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Stain Plumbing & Construction: Excellent Work, Reasonable Rates



By Ali Elizabeth Turner

When Athens native Christian McGowan was 14, he began to learn all the ins and outs of the construction business as well as the "art" of plumbing. He worked for farmers in the area, and experienced what has become nearly lost in our culture—the value of apprenticeship. Farmers by design are no-nonsense customers who need it done the right way, the first time. The "lives" of crops and livestock literally depend on it, and that commitment to doing excellent

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Meet Bethann McGowan Of Dream Key Realty: *Where Buying Your Forever Home Is A Celebration*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

In 2006, Bethann McGowan graduated from Athens High School and made her way to Calhoun Community College.



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FEBRUARY 5, 2026

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**Publisher's Point****On Hope And The Hero's Heart**

Panel discussion after the movie: From left, Moderator and NYT bestselling author Annie Downs, Luna Rivera, who plays Hope, Kathrine Lee, Co-founder of Pure Hope, Bethany Johns, Producer, Richie Johns, Director/Producer, and Executive Producer, Brent McMinn

On Tuesday, February 3, I found myself in Nashville in a heady state of wonder, and am still trying to get my thinking and senses around the exquisite beauty, fellowship, connection, creativity, and hospitality that I experienced. I had been invited to the première of *Still Hope*, the movie whose “lobby still” picture that you see to your left has occupied page two of *Athens Now* for several editions. Promoting the upcoming showing of the film on February 5-9, has recently been my top priority, and now finally I had the chance to see the whole thing from start to finish. I had been devouring the movie trailers as soon as they dropped, trying to piece together how they did the film, and dealing with the surrealism of knowing the people and the place from which this marvelous story of triumph over trauma unfolds has been fascinating.

A couple of things before we go further—the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, where the première was held needs to be on your “must see” list,” it is so beautiful. Second of all, *Still Hope* needs to be on your “must-see list,” and take your 12-year-olds of either gender to raise their awareness in order to protect them as well as their peers. Be at peace, there is nothing graphic and all is age-appropriate. The worst of Hope’s ordeal is implied, and proves once again that very often “less is more.” That being said, it is not an easy watch, whether you are seeing Hope before she gets rescued, or seeing Hope grapple with what seems like the unfair

challenge to embrace forgiveness as the way toward true freedom and release from her captor’s grip. However, the quality of the film is wonderful, and well worth the angst before the resolution.

What was thankfully missing throughout the evening was the inflated egos one would normally expect in an event like this. The love, humor, and camaraderie amongst all those involved in producing *Still Hope* was refreshing, but as much as I love to have love leading the way in the arts, this flick ain’t cheesy; nor should it be. The grit and physicality displayed, particularly on the parts of Luna Rivera who plays Hope Creighton, the young woman who gets abducted, trafficked, and restored, along with Alex Veadov who plays Bishop the Bad Guy Trafficker, definitely gave one pause. I would imagine that Luna at times was exhausted from the physical

and emotional expenditure of energy it took to beautifully portray her character’s story. I know from having talked with Alex at the event that being so convincing as a bad guy had been emotionally hard on him, which leads me to the “point of this *Point*.”

Still Hope is a call to action, to be sure, for anyone on the planet currently drawing breath. However, there is a specific call upon men that Kathrine Lee, the co-founder of Pure Hope Foundation/Ranch (where it all happened in real life) calls “the hero’s heart.” Simply put, the “hero’s heart” is that thing that God placed in men long ago that is just hard-wired to defend, rescue, and protect. And in an era when it has become far too convenient to vilify those who have a rich, God-given level of testosterone running through their bodies, I know in my heart that men are the ones who will ultimately put



On the blue carpet with Alex Veadov, who plays Bishop the bad guy

an end to this heinousness. So, here’s to the men who will do just that. You know who you are, and if you don’t yet, when you do, please step up and answer the call. You **won’t** have to go it alone, you, **will** have a band of brothers, and remember, “Hope” is waiting...

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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Honoring PFC Ricky Turner

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Recently, Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Ret) Stormy Ripley reached out to me requesting that I do a *Soldier* column on PFC Ricky Turner of Athens/Decatur who was killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2009. His sacrifice, I think, may have been even more significant to Stormy both because he was local and was also a part of the 82nd Airborne, which is the unit with which she served as a helicopter pilot. I was happy to comply after having attended the ceremony where Ricky was remembered when the mobile wall honoring those that had died in the Global War on Terror came to

Athens in 2014. Though that was 12 years ago, I remember how the love of Ricky's family struck me. The mobile GWOT wall was a 24-hour exhibit that was outside of the Alabama Veterans Museum, much like the mobile Vietnam Memorial wall that was here last fall on the Athens State University campus.

Ricky was born in Athens in 1988 and graduated from Decatur High School. He had a life-long desire to serve his country, and joined the Army on September 11, 2006. His dad said that Ricky "died doing what he wanted to do." His Aunt Vicky said about Ricky fulfilling his



We Honor and Remember



Pfc. Ricky L. Turner

Athens, Alabama

307th Brigade
Engineer Battalion

January 16, 2009

Baghdad, Iraq

life-long dream of military service that "he was so proud of that," and that "he was a good boy with a good heart."

Ricky served with the 3rd

Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, and the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C. He died on Jan. 16, 2009, in Baghdad of wounds he suffered when an improvised explosive device went off near his unit. The IED blew up the vehicle in which Ricky was riding. Sadly, Ricky left behind a young widow by the name of Nikki.

Lt. Col. (Ret) James Walker was Ricky's ROTC commanding officer. He described Ricky as a "gentle giant," as well as "an outstanding soldier." Reverend Mike Webster at Ricky's service talked both about how Ricky wanted to follow in the footsteps of his stepbrother, Sgt. Jimmy Grimes, and wanted to "find himself." Webster also talked about the fact that the "Army was making him a stronger person."

"He loved to play video games, and he loved to draw. He was an outstanding student in school. Anything he set his mind to he accomplished," said Tammy

Turner, another aunt.

Ricky was one of Dorothy Turner's seven grandchildren. "He was a wonderful person, and I'm very proud of him," said Dorothy. "He was very outgoing. When he stayed with us, he loved to fish in our pond and loved animals."

In 2024, exactly 15 years after Ricky was killed, William Kuner wrote the following on a Facebook group whose purpose is to honor those in our area who have given their lives for our freedom:

I join with others as we honor and remember the life, service, and sacrifice of PFC Ricky Lee Turner; on this the anniversary of his KIA. A grateful Nation salutes you brave Veteran, Warrior and Patriot for your loyal and distinguished service to The United States of America. May the sacrifices you and so many others gave so freely NEVER be forgotten.

Amen. Rest in peace, PFC Turner, and thank you for laying down your life so we can be free.





Carissa's Corner

The Little Things

by Carissa Lovvorn

When my daughters started elementary school, I put a note in their lunchboxes and snack bags each day. It wasn't much, just a little message of encouragement, a hand-drawn picture, and an "I love you." Okay, let's be honest: I started it mainly for me. I was a worried mother who wasn't ready for her babies to start school. I didn't want them to forget Mommy during the day, and I couldn't stand the thought of them feeling alone or scared. I didn't realize until later how much this meant to them, or how this small gesture would start a tradition in our household.

Recently, I've noticed that my husband does the same. Most of the time, it's still Mommy and Daddy handling this chore, but our daughters are now old enough to pack their own lunches. Sometimes they even take it upon themselves to pack lunch for each other, or when they're feeling especially excited, they'll make one for my husband and me. The lunches they make are thoughtful, well planned, and always include a sweet little note. They've even shared that they hope to do the same for their own children one day.

Those small notes are simple, but they carry so much meaning. With Valentine's Day on the horizon, I'm reminded of those little cartoon valentines kids hand out during school—just a

cute, cheerful message to let someone know someone cares for them. It was such a nice feeling to get one from the whole class. As adults, we may not trade classroom valentines anymore, but the need to feel seen, remembered, and loved never really goes away.

Sometimes, life can be hard. Grief, depression, and anxiety seem to always be lurking under the surface. On days when I'm feeling low, I've learned that a small bit of encouragement from a friend, a family member, or even a stranger can make a real difference. It doesn't take much, just a kind word or an "I love you" to lift the spirit.

Throughout the Bible, God instructs us to be devoted to and honor one another above ourselves. For example, in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica, he wrote, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV). In Hebrews, we are shown that considering one another can inspire love and good deeds: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).



Whether it be a little handwritten note in a lunch box, a kind word to a friend, or a cute heart-shaped valentine exclaiming, You're So Totally Awesome!, I

encourage everyone to take a moment to build someone up over the next several weeks. You never know, you may accidentally start a tradition that is carried

down for generations.

Happy Valentine's Day!

Blessings,
Carissa Lovvorn

Calendar of Events

Girl Scout Cookies Go On Sale February 6

Girl Scouts will be selling cookies for \$6 a box. For more information: Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama, 7705 North Lake Drive, Trussville, AL 35173. girlscoutsnca.org | customercare@girlscoutsnca.org | 800.734.4541

Athens Main Street 13th Annual Chocolate Walk Returns February 7

Get your tickets the moment the "box office" opens at evenbrite, because there is a total of only 350 available, and when released, they sell out in 5 minutes. The Walk is self-guided, and participants will be entered into a drawing for \$500" worth of "Love Bucks from Chocolate Walk merchants. For more info, go to the Athens Main Street social sites.

Mardi Gras Parade February 17

Assemble on the east side of City Hall (W. Hobbs & N. Marion). March south on N. Marion Street to the corner of W. Washington, west on W. Washington to N. Jefferson, north on N. Jefferson to W. Market, east on W. Market to N Marion, north on N. Marion to 1st Methodist Church Bus Garage.

EmpowerHER Women's Summit February 25

The EmpowerHER Women's Summit invites professionals of all backgrounds in Athens-Limestone County to connect, grow, and lift one another higher. EmpowerHER will feature notable speakers, interactive roundtable discussions, and opportunities for women to share stories and ideas with one another. 8:30AM - 1:30PM.

Hospice of Limestone County's Chili Challenge February 28

Hospice of Limestone County's Annual Chili Challenge will return to delicious action on Saturday, Feb. 28. 11:00AM - 2:00PM. Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives. 114 W. Pryor St. Athens, AL.

2026 Boutique Crawl Day 1 March 7

This March, downtown Athens' clothing and gift boutiques will offer major specials during the 2026 Boutique Crawl



for two Saturdays. Shoppers can enjoy exclusive deals, and for every purchase over \$20, they can enter to win a \$500 Shopping Spree in downtown Athens.

State of the City Address March 10

Join the Athens-Limestone County Chamber of Commerce as they host the State of the City Address. Athens Mayor, Ronnie Marks, will take this opportunity to update the community on the city's progress and the past year in review. Breakfast begins at 8am with the program starting promptly at 8:30am. Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives, 114 W. Pryor St.

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.

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.

Strength Training: The Key To Living Longer And Better As We Age

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

When people think about getting older, they often focus on slowing down. Fewer stairs. Less activity. Avoiding heavy things. But science tells us something very different: one of the most powerful predictors of how long—and how well—you'll live is how strong you are.

Muscle mass and grip strength, in particular, are directly linked to life expectancy. Numerous studies show that people with greater muscle mass and stronger grip strength live longer, experience fewer falls, recover faster from illness, and maintain independence well into later life. In contrast, loss of muscle—known as sarcopenia—is strongly associated with increased risk of injury, chronic

disease, and early mortality.

This isn't just about looking fit or lifting impressive weights. It's about being able to carry groceries, get up off the floor, climb stairs, and protect yourself during everyday life. Strength is insurance for aging.

One of the biggest misconceptions around strength training is that it's only for the young. Many people believe they "missed their chance" or that lifting weights is unsafe later in life. In reality, the opposite is true. Strength training is one of the safest and most effective things you can do at any age—when it's coached properly.

Research consistently shows that adults in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and beyond can gain significant

strength and muscle mass with resistance training. Bones become denser. Joints become more stable. Balance improves. Confidence grows. Perhaps most importantly, people regain the ability to do the things they love without fear.

Grip strength deserves special attention. It's one of the simplest measurements doctors use to assess overall health, and it's closely tied to heart health, cognitive function, and longevity. If your grip is weak, it often signals overall muscle loss throughout the body. The good news? Grip strength improves naturally when you train your whole body with functional movements like lifting,



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carrying, pulling, and pushing.

This is where intelligent, structured strength training matters. Random workouts or unsupervised gym routines often fall short or lead to injury. Strength needs to be built progressively, with proper mechanics, thoughtful programming, and individual scaling.

At CrossFit Athens, strength training isn't reserved for elite athletes or young people. It's designed for real humans of all ages and backgrounds. Every movement is coached. Every workout is scalable. Whether someone is brand new to exercise, returning after years away, or focused on staying strong for decades to come, the goal is the same: build

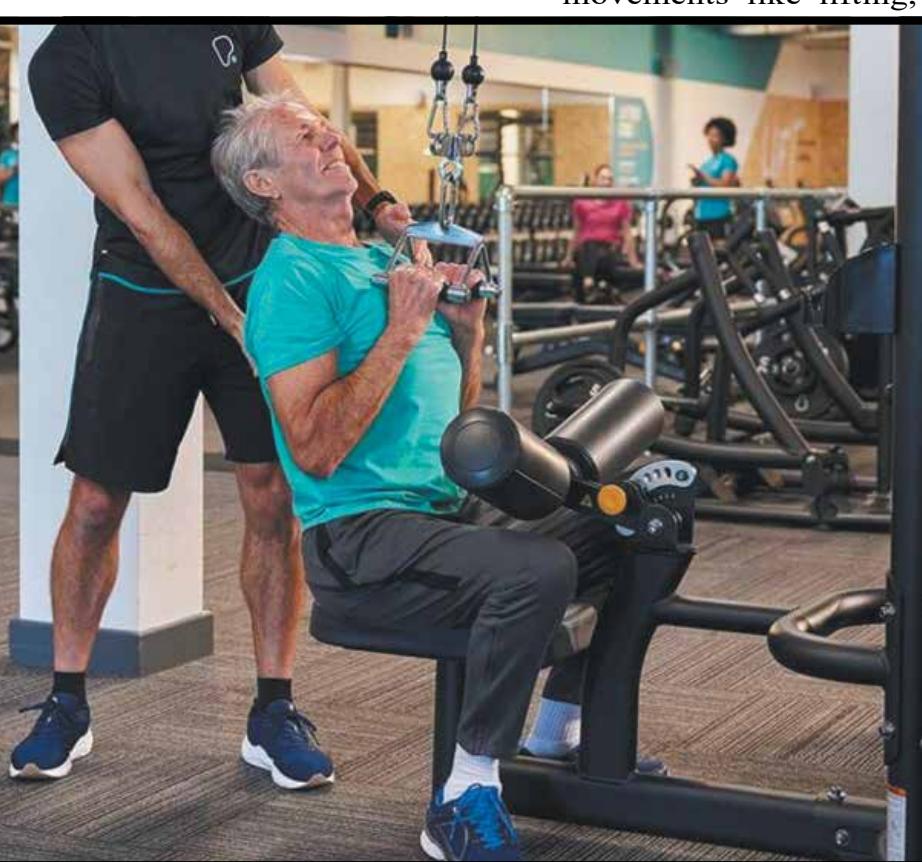
strength that carries over into real life.

Getting stronger today doesn't just help you now—it shapes how you age. The strength you build in your 30s, 40s, 50s, and beyond becomes the foundation for independence later in life.

Aging is inevitable. Weakness doesn't have to be.

If you want to move better, live longer, and stay capable for years to come, strength training isn't optional—it's essential. And with the right guidance, it's never too late to start.

**- Coach Nick
Owner / Head Coach
CrossFit Athens
256-262-7884
www.crossfitathens.com**



What Makes Ronnie Roll

Let The Good Times (And Cans) Roll In Athens

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

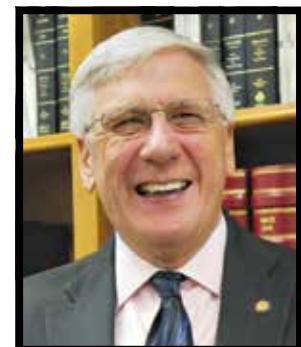
Mayor Ronnie and other local leaders often find themselves in situations where they are meeting themselves coming and going while trying to be in three places at once for various events which are all important to the quality of life in Athens-Limestone County. "It's growing pains," he said with a chuckle. We wondered aloud and in jest if the solution would be to have some kind of cosmic calendar upon which everyone would put their events so folks don't get triple-booked. "People

are energized, and that's a good thing. Having so many choices and activities is a sign of a strong community," he said.

One such activity that is in the works is a replacement for Poke Sallet Follies, which was disbanded during COVID after decades of being a major source of fun for the community. Leaders and town folk alike would participate in all manner of skits. Funds were raised largely for senior activities. It sold out regularly and was a yearly

highlight of life in Athens-Limestone County. Stay tuned for updates as plans and activities become solidified.

We moved on to the topic of Mardi Gras, better known as Fat Tuesday. Mardi Gras day is traditionally the last day to party before Ash Wednesday which begins the season of Lent, a time of prayer and fasting leading up to Easter. On Mardi Gras day, February 17, is when we will have our "small-but-mighty" Mardi Gras parade around



SAVE THE DATE



STATE *of the* CITY
ADDRESS

Featuring Mayor Ronnie Marks

March 10, 2026

8:00AM - Breakfast 8:30AM - Program

Alabama Veterans Museum

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5:30 JUDGING OF THE CARS
6:30 PARADE BEGINS

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the Courthouse Square, and all for a good cause. "Laissez les bon temps rouler," French for "Let the good times roll," is being slightly remodeled this year with the idea of "cans rolling" into the hands of those who need canned food. It is "Let the good cans roll," and is a "Parade With A Purpose." The canned goods will benefit our Community Table.

Our parade is going to consist of decorated shopping carts and other wagons, and of course, there will be beads and, hopefully, delicious king cakes. The history of king cake is that Baby Jesus is the treasure you find baked into a cake decorated with the traditional colors of purple, green, and gold. The gold stands for power, the purple for royalty, and the green for faith. For those who don't know, the custom of celebrating Mardi Gras was brought to America by French Catholic explorers who held the first Mardi Gras celebration at a place they named Pointe du Mardi Gras, about 60 miles west of New

Orleans. New Orleans and Mobile have the most famous Mardi Gras celebrations with numerous parades over several weeks. The fun custom has spread across other parts of the U.S. including our city. So why not join in the festivities as our celebration will include food trucks, music, masks, face painting, and more. The three sponsoring agencies are Athens State University, Athens Utilities, and City of Athens Gas Department.

Last of all, it is hard to believe that it is almost time once again for the mayor's annual State of the City address. It will be held on March 10 at 8 a.m. at the Veterans Museum, and breakfast will be served. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, it is a good way to be brought up to speed about where Athens has been, is currently, and where it is going.

There was only one thing left to do, and that was to pray. So, we did, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.



Galatians: A Road Map For Life

by Anna Hamilton

The book of Galatians is short, just six chapters, but it is bold, freeing, and deeply personal. Written by the apostle Paul, it speaks to believers who struggle with identity, pressure, and performance-based faith. Even today, Galatians reads like a loving but firm reminder of who we are, what truly matters, and how we are meant to live.

Each of the six chapters provide us a powerful reminder to and continue to speak wisdom, freedom, and hope into our daily lives.

Chapter 1 tells us not to live for the approval of others. “If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

Galatians begins with a call to clarity and courage. Paul reminds us that a life centered on pleasing others will always pull us away from our true calling. Approval is fleeting, opinions change, and expectations can become impossible to meet. Living for God’s approval brings freedom because His love is steady, not conditional.

continued on page 22

Italian Grinder Bean Salad

Ingredients:

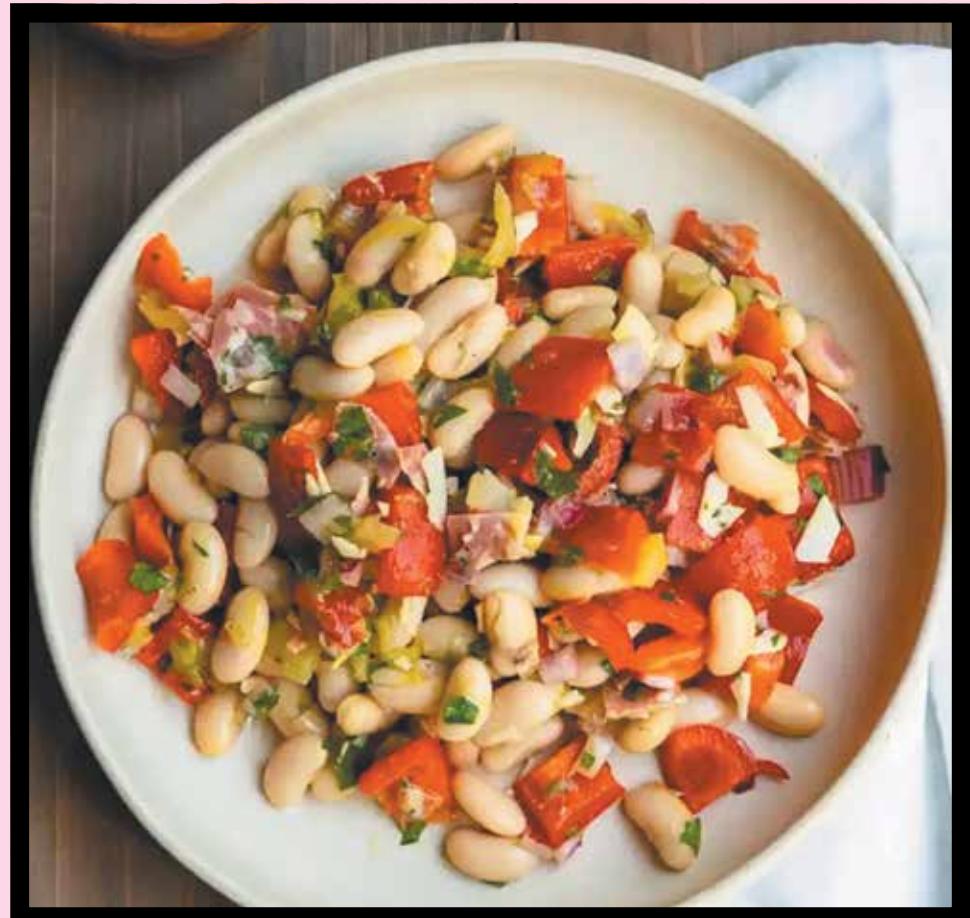
1 can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
2 cans white beans, drained and rinsed
1 cup diced turkey breast slices (optional)
1 cup diced salami (optional)
1 green bell pepper, diced
½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
½ cup pepperoncini peppers, sliced
½ small red onion, finely diced
½ cup parsley, roughly chopped
1 cup diced provolone or mozzarella

For dressing:

½ cup plain Greek yogurt
1 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
2 Tbsp pepperoncini brine
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1 clove garlic, finely grated
1 Tbsp dried oregano
1 tsp red pepper flakes
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

In a small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients for the dressing. Mix well until well combined and



creamy. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine all the salad ingredients and toss gently to mix.

Pour dressing over the bean salad and toss gently to ensure all ingredients are coated in the dressing. Chill until ready to serve.

Party Like It's 2026!

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association

Hello, my amazingly fabulous folk! I hope you endured the cold weather well. I will be honest, I am not at all a cold weather person. However, I have noticed that my love for the area makes the cold days so much easier. I mean, when it can be the dead of January, but there are still green plants showing here and there, I just

sigh with contentment. I actually am loving this season because I get to plan a new fun year for y'all. We are finding more to do on the trails. I am getting more ideas for mini events and large events. I want to take you on the trails, by the river, around the Square, and through the county! I want us to eat,

drink, sing, dance, hike, ride, and play our way through this year!

Our main event this year is going to be on the 4th of July, so mark your calendars. We are going to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our country in grand, neighborly style with even more to do with our Red, White & BOOM: Allow me to introduce Red, White & ZOOM—a super fun race in the (relatively) cool of the 4th of July morning! More details will follow soon, but in the meantime dust off those tennies and get some steps in!

Here is a list of events we have in the works now. Hopefully, more will be added, so if you have a request, contact me. I am here for you, so let me know what you



want to see and do.

Want to see and do.

1. April Historic Walking Tours
2. Guided Trail Walks (throughout the spring)
3. Red, White, and BOOM 4th of July Event
4. Cemetery Stroll
5. Haunt Walks
6. Tinsel Trail
7. Merry Market
8. Christmas Parade

...and more!

“How can we help you, Steph?” Oh, I am so glad you asked! (I knew you would—you are amazing that way!)

1. Are you a business? Let me know how you would like to support our community with products, manpower, or sponsorships for our events.
2. Are you an individual? Let me know if you want to be a guide, a volunteer, or a participant!

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Stain Plumbing & Construction: Excellent Work, Reasonable Rates

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

work began to be a part of Christian's DNA before he could even drive.

Christian worked for AllStar Plumbers, Inc. for 10 years, and started Stain Plumbing & Construction in 2015. In 2018 they gained their A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau. As is the case with so many of our *Athens Now* clients, Christian greatly appreciated his time at AllStar, but got bitten by the "business owner bug" himself and knew that he needed to launch his own company. Eventually he and his wife, Bethann purchased an older home on Mooresville Road with the intention of restoring it, and they are on their way to completing that between working their businesses. Sometimes it can be slow going in the remodel/ restoration department when you have kids, activities, careers, and in our case most recently, winter storms. The address, which is the same as their home, is 17345 Mooresville Road, Athens, AL 35613, and they are available 24/7.

Speaking of winter storms that have recently plagued much of our

nation, Stain Plumbing & Construction posted a public service announcement that could save folks a lot of aggravation and money, which I found most helpful. Weather reporters will tell us from time to time to let our faucets drip in frigid weather to prevent pipes from bursting, but don't always give us the rest of the story. Here is the basic rule: If the outdoor temperature has been at 32°F for 12 hours, it's time to start dripping. If the temperature has dropped to 25 degrees for 4 hours, it's time to get your drip on and keep it on until the temp gets back up to freezing. Stain has been busy recently handling emergency calls for septic systems and pipes, and they have a cheery and maybe a bit cheeky tag line and call-to-action: "Call number one so you can keep going number two!" – Very important in freezing weather, no?

Stain does all aspects of plumbing and septic work, clearing grease traps, and putting in new plumbing for housing developments. They also do complete installs of sewer and septic systems. They have a full-time crew of five and are at present looking to add a helper to their team.

The second part of the



Stain name and brand is "Construction," and while Christian certainly has a heart to help people out of plumbing distresses quickly, he greatly enjoys "creating" new homes. Most of their construction-based work at present is site work, preparation, building pads, and laying new plumbing for developers, but they are a highly experienced construction firm themselves. Right now (between busted pipes and large-scale new construction demands), Stain is building two 1500 sq. ft. starter homes, so if you are looking to build, well, look no further!

Stain Plumbing & Construction's review rate online is 4.9 out of 5, and here are a few for your perusal:

"Arrived early and went right to work upon my arrival. Christian was courteous and competently worked the problem and solved it in under an hour. Price was very fair. Cleaned up after the work was completed. Will definitely use them again for my future plumbing needs!!!"

-Douglas E.

Very responsive and



provided ideas to decrease the scope of work but achieved the results I wanted. Will absolutely use them again, and soon. Did the job right the first time. Love that!

-Chris M.

"My experience was absolutely wonderful. They are very professional, punctual, easy to work with and pricing is highly competitive. I needed the plumbing services and I highly recommend this company for all your plumbing needs!!!"

-Deanna L.

"Stain Plumbing and Construction was my builder, and plumbing contractor. They did a very good job. Easy to work with. Listened to

me and made every effort to do the job to my satisfaction".

-Villard R.

I asked Christian why, when I have several choices in our area regarding plumbing and construction firms, should I choose Stain. He said, "I do excellent work. Reasonable." Call them today and see what he means.

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Plumbing &
Construction**

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Athens, AL 35613

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Construction



Clean, Green And Beautiful

Who Are We

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

Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, has been serving Limestone County since 1977. KALB's mission is to empower citizens of Athens and Limestone County to take greater responsibility for enhancing their community environment. While we are not a branch of the City of Athens or the Limestone County Commission, we work closely with them to accomplish many of our goals. Because we are a nonprofit, we rely on city and county funding, sponsorships, and donations to be able to accomplish our goals.

At Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful, we focus on litter control and abatement, beautification projects, recycling, and education. We are an organization made up of an executive director and a volunteer commission. We have been very fortunate to have our amazing community of volunteers who have worked with us to make everything we have accomplished possible. In the past five years, Keep Ath-



ens-Limestone Beautiful has removed 192,372 pounds of litter from public lands and waterways throughout Athens and Limestone County with the unwavering help from 3,500 volunteers and various partnering businesses and organizations. How do we manage this? First off, we have an amazing volunteer base to work with. Keep Alabama Beautiful and the Alabama Department of Transportation provides us with supplies such as litter grabbers, gloves, safety vests, and bags. We are also lucky enough to have the support of the Limestone

County Commission and the City of Athens.

For the past few years, we have been lucky enough to have the support of the Limestone County Commission to be able to provide the Household Hazardous Waste Collection for all of Limestone County. They have been fundamental in providing this service to the community. It is the only way to ethically dispose of harmful chemicals in Limestone County, and we appreciate all the support from the Commission. We hope to continue to be able to provide this service to Limestone County for as long as we can.

Our favorite event of the year, the Earth Day Expo is possible because of our amazing businesses right here in Limestone County. Because they believe in us and our mission, they sponsor this amazing, family-friendly event every



year. Athens State University donates so much time, energy, and space to us, we can't begin to thank them enough. So many businesses step up to make sure this can remain a free event to the public, and we are proud to see it grow each year.

We owe our success to our community, and we want to see Limestone County flourish in the future. We know that



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Meet Bethann McGowan Of Dream Key Realty: Where Buying Your Forever Home Is A Celebration

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

ge. Ultimately, she chose emergency medicine as her career path, and completed training as an EMT. Bethann worked all over North Alabama and South Tennessee in EMS for 10 years, 7.5 of which were with HEMSI. She loved the work, and still does, but just knew that it was time to do something else. She and her husband Christian decided to homeschool their children, which has kept Bethann more than busy. Beth has also done the books and run the admin for her husband's business, Stain Plumbing & Construction. The kids are involved in a number of sports and activities, with 16-year-old Mikayla doing cheerleading at East Limestone High School, and 10-year-old Cooper highly competitive in NASCAR. Now that Mikayla is attending ELHS and Cooper is more able to do independent study, Bethann has found that fulfilling her lifelong dream of being a real estate agent is an idea whose time has come. She and Christian talked at length and he agreed, "It's time." So, she got her license, having passed the exam on her first try.

Bethann wanted to give potential clients the same kind of experience that she and her husband, Christian, had when they closed on their home, whose extended property on the west side also has

on it the headquarters and storage facilities for Stain Plumbing & Construction, LLC. Dream Key Real Estate Agent Tiffany Pack sold them their home and lit a fire in Bethann through kindness, competence, thoughtfulness, and hard work. "I still have the welcome sign she gave us," said Bethann. Tiffany also grew up with Bethann's husband and seemed like a good choice as a mentor as Bethann started on her new career path.

After Bethann got her license in the summer of 2025, she looked at Dream Key as her real estate business home. She especially appreciated Tiffany telling her to look around at other agents and agencies before a decision was made. Tiffany told Bethann, "Go ahead and interview and see if we are who you want to work with."

Bethann told me that Dream Key-ers Tiffany Pack and Marie Eubanks were excellent role models, and that Dream Key "just felt like home." They welcomed her with open arms on TikTok and made a warm introduction to our community by saying:

Say hey to Bethann! One of our incredible Dream Key agents, out doing what she does best-taking care of clients and handling business with a smile.

From showings to closings, she's the kind of agent who brings professionalism, hustle, and heart to



every step of the process. If you see Bethann out and about, just know... real estate magic is happening!

Dream Key is very clear about their commitment to their customers through the quality of their agents: Some of our competitors want to find the home that offers them the best commission with the least effort. That is not the Dream Key motto. As realtors trusted in North Alabama, our goal is to always find the home that is right for you.

From her site at <https://bethannmcgowan.valleymls.com/>, Bethann issues the following welcome and promise:

Please explore the resources within my website, you will find everything you need to buy or sell a



Looking for a new
real estate agent?

Call Bethann McGowan today!

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Call me today to book an appointment.
256-374-1580
b.mcgowanhomes@gmail.com

home in the area as well as learn about the market value of homes. You can search for homes with detailed descriptions, photos, community and school information and so much more.

As a real estate professional, I am available to address all of your real estate needs. Please give me a call or email when you are ready to visit some homes, or to schedule a free home buying or selling consultation. I look forward to working with you!

There is a twinkle in the eye of someone who has found their niche, and as an EMT, Bethann literally dealt with blood, sweat, and tears before her "dream door" at Dream Key opened. She told me, "Helping someone find

their 'forever home' is a celebration, and I like being able to put people in the right home for them." If you are looking to buy or sell, give Bethann a call today for a no-cost, no-obligation look at what is available to meet your needs, wants...and your dreams!

**Dream Key
Real Estate**
**Bethann McGowan,
Real Estate Agent**

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TikTok: [bethann.mcgowan](https://www.tiktok.com/@bethann.mcgowan)



Captain's Log

Captain Grandpa

by Brenda Wilkerson

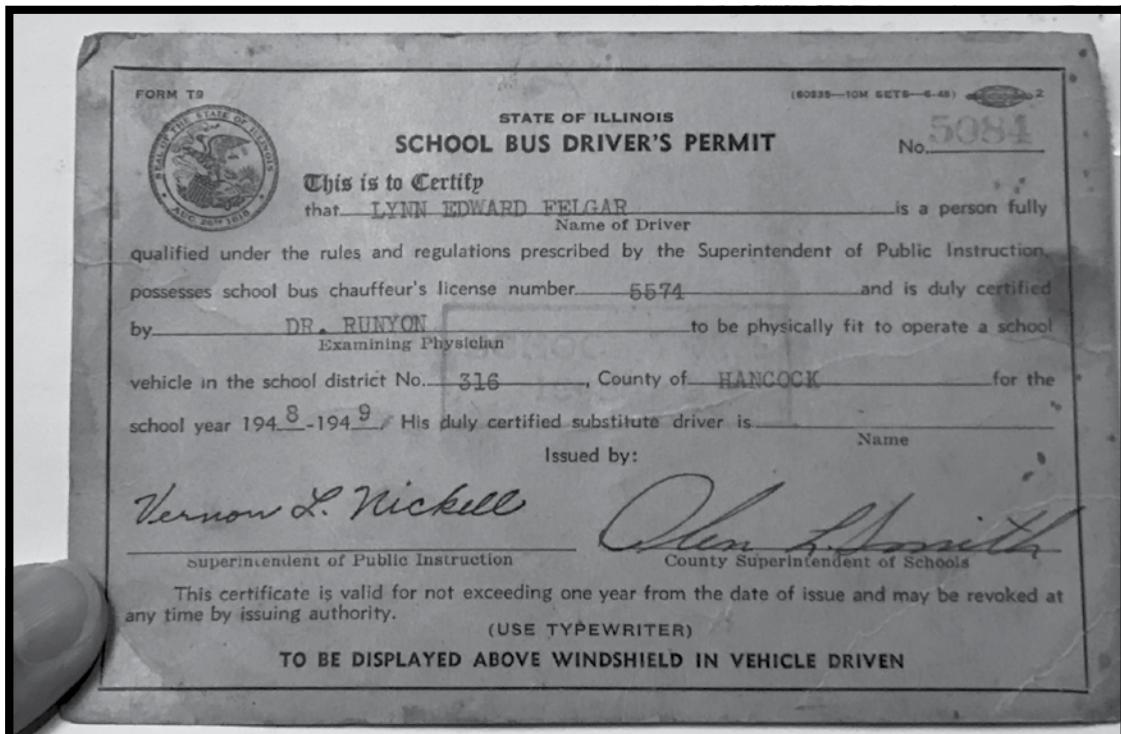
Each and every year I give a respectful and heavenly 'shout out' to my Grandpa Felgar. Pictured here is his 1948-49 school bus driver's permit that he carried in his own school bus in Hamilton, Illinois, 77 years ago. I am forever grateful for his dedication and occupation as a driver to support his family those many years past. My dad, who rode that bus, tells many entertaining stories I will share soon. I wish Grandpa could see that his shy & timid southern granddaughter would one day proudly follow in his footsteps... or maybe he does know. It sure makes this grateful granddaughter's mission to change the world in the little lives that step on this ol' bus each morning that much sweeter!

No matter what you do today, no matter how the world makes you feel about the job you hold, no matter how insignificant you may feel, keep your head high and change the world one encouraging kind word at a time. Make a difference today for the next generations to come. Carry on strong!

In Memory of My Grandpa

Lynn Edward Felgar was the first-generation bus driver in our family. He was a man of extraordinary dedication and discipline. He balanced the roles of a school bus driver, farmer, and night watchman at a box factory—all while being a husband and a father to nine children, one of them being my dad.

A stern and no-nonsense



disciplinarian, Grandpa believed in hard work, respect, and doing things the right way. As a man of faith, he instilled values in his family with unwavering conviction and example the best he could. His day often began at the end of a long night, leaving his third-shift job as a watch-

man at the box factory to start his school bus route at dawn. He ensured local children—including his own—arrived safely to school. His stern demeanor commanded quiet and order on the bus. After driving the bus route, he returned to the farm, where he worked tire-

lessly, tending to the fields and livestock efficiently. Despite his grueling schedule, he remained steadfast, driven by an unshakable sense of duty to provide for his family and teach his children the importance of resilience, responsibility, and respect.

~Brenda

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Your Recipe For Success

by D. A. Slinkard

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

My wife is an awesome cook! What she is able to do in the kitchen is absolutely amazing -- how she is able to take a little of this and a little of that and before you know it, she has produced a tasty dish. She has a knack for cooking and could be really good at showing others that they, too, can produce delicious meals just as she does. She can take a recipe, gather the ingredients, follow the steps, and produce food for which even the chef Gordon Ramsey would give his approval. My wife has not been to culinary school, but she has perfected her cooking skills, thankfully, in large part to time she spent in the kitchen with her grandmother.

Growing up in Missouri, my wife saw the passion her grandmother Jesse Urhahn had when it came to preparing meals for her family. If you were to ask my wife for some of her fondest childhood memories, I guarantee she would mention the times she spent preparing meals with her grandmother. Those times taught my wife a lot about how a woman is to love her family and how food can taste so much better when its primary ingredient is a whole lot of love. The success she has had in preparing meals got me to thinking about the world around us.

My wife can take a recipe, follow each step, and she is able to produce the same tasty results her grandmother did so many years ago. What stops us from doing the exact same feat in the world of business?

In the world of education? What we need to do is find someone who has achieved success, study to find out how they obtained it (their recipe), and then attempt to recreate it. If I follow the exact same steps as someone else — doing what they did, how they did it — realistically speaking, I should be able to achieve the same results.

How many times do we hear about history repeating itself? Why? The same steps or ingredients are used over and over, and these steps produce the same results. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. The one thing I have turned my focus and attention towards has become autobiographies. Why? If you want the recipes from someone's life, what better way than reading the words directly penned by the person you are wanting to emulate?

Some people have faced heartache that we would want to avoid; how do you do that? Avoid using the ingredients that lead to the heartache. Sounds simplistic, but why is it some people can cook using a recipe while others burn the food? Those who do well are able to utilize each step while those who miss out do so because they skip or miss a step. If you ask my wife, the recipes are only guidelines for her because I can tell you, she has been able to take some of the recipes her grandmother had and has been able to improve on them. How? She adds her personal touch to each recipe.

Our success in life can be the same way. Find someone you want to emulate, study who they are, study why they are this way, and then learn how to implement their style mixed with who you are. We are all unique individuals and not one person is the same as the other, but we can train ourselves to be more like those we desire. Sound crazy? I just saw a commercial that showed synchronized swimmers, perfectly swimming in uni-

son. They were fluid, they were perfect in their movements, they looked as one unit, but they had to train to be this way.

Our lives and the success we have is no different. Success takes work, and you must be committed to achieving what you want. The problem when it comes to recipes is sometimes people do not want to follow the steps; they tend to want to veer off course. If you have

the steps you need to take, why not follow the course? If achieving success in life was easy, then everyone would do it; however, the reality is that many people fail. You need to start today with the end in mind, find your person of interest to emulate, find out their recipe for success, then work your tail off to be able to take the same steps as they did. Follow the recipe, find success.



DIVERSITY: A Call To Unity!

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

The next visit we will look at more positive ways to handle criticism, but this visit, I must share exciting, expanded thoughts I have learned about the beauty of DIVERSITY. At first glance it didn't seem to have much to do with Criticism Management or EI, but on reflection... the more we embrace and understand diversity among our fellow humans, the greater our capacity to learn from their ways, avoid their pitfalls, and profit from their life's lessons and heritage. Our fear of people who are different, in looks, ways, lifestyles, will also become more manageable if we understand and embrace the fact that OUR WAY is not, never has been, and never will be, the perfect way to live, above all others.

Let's look at four different species of plants and how when they are bundled together and presented as a unified group, they



represent the greatness of bundled, diverse groups of people working together, each with their own special contributions and unique challenges brought to the whole unit.

Citron: Bright yellow, it stands out prominently in the bundle. It grows slowly to develop its unique qualities. It strengthens the heart, is a remedy for nausea, is used in food, and can even be used to make perfume. Citron has even been used to soften leather. In some traditions it is compared to the human heart, representing a person with both "taste" (wisdom/knowledge) and "fragrance" (good deeds). Both emerge from a deep

and patient process.

Date palm: Rises tall and straight. Every part is useful. Its fruit is eaten, its trunk used for construction, its leaves for weaving, roofing, fire-starting, and cleaning. Tradition likens it to the human spine – a symbol of inner strength, stability, and rootedness. It has no fragrance, but it does have taste in its fruit, and represents people who have wisdom/knowledge, but have yet begun to do good deeds: These are those with a backbone of knowledge still seeking expression

Myrtle: A low, dense green shrub with a gentle and calming scent. It is used to heal wounds, purify spaces, decorate, and add fragrance to windows and doorways. This represents the person who has "fragrance" (good deeds/actions) even while they lack "taste" (wisdom/knowledge). They are a quiet presence of goodness that uplifts its surroundings.

Willow: The simplest of the four, it has neither scent nor flavor, only thin, long leaves, reminiscent of teardrops. It grows beside water. At first it seems to have nothing to offer, yet it too possesses a unique quality – a healing one. Its bark contains nature's own aspirin. In tradition, the willow symbolizes

someone with neither great wisdom nor abundant good deeds, yet remains a part of the community. For even the simple and unseen have their place and great value, even if not immediately recognized.

Each species grows in a unique climate, and carries a different quality, uprightness, fragrance, taste, simplicity, etc. But when they are bound together, they complete the unit.

So it is with us: we are different from one another, and through that diversity, wholeness is achieved. As we embrace this bundle, we connect to one another, to all of creation, and to the world around and above us. One unified group of diversity.

(Many of these thoughts are re-worked words and expressions from a booklet called Bound Together - The Four Species by Avigail Fieldman, produced by Lev Haolam Content Team.)

As I studied this work, so many profound lessons came forth. In business and in family, choose your partners carefully. Look for their strengths and plan for the navigation and understanding of their weaknesses. Give the people in your world time to grow. Don't expect a date tree to produce lemons. Do not disparage the simple, nor

those who seem to have little to offer. They, too, are important. Look for ways to use the assets you already have and stop complaining about what you think you lack. Maybe what you need is right before you, and you will not see it if an easy alternative drops from the sky. Take time to bundle your blessings, wave them publicly around the four corners of your world, and be thankful for the things you have – and the things you don't have. Do not think too much nor too little OF yourself; however, thinking OF yourself less, and more of others, leads to greater happiness and peace.

Embrace DIVERSITY! Imagine how sad the world would be if there were only one species of bird, one piano note, one musical instrument, one color, one flavor, one texture, one cloth, one expression, one sex, one career, one culture, one kind animal. Diversity is a beautiful word, full of thoughts, colors, ideas, looks, feelings... ENJOY the diverse and beautiful world around us! And please, let us all stop being so critical, judgmental, unkind, and arrogant. THIS would be a great first step in developing an excellent, high Emotional Intelligence Quotient! Stay warm as winter rages.

Detri would love to hear from you. Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com or Facebook, Detri Atkinson McGhee. Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismandmanagement.com

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Booker T. Washington: The Steady Builder Today's Leadership Still Needs

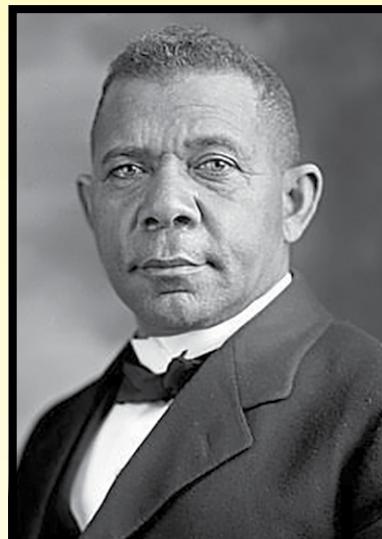
by Eric Betts

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

Booker T. Washington stands as one of the most strategic and steady builders in American history, a man who understood that progress is rarely the product of sudden bursts but of disciplined, deliberate construction. Born into enslavement in 1856, Washington emerged from the shadows of bondage with a vision that stretched far beyond his own lifetime. He believed that education, skill, and character were the foundation stones upon which a people could rise. His life became a blueprint for what it means to build with intention, to build with patience, and to build with an eye toward the generations that will inherit the work.

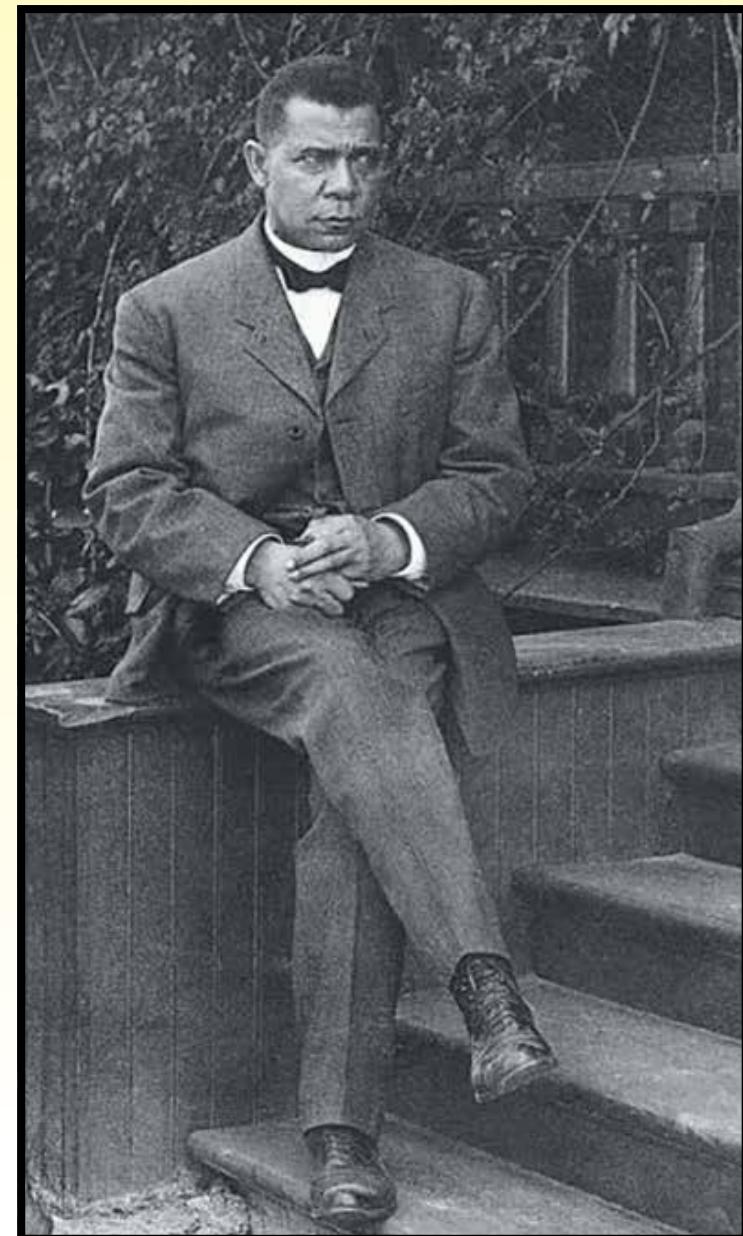
His most enduring creation, the Tuskegee In-

stitute, began in 1881 with no buildings, no money, and no resources beyond Washington's conviction that Black people could—and must—build institutions of excellence. Under his leadership, students literally made the campus with their own hands: they molded bricks, raised walls, planted crops, and constructed a world-class school from the ground up. Washington built more than a campus; he built capacity. He built dignity. He built a culture where labor was not a mark of inferiority but a pathway to mastery and self determination. Tuskegee became a living testimony that brilliance could flourish even in the hostile soil of the post Reconstruction South.



Washington's influence extended far beyond the borders of Alabama. He built networks of donors, alliances with political leaders, and partnerships with communities across the nation. Through the National Negro Business League, he built platforms for Black entrepreneurs to thrive. Through his writings, he built narratives of resilience and possibility. Through his quiet but persistent advocacy, he built pathways for countless Black families to access education, land ownership, and economic stability.

Today, Washington's legacy offers a model for anyone seeking to build something that lasts. He



teaches us that progress is not magic; it is masonry. It is laying one brick at a time, even when the world doubts your ability to build. It is investing in people, institutions, and

skills that outlive you. In a moment when quick results often overshadow long-term vision, Booker T. Washington reminds us that steady builders shape history. They do not simply react to the world—they construct a new one. And like Washington, we are called to build with strategy, with steadiness, and with the unshakeable belief that what we build today can bless generations yet to come.

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Sugar Is Poison

by Roy Williams



The average American consumes a significant amount of sugar yearly, with estimates for added sugars, those added to the processed foods, ranging from around 60 pounds to over 100 pounds annually. This translates to roughly 17-34 teaspoons of added sugar daily, far exceeding recommended limits and contributing to health issues like heart disease, obesity, autoimmune disorders, and of course, diabetes. Figures vary by source, but generally even adults show too much consumption, with younger Americans consuming even more. If we add the amount consumed from soft drinks, tea, coffee, and others, many estimates believe it to be over 200 pounds per person annually.

Sugar is not a neutral food. It is a fast-acting metabolic disruptor that hijacks normal energy regulation, damages tissue over time, and trains the brain toward dependency rather than discipline. Understanding why it harms the body explains why withdrawal feels severe and why structured nutritional support is required. Getting off anything that is addicting requires support.

The Problems With Sugar

Excess sugar repeatedly spikes blood glucose, forcing the pancreas to overpro-

duce insulin. Over time, this leads to insulin resistance (type II diabetes), fat storage (obesity), and metabolic inflexibility. When cells stop responding properly to insulin, energy becomes locked away, hunger increases, and the body begins demanding more sugar to compensate. This is not a lack of willpower. It is a biochemical trap.

Sugar also feeds chronic inflammation. High glucose increases oxidative stress, damages blood vessels, stiffens arteries, and accelerates aging. It directly contributes to cardiovascular disease, fatty liver, (especially high fructose corn syrup) joint degeneration, and nerve damage. In the brain, sugar overstimulates dopamine pathways, the same reward circuitry activated by addictive drugs like cocaine, opioid pain killers, and methamphetamine. This is why people experience anxiety, irritability, headaches, depression, fatigue, and intense cravings when they stop consuming sugar. The nervous system has been trained to expect constant stimulation.

From a health and service perspective, sugar keeps people weak, distracted, inflamed, and dependent. Removing sugar helps restore



clarity, strength, and long-term capacity to survive and help others, but only if the body is supported correctly during the detox transition.

To reduce sugar cravings and blunt withdrawal, the body must be given what sugar was falsely supplying: rapid energy signals, mineral balance, neurotransmitter stability, and blood sugar control.

From Nutritional Health Care, the most effective foundation is **MSM + C**. MSM improves cellular permeability, allowing glucose to enter cells properly instead of remaining in the bloodstream. This alone reduces cravings because cells are no longer starving while blood sugar is high. Vitamin C supports adrenal recovery, which is critical since sugar exhausts the adrenal system. **MSM + C** also stabilizes inflammation and improves insulin sensitivity, making the transition off sugar far less aggressive.

Sugar Shocker is not only for diabetics, it is the primary product for cravings and withdrawal control. It sup-

ports pancreatic function, insulin signaling, and glucose receptor sensitivity. When the body can properly use carbohydrates from whole foods, the demand for refined sugar collapses. **Sugar Shocker** also supplies broad micronutrient support that sugar depletes, particularly chromium-dependent pathways that regulate glucose metabolism.

pH+ electrolyte drops play a major role during withdrawal. Sugar consumption drives acidity and mineral loss. When people stop sugar, they often experience headaches, fatigue, and irritability not because they need sugar but because they are dehydrated and mineral-deficient. Proper alkalization and electrolyte balance sharply reduce these symptoms and restore steady energy, making **pH+** part of the solution.

IS-3 empowers your immune system and can be used strategically, not for cravings directly, but to lower systemic inflammation and immune stress that sugar creates. As

inflammation drops, insulin sensitivity improves, and cravings weaken. This is especially useful in people with long-term metabolic damage or autoimmune stress linked to sugar consumption.

For people using sugar as emotional or neurological stimulation, **Ultimate EFAs** support brain chemistry and stabilize mood. Sugar artificially elevates dopamine and serotonin. When removed, essential fatty acids help normalize neurotransmitter signaling so the brain does not panic and demand sugar as a substitute.

The core truth is this: sugar cravings are not a moral failure. They are a predictable biological response to cellular starvation, mineral depletion, adrenal exhaustion, and neurotransmitter imbalance. When the body is supplied with the correct supplements, discipline becomes natural rather than forced.

Teaching this method for reducing the amount of sugar consumed matters because it restores dignity to people who believe they are weak. When their cravings disappear, so does the shame. Health regained becomes service multiplied.

At NHC Herb Shop in Killeen or Herbs and More in Athens, our staff are trained to help anyone willing to learn to overcome their sugar addiction. Check out our product line at nhcherbs.com or call us for a free appointment at 256-757-0660.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*

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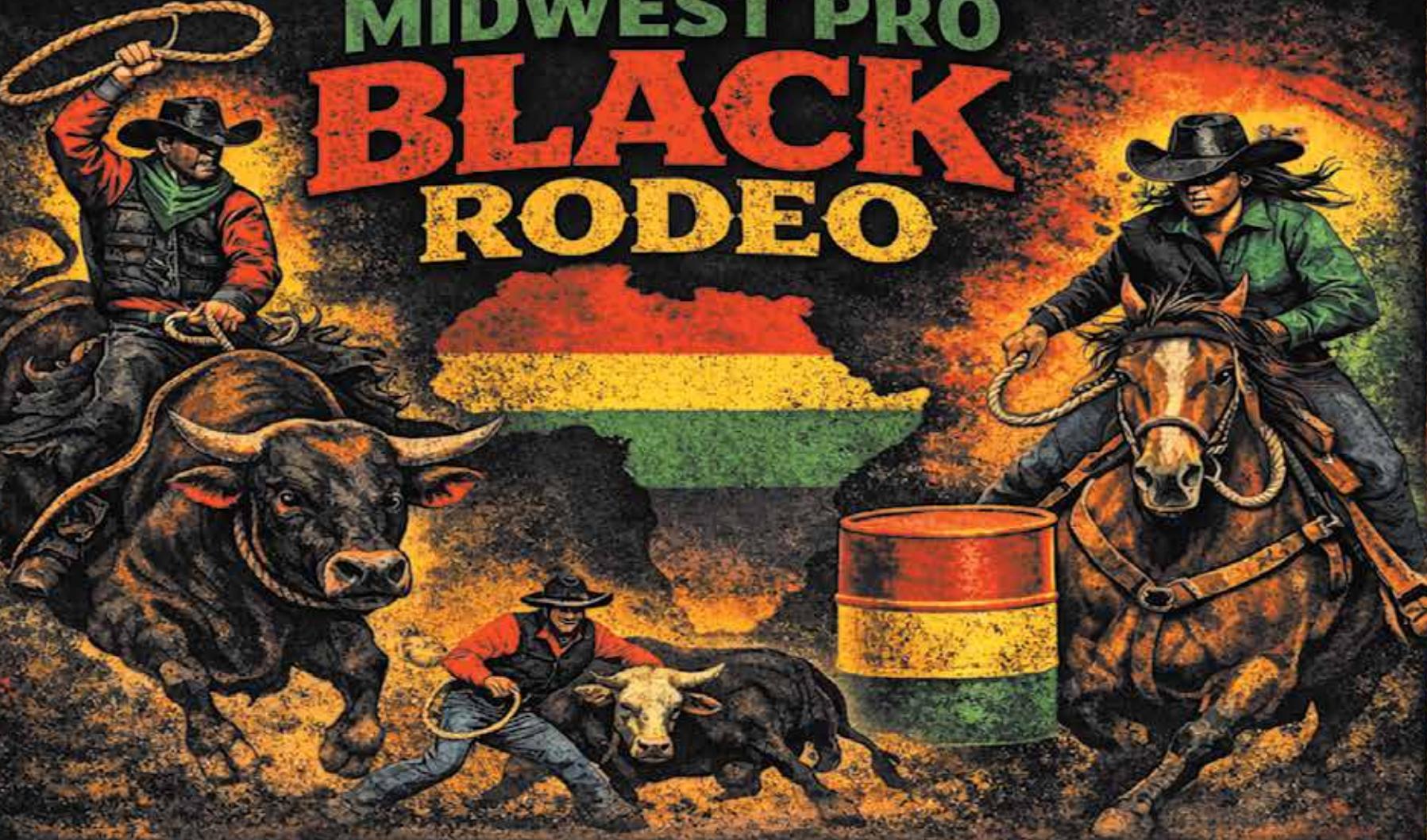
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We Cannot Unite With The Left

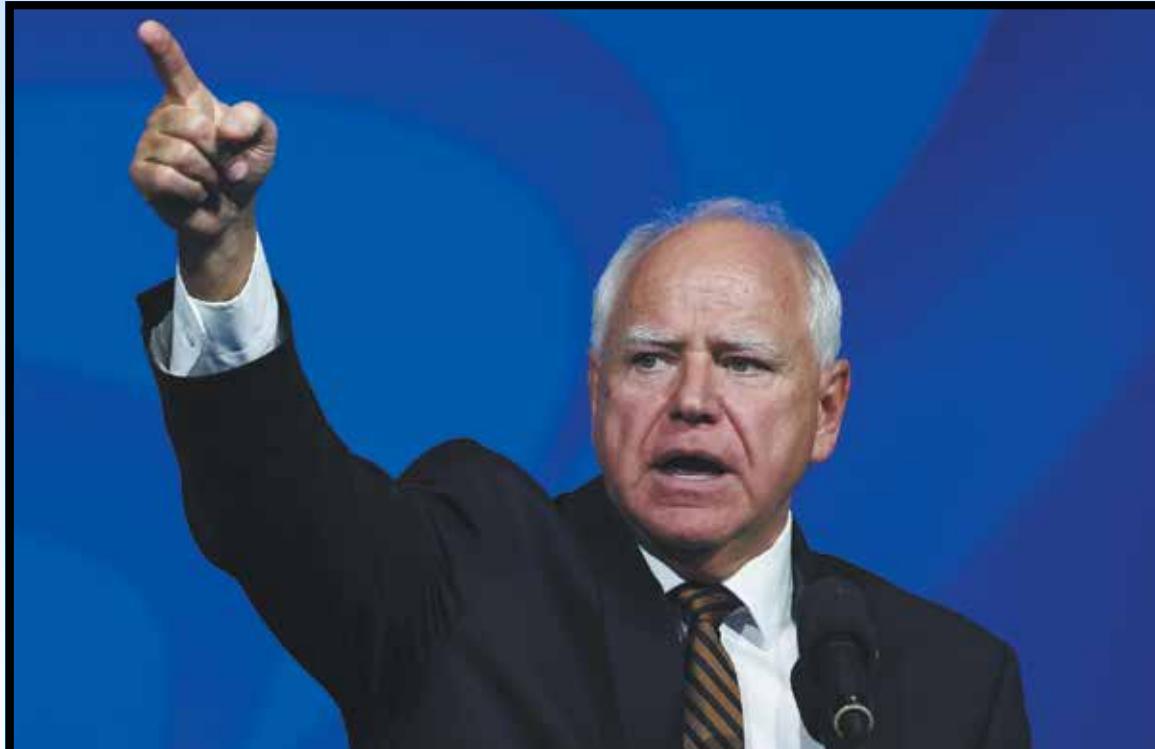
by JP Plott, Co-host of *Rightside Radio*

It's often stated that the "Right" and the "Left" are just constructs by the political elite to keep us fighting each other, and that we actually can unite as one since we have more in common than we think. If you're a Christian conservative and you hold this belief, I urge you to watch what transpired in a Minneapolis church last week -- where Don Lemon led the charge as protesters interrupted church service and terrorized members and the pastor, claiming to be "protesting" ICE in Minneapolis and the pastor being an ICE agent. But this was no protest; it was harassment and terrorism. Kids were crying as the agitators shouted in their faces, and people fled the church, disturbed.

Don Lemon claims this was simply the First Amendment in action, and that the pastor had an obligation to just "talk to" the agitators. He was gleefully pointing out to the camera that was with him that kids were leaving the church crying in the arms of their parents, proclaiming that this was the point of protesting. To make people as uncomfortable as possible. No, Don Lemon, you are incorrect. Church is where sinners enter the home of their Creator, and alongside fellow sinners, confess their sins and worship

the one and only true God. It's their access to the eternal, and it's the most sacred setting on Earth. You and your goons terrorized these innocent people and just scarred those children for the rest of their lives.

The federal government is conducting its rightful business of deporting illegal aliens who have stolen millions from the taxpayers in Minnesota, and this is cause for terrorizing a church, according to Don Lemon. As a Christian and a conservative, these people cannot be united with. They hate us and our way of life. It was no coincidence that they stormed a church service. They hate our God, our way of life, America, and everything we stand for. We must pray for these people, and that they can be saved, but until that day comes, we must do whatever it takes to defeat them. This means that armed security or armed church members must protect the church from such terrorism, and most importantly, it means that everyone who partook in this must be held accountable to the full extent of the law. We have seen a few of these terrorists arrested, but not nearly enough. And yet Don Lemon, the one encouraging the mob and their actions, was let off the hook by an appeals court in Minnesota, along with 5 others who stormed the church.



The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act of 1994 is a federal law prohibiting the use of force, threat of force, or physical obstruction to injure, intimidate, or interfere with anyone obtaining or providing reproductive health services, or exercising religious freedom at a place of worship. It protects clinics and places of worship from damage and allows for civil/criminal penalties. Clearly, Don Lemon and his entourage violated this, but a Minnesota panel of judges deems Christianity as not worth protecting. Along with that, take a look at the anti-ICE protests, where yet another protester was shot and killed resisting ICE. An ICE agent also had half of his finger bitten off. Trump must do something in Minnesota. He must declare the Insurrection Act. Our ICE

agents are under attack for trying to do their job, Christians are under attack for simply attending worship service, and Governor Tim Walz is encouraging all of it. He's calling for more uprisings nationwide, and he is doing nothing but stoking the flames for more ICE agents to be attacked, and henceforth, more protesters to be killed. Pam Bondi went on Fox News to show her "strongly-worded letter" that she wrote to Tim Walz. How about putting some teeth behind it? Is a strongly-worded letter really enough?

What we are seeing in Minnesota is an insurrection, and it must be quelled immediately. No more prioritizing of "optics" or "the mid-terms." We have a country to save, and it's about time we start realizing the threat at hand here. Tim

Walz and the insurrectionists in Minnesota are currently winning. They're slowing down ICE, while getting the fodder that they need with protesters getting killed to incite more riots. It's time to wake up and smell the roses, President Trump. Do what needs to be done.

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.



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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

Galatians: A Road Map For Life

by Anna Hamilton

This reminder invites us to ask an honest question: Whose voice is shaping my choices? When we stop chasing validation from others, we gain the confidence to live authentically and faithfully.

Chapter 2 reminds us that we are not defined by our past. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Galatians 2 points us toward transformation. Our past mistakes, failures, or labels do not get the final word. In Christ, we are made new. Our story does not end where we fell; it begins where grace meets us.

This truth is especially freeing for anyone carrying guilt or shame. Growth is possible. Healing is real. Your past may explain parts of your journey, but it does not define your identity.

Chapter 3 reminds us that our worth is in Christ, not in our achievements. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

In a world that constantly measures value by success, status, education, or productivity, Galatians offers a radical reframe. Our worth is not something we earn, it is something we receive.

This chapter reminds us that we are already enough because of who we belong to, not because of what we accomplish. When our identity is rooted in Christ, we are free from comparison and the pressure to prove ourselves.

Chapter 4 tells us that we are no longer a slave, we are a child of God. "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" (Galatians 4:7).

Galatians 4 speaks to belonging. We are not outsiders, servants trying to earn favor, or captives to fear. We are children fully loved, fully accepted, and fully known.

This shift from slavery to sonship (or daughterhood) changes everything. It replaces fear with intimacy and obligation with relationship. We live from love, not for it.

Chapter 5 teaches us to be led by the Spirit, not just our emotions. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in

step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

Feelings are real and important—but they are not meant to be our guide. Galatians 5 encourages us to walk in step with the Spirit, allowing God's wisdom to shape our responses, decisions, and attitudes.

When we are led by the Spirit, we grow in patience, kindness, self-control, and love. This kind of leadership brings peace, even when emotions feel overwhelming or circumstances feel uncertain.

Chapter 6 reminds us to not grow weary while we are doing good. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

Galatians closes with encouragement for the long road. Doing good can be exhausting, especially when results are slow or unseen. But this final reminder assures us that faithfulness matters, even when it feels unnoticed.

Every act of love, obedience, and perseverance is a seed. In time, those seeds will bear fruit. Keep going. What you are sowing today matters more than you realize.

Galatians is a message of freedom, identity, and hope. It calls us back to the heart of faith—not rules, pressure, or performance -- but grace, relationship, and transformation.

These six reminders invite us to live boldly, love deeply, and rest securely in who we are in Christ. When we return to these truths again and again, we find the strength to live with purpose, peace, and unwavering hope.

This week's recipe is a protein packed salad that will last all week in the fridge and is perfect to pair with chicken or fish for a complete meal. I love this salad all year long, and I hope your family will as well. As always, feel free to make the recipe your own by adding different beans or spices.

"I've been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

What Other People Think

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

“I care not of what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do!”

- Theodore Roosevelt

Many clients come to me with the challenge of caring very much about what others think. I have identified four ways to care less about what other people think of you.

First, accept that it's okay to care about what others think of you. My experience is that most people aren't really bothered by caring about what others think of them. Instead, what bothers them is the huge wave of anxiety, shame, disappointment, and all the other difficult emotions that go with it. This potential excessive

emotionality is often the result of assuming that it's bad to care about other's opinions. When you assume it's bad to be concerned about what others think, you end up feeling bad about feeling bad, which dramatically increases how bad you feel! If you can learn to accept the fact that it's normal and okay to care, you'll stop getting lost in all those unproductive mental patterns that blow your emotional responses out of proportion. Try this: The next time you start this caring process, say this little script to yourself: "I may not like caring about what other people think of me, but it's perfectly normal and okay for me to feel this way."

Second, stop dwelling on your worries. A single

worry won't cause you much anxiety. Ten minutes of continuous worrying almost certainly will. In other words, having a worry isn't the problem. It's continuing to worry that makes you anxious. If you want to care less about what other people think of you, it's critical that you avoid letting a single initial worry turn into cycles of worrying. And the best thing you can do is refocus your attention on something more productive and less anxiety-producing. But what if your concerns are legitimate? You can't just stop thinking about it. Try this: Delay your worry. In most situations, even if the concern is legitimate, it's unlikely that you absolutely need to think more about it right now. Rather, set aside a time in

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a few hours or days to reflect on it when you're in a better state of mind.

Third, clarify what really matters to you. Sometimes we become overly-fixated on what other people think because we aren't very clear about what we think. Specifically, when you're uncertain about your values (what's really important to you in life) it's easy to get lost in other people's values and try to live by them. We all have values. But often we haven't made time to reflect on what is really important. When you do, you'll find yourself increasingly confident in who you are and what you want, and as a result, a lot less concerned about what you think you should want based on others' opinions. Try this: The next time you are feeling anxious about what other people think of you, ask yourself this question: What do I really want right now? And no, to feel less anxious doesn't count!

Finally, build confidence by practicing assertiveness. As we said, it's normal to care about what others think. The trick is

how can we care about it enough, but not so much that it's debilitating? In a word, confidence. More specifically, you have to be confident enough in yourself not to get lost in worries about what other people think. And where does this confidence come from? Assertiveness. Assertiveness is the skill of taking action on what you really want despite your emotions pulling you the other way. For example, despite not wanting to disappoint your coworkers who are working on a project over the weekend, you tell them you can't because it would cut into your family time. Boundaries are a key part of assertiveness. The more you practice being assertive, the more your mind starts to believe that what you want and think matters. And this leads to confidence.

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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