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E-MAIL: info@athensnowal.com

ADVERTISING:
Ali Elizabeth: 256-468-9425

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Attorney Caroline Mathews: A Love Of Law, Language And Athens

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

When Caroline Mathews of Mathews Law was an undergrad at Auburn, she majored in English literature and minored in studio art. She was a National Merit Presidential scholar, made the Dean's List and won several other awards. Caroline had grown up around law all her life, and had worked part time as both a runner and an intern for her dad, Bill. In high

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Getting To Know Your Limestone County Commissioners: Derrick Gatlin, District 3

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Tanner native and Limestone County District 3 Commissioner Derrick Gatlin essentially got into public service as a teenager. The 1990 Tanner High School grad joined the Tanner Volunteer Fire Department when he was 18, and is still at it. "There was a man at the fire department by the name of Gilbert Crutchfield who survived Pearl Harbor, one of only two in Limestone County. He took me under his wing, taught me about firefighting, and instilled the importance of public service into me," Derrick told me. At that time, firefighting was largely

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Publisher / Editor
Ali Turner

Copy Editor
Yvonne Dempsey

Graphic Design
Jonathan Hamilton

Web Design
Teddy Wolcott

Contributing Writers

D. A. Slinkard
Anna Hamilton
JP Plott
Claire Tribble
Eric Betts
Roy Williams
Brenda Wilkerson
Stephanie Reynolds
Nick Niedzwiecki
Lisa Phillipart
Donna Clark
Detri McGhee
Jackie Warner
Deb Kitchenmaster

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Send Inquiries to P.O. Box 428, Athens, AL 35612, or call (256) 468-9425. Emails are preferred, send email to info@athensnowal.com

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Publisher's Point

2025, A Year To "Surthrive"

Usually, this type of op-ed is reserved for the end of December -- a look back at the previous year, dreams and plans for the new year coming up, and it's designed to be retrospective, introspective, and hopefully helpful as to its total perspective.

What inspired the column and its timing was a question that I was asked this week by my dear friend and mentor, Kathrine Lee. Kathrine is a highly successful businesswoman, executive coach, speaker, author, maven of personal development, and most importantly to me, a true lover of God and people. She and her husband, Michael, founded a place that is one of my favorite places on the planet-- Pure Hope Ranch. And, true miracles

happen there in the lives of young women who are being restored from being trafficked. Here. In America. Not Thailand. Not Dubai.

The question was, "Look back from a year ago to now. What has changed?" I can't exactly explain it, but I know that I have grown on the inside. It might not be obvious on the outside, but the Battle of Life has been relentless and fierce, and often has made me have to use my "tool kit." The Good Book says that there are "weapons of our warfare" which we must use quickly, continually, and precisely in order to not just *survive*, but to do what I have coined a word to describe it -- to "*surthrive*." Those weapons are "mighty through

God to the pulling down of strongholds." A good picture is a fortress that is destroyed plank by plank, and the planks (thoughts) are taken back to the Heavenly Commander-in-Chief as proof of the victory He won 2,000 years ago. It's messy, exhausting, and worth it. The year 2025 has been *that* year for me and for many. Unspeakable losses and victories have kissed this year.

So, in answer to Kathrine's question regarding what has changed the most in 2025, I would say that I am more grateful. Every November we do something as a nation to give thanks, and let's just say that in 2025, I am thankful for having been taught new ways by Kathrine and others

to be more thankful. I am thankful that I have the freedom and the opportunity to express that thanks because of soldiers and first-responders who have given up their safety to keep me safe. I am thankful for farmers who sweat so I can shop for my food in air-conditioned supermarkets. I am thankful for family and friends who stay close and watch out for me in ways great and small. I am thankful for a hard-working, truck-driving husband of 30 years on November 24. I am thankful that I can worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and speak freely about the love of that God's Son. No one is waiting outside of WKAC 1080 on Mondays after I get finished with my radio show to arrest me because they didn't like what I had to say.

And, for the purposes of this *Point*, I am more thankful than ever for all things *Athens Now*. To our crew and our readers, thank you for making it possible for me to walk in my why, and part of that is to help you *surthrive*. Happy Thanksgiving 2025.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

Ali Elizabeth Turner
Athens Now
Information & Inspiration
256-468-9425
ali@athensnowal.com
Website:
www.athensnowal.com



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An Eight-Decade Tradition Of Thanks

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Bob Charles was seventeen when his father signed the permission slip for him to enlist in the U.S. Navy. He had older brothers who were already serving, and in that day, it was the firm resolve of Americans to do their part as members of the Greatest Generation to unashamedly make America...and the world...safe for democracy. This was even true in the days immediately following the defeat of Japan by the Allied forces.

In 1943 Bob's ship was launched, and actually was paid for by a civilian, a woman by the name of Mrs. F.M. Leslie. It was built in Pittsburgh, and took to the waters nearly two years to the day before Japan surrendered. It was simply known as LST-42, which was the designation in general of a tank landing ship, and prior to Thanksgiving of 1945, was part of the invasion of Iwo Jima as well as other operations. LSTs were never given names, only known by their numbers, and this one served exclusively in the Pacific theatre.

Bob loves to tell stories of his time in the Navy. One of Bob's favorite "capers" was that the skipper needed to off-load a jeep and get it to dry land, and

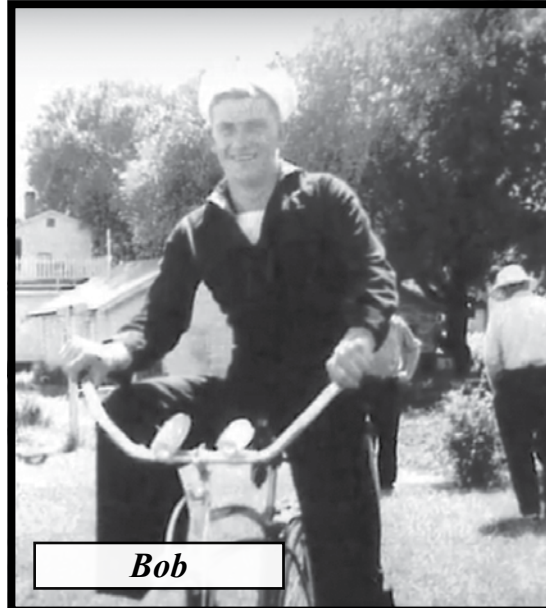
tasked Bob with getting it there. The LSTs were only supposed to be carrying tanks or trucks, along with troops, and my guess was that the skipper used to tool around on some of the smaller islands in "his" jeep. Where he got it, no one knows today, but seeing as Okinawa was one of the larger USN ports in Japan after Hiroshima, the skipper could not risk being subjected to a surprise inspection and have "contraband" found on board. So, Bob went ashore and "traded" the jeep for six cases of beer.

However, there is one story that is now 80 years old that gets told every year in the Charles household, and it is about Thanksgiving of 1945. The LST-42 was docked at Okinawa, and Bob was down below. He received a ship's phone call from up on the main deck that he was to report immediately topside. He had no idea why, but when he got there, he laid eyes for the first time in three years on his brother, Buddy. Buddy was stationed on dry land around 50 miles away, and had hitchhiked 50 miles to come and surprise his brother on Thanksgiving Day. I can only imagine the reunion.

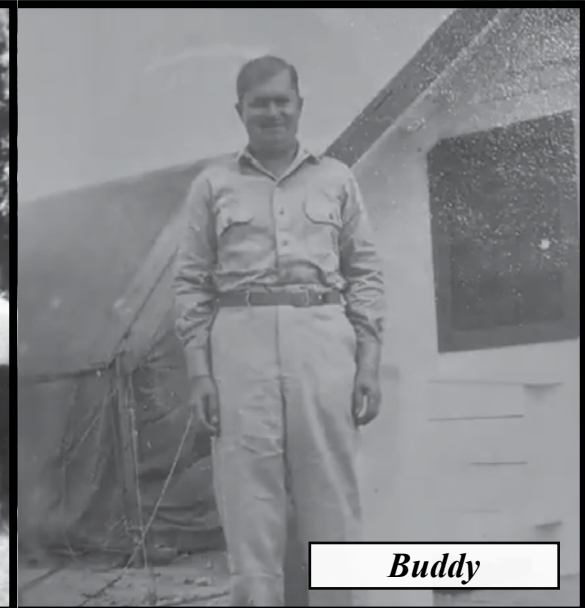
During WWII, it was not at all uncommon for men



Bob Charles



Bob



Buddy

to be gone from their families for two or three years, and R & R was rare. So were letters. I don't know how Buddy found out that Bob was going to be in

his "back yard," but that was a Thanksgiving they never forgot. They spent the day together, and then Buddy had to hitchhike back the 50 miles in order

to report back to duty the next day. Buddy died in his '50s, but it was a tradition in the Charles household to tell this tale every year at the Thanksgiving dinner table. The tradition continues to this day, but 97-year-old Bob has very few family members left to hear it. So, with joy he will tell it to any and all... the day 80 years ago when his brother surprised him and they broke bread. God bless the Charles menfolk, and Happy Thanksgiving.



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A Strong Foundation

by Donna Clark

For over thirty years, a small town in California, Imperial Beach, welcomed thousands of visitors from around the world to enjoy one weekend dedicated for their annual U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition. The beautiful sparkling blue waters were complimented by a shoreline filled with hundreds of competitors working their artistic talents in the sand. The crafters found themselves on the beach in the early morning, women and men using buckets, shovels, and straws to create mystical castles, cartoon characters, mythical creatures, and monuments. The sand was watered and packed as they shaped their designs. It was a labor of love which required amazing patience and detail. By the afternoon, the amazing sculptures were admired by visitors and judged by experts. Grand prizes were awarded to those most outstanding. But then came the tide and little by little those sculptures, so meticulously designed, were gradually washed away. Finally, all the grains of sand needed to build the beauties were washed back into the ocean, nothing left to be seen.

This event reminds me of words given us in Matthew 7:24-27. Storms are going to come. It doesn't matter your social status, what your religious affiliation may be or

how many hours a day you pray, it rains on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45). If our lives are not planted on a firm foundation, we are destined to collapse, just as those remarkable sand sculptures. The amount of time, energy, and attention to detail did not stop the tide from rolling in and taking away all of it, neither will all of our energies and best efforts stop the storms from coming to our lives.

Those sand sculptures took all of one day to build. A fun time in the sun with a light breeze from the ocean. Not an ongoing effort, just a short span of time. Now think of building a brick home. It takes

much effort on days that are beautiful and days that are not. It's a process that includes blood, sweat, and tears. Not a one day, fun-in-the-sun event, it's ongoing. Remember, once that house is built there is still the maintenance and upkeep to ensure the structure is kept at its best.

Think of the foundation that you are building for yourself and your family. A foundation that is secure and steady, the only one that can stand the storms of life. There is only one firm foundation that we can build our lives and dreams on and that is Jesus Christ. When you think you can't forgive the spouse who betrayed you, the

parent who abused you, or the child that broke your heart, remember that strong foundation will keep you standing through the darkest of times. When your faith is secure in Christ, you can keep working through the betrayal, the offense, and eventually love again like you've never been hurt. But that victory is never attainable in our own human effort and strength, it's only by the firm foundation we build our lives on that this peace can be attained. It's then that you can keep believing that God will pull you through when everything around you is crumbling. Then your family and friends see

you holding on, standing strong, and determined to not be destroyed.

So, build the strong foundation. Turn off the distractions of this world, the media, the negative people and thoughts, and tune into the right things. Things that will give you a positive return for your effort, things like prayer, meditating on God's word, being faithful in church attendance. Look at the true needs of others and invest in those less fortunate. Do these things now so that when the storms come to your home, your life, you will stand strong and finish well.

- Donna



Calendar of Events

Annual Christmas Ornament Available Now

The Limestone County Historical Society's annual Christmas ornament is available for purchase at Osborne's Jewelers. This year's ornament represents the Congressional Medal of Honor and highlights the Alabama Veterans Museum located in Athens. As always, this beautiful collector's item is gold plated and is numbered in a limited edition of 300. The cost is \$25.

2025 Athens-Limestone Tinsel Trail November 20 - December 31

Please join us for the time-honored tradition of the Athens-Limestone Tinsel Trail (formerly the "North Poll Stroll") open from November 20 - December 31! The Athens-Limestone Tourism Association will unveil the trail on November 20 with a tree lighting ceremony at 5pm. Big Spring Memorial Park, 350 Market Street E, Athens.

Athens-Limestone County Christmas Open House November 21-23

Join your Athens-Limestone County Chamber at the event of the year, where thousands bring their families out to shop, eat, ice skate, enjoy live entertainment, take photos with Santa, and so much more. 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Downtown Athens.

Holiday Farmers Market November 22

The Holiday Market encourages all of our local patrons to shop and eat quality fresh produce at the updated pavilion in downtown Athens this holiday season. 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM. Athens Farmers Market at Doug Gates Park. <https://athensmainstreet.org/athens-farmers-market/>

MTM Unity in the Community featuring Canton Jones November 23

Get ready to worship, be free and connect as we come together to celebrate faith, love, and unity across our community. Experience an electrifying performance by Canton Jones, along with local artists showcasing their gifts through music, liturgical dance, holy hip hop dance, and powerful testimonies and it is for all ages. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM. Alabama Veterans Museum Event Center, 114 W. Pryor St. Athens, AL 35611

Athens-Limestone County Christmas Parade December 4

The annual Athens-Limestone County Christmas Parade is ready to show off the magic of the holidays with this year's theme "Merry, Movies & Magic!" 5 - 7PM. Downtown Athens.

Christmas Column Lighting December 5

Athens State University. 300 N Beaty Street, Athens. 5:15PM. Please join the Athens State community in kicking off the holiday season! Come enjoy the Athens State Community Choir followed by seasonal refreshments and photos with Santa in the Glasgow Parlor.

15th Annual Sippin' Cider Festival December 13

The annual Sippin' Cider Festival encourages patrons from in and around Athens to walk, shop and eat in the vibrant Downtown Athens area. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Downtown Athens in and around the Limestone County Courthouse Square. 200 W. Washington St., Athens, AL. <https://athensmainstreet.org/sippin-cider/>

Farm City Christmas Market December 13

12-6pm. Join us for a Christmas Market! There will be live music, hot cocoa, cider, photos with Santa, activities for kids, arts & crafts, food trucks, local vendors from the farming and arts communities!! Oh and did we mention FREE Christmas Family Portraits?? Athens Farmers Market, 409 W Green St, Athens.

Tim Lowry presents Dickens' "Christmas Carol" December 14

2-4PM. McCandless Hall @ Athens State University, 300 North Beaty Street in Athens. Step into the magic of the season with master storyteller Tim Lowry as he brings Dickens' A Christmas Carol to life in a way that will captivate the whole family. With his signature wit, warmth, and unforgettable storytelling style, Tim transforms this beloved classic into an experience that feels both timeless and fresh. Laughter, wonder, and a few goosebumps are guaranteed as Scrooge's journey unfolds before your eyes. Make this enchanting Sunday afternoon part of your family's holiday tradition—you'll leave with hearts full of Christmas spirit and a story you'll talk about year after year.

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.



Health and Fitness

The 30-Minute Rule: *Why You Don't Need Hours to Get Healthy*

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



If you're like most people in our community, the biggest obstacle to getting healthy isn't motivation—it's time. Between work, kids, appointments, and the general chaos of life, the idea of squeezing in a long workout feels impossible. And when something feels impossible, it usually gets pushed to "tomorrow," which quickly turns into "next week," "next month," and eventually, "maybe one day."

But here's the truth that most people don't realize: you don't need hours every day to get healthier, stronger, or fitter. You just need 30 minutes.

At CrossFit Athens, we've seen time and time again that the most effective workouts aren't the longest—they're the ones you can consistently show up for. That's why we created our ROAR Express and 30-Minute Spin classes: fast, efficient sessions designed for everyday people who need fitness to fit their life.

And yes—they are truly 30 minutes from start to finish. You walk in, get it done, and walk out feeling like a new person.

Why 30 minutes works so well

Short workouts tap into something called intensity over duration. Instead of dragging through an hour on a treadmill, a well-structured 30-minute class pushes your body just enough to create real change—without leaving you exhausted or stealing your entire evening.

Here's what happens in those 30 minutes:

- Your heart rate elevates quickly
- Your muscles are challenged efficiently
- You burn more calories in less time
- Your metabolism stays elevated after you leave
- You build strength, endurance, and confidence without burnout

For busy parents, business owners, shift workers, teachers, or anyone trying to juggle a real life...this is the perfect formula.

ROAR Express: Small Time, Big Results

ROAR Express is our signature 30-minute HIIT-style class that blends treadmills, ski ergs, assault bikes, and functional strength work into a fast, high-energy session. You're constantly moving, pushing, sweating, and feeling accomplished—but never overwhelmed.

People love it because:

- It's fun
- It's fast
- It's coach-led
- It's done before you have a chance to overthink it

You get a full-body workout in half the time of a traditional gym session. And

because it's guided, you don't waste a single minute figuring out what to do.

30-Minute Spin: Energy Without The Impact

For those who want something lower-impact but still powerful, our 30-Minute Spin class delivers. Picture upbeat music, motivating coaching, and a room full of people working toward the same goal—getting stronger while having a blast.

It's easier on the joints but heavy on results. You'll walk out sweating, smiling, and wondering why you ever thought fitness had to take an hour.

The biggest benefit? You'll actually stick with it.

Thirty minutes feels doable—even on the craziest days. Once you realize you can get a complete workout in the time it takes to watch a TV episode, you stop making excuses and start seeing progress.

And when you're consistent, your whole life improves:

- More energy
- Better mood
- Stronger body
- Less stress
- Better long-term health

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You just need the right place.

And we're right here in Athens, ready to help you get started.

- Coach Nick

Owner

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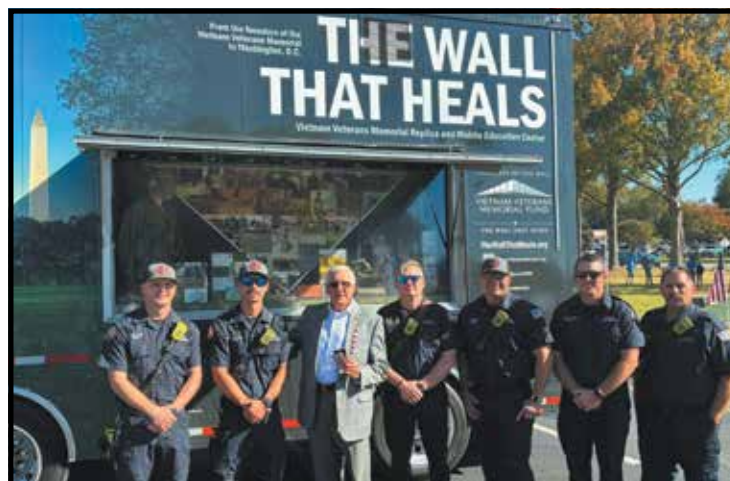
Slow Down And Celebrate

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

When last we met, Athens was looking forward to the arrival of The Wall That Heals, the traveling version of the Vietnam Memorial Wall that is in Washington, D.C. The Wall travels to 30 cities per year, and Athens was number 29 for 2025. Mayor Ronnie went several times to the Wall when it was here, as did I. Sometimes it was at night when few people were there, sometimes during the day with several people, and hearing Thanh Boyer in the Nazaretian Center. One of the high points of the whole experience was seeing the splendid exhibit of watercolors and pencil sketches done by two 'Nam vets by the name of David Wright and Chuck Creasy. The exhibit will be on display until Nov 30, and it is well worth seeing.

Mayor Ronnie took a good part of our time together talking about how grateful he was that the Wall came to Athens, and how grateful he was, especially to Athens State University, the AL Veterans Museum, and all the volunteers that were on duty 24 hours a day to make the experience what it was. "It really is the 'Wall That Heals,'" he said. I agreed.

We moved on to the topic of the holidays, which are wonderful, complicated, and complex for a number of people. There is so much going on in Athens-Limestone County, with the kick-off of the Christmas Open House this weekend. There are the tree lightings, the Open House, the Merry Market, all the music, Thanksgiving dinners with family, and all of it can be



a lot. We need to comfort those that have suffered loss, and this year there have been many. "More than anything, we need to share hearts," said the mayor. I was able to tell him about the fact that the holidays are tough for me as well, my dad having passed two days after Thanksgiving, and my mom two days after Christmas. It is also

a wonderful time, though, and Athens is a beautiful place to celebrate.

The mayor went on to talk further about Thanksgiving and Christmas. "It is about the joy of giving thanks, and the joy of giving," he said. "We do need to humble ourselves, too," Mayor Ronnie added. "I know that we talk about this a lot, but we've got to stay safe



during the holidays, and remember that everything that is happening in Athens now goes to making quality of life here in Athens better," he said.

The mayor was on a roll before it was time for him to roll, and kept going with the theme of celebrating well during the holidays. "We can't get so busy during the holidays that we miss the point of the holidays. We need to slow down and celebrate," said the mayor. "Prayerfully consider the things you do and attend this season," said the mayor. "Amen," I said. There was only one thing left to do, and that was to pray, so we did, and then, once again, well, it was time for Ronnie to...





My Identity In Christ: God Says I Am God's Masterpiece

by Anna Hamilton

Many people spend their entire lives searching for worth and approval from people, accomplishments, or status. But God has already made His declaration over us: We are His masterpiece. Not an accident. Not a rough draft. Not something average or ordinary. We are intentionally crafted by the Creator Himself with purpose, beauty, and value.

You were designed by divine hands. Ephesians 2:10 powerfully declares, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the

good things He planned for us long ago." The word masterpiece suggests something carefully and skillfully made, an original work of art. Out of everything in creation the mountains, the stars, the oceans, God says you are His finest work.

Your appearance? Chosen by Him. Your personality? Crafted with care. Your story, even the parts you don't like? Can be redeemed into something beautiful in His hands.

You may see flaws, but God sees features. You

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Slow Cooker Baby Carrots

Ingredients:

*1/4 cup water
2 pounds baby carrots, rinsed
1/4 cup butter, cut into 4-6 pieces
1/4 cup brown sugar
3 tablespoons honey
1/4 teaspoon salt
Optional: fresh dill (chopped)*

Directions:

Pour the water into the bottom of the slow cooker. Add carrots. Top carrots with brown sugar, honey, and salt. Place butter pieces on top of all ingredients.

Cover slow cooker with lid and cook on HIGH for 3-4 hours, stirring after 2 hours.

Spoon carrots into a bowl or serving platter. If desired, sprinkle with dill.



Gobble Gobble, Y'all!

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



In a little more than a week, the official start of the holiday season arrives (yes, I see y'all who have had your Christmas lights up from even before Halloween—I love it!)

I remember the story my parents told me about their first Thanksgiving -- too poor to afford a turkey so they had Cornish game hens which were eaten on their new fine wedding china on a stack of cardboard boxes. Isn't it funny how love can make a feast out of a morsel and a banquet table out of a box?

This is going to be an interesting season for me and The Wonder Sweetie, and maybe for some of you too. Our son is married and in Denver. I can't wait to hear about how they celebrate Thanksgiving! It isn't their first Thanksgiving together, but I think it might be their first at their own home. I wonder if my son will make spaetzle (a nod to my German heritage), if they will have cranberry sauce in the shape of the can (a nod to The Wonder Sweetie who likes slices of cranberry sauce), and what delightful traditions his beautiful wife will bring from her childhood. They are their own little family now and need to blend and create their own traditions.

Our daughter has a beau, and his brother and sister-in-law just

moved into a new house. I imagine they will want to have Thanksgiving there and will invite our daughter. She too might be spending Thanksgiving away for the first time ever.

We might be empty-nesters for this one.

How does that make me feel? I think I am supposed to feel a little sad, but I really don't...OK, maybe the teeniest bit, but honestly not much. I pray for the blessing of rest for my incredibly busy son and daughter-in-love who are both working and going to school full time. I want them to rise when they want, eat fully and freely, then rest some more.

For my daughter, I pray for the blessing of branching out, of strengthening bonds that might (hopefully!) last a lifetime. I want them to laugh, game, feast, then laugh some more.

It is an exciting time for both children!

And it's a little exciting for my husband and me too. We rented a dumpster for that week (hang with me, this is actually going somewhere poignant). I took off work, and we will be spending the week decluttering our farm and house to make space for new growing things—plants, trees, animals, health, and families. We will keep the treasures and toss the rest. We will

throw out broken old toys (ours and the kids') to make room for new projects and hobbies. We will keep their rooms open for their visits but grow up the spaces a bit—treating memories tenderly without making shrines out of them.

I think that is why I am not so sad. To understand that one can hold beautiful relationships and memories with an open hand and know the love won't slip through your fingers is a wise thing, I think—it gives the children room to fly and a place to land. And it keeps this mama's heart from breaking full into pieces.

And let's not let we empty nesters be left behind! Our tables are now rosewood, not cardboard, but we are still growing, maturing, experiencing—living—just as

much as we were when we were young and the world was new. To face empty nests not as a loss but as more room to explore, reach, learn, embrace, invite, host, and love keeps these moments from being too melancholy.

So! Let's look at this holiday, if you too are empty-nesting it, as a time to be thankful for the past but expanding our hearts and walking eagerly to the future. Invite a neighbor or a stranger. Make a list of people to call. Write heartfelt cards to those whom you wish you could see now but hopefully will see soon. Use this time to fix up an empty bedroom for future guests, to plan a trip, to rest yourselves.

I pray the blessings for you that I have for our family: I hope Thanks-

giving is a day of rest and branching out, of feasting and festivities, of holding the past tenderly but lightly, and looking forward to the future.

Some activities for the Christmas Season!

November 20 through December 29

Athens Tinsel Trail (by the Duck Pond)

November 21-23

Christmas Open House

November 23

Jazz in the City at the Farmer's Market at 4 p.m.

December 4

Athens-Limestone County Christmas Parade from 6 to 8 p.m.

December 13

Sippin' Cider Festival on the Square from 3-7 p.m.



Attorney Caroline Mathews: A Love Of Law, Language And Athens

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

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school she was a cheerleader and ran track, and was an active member of the youth group at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church. However, there came a time when she knew she had been called to the practice of law, and went ahead and enrolled in law school at the University of Alabama. She is a rare one in our town, having been a grad of two rival schools, and it is probably a good thing that her résumé includes being certified as a mediator!

Caroline says that having a love for the English language as well as literature actually helped her prepare for her law career because of needing to be deft at wading through documents written in legalese and understanding what was actually being communicated. Her favorite authors were Jane Austen, Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens. Once she was in law school, her passion became what is sometimes referred to as “rural law,” and she interned as a Finch Initiative recipient with Circuit Judge Ben Bowden in Andalusia. Caroline loved that experience, and came to understand that in many places in Alabama, rural areas are underserved and overlooked. Not so in Athens, and Caroline is committed to practicing law here because she loves it. She graduated in 2023 and passed the bar exam on her first try.

Caroline practices law with her dad, Bill, along with her older brother, William. Her younger

brother, John David, is in law school at Alabama. The Mathews Law Firm specializes in all things civil, and does very little criminal law. Real estate law and closings are a significant portion of the practice. So is personal injury, divorce, as well as adoptions. Caroline enjoys serving families as well as people at both ends of the age spectrum—the elderly and little ones. She especially loves estate planning and making sure that people are safe, protected and are able to stay out of probate. If going to probate court is necessary, Caroline is ready to get the best possible outcome for her clients.

We had a most interesting discussion with regard to the powerful and often overlooked role of being a certified mediator, which Caroline is able to do. Caroline has seen some hard things for sure in the practice of family law and domestic law, but she also has seen people actually avoid divorce and reconcile, which is especially satisfying. Caroline said, “Sometimes people file for legal separation just to be safe while they are working things out, and we have seen them get back together. I like being able to help with that. We also do pre-nups and post-nups.” (Pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements.)

Then there is the especially sticky situation of having to evict. Caroline looked at



Mathews Law
from left, William, Caroline and Bill Sr.



Sully, the Mathews Law Mascot

me in horror when she mentioned that she has seen it all!! It is good to know that there is a firm and a young attorney who will fight for people who find themselves facing crazy situations that they did not cause.

I asked Caroline why I should choose her as an attorney, and I liked the fact that she took her time before she answered. “First

of all,” she said, “if your case is in Limestone County you need a local lawyer that knows the area and the people.” “Second, I work with family. My dad has practiced law for decades and he took my brother and me under his wing. He is always there for me, and our family is close,” she added. “Third, I have lived in Athens all my life, and this is where I plan on staying. I love it, I make connections easily, and I care about people,” said Caroline. If this combination of roots, wings, love, and proficiency are what you are looking for in an attorney, then Caroline

Mathews of Mathews Law is ready, willing, and able to be your advocate in as well as out of the courtroom. Give their office a call today at 256-232-2310 for an appointment.

Caroline Mathews of Mathews Law Firm

**117 S Marion St,
Athens, AL 35611**

**Hours:
8-noon; 1-5 p.m. M-F**

**Website:
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**Facebook:
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Clean, Green And Beautiful

Sixteen Tons

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

We have been unbelievably busy this fall. We've managed to do a little bit of everything, from picking up litter to planting flowers to decorating. And we still have a full calendar to finish out the year. We have some new projects starting, and we are working to reimagine some of our old projects and programs. And as always, we have plenty of volunteer opportunities available!

We kicked off this fall with the Advanced Ag. Class from Limestone County Career Technical School. They met us downtown to help remove some of the tender summer plants to add pumpkins and mums. We wanted the flowerpots to stand out during the Rooted in Rural Alabama, Mississippi & Tennessee Rural Tourism Conference which Athens was selected to host this year. The students took the plants we removed back to their greenhouse at Tanner High School to propagate and grow for us to reuse next year. Chairman Collin Daly was extremely generous by donating all of the pumpkins, which we donated to a mini farm for livestock when we removed them.

We also held a litter cleanup around downtown in preparation for the Tourism Conference. We were a small, but mighty group, but we removed a lot of trash from the creek by the Farmer's Market and Athens-Limestone Public Library. Most of our vol-

unteers for this cleanup were from Athens High School's Eagles United Club. This was our first time working with this group, and they were fantastic! We hope that we can continue to work with them in the future. They pulled a lot of trash from the creek, keeping it from moving any farther!

We also put our decorating talents to use! We decorated the LaunchBox for the Tourism Conference. We reused our Christmas lanterns, foraged beautiful flowers, and Lucas Ferry Flower Farm donated some beautiful dahlias, zinnias, and other blooms for us. Once again, Chairman Daly stepped up and provided us with pumpkins to complete our décor! After our Let There Be Cake fundraiser this summer, we realized our love of decorating store windows -- Kathleen's Corner Salon let us take over their Christmas window. We kept with the Athens-Limestone Chamber of Commerce's Christmas theme, "Merry Movies & Magic." Stop by and check it out; we sure had fun decorating!

Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful was also invited to set up a booth at the T.R.A.I.L. Fall into Philanthropy Fair. T.R.A.I.L., which stands for Together Renewing and Improving Limestone, is a student group funded by the DEKKO Foundation. DEKKO was a plant op-



erated in Ardmore, and since their closure, Limestone County is one of 5 counties nationwide to which they make charitable contributions. These students come together to volunteer with different nonprofit organizations in Limestone County, helping the community and learning the importance of volunteering and giving back. T.R.A.I.L. volunteers with KALB picking up litter at the Farmer's Market.

We had another workday with the Advanced Ag. class to plant our winter pansies. We had to make rounds to remove the pumpkins and mums and add some soil. Then we made our round of planting the winter pansies and adding fertilizer. Then we made another round to water the plants. It was definitely a productive day, we completed the pots, and we all got our steps in, plus some.

We had one more litter cleanup with the Student



Government Association from Athens Renaissance School. We had a small group made up of 7th-12th graders. We chose to work in the field along Golden Eagle Drive. Since it was bush hogged recently, all of the hidden paper, Styrofoam cups, and other trash multiplied. We managed to get the field cleaned up faster than I thought, so we

hopped over to the Dollar General parking lot to finish up our one-hour time limit. There seemed to be as much trash there as there was in the field. The kids and their two teachers managed to fill eight bags in ONE HOUR. And that is why we have a full schedule.



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Getting To Know Your Limestone County Commissioners: *Derrick Gatlin, District 3*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

separated from EMT work. However, when State Senator Tom Butler's life was saved by a Madison firefighter who knew how to use an AED machine, that began to change. Now firefighters get more extensive training to help in any emergency situation. Derrick also spent time in Montgomery lobbying for the needs of firefighters, and added, "I love to serve my fellow man." That's his "why," and what drove him to seek election to the District 3 seat when Jason Black ran for the Alabama State House.

Running for the District 3 seat was a tough decision for Derrick, not because of the work, but because of having to leave a long-time steady job that is a bit unusual—making commercial ice cream! He told me about all of the ins and outs of making ice cream for restaurants. "All the regulations, being able to trace everything, accountability, cleanliness, it is way different than making ice

cream in your back yard," he said. At last he "pulled the trigger" and went to the courthouse to qualify as a candidate, got elected in 2022, and is still able to firmly say, "I enjoy working with the Commission." He is also quick to note that he is thankful for the nearly 400 people who work for Limestone County. "What makes it work is county employees working together," said Derrick.

There are several unique features that are part of District 3. It is the only district that directly deals with Morgan County, Lauderdale County, Madison County, along with the cities of Athens, Madison, Decatur and Huntsville. No other district has more property annexed by other entities. There is also Pryor Field, the Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant, along with the highly utilized Nuclear Plant Road, Huntsville-Browns Ferry Road and Mooresville Road. "It is so different from when I was a kid," said Derrick, who told me that he used to cruise the Square as a teenager and that the only bridge

between Morgan County and Limestone County was a draw bridge that caused traffic to be backed up almost all the way to Calhoun Community College.

As is the concern of other Limestone County commissioners, Derrick wants to be a good steward of the taxpayer's dollars, and he knows that a large part of his job is to listen to people. As a firefighter, he keeps a radio in his truck and goes to incident scenes as much as he can to offer assistance as well as speak with people who were present at the scene. Derrick's desire is to see what caused the accident from the perspective of those involved in order to determine if there is any way the area can be improved to ensure fewer accidents.

Derrick has a solid full-time crew with close to 45 years of combined experience in District 3. He also has two retired guys who work part-time to help with trash pickup. They are:

- Jimmy Gatlin- 30 years (no relation)
- Hunter Gatlin- 7 years (no relation)



- Travis Austiell- 7 years
- Nathan Head- 8 months

His two part time guys are Leroy Gatlin (no relation) and Jim Williamson.

Being a Limestone County Commissioner means being more than a "road guy," although that is a large part of the job. There is a county school system, they are in charge of the Sheriff's Department, as well as animal control. One of the top concerns right now is building a new animal shelter, in addition to improving roads and schools. In District 3, there is talk of building a zoo as

well as a new hospital, but nothing has been decided as of yet.

If Derrick could have a "dream project," it would be to build a by-pass traffic loop around the county to ease traffic flow. More than anything, public safety is top-of-mind with him, especially as a firefighter and in everything he does, he wants to make the right decisions for the citizens as well as the county. Finally, Derrick along with the rest of the Commission is hoping that everyone will have a Happy Thanksgiving!





Captain's Log

Snitches Do Not Get Stitches

by Brenda Wilkerson

"Mrs. Wilkerson, we have a problem," reported Bus Ranger Ace.

"Whatcha got brother?" I responded not even 3 minutes into our flight.

"I have a paper here with a lot of cuss words on it. We have a good idea who wrote it, but he is blaming a younger student."

As Ace handed over the crumpled folded paper, I thanked him and assured him I would take care of this situation. A few minutes later, Momma K presented me with another paper and reported, "We had Brother G write his name on this paper so that you can compare the handwriting to all those cuss words."

"Excellent work, Momma K. Thank you. I will take a good look when I return to the school." As I continued delivering all my sweet babies home, this bus family worked diligently behind me to solve this concerning issue.

Only 11 stops into our hour long flight, Momma K once again returned to the Captain's cockpit and proudly whispered that after she encouraged Brother G to do the right thing, G finally admitted to his guilt. VICTORY! Well done my brave team of 8-10-year-old leaders. Your bus momma is so proud that you kids desire to protect the peace and safety on this bus home we share!

Today's bus word of the day: SNITCH

To all of my precious bus babies....

On this here bus, snitches do NOT, I repeat, do not get stitches. We are family. This is a safe and happy place. We are all beautiful.

If somebody is saying something unkind or uncomfortable, tell them. If they refuse to stop bothering you, let one of my 5th-grade Bus Rangers know. There is NO - ZERO -

bullying of any kind. We are all wonderfully different in a special kind of way. Let me show you the value and power of kindness and standing up for yourself and others. It is necessary, brave, and honorable. For my stubborn friends who want to recklessly test this rule, you will get one and only one warning. If it continues...I will safely pull this bus over, call your momma and have a very brief and uncomfortable conversation with her before I deliver you to your driveway. This is what is called boundaries.

I pray I can teach you, through my lead, acts of kindness, bravery, humility, boundaries, following through with consequences, truth, and most of all LOVE!

It's going to be a GREAT year!!!

1 John 4:19

~Brenda



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Protecting Your Story
Telling It Well

Emotional Intelligence Answers To The “WWWWH” Questions

by Detri L. McGhee - CLU, ChFC, B.Min

This column has approached a number of topics in its days, but for the foreseeable future, we are going to focus on my chosen focus topic,

CRITICISM MANAGEMENT. Criticism Management is the skillset that will allow you to gain every bit of profit, wisdom, and help from any and all criticism you will ever receive, from any source possible, AND develop comfortable, workable emotionally sound skills to keep criticism from destroying, hurting, harming, incapacitating, and stealing your energy. You can learn how to dispose of the negative and embrace the positive. Properly applied, you will never look at criticism the same way again.

Before we can turn our focus on Criticism Management, we must look at the overarching area of Emotional Intelligence. Criticism Management deals with the majority of areas within EI, therefore, we need to get a firm understanding of the EI big picture.

Let's take it from a reporter's viewpoint -- Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why:

Who needs EI? Everyone. EI should be taught from toddler age through assisted living.

What is EI? Emotional Intelligence is the ability to wisely handle your own emotions, understanding how to interact effectively with others, whether that be family, friends, coworkers, acquaintances or even strangers. EI is the ability to recognize, understand, and properly display your

own emotions as well as being able to do the same with others. Profits of maturity within your own EI include stress relief, effective communications skills, overcoming challenges, controlling conflict, and learning to empathize, not just sympathize, with others.

When is EI important? Always. In every relationship, especially in your relationship with yourself.

Where is EI important? Everywhere. Of course, sometimes it is not as readily identified as required, or even helpful. Yet there is not a facet of life that solid, mature EI cannot make better.

How does EI affect our lives? Strong EI skills develop our natural temperamental strengths, and teach us to overcome our natural weaknesses, as well as open doors of understanding for things we never even dreamed possible. EI enables us to solve problems before they arise. EI shows us how to anticipate problems and develop a solution to them before they even surface. EI brings us levels of joy, effectiveness, understanding, and power that are unavailable to us otherwise.

Why pursue EI? For those

lacking strong EI skills, misunderstandings, relationships, and communications pose problems in daily life within every scenario. Personalities that lack mature EI skills tend to make every situation worse, rather than better. They seem to choose the wrong response most often.

Case Study: An upcoming retirement meant that the position she had worked toward for years was now going to be available. She was definitely the most qualified. Educated. Knowledgeable. Trained in every facet of the job. It was inconceivable that anyone else would be seriously considered. Everyone knew this. She could hardly contain her excitement when the day to announce the promotion arrived. Imagine her deep disappointment when a less-qualified employee was selected. Devastated. Crushed. Furious! Her manager was not surprised when she boldly asked to speak with him and practically demanded to know why she was passed over. Was it because they wanted a man? Was this person a relative of the owner? **WHY?** She was taken aback when the real reason was explained. “I’m sorry, but your rela-

tionship with your coworkers is not conducive to you being their leader. Your job is exemplary; your work is excellent... but you do not seem to relate to or understand them. You cannot take suggestions well, and when others make suggestions, you appear to be offended or just brush them off. We value you in the position you are in, but do not think you are ready for management.”

Unfortunately, because of her lack of EI maturity, she left angry, bitter and thinking she might resign. She blamed it on their prejudice because she was a woman. She thought of reasons the lost promotion was because of the actions or desires of others. And she vowed to do as little as possible to help that other person succeed. In her mind, the boss was simply covering up the real reason.

Upon arriving home, she shared with all who would listen about her mistreatment. She continued her bitter attitude allowing it to infect other relationships. She became more difficult to be around for family, friends, coworkers, and strangers.

Thankfully for her, EI training had become the new Hot

Topic among wise management teams. And, after taking her company's EI courses, she grew more mature in her thoughts, actions, and relationships. In learning the value of **ACTING** instead of **REACTING**, this employee learned to truly listen to her fellow employees and even her supervisors. She began actively learning from them, developing her skills at work, but even more important, she gained control over other areas of her life. Seldom was she wasting time being upset, imagining how she was wronged, or planning how to pay back those who criticized or differed with her. Although it took a few more years for an appropriate advancement to become available, it was almost immediately that she began enjoying her job, her coworkers, and even her family in new and exciting ways.

Wouldn't this have been a much happier story if she had been schooled on EI skills years earlier?

PRINCIPLE: Learning from the success and failure of others is a far faster and much less expensive way than having to experience each failure and success all on our own.

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



The View From The Bridge

'Tis The Season Of Spiritual Rehab And Transformation For The Next Bloom

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator

"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters



As the leaves have fallen and with the fall colors screaming to us beautifully, I've found myself reflecting on what this season truly represents. It is more than a change in weather—it's a visual sermon. We see transformation. We see release. We see death. And yet, we also see preparation for something new.

Recently, life slowed me down. Not in the usual way, but in a way that forced me to step back—mentally, physically, and spiritually. For someone like me, who's always on the go, always moving with purpose, this pause felt unfamiliar. But I've come to believe that if we don't slow down willingly, God sometimes slows us down intentionally. Not to punish us, but to position us. To help us be still. To help us lean in.

In this quiet space, I am learning the power of leaning in. Leaning into discomfort. Leaning into silence. Leaning into the Word. It's not always easy—especially when we're used to leading, fixing, and doing. But leaning in is where we begin to hear. It's where we begin to heal.

And just like the trees release their leaves, I've had to release some things too. Old habits. Old expectations. Even parts of my identity that were tied to constant motion. Release isn't always dramatic—it's often subtle. It's the quiet decision to let go of what no longer serves your growth, your peace, or your



purpose.

If you're in a season where God is asking you to release, I invite you to trust that it's not loss—it's preparation. **It's pruning for the next bloom.** It's making space for what's coming.

And now, as fall fades into winter, I'm reminded that this journey isn't just about letting go—it's about learning to wait. Winter is the season where everything appears still, even lifeless. But beneath the surface, roots are deepening. Soil is resting. The earth is preparing for resurrection.

Spiritually, winter invites us

to abide. To sit with God in the quiet. To trust that even when we don't see movement, transformation is happening. It's not a season of visibility—it's a season of depth. And depth is where strength is born.

So if you find yourself in a winter season—emotionally, spiritually, or physically—know that it's not a delay. It's divine development. It's the sacred hush before the springtime bloom.

I was listening to a podcast recently, and the message pierced my spirit. It spoke about the difference between a season of **presentation** and a season of **prepa-**

ration. It described spiritual rehab as a time to be rebuilt, renewed, and realigned with God's vision for us. That resonated deeply. I realized that this isn't my time to show up in my usual "get it done" way. It's my time

to be transformed so I can show up in **God's way.** So if you're in a season where things feel slower, quieter, or even uncertain—know that you're not alone. This might be your spiritual rehab. Your preparation season. And it's not about presenting to the world, your friends, or your family. It's about abiding. It's about being present with the Almighty. It's about letting God's Word do its work in you so that when the time comes for presentation, you present well—in HIM.

Let's embrace this season together. Let's welcome the quiet. Let's honor the discomfort. Because transformation is happening. And when the leaves fall, and the frost settles in, it's not the end—it's the beginning of something deeper, something divine.

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Learning As A Lifestyle

Walking In Another's Moccasins

by Eric Betts

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

As the Thanksgiving season approaches, we are reminded of the Native American teaching that one should ever judge another until they have walked a mile in their moccasins. This wisdom calls us to humility and empathy, recognizing that each person's journey is shaped by burdens, histories, and unseen struggles. To judge without understanding is to dishonor the sacred dignity of another's path. Thanksgiving, at its best, is not about comparison or competition, but about gratitude for the shared humanity that binds us together.

Too often, society perpetuates the myth that because one person endured hardship and "made it," everyone else should be able to do the same. This narrative

erases the complexity of individual circumstances and ignores the many obstacles of life. It also ignores, that sometimes we are the lucky one. "Time and chance happens to all," the wise man said.

Survival stories are powerful, but they should never be weaponized to dismiss the pain of others. To say, "I survived, so you should too," is to deny the uniqueness of each person's struggle and to overlook the communal support, resources, or opportunities that may have made survival possible.

Native American traditions remind us that wisdom is communal, not individualistic. The teaching of walking in another's moccasins is not simply about empathy—it is

about accountability to the community and respect for the sacredness of each life. During Thanksgiving, a holiday often overshadowed by myths of survival and triumph, we can reclaim its meaning by listening to Indigenous voices and honoring their call to compassion. Gratitude is not about boasting of what we overcame, but about recognizing the gifts we share and the responsibilities we carry toward one another.

This season, let us resist the temptation to judge or to measure others by our own survival stories. Instead, let us embrace the Native wisdom that calls us to walk gently, to listen deeply, and to honor the unseen burdens of those around



us. True thanksgiving is found not in comparison, but in compassion; not in judgment, but in justice. As we walk in another's moccasins—even if only in spirit—we honor both the resilience of our ancestors and the dignity of our neighbors today.

Tennessee Valley Spotlight

Mondays at 10am

1080 AM WKAC

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STILL HOPE

FEBRUARY 5, 2026



The Alternative Approach

Lose Weight Naturally (Newly Formulated Dieter's DeLite)

by Roy Williams

Yes, eating season has arrived. The weather is cooling down and for most people that means less activity and fewer calories burned. On top of that, there's Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, which we celebrate with the three Fs, family, friends, and food.

So, today I am going to share with you one of our patented products that my son Seth has reformulated and it is already catching on with momentum. This formulation will soon be recognized as one of the most valuable tools we have ever developed for healthy, sustainable weight management -- a natural formula known as **Dieter's DeLite**.

This time of year, many of us remember that we still have more to give, more to live, and a whole lot more to do. Even though the world tells us we need to slow down, our lifestyle often doesn't agree. If anything, this is the season you can become the strongest, wisest, and most impactful version of yourself. But in order to do that, you must have your health.

If the body does not function, the dreams dissolve.

If the energy is gone, the will fades.

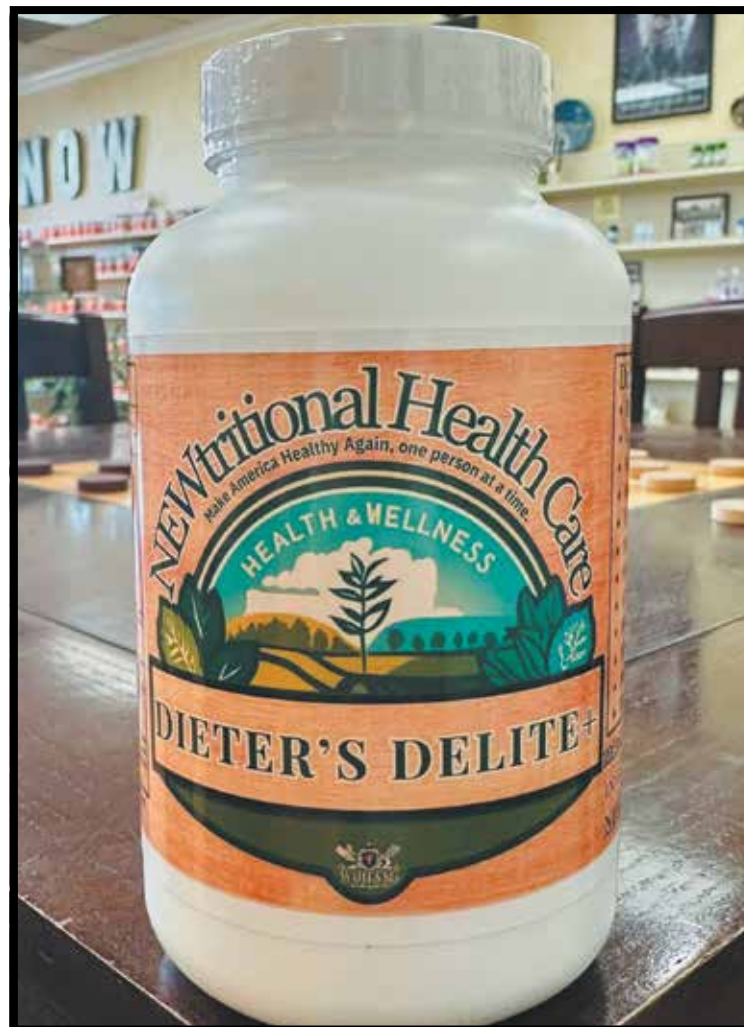
If the mobility declines, the world gets smaller.

And none of us were designed to live small.

So, this article is about how to get your body to work for you instead of against you. **Dieter's DeLite** can help restore your metabolism, increase energy without harsh stimulants, gently suppress your appetite without starving, balance your blood sugar, support your thyroid, increase circulation, and improve nutrient absorption so your body can begin to burn fat efficiently again. The testimonials are already coming in.

Now, I want to address something directly and honestly, because we believe in truth without hesitation. As we get older, metabolism naturally slows. Muscle mass declines if it is not actively maintained. Hormone output changes. Digestion becomes less efficient. None of this means aging is a decline. It simply means the body requires support.

And for those over 50, our generation did not grow up in a world full of processed foods, chemical preservatives, and nutrient depleted soils. This means the body today is under a completely



different set of environmental pressures than just 40 years ago. We must take responsibility for our biology with more intention. Yes, there are things that you can do, on purpose, that will change your life and improve your metabolism, no matter your age.

This is where **Dieter's DeLite** comes in. This formula was created for one purpose -- to give the body what it needs to correct the underlying causes of weight gain. Not to cover symptoms. Not to hype the heart rate. Not to suppress the nervous system. But to bring the body back to balance.

First, **Dieter's DeLite** supports the **thyroid**, the master regulator of metabo-

lism. When the thyroid is underpowered, the body simply refuses to burn fat. It does not matter how little you eat. It does not matter how much you walk. The body holds on to fat like storage for winter. **Dieter's DeLite** contains nutrients that help the thyroid come back online, restoring its natural rhythm.

Second, it **naturally suppresses the appetite**, but not through force. It changes hunger by adjusting blood sugar. When blood sugar is balanced, cravings fade. When cravings fade, discipline becomes easy, and weight loss becomes natural.

Third, **Dieter's DeLite** supports the **adrenals and energy production**. Many

people try to lose weight when their body is exhausted. **Dieter's DeLite** provides natural, nourishing energy that supports the whole system.

Fourth, it acts as a **vasodilator**, meaning it opens circulation. When blood can move freely, nutrients travel efficiently. Oxygen can reach the tissues. Waste can be removed. This is essential for fat burning and cellular repair.

Finally, **Dieter's DeLite** helps the body adapt to the mental and emotional side of weight change. Many people do not realize that weight loss is not only physical. It is psychological. It is identity based. When the body begins to change, the mind must also step into a new self-image. **Dieter's DeLite** supports this transition with gentle energy and mood support.

Overall, we believe that **Dieter's DeLite** will soon be recognized as one of the safest and healthiest ways to support overall body weight. We are so confident in this product that you can go by Herbs & More in Athens or NHC Herb Shop in Killen and pick up a sample pack of 5 capsules for only \$5.00. Take as instructed and you will feel the difference. After your trial pack, you will be qualified to get your first bottle of **Dieter's DeLite** at a 15% discount with this article. Any questions, call 256-757-5660 or visit our website at www.nhcherbs.com.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*



A Horse's Path

by Deb Kitchenmaster



There is a different direction or course in which a horse is moving, depending on its stage of life. Let me give some examples: a foal, stallion, gelding, mare or an older horse.

Along our journey of life, we have experienced some horse breeding and the foaling of beautiful equine. A foal is simply a newborn horse. The word "foal" refers to any young horse, regardless of gender, typically from birth to one year of age. If it is a male, he is referred to as a colt. If a female, she is a filly.

Newborn foals can stand or walk within an hour of birth. A foal's legs are nearly as long as an adult's at birth, giving it an advantage in speed and mobility. This can save its life when birthed in the wild! Mother's milk is the staple for the foal. The foal gets vital nutrients from the milk that helps grow bones, muscles, and organs properly. This is where "imprinting" comes in. Imprint-

ing is a process of intense and specific handling of a foal immediately after birth. To guide the standing foal to the milk station of its mother is an example. You are handling the foal. This process is believed to create less reactive horses that are more manageable and accepting of handling. Imprinting is used to build a connection between the newborn foal and its human caregiver. The earlier a horse learns positive associations with people, the easier it becomes to train for riding, services, or work.

Over its next few weeks, the foal begins to explore its environment, nibble on hay, and watch how other horses behave. Social learning in the herd lays the groundwork for the training that is to come. The foal is introduced to a halter, responds to voice commands, and walk on a lead. In the wild or on a ranch, foals learn herd dynamics quickly, hierarchy and behavior. This early socialization period is critical for foals to form



healthy social bonds and help prevent behavior problems such as nipping (biting) or becoming overly pushy with humans. Foals rely on these early interactions to become well-adjusted adults. Breeders focus on proper weaning, nutrition, and early training.

Most foals are weaned from their mothers around 6 months old. They enter into a solid food diet and

independence. This is extremely important on "how" you wean. Horses are social beings. The foal has found security, safety, and comfort from being nourished from its mother. When you decide to wean, remember this. Taking foal away from mom into isolation/separation can be overwhelming -- socially and emotionally. This is where a good number of horses develop annoying habits like cribbing or wind sucking. They are desperately trying to find comfort! Do NOT isolate the foal. The weanling needs an environment that offers safety, exploration, and a friend or two -- even if it is a cow, goat or another older mare or gelding. You will benefit from this kindness in days ahead.

After one year, the young horse is called a "yearling." Now if you have a colt on your hands, you will need to determine your purpose for this male horse. Do I keep him a stallion or do I make him a "gelding" by castrating him? Male horses are

usually castrated between 12 and 15 months of age.

The life of a stallion! Remember, they too are social beings with high levels of testosterone. We kept our stallion as much a part of the herd as possible. How we accomplished that was to create what we called a neutral zone. There was an 8-foot space between the stallion and the others. You don't want noses to be able to touch. Once a mare had settled (was bred), we would keep that mare and stallion together until foaling. An effective way to improve social skills!

Athens Now readers, I want to wish each and every one of you a Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed path of Righteousness. We thank you Charles for hoof care. We thank you Eric for all your acts of kindness.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

horsinaround188@gmail.com





GenZ With JP

MAGA Split Is Determining The Future Of The GOP

by JP Plott

We are pleased to welcome JP to our Athens Now crew as we cheer Phil Williams on to his next adventure. JP's thoughts are solidly his own, and be sure to listen to Right Side Radio, M-F, 2-5 pm on WVNN Welcome, JP!!

If you have spent any time on the internet over the last several weeks, you may have noticed a major split in the Conservative movement. A “MAGA” civil war, one could say. For those who have become accustomed to dramatic fighting on the internet over conspiracies, you may see this as just another example of exactly that. However, I strongly disagree. What we are witnessing is the future of the GOP being decided. Gen-Z conservatives are watching and picking a side.

Which side is that, exactly? First, we must assess the two sides. On one side, you have the likes of Mark Levin, Ben Shapiro, Ted Cruz, and Laura Loomer. This side strongly sup-

ported the bombing of Iran’s nuclear facilities this summer, the Trump administration’s handling of the Epstein files, and the continuation of U.S. foreign aid abroad. In particular, they strongly support Israel’s war in Gaza and America’s continuing support for Israel. This side has also developed a habit of calling those who disagree anti-Semitic.

On the other side, you have Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens, Marjorie Taylor Greene, and Nick Fuentes. Fuentes, in particular, has gained massive traction amongst Gen-Z conservatives this year, and his interview on Tucker Carlson’s podcast kicked this MAGA civil war into high gear. This side believes in an “America first” approach to policy.

They think both foreign and domestic policy should be based on what’s best for Americans, and Americans only. They are very critical of America’s relationship with Israel and believe our officials aren’t thinking enough about America and Americans.

Despite “trolling” from Trump, he cannot run for another term as president. This will leave the GOP Trumpless for the first time since 2015. Who will take charge of the party moving forward? What will they run on? Gen-Z’s approval of Trump has dropped from 58% in January of this year to 38% this past week. Primarily driving this has been the handling of the Epstein files, continued support of Israel’s war in Gaza, and the lack of urgency when it comes to addressing the lack of home affordability. Calling the Epstein files a hoax, shaming everyone critical of foreign aid to Israel as an anti-Semite, and

proposing 50-year mortgages to make homes more affordable for young people were all drastic missteps.

If the GOP wants to keep Gen-Z support, some serious changes need to happen immediately. We, Gen-Z conservatives, want three things. First, we want mass deportations to open more jobs and make homes affordable again. Second, we want transparency against corruption, such as releasing the Epstein files. And third, but most importantly, we want our elected officials to put America first. This does not make us isolationists or hateful people. All we ask is that, when it comes to foreign aid and global intervention, it be done solely to further American interests. It does not appear that Trump understands this. Disavowing Marjorie Taylor Greene while playing golf with Lindsey Graham is a slap in the face of young conservatives. All this does is appease the current GOP

swamp, while alienating your young supporters.

The Democrats will seize the opportunity to win over Gen-Z with socialism, as we saw in New York City with the election of Zohran Mamdani. When the Right is not united, it makes the Left’s job extremely easy. The mandate that was handed to Republicans with the 2024 election was massive. The only ones that could beat the Republican Party after that were...Republicans. The GOP has made a habit of snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory, and this could be yet another example. With the midterms right around the corner, the time to act is now. The GOP would be wise to pay attention to the desires of the Gen-Z Right. Will they continue to appease the quickly fading Republicans of old? Or, will they listen to the passionate desires of the GOP’s future? This decision must be made quickly. The party’s future depends on it.



Justin “JP” Plott is the production manager for Rightside Media, and Producer for Rightside Radio. JP joined the Rightside team in late 2024 after working at WVNN in Huntsville, Alabama. He quickly became a top-notch, multi-media producer and a voice of Gen-Z conservatism.





Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am God's Masterpiece*

by Anna Hamilton

may see mistakes, but God sees progress. You may feel unqualified, but the Master Artist never makes anything without intention.

You are not defined by your scars. Artists often incorporate imperfections into their work to tell a deeper story. Likewise, God doesn't hide your past, He redeems it. In Christ, even your brokenness becomes part of your beauty.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Your identity is not in what you've been through, but in what He is making of you. You are not a mistake to be fixed; you are a masterpiece in progress.

A masterpiece has purpose. God's masterpieces are never meant to sit hidden away. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we are created for good works. You are designed to reflect God's glory to the world. Your kindness is a brushstroke of His love. Your testimony is a display of His grace. Your gifts and passions are tools in His hands.

When you walk in your identity as His masterpiece, you don't have to compete, compare, or copy others. You are one-of-a-kind! See yourself the way God sees you.

The enemy loves to whisper, "You're not enough." But the Artist of your soul says, "You are My finest work." It's time to silence the lies and agree with what God says:

I am fearfully and wonderfully

made (Psalm 139:14).

I am chosen, set apart, and handcrafted for purpose.

I am God's masterpiece—unique, valuable, and treasured.

Stand tall today. You are not random. You are not ordinary. You are God's masterpiece—signed by the Artist, sealed by the Spirit, and displayed for His glory.

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well" (Psalm 139:13-14).

This week's recipe will be the perfect addition to your Thanksgiving meal. It cooks in the crockpot, so do not worry about finding space in your oven. It is a dish that almost everyone, even children, will love. And best of all, it is super easy to put together! That's a win, win, win. I hope you enjoy it as much as my family does.



The Mental Health Benefits Of Dreaming

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.”
- Jonas Salk

I have always been fascinated with dreams and dreaming. Sometimes my dreams are so vivid, it actually feels like I have existed in another world. Recently, I had a dream that I was sitting at the end a dock, with my feet dangling into the water, watching a beautiful sunset. In that moment, I felt relaxed, peaceful, and calm. It was so absorbing that I woke up with a feeling of contentment, which stayed with me for the rest of the day. There are many theories as to why we dream. Sigmund Freud believed that our dreams were the passageways to understanding our unconscious mind... where we might find those hidden secrets and longings that we dare not share with the rest of the world. Carl Jung, saw dreams as our mind's way of expressing things openly, the psyche's way of communicating and reorganizing important information from our daily lives. And today, neuroscientists continue to explore dreams and dreaming as pathways to improving health, especially our mental health.

Dreams can help you overcome your fears. Neuroscientists use the term lucid dreaming to describe the state of dreaming when you



are aware you are dreaming. When you are a lucid dreamer, you can manipulate and control the story line of your dream. For example, let's say that you are afraid of being in large groups of people. Just the thought of going to a work party, makes your heart rate increase and you start sweating. In a lucid dream, you can be in complete control. You can be however you want to be. In the dream world, you get to practice what you might be afraid to do in real life. The more you practice dealing with your fears in your dreams, the more you are reprogramming your brain. You are preparing for change through your dreams.

Dreams can be therapeutic. Even though our dreams are not real, the emotions that go along with them are quite tangible. If you are experiencing some

form of PTSD or emotional trauma, dreams can be a form of overnight therapy. And, you don't have to be experiencing some form of trauma in order to benefit from a night of dreaming. When you go through any type of emotional event, the release of hormones is triggered in your system which prioritized that event in your mind. This then serves as a reminder to your brain to work through the occurrence during sleep. What happens is that somewhere between the activating event and the point of recollection, the brain can separate the emotions from the memory, so it no longer presents as emotive. Essentially your dream story strips the feeling from the experience by creating a new memory of it.

Dreams help you learn. This is my favorite benefit of dreaming, and I use

it often to help me resolve issues or clarify a decision. Have you ever fallen asleep thinking about a decision that you have been trying to make? You wake up the next morning and somehow the answer has become clear. I know you have heard the expression, “Let me sleep on it.” Well, it looks like there may be some scientific evidence to support our ability to learn while we sleep. According to researchers at Harvard Medical School, if you learn a task and then go to sleep, you could be ten times better at that activ-

ity than if you had stayed awake. Dreaming allows your brain to process and make sense of new information. Dreams have the potential to positively change your life, so sweet dreams everyone!

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.

Lisa Philippart LPC LLC
NCC, BCPCC, BC-TMH
Licensed Professional Counselor
Living Life Counseling Center
814 Palmer Road, Suite B4
Madison, AL 35758
256.326.0909 cell
256.631.7898 office
256.542.3366 fax
urlifematters@hotmail.com or
Lisa.P@livinglifecounselingctr.com
livinglifecounselingctr.com



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REDSTONE
REALTY
SOLUTIONS

256-278-9149

klawrence9149@gmail.com

