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The 19th Annual Athens Storytelling Festival: *Tales, Tunes, And Tons Of Fun*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Full disclosure: The hardest I have EVER laughed in my entire life was at a Storytelling Festival. The evening was over, and I staggered out of the tent, barely able to walk. I was slumped up against the brick wall that once upon a time had been the Civil Defense shelter on Washington Street. Then I got my breath and somehow managed to make my way to my truck, got in, tried to function, and finally just

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LCCI Is Now Community Table, And Loving Limestone County Is Still Its Reason

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

For years, Limestone County Churches Involved (LCCI) has been faithfully helping residents of Limestone County with distributing food and offering financial support to those who find themselves in need of assistance. In the past year,

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Publisher's Point

Don't Miss Your Chance To See The Dragon's Prophecy On October 8

In 2014, I was profoundly blessed to take the trip of a lifetime to Israel which was led by Jonathan Cahn and Joseph Farah. Jonathan is the author of *The Harbinger*, and Joseph is the founder of *World Net Daily*. Jonathan Cahn is a multiple New York Times best-selling author, having additionally written books such as *The Book of Mysteries*, *The Oracle*, *The Paradigm*, *The Shemitah*, *The Return of the Gods*, *The Avatar*, and others. I also had the privilege of helping him to lead worship all over Israel. My life was changed forever as a result of that pilgrimage, and I would go back again in a heartbeat.

Dinesh D'Souza came to the U.S. from India and went to Dartmouth College. He was part of the Reagan Administration, went to prison during the Obama Administration, was pardoned by President Trump in his first administration, and is an author as well as documentary film maker. He has written twelve books, three of which have been on the NYT best-selling list, including *What's So Great About Christianity?*, *What's So Great About America*, and *Il-liberal Education*. Dinesh produced several feature-length films that I have had the opportunity to see on the big screen, and amongst them are *Death of a Nation*, *America:*



Imagine the World Without Her, *Hillary's America*, *2000 Mules*, and more.

Both Jonathan and Dinesh are consummate debaters, and have the remarkable ability to face down tough issues and tough people while remaining calm. They have collaborated together to make the film version of Jonathan's most recent book and NYT best seller: *The Dragon's Prophecy*, and it will be available to see on the big screen in North Alabama on October 8. It is truly one day, and one day only.

The film features interviews with Mike Huckabee, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel; NYT best-selling author and TV host, Eric Metaxas; Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; and others. It was filmed with the attempt to provide an explanation of the Octo-

ber 6th War, the contemporary history of Israel, a frank discussion of the goals of Hamas, and what the Bible has to say about the region.

I would encourage you to go see it, even if you don't agree with the conclusions set forth in the film. In the spirit of keeping Charlie Kirk from having died in vain, you owe it to yourself and the strength of our culture to see how possible it is for people to live in the same space even when they don't share the prevailing views of that particular space.

Please be advised that you need to be situationally aware at all times if you go to the big-screen showing at 7 p.m. at the AMC Valley Bend 18, 1485 Four Mile Post Road SE, Huntsville, AL. When *Sound of Freedom* was released, it was discovered that some theatres faked

equipment problems so that people could not view the film. There will be a livestream/DVD purchase option through Salem Now beginning October 9. Understand also that there is some graphic footage of the October 6th attack contained in the film. Tickets are NOT available at the theatre; you must order them online ahead of time. They can be purchased at <https://tickets.thedragonsprophecyfilm.com/the-dragons-prophecy-amc-valley-bend-18>. Get yours today and make the investment in your own education by seeing *The Dragon's Prophecy*. You won't regret it.

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The Battle Of The Bulge, 2026

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth was about 15 klicks (kilometers) away from me in November of 2004 when he was putting himself and his men in harm's way during Fallujah II. The official name of the battle was Operation Phantom Fury, and it was the largest urban assault operation since the Vietnam War. Hegseth went on to describe before Congress the reaction of the people who greeted them with open arms and asked, "Where have you been?" And, he was an advocate for the validity of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as am I, despite some failures and missteps.

He couldn't have known that on Radwaniyah, we had portly and slow-moving National Guardsmen who honestly made me nervous because I questioned their ability to protect me from our neighbors who wanted to (and did) store heads in their refrigerator. And, he certainly could not have known that in a little over 20 years he would tackle that problem of poor fitness levels, which are an inarguable threat to national security and force protection, especially in a combat zone.

So, it was with great relief that I learned this week that SECWAR gathered up a bunch of

the brass by summoning them to Quantico and laid down the law. Our soldiers would return to being lean, mean fighting machines beginning right now, no exceptions.

"Any place where tried-and-true physical standards were altered, especially since 2015 when combat armed standards were changed to ensure females could qualify, must be returned to their original standard," Hegseth said. "Other standards have been manipulated to hit racial quotas as well, which is just as unacceptable." He clearly is interested only in physical prowess and not skin color, and

he is also saying that those requirements need to be straight across the board. "When it comes to any job that requires physical power to perform in combat, those physical standards must be high and gender neutral. If women can make it, excellent. If not, it is what it is," he added.

What I also appreciated was Hegseth's insistence that officers return to doing PT as well, and submit to being tested two times a year. And, please note that this is a standard that he will submit to himself, even though right now his personal theater of operations is in the Pentagon.

Please understand, I have

had skirmishes with my own weight off and on since I was a kid, and I am not in to fat shaming anyone. But that has nothing to do with force readiness. You simply cannot have soldiers be in a state of anything less than full readiness to "drop and give me 20" at all times. While I did appreciate when in Iraq that soldiers would take National Guardsmen under their wing and coach them while they returned to a literal "fighting weight," that is not something that they should have had to do. And I, for one, am glad that Pete has drawn a hard line in the sand. It's about time.





Carissa's Corner

Bound Together

by Carissa Lovvorn

On Saturday, September 13, I joined fourteen other local authors at the 2025 Tennessee Valley Literary Festival, hosted by the Athens- Limestone County Public Library. Open to the public, the festival invited attendees to shop and connect with authors representing a variety of literary genres. In addition to local vendors, Athens native, New York Times best-selling author, and business owner Deborah Ford Strain, held a Q&A session to share her experience of writing and publishing *The GRITS* (Girls Raised in the South) Guide to Life.

This annual festival not only celebrates the accomplishments of local authors, but it also inspires us to keep writing and sharing our stories. I am grateful to have been part of such a meaningful event and look forward to attending next year.

I've always felt shy in large groups of adults, often overthinking my body language and every response during conversations. However, if you put me in a room full of fellow authors, I am a different person. I'm at ease. We share about publishing experiences, future writing projects, and, of course, the dreaded imposter syndrome that we all experience at some point during our writing careers. Together, we sympathize, empathize, and encourage one another. We build more than connections—we build a community. We become a family.

In a sense, inclusion in the

writing community is a small reflection of the kind of belonging one finds in the faith community. We are one body and one church. When one grieves, we all feel their pain. When one is honored, we all rejoice. We rally together, offering support and encouragement as we walk along this winding path we call life.

God created us to have a deep need for one another. At the beginning, He gave Adam a helpmeet so he would not have to live

alone. He then established the roles of a family—father, mother, and children— each looking to our Heavenly Father for guidance. His design stretches even further, weaving together extended family, friends, neighbors, and even strangers across nations and the world. God's love binds us together and gently reminds us that we belong to him and to one another.

Scripture provides us with beautiful examples of how we are called to sup-

port one another. Consider this well-known proverb: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Proverbs 27:17 NIV). Paul later writes to the churches in Galatia, saying, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Galatians 6:2). And most importantly, Peter encourages us to "...love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8-11).

Much like the fellowship

I found among the authors at latest Literary Festival, members of the faith community experience a similar bond—shared understanding, support, and encouragement. While I cherish my growing author network, nothing compares to my inclusion in God's heavenly family—a place where I experience grace, love, and the comfort of leaning on others during times of uncertainty.

Many blessings,
Carissa



Local authors at the Athens-Limestone Library's Tennessee Valley Literary Festival

Calendar of Events

11th Annual Pink Lady Walk 5K Race October 11

The race route is as follows: Right on Beaty Street to Pryor Street. Right on Pryor Street to Elkton Street. Left on Elkton Street to Skyview Drive. Right on Skyview Drive/Boardwalk to Pryor Street. Right on Pryor Street to Shaw Street. Left on Shaw Street/Chandler Street to Forrest Street. Right on Forrest Street to Beaty Street. Right on Beaty Street and back to the park. 8AM - 10:30AM.

Big Spring Memorial Park, 350 Market Street E, Athens.

Gettin' Dirty at the Library - Save The Bees! October 14

Gettin' Dirty Presentation at the Athens-Limestone Public Library, 603 Jefferson St, Athens, 11am–Noon. It is free of charge and open to the public. The topic is Save the Bees presented by Advanced Master Gardener Soozi Pline. Build Habitats, Preserve Green Space, Plant Wildflower Meadows. Bees are such an essential part of our planet, they pollinate the plants that make our food.

Limestone County Historical Society Quarterly Meeting October 19

The Limestone County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting Sunday, October 19, in the Rodgers Center of the First Presbyterian Church in Athens. Refreshments will be served at 2:30 p.m. with the meeting to follow at 3:00. Craig Beasley, former communications and public information representative for TVA's Browns Ferry nuclear plant, will speak about TVA's presence and importance in the region and the nation's commercial nuclear power programs, including new technology being developed to meet modern power demands. Everyone interested in the history of North Alabama is invited to attend.

19th Annual Athens Storytelling Festival October 23 - 25

Take a seat in the tent and settle in to enjoy internationally-renowned storytellers, award-winning liars, and world-class musicians. Performances open to the public Thursday evening, Oct 23, and all day Friday and Saturday, Oct 24–25, 2025. 8:00 AM-7:30 PM. Athens State University. <https://www.athensstorytellingfestival.com/>

Pink Elephant Luncheon October 29

In honor of October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Athens-Limestone Hospital will host the Pink Elephant Luncheon with Keynote Speaker Pammie Jimmar, CEO & President of the Athens-Limestone County Chamber of Commerce. 11:00

AM - 12:30 PM. Limestone County Event Center, 114 W. Pryor St. Athens. Link: <https://one.bidpal.net/pinkelephant2025/welcome>

ALH Foundation Crystal Cup Golf Tournament November 3

Join the Athens-Limestone Hospital Foundation for the 2025 Crystal Cup Golf Tournament presented by Jimmy Smith Auto Group. They are so thrilled to be back for another year of golf at Canebrake Club in Athens, AL! 10:30 AM - 7:00 PM. <https://crystal-cup-golf-tournament.perfectgolfevent.com/>

Quack Attack 5K November 8

The Quack Attack 5K is a fundraising event to benefit the wetland conservation of Swan Creek. 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM. 5K to begin on East St north of Washington, take a right on Forrest St, right on Houston, right on 1st Ave, right on Madison St, then take a left on Market St, right on Marion St, left on Forrest St, left on Beaty St and then a right into Big Springs Park where the 5K will conclude.

Salute to Service: A Musical Tribute to Veterans November 8

Please join us for a special, one-night only performance by JIMMY FORTUNE on Saturday, November 8, 2025, at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. With a discounted ticket price for veterans, this concert will honor our hometown heroes and feature patriotic musical selections in celebration of Veterans Day. <https://athensstate.ticketspice.com/salute-to-service>

Veterans Day Parade November 11

11:00 AM - 1:30 PM. Assembly at Athens High School. Parade will go down Pryor Street, left on Shaw Street, right onto Hobbs Street, left on Jefferson, left on Market, right on Marion, right on Washington, left on Jefferson and end at the Athens-Limestone Public Library. 655 Hwy. 31 N., Athens, AL.

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.



Don't Wait For January: *Build Your Fitness Momentum Now*

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

As the holidays approach, many people push their health goals aside and vow to make a fresh start in January. Gyms are packed at the beginning of the year, but evidence shows that most New Year's resolutions don't last; nearly 80 percent of resolutions fail by mid February. When we tie our goals to special dates, we often procrastinate, a phenomenon psychologists call the "fresh start" fallacy. Waiting until January also means entering the new year feeling sluggish and heavier – the average person gains 1–2 pounds over the holidays. By starting now, you can avoid that extra weight and be months into a healthy routine before the calendar turns.

Build Habits Before the Rush

Habits form through repetition, and research cited in the European Journal of Social Psychology suggests it takes about 66 days to establish a new habit. If you begin exercising today, you'll have two months of consistency banked before January arrives. Starting early also gives you time to build willpower gradually. The American Psychological Association notes that willpower functions like a muscle – it can be strengthened over time but becomes depleted when overexerted. Small, manageable workouts in October or November build resilience, making it easier to

tackle tougher sessions later. Holiday schedules are busy, but that doesn't mean you can't exercise; high intensity interval training (HIIT) sessions lasting just 20 minutes performed three times per week can significantly improve fitness. This efficiency leaves plenty of time for family gatherings and festive activities.

Benefits of Starting Now

Beginning a fitness plan before the holidays yields tangible benefits. You'll have fewer pounds to lose later and will likely make better choices at parties and dinners. Avoiding holiday weight gain helps you enter the new year ahead of the curve. Working out also reduces stress and boosts mood, making it easier to handle holiday obligations. Momentum matters; instead of feeling guilty about indulgences, you'll feel energized and confident as you see progress. Research cited in Psychological Science shows that linking goals to arbitrary dates increases the likelihood of delay, while getting started now creates an immediate sense of accomplishment. By the time January comes, exercise will already be part of your routine, so you won't face the daunting "day one" that causes so many resolutions to fizzle.

Why Choose CrossFit and ROAR Fitness

CrossFit's scalability

means exercises and weights can be modified to match individual abilities, making it accessible to all fitness levels. Group training fosters camaraderie and accountability; being part of a community encourages consistency, helps build friendships, and makes training more enjoyable. The varied movements also improve balance, coordination and agility, reducing the risk of injuries in everyday life. In short, CrossFit offers comprehensive benefits that extend beyond the gym, helping you feel stronger, more capable, and ready for life's demands.

Your Fitness Journey Starts at CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness

If you live near Decatur or Athens, Alabama, CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness provide the perfect environment to begin your journey. ROAR Fitness at CrossFit Athens is described as a dynamic program designed to unleash the inner strength and drive in every participant. Tailored for all fitness levels, it combines intense workouts, personalized guidance, and community support to help you achieve your goals. Every workout is a step toward a fitter, more energetic version of yourself, and the supportive community helps motivate and uplift you. The program encourages you to embrace the challenge,

push your limits, and "roar" toward a healthier, stronger you.

CrossFit Athens offers classes and programs that include CrossFit, ROAR Fitness, and nutrition coaching. The gym is conveniently located on 15487 Hastings Road just north of Highway 72 in Athens, making it easily accessible. Joining CrossFit Athens means you'll receive personalized attention, challenging workouts, and a transformative fitness journey. It's more than a gym; it's a community that will celebrate your successes and support you through challenges. Ready to take action? Sign up for a free trial and experience the empowering spirit of ROAR Fitness and CrossFit Athens.

Make the Next Three Months Count

Waiting until January often leads to disappointment and missed opportunities. Starting your fitness journey now allows you to build habits, prevent weight gain, manage stress, and enjoy the holidays without guilt. CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness provide the structure, guidance, and community you need to succeed. Imagine how much progress you can make over the next three months – increased strength, improved endurance, healthier eating habits, and renewed confidence. Don't let another year begin with a broken resolution. Invest in yourself today, embrace the challenge, and let CrossFit Athens and ROAR Fitness Athens lead you to success!



What Makes Ronnie Roll

“Kanga” Comes To Athens

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



On September 26, Mayor Ronnie got a chance to do something completely unexpected, and that was to bless the production of a movie that is being produced here in Athens. Our city had been contacted by people in Hawaii about coming to Athens-Limestone and producing a “Hallmark-type” family feature film. When the mayor and I met for our usual appointment, the fun of the event and the beginning of filming was still fresh, and the details of the project are going to have to wait until the studio releases them. I don’t know the storyline, but somewhere in it a live kangaroo takes center stage. Branscombe Richmond, who is a veteran TV and movie actor based in Hawaii, is the one who asked Mayor Ronnie to bless the film, and “Kanga” (a stand-in name from Winnie the Pooh that I chose to use for the movie-making marsupial) was resting in the motor home while

the group shot you see here was taken. So, Mayor Ronnie did the honors and then talked about something I found both refreshing and encouraging.

The producer gathered the crew together and in the presence of the Athenians who were there, made it very clear that they were there to work hard and have fun. There was to be no inappropriate anything—that included political stuff, romantic behavior, language, et al, and if people couldn’t comply, well, there would be consequences. “Wow, what a concept!” was my response to the mayor when he told me.

We then tackled the second part of Chapter 10 from the discussion of our current book, *Crucial Conversations*. It deals with practical ways to apply what has already been set forth in the book as ways that



The “Kanga Krew” after Mayor Marks blessed the production of the film. Actor Branscombe Richmond, right foreground.

work to greatly improve communication with the result of building lasting relationships. The first is called *Start with Heart*, which is probably the scariest because it requires someone to go first in the vulnerability department. It has to do with the why of the matter, and from there builds to what is called *Learn to Look*. That is where you endeavor to discover and then focus on a mutual purpose. The next is *Make it Safe*, finding a way to assure

safety for the other party in the conversation, as well as yourself, by stating their needs as you understand them, and then your own. You *Master Your Own Story* by getting behind the reasons for the way you feel, *State your Path*, which talks about your own plan of action, *Explore Others’ Paths*, and come up with a shared plan of action without demanding that you agree on every point ahead of time. “This is good stuff,” I said.

Mayor Ronnie talked about some new developments at Calhoun, specifically a robotics-based welding program, and how glad he was that kids felt like they had options when it comes to education, vocations, and careers. “Not everybody needs to go to college, but everybody needs a skill,” he said.

This 2025-2026 season for the Mayor’s Youth Commission is getting ready to get going, with the final applicants being considered to round out the roster. It is one of the mayor’s favorite parts of being the mayor.

Fiddlers’ is this weekend, the Airstreamers are back, and there was much to celebrate. It was also time to pray, so we did, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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My Identity In Christ: God Says *I Am Blessed*

by Anna Hamilton

When we step into our identity in Christ, we discover that being blessed is not merely about material possessions, perfect circumstances, or worldly success. Instead, it is a deep, spiritual truth that flows from being connected to Jesus Himself. Scripture reminds us that in Him, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Ephesians 1:3. That means as a child of God, being "blessed" is not a temporary state—it is a permanent part of who we are.

We are blessed beyond our circumstances. The world often measures blessing by wealth, status, or comfort. But in Christ, our blessing is rooted in eternal promises, not fleeting situations. Even in trials, we can say, "I am blessed," because God is working all things for our good. "And we

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Hearty Hamburger Cauliflower Soup

Ingredients:

Olive Oil

½ medium onion, roughly chopped

1 lb. ground beef

1 (14.5 oz) can stewed tomatoes

3 cups beef broth

½ tsp onion powder

¼ tsp garlic salt

½ tsp basil

1 tsp celery flakes

Salt and pepper to taste

½ large cauliflower head, cut into florets

Directions:

Add oil to a large pot and turn heat on medium. Once the oil is hot, sauté the onion until translucent. Add the hamburger meat and brown. Drain any excess grease.

To the ground beef, add the stewed tomatoes, beef broth, onion powder, basil, garlic salt, celery flakes, salt and pepper. Simmer on low for about 20 minutes.



Add cauliflower florets and simmer for 1 hour. If making soup in the crock pot, sauté your onions and brown your ground beef. Transfer to a crock pot and add all the rest of the ingredients. Allow to cook on low for 4 hours, or until cauliflower is tender. The soup can be kept on warm until it is time to eat.

Endless Autumn

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



"I love fall!" More than any other season, autumn seems to be the favorite. Maybe it's the football game season that gives people a chance to share triumph or despair together each week. Maybe it is a relief from the heat. Maybe it is because bonfires in the summer can be a dance "in the smoke to keep the mosquitoes away, but now I'm too hot," and bonfires in the fall are more glorious form than strictly function.

I am actually a summer girl myself, but I do deeply enjoy the aesthetic of warm scarves and warmer cider, dried leaves and book pages, when bright citrusy flavors give way to warming cinnamon and clove.

I love fall especially in Athens-Limestone County. We moved here from North Pole, Alaska. There the fall is brief and intense, like a bottle rocket. It explodes high in hills with ribbons of blue-green spruce winding through brilliant yellow stands of birch trees. The leaves fall quickly before the first snow hits, and for one week, with gold above your head and under your feet, it looks like you're walking in the heart of the sun.

And then it's gone. The light of sky and leaves fade and dim. Each snowfall determinedly drags the mercury down with it, and before long it is too cold even to snow--uncomfortable and too risky for anything like bonfires or strolls through the woods.

But here...oh, here our autumn lasts forever! Month after month different trees take their turn to shine in

bronze colors. The temperature glides softly down, giving us time to thoroughly enjoy the season. If you are a fall person, this has to be the best place for you. Yes, summer tends to not surrender without a fight, but as soon as we get out of the 90s, we hit weeks on end with lows gently drifting through the 60s, then 50s, then 40s. Most years, winter doesn't even make an appearance until January, as autumn is happy to indulge encore after encore. The days are pleasant, the sun is bright, and the nights are cool.

So here we are in October. Let's make the most of this season. Let's get out our calendars right now (because if you're like me, you see fun things and forget about them the minute you walk out of the room) and let's shop the amazing experiences offered this delightful fall:

1. Fiddlers Convention October 1-4 -- Needs no introduction. If you've been anywhere around Athens State, you've seen the amazing work being done by the university and city staff to get the grounds ready for an AH-MAZING few days of music, vendors, and celebration. The weather looks to be perfect, and I am so excited for this! Go to www.athensfiddlers.com for more information. Come stop by our booth and say hello! By the way, the concert on October 1 is a free event! It's at 7:30 p.m. and Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers will be playing.

2. Cemetery Stroll -- If you are more of a history buff,



come to our Cemetery Stroll on October 5, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Athens City Cemetery. Actors in period garb will tell you tales about real people in our heritage. Some of them are actual descendants!

And if you're wondering, this is a historic tour, not a ghost tour. Yes, it's in the cemetery but isn't spooky. This is a free event brought to you by Athens-Limestone County Tourism and the Sons of Confederate Veterans Thomas H. Hobbs Camp 768.

3. Pink Lady Walk 5k October 11 -- Sign up for this wonderful 5K! Walk, run, stroll your way to fitness for a great cause! Go to pinkladywalk.org for more information.

4. Rural Tourism Conference Concert on the Square October 20 -- As y'all know, we were blessed to win a tri-state conference bid for Rural Tourism. That means tourism professionals from Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi will be gathered in our adorable town to learn more about how to bring tourism



to rural areas. On Monday night we will be hosting a fabulous free concert with the group Worth the Wait and we would love for you to come! Bring your chairs to the Courthouse and be ready for an incredible musical delight! It's from 8 to 10 p.m.

5. Storytelling Festival October 23-25 -- Spinning more yarn than the Red Heart fiber company, the master storytellers at the Storytelling Festival will have you enthralled with escapades and anecdotes—and some of them might actually be true! Go to athensstorytellingfestival.com for time and ticket

information.

And a new series we are bringing just for YOU! **Jazz in the City** will start in October with two dates: the 19th and 26th. We will be adding November dates as well! Bring your lawn chairs and come enjoy sweet jazz by local musicians from 4-6 p.m. Free at the Farmer's Market!

And there is even more to do this October. See our Facebook page (exploreathensal) or our webpage (alchamber.org/tourism) to find what else is going on.

The fall in Limestone County is glorious. Let's make this year the year we enjoy it to its fullest.

The 19th Annual Athens Storytelling Festival: Tales, Tunes, And Tons Of Fun

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

put my head down on the steering wheel for a while. If local law enforcement had been watching me, it would have been their sworn duty to make me take a breathalyzer test and walk a straight line. The breathalyzer I would have nailed; walking a straight line, not so much. Now, I am not promising that your experience will be the same, but I can guarantee this -- you may go into the Big Tent on Athens State University for a "time with the 'tellers'" looking and feeling like a sourpuss, but you surely purely will not come back out in that same state. Nearly two decades ago, a group of Athenians went to the National Storytelling Festival held each year in Jonesborough, TN, and as a result, they were hooked. The 'tellers "had them at hello," to the extent that the trusty band of travelers teamed up with the seasoned band of 'tellers, and 19 years ago, the first Athens Storytelling Festival took its rightful place as one of the most marvelous parts of autumn in Athens. In addition, the 'tellers have made it very clear that Athens is one of their favorite places to tell. The reason is because of the way we have loved them and made them part of our tribe. It has become a grand family reunion for us all. This year the 'tellers are from among the OGs from the first festival held in 2006: Donald Davis, Carmen Deedy, Bil Lepp, and Andy Offutt Irwin. Recently, I spoke with Leah Oakley, who is the president of the Athens Storytelling Festival Board. She happens to be a teller her-

self, having personally studied under the tutelage of veteran teller Donald Davis. Leah is one of many people who works tirelessly to give "kids of all ages" the opportunity to experience expert delivery of "tales, tunes, and tons of fun." The festival will be held in the Big Tent once more on the Athens State University Campus. There are free events in addition to "School Days," which is the opportunity for local students (whether public, private, or homeschooled) to attend special sessions designed just for them. Once again, our local legislators have made it possible for students to attend at no charge. We are the only city in the nation that does this, and we thank our representatives and local sponsors who make it possible for kids to imbibe important life lessons that are "the spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine go down." All four of the tellers will participate in School Days

Here is the schedule:

Tuesday, October 16 at 5:30 p.m.

Student 'Teller Competition to be held at Athens-Limestone Public Library. The winners will be able to compete for a chance to tell at the Thursday, October 23rd session to be held in the big tent. There will be one winner selected from the following



grade levels: 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th, 7th and 8th, and then 9th-12th.

Monday, Oct 20 from 5-7:30 p.m.

Donald Davis will be presenting "The Full Story: Inspiring Learning Through Storytelling." Dinner will be served in Sandridge Hall from 5 -6 p.m., and those reservations are now closed. However, the workshop that will be held in McCandless Hall is free and open to the public. Mr. Davis is especially hoping that education majors will attend. It will be well worth your time to learn about the power of story from the master himself.

Tuesday-Thursday, October 21 - October 23

School Days -- Kids from throughout Limestone County will attend all three days, and I can say from experience that this is my favorite event. To watch students actually be engaged with something other than a smartphone is refreshing, and watching

them laugh through listening and imagining is delightful. Donald Davis, Carmen Deedy, Bil Lepp and Andy Offutt Irwin will be the 'tellers for School Days

Tuesday Night, October 21 - 6:00 p.m.

Student 'Teller Showcase is the opportunity for the young 'tellers to trot out their talent under the Big Tent. Everyone is invited, and admission is free. Winners get to tell at the opening event on Thursday pm.

Thursday Night 7:30 p.m.

The Olio, which can mean either a delicious, spicy stew or a miscellaneous collection of things, is the night in which all of the tellers give a "sampling of their wares," in preparation for the Friday and Saturday events. The winners of the student competition will also tell their stories.

Friday-Saturday 9 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

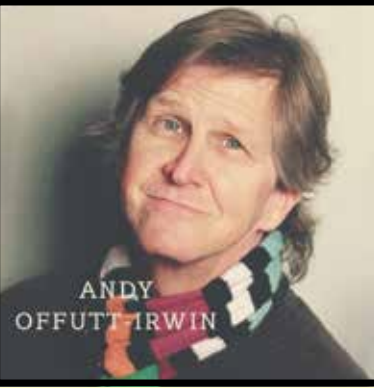
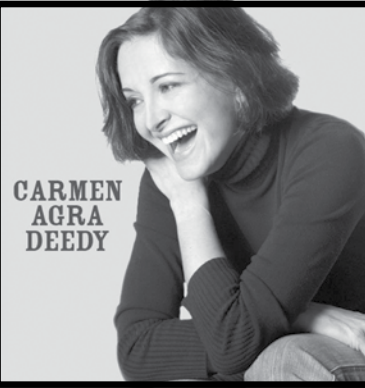
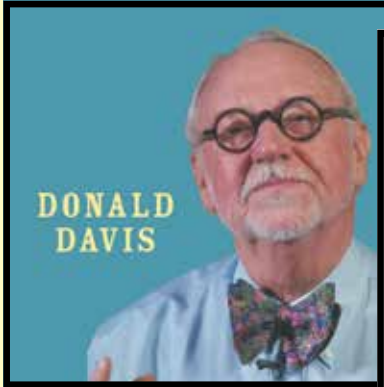
The festival in full swing! At 9:15 p.m. on Friday night, you can attend the Ghost

Walk, which will be conducted around the Athens State University campus. Ticket holders are free, all others are \$10. Athens State students will be dressed in character. This is NOT the same event as Tourism's Haunts Walk or the Cemetery Stroll.

There will be food trucks, and Café 1822 will be open. Of course, wonderful restaurants abound in Athens and are within walking distance of the Big Tent.

In addition, Tim Lowrey will be performing his stellar one-man performance of Dickens's Christmas Carol on December 14, at Athens State, and be on the lookout for the Sundown Stories Series to be held several times this year.

There you have it, ladies and gentlemen! The 2025 Athens Storytelling Festival is almost here, and info as well as ticket purchases are at athensstorytellingfestival.com. See you there!





Clean, Green And Beautiful

It's Cleanup Time

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

Last year, Athens-Limestone Tourism won the bid to host the Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee Rural Tourism Conference, which will be October 20-22. They will be hosting around 250 people from other states and counties to highlight some of Athens

and Limestone County's coolest attractions. This conference will be based downtown, and in an effort to look our very best, we are hosting a city cleanup! Operation Clean Sweep will be on October 18, from 8 a.m.-noon. Since we have a lot of ground to cover, we will have two different sign-

in stations, one on Kelli Drive off Highway 72, and one at the Athens-Limestone Public Library. The Athens-Limestone Public Library sign-in will be for volunteers who choose to work in or around downtown, the Farmer's Market, library, and the Alabama Veter-





ans Museum. The Veterans Museum is where the conference will be based, but the attendees will be shopping, dining at the Farmer's Market, and they will have walking tours of the Arts & Entertainment district and the historic district. We'd like to make a good impression, so we're going to need some help.

The second sign-in station will be located on Kelli Drive. Volunteers in this area will focus on Kelli Drive, Audubon Lane, Cool Springs Drive, and Braly Blvd. We will not be picking up along Hwy 72 because it's way too dangerous. Hopefully, we have plenty of volunteers and we can pick up on the north side of 72 as well. These areas are around the hotels where our guests will be staying. We aren't limited to these areas by

any means; these are just our focus areas.

Each volunteer will be given a safety vest, gloves, litter grabber, and bags. All supplies will need to be turned in when the volunteer is finished -- and no, you don't have to work the entire time. There will be someone stationed at the sign-in table the entire time. Each volunteer will be required to sign a Hold Harmless form when they sign in for supplies. Volunteers under 18 will need a form signed by a parent or guardian. We also ask that all volunteers wear tennis shoes or boots. If you need a sheet signed for volunteer hours, make sure to have it there that day, and we will sign for you!



OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

OCTOBER 18, 2025

8AM-12PM

Sign-in Station #1
Athens-Limestone Public Library
603 South Jefferson Street

Sign-in Station #2
Kelli Drive
(in the circle by Hampton Inn)

Volunteers will be provided gloves, litter grabbers, bags and safety vests. Boots or tennis shoes must be worn.

How to Volunteer:

Each volunteer must sign a Hold Harmless form. Volunteers under 18 must have a form signed by a parent or guardian to participate. Email KALBCares@gmail.com for a form. They will also be available at sign-in stations the day of the cleanup.



Become a Fan



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

LCCI Is Now Community Table, And Loving Limestone County Is Still Its Reason

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

the Board realized that the partnership with the 40+ foundational churches needed to expand into the community as the mission and number of clients needing support was growing. Therefore, the Community Table Concept emerged. Their function has grown and transformed over the years, and their mission Scripture remains the same: Matthew 25:35, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me."

Recently, I met with Sarah Chadwell and Deanna Fike to get more background on what, how, and most importantly why they have chosen this place as a ministerial "home." Their prayer is that you will understand the Community Table needs both churches AND the community to help support families in crisis.

For Deanna, who spent years organizing donations in the back of the building and never saw herself as a manager, it began over a decade ago while on an extended trip in an RV where she observed the extensive homeless community there. Coming back to Athens, LCCI/Community Table seemed like a natural fit.

Sarah Chadwell is a Community Table board member, and has been a part of several local charitable organizations for many years. She comes from a background of broadcast journalism, and has gotten to deal with the complexi-

ties of the problem from the standpoint of reporting about it fairly and truthfully in the media. Sarah told me that the name change was the result of several factors; first and foremost was the need to create inclusion and collaboration with the community alongside the churches in order to better meet the growing needs in our city and county. In addition, it was felt that the name Community Table better reflects who they are and the partnerships they need to support local families.

Sarah went on to discuss some key points regarding the mission that will help to get the word out -- both to people who need what Community Table "brings to the table," and people who want to volunteer or support the mission in order to "set the Table."

The Community Table is in a central location in Downtown Athens on the corner of Jefferson and Hobbs, right across from 1st United Methodist Church of Athens (which supplies the building space), and one of the blessings is that the location helps to lower prices when it comes to procuring food and supplies. Several local stores and restaurants are involved in donating surplus non-perishables, as well as bakery items and even some fresh items. Those places include Publix, Panera, Hometown Grocery, and Aldi's. People are also encouraged to bring produce from their own gardens if they are experiencing a literal "bumper crop" and don't have enough physical neighbors who can use it.



Another service is assistance with rent or utilities. Sometimes hard times just happen, and there are trained staff people at the Community Table who are able to look at the situation and make an equitable decision as to how to help appropriately with the funding available for those projects.

As crucial as food is, the Community Table is also highly vested in education, and sponsored the Daisy and John McCormack Backpack Event at the beginning of this school year. Kids in need could once again have new backpacks that were filled with supplies for that all important first-day-of-school experience. Community Table also partners with LCDEA for an education opportunity called Elevate Limestone which provides no-cost adult education to obtain a

GED or obtain skills such as welding and medical training.

The Community Table is open five days a week, and is a dependable, ethical, and well-run outfit that truly provides a winning situation for both recipients and those who support the mission.

Sarah also added, "We hope that the community and churches will join with our mission into the future. This partnership with our foundational churches and community will allow the Community Table to support our families well into the coming years."

Lastly, the Community Table is a wonderful place to count your blessings and give them back. The fellowship, the camaraderie, and the joy that you have made a difference in the life of a

family just can't be topped. So, come, partake, and find YOUR seat "at The Table!"

The Community Table

201 N. Jefferson Street
Athens, AL 35611

NW corner of
N. Jefferson St. and Hobbs St.

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 168
Athens, AL 35612

Phone
(256) 262-0671

Email
communitytableathens.org

Food Assistance Hours

Monday through Friday:
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

General Assistance Hours

Monday, Tuesday, and
Thursday: 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.



Captain's Log

#Thankful

by Brenda Wilkerson

On a cloudy day, right before Thanksgiving, there was a tragic house fire close enough to the school that the billowing dark smoke could be seen from the school playground and classroom windows. Eerie sirens seemed to never end as many fire departments joined together to fight this destructive monster.

When the kids boarded our home on wheels, there was deep concern and chatter about what their eyes saw and ears heard. As Ol' Yeller departed, this captain calmly explained that we would be passing by the neighborhood of the house fire. I asked each one to try and imagine if this was their home and to be quiet and respectful as we passed by. I asked if anyone was a praying soul, to think

a thoughtful prayer for the precious family that had just lost everything. I even offered the floor if anyone wanted to pray allowed. Many agreed to pray in their hearts but surprisingly, at least 20 hands shot up.

Brother P began with his eyes clinched shut and face toward heaven, "Heavenly Father... One by one, these kids took advantage of the opportunity to freely pray and offer warm thoughts for this family. Although we could not hear everyone's prayer offering, their brothers and sisters around them would say a hearty, "Amen!" As the prayers concluded, the rest of us would respectfully repeat, "Amen." Y'all, this went on for 10 whole minutes. A respectful hush and then a



low murmuring of voices finished the route. Warm tears briefly released behind my reflective glasses to symbolize the beautiful moment I just experienced. These kids, my kids, His kids are amazing souls!

Heavenly Father, we thank you that no one was hurt in this fire. We thank you that we can feel a piece of their pain through sympathy and empathy. We are grateful that we can freely express ourselves in the moments that call for immediate re-

sponse. We love you Lord for Your provision and the precious souls who carry us through the hard times. In JESUS' name... (and everyone said) ~

#onceuponaschoolbus3

~Brenda




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Slinkard On Success

“S” Is For Success

by D. A. Slinkard

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

Nine months of 2025 are now complete, and there are a mere three months remaining in this year. We are now to letter “S” in our series and our word is “Success.” In the last article, we touched on results, and my question is: Are you getting the results you hoped for in 2025?

You must be honest and open with yourself concerning what you have or have not achieved. There are some things we can change, and there are some things we cannot impact at all. We need to focus on what we can change and make the necessary adjustments to hit our desired results.

The definition of success is going to vary from person to person, and this is something we all must be conscious of. We must take the time to think about what our non-negotiables will be, and these non-negotiables is something we are not willing to compromise on. It is something we are willing to give 100 percent effort in making sure we accomplish success. Do not be fooled into thinking you can give 110 percent because it is just not possible. There is no one that can give this much effort, and though it sounds good, we cannot believe this fallacy. Typically, the 110 percenters only give 40-50 percent.

You have three months left to make something

out of your year, and if you are not careful, the three months are going to dwindle to just looking forward to the upcoming year. Go ahead and decide how the rest of your year is going to play out. Go ahead and decide now whether you are going to be the hero or the zero with the time you have remaining.

Are you going to do something great to make your family proud or are you going to be all right with achieving the same old mediocre results as in years past? Sadly, too many people are going to be all right with just barely doing enough to get by.

Only you can decide how this year is going to end for you, and I already know most people are going to end up making ex-

cuses for why they cannot get motivated to make the necessary changes they already know need to be made. Many people have already given up on this year when they should be motivated to make something out of each day. Why give up now when you have so much time left? That is just it, though, a person must realize they have something worth fighting for. What are the things worth fighting for in your life? Take the time to name that which is important to you. You may surprise yourself when you realize how much you do have worth fighting for.

In my life, the thing worth fighting for is my desire to provide for my wife and my daughters. These three individuals are the motivation I need

to find success. What motivation do you have? What motivating force do you have for people who would want to see you succeed in 2025? Take the time and think about these people. Take the time and think about your motivational reasons, and then implement a plan to achieve your desired results. However, many people struggle with this concept right here because we all know what we want to achieve, yet not everyone is willing to do what is required to achieve those results.

It is not too late to make something out of 2025, but you must make the conscious decision to do something today. It does not matter what you have done or have not done thus far in 2025, these things are all in the past. The only thing you can

focus on now is the future and what lies ahead for you.

Do not get caught up on what you have not accomplished and start thinking about what you will accomplish. Go ahead and determine your motivation for the remainder of this year, and then make the decision to just do it. The biggest mistake people make in life is they fail to make the decision to just do it. They try to plan, plan, plan, but they never take the time to just go do it. If you want success, just make it happen and stop putting off today what needed to be done yesterday. You can achieve what you want, but it is going to take effort and work to achieve success.





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Learning As A Lifestyle

The Other Side Of The Storm: *Why Staying The Course Unlocks Growth*

by Eric Betts

Assistant Director, Curtis Coleman Center for Religion Leadership and Culture at Athens State University

When the path gets rocky, many are tempted to turn back, mistaking turbulence for a sign of failure. But resistance, discomfort, and uncertainty are not detours—they are the terrain of transformation. The myth of smooth progress has seduced too many into abandoning their callings prematurely. In truth, every meaningful pursuit—whether personal, professional, or spiritual—will encounter friction. That friction is not a flaw in the journey; it is proof that you are moving. To refuse to quit is to honor the process, to trust that the storm is shaping you, not destroying you.

Growth lives on the other side of grit. Productivity is not born in ease but in perseverance through complexity. Relationships deepen not when everything is perfect, but when people choose to

stay, to listen, to rebuild after misunderstanding. The rocky moments are the curriculum of maturity. They teach patience, sharpen discernment, and reveal character. When you endure, you don't just survive... you evolve. You become someone who can carry more, love deeper, and lead with wisdom forged in fire.

So when the road buckles beneath you, don't misread the moment. It's not a signal to quit—it's an invitation to grow. The breakthrough you seek is often hidden behind the breakdown you fear. Stay the course. Refuse to romanticize escape. Instead, lean into the tension, knowing that every step forward is a declaration: I am becoming. And on the other side of this struggle, there is clarity, fruitfulness, and communion waiting to meet you.



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The Alternative Approach

The Universal Importance Of Nutritional Supplementation

by Roy Williams

In today's world, nutritional supplementation is no longer optional—it is essential. While the human body was designed to thrive on whole, nutrient-rich foods, modern lifestyles, and agricultural practices have created an environment where achieving optimal nutrition through diet alone has become nearly impossible. Nutritional supplementation bridges this gap, empowering individuals to reclaim control over their health, performance, and longevity.

1. Soil Depletion and Nutrient Loss

A century ago, one could obtain the full spectrum of vitamins and minerals from fresh produce grown in nutrient-rich soil. Today, industrial agriculture prioritizes yield over nutrition. Repeated cropping, chemical fertilizers, and erosion have stripped the soil of vital trace minerals such as magnesium, selenium, and zinc—key elements for cellular function and immunity. Studies have shown that fruits and vegetables grown today contain 40–60% fewer nutrients than those grown 50 years ago. Even with a balanced diet, individuals cannot obtain sufficient nutrition without supplementation. To rebuild cellular health and maintain biochemical balance, supplementation is not merely beneficial—it is required.

2. Modern Diets and Lifestyle Stress

The average person consumes processed, convenience-based foods high in calories but low in nutrients. These foods are often stripped of vitamins, minerals, and enzymes essential for digestion,

repair, and energy production. Combined with caffeine, alcohol, sugar, and environmental toxins, the modern diet taxes the body's detoxification systems and accelerates nutrient depletion.

Chronic stress—mental, physical, and emotional—further compounds this issue. Stress consumes B vitamins, magnesium, and antioxidants at an accelerated rate. Without replenishment, individuals experience fatigue, poor sleep, inflammation, and weakened immunity. Supplementation replenishes what stress depletes, restoring equilibrium and enabling the body to function at its full potential.

3. Aging and Declining Absorption

As people age, nutrient absorption efficiency declines due to reduced stomach acid, enzyme production, and cellular transport mechanisms. Even those consuming a pristine diet may suffer deficiencies simply because their bodies can no longer assimilate nutrients effectively. Supplements, particularly those in bioavailable or pH-balanced forms, ensure that older adults receive the nutrients their cells require to maintain vitality, bone density, joint function, and hormonal balance. The right supplementation program can slow biological aging and extend healthspan—not just lifespan.

4. Environmental Toxins and Increased Demand

The human body today faces toxic exposure unprecedented in history—heavy metals, pesticides, microplastics, and electromagnetic stress. These elements disrupt cellular me-



tabolism, damage DNA, and burden detoxification organs like the liver and kidneys. Nutrients such as glutathione, vitamin C, MSM, selenium, and chlorophyll are vital in neutralizing these toxins. Without supplementation, the body's defenses are overwhelmed. Through targeted supplementation, one can fortify natural detox pathways and preserve organ health.

5. Athletic Performance and Recovery

For active individuals, nutrient demands are even higher. Exercise increases oxidative stress, electrolyte loss, and protein turnover. To build lean muscle, repair tissues, and prevent injury, the body requires elevated levels of amino acids, antioxidants, and minerals. Supplements like MSM, vitamin C, electrolytes, and adaptogenic herbs accelerate recovery, enhance oxygen utilization, and improve joint integrity. They allow athletes to train harder, recover faster, and perform better—naturally.

6. Genetic and Metabolic

Differences

Each person's genetic makeup influences how they metabolize nutrients. Some individuals require more folate, B12, or magnesium due to variations in methylation or enzyme activity. Nutritional supplementation allows for personalization—meeting each individual's unique biochemical needs. It transforms health from a one-size-fits-all model into a precision-based system built on awareness and self-responsibility.

7. Prevention over Prescription

The modern medical model treats symptoms with drugs rather than addressing root causes. Nutritional supple-

mentation shifts the paradigm back toward prevention and empowerment. When the body receives the raw materials it needs, it can repair, regenerate, and resist disease naturally. Supplementation is not about dependency—it is about sovereignty. It equips individuals with the tools to stay strong, independent, and free from the cycle of sickness and prescription drugs.

Building Health through Truth and Action

True health begins with truth. The truth is that modern living depletes, distracts, and diminishes the human body unless we act intentionally. Nutritional supplementation is the bridge between potential and performance, between survival and vitality. It is a declaration of self-governance—an act of responsibility that says, "I will provide my body with what it needs to thrive."

In a world where weakness is normalized, supplementation empowers strength. It is the cornerstone of preventive health, cellular regeneration, and personal sovereignty. For those who seek to live long, serve others, and build a lasting legacy, supplementation is not luxury—it is law.

Your Friend in Health,
Roy P Williams



A Dog Named Dexter

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

- Proverbs 23:7

Over eleven years ago, a dog we named Dexter came bouncing into our lives. He was a skinny, stray, yellow, Labrador-retriever mix, with fleas and worms. And he had the happiest, most loving personality of any dog I have ever met.

In the beginning, Dexter was a wild man. His energy level was always set on high. He even ran in his sleep! We didn't think he had ever been in a house before because when we first brought him in, he leapt over our furniture like it was an obstacle course. He ran through our house knocking things over and having the best time, smiling all the while! Yes, Dexter smiles! As much as I loved Dexter already, we knew he needed some discipline if we were ever going to have

peace restored to our home. Did you know you can send your dog to Doggie Boot Camp? Yup. We dropped Dexter off with the promise that he would be "manageable" in three weeks. When we returned, we had to go through some training too, but Dex was much, much better...as long as he was on a leash. My husband and I both worked during the day, so we had to find some way for Dexter to relieve his boundless energy. We decided to take him to doggie daycare. It was there that we discovered two things: First, he could be worn out! And second, that Dexter loves people, and other dogs, not so much. He was the likeable kid in school, always getting into trouble. He was expelled...twice.

So what does my Dexter story have to do with mental health? Three months ago, Dexter was diagnosed with mast cell cancer. It's

bad. But did you know that there is a veterinary oncologist in Nashville? Dogs can receive chemo treatments, and actually tolerate it better than humans. We were told that without chemo, Dex had about three months to live. With chemo, he has about 6-9 months. We have heard several times from those who are working with and treating Dexie, the following comments: "He doesn't know he has cancer, does he?" and "He is the happiest dog on chemo that we have ever seen!" Wow! This got me to thinking about whether attitude can affect a cancer outcome. Can a positive attitude prolong a person's/dog's life? And conversely, does a negative attitude make cancer grow?

Attitude is defined as "a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something." This attitude is often reflected in one's behavior. I believe, as do many

researchers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals that attitude has a unique and profound way of affecting our daily lives. For example, I realize that it is easier to adopt a positive attitude when life circumstances are generally good and problems are few. But when conditions change drastically in a negative way, it's not as easy to keep a positive outlook, especially when those changes involve an illness. A cancer diagnosis can obviously affect attitude. Having to accept a life-altering disease can cause feelings of hopelessness, which can lead to a negative point of view. But it's not necessary to allow the weight of negativity to lead you down the path of loss of control. Those feelings travel through the cycle of fear and sadness, bringing us back to that negative outlook. Mental health counselors can help those with cancer to not only recognize these emotions, and the change in relationships, but to feel more upbeat and have a better quality of life. There is no research study to support the idea that counseling interventions can reduce the risk of cancer, keep cancer from coming back, or help someone with cancer to live longer. So, with that in mind,

why then should someone diagnosed with cancer **choose** to adopt a positive attitude if it's not necessarily going to prolong life? In my own experience, I've learned that I feel better -- emotionally, mentally, and physically -- when I keep a positive attitude. By finding ways to look on the bright side, we can overcome negative circumstances. If nothing else, it can become a helpful coping mechanism.

No one has the right to expect a person/dog with cancer to have a positive outlook all the time, because fighting cancer is extremely difficult. **Choosing** a positive attitude can affect someone's mental and emotional well-being in a constructive way. And by choosing to think good thoughts, our behavior can follow. And with my sweet Dexter, his joy for living and happy disposition continue to propel him through this life. We are grateful for Dexter every day. I'll keep you posted on his journey in articles to follow.

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who divides her time between her own private practice in Huntsville and providing personal counseling services at Athens State University.

I choose to make the rest of my life the best of my life!



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Courtroom Karma

by Phil Williams

Former FBI Director James Comey was just indicted on two counts related to obstruction of justice and lying to Congress. Somewhere Lieutenant General Michael Flynn is having a fine day as he reads the headlines.

I also imagine a lot of deep-staters in DC just spit out their coffee. Washington, D.C. is "a city that floats on a rolling sea of leaks," said legal scholar Jonathan Turley. Professional liars and leakers are surely deleting text messages and scrubbing their emails. But Comey's indictment isn't the only bit of courtroom karma that broke into the open in recent days.

In a landmark smack-down worthy of an MMA octagon, Atlanta District Attorney Fani Willis got her fanny handed to her by the Georgia Supreme Court. You remember Fani? The activist DA who so grievously committed acts of impropriety in her rushed zeal to get Trump that the only way to restore confidence in the justice system was to fully and completely remove her from the case. The Georgia Supreme Court declined to review her removal this week. Fani is off the case, never more to pursue the matter herself. I suspect the Georgia case against

Trump is now over, and should never have happened at all. Fani didn't lose her job; yet she was, in reality, fired for committing incomprehensible, impudent, unethical, and potentially illegal acts such that the senior courts in her state won't even let her continue. No, Fani wasn't fired. But she was torched.

On the heels of Fani's legal demise, we also learned that disgraced former FBI agent Peter Strzok had his lawsuit against the government dismissed this week. Strzok was fired for cause, and rightfully so. He then alleged that his First Amendment rights were violated in his firing related in part to his texting of insults of President Trump on his official phone. Judge Amy Berman Jackson, an Obama appointee, opined clearly that Strzoks "interest in expressing his opinions about political candidates on his FBI phone at that time was outweighed by the FBI's interest in avoiding the appearance of bias..." Strzok is done.

Nothing beats the left's abuse of the justice system. Hunter Biden received a daddy's pardon for anything and everything he did, or could have done, while people like Rudy Giuliani, Steve Bannon, Peter Navarro, and Michael Flynn had their lives

ripped away by zealous prosecutors eager to get Trump.

And then came karma. James Comey, author of *Saving Justice: Truth, Transparency, and Trust*, just had his propensity for mistruth, lack of transparency, and lies questioned by a federal grand jury in a generally liberal venue.

It was Comey who authorized the entrapment interview of Flynn that cost him his job as National Security Advisor and the subsequent four years of his life. By his own confession, Comey intentionally leaked classified information to outside sources to put himself in a better personal position. Comey is now accused of lying to Congress. Comey is also the man who pressed forward on the "Crossfire Hurricane" investigation of the alleged Russia collusion hoax that tore our nation's public discourse to shreds for several years despite knowing the base elements had been fabricated by and on behalf of the Hillary Clinton campaign -- a travesty of weak evidence that could have led to any number of catastrophes on the world stage, to include war with Russia. Comey chose to wag the dog with Russia, Russia, Russia, then he lied about it, he leaked it, wrote a book, and went on a speaking tour.

Comey will get to spend his book advance on legal fees.

The left is predictably screaming that what left-wing activist prosecutors and judges have perpetrated against Trump and other conservatives for years is what we are seeing now in the opposite direction.

Trump had nothing to do with Fani Willis being removed. Her prurient lifestyle was her own undoing.

Trump had nothing to do with Peter Strzok's case being dismissed. Strzok was just plainly and palpably wrong.

And Trump was not sitting on the grand jury in one of the most liberal districts in the nation when they handed down an indictment of James Comey after hearing the evidence, which I am sure included his own admissions of wrongdoing. Comey's own words and that of his former co-workers are his worst enemies.

Should Trump want justice against people like Comey? Of course! Why would he not? Wouldn't anyone who had been subject to attempted ruin want justice against their attackers? They tried to bankrupt him, jail him, dishonor him, ruin his businesses, ruin his family life. Of course, he wants evildoers to face their day in a courtroom and give account for their actions.

It is disingenuous to think otherwise. This is about justice.

Comey will have his day in court. He will hire the best attorneys he can find. And I hope that when it comes time to hear a verdict that General Flynn is sitting in the gallery smiling at Comey and watching as justice comes back around and courtroom karma sets in hard.

Yeah...Fani got her fanny handed to her. Strzok was struck down. Comey came along for a perp walk. It may have all combined to save Lady Justice in the process. They all fooled around and found out about courtroom karma.

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.





Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Blessed*

by Anna Hamilton

know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28. The presence of His Spirit within us is proof that His favor rests on us, regardless of what life looks like on the outside.

We are blessed with forgiveness and grace. Through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, we are blessed with complete forgiveness of sins. No past mistake, no present struggle, and no future failure can strip us of God’s grace. Psalm 32:1 says, “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” This is the greatest blessing of all—knowing that we stand clean and free before God.

When we are blessed, we are then to be a blessing to others. God never blesses us just for ourselves. Our identity as “blessed” comes with a purpose: to reflect His goodness to others. Just as Abraham was blessed to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:2), we are called to pour out God’s love, encouragement, and generosity into the lives of those around us. When we walk in this truth, our lives become channels of God’s blessing to the world.

As Christians, we are living from a place of blessing. To embrace the identity of being blessed in Christ means to live with gratitude, faith, and confidence. Gratitude, because every good gift comes from our Father. Faith, because we trust His promises even when we cannot see them yet. Confidence, because we know

our identity is secure in Christ and cannot be taken away.

To declare, “I am blessed,” is not arrogance—it is agreement with what God has already spoken over us. Our blessing is eternal, spiritual, and purposeful. When we know who we are in Christ, we can walk each day with joy, peace, and the assurance that we are deeply loved and richly blessed.

Being blessed in Christ is not about having a perfect life or everything we want—it’s about having everything we truly need in Him. Through Jesus, we are forgiven, loved, and filled with His Spirit. Our blessing isn’t fragile or temporary; it is eternal and unshakable. Even in trials, we can confidently say, “I am blessed,” because God is with us, for us, and working all things for our good. I am blessed in Christ—fully loved, completely forgiven, and forever favored.

This week’s recipe is a hearty soup that can hang out in the crock pot all day. Its perfect for an easy weeknight meal or on a football Saturday. My family loves this soup with ground beef, but you can swap that out for ground chicken, ground turkey, or even your favorite meat substitute. I hope you love this soup as much as we do!

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

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