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Athens Now

information & inspiration

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I heard the simplest, most thought-provoking, soul-searching message this past Sunday at my church...

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Limestone County Commissioner Daryl Sammet: *Servant-Hearted And Sorely Missed*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

This is a tough holiday season for the Sammet family and the people of Limestone County. District 1 Commissioner Daryl Sammet finished his battle with cancer in November, and his passing has been hard on everybody who knew him. While

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Foundations Counseling Centers: *Hope And Healing For The Holidays And Beyond*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

During this holiday season, which is "supposed" to be so wonderful, it is almost always the case that at least one aspect of it will be tough for just about everyone. The thing is, no one wants to talk about it. Well, not no one, actually; Nancy McDonald, who is a season-

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Cooking With Anna

Loaded Farmhouse Spoon Bread...

This week's recipe will be your go-to on Christmas morning. It is delicious, rich, and cozy spoonbread...

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Here Comes Christmas...

While curbside recycling may be down again, the Limestone County Recycling program wants your recyclables...

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Publisher's Point

“Herod” Is Still A Part Of The Holidays

Over 2,000 years ago, our Savior was born in Bethlehem, and the intent of the angels and heaven itself was to herald the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to humans. “Fear not!!” “Glad tidings of great joy!” “Peace on earth, toward men of goodwill!” And indeed, every year since then has been filled with what we have affectionately come to call “Christmas Miracles.” These are tales of wonder and beauty that make the celebration even more personal. While it is historically true that the event was not on December 25, and that the Wise Men did not arrive the same night as the shepherds to celebrate the birth of Yeshua, in the West we lovingly lump it together and endeavor to make Him “the Reason for the Season” even while Black Friday starts its siren song in September.

Sadly, a very important part of that miraculous Nativity was a stark and dark contrast to the sound of singing angels. It was the demonic and maniacal raving of a mad man, and the insistence that innocent male children from the age of two on down be put to the sword. Why? For no other reason than they were drawing breath, and therefore a threat to King Herod who was terrified that he was about to be deposed. No one wants to wrestle with such evil in a time of great blessing, and for sure, no one wants to try and get their head around the fact that for the second time in the history of the Jewish people, a king decreed a slaughter of the innocents.

Yet, it happened then, and it has just happened again. Fifteen Jews were slaughtered on Bondi Beach of Sydney, Australia, by a father and son team who be-

lieve that it was their divine duty to do so. One of the innocents was a ten-year-old girl. Forty-two others were sent to the hospital. It was the first day of Hanukkah, an 8-day feast of love and light, of cleansing and provision. The footage of the bravery of the man who stopped one of the shooters is compelling, and leaders of every faith are calling Ahmed-al Ahmed a hero. Israel is calling for him to be honored as one who is considered “Righteous among the nations,” the highest honor for someone who is not Jewish, and most often given in the past to people who risked and, at times, gave their lives to protect Jews during WWII.

Here in our own Alabama the Beautiful, we are grieving the temporary “snuffing out” of light. A stunning 19-year-old by the name of Ella Cook who hailed from the Bir-

mingham area was shot in the face at Brown University while in a study group. She was the vice-president of a college conservative club at Brown, a vibrant Christian, kind-hearted, and according to witnesses, targeted. The other young person who was murdered was named Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov, just 18 years old. His family came here from Uzbekistan when he was young, and he too was known for his kindness. Nine others were wounded.

What do we make of this? What do we do, and who do we become? We may not have answers now, but we will, and those answers will be worth waiting for. We “choose to refuse” to give in to hate or fear. We choose to shine more brightly in the darkness, and we sing the songs of angels, irrespective of the cost. We remember that Herod was an incomprehensible part of that first, pure holiday, but he did not succeed in snuffing out the Light. And that hope, that the Light cannot be snuffed out, is indeed the good news that brings great joy this season, even while we weep.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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All Things Soldier

Service Members Who Never Stopped Serving

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

The City of Athens recently put out a publication entitled *The City Of Athens Voice: Serving More Than Our City*, and it is a careful, thoughtful publication that does a solid job of saying thanks to the people who currently serve our city in a number of capacities. In this inaugural December 2025 edition, the first order of business was to make note of how many of our law enforcement officers, first responders, and other personnel have served in the military. Here is what it said:

More than 30 veterans and/or active military serve not only the City of Athens, but also our country. Several departments within the city have employees who have served in various branches of the military, some during

wartime. Athens also has three elected officials who served in the military. Veterans Day may have passed at the time of this publication, but we are at the height of the holidays. May we all take the time to be thankful for our employees' service, the service of those who are currently away from their families, and the service of all who serve in our military.

Mayor Ronnie Marks spent two years in the Army in the jungles of Vietnam and six years in the Guard. City Councilman Chris Seibert was serving in the Air Force in Europe the day that the Twin Towers were destroyed. City Councilman James Lucas was in Germany during the Cold War and the very beginning of the Vietnam War.

In addition to law enforcement and fire and rescue, there are people who have served who work for Gas, Water, Electric, CPR, HR, Sanitation, and Building. During storms, some of them are in just as much danger as being in a combat zone, maybe even more.

Not enough can be said to convey our thanks to our soldier-servants, and one of the things that happens in our town is that people actually write thank you notes to our first responders! How many cities or towns can say the same thing? Or, in other words, who DOES that?? If this season is all about gifts, giving, and the birth of the greatest Gift in the history of mankind, then it is only fitting to pass along the grati-



tude that has been expressed by intensely thankful people who have experienced our first responders in action.

Here is one of many sweet tastes of thanks from an Athenian who took the time and expended some energy to "put pen to paper," albeit digitally:

I want to take a moment to recognize Athens Fire & Rescue, the Athens Police



Department, and all the first responders who were on scene today at the accident on Hwy 31. I captured footage of the Jaws of Life being used during today's incident involving a veteran. Out of respect for the individuals and families involved, I won't be posting the video publicly. I do plan to share it directly with the departments so their teams receive the recognition they truly deserve. Watching the professionalism and compassion of everyone on scene, especially on Veterans Day, was truly inspiring.

--from Jess Renee via Facebook 11/11/25

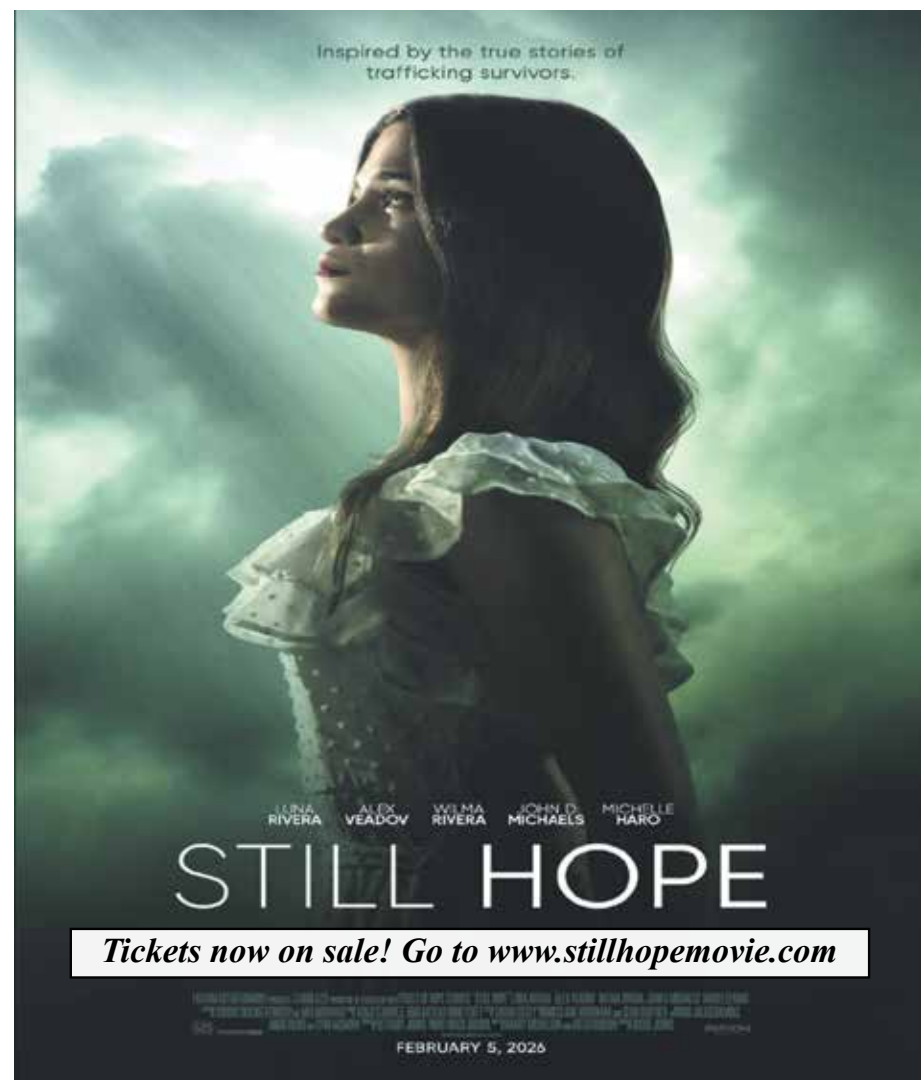
May this Christmas season and beyond serve to serve those who have served and are still serving, and from all of Athens-Limestone County, we bless all y'all!

Steve's Corner

Serial Forgiveness


by Steve Leland

"The Art of forgiving someone who is not done offending"



Occupying The Center

by Donna Clark



I heard the simplest, most thought-provoking, soul-searching message this past Sunday at my church, one I hope that will never leave me. It was an object lesson based on the Nativity scene. As a child, I would see many of these in homes and churches, but sadly they've become a rarity. My dad always displayed the Nativity in our front yard when I was a child. There was something special about that scene, baby Jesus always lying in the wooden slatted manger between Mary and Joseph, while the shepherds and wise men would look on, each in their appropriate order. The speaker reminded us that the arrangement of the Nativity always has Jesus in the center. And as he so wisely shared with us, there are many people who have no hesitation in believing in this miraculous birth. Having a Bible in their home and attending church services are a part of their lives. However, those of us who profess to be a Christian have sadly taken what should be at the very center of our lives and pushed it to the outskirts, still there but somewhat forgotten. It is true that Jesus can be included in our lives, but sadly not the focal point.

As the message was shared, the baby figurine representing Jesus was removed and placed at the outer edge of the arrangement. He was still present, but definitely no longer in the center position. The shepherd then was placed where Jesus

once was. The shepherd represented our everyday lives, the things we are required to do. These things become the center, the focal point. Many push themselves with a 40+ hour job, others studying and striving for the education needed to attain their goal in life. These are the "no options" part of life. Sadly, we exhaust so much time, along with physical and mental effort, there's very little left over for the family at home, a neighbor in need, much less God. Remember – work is a good gift, but a terrible god.

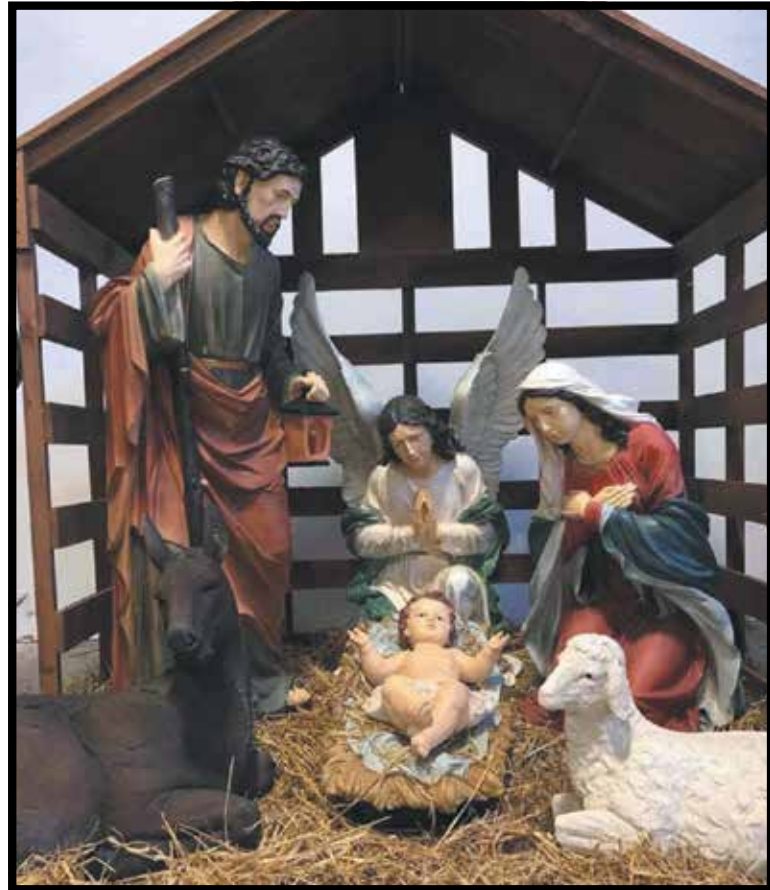
Then the shepherd was removed and the wise men took the center stage. They represented everything worldly that defines our lives -- wealth, social status, education, job titles, awards, and accolades. These things can be good, but when they become the focal point of our lives, they disappoint. Many have climbed the ladder of success to only find it was leaning against the wrong wall. These things promise you a lot, but keep you wanting more.

Mary and Joseph were next to be placed in the center; Jesus was still on the outskirts. They represented our families and

that would seem like the right order, but they too cannot be the object of our greatest focus. Family should be prioritized but God has to be first. These people can bring you joy and fulfillment but they cannot be placed before God. We try to build our house, shape our spouse and children, but as the Bible says, if God doesn't build the house, the house is built in vain. Only by having Him center, will the house, our home, and family be correctly built. Family is a blessing, but never meant to be our source.

Lastly the animals take the spotlight. They represented the things we enjoy, our activities and hobbies. These things we are given to bring us pleasure, happiness. It can be anything from hunting to shopping and lest we not forget the glorious season of football! Pleasure makes life enjoyable, but it was never meant to fulfill it.

In all the scenarios the speaker gave, Jesus was still present, but not in the center. Sometimes we can feel like our lives are all messed up, but what if our lives are not really broken, they are just not



set right. The order of importance is wrong. This nativity scene and the placement of each of the important players represents our lives. We each have a focal point, something we circle ourselves, our time, our money, our energy around. If our life is set up in the wrong order, no one will have to preach it to us, life will preach it. What flows from your heart, the lack of peace and contentment, the constant striving for more and more, a battle that is never won,

will let you know that the most important person is no longer the center of your life. It's such a simple fix, place the most important at the center and leave Him there. Honor Him and watch your focus change. With His help we can make the order correct. As we celebrate this season of His birth, what better time to do some rearranging in your heart and life. I'm definitely looking at who and what is taking center stage in mine.

- Donna



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Calendar of Events

Coffee Call Jan 3rd

8:00am - 9:30am. Alabama Veteran's Museum, 100 Pryor St W, Athens, AL. Coffee Call Veterans and their families are invited for breakfast and fellowship from 8:00AM-9:30AM at the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archive, 100 West Pryor Street in Athens. 256-771-7578.

Chasteen Hall Renovations Ribbon Cutting January 8

Please join the Athens-Limestone County Chamber of Commerce as they celebrate the renovations to Chasteen Hall at Athens State University! 11:00 AM. Chasteen Hall at Athens State University, 161 N. Clinton St. Athens, AL. Learn more about Athens State University at <https://www.athens.edu>

Candlelight Concert at McCandless January 17

Come join Athens Arts League for a night of elegance with Blythe & Brandon Banks. Enjoy opera, jazz, blues & spirituals with a candlelit backdrop at historic McCandless Hall. 7:00 PM-9:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan Street, Athens.

Chamber Coffee January 20

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. At each Chamber Coffee, members will get the opportunity to make announcements about upcoming events and have announcements made by Chamber President,

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.

Pammie Jimmar. Members and anyone else are encouraged to attend, so don't miss out! 9:00 AM at Trustmark Bank.

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series January 22

The 2026 Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series kicks off with special performance by The Jim Hurst Band on Thursday, January 22 at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 7:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University, 300 N. Beaty St., Athens.

The Jim Hurst Band January 22

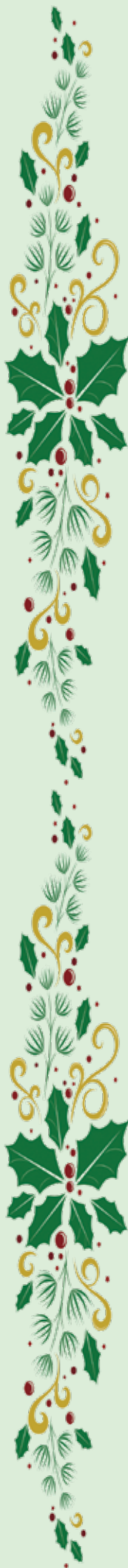
7:00 PM. Athens State University, 300 N Beaty St, Athens. Please join us for a special performance by The Jim Hurst Band on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. Jim Hurst's unique picking style on guitar sets him apart from most of his contemporaries.

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series March 19

Please join us for a special performance by The Gibson Brothers on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 7:00 PM-9:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan St. Athens, AL.

National Walking Week April 1 - 7

Athens-Limestone Visitors Center, 100 N Beaty St, Athens. National Walking Week hosted by AVA_America's Walking Club is a great time to get out and about on Athens-Limestone's trails, tracks and treks including the AVA Athens Historic Volksmarch (you can explore trail options more here) to explore and take steps to benefit your heart, mind and spirit. Trail brochures are available at the Athens-Limestone Visitors Center 100 North Beaty Street in Athens Monday-Friday from 8:00AM-5:00PM and a selection of guest favorites are available on the porch in the covered boxes year-round.



Health and Fitness

Why Strength And Conditioning Training Matters For Every Age And Every Body

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



When people hear the phrase strength and conditioning, many picture elite athletes or intense workouts meant only for the young and fit. The truth is far different. Strength and conditioning training is one of the most powerful tools we have to improve health, independence, and quality of life—for all ages and both men and women.

From kids to seniors, beginners to experienced exercisers, structured strength training provides benefits that no pill, supplement, or short-term fitness trend can replace.

Strength Training Builds a Body That Works in Real Life

Strength and conditioning isn't just about lifting weights—it's about preparing the body for everyday tasks such as carrying groceries, getting up from a chair, lifting kids or grandkids, climbing stairs, or preventing falls and injuries.

These movements matter at every stage of life, not just in the gym. Training them intentionally helps people stay capable and confident as they age.

For Kids and Teens: Building a Strong Foundation

When supervised and taught properly, strength training is safe and beneficial for youth. It improves coordination and motor skills, supports bone development, reduces the risk of sports injuries, and builds confidence and discipline.

Early exposure to strength training also helps young people develop a healthy relationship with exercise—



one focused on performance and health rather than appearance.

For Adults: Strength Is Health Insurance

For adults juggling work, family, and stress, strength training preserves muscle mass; boosts metabolism; improves posture and joint health; reduces back, knee, and shoulder pain; and helps manage weight more effectively than cardio alone.

Just as importantly, strength training improves energy levels and mental resilience—two things many adults feel they're constantly lacking.

For Older Adults: Independence Is the Goal

After age 30, muscle mass naturally declines unless we actively train it. Without strength training, this loss accelerates and can lead to balance issues, falls, loss of independence, and difficulty performing daily activities.

Strength and conditioning helps older adults maintain bone density, improve balance and stability, protect

joints, and stay independent longer.

Simply put: strength keeps people living life on their own terms.

For Women: Strength Is Empowerment

For decades, women were told to avoid lifting weights. We now know that was wrong.

Strength training helps women improve bone density and reduce osteoporosis risk, regulate hormones, improve body composition without "bulking up," and increase confidence and self-esteem.

It's especially important during menopause, when muscle loss and bone density decline speed up. Lifting weights isn't optional—it's essential

For Men: Longevity Over Ego

For men, strength training supports joint health, preserves muscle as testosterone naturally declines, reduces injury risk, and improves cardiovascular health when paired with condition-

ing.

Smart strength training focuses less on ego lifting and more on movement quality, mobility, and long-term health.

The Big Takeaway

Strength and conditioning training isn't about becoming extreme—it's about becoming capable.

Capable of moving well.

Capable of staying injury-free.

Capable of living independently.

Capable of enjoying life longer.

No matter your age, sex, or current fitness level, strength training meets you where you are and gives you what you need most: a stronger, healthier future.

And the best time to start? Today.

- Coach Nick
Owner

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What Makes Ronnie Roll

It Don't Get Much More 'Hallmark' Than This

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Mayor Ronnie and I started off our time talking about the recent announcement of the Eli Lilly plant that will break ground in 2026 and be completed by 2032. With an ongoing concern with regard to growing well, which means quality of life and all that goes with it, we discussed the fact that growth might be challenging. "We are going to need to build two fire stations, and will need to buy

more garbage trucks," said the mayor.

We quickly moved to the topic of the great importance of shopping local. "We need to do that as much as possible, especially since we have gotten so used to shopping online," said the mayor. There was no getting around the negative things that had just shocked us to the core—the loss of a young woman from

the Birmingham area through the incident at Brown University, along with a fellow student whose family came here legally from Uzbekistan when he was a kid to experience the American Dream. In addition, the attacks on the Jews celebrating Hanukkah in Sydney were understandably top-of-mind. "Public safety has always been, and always will be, our number one priority. Without that, nothing else matters," said Mayor Ronnie. He showed me the "book of thanks" that the city had just put out with regard to those who serve and protect us. Safety would certainly be on our prayer list when we closed out later.

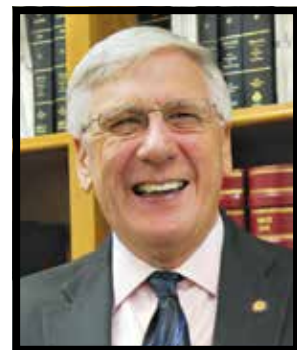
Blessedly, in Athens the weekend had been busy and beautiful. Sippin' Cider was the biggest ever, and the town was hoppin'. The mayor said, "I saw a family near Village Pizza that was parting ways after they had finished. The kids crossed the street and



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called out, 'I love you!' Boy, it don't get much more Hallmark than that!" Speaking of "Hallmark, as of this printing there had not been an update with regard to the movie, *A Kangaroo Christmas* as to when it will be broadcast. As you know, Mr. Mayor plays the mayor in this family-friendly film which was made here in Athens-Limestone County last fall.

First Baptist Church did their annual Christmas Concert, a treat we all look forward to every year, and Mable Hill Baptist Church did their 26th annual Bethlehem Walk, a live Nativity scene that has become a part of our holidays.

Athens State University and the Storytelling Festival hosted a one-man performance of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Tim Lowry played the part of Scrooge, (well, he actually played all the parts)

and it was superb. Tim mentioned that one of the things that weighed heavily on Charles Dickens's heart when he wrote the novella was that the infant mortality rate in London was a whopping 50%. Dickens also came to America in 1867-1868 to do a similar type of performance, and with respect to Mr. Lowry, he has now played the part of Ebenezer more than 200 times. Tim is also an adoptive dad, and the proceeds of the performance went to help families adopt kids. By the way, Tim received a well-deserved standing ovation.

We took some time to talk about the hard part of the holidays. "Recognize that people are having tough times, too. Look out for each other," said the mayor. There was only one thing left to do, and that was to pray about all of it. So we did, and once again it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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My Identity In Christ: God Says I Am A Child Of God

by Anna Hamilton

There is no identity more powerful, more secure, or more life-changing than this: I am a child of God. Not just a servant, not just a believer, not even just a friend. In Christ, we are adopted into the very family of God Himself. We belong to Him, and He calls us His own.

Chosen, Adopted, and Loved

1 John 3:1 proclaims, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" God didn't

just forgive us; He welcomed us into His home and His heart. Through Jesus, we are no longer strangers or outsiders. We are sons and daughters of the King.

Ephesians 1:5 says, "God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure." You are not a burden. You are not barely tolerated. You are deeply desired by God.

continued on page 22

Loaded Farmhouse Spoon Bread

Ingredients:

*1 pound maple pork sausage
4 slices bacon, diced
1 orange/yellow pepper, diced
1 (8.5-ounce) package JIFFY Corn Muffin Mix
1 (14.75-ounce) can cream style corn
1 (15-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted
1 cup sour cream
8 oz shredded cheddar cheese, divided
3 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste*

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375°F and spray a 9×13 dish with nonstick spray.

Brown sausage, bacon, and pepper in skillet.

In a mixing bowl, combine all cornbread mix, cream style corn, whole kernel corn, butter, sour cream, eggs, part of your cheese, and mix well. Leave out 1/3 cup of cheese to top the casserole.



Salt and pepper to taste.

Stir the sausage mixture into the cornbread batter.

Pour the mixture into dish. Sprinkle remaining shredded cheese over the top of the casserole

Bake 35 to 40 minutes, or until the spoon bread is golden brown and set.

Hosting: *The Way Of The Grilled Cheese Sandwich*

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



Who knows what “croque-monsieur” in a fancy restaurant means? (My French speaking folk, don’t answer)

It’s essentially a... grilled cheese sandwich.

So what makes it special enough that you don’t glare at the waiter and think, “Seriously? I could have made this at home.”

Parsley. A sprinkle of parsley.

If it’s a really upscale restaurant, you get an egg on top. Or some béchamel (which is basically thin gravy without meat in it. But “béchamel” sounds fancier.).

And you also get cloth napkins, a candle on the table, and some nice music.

In other words, instead of just eating grilled cheese, you get an event.

What does this have to do with the holiday season? Everything, if you have guests over. You

can take the plainest, most ubiquitous food and make it an event that delights your guests by just dolling things up a bit, and I can prove it.

I’m not much of a hostess. People sometimes think I am, though, because my mom (an actually great hostess) taught me how to add a bit of flair to the ordinary, such as adding colorful fish to flower-filled glass centerpieces on the dinner table.

While she was a master, though, I am not even an apprentice. My events seem nifty, but if you really look at them, they are as basic as Kraft-on-bread. For example, I used to hold Ani-Ramen parties at my house several years ago. I served ramen and put anime on the television. That was (almost) it. It was an introvert’s dream party: eat food and watch Japanese cartoons.

But I did a few easy fun

things to make it seem like more than cheap food and TV: I hung black curtains on a rod across the door to make the living room feel more like a screening room. I took long glow sticks and tucked them here and there for atmosphere. I planned one easy activity that fit the anime. For example, for a spy anime, I bought a lock pick set and we timed each other trying to pick the lock.

I did a lot of “impressive-looking-but-just-dump-in-a-bowl” things such as a buffet of Japanese candy and mix-ins to doll up the ramen, because people love making their own creations. (This isn’t scientific, but I think a minimum of 5 different choices gives that delightful feeling of “bounty”).

So a case of ramen, a lock pick set, glow sticks, some chopped carrots and hard-boiled eggs, and a trip down the

candy aisle made people feel loved and cared for—delighted even.

Another big hit was DIY pizza. It took about 15 minutes to dump various cheeses, veggies, and meats into bowls, yet everyone loved gathering around the selections and arguing if pineapple belongs on a pizza (it doesn’t, you anarchists). Let everyone else ~~do the work of making the food~~ have fun making their pizza. (Hint if you do this: have a lot more crusts than you think you need and a lot of toppings!)

I have held fancy dinners of “rib roasts with a side of stress,” but no one has asked me to do those again. Several years later, though, I still have folk wanting another Ani-Ramen day.

So, during the holidays if you have guests, especially if you are nervous about them, make “events” out of regular things. For example, one night set out a hot cocoa bar. Yes, we can just say, “Anyone want cocoa?” but the wow is in the presentation. Just as a grilled cheese sandwich is 68% more delicious if cut on the bias and 532% more expensive if a candle is on the table, presentation is everything—a few cute mugs from the Dollar Store, packets of various flavors of cocoa, and cans of spray whipped cream, sprinkles, and syrups all in a row and suddenly you have an event that took no time, could be

organized days ahead and stored in a box, but it looks amazing.

This isn’t limited to food! Your guests need to bathe and drink water, so put rolled up towels and bottles of water in a basket on their bed. Also, making a little basket in the bathroom with travel sizes of toothpaste, toothbrushes, antacids, deodorant, etc. is an easy way to seem like you spent a lot of time (you didn’t) and care (you did).

Type up a little list of things to see and do in the area (come see me and we can put a list together!). Let them decide what might be fun. This gives them buy-in, which makes them less likely to complain, and it takes the pressure off you (they were the ones who chose what to do).

Or have a theme for the day. It’s 47% more exciting when the plans are themed. How about a “make your own trail mix” buffet then walk Swan Creek? Tying unrelated things together is like when your sweater matches your shoes—it pulls the day together.

And maybe instead of trying your hand at beef Wellington with \$200 worth of prime rib after all day of taking out of town guests around in traffic and noise, tell your guests you are having “croque-monsieur,” and lay out a bunch of stuff for them to make their own blessed grilled cheese sandwiches.

Don’t forget the parsley.



Limestone County Commissioner Daryl Sammet: *Servant-Hearted And Sorely Missed*

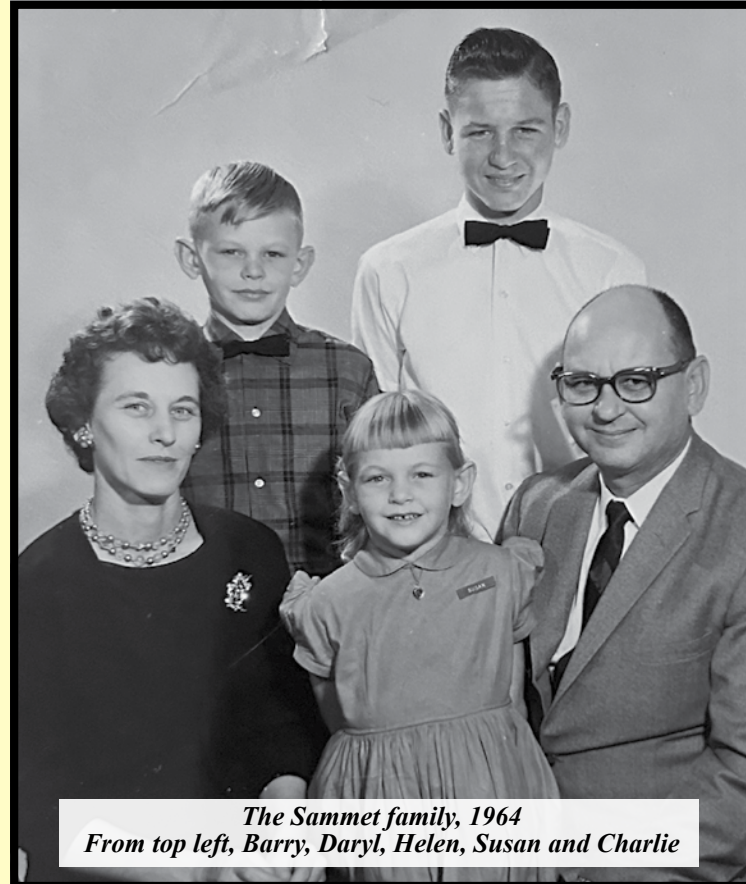
by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

there is certainly comfort in the fact that he was a man of faith, listening to “Daryl stories” as told by his brother, Barry, and his sister, Susan, made me realize even more what a dear, hard-working man he was while he was with us.

Daryl was born in 1953, and was the middle of three children: Barry, who was 4 years older, and Susan, who was 5 years younger. Recently I sat down with Daryl’s siblings to do an article about their brother at the request of the Limestone County Commission. I can say from having spoken to them that all of the commissioners truly loved Daryl. He had already been duly honored in other publications, but I wanted to catch the heart and life of a man who faithfully served Limestone County from the perspective of those who experienced his “peskiness” when they were young, watched him come into his own as a public servant, and are missing him this Christmas.

Daryl’s parents were Charlie and Helen. Charlie was a barber, and he also served as the Limestone County Coroner. “Sometimes he would have to leave in the middle of a haircut to go be a coroner,” Barry said. Helen was a dedicated wife and mom. Their parents taught them the “old-fashioned” values of respect, honesty, dignity, and the Golden Rule the “old-fashioned” way, but that didn’t mean that Daryl didn’t ever drive his baby sister crazy. Big brother Barry had to firmly in-



*The Sammet family, 1964
From top left, Barry, Daryl, Helen, Susan and Charlie*

tervene from time to time. Susan said, “He was aggravating when he was 8 or 9, but he grew out of it. He was good-hearted and honest.” Daryl graduated from Tanner High in 1972. He loved hunting and fishing, and in high school worked as an assistant in a veterinarian’s office. He especially loved dogs of all kinds—mutts and “Heinz 57s.” Daryl hunted everything and fished for anything. Barry said, “He would set trotlines and sometimes catch BIG turtles, and our grandmother would make turtle soup. Then he’d dry out the shells, shellac them and hang them on his walls.” Barry and Susan reminisced further with a smile and said, “Remember when he brought home that live owl?”

Daryl married and had three kids, all of whom still live in Limestone County, and some of whom seem to have

inherited his love for hunting and fishing. Daryl has seven grandkids and one great-grandchild.

According to Barry’s family, he was a “jack-of-all-trades,” and could “do anything.” He had several trades-related jobs, including working at Christopher Plumbing and Electric. He also went into business for himself for a while and had his own landscaping business. “But all his life he just wanted to serve people,” Barry said. He then added, “He didn’t like conflict, and wanted to please people, but nothing made him feel more alive than helping people.” Daryl served Limestone County District 1 for four terms.

On December 15, several commissioners from Limestone County as well as state legislators gathered together to issue the following statement:



The Sammet kids in 1974 - Susan, Barry and Daryl

We honor and remember District 1 Commissioner Daryl Sammet for his dedicated service, leadership, and commitment to the people he served. His integrity, compassion, and devotion to the community left a lasting impact.

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues. His legacy of service will not be forgotten.

Thank you, Representative Andy Whitt and Representative Danny Crawford for presenting a Resolution this morning at the commission meeting in honor of Commissioner Sammet.

While many have their memories of Daryl that go back decades, I have a special one that has to do with crepe myrtles. In 2012 or 2013 we went to the Crepe Myrtle Festival and purchased

two baby myrtles with the rarer bright red blossoms. They were carefully planted, making sure that they would miss someday getting entangled in the power lines when they “grew up.” Apparently, someone had a concern that they would need to be cut down, even though those little trees have had to fight for every inch of height that they possess due to the fact that they are on a lot with about 60 other trees. Wanting to be a good neighbor, I went to Daryl to find out what to do. With his kind, quiet way, he said, “I haven’t heard anything about that, so send me a picture.” In that moment, to me he showed such good leadership, and for me, those myrtles will hopefully be able to stay as a memorial to a dear man, Commissioner Daryl Lynn Sammet, of Limestone County, Alabama.



Clean, Green And Beautiful

Here Comes Christmas

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

While curbside recycling may be down again, the Limestone County Recycling program wants your recyclables! We know that this time of year is busy for everyone, and things tend to get backed up, but I have found that even just removing the cardboard from your bins creates a lot more space. And we all know that the boxes are piling up right now. Limestone County Recycling can take everything that you put in your blue bins, plus motor oil and electronics.

The drop-off location is 1301 North Jefferson Street, where the old L&S Shopping Center used to be. Currently, the drop off location is open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.-3 p.m. If the gates are open on a Friday, you are more than welcome to stop in and drop off your sorted recycling. They accept plastics #1 (items like drink, shampoo, and detergent bottles), aluminum cans, steel cans, mixed papers (books, magazines, junk mail), and card-

board. A new service that is being offered is motor oil recycling. There is a large white tank in the lot, and you are welcome to leave your containers to be emptied and then ethically disposed of. If you choose to empty your own containers, please be sure to put the cap back on the tank!

Please, keep in mind that this program is growing. While they are close to completing a building, they aren't there yet. It is very important to sort your recycling and not to dump trash. As always, break down boxes and remove all plastic and Styrofoam. As you can see from the picture, the Styrofoam explodes when it is being loaded, and pieces go everywhere. Things will be a little hectic until a new rhythm is established to handle the excess. Please, don't start filling an empty trailer until the ones in the line are full. The extra empty trailers are needed and used every day to transport materials.

When the Athens-Limestone Recycling Center closed, we lost the option



to recycle glass in Limestone County. Currently, the only option for recycling glass is with Phoenix Glass Recycling of North Alabama. They are in Huntsville. Check out their Facebook page or website at phoenix-glassrecycling.com for details on their process. Glass recycling is very important for the environment. Glass NEVER breaks down, nor does it ever lose quality. It can be recycled infinitely.

Electronics are full of precious metals and plastic. You can take small electronics such as computers, computer accessories, and cell phones to Staples for recycling at any time for free. To recycle larger items such as flat screen and plasma televisions, call Keri Chalmers at 256-871-0674. The old box televisions are only accepted at the Household Hazardous Waste collection hosted by KALB and the Lime-

stone County Commission. They will not be picked up in bulk trash or accepted at the transfer station because they contain mercury.

Pak Mail on Forrest Street accepts several different items for recycling. They accept Styrofoam packaging peanuts, bubble wrap, plastic air pockets, and packaging paper. This is all very important to get as much use out of these items as possible because only the packing paper breaks down. And all of it is lightweight, so it travels fast and far like plastic bags. It saves money for the next person also!

We can help make Limestone County better in so many ways. Recycling is a major benefit to Limestone County. It will create more jobs, cut down on waste in our landfills, and conserve limited natural resources. Recycling will cut down on the litter that seems to cover our roadways these days. It will reduce the number of raw materials mined for making new products. So, make life easy and sort your materials until the City of Athens has a recycling service again.



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Foundations Counseling Centers: Hope And Healing For The Holidays And Beyond

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

ed Licensed Clinical Social Worker and her staff at Foundations Counseling Centers are ready to not only talk about it, but offer help that actually helps.

Since she was a small child, Nancy simply knew that she had been called to help. It had become “part of her DNA,” having lost her mother, brother, and sister at the age of three to a tornado that occurred in Tanner in 1971. She was understandably drawn to the field of childhood trauma, and had no idea that she would one day have two thriving clinical practices. She graduated from Tanner High, got her undergrad degree in behavioral science from Athens State University, and her LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) master’s degree from Alabama A & M. For several years, she worked with our local Child Advocacy Center, was on campus at Athens State, and then founded Foundations in 2011. As her practice grew, she had different locations near Athens Limestone Hospital, and one of the locations is still at 202 Sanders Street in Athens, just across the street from the hospital. In 2024, Foundations opened their newest location at 24127 Huntsville-Brownsferry Road. It is situated in a charming mid-century home with a red door. “I knew I was where I needed to be,” Nancy said.

“I always wanted to be in a house,” Nancy told me, and even the red door has a purpose. It is bright and welcoming, and it



stays open behind a glass storm door. Clients can walk right in to the living room and feel comfortable. There is a special play room for kids that is part of their therapy. It includes a sand box, all kinds of toys, teaching aids for managing emotions, including learning the alphabet with a behavior attached to it. For example, the letter “H – hug a loved one or a pillow,” is illustrated with a child hugging a safe person. You don’t need to be a kid to love this room or appreciate its purpose.

In the early part of Nancy’s career, helping traumatized kids was the lion’s share of her practice. Over time, as the size of the practice increased, she found that she was treating more adults dealing with trauma of all kinds. Nancy herself went through a divorce, and has learned firsthand that “God takes messes and then blesses.” She understands from personal experience the challenges as well as the opportunities of rebuilding one’s life.

There are several therapists at Foundations, and they range from seasoned to just starting their career-



rs. Foundations also has a nurse practitioner to assist with the “medical side of the house,” and Nancy is fully committed to helping clients understand that their lifestyle, nutritional choices, faith and support systems that are outside the walls of the clinic all have a part in heading toward wholeness. “We have different talents and gifts, and we are a piece of their healing. We try to see the person as a whole.” Nancy also wanted to thank her son Will, who is the Program Director for Foundations, and the organization’s “visionary.” She told me, “He is the one that has made me grow, and is always looking for ways to



Mental Health Matters can be heard on Mondays at 9:30 AM on WKAC 1080. From left, Kirk Harvey, Jeremy Lewis and Nancy McDonald

help us serve our clients better.”

When it comes to “Christmas Challenges,” Nancy said, “First of all, people need to understand that it is completely normal to be experiencing hard things. That’s the first step. You also have to make sure you are not running from yourself. You need to ask yourself, ‘What do I need?’ Then you do what you can to meet those needs healthfully. Be still, be aware, and reach out. There are neighbors and others who are struggling, too. Decide what you are going to join in, and remember that even if there has been loss, this is not just a time of loss, but finding new meaning and purpose.”

Earlier this year, Nancy became a part of the WKAC 1080 AM radio team and has a broadcast on Monday mornings at 9:30 called Mental Health Matters. She and veteran broadcaster Kirk Harvey discuss everything from managing mental illness to having a lifestyle that promotes mental wellness.

I asked Nancy why I should choose her and Foundations

if I am in need of counseling—for any reason—and I was so pleased to hear the genuine warmth and enthusiasm in her voice when she said, “I will start where you are. It would be an honor to walk with you on your journey, and share how life can be experienced differently.”

If this sounds like the kind of support you are seeking in order to cope well with a holiday situation or embrace new growth in the new year, make an appointment today at Foundations Counseling—Trauma and Recovery, Hope and Healing. The “red door” (and their hearts) is waiting and open.

Foundations Counseling Centers

24127 Huntsville-Brownsferry Road,
Athens, AL 35613
(about a mile west of Buc-ee’s)

and

202 Sanders St,
Athens, AL 35611
(near the hospital)

Phone: 256-497-1790

www.foundationscounselingcenters.com



Captain's Log

Empty Bus Belly

by Brenda Wilkerson

I dropped by the school to check on Ol' Yeller during this freezing dip of arctic weather. With a little coaxing, she cranked right up. I let her idle a bit to warm up everything under her hood and check for anything frozen or damaged during this extended frigid winter blast. So far, so good. The heat and defrost worked so I was satisfied to let her continue her nap before the early morning.

As I turned off Ol' Yeller and pumped her brakes down, it felt so very cold and... sadly empty. The heart of a bus is the cargo

of kids and allllll of the bubbly chaos inside every single day. I turned from my captain's chair and took a good look around the inside with a different perspective of what a bus is without kids snug in her belly. No bundled up tiny people, no silly chatter, no happy giggles, no spilled water bottles, no mindless debates of nothingness, no foggy window art, and no sleepy bed heads...

Don't worry girl, just a few more days 'til it's time to go get the kids...

~Brenda





Merry Christmas

AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the

**Limestone County
Commission
&
Chairman Collin Daly**



Slinkard On Success

“X” Is For X-Factor

by D. A. Slinkard

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

The final article of 2025 is here, and our letter is “X” and our word is “X-Factor.” The definition of this word is: “A variable in a given situation that could have the most significant impact on the outcome.” We all need to have an X-factor in our life which is going to be that wow factor that helps put us over the top. Instead, most of us find reasons as to why we cannot do something, and we allow these reasons to become our limitations in life.

We are all going to have limitations. We are all going to have things in our life that we might not be proud of or things that we consider embarrassing,

but we cannot allow these things to bring us down. Too often we look for reasons for us to give in and then give up, but we need to have a different mentality. We need to learn to have a fighter’s mentality.

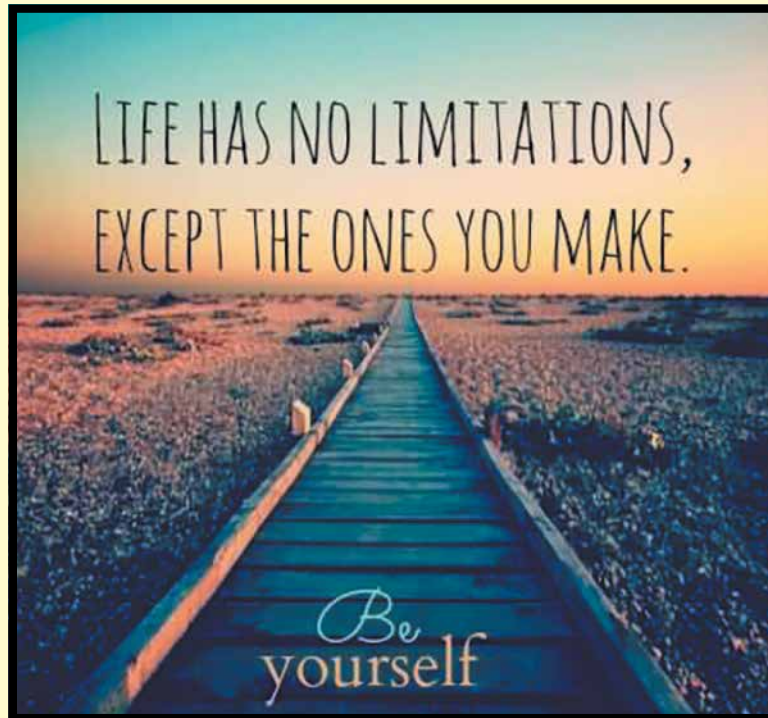
I had an opportunity to speak to some elementary-school-age children, and one point I wanted to drive home about limitations is this: “Limitations only become limitations when we allow the limitations to become limitations.” This is a mouthful, but the validity of the statement holds so much weight.

I think about the people throughout history who were able to overcome obstacles on their way to success. I think

about Helen Keller and what she was able to achieve while by being blind and deaf. How many people would have given up in life? I think about Erik Weihenmayer who went blind at the age of 13 but overcame this limitation to become a national champion wrestler, a middle school teacher, and was able to become the first blind person to reach the summit of Mount Everest in May of 2001. How many people would have given up?

I would love to say to you that when faced with adversity I would not run, but the reality is we never know how we will respond until we are put into a difficult situation. We need to decide now what our X-factor is going to be, and what separates the winners from the whiners comes down to their attitude. Do you find yourself having a whining attitude or a winning attitude? This year is basically over, and it is time today that we begin working on getting rid of the whiny attitude and exchange it for the winning approach.

I coached JV/Varsity basketball teams, and I believe the way we practiced was exactly the way we would play during games. So, if we practice haphazardly, then when it comes to game time, we will not be prepared to execute well. We, you and



I, only have just a few days remaining in 2025, and we need to use the remaining days to tone up and tune in to how we are going to attack the year 2026. We do not want to adopt the mindset of waiting until next year gets here. We need to start right now. We do not need to wait until tomorrow, we do not need to wait until tonight, we do not need to wait five minutes from now; we need to start, and we need to do it right now.

Now, we need to look back at this previous year and examine where our shortcomings were throughout the previous months. What were things that went well for you that you would like to continue with in 2026, and what were some things you would like to change moving into 2026? Once we can identify the positives and the negatives, then

we are better able to achieve greater success in the new year. We need to figure out what we need to do more of while figuring out what we need to do less of, such as no more whining or complaining!

These articles are meant to be used as a tool to help those people wanting to make changes in their life, and it begins with our mental approach to our daily living. Eventually, the changed mentality will become a way of life, and in doing so, we will be able to have a greater impact on our daily living. I do not have to consciously think about having the right attitude as it comes naturally to me (now), but there was a time the right attitude was a foreign concept to me. It is time to make these articles become our X-factor in 2026.



Alabama's own Helen Keller, 1880-1968

Meet The C-A-T That Tames The Dragon

Criticism Loses Its Loss And Gains Its Profit

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

As promised in earlier visits, we are going to discover ways that we can nullify pain, loss, and ugliness that criticism is famous for, and amplify ways we can use that same situation for our joy, gain, and beautification of our lives. We will gradually get into the details that will bring all of this together, but first we must establish the groundwork. Emotional Intelligence -- EI -- is the ability to recognize, understand, and properly deal with your own emotions as well as being able to do the same with others. Criticism Management is my term for the EI areas that are specifically addressed here. I believe this incorporates up to 80% of all EI elements.

Criticism management is a term I first used in the mid '70s when I started developing this info for my own benefit as a naïve young woman entering a man's world of life insurance sales. I never saw it in use before that.

The C-A-T outline:

I. CATEGORIZE (Facts only)

- Correct or Incorrect
- Deserved or Undeserved
- Solicited or Unsolicited
- From Friend or Foe or Neutral

II. ANALYZE (Add emotions)

- Correct or Incorrect
- Deserved or Undeserved
- Solicited or Unsolicited
- From Friend or Foe or Neutral

III. TAKE ACTION

- Ignore it (Don't try this one!)
- Get Angry, Get Even, Get Ulcers
- Wisely take Point by Point and either
 - Discard Properly
 - Use for Profit

Steps I and II look repetitive, but in Step 1 you deal only with facts. In step 2, you take the facts and add the emotions, responses, results, and all other personal details. So, get paper and pen, and take a look at one of YOUR criticisms: One that was not

gladly received. Now, the first step is to CATEGORIZE each part of the criticism. This is the FACT-SEEKING step. Take each part of the criticism and subject it to a-d of Categorize. There are likely several parts to it. For instance, perhaps the first part of the criticism was correct, but then maybe the next part wasn't, and then you found out some of the rest of your criticism was partially true. Write each part in its own space. Now, deserved or undeserved? Solicited or unsolicited? Then, from friend or foe or neutral? Sometimes this is harder to define than you might think, so list first response, and it is okay if you change it later. Neutral sources of criticism might be a book, a speech, or text meant for everyone that hit you hard and sounded like they were talking directly to you, etc.

Next, ANALYZE: Take each separate point and run it through the same set of questions, but this time, analyze what each choice tells you. Here you will allow your

emotions, opinions, and feelings to emerge. Even undeserved or impersonal criticisms can be used to increase your personal EI and bring more profit and personal control into your life. Taking each part of the criticism -- both the deserved and undeserved -- what can you learn from the facts? What was the nature of the problem? Who was involved? Who did you offend? Who was affected by this? What are the possible solutions to the problems resulting from this issue? Are apologies deserved/required? What lessons can you learn about yourself? About others? How would you want others to respond if the issues were reversed? Ask all the questions you can imagine that you would ask of others if the tables were turned. There is so much more here as we dig deeper -- but for now let's move on. Deserved or undeserved? Did you solicit the response? If so, was that wise? (Lots to learn here, but later.) From friend? Can you detach the criticism from the person and/or the way it was delivered? Was this a deep issue that should have been discussed differently when tensions, emotions, surroundings were different? (LOTS to learn here -- more later.)

So now, we need to Take Action: This requires thought and intention. Those who attempt to ignore a criticism usually just push it deep;

and then days, months, or years later at the most inconvenient time, it erupts like a clogged sewer line when the blockage is removed. Sewage spews out, and almost always the mess is extremely nasty. Many people attempt this for too many years, and wonder why they become bitter, grumpy, and difficult to tolerate. They become super judgmental and critical of everyone and everything.

How do you deal with criticism? Next visit, we will go in more depth on wisely handling it. Today, we have time only for this: The unwise, yet all common response is to get angry, think of ways to get even, justify ourselves, make others look even worse, deflect any responsibility from us, blame others, expose their shortcomings, and either give or get ulcers. The wiser choices are coming up next session.

(Hint: Some TAKE ACTION steps are given on my website www.criticismmanagement.com where you will find the complete outline for The C-A-T (system) that tames The Dragon (of criticism).

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

Reflecting, Releasing, And Renewing

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator

"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters



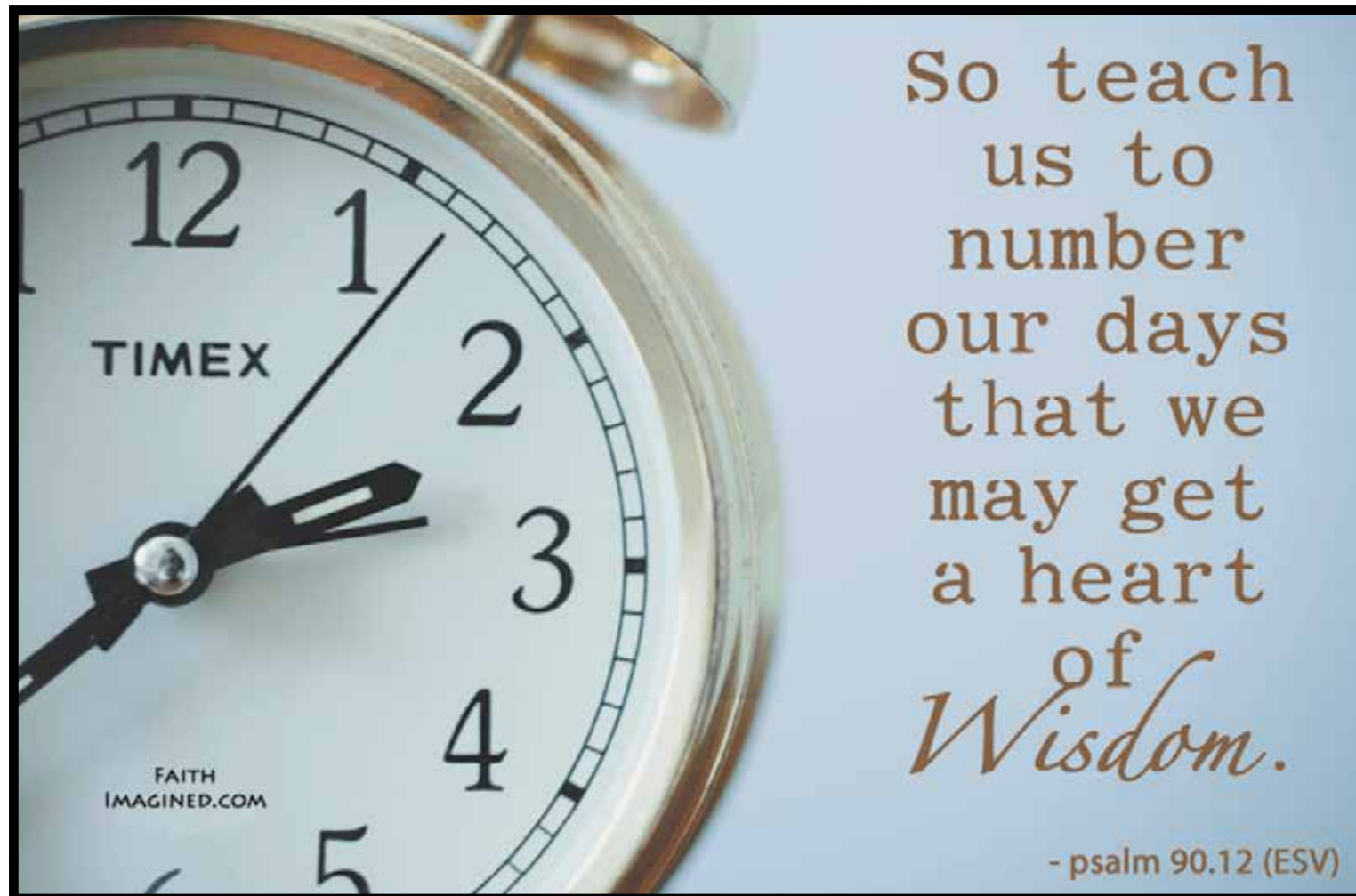
Giving honor to the Almighty and having a thankful heart for the blessings of this year feels especially meaningful as we prepare to close out another chapter. When I look back over the months behind us—the accomplishments, the wins, the losses, and even the moments that stretched us—I'm reminded that every experience carries a lesson. Every high and low has shaped us, strengthened us, and prepared us for what comes next.

Recently, I listened to a seasoned woman share her reflections on turning 60. She said something that struck me deeply: "I have more years behind me than in front of me, and I don't want to have any regrets. I want to enjoy my time here. I don't want to be here and not living."

Her words settled in my spirit. They made me pause. They made me reflect. Because the truth is, I too have more years behind me than ahead. And while none of us knows the number of our days, we do know that time is precious—and how we use it matters.

I found myself asking: **What regrets am I holding on to? What can I change? How can I show up better in the next chapters of my life—for myself, for the people I love, and for the purpose God has placed within me?**

Scripture reminds us in **Psalm 90:12**, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." There is wisdom in



reflection. Wisdom in acknowledging where we've been. Wisdom in choosing how we want to move forward.

As we celebrate this holiday season, I encourage you to lean into that same wisdom. Release the regrets that weigh you down. Replace them with joy, with forgiveness, with gratitude, and

with hope. Let this be the season where you choose to live fully, love deeply, and walk boldly into the purpose God has designed for you.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in **Philippians 3:13-14**, "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the mark..." This is our

invitation—to press forward. To let go. To grow. To live.

As you gather with loved ones, as you reflect on the year behind you, and as you prepare your heart for the year ahead, may you find

peace in your journey and courage for your next steps.

Wishing everyone a blessed and abundant season filled with love, kindness, and renewed purpose. **Happy New Year!**

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Athens Now AL
Protecting Your Story
Telling It Well

Tennessee Valley Spotlight

**Mondays at 10am
1080 AM WKAC**



Learning As A Lifestyle

The Meaning Of The Season

by Eric Betts

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

Christmas is more than a date on the calendar; it is a season that gathers together memory, tradition, and hope. Rooted in the story of Christ's birth, it reminds communities of divine presence breaking into ordinary life. The Nativity narrative—angels announcing peace, shepherds bearing witness, and wise men journeying in faith—offers a vision of light shining in darkness. For many, this season is a time to pause and remember that joy and renewal are possible even in the midst of struggle.

A Season of Generosity

Beyond its sacred origins, Christmas has become a cultural rhythm of giving. Families exchange gifts not merely as transactions but as symbols of care, gratitude, and connection. Charitable acts multiply during this time as communities rally to support those in need. The season teaches that generosity is not measured by



the size of the gift but by the spirit in which it is offered. In this way, Christmas becomes a living parable of compassion, urging us to see abundance where others might see scarcity.

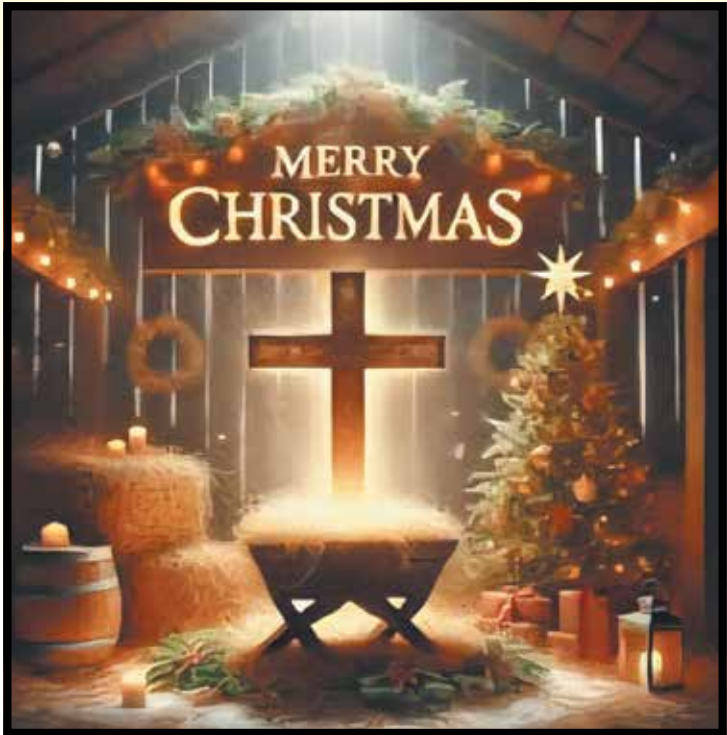
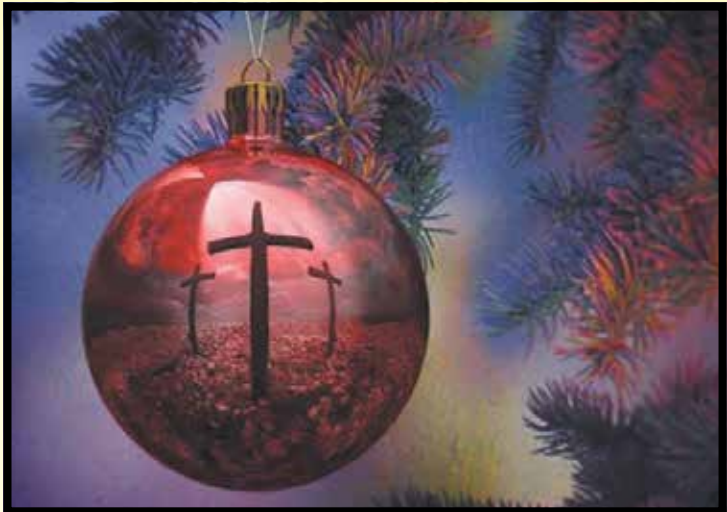
The Power of Gathering

Christmas is also about gathering—around tables, in sanctuaries, and beneath glowing lights. These gatherings weave together stories of past generations with the laughter of children, creating continuity across time. Even when distance or hardship makes gathering difficult,

the season carries a sense of belonging that transcends geography. It is a reminder that human connection is itself a gift, and that shared meals, songs, and rituals strengthen the bonds that sustain communities.

Hope for Tomorrow

Finally, Christmas points forward. The season is not only about remembering what has been but anticipating what can be. The promise of peace on earth and goodwill toward all is both a proclamation and a challenge. It



calls us to live differently—to embody hope, justice, and reconciliation in our daily lives. In this way, Christmas is not confined to De-

cember; it is a rhythm of renewal that can shape every season of the year. This is what the birth of the baby of Bethlehem's manger was about.

BRAD STOVALL'S
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The Alternative Approach

Christ “Our Savior”

by Roy Williams

It is so good to live in a nation that makes a space for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Father loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son so that we could approach his throne anytime we wish. This time of year, a good verse to remember is, “Be ye thankful in all things.” We should be especially thankful for the birth of the greatest Gift ever given.

Another thing I would encourage you to be thankful for is your health. No matter how your health is at this time, let me encourage you to be thankful and then make a faithful decision to help your body heal. Believe me, your body knows how to heal. Healing is one of the things that was woven into your being right from the start. It will heal as long as you provide the raw materials that are necessary for the miracle to take place.

The Miracle of Digestion

Most people believe they have a “heart problem,” a “joint problem,” or a “hormone problem.” In reality, most people have a digestive problem that shows up somewhere else. The gut is not simply a place where food goes. It is where life is either built or slowly

broken down, day by day.

If digestion is weak, every other system will suffer. Poor digestion leads to poor absorption. Poor absorption leads to deficiency. Deficiency leads to degeneration. This pattern is not theoretical. It is observable. And it is predictable. Your body does not run on what you eat. It runs on what you absorb.

You can eat the best food in the world, but if your digestive system is not functioning properly, those nutrients will pass through you without ever becoming part of you. This is why some people eat clean and still feel exhausted, inflamed, bloated, or foggy. The problem is not the food. The problem is the system that processes the food. Almost all disease begins in the gut. Warning signs include:

- Gas and bloating
- Heartburn or reflux
- Constipation or irregularity
- Diarrhea or loose stools
- Fatigue after meals
- Sugar cravings
- Joint stiffness or inflammation
- Skin breakouts or itching



- Brain fog or poor concentration
- Mood fluctuation
- Weak immunity
- Unexplained weight gain or loss

When digestion breaks down, disease enters quietly. The digestive tract cannot heal if waste is backing up inside the system. Constipation, sluggish movement, and residue buildup poison the gut environment and burden the liver and colon. Real digestive health requires three simultaneous actions: elimination support, microbial restoration, nutrient absorption.

Step one is to improve elimination and after 25 years in this industry, one product stands head and shoulders above the rest. It is called **Moving Experience**. It is designed to restore natural and regular elimination. The botanical agents and digestive allies are formulated to retrain the bowel, so you can restore regular elimination. It is not a drug and is totally safe with any medication.

Key components:



Cascara sagrada supports natural colon contraction and trains the bowel to move without dependency.

Aloe vera soothes the intestinal lining and supports tissue repair throughout the gut wall.

LactoSpore probiotic introduces beneficial bacteria that survive stomach acid and improve bowel ecology.

This is not a laxative. It is a conditioning agent for a weak digestive system. When waste moves, healing begins. Regular bowel movement is not optional for health. It is foundational. If food goes in, waste must come out. Anything less leads to toxin retention, fatigue, and inflammation.

Defending the Internal Terrain

A sick digestive system is more than weak. It is often invaded. Bad bacteria, yeast, parasites, mold, and pathogenic organisms do not enter the body through the lungs or skin. They enter primarily through the digestive tract. **Terminator**

tor addresses this problem directly.

Ingredients:

Mexican oregano for broad-spectrum microbial control.

Deodorized garlic for systemic antimicrobial activity.

Clove to disrupt parasite survival.

Citrus aurantium to support digestion and pathogen defense.

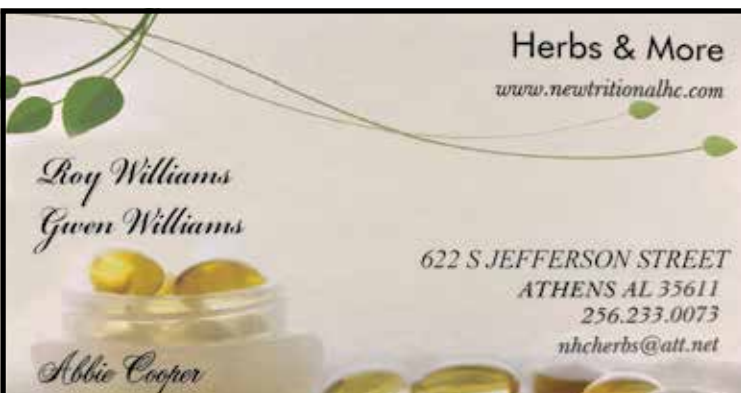
MSM to protect cells and contribute to internal detoxification.

Terminator does not attack the body. It helps the body defend itself. When harmful organisms dominate the gut, digestion becomes hostile. Nutrients are stolen. Inflammation increases. Immune response weakens. Energy drops. Skin worsens. Thought slows.

Terminator attacks the bad without harming the good. With time it destroys candida, bad bacteria, germs, and even destroys viruses. It was an extremely popular and effective support during the COVID pandemic.

These two products work together not only helping clean the digestive tract naturally, they also set up the best environment possible for true and effective healing. Check us out at Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, call us for shipping at 256-757-5660 or go to our website at www.nhcherbs.com.

Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams



Merry Christmas

by Deb Kitchenmaster



Burl Ives sang a song encouraging people to “Have a holly, jolly Christmas. It’s the best time of the year. I don’t know if there’ll be snow, but have a cup of cheer.” Yes. “Have a holly, jolly Christmas. And in case you didn’t hear, oh, by golly have a holly, jolly Christmas this year.” The Illinois born entertainer held within his 300-pound frame a white beard, a chuckle, and the grin of the very best Santa. He released this single in 1965 on Decca Records. The last few weeks this very song is being played over and over in my inside juke box! This is my wish to each of you this Christ-

mas.

Like riding a horse down a steep slope, we need to lean back until we enter the landscape of language to be able to truly have a holly, jolly Christmas this year. What is the oldest language known to man? The oldest ‘written’ language in the world is Sumerian, dating back to around 3500 B.C. The oldest ‘spoken’ language in the world is Hebrew. Hebrew is a pictorial language where each letter is a picture. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet also has at least one number associated with it. The 22 Hebrew letters, a decade ago, were coined “Hebrew Living” letters to distinguish

the reality that each Hebrew letter is a living being inherent in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ). In fact, the name ‘Yeshua’ – ALEF-TAV represents “the Lord of all creation from ALEF (first) to TAV (last). Let’s look at a couple of species from the Lord’s creation -- sheep and donkey -- and allow them to tell a small portion of their story in reference to Christmas.

On that first Christmas night, the angels appeared to shepherds on a hill near Bethlehem. Alfred Edersheim, the great 19th century Jewish-Christian scholar, wrote in his book *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH*,



that the shepherds and the sheep to which the angels appeared near Bethlehem were no ordinary shepherds and sheep. The sheep were those bound for the temple sacrifices. The shepherds were outcasts because of their necessary isolation from religious ordinances. And their manner of life rendered legal observances unlikely, if not absolutely impossible. How wonderful that in God’s wisdom and love the angels should appear to them, the doomed and the outcast that night!

Today we can declare to the world that the Good Shepherd cares for all people and wants to give them peace. Breaking 400 years of silence, Christ came on that first Christmas for one great purpose – to die on the cross for our sins. Now God offers forgiveness, inner peace, and eternal life to all who will repent and BELIEVE in His Son. This is the Christmas message in Luke 2:8-10.

One morning, just awakening from a restful sleep, I hear “baaaaaa.” Outside my window I have heard the sounds of horses, dogs, cats, coyotes, and a donkey’s bray but never ‘baaaaaaa.’ It took me a while before

I realized there was not a lamb in my yard. However, this “BAAAAAAA” held a message for me; “When you don’t know what to do or how to pray simply “BAAAAAAA” -- Believe Abide Agree Accept Acknowledge Allow Align Ask Awake.

The donkey is a separate animal member of the horse family. A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. A donkey is recognized in the Nativity, and a donkey is being ridden by Jesus that day He rode into Jerusalem before laying His life down for us. The donkey symbolizes stability and sturdiness. The donkey is known for its patience and kind-hearted nature. The presence of this highly intelligent creature offers a long list of helpful meanings that can make our journey light and easy.

From a sheep’s “baaaaaaa”
From a donkey’s “neehaw”

From my heart to yours,
Have yourself a very Merry Christmas.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster*

horsinaround188@gmail.com





GenZ With JP

Why Gen Z Supports Trump's Use Of The Monroe Doctrine

by JP Plott, Co-host of *Rightside Radio*



*James Monroe, Donald Trump
and Nicolas Maduro*



The Monroe Doctrine is a foreign policy declaration made in 1823 by James Monroe. Its intention was to rein in the United States' overreaching intervention in European affairs, as long as Europe recognized the Western Hemisphere as the United States' rightful sphere of influence. This declaration from Monroe set the precedent not only for his time but also for future presidents.

Teddy Roosevelt famously leaned on this policy as justification for many of his actions during his presidency. It's really quite a genius policy...really. How often do you have a president who is willing to relinquish the never-ending pursuit of an empire? Constantly looking abroad in search of monsters to destroy, as John Quincy Adams once stated. But when it comes to our own backyard, we will defend it strongly. We have to. Just because America is smart enough to realize that constantly seeking global domination is a recipe for disaster, it doesn't mean we won't defend our rightful sphere of influence.

President Trump and Pete Hegseth have been under fire as of late when it comes to the attacks on narco-terrorists coming on boats with drugs to harm Americans. The Left has screamed about war crimes, and all of a sudden has become the party of peace. Disregard President Obama's drone strikes and Biden's

provocation of Russia via Ukraine. I stumbled across a poll this week that I found very telling. Gen-Z support for these attacks on narco-terrorist boats is currently at +34. Gen-Z, the same generation that is profoundly anti-war, strongly supports defending our homeland and the Western Hemisphere. This is because we know someone, either directly or indirectly, who has suffered at the hands of fentanyl. We've had friends and family members die because of the wide-open borders and lax policies when it comes to the constant flow of fentanyl from countries like Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico.

Each foreign conflict is unique and has its own reasoning and benefits. Gen-Z is against being involved in the war in Ukraine, Gaza, and the Middle East as a whole. That is not within our sphere of influence. That is not an America-first policy. Amer-

icans don't benefit from bankrupting our nation to fight wars on behalf of other countries. Gen-Z had fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins go fight and die in the ever-so successful war on terror, and we're tired of the neocon way of doing things. But when it comes to fighting narco-terrorists, that is inherently America first. The cartels have declared war on American citizens for years, and it's beyond time we fight back. In 2023, 72,776 Americans died from drug overdoses, according to the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention. What if there were missiles being shot over our border that killed that many Americans? That would be a declaration of war. Is it any different if it's via fentanyl?

Regime change in Venezuela appears imminent, and I'm not naive enough to think that the reasoning is solely because of Venezuela's importing of drugs into our country. However, that alone is reason enough. On top of the fact that we have a leader in Maduro directly in our own backyard who

is pro-Russia and China, I say that direct conflict with Venezuela checks all of the boxes. Trump's exercise of the Monroe Doctrine is not only necessary, but it's got the support of Gen-Z. Protect our friends and family members from suffering at the hands of fentanyl, and let's defend our turf from Russia and China.

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 A Child Of God*

by Anna Hamilton

You have a Father who cares deeply. As children of God, we don't walk alone or unprotected. We have a heavenly Father who loves us unconditionally. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

We have a heavenly Father who provides for our needs. Matthew 6:31–33 tells us, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' Or 'What shall we drink?' Or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

We have a heavenly Father that protects us from harm. Psalm 91:2 tells us, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust."

We have a heavenly Father that listens when we pray. 1 John 5:14 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

We have a heavenly Father that disciplines us with love. Hebrews 12:6 tells us, "Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."

We have a heavenly Father that guides us in truth. Romans 8:14 tells us, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God as the children of God."

Even if our earthly family fails us, God

never will. His love is steady, His presence is constant, and His arms are always open.

We are heirs to the kingdom. Galatians 4:7 reminds us "So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir."

We don't just carry His name, we carry His inheritance. Eternal life, peace, joy, authority over the enemy, and the promise of heaven are all part of our birthright as His children.

Being a child of God allows us to live a childlike confidence. Children do not worry about what their parents will provide, they trust. They don't beg for love; they rest in it. They don't strive to earn approval; they already have it. That is how we are called to live as children of God.

Hold your head high today and let this truth sink deep into your heart: You are not abandoned, unworthy, or forgotten. You are a beloved child of God—known, chosen, protected, and forever loved.

This week's recipe will be your go-to on Christmas morning. It is delicious, rich, and cozy spoonbread. Sure to satisfy even your pickiest eaters, this one is sure to be a hit! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that it is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (1 John 3:1).

Connectedness and Mental Health

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



"Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self. And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others."

- Harriet Lerner

Do you remember way back in January, when we talked about rather than making resolutions, we would pick a word to make our focus and direction for the year? I hope you followed through and picked your word of purpose. I will now share with you that my word was -- connection. I wanted to work toward making meaningful connections both within myself and with others. I have been striving to meet with those in the community who share my passions and interests. I have rekindled friendships and made new friends. I have intentionally "connected" with those who push me to be a better person and have a positive impact in my life. I also worked on connecting within myself...searching for what I believe, who I am, and who I want to become. I can honestly say I have experienced a year of growth toward my goal of connectedness. What I came to realize was that our positive connections have a profound effect on our mental wellbeing. Conversely, the lack of connectedness can negatively impact our social relationships, psychologically and physiologically. Let's look at the ways isolation can

harm, and connection may improve, our mental health.

Lack of connectedness breeds loneliness. And unfortunately, loneliness is infectious. Believe it or not, studies have shown that people seem to "catch" loneliness from one another. As people become lonelier, they move to the edges of social networks, creating a kind of domino effect. This means that when one person reported an increase of one day per week of loneliness, his or her close friends also reported an increase. And as people become lonelier over time, they begin to trust others less and less, creating a nasty cycle of seclusion and social isolation. Physiologically, loneliness may contribute to inflammation. Several studies have shown that people who reported being lonelier had higher biomarkers of inflammation, increased activity of inflammatory genes, and decreased activity of anti-viral genes. Loneliness seemed to also cause an elevated activity of the sympathetic nervous system -- our flight or fight response. In particular, loneliness appears to affect the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal alignment, which regulates the stress hormones' role in the stress response.

Loneliness is deeply connected to depression. This is related to the stress connection, but has a kind of chicken or egg situation. Does loneliness lead to depression or depression lead to loneliness? Most likely, a little bit of both, with each one contributing to the risk of the other. One of the symptoms of depression is social

isolation, and if you are continuously lonely, your mood may suffer. There is a reciprocal relationship between loneliness and depression, where over time, each one contributes to the other. Taking this further, studies suggest that loneliness is a stronger predictor of mental health than mental health is a predictor of loneliness. And lastly, loneliness can affect cognition, maybe even increase dementia risk. Loneliness has been linked to problems with attention, executive function, and cognitive function. A study of 12,000 participants for ten years, showed that those who reported being loneliest had a 40% greater risk of dementia.

Social connection is perhaps the KEY factor in mental wellbeing. As much as loneliness can hurt us, social connectedness seems to not only undo these effects, it can protect our overall health. When looking at social connection and wellbeing, one seems to predict the other. People with stronger social connections report being the healthiest and happiest. In fact, social connectivity over a lifetime was the single most significant factor in predicting happiness and longevity. Even on a day-to-day scale, social interactions with casual acquaintances predict happiness, which suggests that we might not need to have only deep interactions to appreciate the psychological benefits of connection. The other piece of social connection is that it's not just about inflammation and stress hormones...it provides mental



and emotion comfort and increases resilience to trauma and anxiety. For people who have experienced serious sufferings, stronger social ties predict better outcomes. One study showed that people who mindfully boosted their social interactions and compassion had significantly reduced feelings of stress and discomfort, further confirming the profound effect of social connectedness on both our perceived stress levels and wellbeing.

Finally, relationships can create context for finding purpose and meaning in our lives. Relationships provide perspective to understanding the world and making sense of its ways. For example, when we struggle to make a decision, sometimes

communicating the issue to another person can provide the insight we're searching for. Coming together with a community in a shared activity or goal can lessen the load of existential dissatisfaction we may feel these days.

I look forward to selecting my word for next year and hope you will do the same. I wish you an emotionally happy and mentally thriving new year!

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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