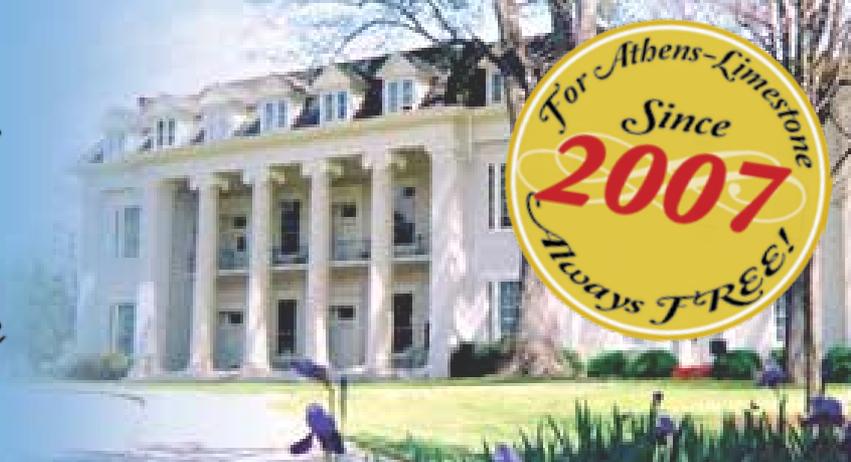


March 6 - March 19, 2026

Athens Now

information & inspiration
AthensNowal.com



E-MAIL: info@athensnowal.com

ADVERTISING:
Ali Elizabeth: 256-468-9425

IN THIS ISSUE:

Special Feature

River City Roofing Solutions: Seeing "It" Through To Your Satisfaction...
Chris and Michael Muse grew up slinging hammers for their dad beginning when they were...
Page 5



OPEN DAILY 10am - 5pm • 26051 Upper Elkton Road • Elkmont, AL • 256-423-2746

Save March 28 For The 2nd Annual Fortify Alabama Everglowing Anti-Trafficking Fundraising Gala

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

On Saturday, March 28, Fortify Alabama will host its second annual gala whose proceeds go to implementing a multi-pronged strategy to end trafficking of all kinds in Alabama the Beautiful. Fortify Alabama has as one of its "job descriptions" the following simple but

Continued on page 15



Special Feature

Alabama HB 446 - The Alabama Dog Tethering And Outdoor Shelter Act...
The Bible teaches that "the righteous care for the needs of their animals."...
Page 7



Cooking With Anna

You Belong Among The Wildflowers...
Calling all the budding artists! Thanks to TBAKI, LLC of Athens, we are able to host the Earth Day Expo Student Art Contest again....
Page 9



Carissa's Corner

Shamrocks, Shopping Carts, & Serving Hearts...
It truly warms my heart when I see local nonprofits rallying together to support a common cause...
Page 23



Steve Garner Is Running For Limestone County Commission, District 1

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

1972 Athens High School grad, Vietnam veteran, and former USAF Staff Sergeant Steve Garner is running for the District 1 position in the Limestone County

Continued on page 17



FRAME GALLERY
OF ATHENS

YOUR HOMETOWN FRAMER

FRAMES | MIRRORS | SHADOW BOXES | DRYMOUNTS

256.232.2302

TRACIE@FRAMEGALLERYOFATHENS.COM

125 NORTH MARION STREET, DOWNTOWN ATHENS



Inspired by the true stories of
trafficking survivors.



LUNA
RIVERA

ALEX
VEADOV

WILMA
RIVERA

JOHN D.
MICHAELS

MICHELLE
HARO

STILL HOPE

You can now stream Still Hope exclusively on Angel

FATHOM ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A STUDIO 52 PRODUCTION AN INSPIRING TRUE STORY "STILL HOPE" LUNA RIVERA, ALEX VEADOV, WILMA RIVERA, JOHN D. MICHAELS, MICHELLE HARO
WRITTEN BY CINDY WELING KEENEY AND GUS BRIDGMAN PRODUCED BY KATHA STANULE, HOWAEEAN HUNEYSCOTT, SARAH DEELEY, WENDY CLARK, WOODMAN AND SEAN GUTNER, JUDITH, AND DORIS
CASTING BY JUDITH AND LYNN MCMONN COSTUME DESIGNER DIANE JONES EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS WENDY CLARK, WOODMAN AND SEAN GUTNER, JUDITH, AND DORIS
52 FATHOM

FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Publisher / Editor
Ali Turner

Copy Editor
Yvonne Dempsey

Graphic Design
Jonathan Hamilton

Web Design
Teddy Wolcott

Contributing Writers

D. A. Slinkard
Anna Hamilton
JP Plott

Claire Tribble
Roy Williams

Brenda Wilkerson
Stephanie Reynolds

Detri McGhee
Eric Betts

Carissa Lovvorn
Nick Niedzwiecki

Lisa Phillipart
Jennifer Lord

Athens Now is published every first and third Friday of the month and is a publication of Turning Press, LLC. Reproduction in whole or in part, without expressed written permission of the publisher, is strictly prohibited. Athens Now is not responsible for the content or claims of any advertising or editorial in this publication. All information is believed to be accurate. © Copyright 2007.

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

Contents

Publisher's Point 3
All Things Soldier 4
Special Feature 5
Calendar Of Events 6
Special Feature 7
What Makes Ronnie Roll 8
Cooking With Anna 9
From The Tourism Office ... 10
Clean Green And Beautiful .. 12
Slinkard on Success 13
Captain's Log 14
Cover Stories 15 & 17
McGhee On Management ... 16
Learning As A Lifestyle 18
Alternative Approach 19
GenZ With JP 21
Carissa's Corner 23
Health And Fitness 26
Mental Heath Minute 30



Publisher's Point

The Lion, The Sun, And The Waymaker

On Monday, March 2, I spent the first 30 minutes of my radio show, the *Tennessee Valley Spotlight Radio Show* on WKAC trying to speak through that challenge of a lump in one's throat—not exactly manifesting broadcast excellence, but hopefully heaven looked upon my struggling voice with a smile as I celebrated what I knew had been going on for at least 20 years in secret now going viral. It was the sight and sound of Christians worshipping the one true God of Israel to the tune of a wonderful song entitled simply, *Waymaker*. And the best part? It was being sung in Farsi, in a public place, with several thousand people all gathered in one accord.

Of the three years I spent in Iraq now nearly twenty years ago, approximately 15 months were spent on an intel base that had been the former haunt of Uday Hussein. There was talk of what was going to be the next step as far as dealing with Iran, the largest state sponsor of terrorism on the planet, and the scuttlebutt was that there was a revival amongst the youth and Iranians who were coming to Christ at that time by the thousands. The concern was that nobody wanted to see the kids hurt.

Now the estimate is that there are 8 million Christians in Iran, with new “births” every day. I saw a recent interview with a man who was 19 years old when he got saved twenty years ago, and the joy on his face with regard to loving God, loving people, and wildly enough, loving Israel continues to make my eyes leaky. What is also difficult to describe is what it is like to be around believers who actually thank you for the fact that you are a part of a country that attacked their own. They make you into a rock star because they would rather risk death and be free than live under oppression, and let's just say that Patrick Henry's “Give me liberty or give me death” iconic patriotic statement is true universally in every regard.

While I have watched the *Waymaker* reel a zillion times now, what also touches me is that while they worship, Iranians are wrapped in the former Iranian flag that features in its central medallion a sunburst as well as a lion. From a scriptural standpoint, those two symbols point to Isa, Yeshua, Jesus. He is the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, and He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah that breaks every



chain.

And the song? Well, it is stellar proof that God is the author of true diversity. It was written by an African woman by the name of Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu, better known as Sinach while she was on a state-side plane heading back to her native Nigeria. It became an anthem during COVID. It was made popular by a white man by the name of Michael W. Smith, and sung powerfully by the Pentecostals of Virginia, sung powerfully in Hebrew in Israel, and now sung powerfully in Farsi

in Iran. The best part of the chorus? “*Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the Darkness, My God, That is who You are...*”

May we stand with our brothers and sisters in Iran while we experience on this side every tongue and tribe gathered around the throne, praising God.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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





The Kurdish Question

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

If this *Soldier* column seems a bit “scrambly,” it is because we were up against a printing deadline and hoping to get some clarity as to what is actually going on with regards to the Kurds deciding to wade into the fray that is occurring in Iran. And, I am aware that by the time you read this, things could have changed many times, and reports may be more than fuzzy.

There is a hive of questions buzzing and poised to sting due to the fact that the Kurds, who have my deepest admiration as a result of my time in Iraq, are once again putting their lives on the line for freedom. It could be said that they are just being backed by other interests, but that tells me you don’t know the Kurds, their history, their resolve or their determination to be free.

Saddam Hussein went after the Kurds on March 16, 1988, and used chemical warfare to kill thousands. One of my dearest friends in Iraq, Mr. Aram escaped the Halabja massacre because he was already on the run from Saddam, and crept back in after the attack. The



discussion of what it was like to see the dead and still contend with the traces of the chemicals used in the attack changed my life. Interestingly, the man known as Chemical Ali, who was imprisoned on one of the bases where I worked made the following statement in 1987, “I will kill them all with chemical weapons. Who is going to say anything? The international community?” By contrast, Mr. Aram told God, “Whoever invades to

help us be free I will help,” and he did.

Most of the interpreters that came from around the world to work in the post-Saddam era were Christians and many spoke several languages, including Farsi. And, the Kurds went on to actually produce videos thanking the United States for invading their country and inviting us to the resorts they were running “up there.” If you went to what is now Kurdistan, you

would be watched over by the entire population by the deeply held Middle Eastern conviction that if a visitor comes your way, you are duty bound to protect them with your life. We jokingly talked about how wonderful it would be to take a Leave Without Pay (LWOP) and go vacation with the Kurds. Truth be told, we would have been safer there than in many cities in America.

Enter the Peshmerga, the Kurdish warriors. They are fierce, they are loyal, they are principled, disciplined and remind me of what I imagine David’s mighty men might have been like. They are warriors amongst

warriors. They want to be free, and they live in both Iraq and Iran. Do I know all the reasons they have decided to get involved? No. However, these guys will do what ever it takes to be out from under oppression, and trust me when I tell you that they are patient.

If they get crushed, they’ll be back. And for my part, I will be praying for them that they prevail. They are amongst the honored ones to whom I owe my gratitude for being protected so well while I played ping-pong with our soldiers just to give them a taste of home. May God give them victory.

Dugger's Florist & Gifts, LLC
www.duggersflorist.com
Melinda Dugger
 Owner
duggersflorist@gmail.com
 705 Hobbs St E
 Athens, AL 35611
 (256) 232-5777

Athens Athletics
 SCREENPRINTING & EMBROIDERY
 Trophies - Engraving - Awards
Randy McKinney
 Owner
 701 HIGHWAY 31 SOUTH
 ATHENS, AL
 (256) 232-6038
RANDY@ATHENSATHLETICS.COM
fb.com/AthensAthletics

River City Roofing Solutions: *Seeing “It” Through To Your Satisfaction*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Chris and Michael Muse grew up slinging hammers for their dad beginning when they were teenagers. They have been involved in every type and phase of construction for what Michael says “is pushin’ 40 years” when you combine their experience, and now the legacy has extended to their sister, Tia, their brother, Greg and the 3rd generation of Mus-es, Brendon and Boston.

Chris and Michael started RCRS in 2018, with the original intention being to be “small and good,” as opposed to “big and mediocre.” They have certainly more than met that first goal, and have never wavered from their commitment of “seeing it through to the customer’s satisfaction.” What has set them apart for years, and that I have heard from several *Athens Now* clients that is the lengths to which they will go to both

protect their clients and provide outstanding customer service.

How do they do that? Well, first of all, they have a rule, and that is that no roof gets installed that they would not put on their own grandma’s house. We are coming up on storm season in North Alabama, and every year “fly-by-night” roofing companies that nobody has ever heard of come out of the woodwork offering “bargains.” Right. Here today, gone tomorrow, shoddy work and no written, enforceable guarantees. Then, there are insurance companies that deny claims. Michael in particular likes to walk potential clients through the insurance process and is quick to point out when something doesn’t “seem right.” He has no problem asking adjusters questions that homeowners might not even consider in order to get what their claim promised.



Secondly, River City Roofing Solutions has always utilized technology to save time and money for themselves and their clients. They were early adapters when it came to the use of drones which could more safely and

completely assess damage as well as needs, and CAD software that could show clients what a particular style or color of roof would look like *before* they signed a contract.

When storms are on the way, RCRS is ready to help with tarps and tarping in the aftermath, and as a family business it becomes “all-hands-on-deck.” I have been a member of the Lime-

stone Leaders Business Network International since 2019, a year after RCRS’s inception, and can verify that each year River City has served our community well during storm season and all year long.

Now that it’s 2026, there are several new features that have increased River City’s ability to serve. The first is a no-obligation assessment

Continued on Page 20



Calendar of Events

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.

Spring Into Girl Scouts

March 7

We're a nonprofit organization hosting Spring Into Girl Scouts, a series of free, family-friendly events for girls in grades K-12, including events in the community. Spring Into Girl Scouts is designed especially with young girls and their families in mind. The event will feature simple, hands-on activities like meeting an animal, creating a watercolor butterfly, and planting a daisy in a take-home flower pot. It's a fun, low-pressure way for girls to try something new, make friends, and explore what Girl Scouts is all about—no membership required.

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.

Gettin' Dirty At The Library presents *Invasive Species That Escaped Cultivation: Maybe From Your Yard!*

March 10

Presented by Advanced MG Sozzi Pline. 11am-12pm. Athens-Limestone Public Library, 603 S Jefferson Street. Free and open to the public. <https://mastergardeners-limestonecountyalabama.org>

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.

Swamp John's

March 26

4:00pm – 7:00pm. Sheriff's Rodeo Arena, Athens. The Sons of Confederate Veterans is having a Swamp John's supper to raise funds to purchase a new historical marker. Plates are \$15 and include fried fish, shrimp, or chicken, (or any combination) along with slaw, french fries, hush puppies, and tea. Carry out or eat in. Presale tickets are available. Walkups are encouraged and welcome! Cash, check, or credit cards. Call Daveen Stanford at 256-777-2199 with any questions. Email camp768@alscv.org for more information.

3rd Annual Singing River Smoke-O-Rama BBQ Festival

March 27

Fire up the grills and sharpen the knives! The Singing River Smoke-O-Rama BBQ Festival is officially returning to Athens, Alabama, on March 27th and 28th, 2026. 6:00 PM. Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena. 18118 SR-99 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.



Alabama HB 446 - The Alabama Dog Tethering And Outdoor Shelter Act

by Jennifer Lord

The Bible teaches that “the righteous care for the needs of their animals.” In a state where Christian faith plays a central role in public life, that principle should guide our laws as much as our personal beliefs. Yet Alabama has consistently ranked among the worst states for animal cruelty protections, raising serious questions about whether our laws reflect the compassion we claim to value.

Despite Alabama’s poor ranking for animal cruelty protections, this moment offers hope. House Bill 446 was introduced on February 12, 2026, to the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Our community has an opportunity to speak clearly to our elected leaders and say that we expect better. We can choose laws that protect animals, reflect our values, and show that compassion still has a place in Alabama policy.

Alabama House Bill 446 (HB 446), also called the *Alabama Dog Tethering and Outdoor Shelter Act*, is proposed legislation aimed at strengthening protections for dogs kept outside. It would:

- **Restrict how dogs can be tethered** or chained to stationary objects like trees, posts, or houses unless specific conditions are met.
- **Require safe outdoor care** — for example, dogs must be in secure enclosures (like fenced yards or approved trol-

ley systems), have proper shelter, and access to food and water.

- **Set standards for tethering equipment** (e.g., harnesses that don’t choke and tethers of appropriate length/weight).
- **Include exemptions** for activities like hunting, herding, training, grooming facilities, or temporary tethering at campsites.
- **Create penalties** for violations, classified as a Class B misdemeanor if someone fails to meet the bill’s requirements.

In short, HB446 would make Alabama’s laws more specific and enforceable about humane outdoor care for dogs, addressing problems like long-term chaining without protection from weather or adequate resources.

There isn’t a specific statewide Alabama law that clearly says a dog must have a doghouse or a defined type of outdoor shelter. At the state level, what exists are general animal cruelty provisions that say a person cannot deprive an animal of “necessary...shelter,” but they don’t spell out exact requirements (like a doghouse with minimum dimensions, insulation, etc.) the way some local ordinances do.

Under Alabama’s animal cruelty statute (§ 13A-11-241), it’s unlawful to deprive a dog of necessary shelter in a cruel manner. That

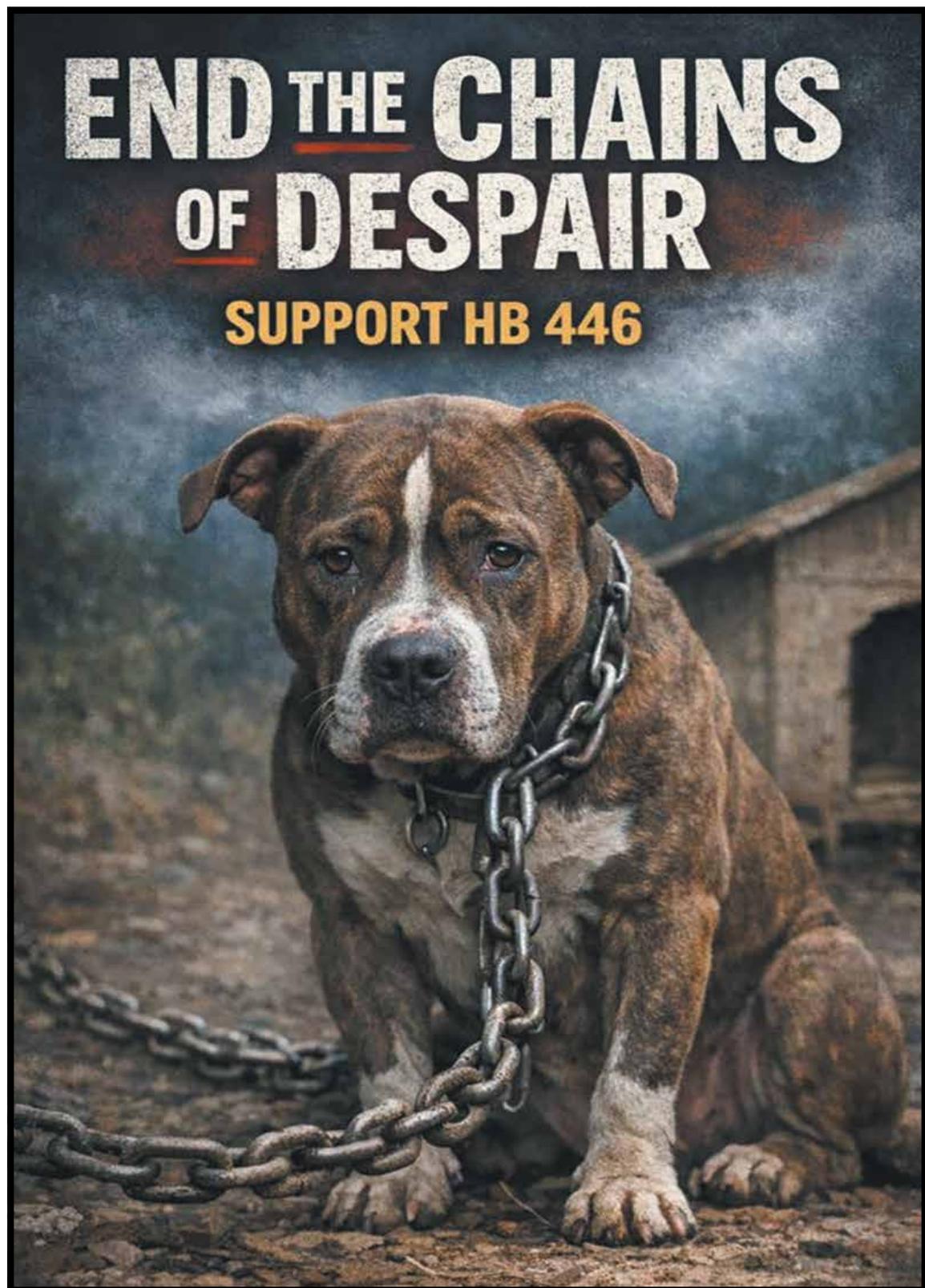
means a dog must have reasonable protection from weather and conditions that could cause suffering. But the statute doesn’t define “necessary shelter” with specific measurements or features.

Alabama doesn’t currently have a clear, detailed statewide requirement that every dog kept outdoors must have a doghouse or specific type of housing. The anti-cruelty language is broad, which makes

enforcement subjective and dependent on local animal control’s interpretation.

Over the years, I have contacted Limestone County Animal Control

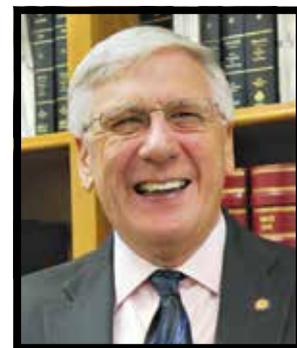
Continued on Page 25



What Makes Ronnie Roll

There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly And Other Tall Tales

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



For many years, Mayor Ronnie has been participating in the Read Across America program, and most times he is seen in the iconic Dr. Seuss *Cat In The Hat* hat. For as many times as we have covered this wonderful event over the past nearly 15 years, I learned something new... I had always ASSUMED that Mayor Ronnie was the actual owner of the Cat's hat, and come to find out that Helen Carter started reading for Read Across America before Ronnie ever did, and he only borrows it. However, Mayor Ronnie is sole owner of his personal Tigger and Pooh Bear ties, and sports them interchangeably for the occasion.

By way of history, Nation-

al Read Across America Day is always celebrated on March 2, which happens to be Dr. Seuss's birthday. The point of the day, besides to honor the impact that he had on reading, is to celebrate and encourage literacy. Reading to kids is one of the best ways to teach or improve literacy, and this year Mayor Ronnie read to kids at Lindsay Lane Christian Academy and Little Tots Preschool on Hwy 31. Two of his favorites, which happen to not be Dr. Seuss books (which he genuinely loves) are *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*, by Eric Litwin, and *There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly*, by Simms Taback. They are well-worn, coffee-stained,

and thus, well-loved. One of his favorite moments from this year's *Read* was a discussion on pets. Of course, there were the predictable stories regarding of Fido and Fifi at home discussed in the context of *Pete the Cat*, and as the kids talked about their pets, one little boy piped up and confidently announced that he had two donkeys. The class got real quiet, and the mayor wasn't sure what to say next. After all, who has one pet donkey, let alone two, in Athens, AL? Turns out, these were no imaginary pets; pictures confirmed that they were real, and the kid became the King of Kool, at least amongst his classmates.

Mayor Ronnie mentioned

that after 28 years of service to Limestone County and the City of Athens, Kim Glaze is going to be retiring to help take care of an aging grandparent and to enjoy a grandchild. Twenty-four years of her career were spent with the City, and she will be sorely missed. These are going to be some tough shoes to fill.

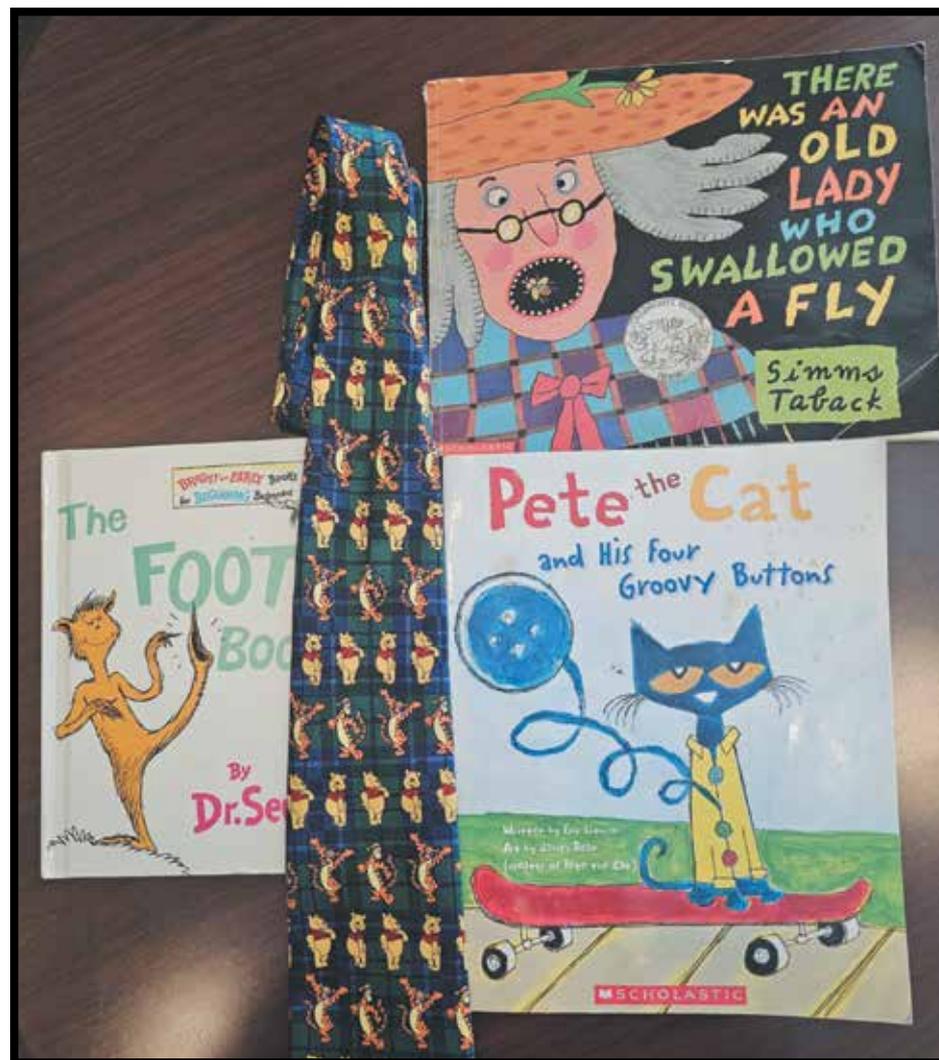
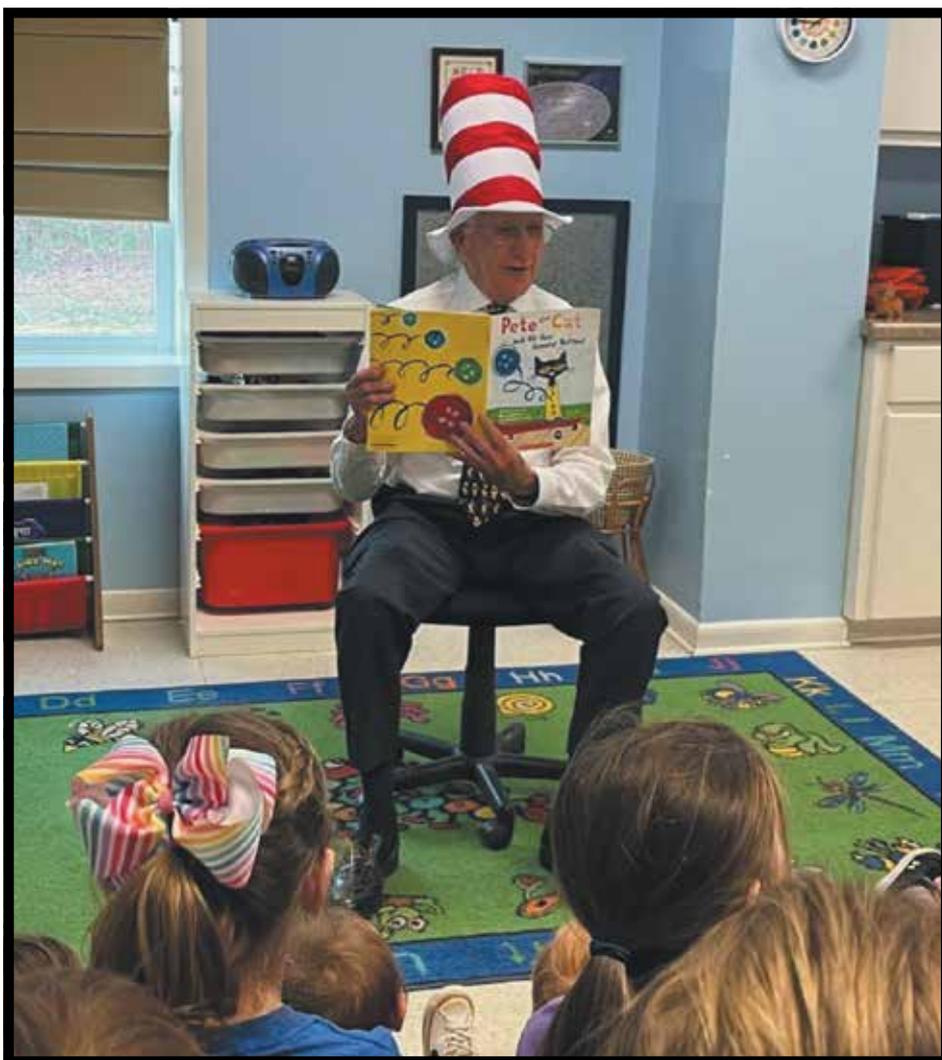
Mayor Ronnie had been serving as the local Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 511's treasurer, and laughed as he told of his shock about having to write the check for some mysterious honorary plaque, only to turn the plaque over and find that he had been voted the Veteran of the Year.

March 10 will be the State

of the City Address, and this year will be held at 8 a.m. at the Alabama Veterans Museum, 114 W. Pryor St., due to the renovation of Carter Gym which is currently underway.

Lastly, this past week Leak City was home once again to utilities workers from all over the lower 48 as well as Alaska, and we are considered to have one of the finest training facilities of this kind anywhere.

We talked about our blessings as well as our vulnerabilities, mindful of the fact that if it were not for His mercies, we would indeed be utterly consumed. It was then time to pray, so we did, and once again it was time for Ronnie to roll.





P.U.S.H. – Pray Until Something Happens

by Anna Hamilton

In life, there are moments when answers seem distant and hope feels faint. During those times, faith calls us to remain steady and persistent. The simple acronym P.U.S.H. -- Pray Until Something Happens -- reminds us that prayer is not a one-time act but a continuous relationship with God. It encourages us to keep seeking, trusting, and believing even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

P - Pray

Prayer is the foundation of a faithful life. It is not reserved for special occasions or times of crisis; it is meant to be woven into our everyday moments. Scripture tells us to “pray without ceasing,” meaning that prayer should become as natural as breathing. Whether our words are eloquent or simple, what matters most is

continued on page 22

Spaghetti Squash Chow Mein

Ingredients:

- 1 spaghetti squash, about 3 lbs.*
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil*
- 2 Tbsps. soy sauce*
- 2 tsps. rice vinegar*
- 1 Tbsp. hoisin for sauce*
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil*
- 1 small onion, diced*
- 4 cloves garlic, minced*
- 1 red bell pepper, thin sliced*
- 1 cup sliced snow peas or sugar snap peas*
- 1 large carrot, diced*
- Salt and pepper to taste*
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro (optional)*
- Chili garlic sauce, sriracha or hot sauce (optional)*

Directions:

Preheat Oven to 375°F. Oil a sheet pan with olive oil. Carefully cut spaghetti squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds and connecting strands, then place cut side down on the prepared sheet pan. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the squash flesh becomes tender and separates easily into strands with a fork. Finish by gently loosening and removing the "spaghetti strands" from the shells. Set aside. Make the sauce: In medium bowl combine soy sauce, vinegar, and hoisin. Set aside.



Heat olive oil in a large skillet on medium high heat. Add onions and garlic, cook until soft. Add red bell pepper, snow peas and carrots. Cook until vegetables are tender, about 2 minutes. Add the spaghetti squash strands and the sauce. Stir everything in the pan until the squash is coated with the sauce. Cook for about another minute until the spaghetti squash is heated through. Don't overcook the squash or it'll be super mushy. Add additional salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with cilantro, serve with hot sauce.

Today It's Spring

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



It's warm and soft and pretty. Daffodils are blooming. So are the forsythia. (And so is my blasted plum tree which almost certainly means a future freeze and I won't get plums this year... again...).

While summer is my favorite season, spring really shifts me into drive. There are events to be planned, seeds to be planted, and apparently nest boxes to be built for my turkeys—we just found an egg in the coop.

I love watching the trees get hazy looking on the drive home. At first, I just blink rapidly in case the fuzziness is more allergies than actual growth.

Day after day, though, the haze gets greener and more pronounced and soon little leaves emerge. Not too long from now we will be driving through beau-

tiful oak arches as branches reach over the road.

I imagine what it might feel like to be a tree slowly waking on the trail, stretching its limbs on a warm-sun/cool-breeze Wednesday in March, and I realize it feels just like me—stretching my way out of a pleasant, if chilly, winter, and eager to bring fruit in the summer.

Just moments ago, an ice cream truck drove past my work window—a surer sign of spring than redbud blossoms. But I also realized I have my space heater on my feet to keep off the chill, the hot air of which seems to whisper, “Wait, Steph, before you get too heady and enthusiastic about the sweetly scented air of spring, remember it might get cold.” And I let trepidation of more winter make me pause.



But only for a moment. Why waste a perfectly good spring day for fear of a cold snap that may not happen? Why start shopping for out-of-season plums when my tree may be heavy laden come July? Why not thoroughly embrace spring today, just for a few hours, without letting fear or anxiety cloud up and chill a brilliantly sunny afternoon?

Hmmm... why not indeed?

Events coming up in Athens:

1. *2026 Boutique Crawl: March 7 & 14, 2026, all day downtown Athens. 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

2. *State of the City Address: March 10, 2026, 8:00 AM, Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives. 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.*

3. *Plant Propagation: March 10, 2026, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM, Athens-Limestone County Public Library. Join the Limestone County Master Gardeners for their free presentation on plant propagation.*

4. *St. Patrick's Day Parade with a Purpose: March 17, 2026, 6:30 PM, Jefferson Street and along the Square at the Limestone County Courthouse. Donations*

of diapers, wipes, and deodorant will be collected for the Athens Family Resource Center. Music will begin on the Courthouse steps at 5:30 PM.

5. *Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series: March 19, 2026, 7:00 PM-9:00 PM McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 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.*

6. *3rd Annual Singing River Smoke-O-Rama BBQ Festival: March 27, 2026, 6:00 PM, Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena. Fire up the grills and sharpen the knives! The Singing River Smoke-O-Rama BBQ Festival is officially returning to Athens, Alabama, on March 27th and 28th, 2026.*

The Original
Rocket City Barns
 •Sheds •Carports •Metal Buildings

See our inventory at:
RocketCityBarns.com

Call or Text **256-221-7062**



Caleb Lawler

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

Financial Advisor | EdwardJones

27453 Capshaw Rd. Suite D | Athens, AL 35613

Phone 256.233.4037 | Fax 855.225.7589

caleb.lawler@edwardjones.com



RIVER CITY
ROOFING
SOLUTIONS INC.

256-274-8530
WWW.RIVERCITYROOFINGSOLUTIONS.COM



PSI

PREMIER STRUCTURES...
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
2311 S. Hine Street
232-2092
EST. 1986



Grant Gilbert
Owner

Gilbert's Jeeps
Sales • Service • Accessories
www.webejeeping.com

6494 Hwy 72 West Cell: (256) 777-2436
Athens, AL 35611 Office: (256) 729-1980



Ali Elizabeth Turner
Publisher

Protecting Your Story

Telling It Well

(256) 468-9425
ali@alturner.com
ali@athensnowal.com

Athens Now AL

★ ★ ★ Collin ★ ★ ★

DALY

COUNTY CHAIRMAN

OPEN

Alabama Biz Finder
... Always Open - 24/7
alabamabizfinder.com



TVC
TENNESSEE VALLEY
COATINGS

Sand Blasting
&
Powder Coating

Give us a Call:
256-614-2016

<https://alabamabizfinder.com/listing/last-word-vinyl-creations/>



Clean, Green And Beautiful

You Belong Among The Wildflowers

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

Calling all the budding artists! Thanks to TBAKI, LLC of Athens, we are able to host the Earth Day Expo Student Art Contest again. We started this contest last year, and we had an awesome response from Limestone County students. This year, the theme is *You Belong Among the Wildflowers*. After seeing the amazing artwork that was entered last year, I am relieved that TBAKI does the judging! You'd be amazed at how creative and talented the kids in Lime-

stone County are.

This contest is open to any student within Limestone County -- public, private, and homeschooled. There are 3 divisions: K-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th-12th. We have some great prizes for the winners to choose from. This year, the K-5th grade prizes include an Ozark Trail bicycle (this will come with a receipt), a Scribed 3-D pen (with extra filament), and a 149-piece art set. The 6th-8th grade prizes include a drone with a camera, a microscope, and a 192-piece

art set. The 9th-12th grade prizes include a Cannon DSLR camera, a telescope, and a 141-piece art set. The prizes are chosen by the winners, starting with 1st place.

All mediums are accepted, so if you aren't a painter or drawer, try something new! Think outside the box, we're here for all of it! Of course, we learned a few things last year, and we had some great suggestions on how to make it even better. So, this year extra points will



be given for the use of natural materials and/or recycled materials. Our winners from last year ranged from sculpture, drawing, painting, photography to collage. Last year, all the middle school entries were made from recycled materials. Google, get on Pinterest, just get creative!

Completed works are due Friday, April 17, by 4 p.m. Works can be delivered to the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful office located at 125 East Street. We're right beside the old Gulf Gas Station. All works will be displayed during the Earth Day Expo on April 25 in the ballroom at Athens State University. Winners will be announced at noon. Winners do not have to

be present to win, but they will not have their choice of prizes. Art can be collected at the end of the Earth Day Expo or the following week at the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful office.

We can't wait to see how many of our creative kids enter this year. I heard hard choices had to be made last year to pick the winners, making me even more grateful for TBAKI! Don't miss a chance to have your artwork displayed and win a really cool prize! Watch our Facebook for special show, exhibit, and vendor announcements. We have a lot of new things for this year!

YOU BELONG AMONG THE WILDFLOWERS

EARTH DAY ART CONTEST

K-5TH 6TH-8TH 9TH-12TH

SPONSORED BY:



(256) 233-8000

KALBCares@gmail.com
www.KALBCares.com

Progress Brings Growth

by D. A. Slinkard

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



I love the book of Proverbs in my King James Bible — so much wisdom and truth packed in this book that I believe a person should read a chapter of Proverbs every day. There are 31 chapters, and the simple plan would be to read the chapter number for the day of the month it is. Reading God's Word is a great thing all of us could do. In fact, reading God's Word is exactly where this article you hold in your hand came from. Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish..."

It seems we are a society that lacks vision. We have become a society that likes to reflect on what was, and we are a society that likes to look ahead, but we fail to have the vision of NOW. Some people would call this living in the moment; but it seems to me too many people are caught up in their past or prematurely looking toward their future that they miss what is happening right this very instant. We get so worried about what has happened or worried about what might happen that we completely forget about what IS happening. Where there is no vision, the people perish. We need to know what we want and with our vision, we need to focus on what we are going to accomplish.

I remember as a kid we

had some mules growing up on our farm, and I remember my dad using the team of mules to plow up the ground we had. He would put blinders on these mules because he did not want them to get spooked when he would be working with them. The purpose of the blinders was to keep the mules from seeing to the rear of them and to help eliminate distractions. How different would our lives be if there was some way we could put blinders in our own lives?

How many times do we look back on things and we take our focus

off moving ahead? How many times do we see something out of the corner of our eyes, and we are now looking sideways instead of focusing straight ahead on what we want to achieve? It happens all the time, and we are inundated with all kinds of distractions. A big distraction for many people is their cell phone — whether it be talking, texting, face-timing, or browsing the Internet. If I am not mistaken, there was a new study that came out suggesting most kids born today have a cell phone in the womb. Craziest thing, it seems they

come out of the womb knowing how to text and send messages.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. What distractions are you allowing into your life? How many distractions are you allowing daily that prevent you from achieving everything you need to get done to be a success? Have you even thought about it? I am constantly trying to improve my productivity in my personal life; and so I am always trying new things. What I found is if I do not mix things up, I eventually become stagnant. I love written to-do lists, but

I must alternate how I attack these lists, otherwise, I just start transferring things that need to get done from one day to the next.

Are you one of the people that could not wait for 2025 to be over but have done nothing different thus far in 2026? Many people are guilty, but it does not have to be like that. Think about what you want to achieve NOW, get the vision of HOW, and then focus in on doing it. Put your blinders on, limit your distractions, and make something out of 2026 each day. Do something that moves you toward your vision each day because each day will eventually become your year.

Vision is not just a word you write down in a journal; it is waking up with purpose and choosing discipline over distraction. It is deciding that today will not be wasted thinking about yesterday or daydreaming about tomorrow. If you want a different year, you must have a different day. If you want a different life, you must make different choices. Do not wait for the perfect time. Do not wait for the perfect conditions. Start now. Because where there is vision — there is progress, there is growth, and there is life...What will your vision be and what will you do today to start?

**WHEN PEOPLE DO NOT
ACCEPT DIVINE GUIDANCE,
they run wild. But whoever obeys
THE LAW IS JOYFUL.**

Proverbs 29:18





Captain's Log

Tag – You're It!

by Brenda Wilkerson

The stark contrast between driving elementary children to and from school versus the high schoolers is a bit shocking. On one hand you have wiggly, giggly, and chatty li'l elementary squirmy worms chanting, "Six-seeeeeeven," enthusiastically trading Pokémon cards, and screech-barking songs as I resort to my ear bleed whistle to maintain a lower decibel above rambunctious chaos. All that while attempting to drive as undistracted and safely as humanly possible. On the other hand, you have the stoic, eerily quiet, emotionless, Monster Energy drinkin', detached, blue-screen-eyed, and ear-budded high schoolers who barely talk above the polite belly of an airplane murmur just before take-off. When I share with those who ask, that I drive high schoolers, there is almost always a physical recoil as bad bus memories forever hiccupped in their hippocampus spasmodically rush their nervous system.

Each and every day for 120 school days, I have tried to connect with these older kids in some way or another. Most days, the



earbuds blasting whatever their choice of brain noise drowns out any "Good Morning" or "Have a Good Day" I gladly offer daily. Most times, there is not even eye contact. I had a talk with myself early on not to take it personal as my snarky side wanted to shock them into noticing my kind greetings with overly dramatic arm flailing sign language to say, "Good Morning" or a brief tirade of the "Haka" of the Maori people who are known for their angry scream chants with bulging wide eyes, stomping their feet while dramati-

cally slapping their chest and thighs. But, alas, a fear response to the psycho bus driver is not the goal here. Plus, there are about six cameras on the bus, and with one complaint from a panicked parent, they will have me replayed on the evening news every half hour till 10 o'clock.

But then there was last Friday, a beautiful spring-like afternoon, when a few of my chattier girls behind me started the age-old game of tag. One would reach over and startle the other with a poke that mustered an unexpected shock squeal and a "Tag! No tag backs!" Then another one of the girls quickly got up at a stop light and with lighting speed, tagged her friend in the back and was safe in her seat before the light turned green. Now, the commotion spread to the back half of the bus. I saw kids reaching over seats,

under the seats, across the seats, striking complicated yoga poses struggling to stay just out of reach of the tagger's fingertip. From then on, each stop and departure became a sport of Olympic proportions to try to leave Ol' Yeller having tagged last and then to escape down the steps victorious before the action could be returned. Y'all, as a proud member of Gen-X, I almost teared up as my soul took a deeeep breath for these kids who are living in a detached, burdened, and toxic environment so foreign to me. And now, what a fabulous day! Oh, how I have wanted this for them since the very first week of school.

So, here is my call for personal reflection. Have I somehow grown accustomed to my own ways of unintentionally shutting people out by not looking up or listening to the quiet invitations for connection?

Can we possibly send the wrong message without our awareness? How can we shift to healthier connections of our own needs and those around us? Are we willing to pivot, shift, and re-center from our own mind-numbing activities to notice those around us that just might need a kind word and a simple "Good Morning" with a genuine smile and the intentional eye contact of simple connection. Let's be intentional. Let's spread some joy and kindness to friends, neighbors, strangers, parents, grandparents, children, sisters, brothers, coworkers, waitresses, mailpersons, UPS drivers, and to those we meet throughout the adventure of a simple day. Today.

Lord, this is the day that you have made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

~Brenda

New & Used Tires Wheel Alignments	All Size Tire Repair & Auto Repair
Athens Auto Tire & Wrecker Service	
	
24 Hr. Road & Wrecker Service	
306 Fifth Avenue Athens, Alabama 35611	Tommy Morris Office: 771-7537

Save March 28 For The 2nd Annual Fortify Alabama Everglowing Anti-Trafficking Fundraising Gala

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

powerful statement:

We are working to raise awareness, provide education, and deliver direct support to human trafficking victims throughout Alabama.

Fortify Alabama is dedicated to combating human trafficking through education, awareness, and outreach. The organization provides professional training for communities and organizations while also conducting motel and street outreach to build relationships and offer support to those who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

By raising both awareness and support for this work, Fortify Alabama partners with law enforcement and trusted anti-trafficking organizations across the country to strengthen the collective fight against human trafficking.

For the second year in a row, I am honored to help Fortify Alabama get the word out; this includes for the gala as well as training conferences that will be coming up later this spring and summer.

This year's Fortify Alabama Everglowing Gala will be held at the Jackson Center in Huntsville, on March



28 at 6 p.m., and as tough as the topic is, I can say from experience that they have learned to also provide a truly enjoyable evening for those who attend. Silent auction items are as varied as a certified Fendi bag to alpaca socks. There will be genuinely delicious food, live music from a special guest DJ, a dance floor, a silent auction, clever games with wonderful prizes, and an evening of stories, impact, and vision that will inspire hope.

There are so many "small things that make a big difference" that Fortify Alabama does for those who are trapped in the \$150 BILLION

trafficking industry, and those things are as diverse as purchasing long stemmed red roses as a gesture of a pure and genuine worth along with much-needed hygiene items that are lovingly packaged, but the "baby" of Fortify Alabama's founder, Nicole Wilson is the mobile boutique. When the team goes out on a motel or strip club outreach, most times they take with them the mobile boutique, which is a converted trailer filled with clothing and other items that help restore identity, dignity, and a sense of worth. The mobile boutique was purchased with the proceeds



from last year's Everglowing Gala. There are also other projects that are able to be completed through thoughtful giving—things like "spa days" or Christmas celebrations to "spoil the girls"...in a good way.

When a woman is caught in the crisis of trafficking, oftentimes she will look to having a pet as her only source of devoted loyalty and affection. A dog or a cat doesn't care what you do for "a living," they just walk in their purpose by providing unconditional love. A trafficker knows this, and will often tell a trafficked person that their "fur baby" will be harmed or killed if any attempt to escape is made. So, while a trafficked person may be ready to get out, they know that there is no rescue for their pet, and that is an unthinkable torment. Fortify Alabama has agreements with various excellent animal rescue organizations that will take in the animal so "their person" gets help and restoration.

Of course, Fortify Alabama

knows that the most powerful restorer of worth, dignity, purpose, and identity is Jesus Himself, and many times it takes several contacts with those trapped before they feel safe enough to let Him into their lives. Shame, fear, church hurt, and the fear of being judged are large hurdles, but there are wondrous stories of deliverance, providence, protection, and transformation that have come about as Fortify Alabama goes to some of the most vulnerable in our culture. Those stories will be skillfully told at the Everglowing Gala as well as the training conferences later in 2026.

Dreaming ahead, one of the things Nicole would like to see in Fortify Alabama's future is the creation of a resource/support center. This would be a place where deep healing can take place in a safe community. It would be a place where addictions can be broken, education can be completed, children could be cared for, job training could occur, food could be provided, and one could discover a life well-lived and loved. If you are interested in becoming a part of making that dream come true, Fortify Alabama is seeking sponsorships, volunteers and attendees for the 2nd Annual Everglowing Fundraising Gala on March 28. Tickets are available at <https://givebutler.com/everglowing>. See you there!



Lessons From The Mundane

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



A tsunami of inspiration crashed upon me, and I decided to repaint my kitchen cabinets. Oh, that would look so much better! Luckily, I had purchased a second can of special colored paint and kept it all these years, wanting to be careful that I could match it exactly when the time came. It had been sitting dormant for several years, so I hoped it was still good.

I expected Emperor Green! Deep, dark and distinctive. Imagine my surprise when I opened the can and a bright, beautiful Royal Blue with emerald specks covered the lid! As I began stirring, the swirls of bold green and royal blue were quite pretty, and I was tempted to see if it would paint like that... but then I thought better. Lumps rose to the top. More stirring. Gradually it was turning more into the dark green

I had expected, but after lengthy stirring, I still had lumps and uneven color. Finally, I replaced the lid carefully and took it to our local hardware store for a professional shaking. They had the proper equipment, and knew the proper time needed to get the job done right. And they would not even let me pay them. Friends! I love friends!!!

Once home, I opened the lid and went right to work. The lumps were completely gone. The color was smooth, vibrant, consistent, and easy to apply.

I personally believe that every scenario, every story, every situation has multiple lessons we can learn. A few that I learned from my kitchen painting adventure are:

- When you open something up, you might get a surprise.
- What you think you

want and have might not look like what you need at first glance. Then, after time and work, you may find yourself with exactly what you really wanted. (Marriage and jobs have interesting applications here!)

- Sometimes professional help is needed to accomplish what you desire in order to complete the task with excellence.
- Most projects are a lot more work than you think they will be when only in your dreams. This really has applications when you think other people have easy, cushy, fun jobs and in reality, you have little true knowledge of what they are dealing with.
- Sometimes when you start a project, you find you must add to the work to get best results: Like cleaning, painting and papering the inside of the cabinets, too. (sigh...)

• Along the way (while stirring) you may be tempted to change plans (like paint with swirly, lumpy but lovely paint). However, consider everything before making changes that have not been carefully thought through. You may end up with unexpected problems if you act too quickly.

• Holding on to the vision of the anticipated successful conclusion of a project can give strength to endure the slow, tiring, sometimes messy grind of getting it done.

• Plan ahead on how you will clean up the messes made during the construction process.

• Thinking you would like something, then doubting/wondering if you can do it yourself, THEN deciding that, "Yes! I can do that!" is a good feeling. But plowing through the process and coming out the other side with the job well done (though not perfect) is empowering, exciting and such a great feeling of accomplishment. I DID IT!

• Keeping my focus on taking care of MY BUSINESS and letting others take care of theirs keeps me from a plethora of mistakes and misspeaks.

THIS is an example of applying EI (Emotional Intelligence) to everyday life. Thinking. Planning. Preparing. Thinking more. Assembling

the needed items. Starting. Staying focused. Cleaning up after spills and splatters. Refusing to let problems stop us. Dealing with delays and discouragement and side issues. Pausing when needed or necessary. Finishing the job, even if it wasn't perfect, took longer, and was harder than expected, and someone else could probably have done it better... I DID IT!

WHAT is it you want? What do you NEED to do? What is REQUIRED of you to be/become the best you possible? WHO are you? WHERE do you need professional help/advice? WHO/WHAT controls you? HOW will you meet your desires: With fear or Faith? With wishes or plans? With an attitude of confidence, or with doubt and complaints? We all have so many choices to make every day. Yesterday is gone. It is too late to do what you should have done then but didn't. Today you may be given another chance. Are you preparing your mind and body and spirit to DO THAT NEXT BEST THING if you are blessed with another opportunity?

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



Steve Garner Is Running For Limestone County Commission, District 1

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

Commission. He is running for one reason, and that's love. The love to which he is referring is for his passel of grandkids, and his other love is for the people who live here. "I'm not much into politics, and I don't need the money," he told me. With regard to his grands, Steve is most concerned that once he is gone, they will have to deal with the mess of poorly planned "overgrown growth" and crumbling infrastructure. That is something he simply cannot abide, and last fall, when he decided to run, he said the following: I have been holding

off for a while but feel it is time to let everyone know that I am tossing my hat in the ring to run for Limestone County Commissioner for District 1. I believe with a passion that our county needs to prepare for the future and listen to our citizens. I want to pledge to serve our county with all my ability and most of all listen to YOU. I will post more later and publish my experience and my platform. Thanks to everyone that has urged and supported me in this decision.

Steve chuckled as we chatted, and he asked me, "You know how in Field of Dreams they say, 'If you build it (he) they will come?'" Well,



in Limestone County, if we don't build it, they are still going to come!"

He added that his "why" is also that he wants to give back and prepare for growth.

Limestone County is an interesting blend of farmers and farm land, manufacturing and manufacturers, businesses and business owners, a university, public and private schools along with two school systems, two law enforcement organizations, and a current speed and level of growth that makes your hair blow back. Thankfully, Steve has experience in many of these areas. He was involved with his grandparents' farm, worked cattle, horses, and chopped cotton. He has owned his own trucking company. He has literally manufactured his own Jeep when he worked as a consultant and project manager

at their plant. He has swept floors and been in C-suite corner office management where he had to wear suits every day. When he was in the Air Force, he was part of the Air Rescue team that got wounded soldiers out of the jungle on choppers what were affectionately referred to as "Jolly Green Giants." While in the Air Force, he also served in Personal Security Details. He worked for TVA and got his degree in electrical engineering from Alabama.

Steve has been a project manager and consultant for companies such as KIA and Shell Oil, and has done short-term missionary work in Africa building schools and orphanages. He has had to manage pro-

continued on page 21



Learning As A Lifestyle

Humility, Courage, And Resilience: *The Soul Of Prophetic Leadership*

by Eric Betts

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

In a culture that often rewards loud personalities, self-promotion, and constant visibility, the most transformative leaders rarely look the way we expect. Prophetic leadership — the kind that changes communities and shapes history — is not often built on charisma alone. Instead, it rests on deeper moral foundations: humility, courage, and resilience. These qualities form the quiet architecture of leadership that serves others rather than the ego of the leader. When these virtues are present, leadership moves beyond personal ambition and becomes a calling rooted in responsibility, integrity, and moral vision.

Humility is often misunderstood as weakness or lack of confidence, but in reality, it is clarity about one's purpose. Leadership rooted in humility recognizes that the mission matters more than the spotlight. Leadership scholar Jim Collins, in his study of what makes organizations truly great, calls this "Level 5 leadership" — a paradoxical blend of personal humility and fierce determination for a cause greater

than oneself. One of the clearest examples of this kind of leadership is Howard Thurman, the renowned minister and contemplative whose spiritual insights helped shape the Civil Rights Movement. Thurman was never the loudest voice in the room, nor did he seek public recognition, yet his influence on figures like Martin Luther King Jr. was profound. His writings and spiritual guidance strengthened the moral foundations of a movement that changed

America. But humility alone is not enough. Prophetic leadership also requires courage — not the loud outrage that dominates social media, but the deeper courage to stand for what is right even when it is difficult or unpopular. Thurman lived through the harsh realities of segregation and racial injustice, yet he refused to allow hatred to define his response. In his classic work *Jesus and the Disinherited*, he warned that fear, decep-

tion, and hatred can become destructive forces within our culture and within one's soul. His message was that confronting injustice requires moral strength without surrendering one's humanity. Courage in leadership means telling the truth when silence would be easier, resisting injustice without losing compassion, and maintaining conviction even when pressure mounts.

Finally, prophetic leadership demands resilience.

Real change rarely happens quickly, and those who seek to transform communities often face resistance, misunderstanding, and fatigue. Resilience is the ability to endure that resistance without losing sight of the larger vision. Howard Thurman spent decades teaching, mentoring, and building bridges across racial and social divides long before such efforts were widely embraced. His life reminds us that meaningful leadership is not about momentary recognition but long-term faithfulness. Humility keeps leaders grounded, courage keeps them honest, and resilience keeps them moving forward. Together, these virtues form the soul of prophetic leadership — the kind of leadership our communities need now more than ever.



HAZEL GREEN CHIROPRACTIC
Dr. JOHN BOYLE

13971 Highway 231/431
Hazel Green, AL 35750

Tel: (256) 828-4288
Fax: (256) 828-4250
hazelgreenchiropractic@yahoo.com
hazelgreenchiropractic.com



ADAMS WESTERN WEAR AND FEED
Kenneth & Marie Adams
Owner/Operator
28100 Hwy 251
Ardmore, AL 35739
Phone/Fax (256) 423-5868
Mon. - Fri. 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.
Sat. 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.





The Alternative Approach

Breathing Better

by Roy Williams

Today, I am going to help you have a good understanding of what your body needs to not only perform your daily activities but to also help you live with the highest quality of life possible, including more energy, less illness, clearer thinking, and even less pain. After trying these simple and easy concepts for just a few days, you will gain more usable knowledge and common sense than you will receive from anything the medical industrial complex has to offer.

We are so much more than just our physical bodies, yet most people live their lives controlled by their flesh. We eat when we aren't hungry, we refuse to accept any pain even though it is a normal part of healing, we get angry about things we have no control over, our stress levels are dangerously high, and many in our society feel completely out of control.

Many people talk about feeling as if a great weight has been lifted from them, or for the first time in years they're getting better medical reports, or they're finally able to come off their prescription drugs. One man put it this way, "What I learned from your methods is that I don't have to be dependent on the medical profession, and after learning the truth about statin drugs, I feel like I did when I was in my thirties."

When it comes to your health, it all begins with basic nutrition, which includes getting enough of the number one most im-

portant nutrient of all -- **oxygen**. The only time most of us take deep breaths is when we have to walk up a flight of stairs or, heaven forbid, have to run a short distance.

You can live up to 60 days without food. You can live up to five days without water, but no one can live much over four minutes without the most necessary of all nutrients, **oxygen**. It is the most necessary of all nutrients, yet most of us take it for granted. Yes, breathing is important but learning deep breathing techniques and using them on a regular bases can lengthen your life. And most importantly, it will result in a higher quality of life almost instantly.

Even if you can't exercise, which is the best way to oxygenate, you can still make a practice of deep breathing. **Challenge!** Every morning when you wake up, breathe in as deeply as possible, hold it to the count of four, and then exhale slowly. Do that three times. Do the same each afternoon. Do it again each evening when lying down to sleep. Doing this exercise three times in a row each time is the secret. I know, it seems too easy to really make a difference, but trust me, it makes a noticeable difference in as little as three days.

Doing it also helps reduce stress, relieve anxiety, and even helps with depression. Many people report that for the first time in years they are sleeping much better. It also helps when you are in a situation

where you need to focus and concentrate. Remember, your brain uses more oxygen than any other organ so, breathe in as deeply as possible, hold to the count of four, exhale slowly, and repeat three times. You can do this practically anywhere and at any time. Ever feel as if you are falling asleep while driving? Try this technique and I promise you will notice the difference.

If you are suffering from any type of breathing disorder, which almost always includes inflammation, you might consider our **Healthy Breathing Combo**. It is combination of two products that support the respiratory system. As your lungs become inflamed, it reduces the ability to inhale as much oxygen as needed. The bronchial tube can become swollen or filled with mucus, which restricts oxygen flow. Reduced blood flow to the brain will cause loss of focus and concentration. Given enough time it can bring on memory loss and dementia.

The **Healthy Breathing Combo** is designed to reduce inflammation in and around the lungs. It also has herbs that have proven to support healthier more permeable tissue, including the air sacks, making them more flexible and permeable. In just a few days, most people report much better, deeper and easier breathing, which means the brain will also have more oxygen.

The two products that make



up the **Healthy Breathing Combo** are **MSM+C** and **Mullen**, which when taken together, has so many health enhancing benefits that I don't have room to go through all of them in this article. The one I wish to focus on today is **MSM+C** because of its ability to make all soft-cell tissue more flexible and permeable. Air sacks are very delicate soft-cell tissue, and the healthier it is, the better your lungs can perform and **MSM+C** has been our bestselling product for over 25 years.

MSM+C is used by your body to manufacture collagen. Scar tissue can also restrict your ability to absorb oxygen. Emphysema is common among those

people and can lead to COPD. **MSM+C** can over time support the development of healthier more permeable tissue. Even burn scars show up to a 95% improvement over time.

This combination can make all the difference for those suffering from all types of breathing disorders including sinus drainage, sinus infections, and allergies. If you are having any breathing difficulties you can go by Herbs & More in Athens or NHC Herb Shop in Killen or call 256-757-5660 or check us out on line at www.nhcherbs.com.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*



River City Roofing Solutions: *Seeing “It” Through To Your Satisfaction*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Continued from Page 5

that is computer generated and estimates the need for replacing a roof based on storm history at one’s address. You can go to rivercity-roofingsolutions.com and check it out. I was impressed by the accuracy of this tool.

Another is a huge upgrade in metal roofing known as a standing seam roof. It takes a special machine that is brought to the site which custom creates a roof whose screws are covered, and there is no exposed fastening. The roof is cut in 16” swaths, and there is virtually no waste. Michael’s own house has a metal roof, and he is

quick to point out that people have a misconception that metal roofs are “permanent.” “They are not permanent, and what is the first to go is the screws. They rust, and then they leak,” he said. However, with the standing seam system, RCRS says the materials will last 40 years, and they will warranty labor for a full ten years.

Always looking to provide greater customer service, right now Michael is in the process of developing a podcast that will make it possible for listeners to ask any question you can think of that is “roof-related.” He knows that being an advocate for the client is good for business and good for



the community, and is looking forward to increasing both.

Finally, River City Roofing Solutions is passionate about giving

back to the community, and right now when you “book” a roof, \$250 will go to a local youth sports team of your choice. They also honor

a local student athlete that is the “GOAT” of the week for their contribution to their team and their community. River City is currently looking into expanding that offer to other groups and charitable organizations committed to making our area safer and better for everyone.

If your roof is in need of repair or replacement, then let the Muse family and River City Roofing Solutions help you, and know they will see “it” through until your satisfaction.



**River City
Roofing
Solutions**

3325 Central Pkwy SW,
Decatur, AL 35603

(256) 274-8530

rivercityroofing.com



Be A Threat To Evil

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

“My prayer is that when I die, all of Hell will rejoice that I am out of the fight” - CS Lewis. We live in a world run by evil and evildoers. This is evident through the suffering endured by everyone who has ever lived in this fallen world. Lies, betrayal, violence, and darkness are just the price of being born into a world that’s deeply corrupted by sin.

As human beings, we have two different paths to follow. We can choose the path of succumbing to the evil around us and let it have its way. We become docile, weak, and complicit in the evil that takes place in this world through our inaction. This, unfortunately, is the route that most American Christians take today. They sit back and watch as their communities are overrun by evil ideologies. Transgenderism, LGBTQ-ism, drag queen story hour with their kids, it is allowed to take place because Christians are told that standing up against it is not “loving.” They allow the word of God to be twisted by those who hate every word of it to shame Christians into silence and compliance. However, this is not the way. This is not the path that God calls us to take.

The other path available is that of standing up. Speaking up and saying no to the evil of the world. We become a threat to those who seek to kill and destroy, and make evil think twice

before trying to impose its way of life on us and our community. Now, when I say to be a threat, this will automatically be twisted by said evil-doers to mean I’m calling for violence. On the contrary, I’m calling for peace. Peace can only exist in the presence of strong, dangerous men who can control it. Among my favorite interactions is that of Jordan Peterson when he’s confronted with the belief that men must be dangerous and capable, and then control it. The interviewer questions Jordan, saying, “When you say that men should be dangerous, that implies that I should be ready to threaten someone and hurt somebody!” Jordan replies, “No, you should be capable of it. But that doesn’t mean you should use it. There’s nothing to you, otherwise. If you’re not a formidable force, then there’s no mo-

ality in your self-control.”

Here’s how you become an effective and righteous threat against evil: First, become a strong, dangerous man. Then, you intelligently use your words to counter evil. You speak up, and you expose the fragile foundation of their evil. The perfect example of this was Charlie Kirk. A strong, Christian man who was so intelligent and able to use his words to counter evil that evil had to violently take him out of the fight. Charlie is a Christian martyr, and Hell definitely rejoiced when he was taken out of the fight. But that’s how you effectively defeat evil. Your strong and dangerous nature deters evil from forcing its way into your life, and then you dismantle and defeat it in discourse.

Too many Christians are scared to speak up for fear

of being called mean words -- a transphobe, homophobe, Christian nationalist, or any-other-phobe under the sun. They’re told that their Bible tells them to love everyone and be accepting. This could not be more incorrect. Love does not mean accepting others in their sin and allowing them to spread it to you. Loving your family and community means raising them in the Word and protecting them from evil, and loving your enemy means bringing them to the light while exposing how lost they are without Christ. Truth be told, if you’re not being called mean names by those who seek to inflict evil, then I question if you’re really in the fight. If you’re not a target in the eyes of evil, they clearly don’t see you as a threat. They see you as complicit and not a roadblock to their plans to remove Christ

from this world. Show me who sees you as an enemy, and I’ll see who you really are. Therefore, become a threat to evil. Make it think twice before coming to your neck of the woods. And when it does, walk in victory in the name of Christ.

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)

P.U.S.H. – *Pray Until Something Happens*

by Anna Hamilton

sincerity. Prayer connects us to God's presence, giving us strength, guidance, and peace. Through prayer, we bring our worries, hopes, gratitude, and questions before Him, knowing He listens. "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

U - Until

Faith requires patience and perseverance. Sometimes we pray and expect immediate answers, but God's timing is often different from our own. Waiting does not mean God is silent or absent; it often means He is working in ways we cannot yet understand. Jesus taught His followers to pray continually and never give up. Persistent prayer strengthens our trust and deepens our faith. It reminds us that hope is sustained not by quick answers but by unwavering belief. "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1).

S - Something

When we pray, we are invited to ask, seek, and knock. Prayer is an active expression of faith. We bring our needs and desires before God with confidence, believing that He hears us. The "something" that happens may not always look exactly like what we expected. Sometimes the answer is a solution to a problem; other times it is wisdom, peace, or a new direction. God responds in ways that shape our lives for the better, even when the path is not immediately clear. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

H - Happens

Prayer is powerful. The prayers of a faithful heart can bring comfort, healing, and transformation. When we pray persistently, we begin to see how

God is at work—sometimes through changed circumstances, and sometimes through changed hearts. Answers often come gradually, unfolding over time. What once seemed impossible begins to shift, and we recognize that God has been working all along. "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

P.U.S.H. reminds us that prayer is not about finding the perfect words; it is about maintaining persistent faith. When answers seem delayed, we are encouraged not to give up. Instead, we continue to pray, trust, and move forward with hope.

Faith grows strongest when it is tested by waiting. Even when we cannot yet see the results of our prayers, we can trust that God is always working behind the scenes. Every prayer offered in faith is heard, and every moment spent in prayer strengthens our connection with Him.

When life feels uncertain, remember the simple message: Pray Until Something Happens. Keep praying, keep trusting, and keep believing that in time, the answers will come.

This week's recipe is one of my favorite types of food. I love all types of Asian food and this spaghetti squash chow mein is not only delicious, but it is also a great healthy alternative. I love to add chicken to this dish, but shrimp is also delicious as well as ground pork. I hope you enjoy it as much as my family does.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Carissa's Corner

Shamrocks, Shopping Carts, & Serving Hearts

by Carissa Lovvorn

It truly warms my heart when I see local nonprofits rallying together to support a common cause. There is something powerful about organizations choosing collaboration over competition, unity over recognition. It brings to mind the beautiful proverb: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NIV).

When reflecting on nonprofits that strive to encourage others within the community, one immediately comes to mind: the Athens Arts League. This 501(c)(3) organization "supports artists, promotes art education, and brings cultural events to Athens and Limestone County," but its influence reaches far beyond those words. I've seen firsthand the impact this organization has on our area. You can see their efforts in local schools through art classes, seasonal artwork displayed in the children's section of the public library, free music and writing classes, and art and reading events that encourage creativity and literacy in young children.

Among their many volunteer efforts, the Athens Arts League has a unique take on celebratory parades. They call them "Parades with a Purpose." The growing community support for their Mardi Gras parade, which benefits Community Table, our local food pantry, sparked the idea

for their latest event.

This upcoming St. Patrick's Day, the Athens Arts League will introduce the "Luck of the Wee Ones" — a parade supporting local families in need. The "purpose" portion of this festivity is the collection of diapers, wipes, and deodorant for the Athens-Limestone County Family Resource Center, whose mission is "to strengthen Limestone County families through life-changing programs and services." These items are among their greatest needs.

The use of shopping carts as floats began at the previous parade, where canned food items were collected — so why not continue this fun tradition? Volunteers are busy planning how to decorate their carts with a whimsical Irish theme. However, emerald green and rainbow-and-shamrock-covered shopping carts are not the only things on the agenda for the evening.

Huntsville bagpiper Andrew Choate will lead the parade and play on the courthouse stairs from 5-5:30 p.m. Then, from 5:30-6:30 p.m., Jim and Inge Wood will perform traditional Celtic and American roots music. The Rocket City Starlets are sure to bring sparkle and joy to the occasion with their unique outfits and exciting, choreographed dances — and they love crowd participation! This all-

girl volunteer group is dedicated to "shining a light on the often-hidden realities of domestic violence." Through outreach, education, and advocacy, they work tirelessly to raise awareness, foster understanding, and inspire action.

Want to join in the fun? You can! Shop-

ping cart reservations are \$30; nonprofits and schools participate free of charge. For decorating times and locations or to reserve a cart, call 256-431-6941. Donations may be dropped off at City Hall Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The main event is open to the public at no

cost. All are invited, costumes are encouraged, and dogs are welcome.

In the words of the Athens Arts League, "Let's celebrate. Let's show up. Let's give back." I hope to see you there!

Blessings,

Carissa Lovvorn

HOSTED BY ATHENS ARTS LEAGUE

St. Patrick's Day

Parade with a Purpose

"Luck of the Wee Ones"
March 17 @ 6:30pm

DONATIONS OF DIAPERS, WIPES, AND DEODORANT WILL BE COLLECTED FOR THE ATHENS FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

MUSIC WILL BEGIN ON THE COURTHOUSE STEPS AT 5:30PM

PARADE STARTS AT 6:30PM

FOR REGISTRATION CALL 256-431-6941

CITY OF ATHENS GAS DEPARTMENT

ATHENS UTILITIES

ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

Celebrating over

37 years

Legacy of Life

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER OF ATHENS



A T H E N S , A L
WOMEN'S
RESOURCE CENTER

256-233-5775 • 24-Hr Hotline

727 Market Street W, Ste. D in Athens

www.savallifeathens.org

Alabama HB 446 - The Alabama Dog Tethering And Outdoor Shelter Act

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Continued from Page 7

countless times to report dogs left outdoors without proper shelter. I was repeatedly told that if a dog can crawl under a car or mobile home, it counts as "shelter." I have also spoken directly with the Limestone County Sheriff's Office and received the same explanation. This interpretation of the law exposes a serious gap in Alabama's animal welfare protections—and it is one that animals are paying for. Dogs deserve better in Limestone County and across our state.

Alabama is at a crossroads. (HB 446) is more than a piece of legislation -- it's a moral imperative. The bill is sponsored by Representative Phillip Ensler, seeks to establish clear, enforceable standards for how long dogs are tethered and sheltered outdoors. Passing HB 446 would not only protect animals from unnecessary suffering but also strengthen public safety and modernize our state's approach to animal welfare.

Across Alabama, countless dogs spend their lives chained to stationary objects, exposed to scorching summers and freezing winters, often without adequate food, water, or shelter. Current laws are vague, leaving law enforcement and animal control officers little power to intervene until tragedy strikes.

HB 446 changes that by setting humane, practical standards for outdoor confinement. These guidelines are not radical; they are common sense measures already adopted in many states.

"Why does it matter?" I am glad you asked. Dogs are social creatures that suffer physically and emotionally when chained for long periods of time. HB446 prevents needless suffering and promotes responsible pet ownership. Empow-

ering law enforcement with clear definitions of neglect and abuse give tools they need to act before a situation becomes life-threatening for the animal and community. Neglected dogs often become aggressive or attempt to escape, creating hazards for neighbors. Humane confinement reduces this risk, enhancing public safety and making communities safer. States across the country have passed similar laws. By adopt-

ing HB 446, Alabama signals its commitment to compassion and progress and aligns Alabama with modern standards.

Opponents may argue that this bill imposes burdens on pet owners. In reality, HB 446 asks for the bare minimums: shelter from the elements, safe tethering practices, and basic care. Failing to act means continuing the cycle of neglect, suffering and preventable tragedies.

HB 446 is not just about

dogs -- it's about who we are as a state. Do we value compassion, responsibility, and safety? Or do we allow outdated practices to persist at the expense of animals and communities? Lawmakers have a chance to make history by passing HB 446. By reaching out to our state legislators through email or phone, our community can express concern for our animal companions and advocate for positive change in Alabama.



State Representative Phillip Ensler, sponsor of HB 446

CrossFit Athens: *More Than a Gym— A Center for Health*

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



When most people think of a gym, they picture rows of treadmills, weight machines, and people wandering around trying to figure out what to do next. For many, the typical gym experience means showing up, doing a few exercises, and leaving without a clear plan or direction. The goal is often simply to “get a workout in.”

At CrossFit Athens, we see things very differently.

Our gym is not simply a

place to exercise. It is a health center focused on longevity, vitality, and living better lives. The difference between CrossFit Athens and a traditional gym isn't just the equipment or the workouts—it's the purpose behind everything we do.

Working out for the sake of working out isn't the goal. The goal is living a longer, healthier, and more capable life.

Many traditional gyms fo-

cus on isolated exercises or chasing aesthetics. You might spend an hour moving from one machine to another, but the bigger picture of health is often missing. True health is not just about burning calories or building a six-pack. It's about building a body that can serve you well for decades.

At CrossFit Athens, every workout is designed with that long-term purpose in mind.

We train movements that

matter in real life—lifting objects from the ground, carrying weight, standing up from the floor, pushing, pulling, and moving your body through space. These movements help develop strength, balance, coordination, and endurance. These are the qualities that allow you to stay independent as you age.

Research continues to show that strength and muscle mass are directly tied to longevity and quality of life. Grip strength alone has been shown to be a powerful predictor of life expectancy. In simple terms, the stronger you are, the better your chances of living a longer, healthier life.

That is why strength training is a cornerstone of what we do.

But exercise is only one piece of the puzzle. Real health cannot exist without proper nutrition. At CrossFit Athens we place a strong emphasis on helping our members understand how food impacts their health, energy levels, and long-term wellbeing. Through coaching and education, we help people build sustainable habits that support their fitness and their health outside the gym.

The result is not just people who are fitter—it's people who feel better, move better, and live better.

Another major difference between CrossFit Athens and a typical gym is coaching. When you walk into many gyms, you're largely on your own. You may get a tour or a quick orientation, but after that you're expected to figure things out for

yourself.

At CrossFit Athens, every class is coached. Our trainers guide you through warm-ups, teach proper technique, adjust movements for your ability level, and help you push yourself safely. Whether someone is brand new to exercise or has years of experience, they receive the same level of attention and support.

Perhaps most importantly, CrossFit Athens is a community.

People don't just show up, put in headphones, and disappear into their own world. Members encourage each other, celebrate progress, and support one another both inside and outside the gym. That sense of accountability and connection makes it easier to stay consistent and committed to a healthier lifestyle.

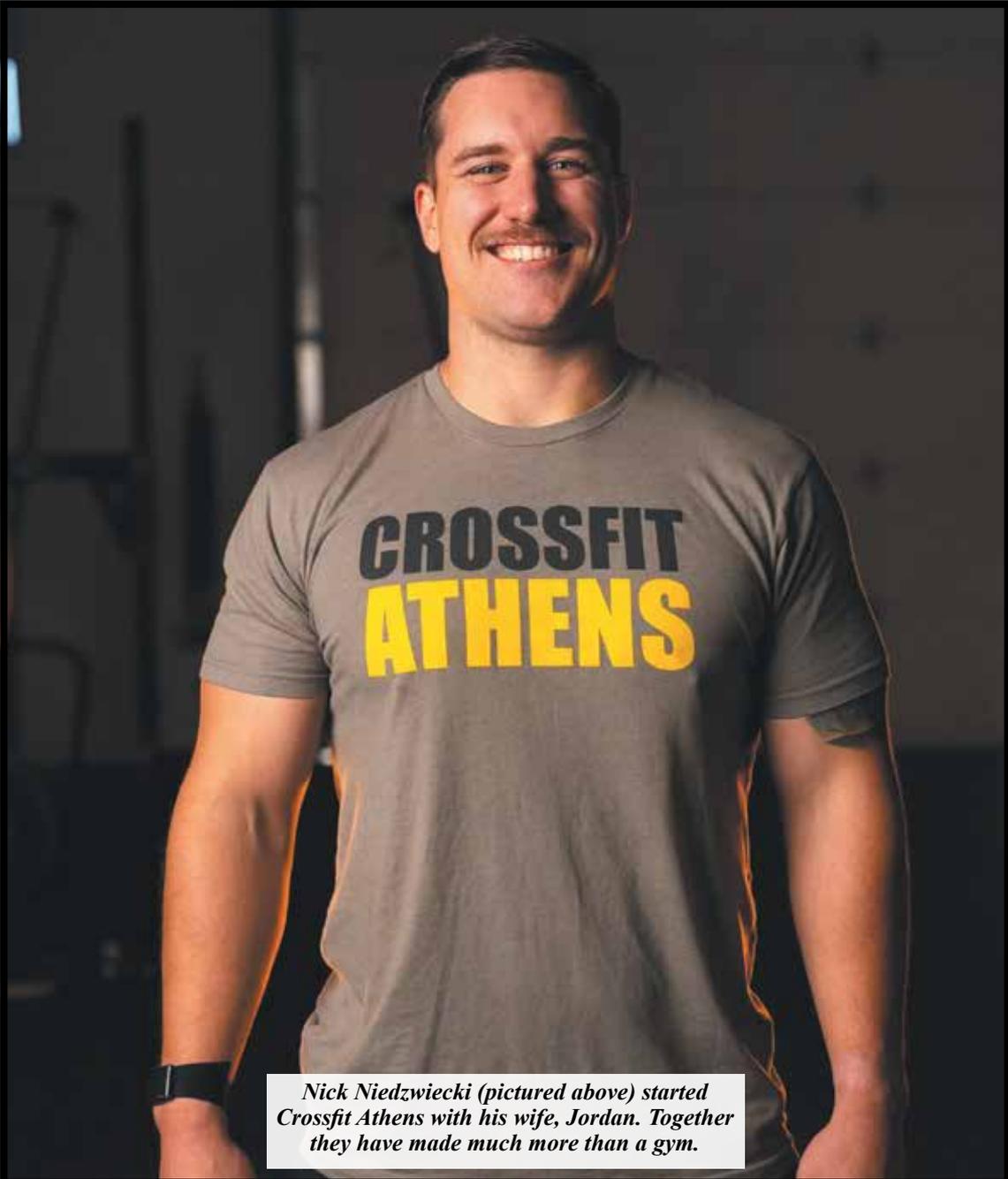
When you combine coaching, community, exercise, and nutrition, you get something far more powerful than a typical gym.

You get a place that helps people truly change their lives.

CrossFit Athens is not a place to simply burn calories for an hour. It's a place where people come to build strength, improve their health, and invest in a longer, more capable life.

And that's something you simply won't find at a regular gym.

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



Nick Niedzwiecki (pictured above) started Crossfit Athens with his wife, Jordan. Together they have made much more than a gym.

Happy SPRING from Athens Now

Spring Word Search

- BLOSSOM
- BLOOM
- FLOWERS
- RAIN
- SHOWERS
- EASTER
- SPRING BREAK
- GRASS
- HATCH
- BIRDS
- SUNSHINE
- SEASON
- MARCH
- APRIL
- MAY

N L M O R D Y S M B M O O L B
 N I A R M E L E S E E A W O G
 U O Y E L O S E A S O N M S S
 L M L I O D N E K L A Y R P H
 H C T A H I N G Q L D B R K U
 U T P E H O O D I O O I F C L
 Y T I S R E T R M D N T R E U
 V W N A O E P J T G N E D X V
 E U G R N A D M B R A Y A T E
 S L M E U B G R T A S O U P A
 R E F G L C E B T S I R G A S
 B A L Y B A E N O S R E H R T
 Y A O I K D O O H R E H O H E
 U Y W E M S H O W E R S E D R
 C H E F A M C L Y O G D R E S
 X L R O V Z R C O J B R I N O
 F I S E A R A K S L E I O E L
 B L O S S O M C B J W B M O B

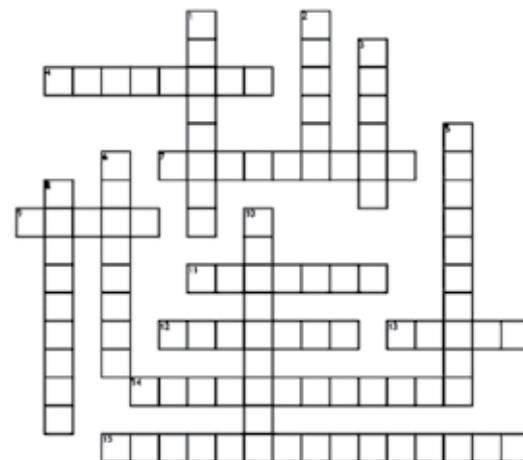
Spring Crossword

Across

- 4. A day set aside for planting trees.
- 7. A winged insect that comes in a variety of colors.
- 9. The first month of spring.
- 11. What happens in April to bring May flowers?
- 12. After it rains, what is something colorful you might see in the sky?
- 13. What do the flowers do in the Spring?
- 14. A basketball tournament that occurs during a spring month.
- 15. What is it called when time is moved one hour back?

Down

- 1. Small round beetles that are often red with black dots.
- 2. A colorful plant with leaves and petals.



- 3. A small pool of water.
- 5. A day to play pranks.
- 6. A name for a young duck.
- 8. A grassweed with a yellow flower.
- 10. Animal who shows if spring is coming.



BRAD STOVALL'S AUTO BODY

Let us get your
BODY back
in **SHAPE!**



Behind Tanner Post Office • 233-5140

Tennessee Valley Spotlight



Mondays at 10am

1080 AM WKAC

Steve Garner Is Running For Limestone County Commission, District 1

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 17

jects involving literally billions of dollars. He is currently doing consulting and project managing at Robins & Morton in Huntsville, and if elected, being a commissioner will be his full-time job.

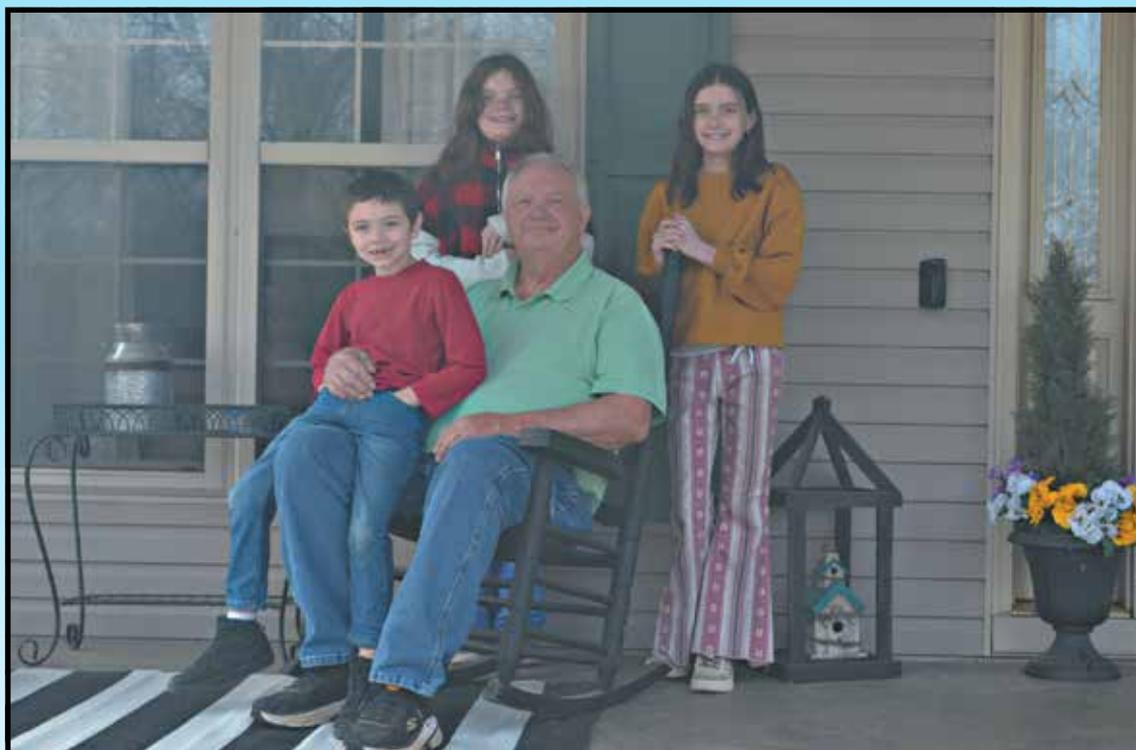
Steve has three basic priorities: roads, staffing, and economic development.

“The roads were originally made for light-haul trucking, and we need to get them built properly,” Steve said. Trucks are too heavy, and the roads can’t handle them. They are central to everything else in the county,” he said. An avid classic car and antique tractor collector, Steve is the co-owner of a Fordson gasoline tractor, which was delivered by train to Limestone County in 1919. He teaches

classes to kids about our past and what life was like here, with the hope that he’ll be able to instill a love for Limestone in them.

“There are departments that have too much staff in one area and not enough in another. I am used to dealing with and solving those kinds of staffing issues,” Steve said.

“Economic development is my third priority, and we need to give the residents of Limestone County what they need. There isn’t one dog park in the county, and the county needs its own Parks and Rec Center,” Mr. Garner added. I asked him why I should choose him as District 1 Commissioner, and he had several reasons. “Because I am not looking to build a political career, I will be free to vote my con-



science, and because I do not need the salary or the accolades, I can really focus on building the county well,” he said. The only thing he wants is for his grands and others to be able to say someday after he’s gone, “That guy, he sure

did a lot for us.” If this is what you are looking for in a county commis-

sioner, then Steve Garner would appreciate your vote.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

STEVE

ELECT

GARNER

FOR
LIMESTONE CO.
DISTRICT 1
COMMISSIONER

FOR THE PEOPLE

Learn more:
www.garnerforcommissioner.com

The Second Brain

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“Anything that affects the gut will always affect the brain.”

- Dr. Charles Majors

Have you heard the phrase, “Trust your gut,” which means to trust your instincts when making decisions? Or ever have that uneasy feeling in the pit of your stomach when you are anxious or something just doesn’t feel right? Do you get stomach pains when you feel depressed? Your gut is sensitive to emotions like anger, joy, worry, and sadness, and your brain can react to signals from your stomach. In fact, it turns out that the gut plays a huge role not only with our emotions, but in our judgments, overall health, and mental well-being.

The gut includes every organ involved in digesting food and processing

it into waste. This includes the esophagus and stomach, small and large intestines, gall bladder, liver, and pancreas. The lining of your gut is often called the second brain, because it can operate on its own, and communicates back and forth with your actual brain. Your gut and brain are connected in two ways: physically and chemically. Physically, the vagus nerve controls messages to the gut, heart, lungs, and other vital organs. This nerve is the gut’s direct connection to the brain. Chemically, messages are passed between the gut and brain through bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut, called the gut microbiome.

The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut may be beneficial, harmless, or harmful. So how is the gut microbiome related to mental health? First, there

is a strong relationship between having mental health problems and having gastrointestinal symptoms like heartburn, indigestion, acid reflux, bloating, pain, and constipation and/or diarrhea. Second, having anxiety and depression can cause changes in the gut microbiome because of what happens in the body when it has a stress response. Third, animal research has confirmed that changes in the gut microbiome and inflammation in the gut can affect the brain, producing symptoms that look like Parkinson’s disease, autism, and anxiety and depression.

So, what does this all mean for those who struggle with mental and emotional challenges? We know that the human body interacts with the environment in complex ways. Your body creates panic attacks, anxiety, and other symptoms on

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



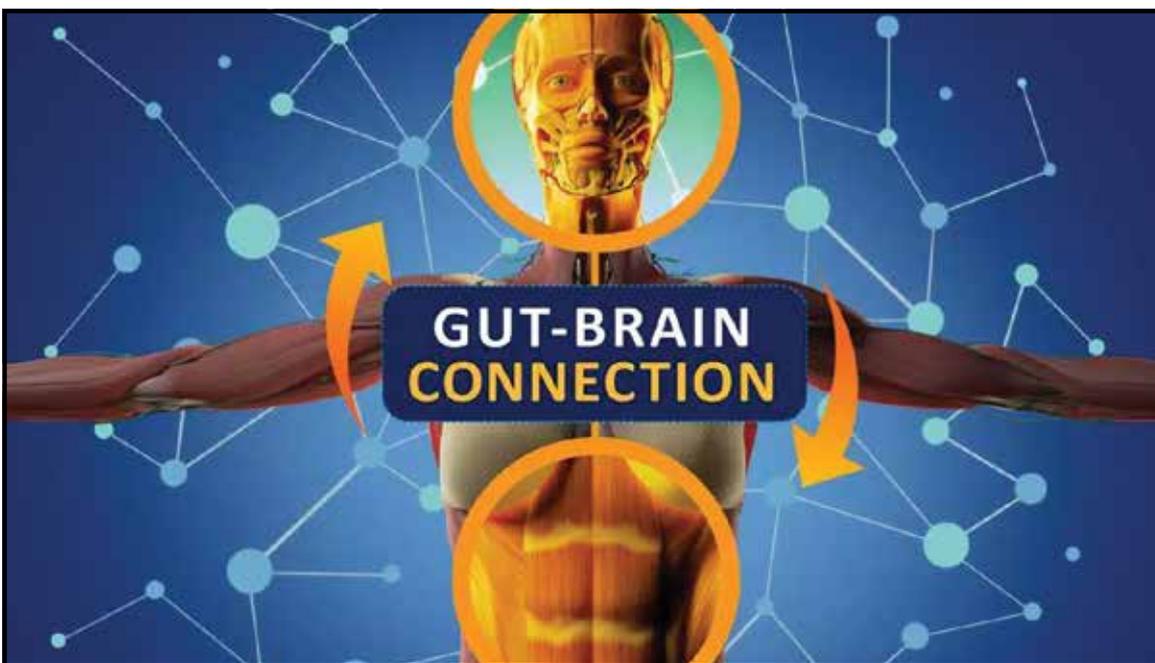
purpose, as a meaningful reaction to what is going on around you. There is a good reason for your brain and mood to get your attention...so you can make a change. So stay with me here while I suggest that there is a correlation between inflammation and symptoms of mental illness. I am not proposing that there is a cause and effect, but rather a relationship.

When your body is in a state of inflammation, this can translate as “danger” to the brain and influence the neurochemical balance. For example, gut inflammation can impact the extremely sensitive feedback systems around stress hormones, like cortisol. The problem is that once triggered, inflammation can be repeatedly activated, signaling distress to the body and mind. This inflammation transfers information to the nervous system typically through the vagus nerve (remember the link from the gut to the brain?) Quite possibly, depression, anxiety, and a host of other symptoms of mental illness may be a complex product of chronic in-

flammation. You may have a “sick gut” that is a result of infection produced through a cortisol or other hormonal dysfunction.

The gut is the gatekeeper of inflammatory response, and houses a large portion of our immune system. Continuing down the gut-brain path, the natural healing process conclusion would be that if you learn to take care of your gut, you can improve your mental health. If this topic interests you, and/or you have found yourself saying, “Yes, this all makes sense to me,” then I encourage you to do further research on your own. There is a wealth of information on the gut-brain connection. So start to balance your moods by listening to your gut. You have the power to change.

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.



Beautifully Designed Winter Home



20933 Jeremiah Lane, Athens, AL 35611

4 Bedroom / 3.5 Bath

MLS# 21896935

\$1,043,500



Robin Gerrish
(256) 374-9139

CRYE-LEIKE[®]
REAL ESTATE SERVICES

Captivating Historic Home



500 S Clinton Street, Athens, AL 35611
4 Bedroom / 3 Bath
MLS# 21910552

\$599,000



Robin Gerrish
(256) 374-9139

CRYE-LEIKE[®]
REAL ESTATE SERVICES



Darla Bunker
(256) 497-3297