crocs and holding a naked Barbie,” as if to indicate that walking the trail was as predictable and tame as walking in Dollar General.

When I first read that, I initially thought he might be on to something, though unnecessarily snarky. Was the couple was thinking that the “Crocs and naked Barbie” molehill was a mountain? Was I just like that couple with all my gear? We usually go on the Richard Martin Trail which is straight, well-

traveled, has houses close enough to run to for help. What do people think seeing us in full array going essentially for a walk in the park?

But what happened the ONE time when I didn’t check my ego and explored an unknown trail alone and without anything but a cell phone? I got lost. It turned out to be a non-event, quickly resolved, but it could have been bad.

What happened when I carried my pack on that well-worn, well-used trail that we know by heart, down to rock and fallen tree? More than once we have dug in my pack past the mass of Haribo gummy bears for other necessities: a spare pair of socks for someone get-

ting blisters on the back of the heel, a saw and heavy work gloves to remove trees from the path, bug spray, emergency water, hand warmers, a poncho, a baggie to protect a fellow hiker’s cell phone from the rain. We even came across someone badly injured on the trail once, and I had gear for them.

What Mr. Snarky Mc-Memeguy also didn’t consider was training. A decent hiker/runner/biker knows you never go into a race or expedition without having tested your socks, shoes, pack, nutrition, hydration, and kit on a trail you know well. Boots act differently on your feet when you add 20# of gear to your back. You don’t want to find out 2 days into a 5-day trek that you forgot to bring a second way to light fires. And you really don’t want to deal with lower digestive distress from the new gels you decided to try when you are halfway down the Tennessee River in a kayak.

So even if you go on a local town trail you know by heart, take some gear. At a minimum, take water, a first aid kit, and at least one way to signal someone (besides your cell phone), like a whistle.

If someone laughingly asks why you are carrying so much stuff, look them straight in the eye and calmly say, “Training. I’m considering the Appalachian Trail.” Then let that idea sink into your own mind. You’re a hiker now, and the entire planet is ready for you to explore.



The Trinity Of Ethical Commitment

by Eric M. Betts, PhD

Hampton University School of Religion | Athens State University Coleman Center for Religion Leadership and Culture



Love, power, and justice are intricate yet interconnected principles that form the core of a morally grounded life. Cornel West, American philosopher and theologian, eloquently captures this relationship when he states, "Justice is what love looks like in public." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." This profound idea challenges conventional notions that reduce love to a mere expression of private affection. Instead, it emphasizes love as a powerful and active force driving collective responsibility, fairness, and justice in society.

Love, in this context, is not confined to personal

relationships or fleeting emotions. It transcends individual connections and becomes a transformative force for societal change. True love is rooted in empathy, a deep recognition of the humanity in others, and the desire to see them thrive. It demands action—standing against oppression, creating equitable opportunities, and ensuring that systems of power uplift rather than marginalize.

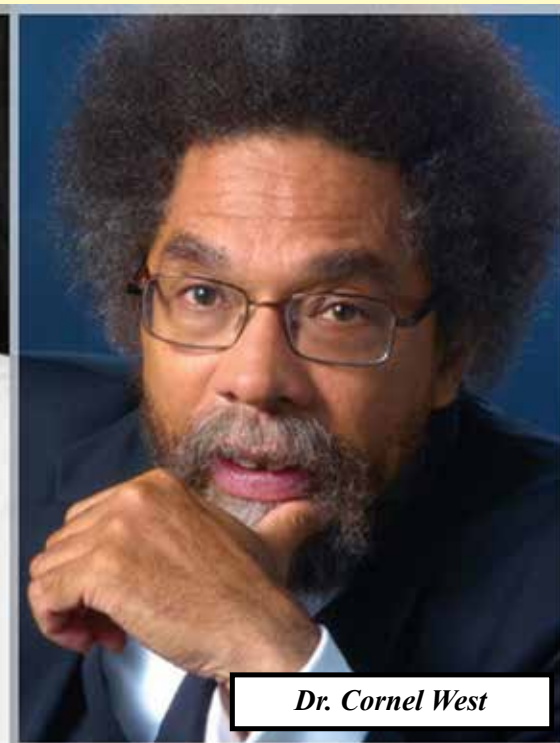
When love is applied in the public sphere, it manifests as justice. It works to dismantle barriers that prevent people from living with dignity and freedom. Love calls for accountability, not just on a personal level but within institutions and communities, ensuring that fairness and compassion guide decision-making. It seeks to heal divisions, nurture community bonds, and



Dr. Martin Luther King

foster a culture where every individual is valued and supported.

At its core, this vision of love is bold and radical. It requires courage to challenge injustice and the willingness to act selflessly for the greater good. Love in this sense is not passive; it's a driv-



Dr. Cornel West

ing force for progress, a commitment to a better world where justice becomes the foundation of collective well-being. This expansive idea of love reminds us that living morally is not just about personal virtues but about creating a society where love and justice are inseparable.

Power is often viewed with skepticism, perceived as a tool for domination and control. However, Cornel West redefines power as an essential component of enacting justice and embodying love in action. He reminds us that without power, love may lack the necessary means to confront societal harms. Power must be wielded with humility and guided by moral clarity, ensuring it serves justice rather than selfish ambition. When grounded in love, power transforms

into a force that uplifts rather than suppresses, operating in service of the common good.

Justice, as Cornel West highlights, is not about being superficially "nice" but demands a profound moral commitment. It calls individuals to help those who are left behind advocate for under-represented communities, and embody love in tangible ways that reshape communities. At its core, justice requires the courage to confront uncomfortable truths while acting with compassion and moral integrity. This vision of justice as public love inspires a responsibility to engage in the world with both passion and purpose, uniting love, power, and justice as inseparable facets of a truly ethical life.

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The Alternative Approach

What To Expect

by Roy Williams

Yes, things are changing right before our eyes. Technology has given us the ability to do more, go faster, find more information, and make changes that just a few decades ago were unimaginable.

The pharmaceutical industry is no different, with one exception. Instead of using technology to find cures and prevent disease, they have chosen to use it to treat the symptoms of disease and never cure disease.

It really is easy to understand when you realize that the money is not in prevention or finding cures. In all reality, doing either of those would stop them from being able to charge the outrageous prices for everything they are involved with. We, as the American public, must begin to understand that they make their money from sickness.

To make sure their stockholders continue to make money and that their overall profit margins continue to grow, not only can they never cure or prevent, they must make sure that "true cures and actual preventative measures" are never taught or used.

So, what can we expect

from this powerful industry? You don't have to look back very far to figure out the answer to that question. It wasn't so long ago that the pharmaceutical industry was not allowed to advertise prescription drugs. In order to receive a prescription, your doctor would have to do an examination on you to determine what wasn't right with your physical or mental health. At that point, he or she could make a suggestion of a drug to use, and if you agreed, the prescription was written and you could take to the pharmacist to be filled.

Over time, the pharmaceutical industry was able to put pressure on our legislators to change the laws so that the pharmaceutical companies could advertise their drugs and encourage you to go to your doctor and ask for a prescription. Using the power of television, radio, and other means of advertising, they began to use commercials to persuade us to do just that.

Since that legislation has been passed, pharmaceutical sales have soared, making them some of the most lucrative businesses on earth. They have be-



come so powerful that they are actually influencing the FDA, CDC, and governments around the world. The FDA, for instance, should no longer be considered a government agency, but instead, just a part of the pharmaceutical industry. The name Food and Drug Administration implies that they are controlled by the federal government. In reality, not only are they controlled by the pharmaceutical industry, the only people qualified to work for them actually have to come from that same industry. If one must have worked for the pharmaceutical industry or have a huge investment in the industry to work for them, doesn't that create a conflict of interest?

If someone running for president of the United States was born in another country or was receiving a large income from another country, wouldn't it be a conflict of interest for them to be making decisions for this country? If your doctor has large in-

vestments in two or three prescription drug manufacturers, wouldn't it be a conflict of interest for them to prescribe those drugs?

Very few people know this. Medical doctors are not allowed to sell you drugs directly from the manufacturer, with the exception of oncologists. Cancer is the largest income producer for the pharmaceutical industry because doctors are allowed to make a profit off the drugs they prescribe. Isn't that a conflict of interest?

Maybe now, you are beginning to understand why no cures for any disease have been developed in over 65 years. Remember, the treatment is in "treating the symptoms" not curing disease. Maybe, you are beginning to understand why the cost of prescription drugs have gone up higher and faster than any other product sold in the world. Maybe, you are beginning to understand. "What we can expect?" -- Without some

major changes, more of the same.

It is time that we, the American people, begin to take responsibility for our own health, instead of being dependent on the organizations that make money from sickness. It is time to realize that for the human body to maintain good health, we are dependent on 16 vitamins, 74 minerals and trace elements, 12 amino acids, 3 essential fatty acids, and a lot of protein. Unfortunately, the American diet is missing over 75% of those nutrients.

Knowing that your body is dependent on those nutrients for health, healing, energy, concentration, quality of life, and longevity, doesn't it make sense to learn the best way to supplement your diet? To learn more, go by Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herbs Shop in Killen, call 256-757-5660 or go to nhcherbs.com.

*Your Friend in Health,
Roy P Williams*

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Gwen Williams
Abbie Cooper

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nhcherbs@att.net

Is Anger Harming Your Health?

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

effect on our bodies. Let's take a look at a few ways that anger may be doing harm to your physical health and overall well-being.

If you're mad all the time, you just may discover that you also seem to be sick more often. **Anger weakens your immune system.** In a recent Harvard study, scientists discovered that healthy people who simply recalled an angry experience from their past caused a 6-hour dip in levels of antibody immunoglobulin A, which is the cell's first line of defense against infection. **Anger could be hurting your lung capacity.** In another Harvard study, a large group of men were asked to measure their anger levels, and then changes in their lung functions were assessed. Men with the highest hostility ratings showed significantly worse lung capacity, which in turn lead to more

respiratory problems. The researchers believed that the chain of events, increased anger, led to a surge in stress hormones, which created inflammation in the lungs' airways.

Outbursts of anger put your heart at risk. Dr. Chris Aiken, a clinical psychiatry instructor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, reported that in the two hours after an anger outburst, the chance of having a heart attack doubles! He also discovered that those people who tend to be anger prone have twice the risk of coronary diseases as their calmer peers. **Anger explosions increase your risk for stroke and decrease brain function.** Following an anger outburst, your brain may react in potentially lethal ways. One study reported a three times higher risk of stroke from a blood clot to the brain or a brain bleed in the two hours after a rage explosion. An-

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other negative effect of anger on the brain is the increased cortisol levels which creates a loss of neurons in the pre-frontal cortex. This is the area of the brain associated with executive function and appropriate social behavior.

Is it true that happy people live longer? **Anger can shorten your life.** A longitudinal study of couples found that those who fought frequently were more than twice as likely to die at a young age as did those couples who rarely fought. And those who fought frequently with friends were at an even greater risk. Fight-

ing friends were 2.6 times more likely to die prematurely than those who got along with their pals. Worst of all were persistent fights with neighbors! These types of argumentative relationships created a risk of three times the likelihood of dying prematurely. Bottom line: Your body will thank you if you can learn to decrease your anger and calm down. My next article will address ways to do just that.

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor whose practice is in Madison, Alabama

"Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured."

- Mark Twain

In my last article, we explored the nature of anger as a "secondhand" emotion, often used to express feelings of pain. Today, I will be exploring the ways that anger may be affecting your physical health... and it's not in a good way. Have you known people who seem habitually angry? As I acknowledged previously, sometimes anger can be good for you, if it's addressed quickly and expressed in an appropriate manner. In fact, for some people anger can help them to think more rationally. Most of us can understand that holding anger in, turning anger inward, or exploding in anger can have a negative and possibly prolonged





Rightside Way

“Freedom is Contagious”

by Phil Williams

What kind of America do we want? An America that will just go along to get along? Standing for everything, and therefore standing for nothing?

I believe the soul of our nation is at a hinge point -- a fork in the proverbial road. A cultural fight for the very liberties, ideals, mores, traditions, and values that have made the United States of America the grandest experiment in self-governance known to man.

So, what kind of America do we want?

The battle for our society is good versus evil, left versus right. It is freedom versus slavery in the spiritual and moral sense. But as my sweet wife is prone to say, “There’s more of us than there are of them.” True that.

But leaders must speak to the moment. Action must resonate with the masses. Sometimes an everyman rises up. Other times it is the leader who speaks over the fears of his people to provide reassurance and inspire confidence.

When those words and actions are timely and well placed, they can be contagious, turning a moment of depression into a movement of inspiration.

Freedom is contagious.

Andrew Jackson, who rose from rags to riches, rallied a beleaguered

group of Tennessee militia to fight the British in the War of 1812. Loved by his men, he exhorted them: “Who are we? And for what are we going to fight? Are we the titled slaves of George the Third?...No, we are the free-born sons of America; the citizens of the only republic now existing in the world; and the only people on earth who possess rights, liberties, and property which they dare call their own.”

Jackson’s words and actions galvanized the nation and propelled him to the presidency.

Freedom is so contagious.

But the common man has struck the freedom nerve just as often. That could never be truer than the story of Samuel Whittemore.

Whittemore’s story makes my 60-year-old self stand up a little straighter -- my crickety neck and old muscles feel like they could still do more than I already push them to do. There is an old axiom: “Beware the old man in a profession where men die young.” Samuel Whittemore is the oldest known colonial fighter of the American Revolutionary War. Born in 1695 (‘96 by some accounts), and if you’re quick with math, you’re already figuring out he was in his twilight years by the time the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. He was also a fighter, having served the colonies in multiple conflicts, including the French and

Indian War.

On April 19, 1775, at 78 years old, Whittemore saw British troops returning to Boston from the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Whittemore took up a position behind a stone wall with a musket, two black powder dueling pistols, and a sword he had captured fighting the French in 1745. Accounts of the day say that Whittemore gave an *animated exhortation to the collected militia, to the exercise of bravery and courage saying “If I can only be the instrument of killing one of my country’s foes I shall die in peace!”*

Confronting the British soldiers, old Whittemore killed one with his musket, drew his pistols and killed two more. He was danger close, with no time to reload, so Samuel Whittemore, at 78 years old, drew his sword and attacked the British troops. He was shot in the face, bayoneted several times, and left for dead.

Colonials found Whittemore bloodied but alive, still trying to load his musket to go back for more. His wounds so severe he was not expected to survive.

But Samuel Whittemore, the aged patriot, was as hard as woodpecker lips. At a time when the average life expectancy for men in the American colonies was just 38 years old, the ancient warrior survived his wounds and lived to the ripe old age of

96! *The New London Journal* reported on his death in 1793, saying, “He survived to see the complete overthrow of his enemies, and his country enjoy all the blessings of peace and independence.”

One man. Common, but uncommon. Freedom is contagious, and Whittemore had caught the fever. In 2005, Samuel Whittemore was declared the “Official Hero of the State of Massachusetts.”

The physical fight Samuel Whittemore gave to see our nation become free and prosperous is still ongoing. It may not always be a physical fight, but it is still a fight nonetheless, requiring Americans to step into the fray.

Pastor and author Dutch Sheets was very candid in a recent post, saying, “... we are in a ‘winner take all’ spiritual war for the soul of America. The Left certainly knows this and has pulled out all the stops. They no longer even attempt to masquerade their attempts at taking over. Winning by persuasion and numbers is no longer their plan; they intend to take over by force, laws, and intimidation,” Sheets said. “In their demented minds, parents no longer have the right to control the education of their children, and kindergartners are supposed to be indoctrinated regarding sexual preferences. The fruit of allowing humanistic ideals to control our nation is now in complete manifestation: truth no longer mat-

ters, and lying to advance their agenda is perfectly acceptable. The average American, even those who do not profess to be Christians, shakes her or his head in wonder asking, ‘How did we get to this insane point?’”

We have to speak into our moments with words of encouragement, motivation, and resistance being more necessary than ever. We must stand and rally others to stand with us. The right words said at the right time by the right person generate the right results. Words matter. Actions speak. Freedom is contagious.

This is a fight worth having, and we are in this fight together...and yes, there are more of us than there are of them.

Phil Williams is a former State Senator, retired Army Col and combat veteran, and a practicing Attorney. He previously served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute in Birmingham. Phil currently hosts the conservative news/talkshow Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 pm on multiple channels throughout the southeast. His column appears weekly throughout Alabama. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this news source. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to www.rightsideradio.org.



A Health Checklist For Your Home's Hvac System

courtesy BrandPoint content

(BPT)- If you're like most people, you spend up to 90% of your life indoors. That means you are constantly affected by indoor air quality - including the air in your home. While you may not give much thought to the various parts that make up a home's HVAC system, each component plays a critical role in enhancing your comfort. Some components are not immediately obvious. For example, an insufficient amount of attic insulation or holes and leaks in attic ductwork can adversely affect your home's air quality and energy efficiency.

When a home isn't being optimally heated or cooled, homeowners often blame the heating and cooling equipment. But other parts of the HVAC system may be the root cause of reduced comfort or higher utility bills. It is important to go "beyond the box" and assess the condition and operation of various components that can contribute to an issue.

Assessing your home's heating and cooling system

Beyond the obvious signs - a home that is persistently too hot or too cold - what are some signs that your home's HVAC system may not be delivering its full value? Here are seven questions to consider:

- * Have you noticed a musty smell or an increase in allergy symptoms?
- * Have you noticed mold or mildew around the vents?
- * Is there more dust in your home?
- * Does your HVAC system seem to be cycling frequently?
- * Are there hot or cold spots throughout your home?
- * Can you see any damage to visible ductwork?
- * Have you experienced an unusual spike in your home's energy bills?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your ductwork may need attention. One way to help protect your indoor environment is to schedule an HVAC System Health Check. A check performed by an Owens Corning Air Care® professional will evaluate 11 key factors. The checklist will provide information to help you properly maintain your home's air system and alert the technician to

trouble spots that need attention.

A ductwork checklist

The HVAC System Health Check brings a "whole home" approach to caring for your home's indoor air. It includes 11 checkpoints that allow the technician to evaluate your HVAC system - including the ductwork - to determine how well it is functioning and whether attention is needed to any of its components.

These are the 11 measures in the HVAC System Health Check and what the contractor will look for:


- * System Design - Properly sized ducts and adequate number of returns
- * Exterior Duct Condition - No holes, sagging or other damage
- * Interior Duct Condition - Free from excess dust, mold and other particulates
- * Duct Insulation - Not torn or damaged. Properly installed and sealed.
- * Sealing Around Joints - Properly sealed to help prevent leakage
- * Indoor Air Quality - Ducts properly sealed to avoid pulling in contaminants from unconditioned spaces
- * Attic Insulation - Helps avoid overworking the HVAC system
- * AC and Furnace Units - Installed and maintained properly, operating efficiently
- * Air Filter - Properly sized and replaced on a schedule
- * Output Efficiency - Actual airflow matches capacity of unit
- * Thermostat - Suits household living patterns

Having an Owens Corning AirCare® professional conduct an HVAC System Health Check may uncover issues that could be affecting your home's air quality and energy costs. Owens Corning AirCare® contractors take a whole home approach to understanding how your home's HVAC system components - like ductwork and attic insulation - work as part of the air distribution system, helping them to care for your home environment. To find an AirCare® professional, visit the online locator at <https://www.owenscorning.com/en-us/insulation/find-hvac-contractor>.

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WHICH HOME LOAN IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

The 4 Most Common Mortgage Programs

Example Scenario:

\$525,000 Home Price - 30 Yr Fixed Rate

Conventional

- Min. 3% down payment
- Min. 620 credit score
- Competitive interest rates
- No limits on income, area, or occupancy type



\$52,500 10% Down Payment
3.75% Interest Rate
4.75% APR
\$472,500 Loan Amount

\$67,131 Cash to Close
\$3,202 Monthly Payment

USDA

- No down payment required
- Min. 640 credit score
- Income restrictions, eligible areas only
- May only be used as primary residence



\$0 Down Payment
3.25% Interest Rate
4.75% APR
\$530,357 Loan Amount

\$15,230 Cash to Close
\$3,270 Monthly Payment

FHA

- Min. 3.5% down payment
- Min. 580 credit score
- Lower limits than conventional loans
- May only be used as primary residence



\$18,375 3.5% Down Payment
3.25% Interest Rate
4.75% APR
\$515,490 Loan Amount

\$34,267 Cash to Close
\$3,595 Monthly Payment

VA Loan

- No down payment required
- Min. 580-620 credit score
- Ultra-low interest rates
- May only be used as primary residence
- Must be active military or veteran



\$0 Down Payment
3.25% Interest Rate
4.75% APR
\$537,075 Loan Amount

\$13,160 Cash to Close
\$3,342 Monthly Payment

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