

December 05 - 18, 2025

Athens Now

information & inspiration

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Carissa's Corner

A Place Called Home...
There is just something about going home to the family farm, the place where my grandfather was born and raised, where I spent summer weeks watching my...
Page 5

What Makes Ronnie Roll

The Best Ways For The Holidays...
We met with gratitude, full hearts and no longer full tummies on December 1, and exchanged stories of the blessings of the season...
Page 8



Cooking With Anna

Simple Sugar Cookies...
This week's recipe will be the perfect cookie for your holiday celebration. It is so simple, with only a few ingredients, you can make a sweet and perfect treat...
Page 10

Clean, Green And Beautiful

The Long And Winding Road...
This past weekend, I had the pleasure of working with an amazing young lady from Athens Bible School, Kate Hargrave...
Page 12



Give The Gift Of Health To Others And Yourself

By Seth Williams

This is the time of year that people focus on giving—materially, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. It is a time of celebration, reflection, and then starting afresh in the new year. We love and give from our hearts, but what if the most loving thing we can do du-

Continued on page 11



Melinda Dugger, (r) with her daughter, Sidney Dugger Haney at the new location of Dugger's Florist & Gifts

Dugger's Florist & Gifts: Super New Shop, Same Knockout Service

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Last month, Dugger's Florist and Gifts got to move into their "cool new digs" just in time for the holiday season. The shop is now located at 705 E. Hobbs Street in Athens, just down from Athens Police Department and across from the Hometown Grocery complex.

The new shop is delightful—spacious, airy, and comfortable. The-

Continued on page 13



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Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Publisher's Point | 3 |
| All Things Soldier | 4 |
| Carissa's Corner | 5 |
| Calendar Of Events | 6 |
| Health And Fitness | 7 |
| What Makes Ronnie Roll | 8 |
| Cooking With Anna | 9 |
| From The Tourism Office ... | 10 |
| Cover Stories | 11 & 13 |
| Clean Green And Beautiful .. | 12 |
| Captain's Log | 14 |
| Slinkard on Success | 15 |
| McGhee On Management ... | 16 |
| Learning As A Lifestyle | 18 |
| Alternative Approach | 19 |
| GenZ With JP | 21 |
| Mental Health Minute | 23 |



Publisher's Point

A Gift Of Courage... Just For You!

There are times when I have to take a step back from what I am doing as it pertains to meeting deadlines for *Athens Now* and think about the extraordinary events that occur each time we go to print. Thoughts are typed, buttons are pushed, energy goes zinging out into space and then comes back again in less than the blink of an eye, and once again through the unfailing efforts of a wonderful crew and the marvels of technology we have a paper in print and online form that is read in more than 80 countries. When I think of the fact that our

“funky little country paper” is read all over the world, there is only one word that is appropriate: *miracle*.

It is the time of year when, for all the right reasons, (and perhaps some that aren't so much) we focus on giving. We are told in the Good Book that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and our King wasn't kiddin' when He taught us that. So it is with giddy gladness that I invite you to partake of a true Christmas miracle, and that is a chance to be genuinely transformed. On Saturday, December 6, my friend and men-

tor Kathrine Lee is going to give you the opportunity to begin to build a “tool kit” that is based on scripture and science; it is simply entitled, *The Courageous Event*.

The “litmus test” for how powerfully these tools work is that they are what the young women who are divinely determined to overcome the effects of being trafficked use themselves to turn pain into purpose and become what their Maker had in mind in the first place before they were taken. You see, Kathrine and her husband, Michael, are the founders of *Pure Hope Foundation*, and *Pure Hope Ranch*, and these remarkable “interns” have gone on to finish their educations, become professional women, wives, moms, welders, lawyers, animal lovers, and more. I have met some of them, hugged them, seen them in action, and they are all my heroes.

Kathrine is presenting the *Courageous Event* on Saturday, December 6, from 9 a.m. until noon Central time, via the miracle of Zoom. All the information to get on the call is included in the flyer that is also the illustration for this *Publisher's Point*, and it will be an excellent use of your time or that of someone you love. There's more good news! The *Coura-*

geous Event is going to be recorded if you cannot make it live, and will be available early next week.

You will hear inspiring true stories. You will be given an overview of what has been proven over decades to equip people from widely varying walks of life to overcome everything from “garden variety” obstacles to triumphing over severe trauma. You will be introduced to an army of ambassadors whose mission is to help to end trafficking, have the opportunity to become involved if you wish, and to be reminded once again that it is not what happens to us that has the power; it is what we do with what has happened to us that makes all the difference. I hope you will avail yourself of this gift, and I look forward to seeing you on the call. Access lines are limited, so be sure to get on a few minutes early. Go old school and take notes if you wish, or take screen shots of the presentation. Give yourself this gift, and watch yourself become more *Courageous* this Christmas!

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Real Stories. Real Hope. Real Transformation.

Courageous Event

Learn how to rewire your brain to be courageous
Hear powerful stories of hope and healing from graduates of Pure Hope Foundation
Be equipped with simple, life-changing tools to live with passion, peace, and unwavering purpose

Be Inspired. Be Empowered. Be Part of the Movement.

Face Fear Boldly
Live Life Confidently
Forgive Others Willingly
Walk Out Courageously

Kathrine Lee
Founder of Pure Hope Foundation
High Performance Coach
Creator of The Ultimate Source

Interactive Workshop Event
Time: Dec 6, 2025
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Central Time
bit.ly/CourageousDec6

Events will raise awareness and support for Pure Hope Foundation



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Vets And The Phenomenon Of “Costly Giving”

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



It is no surprise that the theme of “giving” is popping up in this edition of *Athens Now*. After all, it is the holiday season; a time of celebrating being given remarkable gifts such as the miracle of the oil in the Temple lasting eight days in the middle of a brutal siege. And for Christians, even though the timing is off as to it being December 25, being given a savior who was born in brutal circumstances is the most remarkable gift of all time, if we will let that Gift do His work in us.

However, it can be a time of great loneliness for many, including veterans, and thankfully these days there are so many more resources designed to serve those who have “worn the uniform” than existed 20 years ago when I was in Iraq. This *Soldier* is dedicated to veterans and veterans’ groups that are doing remarkable things on a number of fronts, but there is a twist; so please read on.

Team Rubicon

The term “crossing the Rubicon” originally referred to Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon River for the point of starting a war; thus, reaching a point of

no return and committing to completing the task. Team Rubicon does something interesting in that they have become a highly effective “unit” that deals with disaster relief in America and all over the world. The “war” that they start is against the suffering caused most often by weather gone rogue. All kinds of folk who have served, whether or not they have been in combat show up as “Greyshirts” to get the job done.

Last week during Thanksgiving a team deployed to help in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. Here is what one Marine experienced: “You miss your family, but you also gain perspective. Many of the people we help don’t even have a stable roof over their heads right now. Holiday deployments bring a mix of sacrifice and

purpose, and they highlight the best of humanity. Greyshirts lean on each other, watch out for one another, and push forward to make a difference,” he says. “In the end, serving during the holidays isn’t about what you miss; it’s about what you give.” He is on to something, which I will get to in a minute.

Turbo Vets

Even though their platform is completely different, TurboVets has the same “Rubicon” mentality, focusing on serving veterans through technology and connecting vet-

eran service groups into a monster clearinghouse that streamlines the process of accessing benefits, building businesses, and continuing to serve. They are not Greyshirts, they often are wearing three-piece suits, but don’t let these guys fool you. Many are SEALS, many have seen action, many have been wounded to the point that they had to completely rebuild their lives, and they are paying it forward using technology to do so.

What do they have in common? They have experienced something described by psychologists known as “costly giving.”

In a word, it is the joy that comes when you give out of your core essence; when it really costs you to do so. The benefits to your health are virtually endless, especially when it comes to cardiovascular and mental health. Steve and I saw it often when we lived at the orphanage in Ciudad Juarez. Over the holidays, teams and families would come stay and spend their holiday giving, and without fail, the smiles were from ear to ear. I saw sullen teenagers light up, and my own mother-in-law, who already was a giver for sure, went back to Minnesota refreshed. Of course, that was AFTER she made her famous pecan rolls for everyone...

So, what am I proposing? That perhaps you and your family, and especially if you are a veteran, plan on making a memorable holiday that possibly includes some discomfort and discover “costly giving” in a whole new way. It absolutely cannot hurt.



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Carissa's Corner

A Place Called Home

by Carissa Lovvorn

There is just something about going home to the family farm, the place where my grandfather was born and raised, where I spent summer weeks watching my grandmother make her famous homemade biscuits and peanut butter fudge, and where I worked side by side with my grandfather on home-building projects. My brothers, cousin, and I, filled with a sense of adventure, wandered the woods, returning only when the car horn blared to tell us it was time to leave. That log cabin, heated with an old wood-burning stove, holds many memories, especially around the holidays.

Ten years ago, we lost the patriarch of our family -- my grandfather. We feel his absence each time we return to the farm. Memories of him are everywhere: in the tractor he loved to drive the grandchildren on, in the extra blocks of wood he added to support the rafters I couldn't hold while helping to build the porch, in his rocking chair that overlooks the pond, and perhaps the most meaningful of all, in the absence of his prayer before meals.

On Thanksgiving, our family piled into the large gathering room. He added the addition with the hope that one day it would be full of family. His wish came true. To be honest, it's now getting a little cramped and the family is not even done growing! My dad



and uncle jokingly said to my grandmother, "Look at the mess you and dad created."

Just as my grandfather entered this world on his own, later met my grandmother, and built the place we lovingly call home, he has now gone before us to another home, one prepared for all believers, where he waits patiently for our arrival. Jesus said, "...You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's

house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:1-3, NIV).

My grandfather knew with all his heart that our earthly home needed to be built on the Word of God. And while the log cabin may hold precious family heirlooms, he did not see fit to store up treasures on this earth. Instead, he poured the love of Christ into his

family, setting an example of how to follow in Jesus' footsteps. He declared, "...As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). He taught us how to be faithful servants, and I see his traits in each and every one of my family members.

I miss the days when my grandfather was here. His words were full of wisdom, his hands gently instructed us, and his

embrace was warm and loving. Oh, to go back and receive one last hug! However, I have hope that I will see him again, because our true family "home" is not built with logs, a stone foundation, and a metal roof. It's in paradise with our Heavenly Father and fellow believers. A place we can all call home.

*Blessings,
Carissa*



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Calendar of Events

POSTPONED!

Athens Christmas Parade New Date TBA

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 Now - December 31

The time-honored tradition of the Athens-Limestone Tinsel Trail (formerly the "North Poll Stroll") through Dec 31! Big Spring Memorial Park, 350 Market Street E, 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.

Christmas Chamber Coffee December 9

Chamber Coffees are once-a-month, Tuesday morning networking events where you can sip coffee, eat a bite, and chat with fellow business owners and employees. This Chamber Coffee is holiday themed, highlighting our Miss Merry Christmases from local high schools. 9-11AM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University, 302 Bryan St. Athens.

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. 3-7PM. Downtown in and around the Limestone County Courthouse Square. 200 W. Washington St., Athens. <https://athensmainstreet.org/sippin-cider/>

50th Annual Parade of Lights at Joe Wheeler State Park December 13

6pm. Rogersville. Join us Dec 13th at 6pm for a truly spectacular 50th anniversary of the greatest boat parade in the Shoals!! This

year is going to be our biggest year ever. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be riding in the parade. You can watch the lighted boats float past from inside the park's restaurant, outside along the banks between the lodge and Marina, or from a lodge room balcony. After the parade, enjoy Santa's workshop with hot cocoa and activities, Christmas carolers, photos with Santa and more.

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.

Christmas Cantata December 14

10:30 am. Isom's Chapel Methodist Church. 16230 Mooresville Rd, Athens. Come join us for a nostalgic, musical celebration of Christmas! The story of the birth of Jesus told alongside carols and hymns you can't help but sing along with! Come feel the Christmas spirit at Isom's Chapel.

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

Why Group Fitness Makes All The Difference When Starting Your Health Journey

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

If you've ever tried to start a health and fitness routine on your own, you know how hard it can be. You set goals, get motivated for a few days, and then life happens—your schedule gets busy, your energy dips, or you simply lose momentum. And before you know it, the routine you hoped would change your life becomes just another habit that didn't stick.

But what if the problem isn't you?

What if the problem is that you were never meant to do it alone?

Group fitness has become one of the most effective and sustainable ways for people to im-

prove their health, build consistency, and finally feel supported in their journey. At CrossFit Athens, ROAR Fitness Athens, and ROAR Spin, we see it every single day: people who once felt overwhelmed, intimidated, or unsure suddenly find themselves thriving—all because they stepped into a room full of people working toward the same goal.

Why Group Fitness Works

1. You Get Accountability You Can Feel

When you work out alone, no one knows whether you show up. But in a group class, your coaches and classmates expect to see you. That built-in account-

ability makes a massive difference. People are far more likely to stick with a routine when others are counting on them—something our members tell us they value most.

2. You Don't Have to Plan—Just Show Up

Walking into a gym and trying to figure out what to do can be overwhelming. In our group classes, the plan is already set for you. Our coaches craft every workout based on proven training principles so all you have to do is walk in the door and start moving.

3. You Get Expert Coaching Every Time

Trying to learn proper form or build a routine on your own can be confus-

ing and even risky. When you train in a structured class, you're guided by certified coaches who ensure your movements are safe, effective, and scaled to your personal level. You get the benefits of personal training—at a fraction of the cost.

4. You Become Part of a Community

This is the real magic of group fitness. At CrossFit Athens, ROAR Fitness Athens, and ROAR Spin, people make friends, celebrate milestones, and encourage one another through every workout. Community isn't just a buzzword—it's the reason people keep coming back. When you enjoy

the people you work out with, fitness becomes the best part of your day.

Where to Start: Three Powerful Options

CrossFit Athens is the place to build strength, confidence, and long-term health. Whether you're brand new or experienced, our coaches guide you every step of the way.

ROAR Fitness Athens offers high-intensity interval classes that are energizing, efficient, and accessible for all levels—with treadmills, skis, ergs, bikes, and Y-bells to keep things fun and fast-paced.

ROAR Spin gives you a 30-minute music-driven cycling workout that's perfect for busy adults who want a great sweat in a short amount of time. No experience required.

Start With People Who Want You to Succeed

You don't need to be in shape to start. You don't need to know what to do. You just need to walk in the door—and we'll take it from there.

If you're ready to finally make your health a priority, join us at CrossFit Athens, ROAR Fitness Athens, or ROAR Spin.

Your journey will be stronger, more fun, and more successful when you don't do it alone.

**- Coach Nick
Owner**

**CrossFit Athens
www.CrossFitAthens.com**



What Makes Ronnie Roll

The Best Ways For The Holidays

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



We met with gratitude, full hearts and no longer full tummies on December 1, and exchanged stories of the blessings of the season. Mayor Ronnie sometimes gets concerned about re-visiting topics, but once again we found ourselves discussing the number one concern no matter what time of year, and that is public safety. “Without it, we can’t celebrate anything,” he said. “We need to pray for Washington DC,” and I agreed. The topic of public prayer and the freedom to engage in it was one of things about which we expressed gratitude. “We are free to pray before City Council meetings. We are free to pray before games. We can never take that for granted,” he said.

Another topic that pops up often in our conversation is that of growth. It is no small task to endeavor to grow well, and it is one of the things that is continually on Mayor Marks’s heart and mind—how do we prepare for and respond to being one of the fastest-growing cities in the

state of Alabama without losing our “Athensness?” There is the Food City complex on Lucas Ferry and Hwy 99 which is coming along well. Ground has been broken for the new Publix store on Mooresville Road. It is hard to imagine that when the first Publix store was built close to 15 years ago at the intersection of Lindsay Lane and Hwy 72 that there was serious concern as to whether it would be financially viable. Now we have Publix #3 in the works. We are definitely on the radar of several national chain enterprises, and with growth comes challenges along with jobs and a strengthened economy.

Athens-Limestone has a number of ways to celebrate the holidays. Sometime soon the movie, *A Kangaroo Christmas*, which was filmed here in Athens, is going to be broadcast, but those details are not yet available. Mayor Ronnie got to be a part of that movie and has a cameo role as the mayor. The undisputed “star” of the movie was the baby kangaroo, whose

name in real life is Scarlett Johansson, and the movie could very well end up being our own *It’s A Wonderful Life*.

The annual Christmas Parade is having to be postponed due to un-cooperative weather, and hopefully the December 5th lighting of the columns at Athens State University followed by the Athens State choir concert won’t have to be. Athens High School has its annual Christmas Concert on Dec 6 at 7 p.m. at the AHS performing arts center. Sipin’ Cider will be on December 13, and the Storytelling Festival version of *A Christmas Carol* will be on December 14. The Lincoln-Bridgeforth Christmas Tree Lighting is on December 18, and Mayor Ronnie knew that the only way to enjoy the holidays might sound a bit paradoxical. “If you get engaged and involved in this city, the holidays are just better.



But, if you overdo it, you will miss the whole point of the holidays,” he said. I could not agree more. Thankfully there is a wide variety of ways to celebrate, and even if the snow falls in abundance, it will not

dampen the Christmas spirit.

We took the time to pray and thank God for more blessings than we can handle, and once again it was time for Ronnie to roll.





My Identity In Christ: God Says *I Have A Purpose*

by Anna Hamilton

One of the deepest desires of every human heart is to know why we are here. We long to believe that our lives matter, that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. The world may leave us confused, overlooked, or uncertain but God's Word is clear and powerful: you were created on purpose, with purpose, for a purpose.

You were not an accident. Psalm 139:16 declares, "All the days ordained for me

were written in your book before one of them came to be." Before you took your first breath, God had already mapped out a meaningful plan for your life.

You may not always feel qualified or capable, but God doesn't make mistakes. He strategically placed you in this generation, in your family, with your gifts and experiences because your life is part of His greater story.

continued on page 22

Easy Sugar Cookies

Ingredients:

*1 cup butter, room temperature
2/3 cup + 3 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
2 cups + 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
1 teaspoon vanilla, (optional, but recommended)
Rainbow sprinkles or nonpareils, (optional, but recommended)*

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, using a handheld electric mixer, beat together the butter and 2/3 cup sugar until combined. Add flour and blend well. Add vanilla and blend.

Using a cookie scoop, scoop out 1-inch-size balls, then knead and roll in the palms of your hands until they feel soft and smooth.

Gently roll the balls in the remaining 3 tablespoons of sugar until lightly coated, transfer to the baking sheets 2 inches apart.

With the bottom of a measuring cup or glass, press down on the balls to flatten. Sprinkle with some nonpareils (if using) and lightly press down again



just so they stick.

Bake for 14-16 minutes or until just slightly golden around the edges and on the bottom.

Remove from the oven and let rest on the baking sheets for at least 10-15 minutes (don't skip this step!) Then eat or transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Enjoy!

Aannnnnd We're Ready To Relax...

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



It's been a busy summer and a busier autumn and now we're ready to breathe. We're ready for walking through the Christmas trees at the duck pond. We're ready for cider on the square. We're ready for parades and shopping and feasting and resting. We're ready for sweet, plaintive strains of "Silent Night" wafting out into the night from every church window, seeking the lost and the lonely. As the days get shorter and the waning sun dims our vision slightly, we're ready for other senses to lead us through the season—the scent of fir, the taste of cocoa, the warmth of a hug, and the sound of laughter.

What a beautiful time to be in Athens-Limestone County!

Now, I know that for many of us this time of year can be harried. The drive to make everything "influencer perfect" grinds at our souls. Like hastily stretching a new tablecloth on an old, scratched wooden family table, we try to throw

brightly colored perfection on our lives in ribbons and handmade cards and expensive presents and overfull calendars. Icing and makeup hide divots and dark circles on our desserts and faces.

But why don't we make this holiday season as chill as the (utterly ridiculous) temperature outside? I mean, we are in the best county in the best state in the country! We are the warmth that people write about, fun that people dream of, nature that people long for...

And it's ALMOST CHRISTMAS!

Let's leave the Pinterest-perfect and Facebook-fabulous daydreams behind and instead get up to our elbows in icing, glitter, and sprinkles. Let's under-book our days (OH! Remind me to tell you about a great idea... one sec...) and overload our hearts with merri-ment.

I know that sometimes having guests can make it hard to relax but if you have guests coming in, please come see me! I

would be more than happy to help you plan some great things for them to do. Your guests will have a fun time, you can be a hero, and I'll get to gush over how awesome our county is—it's a win-win-win!

Ok, back to my great idea for under-booking our days: Bookmas. If you haven't heard of it, it goes like this: On one night, everyone gets a new book (it can be a surprise or one you asked for) and you have snacks and read the new books—that's it. Just reading and food.

They need to be fun books, though, delightful books. No tearjerkers like *Old Yeller* or *Organic Chemistry: Structure and Function* by Vollhardt, K. Peter C, and Schore, Neil E. (2014). Get dreamy books, adventurous books, thoughtful books, comic books (or manga if you're my type of nerd).

Now, normally this takes place on Christmas Eve, but I think it would be awesome if we did it once a week leading up to Christmas. That way we're guaranteed an "Oh,

I'm sorry we can't <insert event you really are too tired to go to here>. We have a family-thing night of quiet every week!" Isn't that a GREAT idea? Just a great night to feed the belly, the heart, and the mind with family and a close friend or two.

Everyone I know who has tried Bookmas loves it. There is something delicious about thinking about a new book and a night set aside on purpose to make an event of reading it. If you aren't sure about it, just try it. Let me know what book you got, what snacks you're eating, and how many times

you are going to do this in the weeks leading up to Christmas. You can go to our Facebook page if you want to post it or just email me here. I really want to know!

It's the beginning of an amazing month, the season of Advent, the most wonderful time of the year! Let's really sink deep into this time and soak in the light of every Christmas tree and smile, the warmth of every fireplace and heart, the taste of cider and kisses.

Merry Almost-Christmas, my amazing neighbors! I am so glad to be with you this year!



Give The Gift Of Health To Others And Yourself

by Seth Williams



continued from page 1

ring the holiday season is take care of our physical heart health? And, what if the result is that we are here stronger and longer to keep loving our friends and family? That is the mission of Herbs & More—Making America Healthy Again.

Why Heart Disease and Weight Gain Always Travel Together

Heart disease is not a sudden disaster. It is the final stage of something that has been quietly building for years. Weight gain, fatigue, shortness of breath, blood pressure issues, blood sugar problems, and swelling are not “separate” concerns. They are warning signs of a system under strain long before a doctor sees a problem on a chart.

Most people think cholesterol is the enemy. It is not. Cholesterol is a repair molecule. When arteries are damaged by inflammation, poor diet, oxidized fats, excess sugar, and nutrient deficiencies, the body sends cholesterol to patch the damage. The buildup is not the cause. The damage is.

The heart fails when the body becomes inflamed, acidic, congested, and deficient. That same environment also makes it impossible to lose weight no matter how hard someone diets. A stressed cardiovascular system slows metabolism, traps fat, drives cravings, and sabotages energy. Weight gain is not the cause of heart disease. It is often the symptom.

That is why real corre-

ction does not come from suppressing symptoms. It comes from rebuilding the machinery of the body so that circulation improves, metabolism turns on, and inflammation cools down.

At **NEWtritional Health Care**, we do not treat numbers. We correct systems.

How Athens residents can take control of their health before problems become permanent

OUR HEART: Rebuilding, Not Covering Up

OUR HEART was developed with one purpose: restore cardiovascular strength at the cellular level.

The heart is a muscle. Arteries are living tissue. Blood vessels must remain flexible, resilient, and repaired to function properly. When nutrient gaps persist for years, arteries become fragile, circulation weakens, and pressure rises.

OUR HEART supplies the structural nutrients needed to support arterial integrity, blood flow, and oxygen delivery. When circulation improves, oxygen improves. When oxygen improves,

energy improves. When energy improves, metabolism finally responds.

A healthy heart burns fuel better.

That is why people often notice reduced swelling, improved breathing, and better stamina when cardiovascular support is restored.

Dieter's DeLite: Turning Metabolism Back On

Dieter's DeLite is not a stimulant. It does not force weight loss. It works by correcting the systems that determine whether your body burns calories or stores them.

At the center of weight loss is the thyroid. The thyroid controls metabolic rate. If it slows, fat stays locked in place even when food intake drops.

That is why so many people “do everything right” and still fail to lose weight.

Dieter's DeLite supports metabolic output so the body responds to effort instead of resisting it.

Cravings are not weakness. They are blood sugar instability. When blood sugar

crashes, hunger surges and discipline disappears. Dieter's DeLite helps support balanced blood sugar so eating becomes logical again. When metabolism improves, appetite stabilizes. When appetite stabilizes, discipline returns. That is when dieting finally works.

Already On A Diet Or Medication?

Many people in Athens are now on prescription weight loss medications. These drugs reduce appetite, but they also reduce nutrient intake, muscle tone, and energy if the body is not properly supported.

Dieter's DeLite is not a replacement for medical treatment. It strengthens the system underneath it.

Supporting metabolism while calories are lower prevents energy collapse, helps preserve muscle, and makes weight loss sustainable instead of temporary.

People who support metabolism lose weight with less struggle. People who ignore it fight their own body.

Why Dieter's DeLite And OUR HEART

Work Best Together

Supporting metabolism without supporting the heart creates stress.

Supporting the heart without restoring metabolism leaves fat locked into place.

That is why these two products were designed to work together.

OUR HEART restores circulation. Dieter's DeLite restores fuel utilization.

When oxygen delivery improves, fat burns more efficiently.

When metabolism improves, energy returns naturally.

This combination repairs the engine and refuels the system at the same time.

This is not a crash plan.

This is restoration.

The Real Cost Of Waiting

Delaying correction does not pause damage. It multiplies it.

Arteries stiffen.

Blood sugar rises.

Energy fades.

Fat accumulates.

Waiting always collects interest and the bill arrives in fatigue, disease, and lost years.

Check out the NEWtritional Health Care Product Line at Herbs & More in Athens.

If you live in Athens and your weight and heart health matter to you, stop guessing and start correcting.

We take the time to explain, not rush. We restore systems, not chase symptoms.

Call or visit today and ask about **Dieter's DeLite** and **OUR HEART**.

Your body was designed to recover. It just needs the tools to do it.

Herbs & More Athens

622 S Jefferson St,
Athens, AL 35611

Hours: M-F 10-5
Sat 10-2

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

The Long And Winding Road

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

This past weekend, I had the pleasure of working with an amazing young lady from Athens Bible School, Kate Hargrave. Kate is a senior and reached out as a part of her Youth Leadership Development Program. These Youth Leaders reached out to different nonprofits to plan and schedule a volunteer event according to the program's requirements. Kate chose her location -- New Bethel Road in Elkmont. We parked at JD Adams Drive and worked our way back towards Sandlin Road, a whole 0.6 miles.

I hadn't ridden down New Bethel Road in a while, and I had forgotten that the 0.6-mile stretch was LOADED with litter. It took us ev-

ery bit of the three hours Kate planned to make it back to Sandlin Road. When we started, Kate, her dad, and I grabbed about five bags each. For some crazy reason, we thought that would be plenty to get the litter picked up. We made so many trips back to the truck for more bags. It was awful, everywhere you looked there was something. We know we left a lot because the ditches were full of leaves and pinecones that hid the litter. When we counted bags, there were 37 FULL bags. Keep America Beautiful averages bags of litter at 20 pounds. That's roughly 740 pounds in 0.6 miles.

Since most of the leaves on the trees and brush have died back, you could see the big stuff.



The kind of stuff that it took an effort to get out and dump where it would normally be hidden. We pulled a set of refrigerator/freezer doors, tires, a flat-screen television, a couple of paint cans, and an aquarium out to the side of the road. I'd estimate this added at least another 100 pounds, making the total somewhere around 850 pounds.

I'd heard that New Bethel Road is covered in litter from end to end, and I believe it. We had so many cars slow down to thank us for what we were doing. We usually get that when we are working, but this time it was close to 75% of the cars that passed. Saturday was a little different from some cleanups that we do because it was Commissioner Daryl Sammet's funeral. Normally, we would have a

dump trailer to load up, or even the crew from the district running the roads to load our bags for us. With all that was going on, Chairman Collin Daly and Commissioner Derrick Gatlin offered to help us, it would just be Sunday afternoon before they could get there. After Commissioner Sammet's funeral service had ended, Collin made his way to New Bethel Road and some wonderful person (whom we hope sees this) had already picked up all the bags. We don't know

who to thank exactly, but we are grateful!

If you know Kate, make sure to tell her how awesome she really is. We can't thank her enough! She made the plan, did the work, inspired others to volunteer, and she inspired us to continue down New Bethel Road. If the spirit moves you to volunteer, keep a watch on our Facebook page over the next few weeks and months, because we're going back to New Bethel Road.



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

Dugger's Florist & Gifts: *Super New Shop, Same Knockout Service*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

There is a generous amount of available light streaming in from the windows (which the plants absolutely love, and a comfortable table and chairs where you can wait, dream, or both. Melinda told me that she especially enjoys having lots of available parking, along with more display area. Because Dugger's does a lot of funeral work, Melinda also likes the fact that the parking is easier and less stressful for families that have just suffered loss.

While it might sound unusual, Melinda feels like she is making a difference for families when she does funeral flowers or provides other bereavement gifts. "People are under so much pressure when they have lost someone, and I like to help," she said. Melinda is committed to helping people find what they want while respecting their budget, and reminds people that funeral flowers are "the last thing you'll do for them," (meaning the deceased.)

I first met Melinda in 2010 when Dugger's was located in Tanner, and we both are

in the same BNI (Business Networking International) chapter in Athens known as Limestone Leaders. Neither of us ever had a plan to become entrepreneurs, and it has been a joy to watch her come into her stride. I also am beholden to her for how skillfully she has handled family flower needs from Seattle to New York City. Both my mom's 99th birthday and my brother-in-law's passing were just made better all the way around because of Melinda and the Dugger's Florist team. Additionally, she taught me some things about flower arranging and how to make a quick holiday arrangement using evergreens and holly.

One of the things I appreciate about Melinda is the care she takes to educate her customers so that they can get what they desire for the best possible price. She will tell them why a flower is or isn't a good choice, and whether or not it is in season. This is certainly important when it comes to weddings. A bride may have her heart set on a certain type of flower, and while it may be pretty, it may not be sturdy enough to handle being part of an arrangement.

Melinda will do her best to suggest an alternative.

This excellent level of client care and education has served to give Melinda quite a base of raving fan customers who trust her creativity so much that they basically say, "Just do your thing—I know it will turn out fine." So, she does, and it does.

Which brings us to Christmas. There is still time to order a beautiful centerpiece for your table, and Melinda will see to it that it is just the right size. She does live wreaths, as well as silk everything, and popular flowers for the season are roses, hydrangeas, and, of course, lots of evergreens and holly. Flowers come from Holland, South America, and California this time of year, and supply is good.

Yesterday would have been the annual Athens Christmas Parade, which has been temporarily postponed due to the possibility of snow. However, when it happens, the parade will go right by the front of the store on Hobbs. Dugger's will be open late for the parade, and as Melinda said, "It will be a safe friendly place to get warm."

Melinda is planning on having a grand re-opening



celebration sometime in January, but she needs to get through Christmas first. Valentine's Day will be her next big holiday, and actually likes that holiday the best. The biggest reason is that Valentine's Day is much less demanding when it comes to floral selection—everybody wants roses, especially red ones--so she is able to order ahead from all over the world to meet the demand. One of the countries that greatly helps people in North Alabama celebrate Valentine's Day

by providing roses is Ecuador.

Other items that are offered by Dugger's are customized teddy bears, bereavement gifts, and personalized Christmas decorations. And, everything is pulled together by a great crew that has a lot of fun doing what they do. "We go the extra mile to take care of our customers," said Melinda. Stop by today to enjoy their new location and their great customer service.



***Dugger's
Florist &
Gifts***

705 E. Hobbs Street,
Athens, AL 35611

Hours: M-F 8-5, Sat 9-noon

Phone: 256-232-5777

duggersflorist@gmail.com

Facebook:

Dugger's Florist & Gifts

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www.duggersflorist.com



Captain's Log

My First Tip

by Brenda Wilkerson

At the #7 stop, my sweet and generous 3rd-grade princess paused briefly at my captain's chair before departing down the steps. She awkwardly dug through items stuffed in her hands including book fair change and several other treasures while balancing her water bottle. "Here is your tip!" she proudly announced and then placed this dollar bill in my hands.

My first thought was to refuse the money and tell her to keep it, but how could I refuse an unsolicited act of generosity? "Why, thank you, My Lady" is what giggled out of my mouth. We both laughed, and I thanked her. She then turned to bounce down the 3 steep steps and happily skipped to her front door.

Oh, the little things we teach and learn, both good and bad, without even realizing it! Somewhere along the way, she picked up that act of kindness. Someone, most likely a parent, taught an invisible valuable lesson by example.

It caused me to pause and wonder where else in my day do I teach and reinforce lessons unaware. Do I encourage or discourage others who wish to deposit small gifts in my life? The simple act of an encouraging response by accepting someone's act of kindness may be the most impactful moment of the giver. Let this be our 'tip' to ponder on this crisp day knowing that God loves a cheerful giver.

Let us encourage others by receiving gifts and acts of kindness just as cheerfully!

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, **for God loves a cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8 ESV)

~Brenda



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Protecting Your Story
Telling It Well



Slinkard On Success

“W” Is For Winning

by D. A. Slinkard

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

This article brings us to the letter “W” and our word is “Winning,” and just like that we are in the month of December, with the year 2026 fast approaching. The new year is right around the corner, and we are about to turn the final page of 2025. How has your year been for you? Have you been able to achieve what you set out to do? Do you find yourself hitting the targeted mark or are you like so many other people missing out on the success you would like to achieve?

It has been my experience that too often we decide to make changes in our lives, but we decide we are going to start on Monday, or two weeks from now, or even at the beginning of next year. This thought process sounds good in theory, but it only becomes a form of procrastination which will ultimately lead to us getting the same old results. For success in life, I believe we need to have a winning mentality with the focus on giving 100%. The reality is that too many people do not have the right mentality, and even fewer people are willing to give 100% in life.

It is as if we want success, but instead of working for it, we want it to be handed to us. I am reminded of the quote which

states, “The only place ‘success’ comes before ‘work’ is in the dictionary.” If you want success, it will take work. No work means no success. We live in a society that is accustomed to instant gratification. If we have to wait any length of time for something, many people begin to wonder whether or not it is truly worth it.

Any great thing in life is worth waiting for and is worth working for — and I believe there are three types of people in our society. We have the defeated, the disheartened, and the devoted. To have a winning attitude, a person is going to need to learn how to get to the latter approach of being devoted. We have far too many people walking around with a defeated attitude trying

to figure out what is the next thing that is going to go wrong for them.

These are the people who have given up before they have even started, and if they were to start, they are already expecting to lose. When it comes to our daily living, we need to expect to win, and we need to expect to have success. Instead, we have a society who feels entitled to get things they have not earned. No one owes me anything; no one else owes you anything; the only person that owes you anything is yourself! We live in the greatest country known to man, and we need to have the victor (winning) attitude and not the victim approach.

It is easy to feel like a victim in the world we

live in, but this attitude and approach is not the right one to have. People can easily become disheartened if we try to look at the world in a manner that victimizes people. I was 15 years old when my dad died; I was 17 years old when my mom left me to live on my own. I do not say this for you to feel sorry for me. I say this because life should not be dictated by circumstances, but life should be dictated by the choices we make. I could have chosen to be disheartened and defeated, but instead I decided each day to be devoted to having a winning approach.

When I say I am devoted, it means I am committed to have a winning attitude and approach to

life. Do I get down? Absolutely, but negative things happening to us are only temporary. The issues in my life I have found are 10% of what happens to me and 90% of how I allow it to impact me. Will you decide to be devoted to success in your life?

This year is almost over, and we cannot get the previous days back. We can only change today and our future. What approach are you going to take? Are you going to allow for your circumstances to dictate whether you are the victim or whether you are the victor in your life? The choice is yours to make, and no one else can decide for you. When will you commit to success?





McGhee On Management

Emotional Intelligence *Your Choice*

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

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Explore EI – That wonderful exercise and experience of the mind that brings joy, peace, challenge, and a sense of personal control to life that is not available otherwise. First...I hope you will “think” a few minutes with me.

CHOICE. Choice & Consequence. Choice & Responsibility. My Responsibility for MY Choices. My Responsibility for YOUR Choices. Your Responsibility for MY Choices.

Where your own emotional intelligence quotient is concerned, you have a choice to leave it as is or choose to grow exponentially in maturity – and take with that growth a new perspective on your own life and the lives of others around you. The choices you make today affect every day of your future.

“Today’s energy depends on yesterday’s expenditure,” so they told my mom. As with the body, so with the mind, heart, and soul. Today, you and I will either build or tear

down our bodies, minds, hearts and souls. My choice. Your choice.

Before we can develop maximum wisdom on EI Through Criticism Management (That is, after all, my pet project!), we need clarity on the power and responsibility of CHOICE. All too many people are never taught to take responsibility for their attitudes, actions, and thoughts, and thus their words and deeds are also loosely strewn about, carelessly, and with no awareness of the pain, hurt, and harm they are inflicting on those around them.

We don’t have room here for a complete course on “CHOICE” -- but a few undergirding truths will take the wise reader far. As you ponder these points, your already sharp mind will expand and expound in exciting ways as you see how thinking on these things throughout the day gives you clarity, and ways to use these points that apply to a myriad of life’s scenarios.

- I can choose. In most ev-

erything, time, and place of life... I can choose.

- I can often choose for others.
- You can choose.
- Your choices sometimes affect me.
- Some choices cannot be undone.
- Some choices can be changed.
- Some choices have effects no one could foresee.
- Some choices affect my life very little.
- Some choices change the whole course of my life.
- I have the power to CHOOSE how your choices will ultimately affect me.
- I am responsible for my choices.
- You are responsible for your choices.
- I am responsible for how I let your choices affect my life.
- You cannot control my choices unless I give you permission.

- My choices might be opposite of your choices, yet both can be right or wrong

- I can choose, but I cannot choose the consequences.

See where we are headed here? Personal accountability is required if anyone wants to grow in EI – Emotional Intelligence. As long as we carry a victim mentality, our emotions are immature. The simple, plain truth is, you have a choice as to whether you pay the price to learn and apply some growth principles and become a better person for yourself and everyone else in your life.

Consider: Are you the one in your family/career/world who gets ulcers, or the one who gives them? Have you ever said, “That’s just the way I am, so deal with it!”? Do you state that you are “Just being honest!” as a way to be thoughtless and unkind in your words and deeds so that your rudeness appears to be their fault?

Are you willing to ask yourself some tough questions in

order to grow in your own personal emotional intelligence, and possibly help others at the same time?

Even the Bible tells us to judge ourselves so we will not be judged by others (I Cor. 11:31). So, it makes sense to me to assess (judge) my current situation, see where I can grow, and get the nourishment that feeds that process, take it in, and enjoy the fruits of my labor. I hope you will join me. It is a constant growth opportunity for me, and I think it will benefit all who choose to partake. Hope to see you again soon!

PRINCIPLE: You can CHOOSE: But you cannot always choose the CONSEQUENCES.

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



Happy Hanukkah

from

Athens Now
information & inspiration



Learning As A Lifestyle

Leadership 101: *Not For The Faint Of Heart*

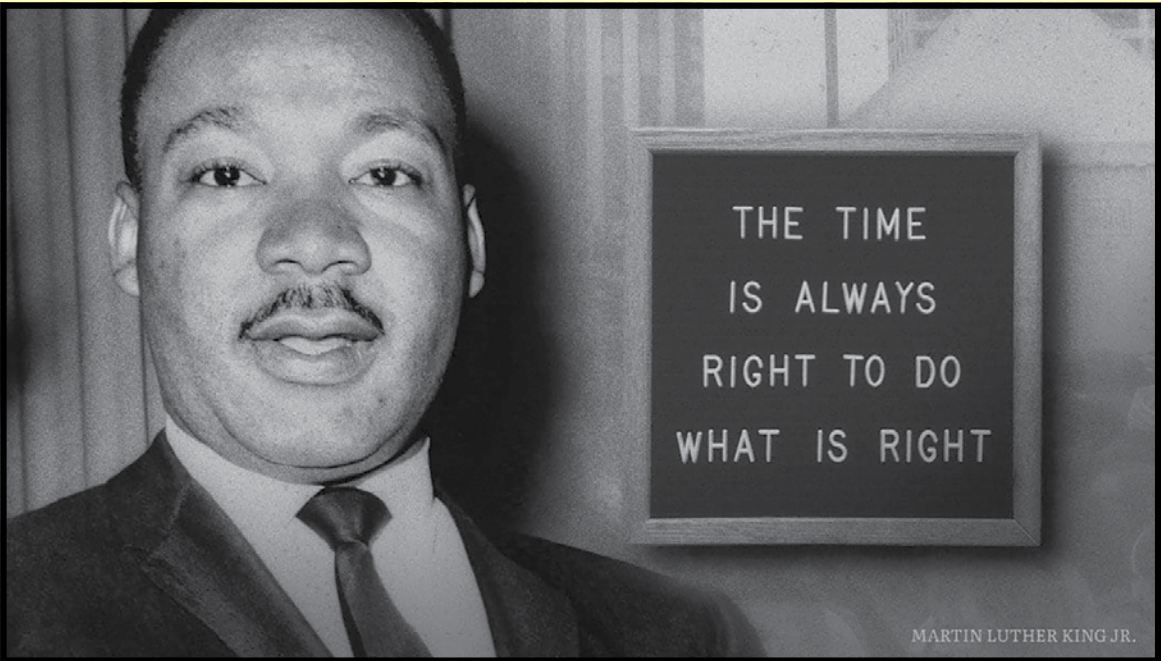
by Eric Betts

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

Leadership is not for the faint of heart. It is a mantle that attracts both admiration and accusation, often in the same breath. When things go wrong—whether due to systems, circumstances, or collective failure—leaders become the lightning rods for blame. This is not necessarily a reflection of personal failure, but rather a function of the role itself. The position of leadership is designed to bear the weight of responsibility, and with that comes the inevitability of criticism, misunderstanding, and even betrayal.

Human nature seeks

clarity in chaos, and in moments of crisis, people instinctively look for someone to hold accountable. Leaders, by virtue of their visibility and authority, become the most convenient targets. This dynamic is not new. From Moses to Mandela, from Dr. King to modern-day change-makers, history is filled with examples of leaders whose motives were questioned, whose decisions were dissected, and whose character was challenged. Yet, their legacy was not defined by the accusations they endured, but by the vision they held and the cour-



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

age with which they led. To lead well, one must learn the sacred art of not taking it personally. This does not mean becoming indifferent or emotionally detached, but rather developing the spiritual and emotional maturity to distinguish between personal attacks

and the burdens of leadership. It means recognizing that criticism often says more about the fears and frustrations of others than it does about your own integrity. It means refusing to internalize every complaint as a condemnation of your calling.

Ultimately, you must anchor yourself in the assurance of your gifts and the righteousness of

your path. If your leadership is rooted in justice, compassion, and truth, then you are on the side of right—even when others cannot yet see it. Trust the process. Trust the God who called you. And remember: the weight of blame may fall on your shoulders, but the strength to carry it comes from within and above. Keep leading. Keep believing. Keep becoming.



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The Alternative Approach

Weight Loss And Heart Health

by Roy Williams

If you are tired of fighting your weight, worried about your heart, or both, you already know that doing nothing is not an option. Every month you delay, habits set deeper, arteries stiffen more, and energy slips a little further away.

Right now, in Athens, people are working hard on diet plans, gym memberships, and even prescription drugs like Ozempic. Yet many of them still feel exhausted, hungry, and afraid that heart disease is catching up with them. On top of all that, the side effects from the weight loss injections are closing in on the users.

That is exactly why we created **Dieter's DeLite** and paired it with our **HEART** formula at **NEWtritional Health Care**. Together, they are designed to support metabolism, appetite control, and cardiovascular health in a way most "single focus" approaches simply do not cover. If you are serious about protecting your heart and losing weight before it costs you your health, this combination is not just an option, it can be

a strategic plan that is already working for so many.

Most diets fail for three main reasons:

1. The metabolism is already slowed down.
2. Blood sugar swings hijack willpower.
3. Energy drops so low that people cannot stick with it.

When the thyroid, adrenals, and blood sugar system are under stress, the body fights to hold on to every calorie. You can cut food, count points, and skip dessert, yet the scale barely moves and your energy decreases. At the same time, a sluggish metabolism and poor circulation put an extra load on your cardiovascular system. That is when blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides start to climb. If you do not address metabolism and the heart at the same time, you are trying to push a car uphill with the parking brake still on.

Why Dieter's DeLite Helps You Win

Dieter's DeLite was formulated to support:

- A more active metabo-

lism

- Better appetite and craving control, many saying they are forgetting to eat
- More consistent, natural energy

This special formulation of ingredients targets the systems that control how your body uses food rather than simply trying to suppress hunger. When your metabolic "engine" is encouraged to run properly, your diet plan finally has a chance to work. This formula is definitely helping me eat less and has all but stopped my sugar cravings. (Rose M., Madison, Alabama)

What you need to know about Ozempic and Other Weight Loss Drugs

Many people in Athens are now on Ozempic or other GLP-1 medications. These drugs reduce appetite and can lower food intake dramatically. The problem is that with less food often comes less energy, less nutrition, and in some cases a tired, flat feeling that makes everyday life harder. Some studies are showing evidence of permanent damage to the digestive tract.

Dieter's DeLite is not a prescription. What it can do is **complement** your program by supporting:

- Metabolic activity while calories are reduced
- Natural energy so you can function, work, and even exercise
- A more balanced appetite pattern instead of wild swings
- Delivers nutrients missing due to eating less.

Why Pair Dieter's DeLite with Our HEART Formula

Supporting weight loss while ignoring the heart is short sighted. Extra weight, poor circulation, and nutrient deficiencies are some of the same factors that contribute to cardiovascular problems.

Our **HEART** formula is designed to support:

- Healthy arterial walls
- Better circulation and blood flow

- Overall cardiovascular function
- Weight loss which protects overall circulatory health

When you combine **HEART** with **Dieter's DeLite**, several important things happen at once:

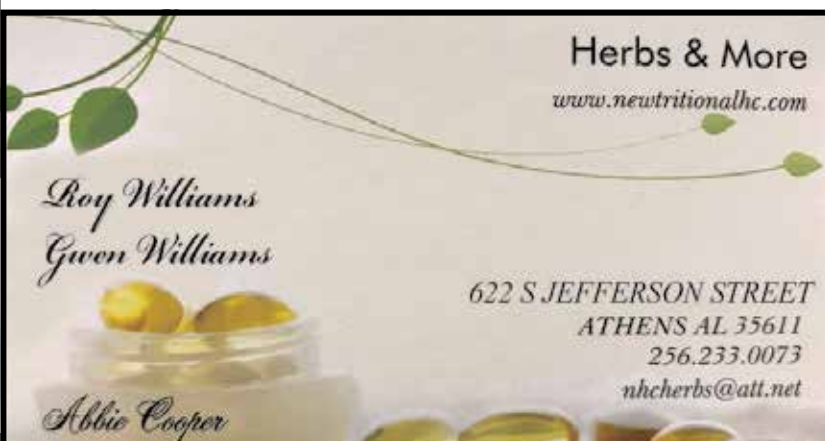
- As circulation improves, oxygen and nutrients reach your cells more effectively.
- As metabolism picks up, your body becomes more efficient at burning stored fat.
- As energy rises, it is easier to move, walk, and exercise.
- Overall better outlook on life

You are no longer just trying to make the scale move. You are working to protect the system that keeps you alive.

Come by **Herbs & More** in Athens or **NHC Herb Shop** in Killen so we can sit down with you, review your goals, and help you understand exactly how **Dieter's DeLite** and **HEART** can fit into your current plan. You may visit our website at nhcherbs.com or call 256-757-5660. You get local guidance, real products, and a clear plan instead of another empty promise.

Your heart is working every second of your life. Make sure your plan is working just as hard.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*



Tennessee Valley Spotlight



Mondays at 10am

1080 AM WKAC



GenZ With JP

Dear Christians, Speak Up

by JP Plott



There's a common misconception amongst modern Christians. One that has allowed chaos and degeneracy to take hold in our society. It's drifted America away from its Christian roots. This misconception is that our Christian beliefs should not be mixed with politics, and that Jesus would want us to "live and let live." Christians have allowed our love of others to be maliciously twisted by those who don't share our morality in the first place to silence us. They will claim that there's a separation of church and state for a reason, and Christians have no right to be lecturing others on how to live their life. This has allowed abortion, transgenderism, pornography, along with a long list of other demonic vices, to become mainstream in our society.

As Christians, we must ask ourselves, is this the world we want to leave to our children? Firstly, our Founding Fathers granted us the freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. Christianity was the foundation of our nation's founding. That every human being was granted unalienable rights by God, the Christian God. John Adams once said, "We recognize no sovereign but God, and no king but Jesus." Thomas Jefferson professed, "God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God?"

Our ancestors rode into battle with "Appeal to Heaven" flags; Washington knelt and prayed for his men when defeat seemed inevitable in the forest at Valley Forge. God granted America victory and has paved the way for the greatest nation the world has ever seen. This was not in vain.

Our Founding Fathers gave us a nation built on the foundation of Christianity. It is our duty as Christians to preserve it. The Sunday before the 2024 election, I was visiting a church for the second time. The pastor stood on the stage and said, "We don't tell you how to vote, we just tell you to vote." This perplexed me. Christians have every right to impose our morality on the world around us. Why? Because we're correct.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Our enemies fight with every bone in their body to enforce their way of life; it's time we start doing the same. How do we accomplish this? How do we impose our morality effectively? We have to learn how to play the game, the game being politics. Politics is how the world operates. Whether you think it's unbearable or not, it's just the truth.

If you want to start seeing real, tangible change around you, more often than not, it has to be achieved politically. How do we outnumber the anti-Christian swamp in DC? More Christians run for office. How do we get pornography out of our children's books? Christians start mak-

ing up the library boards. How do we change the world around us for Christ? Christians must get engaged. Don't let the atheist crowd force you into silence while they enforce their way of life. Stand up, speak up, and be the light God has called us to be.

America is a Christian nation; this is a fact. Satan would love to turn it into Sodom and Gomorrah. Hiding in your hole and avoiding politics because it's messy is not the answer. Get engaged, get active, and start making the world more Christ-like. Whether that's running for office yourself, or volunteering on a campaign, or even just speaking to others about the issues. Of course, politics is not our God. Politics won't get you into Heaven. However, God has given us a nation

worth preserving. Action from Christians is required to preserve America. Honor God and our Founding Fathers by standing up. Keep America Christian. It doesn't have to get worse before it gets better.

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 Have A Purpose*

by Anna Hamilton

You were created for good works. Ephesians 2:10 beautifully reminds us, “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.” Your purpose is not random; it was prepared long ago. God did not save you just to sit still; He saved you so that you could shine His light, impact lives, and make a difference in ways only you can.

Your purpose doesn’t have to be loud or public. Sometimes it’s expressed through encouraging someone who feels unseen, raising children in love and faith, showing kindness where others offer judgment, sharing Jesus through your words and actions, and using your gifts, whether creative, practical, or spiritual, to serve others

You have a purpose in every season of your life. Purpose isn’t just about your future, you have purpose right now, even in the middle of uncertainty, waiting, or struggle. Romans 8:28 assures us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.” That

means every season, good or bad, is being woven into something meaningful.

Even your pain can become part of your purpose. God specializes in turning tests into testimonies. What hurt you may one day help someone else.

You can be walking confidently in your calling. You don’t have to know every detail of your future to walk confidently in purpose. Your first calling is simply this, know God, love others, and be faithful right where you are.

As you do those things, He will guide your steps. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” His plan unfolds piece by piece, and He equips you with everything you need for the journey.

So, lift your head and walk boldly, your life is not random. You were created on purpose, and God will fulfill His purpose in you.

This week’s recipe will be the perfect cookie for your holiday celebration. It is so simple, with only a few ingredients, you can make a sweet and perfect treat. Perfect for your Christmas cookie swaps and to leave out for Santa. I hope your family loves these easy and delicious cookies as much as my family does.

“The Lord will vindicate me; your love, Lord, endures forever—do not abandon the works of your hands” (Psalm 138:8).



GOD HAS GIVEN
ALL OF US
GREAT PURPOSE!

Seasonal Affective Disorder

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.”

- John Steinbeck

In my youth, I will admit, I never understood what seasonal affective disorder was all about. How could the weather, or the fact that the sun was not shining, possibly affect how one feels to the point of depression? And then we moved to The Netherlands. I was told that The Netherlands averages about 60 days of sunshine per year! While this is not true, I did notice that with an increase in cloudier days, more than I was used to, my mood seemed to take a downward turn. Wow. Ok, now I get it. The way the Dutch combat this seemingly perpetual lack of sunlight is not in the healthiest way...many homes had their own tanning beds or, at the very least, a light box.

Let's examine Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) for a better understanding of what it is -- symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. Seasonal Affective Disorder is a form of depression, also known as seasonal depression or winter depression. Symptoms of depression usually occur during the fall and winter months when there is less sunlight, and then usually improve with the arrival of spring. The most difficult months for people with SAD in the United States tend to be January and February.

SAD is much more than just the winter blues. Symptoms can be distressing and overwhelming to the point of interfering with daily functioning. About 5% of adults in the U.S. experience SAD, which typically lasts about 4-5 months of the year. It is also more common among women than men. SAD may begin at any age, but it typically starts when a person is between ages 18 and 30. SAD has been linked to a biochemical imbalance in the brain, prompted by shorter daylight hours and less sunlight in the winter. As seasons change, some people experience a shift in their biological internal clock that can cause them to be out of sync with time and their daily schedule. Daylight Savings Time, which is meant to maximize the use of daylight hours, can have a negative effect for those who tend to use their evening hours to get things done. I have noticed for me, that 7 p.m. now feels like 9 p.m.! Common symptoms of SAD include fatigue, even with too much sleep, and weight gain associated with overeating and craving carbohydrates. As you might expect, SAD symptoms can vary from mild to severe and may include many symptoms similar to major depression such as:

Feelings of sadness and hopelessness

Changes in appetite, usually eating more

Sleeping too much

Loss of energy or increased fatigue

Increase in restlessness



(pacing, shaking, etc.)

Trouble concentrating or making decisions

Thoughts of death or suicide

SAD can be effectively treated in a number of ways, including light therapy, antidepressant medications, and talk therapy. While symptoms will generally improve on their own with the change of season, symptoms can improve more quickly with treatment. Light therapy involves sitting in front of a light therapy box, which mimics outdoor light. Researchers believe that this type of light causes a chemical change in the brain that lifts your mood and eases other SAD symptoms. In general, the light box should provide an exposure of up to 10,000 lux of light, emitting as little UV light as possible. To be most effective, a light box should be used within the first hour of waking up in the morning and requires about 20-30 minutes. Please note: Light boxes are designed to be safe and ef-

fective, but they aren't approved or regulated by the FDA. So, it's important to understand the risks and options. Many see some improvements from light therapy within one to two weeks. If you are cautious about using a light box, spending time outdoors or arranging your home or office so that you are exposed to a window during the day can also have positive effects.

If you feel you have symptoms of SAD, please seek the help of a trained medical or mental health professional. Just as with other forms of depression, it is important to make sure there is no other medical condition causing these symptoms.

For example, SAD can be misdiagnosed as hypothyroidism, hypoglycemia, and mono or other viral infections. A mental health professional can diagnose the condition and discuss therapy options such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) or rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT.) With the right treatment, SAD can be a manageable condition.

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.

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