

April 17 - April 30, 2026

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## Save The Date: *The 44th Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Week Begins* May 12



By Bruce Wilson

The 44th Annual Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo is back next month, and organizers are promising one of the biggest celebrations yet. Spanning nearly a week of events — from a downtown street dance to a full-scale professional rodeo — the festi-

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## Save May 2 & 3 To Come And Connect With Athens

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

On May 2, a brand-new, full-on family festival called Connect Athens is going to be "born" at Athens Middle School, and YOU are invited to this birthday party! After a hiatus of a few years, the Athens-Limestone Chamber of Commerce was able to put on a

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SAVE THE DATE

**CONNECT ATHENS**

MAY 2-3 PRESENTED BY

ATHENS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SATURDAY 8 AM - 4 PM SUNDAY 12 PM - 4 PM

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It's finally that time of the year! Every spring, Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful along with TVA hosts a Trash Attack at the river...  
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**Publisher's Point**

**Meet Dr. Lee Warren, A Guy Who Has "Sur-thrived" And Is Ready To Help**

Anyone who knows me at all knows I am "nutz about neuroscience." I was exposed to it while I was in Iraq, and I am unashamedly hooked. It never takes long in a conversation for me to get to the fact that we as humans, and especially our brains, are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and that I now believe there is absolutely nothing you can go through that cannot be completely redeemed. In a word, you were designed to heal, and now you can have new and better tools to do so.

And it is not only a matter of faith. Scripture and science have been proven to have collided and kissed, and there is measurable proof. It can be seen on scans that illustrate the difference between a brain that has been harmed by life, and a brain whose owner has learned how to perform what combat neurosurgeon Dr. Lee Warren calls "self-brain surgery."

For me, what makes Dr. Lee's work so commendable is the fact that the guy has been through literal hell himself and has the hope of

heaven as one of his trusted "scalpels." He also has a simple, no-nonsense approach that works irrespective of your level of education. And, perhaps the most important is that through the miracles of technology, he is building an army of fellow travelers that provide the irreplaceable quality of support and ongoing proof that you are not alone on your journey.

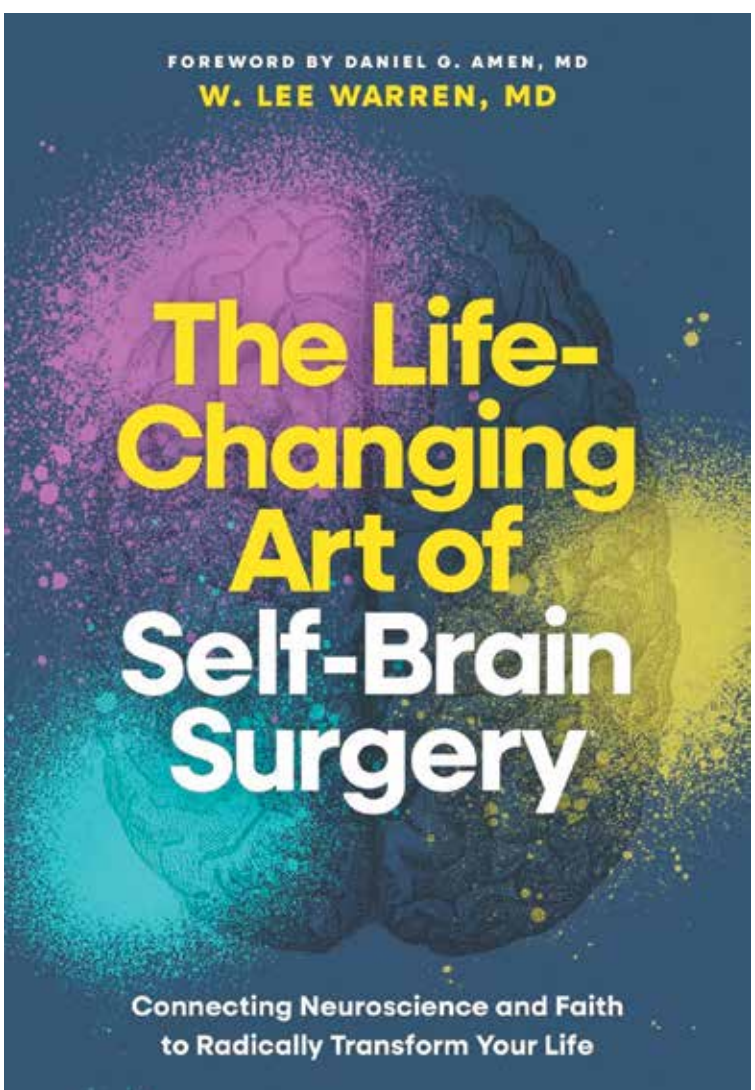
As to Dr. Lee's personal story, the man was in Iraq when I was, stationed at Balad, which is about 40 miles north of Baghdad, and serving in a CASH, better known as a Combat Area Service Hospital. He literally was blood-stained from performing more than 200 neurosurgeries due to combat-related injuries, but that isn't all. His marriage was falling apart (something that I unfortunately observed often while working in Morale, Welfare and Recreation) and as far as PTSD is concerned, one day Dr. Lee was out doing his mandatory Physical Training run and got caught in the middle of incoming to the tune of 200 mortar rounds. As bad as all of that was, what nearly did him in was the violent death of his 19-year-old son, Mitch.

Dr. Lee's testimony is that in short time his hair literally turned grey and he broke his molars. He had been a Christian all his life, and he was living in the "shadow of death" on a level that most folks can't begin to imagine, let alone experience. He

had to find healing and purpose, or he was done. And, by God's grace, he has, and while he is still performing surgeries, he has written three books that tell the story and weave together to dish out wonderful doses of industrial-strength hope. In a word, Dr. Lee "has the receipts."

The books are called, *No Place To Hide: A Brain Surgeon's Long Journey Home From The Iraq War*, followed by *Hope Is The First Dose: A Treatment Plan For Recovering From Trauma, Tragedy And Other Massive Things*, and his most recent, *The Life-Changing Art of Self-Brain Surgery: Connecting Neuroscience and Faith to Radically Transform Your Life*. He also has a YouTube channel, podcasts, lots of resources, and he wants to help. Whether you feel you are a Capital-T-Trauma-train-wreck and are hanging on by a thread, or a typical lower-case-t-trauma human walking around with wounds no one sees, you need this guy. More importantly, you need the God who brought Lee through and taught him how to bring others along with him. Help that helps is here; please take it.

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## All Things Soldier

# Remembering The Meaning Of Memorial Day And Honoring Those Who Served



by Yvonne Dempsey

The month of April is nearly gone, and we are headed into the month of May. For many Americans, May brings warmer temps and the beginning of outdoor fun as families enjoy vacations, backyard pools and cookouts, proms, graduations, the end of another school year, and whatever adventures the summer brings. Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, is usually looked upon as the unofficial start of summer. But at its heart, Memorial Day is something far more solemn and significant.

Memorial Day is a time set aside to honor the men and women of our armed forces who gave their lives in service to our country. It is not simply a day off from work and school, it is a day of remembrance, reflection, and gratitude for those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may live in freedom. The day was first known as Decoration Day in May 1868, a day set aside to decorate Civil War soldiers' graves with flowers and flags. As the years passed and wars

were fought, the graves of these veterans were also decorated on various days. In 1968, Congress set the observance as the last Monday in May, and in 1971, it became an official Federal holiday named Memorial Day.

One of the most visible and meaningful traditions still associated with Memorial Day is the placement of American flags on the graves of veterans. These small flags serve as powerful symbols of respect and remembrance. Each one represents a life lived in service, a family forever changed, and a debt we can never fully repay.

Every year, patriotic citizens of Limestone County participate in the tradition of placing flags on veterans' graves. However, there are significantly fewer people who take time to do this. Sadly, about 50% of local veterans never have a flag placed in remembrance at their graves, especially those with no remaining family or friends. Their final resting places often remain forlorn and



forgotten.

This year, we are asking for volunteers from our community to help place flags on veterans' graves in our local cemeteries. There are around 5,000 veterans buried in over 400 cemeteries and graveyards across Limestone County. Some of them are in very remote areas while others are in our most visited, largest cemeteries. It costs nothing but a little time and effort to honor those who gave so much of their time and effort in service to our country. In the past, we have had school groups, church groups, Scout troops, families, and individuals take time in the month of May to help ensure that these flags are put out. While Memorial Day is a good time to visit these graves and place the flags, any time during the month would work. Our goal, as always, is to have all of the

flags in place by the end of Memorial Day.

Whether you can spare an hour or an afternoon, your help would make a huge difference. Please urge your friends, families, and organizations to share in this time-honored tradition. We would be grateful for any group, family, or individual to consider adopting a cemetery, graveyard, or a section of one of the larger cemeteries and be responsible for making this a yearly tradition, one that could be passed on to others over the years. We especially ask all of the local veterans' service organizations to undertake this cause -- veterans honoring and remembering other veterans who have gone before them. This is an opportunity not only to give back, but also to teach younger generations the true meaning of Memorial Day and ensure that these heroes are never forgotten.

If we don't continue this tradition, it will be forgotten by future generations. We cannot let this happen.

The flags are free and available for pick up beginning May 1 at the Alabama Veterans Museum, 114 W. Pryor St. in Athens. Flags will be in the museum library along with a list of the graveyards and cemeteries and the veterans in each. Museum hours are 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Saturday. If you would like to participate or learn more about how you can help, please reach out to Bob Borden at 256-509-1306 or the museum at 256-771-7578.

Let us come together as a community to honor those who gave everything. This Memorial Day, may we remember, reflect, and show our gratitude in a tangible way.

"We don't know them all, but we owe them all."



# Just Another Day

by Donna Clark



A few days prior to Easter, I walked into the nail salon I patronize and was directed to station five. My nail technician quickly sat in front of me. I picked a beautiful pink, and she began to work her magic. I'd been her client for several months; however, our conversations were always surface level. She asked me if I had any Easter plans and I, in turn, asked her the same. I was not prepared for her response, and honestly, as I write this, I'm still searching for the words to describe the feeling I had when, in her broken English, she replied that her family did not observe Easter, it was "just another day." Just another day.

Thankfully, I grew up in a Christian home. I was taught the Easter story and hold tightly to the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and of His suffering a terrible death in order to give me life. A few years ago, I dug deeper into the crucifixion and found myself horrified by a physician's description of the agony this Man endured. Yes, those who share this same faith understand there was a beating and a cross, three nails, and a spear. But there's so much more to this event. I discovered there is a medical condition, hematomatidrosis, in which under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress, blood vessels that feed the sweat glands can hemorrhage.

This was the beginning of the suffering as Jesus prayed in the garden that night, sweating great drops of blood as He asked His Father if there would be any other way for mankind to be saved. Then He was taken by night to the High Priest, Caiphus, where He was blindfolded, mocked, struck in the face, and spat upon. After this He was brought before Pilate, the procurator of Judea, who resolved to order a flogging and crucifixion to quite a restless Jewish mob.

Being stripped of clothing and hands tied to a post, the beating began. This wasn't just an ordinary whip, this weapon contained several heavy, leather thongs with metal balls and possibly pieces of bone or broken pottery. As each strike hit Jesus' back, it ripped into His flesh until finally the flesh was falling from His body like ribbons. One particular translation of Isaiah 52:14 states, "Many were appalled at Him, because He was so disfigured that He didn't even seem human and simply no longer looked like a man."

Then with a wooden cross, weighing between 75 to 125 pounds, placed upon His back of open wounds, He began the journey, the distance of over six football fields, to the place of Golgotha. Three wrought iron spikes were driven, one in each wrist and one

in the feet. The spikes were strategically placed in order to cause more pain as the body would rise and fall in order to breathe. Jesus experienced hours of limitless pain; cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps; intermittent partial asphyxiation; and searing pain where tissue was torn from His lacerated back as He moved up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony began -- a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly filled with serum and began to compress His heart. Then with one last surge of strength, He pressed His torn feet against the nail, straightened His legs, took a deeper breath, and uttered His last cry, "Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit." As horrible as this was, I began to think about the emotional pain of the sacrifice He will-

ingly made for all of us. Jesus, who understood the temptations we all face today, never sinned. He never knew the regret, guilt, or shame of a wrong decision or action. But that day, on that cross, I believe He felt the guilt and pain of every sin that man would ever commit. This Man who never caused hurt to another, had to endure the emotional weight of every horrible act that could be inflicted upon another individual. I wonder if the emotional pain was just as difficult, if not more so, than the physical pain he endured. Spiritually, Jesus carried the weight of all the sins of the entire world on His shoulders. He became sin for us and even experienced the feeling of being forsaken by God.

With as many religions as there are in the world today, I've never heard

of anyone who made a sacrifice as Jesus did. Even if there has been, I know of no one who died and then rose from the dead. Mostly, I've never known anyone who had such a love and passion for humankind.

From writing this article, I believe I have found the words that I felt when she spoke, "Just another day," and that would be sadness. Sadness that she doesn't know the Man that I do and has never experienced His love. I pray that my next nail visit will find me at a place where I can question more about her belief and have the opportunity to share mine. Hopefully, she too can experience the infinite mercy of God toward us, the miracle of atonement, and the excitement that an Easter morning brings.

Blessings,

Donna



# Calendar of Events

## Get ready to explore – Athens, AL Historic Walking Tours are BACK in April!

This year's remaining tours:

- April 18: Athens State University District,

Guided by Leah Oakley

- April 25: Beaty Historical District Guide TBD

We are excited to announce the return of FREE, guided walking tours each Saturday during the month of April. Residents and visitors are invited to take part in a casual stroll through historic Athens and learn about our history and heritage. The one-hour walking tours are scheduled to begin at 10AM at the Athens' Visitor Center meeting room with check-in beginning at 9:45AM. You can park at the Visitor's Center next to Big Spring Memorial Park. No pre-registration is necessary. Knowledgeable guides will escort participants through historic neighborhoods and landmarks where they will share the history of the city including history of local businesses and families, architectural styles of the homes and other colorful moments in the community's history. See you there!

## Limestone County Historical Society Meeting April 19

Local student, Ava Slinkard, will share her interest in WWII with the Historical Society the afternoon of April 19 at the Rodgers Center of First Presbyterian Church on the square in Athens. A French Resistance Historical Reenactor, Ava will present her research into the service of five Limestone County WWII soldiers. Especially interested in educating her peers about the War, she has worked with the Alabama Veteran's Museum to gather information for her presentation. Refreshments will be served at 2:30, and the program will begin at 3:00. Everyone interested in the history of our area is encouraged to attend.

## 2026 Fridays After Five Concert Series April 24

Athens Main Street's highly-anticipated Fridays After Five Concert Series will return in 2026 for another year. Don't forget your lawn chairs. East Side of the Courthouse.

## 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.

## 2026 APD Sporting Clay Shoot May 8

Calling all sharpshooters and supporters of law enforcement! We're gearing up for our 2026 Sporting Clay Shoot, and we already know it's going to be a blast. Get your teams ready now and join us at Old South Clays. Every registration and sponsorship supports our APD Tactical Team! 8AM. Old South Clays. 27246 Wooley Springs Rd Athens.

## DMAC Fest May 9

Live music, food trucks, free admission. All proceeds benefit the DMAC Foundation Trade School Scholarship fund. 5:00PM - 9:30PM. Limestone County Courthouse Square.

## Shoals Storytelling Festival May 14-16

Come join us for fun, laughter, and excitement! 2026 Storytellers: Donald Davis, Dolores Hydock, Eric Kirkman, Bil Lepp, Johnny Thomas Fowler, and Jennifer Armstrong. Mark your calendars. Shoals Theater, Florence. Tickets may be purchased at the ticket office at the Shoals Theater or online at shoalsstorytelling.com

## 44th Annual Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo May 15

Come join us for our 44th Annual Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo! You don't want to miss all the family fun of authentic Rodeo action. 8PM - 10PM. Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena. 18118 SR-99, Athens.

## Limestone County Master Gardeners Hummingbird Saturday Class May 16

10 am – 11 am at the Limestone County Extension Office at 1109 W. Market Street (across from the post office), Athens. Learn about these fascinating little creatures, how to attract them, their unique biology, specialized foraging habits, incredible migration flight, and ecological importance as pollinators. Taught by Master Gardener Melissa Kirkindall. Free and Open to the Public.

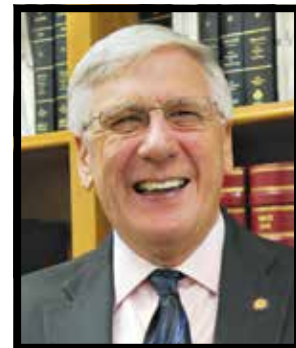
## Historic Decatur Association Garden Tour May 17

1-5pm. The Historic Decatur Association invites the community to its free annual Garden Tour on Sunday, May 17, celebrating the charm, beauty, and character of Decatur's oldest and treasured neighborhoods. The tour is free and open to the public.



## Wrapping Our Arms Around Us

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Monday was one of those days you'll never forget and that you hope you won't ever have to repeat. It was also a day that was filled with grace, beauty, hope, and promise. Two families had tragically lost two family members, and our town was reeling. The funeral for both was held on Monday. Mayor Ronnie and I chatted about several things that were far more positive, but discussion about the loss did (and in my view, needed to) weave itself in and out of our conversation.

I finally asked Mayor Ronnie if there was something he wanted to say in the space of this column, and he grew quiet for a while. Then he said, "In spite of tragedy, whether it's natural or manmade, family—any-

thing, we wrap our arms around people, and that's the most important message we can give."

The mayor went on to talk about how Athens needs to be a "protective community," and by that he meant far more than having excellent first responders, which we do; it means people being aware and ready to help their neighbors.

WKAC AM 1080 had a special presentation of #1 hits from 1968, and while that year Mayor Ronnie had been in the jungles of Vietnam and I had been protesting him doing so, Paul McCartney did a special thing for John Lennon's boy, Julian. He wrote the classic, "Hey Jude." What I had just found out was that the monster hit originally was called, "Hey Jules."



Paul changed the title in order to protect the boy's privacy as he gave him musical advice on how to navigate the Lennon's divorce and the invasion of Yoko Ono. "Take a sad song, and make it better," while not exactly gospel is still really good advice. Sometimes it takes a long time, but it

is possible.

We moved on to things that we look forward to every year; the first being Celebrity Waiter's Night that is held every year at Applebee's Restaurant to raise funds for Relay for Life and the American Cancer Society. People come for dinner, and all

the tips earned by their waiter go toward Relay. There is a friendly contest amongst those who have been designated as waiters, and people turn out in droves. This year the waiters are Mayor Ronnie, Athens Police Department Officer Michael Stainbrook, Athens High School Coach Cody Gross, Pammie Jimmar of the Chamber of Commerce, Athens Fire Department Firefighter Jordan Pugh, Jackie Jackson, Kay Burlingame, and Doug Swaim.

It is also almost time for the annual Sheriff's Rodeo. (See the front cover article.) For more than four decades, Limestone County has had one of the largest outdoor rodeos east of the Mississippi, and all the proceeds go to procure equipment and training for the department.

It had been a difficult but profitable conversation, and there was just one thing left to do, and that was to pray. So we did, fervently, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.





## *Psalms For Sleep*

by Anna Hamilton

*Do you know anyone that gets enough sleep? If you do, I would love to meet them. I, myself, am a horrible sleeper! I think describing my sleep life as horrible is actually being kind. I feel like most everyone wants more meaningful sleep in their life.*

*So, how do you get better sleep? The question I asked myself all the time. Finding rest can be difficult. The Bible is full of verses describing what perfect rest looks like. Taking time to focus on God will help you find a peace which in turn*

*will lead to better sleep.*

*Start by reflecting on who God truly is. Thinking about who God is and all He has blessed you with will help you be calm and your mind clear. Focusing on God's blessings instead of your worries sets your mind on better things and in return focuses you on peaceful sleep. "I reflect at night on who you are, O Lord; therefore, I obey your instructions" (Psalm 119:55).*

*Think about God's promises. As Christians, we*

*continued on page 22*

## *Hearty Stuffed Bell Peppers*

### *Ingredients:*

- ½ cup uncooked white rice*
- 4 medium bell peppers, any color*
- 1 lb. extra lean ground beef, turkey, or chicken*
- 1 small onion, chopped*
- 2 garlic cloves, minced*
- 1 ½ cups tomato juice*
- 3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese*
- 1 tsp garlic powder*
- ½ tsp Italian seasoning*
- ½ tsp onion powder*
- Salt and pepper to taste*

### *Directions:*

*Preheat oven to 350° F.*

*Cook the rice according to package directions. Allow to cool for 10 minutes.*

*While rice cooks, slice the top off of each bell pepper and remove the seeds. Set aside. Remove and discard stem, dice remaining pepper tops.*

*Cook and brown ground beef. Combine cooked rice, ground beef, onion, diced pepper, minced garlic, ¼ cup of the tomato juice, Parmesan, and spices in a large bowl.*



*Spoon the rice mixture evenly into the bell peppers. Place the peppers in a 3-quart deep dish. Pour the remaining tomato juice around the peppers.*

*Cover the dish with foil and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the peppers are tender. Remove from the oven and let cool for a few minutes before serving.*

# Lost In Space... & Rocket Center

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



I got lost at the U. S. Space & Rocket Center today. Okay, not LOST-lost. I mean, I knew I was in Alabama, vaguely the direction of “north,” and where I left my truck.

But I couldn't get from where I was to where I was parked (and it wasn't just me. They had shut the gates). Even though the Davidson Center is one large room with a door at one end, somehow I ended up on the second floor inside the main park, with no discernable way to get down and out to the parking lot.

This is (one of several rea-

sons) why I am not an astronaut—I would probably miss the moon. Or Earth. It's sort of like my golf game: I take a swing and whiff the PLANET I am STANDING on (and the little white ball sitting atop it that I'm actually trying to hit).

To be honest, though, being unable to escape the Space & Rocket Center isn't the worst thing I could think of. I mean, it's the Rocket Center. Many a young person's dreams ignited for liftoff in those halls, including mine back in the day (I am excessively proud of the “Space Camp Alumni”

button on my work backpack). I walked by two men in lab coats with an “Ask A Rocket Scientist” sign by them (so epic!) and am still kicking myself that I didn't stop and chat.

So if I had to be lost (temporarily misplaced) there, I would be fine.

But let me back up a bit. I was there attending a press conference held by the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (the tourism group that consists of the 15 northern counties in Alabama, including ours).

The press conference was wonderful! I got to see so many of my tourism professional folk, which is always a delight. Every time we get together, it is the same sweet song: squeals of “Hey! How are you? I haven't seen you in forever,” lots of photos, and hugs aplenty. Couple that with the announcement of good work earnestly done by people who care in a setting of star-filled dreams...what a beautiful way to spend a morning!

At the conference, AMLA announced the donation of 23 wheelchairs and two Meta smart glasses to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center to help improve accessibility for visitors. The equipment was purchased through grant funding through Alabama's Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys Resource Conservation & Development Council (long name, great people!).

Our AHMAZING partner and Creative Tourism Consultant Leslie Walker had this quote (which I shamelessly copied because it was so fab): “Accessibility doesn't start with equipment. It starts with awareness. But when you pair that awareness with the right tools, like these new wheelchairs and Meta smart glasses, you move from good intentions into real, tangible access. That's when a visitor stops worrying about how they'll navigate a space and can actually experience it.” Ah, I love that. “Awareness” without “action” is like an empty pizza box—full of promise but leaves you hungry.

Anyway, Leslie is one of our favorite consultants. She created Tourism ALL-a-Bama which promotes and enhances the tourism industry within

the state by offering sensory tourism trainings and practice stay experiences for individuals who qualify. PLEASE come see me if you want more info on this. Her program is great!

I am so glad AMLA and ALL-a-Bama share the same deep desire as our Athens-Limestone County Tourism office to make tourism available for everyone. We are working diligently to make sure our trails, hotels, restaurants, and venues are ready for all. Regardless of the challenges one has, everyone should have the opportunity to explore, experience, and thrive. Very few of us will get the opportunity to go to outer space, but we all should have the benefit of exploring trail-space and new-restaurant-space and museum-space.

It's hard to think about possibly needing assistance, especially as one ages (which is why you need to join me on the trails! Age might catch up to us, but it's going to have to hoof it to do so!). The truth is that we, young and old, are one “fell off the curb while taking a selfie” away from not being able to move freely for a while. We also may have friends and family members who need a little sensory assistance or who have other challenges. By making Athens-Limestone -- indeed all North Alabama -- accessible, we are caring for others and perhaps even our future (or current) selves.

I might not be able to find my way to the parking lot at the USSRC, but I see clearly the path before us in tourism: accessibility for everyone, every time, everywhere.



# Save The Date: *The 44th Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Week Begins May 12*

by Bruce Wilson

*continued from page 1*

vities offer something for the entire community while supporting a meaningful cause. All proceeds from the 44th Annual Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo benefit the men and women of the Limestone County Sheriff's Office.

"This rodeo is one of our favorite traditions in Limestone County," said Sheriff Joshua McLaughlin. "It's not just about the entertainment — it's about our community coming together to support the deputies and staff who serve this county every single day. Every ticket purchased, every sponsor who steps up, it all goes back to the people protecting our community."

Rodeo week kicks off Tuesday, May 12, with a free street dance in downtown Athens at 6 p.m. giving residents an early opportunity to celebrate before the main events begin. Attendees can enjoy restaurants and merchants around the downtown area. On Thursday, May 14, slack performance

gives rodeo competitors and fans an additional viewing opportunity ahead of the featured programming. Gates open at 8 a.m. and the competition begins at 9 a.m. Admission is \$5.

One of the week's most anticipated moments arrives Friday, May 15, with the Exceptional Needs Rodeo — a daytime event from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. designed specifically for individuals with special needs. This event gives more than 800 attendees a unique and memorable rodeo experience in an inclusive environment.

Captain Tammy Waddell emphasized how much the Exceptional Needs Rodeo means to everyone involved. "The Exceptional Needs Rodeo is truly one of the highlights of the whole week for us," Waddell said. "Seeing those smiles, watching those participants experience the rodeo in their own way — that's what it's all about."

The main rodeo event takes center stage Friday, May 15 and Saturday, May 16, at the



Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo grounds located at 18118 AL Hwy 99, Athens, AL. Gates open at 6 p.m. each night with the show getting underway at 8 p.m. Daily ticket prices are adults \$17 (advance) or \$20 (gate) and children 12 years and under \$10 (advance) or \$12 (gate). Tickets may be purchased in advance online or at the

Limestone County Sheriff's Office. The performances are produced by Lone Star Rodeo Company, bringing professional-level competition and entertainment to North Alabama.

"Lone Star puts on an incredible show," Sheriff McLaughlin added. "We're proud to have them back again this year. I encourage everyone in Limestone County and the surrounding area to come out, bring your family, and enjoy a great night under the lights."

The 44th Annual Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo is made pos-

sible through the generous support of major sponsors including Pepsi, Lynn Layton Chevrolet, Flanagan Lumber Company, Halsey Food Service, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (Visit North Alabama), Tiffany Pack with Dream Key Real Estate, Legacy Commissary, and Combined Public Communications.

For more information on tickets and event schedules, contact the Limestone County Sheriff's Office or visit their official website and social media channels.



## The View From The Bridge

# Lessons That Make Sense With Time... Yes, Wisdom

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator  
"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters



As I grow older, I find myself returning more and more to the memories of my grandmother — not just the things she said, but the things she didn't say. The choices she made. The boundaries she held. The love she gave so freely. And now, with more life behind me and more wisdom within me, I finally have begun to understand why she lived the way she did.

I honor and cherish the quiet moments we shared. I honor the stern upbringing she gave me. I honor the discipline, the structure, and the love wrapped in firmness.

She would often say, "I wish I was a thousand miles away from here." As a child, I didn't know what she meant. As a woman, I understand it deeply.

Sometimes we get stuck — not physically, but in our minds, in our souls, in the weight of responsibility, in the noise of life. Sometimes we long for a reset, a breath of fresh air, a change of scenery, or simply a moment where the world stops pulling on us.



Even the strongest among us reach moments where we feel stretched thin. My grandmother carried so much — family, work, community, expectations — and she carried it with grace. But her longing to be "a thousand miles away" wasn't about running. It was about rest.

Scripture speaks to this very human need:

**"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28).

Rest is not weakness. Rest is not quitting. Rest is God's invitation to breathe again.

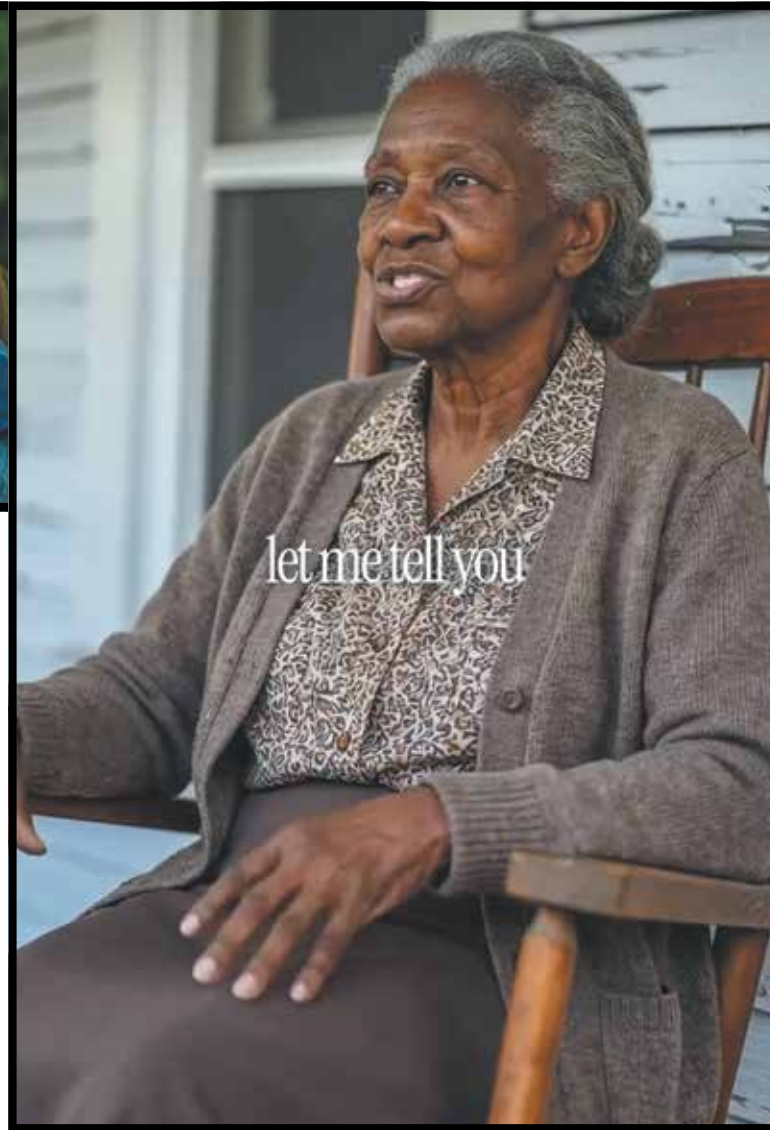
With time, I've learned that wisdom often arrives long after the lesson is

given. My grandmother's boundaries now make sense. Her silence now makes sense. Her decisions — even the ones I questioned — now make sense. She understood something I am only now beginning to grasp:

**"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven"** (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

My grandmother loved deeply, but she also knew how to protect her peace. She knew when to speak and when to be silent. She knew when to pour out and when to pull back. She knew that loving others didn't mean losing herself. That is wisdom.

**"Above all else, guard**



**your heart, for everything you do flows from it"** (Proverbs 4:23)

Guarding your heart is not selfish. It is stewardship. It is survival. It is spiritual maturity.

### A Legacy of Strength and Stillness

As I walk through my own journey, I now see her life as a blueprint — a quiet testimony of resilience, faith, and discernment. She taught me that God meets us in every season — even the ones where we feel stuck, tired, or stretched thin.

**"He restoreth my soul"** (Psalm 23:3).

Sometimes we just need to be "a thousand miles away"...not to escape life but to return to it renewed.

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# Save May 2 & 3 To Come And Connect With Athens

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

*continued from page 1*

successful Home & Garden Show at the same location, and it was thought that the event could be expanded to include more—more vendors, food trucks, inflatables, activities for everyone, and combine it with the Color Run. It is being sponsored by Impact Roofing, and the inaugural opportunity to “Connect” is sure to do an even lovelier job of framing a gorgeous spring season in Athens-Limestone County for you and your family.

Pammie Jimmar and her hard-working crew at the Chamber have been putting in the hours to make this “baby” beautiful, and recently I caught up with her to find out more about Connect. I asked her to tell me some of “whys” behind what inspired this “prize,” and here is what she told me:

*While the Home & Garden Show has been very successful, we began hearing from small businesses that they were looking for more opportunities to connect directly with the community, especially with the many new residents moving into our area who are actively seeking local services.*

*Connect Athens was created to meet that need by bringing businesses together under one roof while also creating a fun, family-friendly environment.*

*By incorporating kid-focused activities, a community Color Run, a dedicated sensory-friendly area for children, and a large ribbon cutting with all participating vendors to kick off the event, we’re not only supporting our business community but also creating a meaningful, inclusive experience that brings people together.*



Let’s talk about the “biz buzz” as it pertains to vendors and the vision the Chamber has for having the equivalent of a two-day market to showcase local wares and services. As a vendor in the business expo component of Connect Athens, you will have the perfect opportunity to:

- *Expand Your Customer Base: Meet hundreds of potential customers from the Athens-Limestone County area and beyond.*
- *Showcase Your Products and Services: Display your latest innovations to a targeted audience looking to support local business.*
- *Network with Industry Professionals: Connect with like-minded professionals and businesses within multiple sectors.*
- *Gain Exposure: As a featured vendor, your business will be promoted through*

*event marketing efforts, including social media, signage, and event guides.*

All are welcome to apply, but we will be prioritizing vendors based on the following criteria:

*Chamber members*

*Businesses who are based in or do regular business in Athens and Limestone County, AL*

If you do not fall under these criteria, you are still welcome to apply, but we only have 50 booths available, and they will go quickly. Apply today at <https://forms.gle/PLCs-h5oQdXddSx3e9>

Here is the itinerary for Connect Athens:

Saturday, May 2 - Ribbon Cutting and 1-Mile Color Run at 7 a.m. - free to all

Saturday and Sunday Sensory-Friendly Hours:

May 2 | 8–9 a.m.

May 3 | Noon–1 p.m.

These special times are designed to make the event accessible to those who need a suitably-designed sensory experience.

General Hours:

Saturday, May 2 | 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sunday, May 3 | Noon – 4

p.m.

Location: Athens Middle School, Intersection of W. Hobbs & US Hwy 31, Athens, AL

I asked Pammie what her “dream outcome” for Connect Athens is, and here is her vision:

*Our goal with Connect Athens is to strengthen the connection between our businesses and our community. When local businesses gain visibility and build relationships with residents, especially those new to our area, it creates lasting economic impact.*

*At the same time, we’re creating an event where families feel welcomed, engaged, and proud to be part of Athens. She said further, Athens Connect is where local comes to life.*

Last of all, here’s a sneak peak of one more thing to do at Athens Connect: Touch-A-Truck—where you do NOT have to be a kid to go see, touch, and sit in all manner of commercial vehicles. And, of course there will be professional supervision of you and your kiddos by the professionals who drive them! So far, there will be a firetruck, a tow-truck, and a police car. See you there!





## Captain's Log

# Easter Babies

by Brenda Wilkerson

Ohhhh... the sweet blessings of the innocent and powerful words that come out of these tiny pie holes! As a driver, there are small ramblings that just go on and on that don't make a bit of sense and it is adorable. I respond with the usual, "Wow" or "That is so cool" or "Tell me more."

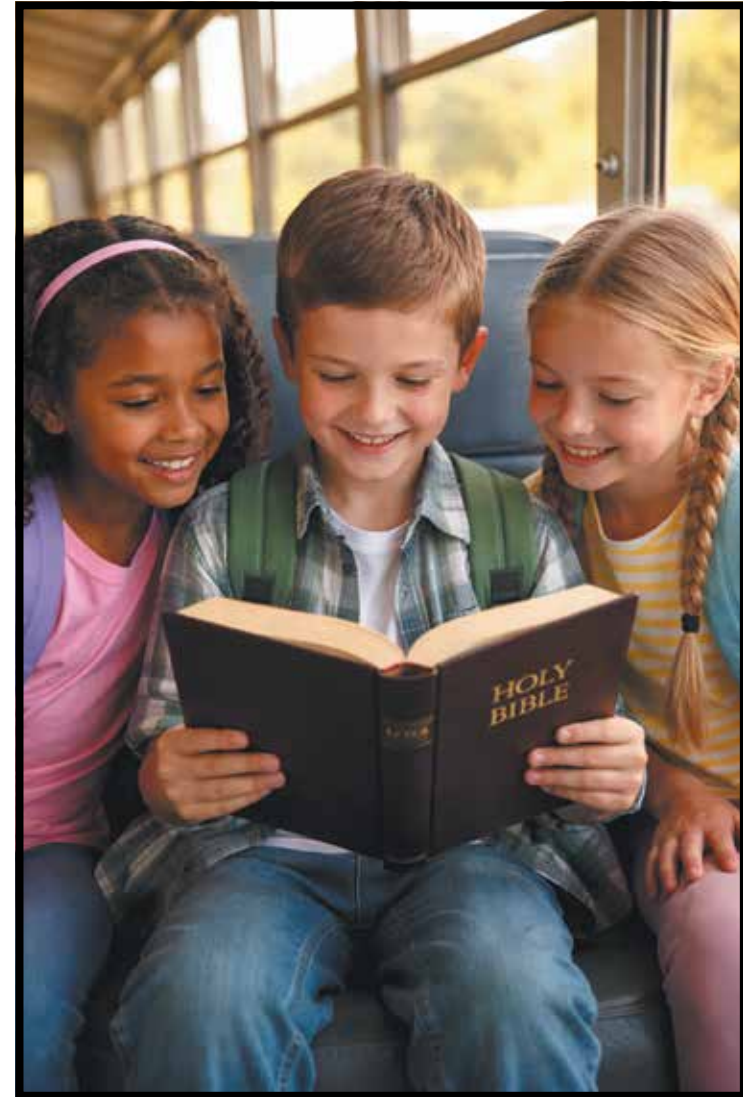
This day was beautifully different. We were down to the last five children on the bus, and I heard one of them begin to talk about what they learned in church on Easter morning. I was a fly on the bus wall as three 5- and 6-year-old young ones talked about

Jesus. They were running over each other with their mini-sermons, and it absolutely made my entire week. Then they started telling me about their Jesus. I responded as someone who is hearing this miraculous event for the very first time. My words reflected curiosity and enthusiasm, which encouraged them to tell me more. They got it almost just right, except for one comment that about broke me out of character. "Jesus died on the cross, they put him in the tomb, and they rolled the stone over him." At this comment, my ears perked up and then I piped

up asking, "They rolled the stone over him?"

The three of them halted for a moment, looked at each other, and began a quick debate to correct where one of them had gone astray. It took 3.4 seconds to change this misinformation and continue telling me the rest of the Easter story with the added blessed edition of a song about the fruits of the Spirit. If you could've seen them from the outside with spiritual eyes, you would've seen a bus glowing with the name of Jesus coming out of the mouths of babes.

Lord, I thank you for these



babies you have strategically placed in my life. I pray for these children. I know they are at or close to the age of accountability, and I thank you for their parents who are taking them to hear more about Jesus each week. Let these human guardians you have put in charge of

these littles know somehow that what they are doing is making a difference. God, you are good! And I see you. Thank you for allowing me to see even more of your goodness through tiny voices behind me, echoing in a school bus.

~Brenda

Celebrating over

# 37 years

## Legacy of Life

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## McGhee On Management

# Ponder Choices In Light Of Who You Want To Be

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

Choices. We all have so many to make in this world. Sometimes – like me with my parents -- it is often to our benefit that we don't know what some of the possible choices are! We never heard of them. Never knew they were available.

EI (Emotional Intelligence) growth is optional, involves choices, costs much, and returns exponentially. What facet of EI are you working on now?

As a small child, I had no idea that it was possible to deliberately disobey my parents.

I was never beaten, belittled, mistreated, nor did I ever feel unloved. Sure, I had scrapes and scratches because I was a little farm girl until age 7. I had two older brothers and all I ever remember was them looking after me. Well, except for the time they put me on a bicycle and pushed me down a steep, bumpy gravel hill so I could finally stay on the bike. I did, too! I made it to the bottom of the big hill, screaming all the way, frozen to the bike, and coasted to a near-stop before I fell gently over. I loved my bike.

But, never in my wildest dreams did I consider that I had the option of disobeying my parents. There was something about the way they led me that made me feel safe. They led with authority in such a way that I instinctively knew they were leading me

for MY benefit. As I got older, I made many more decisions myself. What to wear or to eat, where to go, who to spend time with – these were all choices I gradually gained freedom to make for myself. And, I was allowed to have a childhood because there were things many of my friends were experiencing that I had absolutely no idea existed in the world... because they didn't exist in my world. How eternally grateful I am for the childhood I experienced.

However, as we mature, and develop our God-given personalities to become the best “ME” that we can be, we find there are other opportunities (choices) that we would be wise to uncover. Growing to a more balanced person emotionally, developing a higher EI (Emotional Intelligence) becomes a goal worthy of work, dedication, and focus.

It is well worth the cost to invest time, money, emotions, and relationships in the pursuit of understanding and maturing our emotions and the emotions and relationships with those we love. It isn't easy to be totally honest with ourselves. It isn't fun to find out we have been wrong, or uninformed, unaware, or even downright selfish. All of us want to be right, appreciated, loved, and looked at with perhaps a touch of admiration. But maturity doesn't

come apart from growing pains. It is time we learn for ourselves and teach others that life is a challenging work, and “the sooner we put our shoulder to the grindstone, the sharper our blade will become!” No one ever attains success without passing through much failure, difficulty, trials, and suffering.

Oh, yes, I just remembered: There was that time that my curious brother talked me into following him as our older, more cautious brother warned us to stay away from the bees swarming on the ground. One brother was bee-sting free. The other one ran even faster than I could.

Oh, and there's the time they talked me into asking Mother what that funny 4-letter word meant. (I don't think she ever told me...) And, the time they sent me into the house to get the matches so we could start our bonfire.

And, THEN the time they laughed at me when we were playing chase, and I slipped in the pile of horse dung. (I wonder if they led me that direction.) Memories are flooding back now!

But, I digress... Back to EI for just a final moment. I leave you today with one thought to ponder. (I LOVE that word: ponder. PONDER. Ponder. Any way you say it is thought-provoking!)

PONDER: WHO really controls you? Your



words? Your thoughts? Your attitudes? Your desires? Your choices? You? Or your temper, friends, bad habits, pet peeves, past failures, selfish desires? “Them” or You??? WHO really controls you? Hopefully, God enters into this equation heavily. It is your choice. Choose

wisely. Today's choices determine much of tomorrow's life.

*Detri would love to hear from you. Send your comebacks to: Email: [detrimcghee@gmail.com](mailto:detrimcghee@gmail.com) Facebook: Detri Atkinson McGhee. [www.criticism-management.com](http://www.criticism-management.com)*

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

# Take Me To The River

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

It's finally that time of the year! Every spring, Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful along with TVA hosts a Trash Attack at the river. This year, we are a little later than usual, but one good thing about it being late is it won't be miserably cold. Over the past few years, we have removed over 10,000 pounds of litter from just three roads by the Tennessee River. And guess what...there is plenty more again this year. Volunteers will meet at the Cowford Campground on May 16 at 8 a.m. for directions, supplies, and a gift from TVA!

Why are these river cleanups important? Rivers are vital natural resources that provide drinking wa-

ter, support wildlife, and offer recreational opportunities. However, they are often heavily impacted by litter. Trash left along riverbanks or washed in from nearby areas can quickly accumulate, harming both the environment and the communities that depend on these waterways. Litter cleanups at the river are an essential step in protecting these fragile ecosystems. In the past few years, our Trash Attacks have removed over 10,000 pounds of trash from Dairy Road, Hatchett Ridge Road, and Cowford Road.

One of the biggest concerns with river litter is its impact on aquatic life. Fish, birds, and other animals can ingest plastic or become entangled in debris

such as fishing lines and packaging materials. This can lead to injury, starvation, or death. Cleaning up litter helps prevent these dangers and keeps the river habitat safe for wildlife. Like anywhere that allows public access to land, people take advantage and leave their trash behind. This creates an awful environment and landscape for everyone else.

Litter in rivers also affects water quality. As waste breaks down, it can release harmful chemicals into the water, making it unsafe for drinking, swimming, and fishing. In addition, trash can block water flow, contributing to flooding and erosion along the riverbanks. Regular cleanup efforts help main-



tain a healthier and more stable river system. We have never held a cleanup where trash such as food wrappers, drink bottles, or fishing equipment were the only things left behind. We have found that many people use these areas to dump anything and everything. From dishwashers to tires to furniture, we've found a little bit of everything.

Community river cleanups bring people together to make a visible difference. Volunteers often work in teams to collect and properly dispose of trash. Thankfully, we have the support of Limestone County District 3 Commissioner Derek Gatlin. He, along with his crew, come out on one

of their days off to collect the bags (and piles). This is especially great because it prevents animals and people from tearing open bags and scattering the trash again. We can't thank him enough for his continued help and support. Commissioner Gatlin goes above and beyond for Limestone County.

Litter cleanups at the river are crucial for preserving clean water, protecting wildlife, and maintaining the beauty of natural landscapes. Through community effort and responsible behavior, we can ensure that rivers remain healthy and enjoyable for generations to come.

**TVA** TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Saturday, May 16th  
8am-12pm

Cowford Campground  
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Athens, AL 35611

Supplies and a gift provided for all volunteers!

**Tennessee River Trash Attack**



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## Slinkard On Scriptural Success

# What's In Your Library For Success?

by D. A. Slinkard

*D.A. Slinkard would love your feedback. You can contact him at [da.slinkard@gmail.com](mailto:da.slinkard@gmail.com)*



We are all familiar with the commercials from major credit card companies asking you, “What’s in your wallet?” In 2026, you might hear a similar question through a mobile app, a smartwatch, or even a digital assistant—but the question still sticks. And it got me thinking about the business world. My question for you is this: “What’s in your library?” The saying that “Knowledge is power” still holds true, and my question for you is, “What are you reading... or listening to?”

It is said that CEOs are some of the most intentional learners out there. Today, that doesn’t just mean physical books—it includes audiobooks, podcasts, digital libraries, and even curated learning platforms. Studies still suggest top leaders consume the equivalent of 50–60+ books per year. How does that compare to what you’re taking in? If you want to be great in the world of business—and I know you do, otherwise you wouldn’t have made it to paragraph two—you are going to have to start feeding your mind consistently.

To survive in today’s business world, you must equip yourself with a specialized skill set—or more accurately, multiple skill sets. Think about your business. What skills do you need to sharpen? You

need to communicate effectively—not just face-to-face, but through text, email, and online platforms. You need to grow as a leader because we all know there are bosses and then there are leaders. And in a world filled with noise, comparison, and constant change, you must develop the right mindset to stay focused, disciplined, and forward-moving.

If you are in sales (and let’s be honest, every business is selling something), how much time have you invested in learning your craft this past year? Not scrolling... not watching random videos but intentional learning. It still amazes me how many people in sales roles have never seriously studied sales. How are you going to be effective? It makes me wonder how many people succeed not because of what they intentionally built but because of what I call “accidental success.”

Accidental success means you reached a level of success... but not on purpose. The results came from luck, timing, or circumstances falling your way. But what happens next week... next month... next year... when the breaks don’t fall your way? This is why you must build your library.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach in business. Walk into any bookstore—or open any online marketplace—and

you’ll find thousands of resources on leadership, sales, mindset, marketing, and growth. No matter which format you choose—book, audiobook, podcast, or course—they all require one thing: intentional consumption.

Personally, I still love having a physical book in my hands, pen nearby, ready to underline, highlight, and write down those “a-ha” moments. But I also take advantage of audiobooks while driving or working. Many times, I’ll take one idea and shape it into something that fits my personality and my business. Before long, I’m building a strategy—not from one voice—but from many—and becoming a better leader because of it.

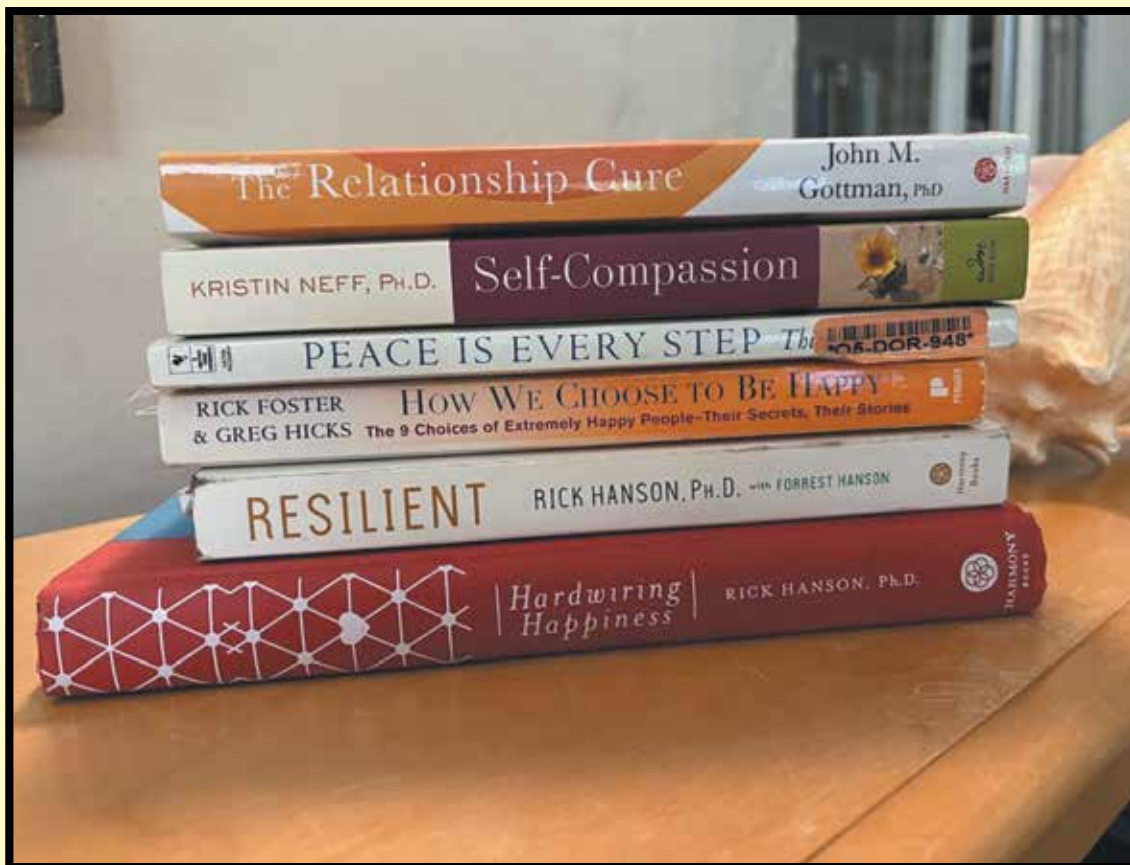
But here is where most people stop—and this is where the difference is made. Once you gain the knowledge, you must put it into action. This is the hardest part because it requires effort, discipline, and change. But it is also the most rewarding because this is where growth actually happens—in you, in your team, and in your business.

As your library begins to expand, your level of understanding will expand with it. Things that once confused you will begin to make sense. Decisions will become clearer. Direction will become sharper. And the more you learn—and apply—the more those “lucky breaks” seem to show up. But they’re not luck... they’re the result of preparation meeting

opportunity.

When you see a book or any learning resource, I don’t want you to see the price tag. I want you to see the potential return. A \$30 book, a \$15 audiobook, or even a free podcast could be the very thing that unlocks hundreds of thousands—or even millions—in future revenue if you apply what you learn.

Start today. Build your library. Sharpen your mind. And change the way you do business and life in 2026 and beyond. We have one shot at life, and when it is over, it’s over. We have no do-overs, and we must live intentionally each day to make the most of our lives. How will you make your life count?





Learning As A Lifestyle

# Conscience, Behavior, And Moral Clarity

by Eric Betts

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

Most of us know the difference between right and wrong long before we can quote a rule about it. A toddler who steals a cookie and hides it behind their back isn't responding to a Bible verse — they're responding to conscience. They know they've crossed a line because something in them recognizes harm, deception, or selfishness. Adults aren't much different. Across cultures and religions, people share a basic moral intuition: cruelty wounds, domination degrades, and dignity matters. This isn't relativism; it's the shared human equipment that allows societies to function long before anyone writes a law or a sacred text.

people today can see the wrongness of slavery, even though the Bible never explicitly condemns it. History shows that many slaveholders felt the moral tension — the guilt, the unease, the need to justify themselves — and reached for Scripture not to discover truth but to silence conscience. The Bible became the hand behind the back, the tool used to hide what they already knew. Meanwhile, the enslaved and other abolitionists, recognized instantly that chattel slavery violated the very core of human dignity. Their clarity exposes the truth: people often know the moral wrong first, and then look for a way to explain it away.

That's why so many

This is why treating the



Bible as a rulebook misses the point. Paul said, "The letter killeth, but the spirit gives life." The

early church lived the message long before they wrote it down. Scripture emerged as a witness to the Christ event, not a manual for every ethical dilemma. Its power is not in providing a verse for every situation but in shaping a moral imagination capable of recognizing justice, love, compassion, and human worth.

For Christians and secular readers alike, this means the Bible's role, and other religious texts, is not to replace con-

science but to refine it. It gives us a story big enough to challenge our biases, a vision of humanity expansive enough to resist cruelty, and a portrait of Jesus that calls us beyond fear into love. The deeper truth is simpler: we know harm when we see it, we know dignity when we encounter it, and we know love when it takes flesh. The Bible doesn't erase that knowledge. At its best, it helps us live it more fully.

# Tennessee Valley Spotlight

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## The Alternative Approach

# What Would You Be Willing To Do?

by Roy Williams

If you got a cancer diagnosis, what would you be willing to do? Cancer is one of the most, if not the most dreaded diagnosis of this century. We have been so inundated with the possibilities of cancer that a lump, a spot on the skin, pain in the abdomen, or even weight loss, can cause us to think, Do I have cancer?

So, the question today is, if diagnosed with cancer, what would you be willing to do to live as long as possible? Of course, the medical profession will offer you what they call the most promising treatments available anywhere in the world. Most likely they will want you to start immediately with surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or do all three. They are quick to tell you that those are your only options. Anything that has not been approved is not acceptable.

When a person is confronted with cancer, their decision-making changes in a fundamental way. The hierarchy of values shifts. What once seemed extreme becomes reasonable. What once seemed optional becomes necessary. This transformation is not random. It follows a predictable structure rooted in fear, hope, identity, trust, and perceived control.

Chemotherapy, for example, is widely accepted despite its known toxicity. Patients understand, at least on some level, that it damages both healthy and unhealthy cells. Yet



they proceed. The reason is not ignorance, but prioritization. The decisions made are often not just the individual diagnosed but many times, family and friends get involved.

Cancer is not perceived as a simple illness. It is interpreted as an existential threat. It challenges survival, identity, family structure, and future plans all at once. The question is not merely what treatments exist, but how far a person is willing to go when the cost of inaction appears to be death.

The medical profession will begin by telling you that they can reduce the size of the tumor. Side effects are reframed as acceptable collateral. Hair loss, fatigue, immune suppression, and organ stress are tolerated because the alternative appears worse. Even then, the possibility of it reappearing must be considered.

So, allow me to go back

to the beginning of this article. What would you be willing to do if you were diagnosed? After or alongside conventional treatment, many individuals begin exploring supplementation. Supplementation represents a different category of action. It is perceived as supportive rather than destructive. While chemotherapy and radiation are associated with killing cancer, supplements are associated with strengthening the body while leaving the immune system intact to fight and heal.

By no means is this article an attempt to stop anyone from doing conventional medicine. Our goal, in the nutritional industry, is not only to leave your immune system intact, but to do everything in our power to help you make the environment within your body impossible for the cancer to thrive. We have had tremendous success by super charging the immune sys-

tem, stopping free radical damage, decreasing inflammation, and balancing the body's pH from the inside out.

At NHC Herb Shop in Killen and Herbs & More in Athens, we have put together supplemental programs that can help you maintain a higher quality of life, increase immune reaction, support normal pH levels, fight free radicals, and decrease inflammation. Over the years those who use this approach instead of modern medicine, report great results. For those who decide to do both, many report less nausea, no hair loss, increased energy, and

faster healing. There is absolutely no reason anyone diagnosed with cancer can't use both methods to fight back.

So, if I were diagnosed with cancer I would begin with IS-3 to boost my immune system. The immune system, when it is functioning as designed by God can recognize and eliminate cancer cells and speed up the healing process. MSM+C and Relief can be used to decrease inflammation while reducing pain associated with some forms of cancer. And pH Plus or Cell Power in your water can restore healthy pH levels. It has been noted that cancer cannot live in an alkaline environment, which is exactly what those products do. When taken as suggested, you are giving your body the nutrients it needs to fight back and at the same time making the environment unsuitable for cancer to survive.

For more information go to [www.nhcherbs.com](http://www.nhcherbs.com) or call 256-757-0660. Our trained staff can answer your questions and remember; we do not charge for our time.

*Your friend in health,  
Roy P. Williams*







GenZ With JP

# The Harsh Reality Exposed By Appomattox

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

On April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant and the Union. Although the war technically lasted for months longer, this occasion effectively brought the Civil War to a close. The face of the South humbly accepting defeat that day in 1865 was more resounding than any official end of hostilities altogether.

I'm a proud descendant of both sides of the war. I have ancestors who both died fighting against each other. Both were gallant in their efforts to preserve their way of life and fought for a cause that they deemed worth dying for. I'm one who loves portraits. I believe they tell a story better than any words written on paper could ever express. It's hard to encapsulate the entire war, not just the surrender, any better than the portrait of Grant shaking the hand of Lee that day.

Grant, with his boots covered in mud and his uniform overwhelmingly casual for an occasion such as this, was the perfect example of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. A notorious drunk and all-around failure in life, he eventually found himself General of the Union Army and was tasked with cracking the code that was Robert E. Lee. Lincoln desired a general who "understood the arithmetic" to defeat the Confederacy, and Grant was exactly that. His humble appearance on that day, while yet standing victorious, told his sto-

ry impeccably. Standing across from Grant was the great Robert E. Lee. With his spotless military uniform, sword in hand, he was the textbook example of chivalry. The fox that haunted the Union for the entire war was finally cornered, yet even in defeat, his presence commanded attention. A military genius with a remarkable résumé, his appearance on that day was fitting. However, his brilliance and military record were not enough. He was a defeated man, but even in defeat, he accepted it honorably. You'd be hard-pressed to fill a room with two more honorable men than Generals Grant and Lee on that day.

As I reflect on this moment and try my best to picture myself in that room, I'm filled with despair. Even after being at war, the leaders of both sides held each other in such high regard. As Lee was leaving that day, conquered and humbled, the soldiers of the Union started to cheer in the presence of Lee. Grant demanded they stop, and later reflected on why. He said, "They were now our countrymen. We did not want to exult over their downfall."

As an American in 2026, this quote will hit you at your core. This represents the fact that, in 1865, after the nation was divided by a war over secession, they felt they had more in common than we do today. Americans today are more divided and distant from one another than ever before. Yes, even more than 1861. Our civil

war is cold, but undoubtedly more intense. The men who fought on both sides of that civil war all shared the same traditional values. They all agreed on what a woman was; they valued their families and cherished the tradition of carrying on their heritage. They were all passionately patriotic for their cause and noble in victory and defeat. Their war was fought upon an issue that was kicked down the road by every founding father that came before them. Slavery was a moral evil that had to be eradicated, not just for America, but for every slave who had their God-given freedoms stripped from them. But despite this disagreement, the men who fought each other were infinitely more in common than we are today.

If you made a road trip around the nation, and drove through the Bible Belt, then to Los Angeles, north through Seattle, all the way back east through Chicago and New York, before finally circling back to Dixie, you'd think you visited five

different countries. Some may say this is a good thing. But if your nation is that diverse, not just in lifestyle, but in worldview, what exactly is the thread that connects us all? What is the unifying belief amongst us Americans? When certain parts of the nation believe in Christian values and hold pro-American beliefs, while the other half believes in pure degeneracy and wishes for America's downfall, how do we proceed? I would argue the answer is not to conform to the beliefs that are antithetical to those that made this nation.

America became one of the best countries in existence due to the influence of Christianity, individualism, capitalism, and the pursuit of happiness. Those who actively fight against these beliefs are inherently working against everything this country is about. As Americans, we must fall back on what we have in common. However, to accomplish this, we must once again agree upon what it means to be an American.

We solve this through open dialogue, but most importantly by getting involved and engaged in the political system around us. The same way that Portland became a new version of Sodom and Gomorrah with rampant drug abuse and debauchery, you can fight to keep your community around you from falling to this by speaking up and taking action.

Perhaps the best quote from that day in Appomattox on April 9, 1865, was by Ely S. Parker, a Native American and an officer in the Army. When Lee noticed Parker, he extended his hand and said, "I am glad to see one real American here." Parker replied, "We are all Americans." For us to once again feel connected as a nation, and to finally end this cold civil war we find ourselves in, we must redefine what it means to be an American. Only then can we move forward and preserve our great nation.

*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)

# Psalms For Sleep

by Anna Hamilton

*aren't promised an easy life, but we are promised to be taken care of always. The Lord loves us and always wants the best for our lives. Even when our world seems impossible to navigate, God is always there and will never fail us. So, when you are awake at night, starrng at the ceiling, focus on the beautiful promise of God. "I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise" (Psalm 119:148).*

*Proclaim God's faithfulness. Saying prayers of thanksgiving offers you true perspective of just how faithful God has been in your life. Not only will focusing on blessings make you at peace for better sleep, it will also make you at peace in your waking life as well. "It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening" (Psalm 92:2).*

*Sing praise to the Lord. There have been so many times when praying just would not work. Words would not come to mind, only songs. So instead of trying to force myself to come up with the right thing to say, I would just sing to the Lord. Words of thankfulness, words of hope, words of love. Singing can calm the body and mind. "But each day the Lord pours His unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing His songs" (Psalm 42:8).*

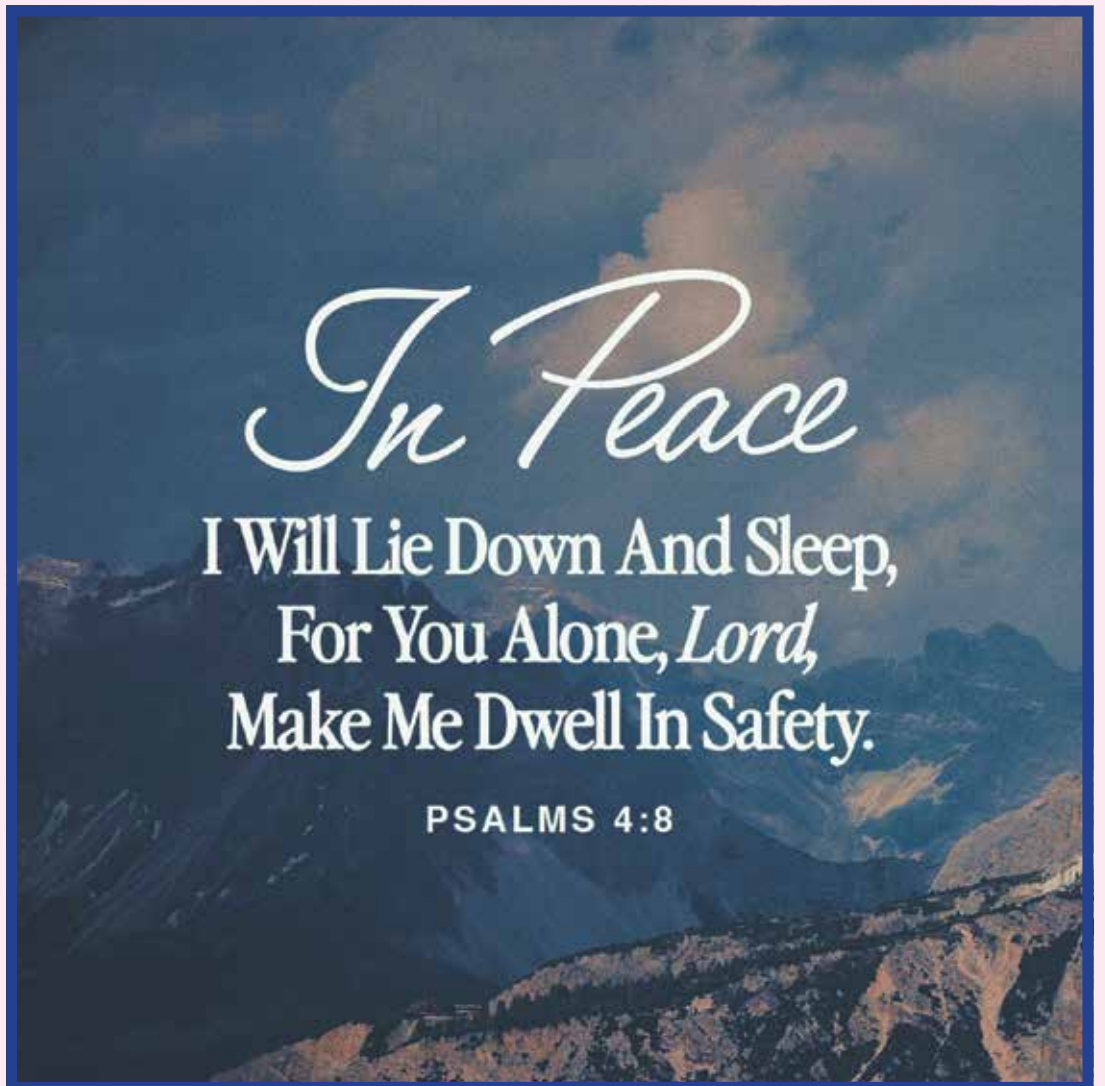
*Thank God. As simple as it sounds, just be thankful. Instead of staying in the mindset of worry and what all you need in your life, focus on thanks. Being a thankful person provides so much more peace than being one full of worry and never being satisfied. Be thankful. "I rise at midnight to thank you for your*

*just regulations" (Psalm 119:62).*

*The next time you find yourself lying in bed unable to sleep, I hope you try reflecting on these few principles. Reflect on who God is, think about God's promises, proclaim God's faithfulness, sing to God, and thank God. Doing these things not only will provide you better sleep, but will also provide you a better tomorrow.*

*This week's recipe is the perfect one-dish dinner. It is a crowd pleaser, easy to prepare, and full of yummy ingredients. I hope you love it as much as my family does.*

*"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).*



# Move Better - Live Longer

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



Walk into most traditional gyms and you'll see a common pattern: people moving through workouts on their own, piecing together exercises from memory, social media, or something they watched online. There's often little structure, minimal feedback, and almost no real progression. Compare that to a CrossFit class, and the difference in how movement is taught becomes immediately clear.

At CrossFit, movement is coached—not guessed.

The foundation of CrossFit training is simple but powerful: mechanics, consistency, then intensity. In other words, we teach you how to move well first. Only after you can perform a movement correctly do we ask you to do it more often. Then—and only then—do we increase intensity through load or speed. This order is intentional, and it's what separates effective training from random exercise.

Take something as simple as a squat. In a typical gym setting, someone might load up a barbell based on what they think they can handle and start moving. Maybe their knees cave in, their chest drops forward, or they're not hitting full depth—but without feedback, they don't know. Over time, those small inefficiencies can lead to stalled progress or even injury.

In a CrossFit class, that same squat is broken down and taught. A coach will cue proper stance, depth, and posture. They'll watch each rep, provide corrections in real time, and ensure the movement is sound before adding weight. The goal isn't just to complete the workout—it's to move better every single day.

The same applies to more complex movements like deadlifts, presses, or Olympic lifts. Learning these from a YouTube video or an Instagram clip might give you a general idea, but it can't replace the value of a trained coach watching you in person. Online content is one-size-fits-all. Coaching is individualized.

An in-person coach sees what you can't. They catch subtle breakdowns in technique, adjust movements to fit your body, and help you avoid reinforcing bad habits. More importantly, they accelerate your progress. Instead of spending months figuring things out on your own, you're improving every time you step into the gym.

There's also an accountability factor. When you're on your own, it's easy to cut corners—shorten range of motion, rush through reps, or avoid movements you're not comfortable with. In a coached environment, those shortcuts disappear. You're held to a standard, and that standard leads to better re-

sults.

Form matters. It's not just about safety—it's about effectiveness. Proper movement allows you to generate more power, recruit the right muscles, and get the most out of every workout. At CrossFit, we prioritize movement quality because we know it's the foundation for everything else.

Anyone can work out. But not everyone is training with purpose.

That's the difference.

Let us guide you along the way. Give me a call at 256-777-8275 and let's talk about your health and fitness journey.

- Coach Nick  
Owner / Head Coach  
CrossFit Athens  
256-262-7884

[www.crossfitathens.com](http://www.crossfitathens.com)

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