

May 1 - May 14, 2026

Athens Now

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Carissa's Corner



The Hand That Holds You...
As I walked into the sterile room of the rehab facility, I locked eyes with my grandmother. A smile spread across...
Page 5

What Makes Ronnie Roll

Fear No Evil...
While the weekend had been wonderful, and we'll get to that, the elephant in the room was yet another attempt on the life of President Donald Trump...
Page 8



Cooking With Anna



Popping Into Spring...
In honor of spring "popping" up all around us, this week's recipe is a delicious popcorn snack, Apple Cinnamon Popcorn....
Page 9

Clean, Green And Beautiful

What A Wonderful World...
Oh, Earth Day, you always shine. The 2026 Earth Day Expo was nothing short of amazing. We had so many people come through, and it looked as though...
Page 16



Re-Elect Limestone County Commission Chairman Collin Daly On May 19

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Lifelong Limestone County resident and Commission Chairman Collin Daly is running for re-election and is asking for your vote on May

19. Collin first ran successfully for the position in 2018 and was then unopposed in 2022. He is running again for reasons that will be discussed further into this advertorial. That being said, if you were to ask him if he ever saw him-

Continued on pages 12-13



Limestone County Commission Chairman Collin Daly and his wife, Penny Williams Daly



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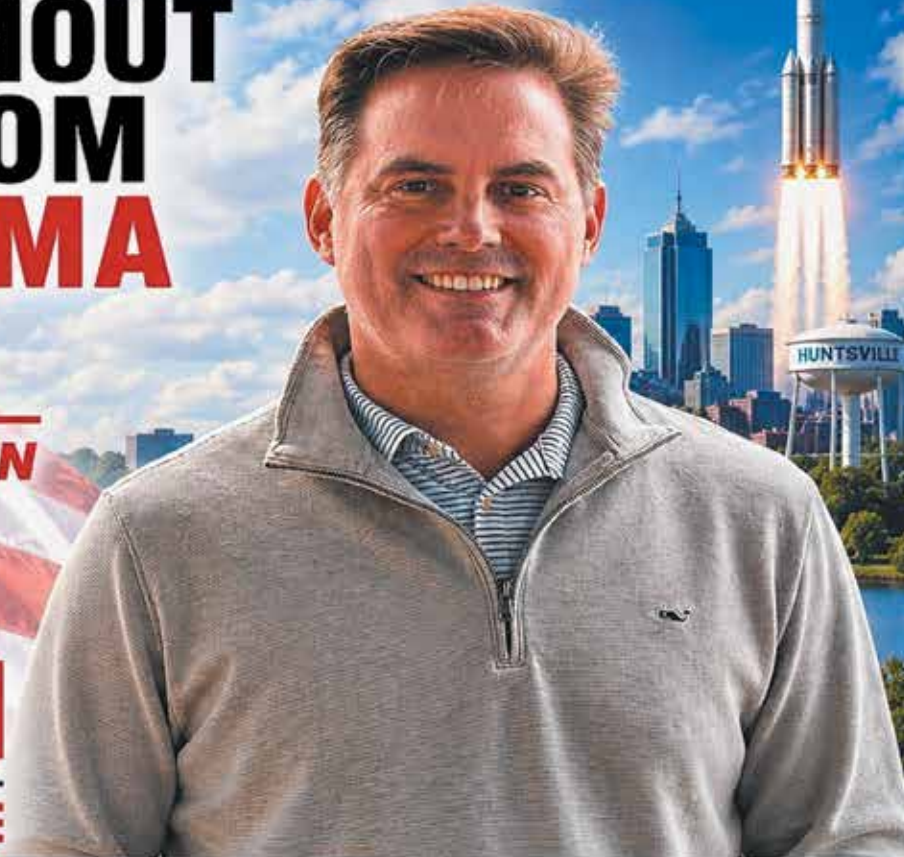


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Contents

Publisher's Point 3
All Things Soldier 4
Carissa's Corner 5
Calendar Of Events 6
What Makes Ronnie Roll 8
Cooking With Anna 9
From The Tourism Office . . . 10
Cover Story 12 - 13
Captain's Log 14
McGhee On Management . . . 15
Clean Green And Beautiful . . 16
Slinkard on Success 17
Learning As A Lifestyle 18
Alternative Approach 19
Mental Health Minute 20
GenZ With JP 21
Health And Fitness 23



Publisher's Point

Why You And My Crew Make Me Love What I Do

In 2011, when my husband Steve and I bought *Athens Now* from Wayne and Deborah Huff, I was tossed into the pool of publishing without a foam noodle or inflatable wings, and the largely self-taught swimming lessons and some taking on of water began. However, the one who kept me afloat from the very first edition was Jonathan Hamilton, our uber-patient production design guy. Now, over 300 editions later, I have the great honor to tell

you a beautiful back story that I think will brighten your Mother's Day, even if that day is a tough one for you.

Over the years, a grand team of *AN* writers has coalesced and solidified, and when I say I love them, I mean it. I brag on them all the time on my radio show on WKAC, have them on the show often to showcase their works or events, and every two weeks thank them for their work when we put out another edition.

One of our writers is Carissa Lovvorn, who has the column known as "Carissa's Corner." Carissa is an extraordinarily talented young woman, a mom, a wife, and an award-winning children's author. On Tuesday she called me up in tears, and told me the following story.

Her grandmother was getting close to passing and Carissa had written an article about her, which you can read on page 5. Carissa and her sister were involved in caring for her, and Carissa very much wanted her grandmother to see as well as hear what had been written about her for what is most likely going to be her last Mother's Day. The only problem was that paper had not begun to have been "put to bed" and sent on to the printers. After explaining the situation, Carissa asked so tentatively, "Is there any way we can get my article done early?" I promised her I would check with Yvonne Dempsey, our copy editor, as well as Jonathan. Both people are busy with jobs, businesses, volunteer work, family, and hectic schedules. But I knew they would move heaven and earth to grant Carissa her request if at all humanly possible. In Jonathan's case, that was going to be a challenge. You see, he had just been in the ER with kidney stones, and had passed two in the night. To say the guy was uncomfortable was an understatement. After he told me of his predicament, I said, "Look, I need you to tell me the absolute truth; if you can't do this, I completely un-

derstand, and I know Carissa will, too." A couple of seconds passed, and then I heard that unfailingly kind voice quietly say, "I can do that."

I called Carissa back, gave her the good news and the tears began on both ends. She was grateful for our crew making it happen, and I was grateful for the chance to have a small part in bringing joy as a wonderful, godly grandmother was getting closer to seeing her Savior face to face. Jonathan and Yvonne got 'er done in a ridiculously short amount of time, and all I did was hit "send."

Carissa opened the attachment on her computer, quietly exclaimed that it was perfect, and I said, "Get going, your grandma is waiting." The next day she told me all about it via text, which we captured as a screenshot to illustrate what happened. And none of this could have happened if I did not have the technology and the totally amazing people who make up *Athens Now* work so hard and well to bring you "Information and Inspiration" the first and third Friday of every month.

And now you know one of the zillion ways in which I am blessed right out of my boots. It's my crew, and YOU. Happy Mother's Day!!

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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The End Of Osama, 15 Years Later

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



When President Barak Obama announced here in the States on May 1 (May 2 in Pakistan) 2011, that Osama bin Laden had been killed, there were plenty of people here in Athens-Limestone County who were without power, water, or a house in which to lay their heads, let alone a radio or a TV to hear the news. The “Killer Storm” of April 27, 2011, had just roared through; our community had swathes of destruction that looked like bombs had been dropped, and we were busy working through the aftermath of a disaster that takes people and communities from “reeling-to-recovering.”

It was a remarkable time and experience, albeit one I would rather not repeat. So, as word began to surface that Navy SEALs had successfully breached Osama’s compound in Pakistan and he was no longer an existential threat to our country, there was relief, to be certain, but our focus was on sifting through stuff, sending hope, and coping with shock. Nonetheless, after Osama died, the SEALs gained even more popularity in our culture at large, although there was understandable disapproval amongst much of the spec ops community that anyone “broke the code” and went public

re: allegedly firing the kill shot that took Osama out. That just ain’t right.

In 2021, a decade after Osama was killed, we were reeling again, this time during the COVID pandemic, and there was marginal mention of the operation in what would have been the standard ten-year commemoration of such an important covert operation. By that time, much more information about what had happened and had been found at the compound in Pakistan had become de-classified, and there were some fascinating things that came to light. One was that Osama had written extensively in his

diary that he was afraid of being found and killed by Americans. It reminds me of other dreadful creatures such as Adolph Hitler and Saddam Hussein. Past all the bluster, flawed humans often cave in to fear when they are facing a doomed eternity.

At Osama’s compound, there were other indications of a highly conflicted existence, not to anyone’s surprise. One was a rather extensive collection of pornography. The other was a collection of Disney movies, including Cars, and Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs, along with video games as diverse as Super Ma-

rio Brothers and Resident Evil 2.

Other pieces of intel made it possible for the raid to go off without a hitch, even though one of the helicopters experienced a soft crash. The first was tracking a courier who would come and go from the compound. Another was finding out the code name of the courier, and another was the ingenious use of a ruse that involved giving Hepatitis B shots to the whole community, which gave a nurse access to Osama and could thereby confirm through the tiniest amount of blood and resulting DNA that he was, in fact, the guy inside. Once the compound had been identified through satellite imagery, a life-size model was built so that the SEALs could practice the raid and be familiar with the layout before they even got there. Osama was shot through the eye with his rifle at his side, and was buried at sea in under 24 hours according to Muslim traditions. At this point I could just say, “The End,” and I would be tempted to do so because I believe evil always eventually gets bested, eventually. However, I want to use this space to say “Thank you” to all the ones, civilian and military, whose names we will never know and whose actions we’ll never be able to celebrate—thank you 15 years later for ending an evil man and protecting us once again.



The Hand That Holds You

by Carissa Lovvorn



As I walked into the sterile room of the rehab facility, I locked eyes with my grandmother. A smile spread across her face as she realized I had come for a visit.

“Hey, Carissa,” she exclaimed. “I didn’t expect to see you today!”

I pulled up a chair beside her bed to get closer. I reached for her hand and talked with her until she eventually drifted off to sleep. With it still firmly clasped in mine, I didn’t dare move for fear of waking her. I sat there, gently stroking her frail skin, thinking back on all our years together and how much her hand resembled my own.

I’ve learned so much from her. Practical things, like how to crochet, paint, sing, and make her secret recipe fudge, readily come to mind. More importantly, she’s shown me how to be a wife through sickness and health, how to give selflessly through service and ministry, and how to love the Lord without fear of rejection from others.

She has helped shape my definition of a mother and the type of mother I strive to be.

According to Merriam-Webster, the verb mother means “to give rise to,” “to produce,” or “to care for tenderly and nurture.”

The Bible provides us with key aspects of the role of mothers. They

are called to be nurturing, teachers of wisdom, reflections of the image of God, faithful, and willing to sacrifice for their families.

The Bible also offers wonderful examples: Sarah, who represented God’s promise through her hope; Hannah, a mother who prayed fervently for her child; Timothy’s mother and grandmother, whom Paul praised for passing on their faith; and Mary, the mother of Jesus, whose obedience and devotion helped

raise the One who would fulfill God’s plan for the world.

Motherhood is a sacred ministry. One that is not confined to the relationship between a biological mother and child. It can come in the form of a grandmother, sister, aunt, stepmother, mother-in-law, spiritual mother, friend, or even a female mentor. As women, we have the privilege to learn from other mothers while nurturing future generations.

I know Mother’s Day can

be difficult. The loss of a mother figure weighs heavily on that day. Some deal with the absence of a mother due to death or abandonment, while others deal with infertility or the loss of a child. So many emotions are tied to the role of mothers in our lives. I have my own share of sadness surrounding the day. However, this year, I’m determined to focus on the blessings. I plan to remember and honor all those who have helped shape my life.

Only God knows how long I will be able to hold my grandmother’s hand, but that special moment is forever etched into my heart.

I would like to wish my grandmother and all mothers a Happy Mother’s Day.

May we never overlook the love found in a mother’s hand, and may we learn to carry that love forward—into every life we are blessed to touch.

*Blessings,
Carissa Lovvorn*



Calendar of Events

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.

Herbs and Tea Class May 12

Athens Limestone Public Library. 11am. Learn about herbs you can grow at home and drying herbs. Join us for tea tasting! Free and open to the public.

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.

Washington Update May 26

Join the Athens-Limestone County Chamber of Commerce for an event featuring Congressman Dale Strong, as he provides a comprehensive Washington Update. Get firsthand insights into the latest developments from Capitol Hill, including key legislation, policy changes, and the pressing issues that are shaping the future of our nation. 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Athens State University. 300 N. Beaty St., Athens.

Limestone County Master Gardeners present Exploring Beautiful Northern Alabama June 20

10 AM at the Limestone County Extension Office, 1109 W. Market Street, Athens. Discover the natural wonders that are found in Northern Alabama including beautiful waterfalls, natural springs, and massive rock formations. Instructor for this class is Bob Goodwin, Master Gardener, Tennessee Naturalist and Alabama Master Naturalist. He has explored the area's trails and byways for over 20 years and will share his knowledge and photos with you. No registration necessary. Free and open to the public.

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.

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Friendship Methodist Church - Lucas Ferry Road. Free to the public!



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What Makes Ronnie Roll

Fear No Evil

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

While the weekend had been wonderful, and we'll get to that, the elephant in the room was yet another attempt on the life of President Donald Trump, and we most definitely needed to discuss it. And, you can know that at the end of our time together, the mayor and I prayed for the man not only because we are commanded to, or that it is simply the right thing to do. Both of us have lived through several "successful" assassinations, and we know from experience that it harms the whole nation when a leader is killed, whether you are a member of their specific political party or not. We also spoke of the "thin silver thread" of rights that are enumerated in the First Amendment as guaranteed by the Constitution, and they do not include obscenity in a public place directed at a duly elected leader. The conversation regarding

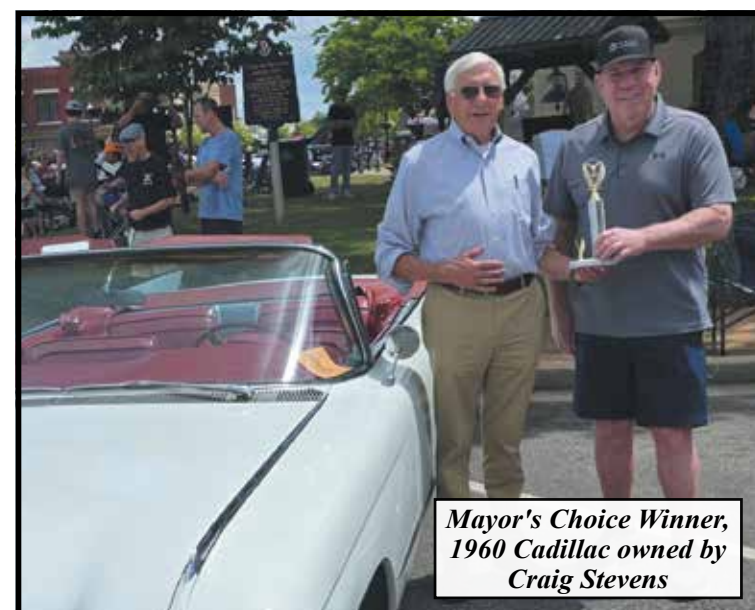
these adventures over the weekend led us both to the fact that some days it is really tough to obey the biblical commitment to "fear no evil," especially when it seems like the world has gone nuts.

However, it is true that the antidote to fear is always going to be love, and it was a discussion of the love that shows up continually in this city and county. It comes through all of the things that we do to build community and take care of each other, and that "prescription" seemed to be just what the doctor ordered.

Last night was the Survivor's Supper for our ongoing Relay-for-Life celebration and campaign. Athens-Limestone is always hard at it when it comes to fighting cancer, and it shows. "We just support folks," Mayor Ronnie said simply. A week ago,

we had our first 2026 Fridays After Five event on the Courthouse Square, and while I haven't seen the numbers, it "felt" like it was the biggest one yet. "Juice (the band) always brings the Juice," said the mayor. For my part, it was jammed and took way longer than usual to get to the food trucks, but no one seemed to mind.

Earlier in the week, we had some semi-fierce storms, and as always, our utilities crews made fast work of power outages. We lost power at our house, and while we had been prepared for that possibility, you "don't know what you got 'til it's gone," and we were amongst the few hundred who only had to wait for a few hours to be back in biz so we could produce the paper. The mayor always expresses thanks to our crews and considers them to be First Responders, worthy of



Mayor's Choice Winner, 1960 Cadillac owned by Craig Stevens

honor. I agree.

On a lighter note, but still with some heft, the mayor had gotten the chance to participate in the Derby Party, which was the fundraiser for the Boys and Girls Club. The Kentucky Derby is this weekend, and he chose an appropriate straw hat with a blue band and a complimentary tie to participate in a fundraiser for a most worthy cause.

As we continued down the list of positive celebrations that had just occurred in our town, the mayor burst out, "Earth Day! Did you see the caricatures and the snakes and the raptors?" They had, in fact been amazing, deserving a shout out to everyone who made these things free, fun, and a way to bring love to our town. There had been a car show, and the Mayor's Choice Award went to a 1960 Cadillac convertible with the iconic fins.

Food City is coming along and hopes to open in July, and the new Publix on Mooresville Road is on its way. When the first Athens Publix opened in 2008, it was a big risk for every-

one. No one could have anticipated that we would ever need three and a Food City. Which brings us back to the ever-present topic of growth and growing well. The mayor spent April 22-24 in Lexington, KY, at the Southern Municipal Leadership Conference Summit, which comprises 14 states— Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and wait for it, Maryland. "Maryland?" I said with a question in my voice. "They wanted us to adopt them, and we did," said Mayor Ronnie. He is due to assume the presidency of the organization soon, and already is getting calls from other cities and states as to how Athens does...X, Y, and Z. "Mostly they are about budgets and revenue streams," he said. Those things are above my pay grade, for sure, but prayer isn't, so we did what we always do, and that was to pray. And then, once again, it was time for Ronnie to roll.





Popping Into Spring

by Anna Hamilton

Everywhere you turn, you can see the signs of spring. New buds on the trees, daffodils blooming, birds singing in the trees, bees buzzing. Springtime has arrived. With new life popping up from the ground, I'm reminded of something my mom would always say to me growing up. "Popcorn is prepared in the same pot, in the same heat, in the same oil, and yet the kernels do not all pop at the same time. Don't compare yourself to others. Your turn to pop will come!"

Not all flowers bloom at the same time; not all trees put out buds at the same time. My favorite trees are crepe myrtles and they do not bloom until summer. If

nature has this figured out, then why are we so slow to catch on! The daffodils don't compare themselves to the rose bush. The pear tree doesn't think less of the slow blooming crepe myrtle. The fact that all of nature blooms at its own pace should be example enough for us to stop putting so much pressure on ourselves to be just like everyone else.

You are right where you are meant to be! Enjoy where you are. I have spent a good part of my life wondering why parts of my life didn't just "happen" to me the way it did for other people. Now that I have turned 40, I realize that my life is happening the

continued on page 22

Apple Cinnamon Popcorn

Ingredients:

*4-6 cups plain popcorn, popped
2 Tbsps. coconut oil, or butter
1 Tbsp. honey
½ tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. cinnamon or apple pie spice
1 cup apple chips (dehydrated apples)*

Directions:

In a small bowl, melt coconut oil or butter with honey, vanilla, and cinnamon or apple pie spice. Whisk to combine.

Drizzle over popped plain popcorn and toss to coat. Toss mixture with apple chips. Enjoy!



Costumes

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



If there is one word that describes the last month of my life, it is “costumes” (though “cake” would also be a top contender). There are my April Historic Tour costumes, including the two new amazing and incredibly period accurate dresses (if the term “period accurate” includes polyester machine lace and an Amazon Prime account) I bought. I eventually realized that one of them was the same dress one of our guides wears. Truly she looks better in hers than I do in mine—we’ll just have to make sure we don’t wear them on the same day. If we do, we will just blame it on limited choices of bolt fabric at the mercantile.

There’s the costume I enthusiastically volunteered to create in a moment of unreasonable confidence, then fretted about for 2 months, and finally started today. It’s

due in 5 days. I don’t even have all the materials yet. I *thrive* under pressure, I tell ya.

Then there are the three formal dresses I ordered online for the Chamber Gala. One went straight to the “cosplay” pile. It was only \$18 so that’s fine. Another is a rich teal velvet with bright sparklies on the hips, and the final one is a burgundy, sashed, spangly, netted formal with a mini train. I have no shoes for either, and the event is tomorrow. If I wear the super long one with the mini trail, I could probably just wear my sneakers.

Then there’s the Recovery Girl costume I designed in my head on Saturday during an insomnia-fueled burst of creativity at 3 a.m., then ran to Walmart to get supplies at 6 a.m., started putting it together at 8 a.m., and then re-

alized by 8:12 I could never get it done in time for the Convention happening that day.

And lastly there’s the Star Trek costume I wore instead, reminiscent of Troi’s 60’s Trek throwback era (Live long, fellow nerds, and prosper).

At one point during all these costume changes, I briefly thought about how people act differently in various situations; they sometimes feel weird about it, but I realized that might not always be terrible, actually. The way I act when I dress up in my hoop skirt and crinoline is significantly different than the way I act with my 50-lb. ruck on the Richard Martin Trail. A giant hoop skirt billowing below a cinched waist instantly summons a curtsy at the gentlemanly kiss of my kid-gloved hand. If I tried to curtsy with

my ruck on, I’d probably pull a hammy. And if anyone tries kissing my hand on the trail, it better be a deer.

The way I act in my fabulous new teal-velvet-with-white-sparklies “formal costume” at the Gala will be completely different than I will in my Recovery Girl costume. At the Gala I will be (hopefully) regal and (hopefully) elegant and (hopefully) not accidentally stain my underarms blue and have bobby pins shoot out of my hair across the dinner table, which happened at another formal dinner (Yes, I’m serious. No, don’t ask.)

And I definitely won’t be able to act like Recovery Girl at any of these other places. She’s a character from an anime called My Hero Academia and heals people with a big loud smooch and hands out gummi bears...I’m almost certain that big loud

kissy noises would *absolutely not* be appropriate at the Gala and would be dodgy on the trail, though I do hand out gummi bears ad libitum.

But it’s all still me—sometimes elegant, sometimes rugged, sometimes genteel, sometimes smoochy, sometimes nerdy (okay, okay, always nerdy). Each time I dress up in a costume, I get to play with a new facet of my human experience. And I love it! It’s not hiding me, it’s revealing what’s been inside me this whole time.

So, what does this have to do with Tourism you might ask? Just this: Tourism and community events give you a million ways to explore different facets of *you*. Today you might want to dress up as “rugged you” and head to the trails. Or maybe you want to dress up as “ancestor you” and be a character at the Cemetery Stroll (we’re looking for more folk to re-enact, hint, hint). Maybe you want to dress up as “sporty you” and try pickleball. Maybe you want to dress up as “runner you” sign up for our Red White & ZOOM Rocket Pop 5K. Maybe you want to dress up as “elegant” you and don a top hat and cane or a spangly gown. Scholar you? Artist you? Food taster you? Golfer you? Writer you? Musician you? Biker you? Introvert you? Extrovert you?--We have a venue for every “you”!

Follow our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/exploreathensal>) to see the events in town. Come see me at the Tourism building and we’ll make a great plan. Find us (and tag us!) on Insta. Let’s get you exploring all the different facets of YOU.

Mwahh!



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Re-Elect Limestone County Commission Chairman Collin Daly On May 19

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

self as county commission chairman when he was a kid, his answer would have been a firm, “No.”

Collin’s father, the late Gary Daly served as the Limestone County Commission Chairman from 1986-2000, and two terms as District 1 Commissioner from 2006-2014. Gary also served as captain of the Ardmore Police Department, and an officer for Limestone County Sheriff’s Office and Athens Police Department. At the time, Collin had no interest in ever being involved

in holding public office. He worked the family farm and also for Utilities in the City of Huntsville, as well as for Water and Sewer here. People asked him to run in 2018, people asked him to run again in 2022, and people are asking him again. Though he knows better than most from watching his father how tough public service can be, he feels that he still has a job to do for the people of Limestone County. His vision is to leave the county better than he found it, and he knows that his efforts will affect his own kids now and someday his grandkids.

Collin will tell you that running in 2018 was the hardest decision he ever made, and he still wants to serve. I asked him, “Why?” back then as well as recently, and his answer was simple. A strong sense of calling and a fierce love for Limestone County and its people were and are at the heart of his decision, then and now. He also knows that on May 20 –irrespective of the outcome of the election -- he will still serve our county any way he can. Collin also understands that the role of chairman is much more of being a moderator than a manager. Alabama law lets him vote



in the event there is a tie, but other than that, it is up to the chair to make sure that things are heard fully

and plans to move forward are in alignment with “law and love for the county.” He also was quick to point out that his family basically told him that he “had to run” for the good of the county.

To date, here are some of things the Limestone County Commission has been able to accomplish since Collin has been at the helm.

- The Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives took over the Limestone County Event Center, and now houses both the Museum as well as the Event Center.
- Limestone County purchased and re-purposed land in Athens to make a new Recycling Center
- Solid Waste is now an “in house” service
- The County now has its own Animal Shelter
- Limestone County now has its own attorney, Mr.





Drew Dill

- Limestone County Sheriff's Office has added new officers
- Limestone County Sheriff's Office is also bringing back the D.A.R.E. program—Drug Addiction Resistance Education
- 333 miles of roads have been re-paved in Limestone County as a result of 29 million dollars secured and invested for that purpose
- Paved the Richard Martin Walking Trail in memory of Brady Jordan

Brady Jordan was a wonderful young man who faced physical challenges and used the trail a great deal to walk with his dad and enjoy the abundant beauty of Limestone County. Brady has passed, but getting the trail upgraded so that everyone can use it—parents with kids in strollers, perhaps those who want to be out and about but needed something that provided better footing—has been one of Collin's "passion projects." "You have to have several 'passion projects' when you have this job because they keep you going, and working on them helps build relationships, which will always be the most important part of this job," he said.

For anyone in public service, quality of life and public safety are non-negotiables. Limestone County has increased services for outlets such as senior centers as well as a new storm shelter. "I want us to be festive," said Collin, "and make Limestone County like our own Hallmark movie." He then added, "I don't want to see us run over by anyone or anything." The simplest way to put it was this: "I want us to be who we say we are."

I asked him about some of his "dreams" for the county, and they are all orbiting around a desire to grow well. As the fastest-growing county in the State of Alabama, there are real and legitimate concerns about losing the hometown qualities that make us unique, and whenever there are those kinds of issues, the challenge becomes finding a way through to "good growth." All of it must stay in keeping with laws, regulations and the desire of the people. "Listen, take it in, and figure out the next step," he said.

One of the things he would like to see in order to ease traffic and help "keep Athens-Limestone County stay Athens-Limestone County" is a traffic loop beginning on Elm Street.

Another is to create something along the lines of the

"One Stop Shop" in the form of a municipal building that is present at Athens City Hall, where you can have all of your services in one place. "We've outgrown our building," he said, referring to the iconic and historic building on Washington that currently houses the Commission. The Courthouse Annex on Clinton is in the same boat. New facilities need to be created in order to have the county hum along while we grow. "Some things get done better when your back is against the wall," said Chairman Daly.

In August of 2026, Chairman Daly will assume the position of president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, and currently he serves as vice-president. It is something he is looking forward to, and has greatly enjoyed



his term as VP.

Below are some things that Chairman Daly has said in order to let people know more about what he has done, and why he is doing it:

Limestone County is home. It's where I was raised, where I raised my family and where I'm committed to protecting our values while responsibly managing growth,

supporting law enforcement, and being a good steward of every taxpayer dollar. That is why I am asking for your vote on May 19 for Chairman of the Limestone County Commission.

If you believe Collin Daly is the man for the job, then return him to the chair he currently holds, and he humbly thanks you for your choice.

*** Collin ***
DALY
 COUNTY CHAIRMAN

"Limestone County is home. It's where I was raised, where I raised my family, and where I'm committed to protecting our values while responsibly managing growth, supporting law enforcement, and being a good steward of every taxpayer dollar. That is why I am asking for your vote on May 19th for Chairman of the Limestone County Commission."

-Collin Daly

VOTE: MAY 19TH

*** Collin ***
DALY
 COUNTY CHAIRMAN

LIMESTONE COUNTY EXPERIENCE
 Raised on his family farm, second-generation public servant Collin Daly has served as Chairman since 2018, bringing local experience, statewide leadership, and strong faith and family values.

MANAGING GROWTH & PROTECTING OUR VALUES.
 Collin has led Alabama's fastest-growing county with responsible, conservative leadership: supporting jobs and small businesses, expanding services, and growing the budget without raising taxes.

INVESTING IN ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE
 Collin has secured millions for critical road widening, intersection upgrades, and resurfacing projects to keep Limestone County moving forward.

BACKING THE BLUE & PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES
 Collin has strengthened public safety by adding law enforcement personnel and ensuring first responders have the resources and support they need.

PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE
 From a new community storm shelter to continued investments in parks and senior centers, Collin is protecting our quality of life for generations to come.

VOTE: MAY 19TH



Captain's Log

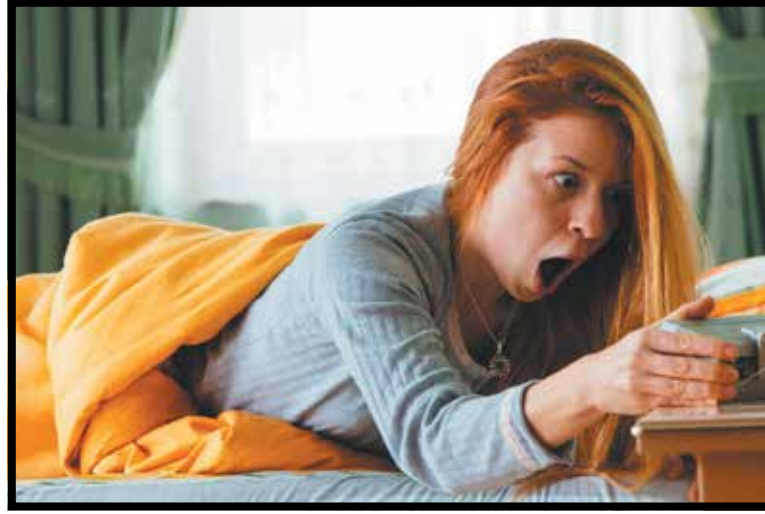
Spit Handshake

by Brenda Wilkers

I woke with a panic. Oh no! It was light outside. I reached for my phone to check the time. Dead. Dead as a doorknob! My mind rushed back to the only time I was late to work was when I stayed up late and fell asleep watching the news when the horrific hurricane Helene was ravaging North Carolina and Tennessee. My phone had fallen off my nightstand and under my bed - not charging. With that familiar panic, I was late - again!

When you are late as a driver, you shift the universe at your school - and not in a good way. Drivers are on the radio desperately working together to try

and pick up their kids and yours, parents are calling in, admin is radioing bus drivers trying to get an estimated time of arrival for the parents, elementary babies are waiting longer at their stops dealing with bus abandonment, and the grumpy rush of the parents who throw their kid in their vehicle to go wait in the carline which puts each individual family in a time crunch and a stressful emotional spin. Not a good start for anyone. On top of that, it's a whole public fiasco played in real time over the radio with three other local school's drivers listening, who share that same channel. It will definitely leave



a mark on your ego! Only one late event and your reputation is pretty much poop. (Drivers don't hold grudges -- we've all made mistakes and help each other out.) So now you know why I panicked.

I've never gotten ready so

fast in all my life. I believe it took me three minutes to throw on something, mostly what I wore yesterday, and a bra under my pajama shirt. As if I didn't need any more reason to freak out, my phone was still very much dead. Charging in the car, it took about two minutes to finally get enough juice to turn on, and voice text the lead driver to apologize and ask her to start my bus to save me some time. I saw the three dots as I knew she was typing and was ready for her sarcastic reply. But what she typed stopped me in my tracks and deflated my panic in two words... "It's Sunday." Talk about a brain explosion!

How do you come back from that one? I was both relieved and horrified at the very same moment. Now my reputation as a driver took a different shift. Being late is a human excuse, but trying to go to work on Sunday and wake text your lead driver at 6:20 a.m. on a Sunday? That's next level crazy -- and she would LOVE to gossip to everybody with exaggeration and colorful words. I thought about making her

a cake for Monday morning to request to keep this between us, but I decided to swallow my pride, take the hits, and laugh along while threatening to take a few days off for my mental health.

So when Monday morning rolled in, I was braced and ready. But as I pre-checked my bus, I received a phone call from her, my lead driver, the same one I was bracing for. "Girl, you done rubbed off on me! I slept in! Can you start my bus for me?"

I responded with a sympathetic, "Absolutely!" I finished up the conversation with one statement. "I won't tell if you won't tell."

Our promise to keep our secrets among just the two of us was so deep and sincere that if we were standing face-to-face, we might've just spit in our hands with a handshake of forever silence about the unfortunate events of the last 24 hours.

Lord, thank you for the moments that keep us humble, on our toes, and ready to roll with the punches with laughter. I am in awe of the work you've done in my life because my reaction could have been angry, blame everything but me, and hold self-demeaning conversations in my head. I could've been the victim of a dead phone, desperate need of a mental break, and could have chosen to be in a horrible mood. Your work is evident, and I am forever grateful.

~Brenda

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McGhee On Management

Choose Positivity

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

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is usually the topic of this column whether totally clear or implied. Sometimes it addresses situations, criticisms, or attitudes that contribute to the growth or demise of EI. A high EI is actually more important in the workplace and in family relationships than a high IQ.

One of the most destructive enemies of EI growth is negativity. "Experts say it takes anywhere from 5-12 positive interactions to erase the damage from just one negative interaction. They noted that it is more important to get rid of the negative than to experience the positive.

When I was a teenager, one of my teachers said, "You know, Detri... You could be Miss Arkansas if you would just lose 10 pounds." I think she meant it as a compliment, but I heard, "You know, Detri, you would be kinda cute if you just weren't so fat." I realize now that especially back then in the Dark Ages, a girl had to be uber-thin to win that beauty pageant. However, I never really lost the feeling that I might be kind of cute if I just wasn't so fat.

Negativity is hard to overcome. Even as a "seasoned adult," I remember how I felt that day. Years later, I found some of my clothes from back then in an old trunk, and I definitely was not fat. But, what



I DO know now is that everything comes into our lives for a reason. If I had chased a Miss Arkansas/Miss America crown, many things that made me the me I am now would have likely been far different. What if I had WON? I might be arrogant, snooty, unsympathetic toward all those other poor "ugly people." Or, what if I LOST? I might have become depressed at my "failure." I cared a lot more back then about what other people thought. I let their opinion (or even what I imagined their opinions were) determine what I said or tried to do.

For problems or criticisms, working through that process, analyzing The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly; working with what was given to us; and not giving up raises

our EI level quite a few points. After one business decision where I should have stood up more forcefully but didn't, I saw firsthand the cost of compromise or fear. Since then, I quit being afraid of stating my thoughts and opinions. However, I did not lose my understanding that an employee abides by the ultimate decisions of those in authority over them. Another reason I prefer to be self-employed... or retired!

So, how about you? What difficult situation have you been in that you can look back on and learn some very valuable lessons for the future? Have you failed to express your ideas at work for fear they will be unwelcome? What needs changing in your life to make you a bet-

ter, happier, more productive person? What habit(s) of loved ones make your life harder because you won't speak up and let them know how you feel? That's where playing "What if..." can come in handy. "What if I tell her I really don't like (prefer) chicken spaghetti?" "What if I tell him that his leaving the empty candy wrapper on the counter right beside the trash can, makes me feel like he thinks I am his maid, not equal?" Then decide with yourself how you can share that with them in the kindest and most productive way.

Honesty really is the best policy. But never is it an excuse to hurt or unnecessarily criticize others. Habitually negative, grumpy people often use the old lines, "Well,

that's just the way I am. I just speak my mind" or "I'm just saying what everyone else is thinking and won't say." Just know this: that is NOT a mature mind. And, frankly, if your mind is full of hate and needless negativity, garbage, or filth, go out in the desert alone, let it spew out, and kill the cactus. But, you have no right to spread that manure in the presence of others. And someday you will be called out on it -- to your stunned amazement -- and probably follow up with accusing them of being thin-skinned, or worse. Sadly, you may lose a great friend, or a valuable employee, or close family member. Again, your choice. But you can't choose the consequences.

Grow your EI skills with grace, positivity, honesty, and kindness. Fewer regrets, greater joy.

Detri would love to hear from you. Send your comebacks to: Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com Facebook: Detri Atkinson McGhee. www.criticismmanagement.com

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

What A Wonderful World

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

Oh, Earth Day, you always shine. The 2026 Earth Day Expo was nothing short of amazing. We had so many people come through, and it looked as though everyone was having a great time. From perfect weather (a real surprise), to shows and vendors, everything was spectacular. We all work incredibly hard to make sure that the event is a success, but the real heroes are our sponsors. They continue to make it possible for all of this to happen.

Athens State University goes above and beyond every year. From providing the space as well as the tables and chairs to setting it up, nothing is lacking! Amy Garrison, Donald Evans, and Necedah Henderson work incredibly hard helping us plan everything down to the very last detail. And it doesn't stop there, the Athens State Biology department brings rep-

tiles for attendees to interact with, they bring tree seedlings to give away, and they offer Tree Tours of the campus's historic trees. This year, their English department was able to host a writing workshop with Wild Alabama during the event. ASU Teach had a scavenger hunt and nature bingo. We really can't put into words how much they do for the Earth Day Expo.

Limestone County Water and Sewer Authority has been absolutely marvelous over the past few years. They bring us Steve Trash-Rockin' Eco Hero! Kids love his shows -- they are filled with magic, music, and education! From recycling to ethical environmental habits, he teaches it all. He's a crowd favorite for sure. He has a show on PBS, if you've never seen it, you're missing out!

This year, Indorama brought two new things -- Caricature artist Lash

LaRoux and Wild Adventures' spider monkeys! Lash had a line all day long! I didn't see anyone that wasn't thrilled with their portraits, and we hope that this is something that people keep for years to come. The spider monkeys from Wild Adventures were a total hit! Kids and adults were lined up to see the monkeys and interact with them. And those monkeys could not have been sweeter!

This was our second year for the TBAKI Earth Day Art Contest. This may be my favorite part of Earth Day now. We had well over 100 entries this year, and I am so grateful that I did not have to judge! There was some stiff competition for sure. I love to see how creative kids can be; we have so much talent in Limestone County. We are so grateful that TBAKI has chosen to sponsor this part of the Earth Day Expo, and we hope that we can continue to grow this event every year.

Harmon Scrap Metal chose to sponsor our Kid's Crafts booth this year! We were able to have several crafts to choose from, inside and outside! From tissue paper flowers to bee crowns to birdfeeders, we had a little bit of everything! And we need to give a shoutout to our wonderful volunteers who ran these booths, Diane Risdon and Amy Cotton. We truly couldn't have done it without you!



Redstone Federal Credit Union and Bank Independent brought you the Rise Raptor show and booth. Curt and his crew work extremely hard to keep their rescue going, and we are so happy that they are able to share their amazing raptors with us. Maximus is the most beautiful, stoic creature and he steals the show every year! They

are a nonprofit like us, so they work hard every day to keep everything running. We are so happy that we are able to contribute to their cause.

We can't wait to begin planning for next year, and we hope you make sure to put us on your calendar!



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Growth Is A Choice

by D. A. Slinkard

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



Sometimes I believe I did not move far enough south. The weather in Alabama can be so confusing—one week we are bundling up from a cold snap, and the next we are stepping outside to sunshine and warm spring air.

As the seasons began to change and everything started coming back to life, it got me thinking. In the winter, when things grow cold, we naturally adjust—we turn up the thermostat, we add layers, we respond to the environment. But what about when things begin to warm up outside, yet something inside of us still feels dormant?

Spring is a season of renewal. Flowers begin to bloom, trees regain their leaves, and life that once looked dead begins to show signs of growth again. But what happens when we notice that, while everything around us is coming alive, we are still spiritually or internally stagnant?

I am reminded of the words of Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation 3:15–16, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

This can apply to every area of life—our spiritual walk, our relation-

ships, our work. There are seasons when we are not burning with passion the way we once were. We are not completely cold, but we are far from being on fire. We become comfortable in a lukewarm state.

Spring reminds us that growth requires intention. Just because the season changes does not mean everything automatically flourishes. Some things must be pruned. Some things must be planted. Some things must be cultivated with care.

The truth is that you know when something inside of you has changed. Others may not see it right away, but you do. When your passion fades, when your focus drifts, when your desire weakens—you recognize it. Yet many people continue living in that condition, settling for a lukewarm life.

We wonder why there is so much struggle, why there is so little progress—and often it is because we have grown comfortable with just getting by. We have lost that internal fire. What once burned with purpose now sits idle.

But just like spring calls everything back to life, there must come a moment when we decide to come alive again.

We will all face seasons where moving forward feels difficult. But

growth does not happen by accident; it happens by decision. You must decide to wake up spiritually. You must decide to pursue growth. You must decide to cultivate what matters most.

So what should you do if you find yourself in a rut? First, be honest with yourself. No one knows your life better than you do. Identify the areas where you have become stagnant. Acknowledge where growth has stopped. Ignoring those areas will not fix them—it will only delay the moment you are forced to confront them.

What has helped me is to make a list of the areas that matter most—spiritually, relationally, and personally. Then, one by one, I evaluate

them honestly. Where have I stopped growing? Where have I lost focus? Where have I allowed things to drift?

Spring is the perfect time to do this kind of evaluation. Once you identify those areas, it is time to take action. Growth requires effort. Renewal requires intention. You cannot expect change without doing something different.

This is not something to rush through. If you truly want to see change, take your time and be thorough. And when you know what needs to be done, do not delay. Just like a garden will not grow without care, your life will not flourish without attention. No one else can cultivate your life for you. No one else can

make your decisions for you. The responsibility is yours. So as everything around you begins to bloom this spring, make the decision to grow as well.

Will it be an easy task to accomplish? Absolutely not... and if it was easy then everyone would be doing it. Our focus needs to be on becoming the best version of ourselves. Our competition is not other people, but our goal should be to become better than who we were the day before. Even if I can just make a 1% improvement daily, after ten days that would put me at 10% better than I was. Take the one percent challenge and see how your life changes.





Learning As A Lifestyle

Personal Growth As An Ethical Imperative

by Eric Betts

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

Leadership today demands more than charisma, instinct, or inherited authority. It requires a disciplined commitment to self improvement that is not optional, decorative, or “nice to have.” In a world where communities are navigating rapid change, misinformation, and widening gaps in opportunity, leaders who refuse to grow become liabilities to the very people they claim to serve.

Education—whether formal study, professional development, or intentional reading—is not an add on to leadership. It is the ethical

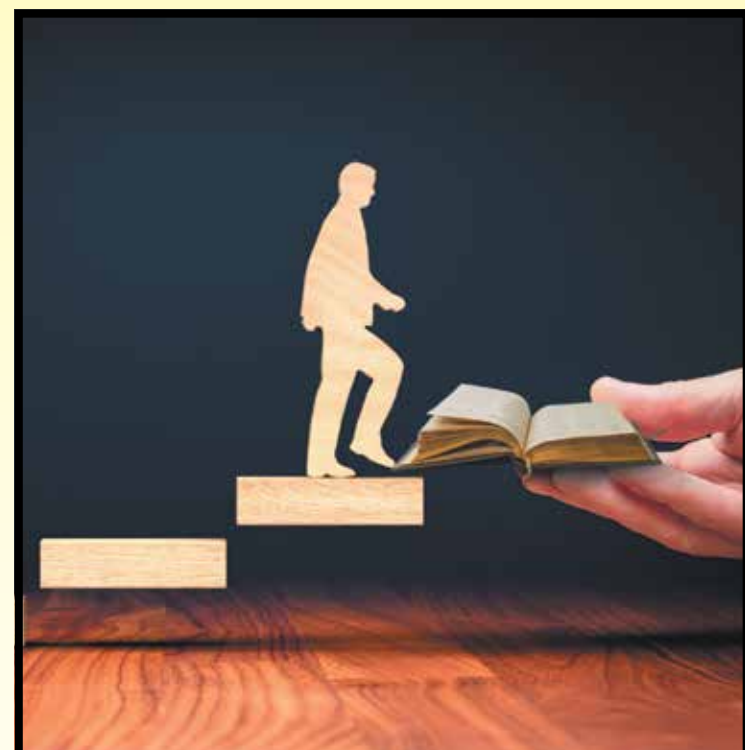
foundation that keeps leaders honest, humble, and capable of guiding others with integrity.

Too often, we treat learning as something leaders pursue only when convenient, when the schedule lightens, or when a crisis forces it. But communities suffer when leaders operate on outdated assumptions, unexamined biases, or stale skill sets. Growth is not merely personal enrichment; it is stewardship. When a leader sharpens their mind, expands their understanding, or deepens their expertise, the benefits ripple outward. Teams

become more effective. Organizations become more just. Communities become more resilient. The leader’s development becomes a public good.

This is especially true in professions that shape people’s lives—education, ministry, health-care, public service. In these spaces, the refusal to grow is not neutral; it is harmful.

A leader who stops learning eventually stops listening. A leader who stops listening eventually stops serving. And a leader who stops serving eventually becomes more commit-



ted to protecting their position than empowering their people. Professional development, then, is not about climbing ladders or collecting certificates. It is about cultivating the moral imagination required to lead with clarity, compassion, and competence.

At its core, self improvement is an act of love. It says to the people we lead: “You matter enough for me to stay sharp.” It says to our teams: “Your work

deserves a leader who is prepared.” And it says to our communities: “Your future is too important for me to lead on autopilot.”

When leaders embrace learning as an ethical imperative, they model the very transformation they hope to inspire. They remind us that growth is not a phase—it is a posture. And in a world hungry for trustworthy leadership, that posture may be the most powerful gift we can offer.

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The Alternative Approach

Most Successful Health Care

by Roy Williams

“Nutrition -- the building materials that supports the entire body at a cellular level.” Without enough nutrition, which includes all the vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids and proteins your body uses to repair and replace every cell, your body will become diseased (not at ease). As one example, without enough silica you will die. Another example is vitamin C. Our bodies cannot produce any vitamin C. It must come from our diet. In all reality most nutrients must come from our diet.

Today, I’m going to cover the Hayflick limit, discovered by Dr. Leonard Hayflick, which says, normal human cells divide about 50 times before they stop. That math works out to a potential 120-year lifespan. Now isn’t that interesting. Genesis 6:3 says the same thing: “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever... his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” Ladies and gentlemen, that is not a coincidence. Basically, God is saying that He engineered us for an average of 120 vibrant years, yet our average lifespan is only around 78.

In all reality, we are dying decades early from lack of proper nutrition, toxicity, and acidity. The Journal of the American Medical Association admits that we are experiencing a shockingly large number of drug-related deaths. They are

not talking about illegal drugs. Their study is from patients taking their prescribed medications as instructed by their doctor. In all reality, we are overmedicating by treating the symptoms of disease instead of fixing the root problems.

What most people are never taught is that large numbers of people are reversing long-term illness with targeted nutrition instead of using drugs to make them more comfortable while the disease continues to slowly shut them down. This isn’t theory – it’s what we’ve seen for 25+ years at NEWtritional Health Care with people who use our patented formulas such as the Healthy Heart Combo, Joint Combo, Immune Combo, Bone Combo, or Sugar Combo just to name a few. Over the years, we have developed the combinations of nutritional support that allows the human body to operate the way it was designed.

It’s not genetics alone. It’s toxicity. We’re drowning in processed food, acidic drinks, environmental poisons, and especially pharmaceutical drugs. Those drugs don’t rebuild – they suppress. They shut down pathways, mask symptoms, and create new problems that need more drugs. The result? Cellular damage, mitochondrial burnout, chronic inflammation, and accelerated aging. It also accomplishes another



important system for the pharmaceutical industry. It creates a sick nation, addicted to their drugs, that pays them literally trillions of dollars each decade.

Contrast that with NEWtritional Health Care LLC. When you supply the body with the exact raw materials it needs – bioavailable vitamins, minerals, herbs, enzymes, and targeted botanicals – cells can repair, rebuild, and function the way they were designed. No suppression. No new diseases created. Just restoration at the mitochondrial and DNA level.

Using our NEWtritional approach, we give the body what it’s starving for. Our patented formulas deliver concentrated, absorbable nutrients that support cellular regeneration. For example, our Healthy Sugar Combo strengthens your pancreas and endocrine system while reducing inflammation, protecting your vision, kidneys, and circulatory systems so you don’t end up with vision loss, kidney failure, or neuropathy. Of course, MSM+C is part of that combo which combines specific herbal extracts and antioxidants that help the body clear toxins, stop free radical damage, and rebuild at a cellular level. Every Combo is



designed to support the targeted system so it can function normally and repair itself naturally.

This isn’t placebo. It’s basic biology. Every cell in your body is constantly in a state of repair and replacement. Skin cells regenerate every 28 days. Bone every 10 years. Your body is literally rebuilding itself constantly. When we give our bodies junk or drugs that interfere, our cells become weaker and less capable than the cells that were there before. Give your body premium raw materials – the NEWtritional Health Care way – and you get stronger, more resilient cells that push back against the Hayflick clock. Every Combo slows down the aging process by decreasing inflammation, stopping oxidative stress and supplying specific nutrients

that support that specific part of the body.

If this makes sense and you are tired of following the doctors’ orders for more prescriptions, more specialists, and more surgeries, then maybe it is time to consider checking us out at Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen or going to our website at www.nhcherbs.com. Recently, we had a customer ask how long we had been in business. We told him, over 26 years. After doing his research, he got back with us saying, he could not find even one complaint about our products or service. For real health care, trust the company with the best reputation, NEWtritional Health Care LLC.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*



Overcoming Avoidance

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“You cannot find peace by avoiding life.”

- Virginia Woolf

One of my areas of expertise is anxiety. I am a master at it! I have used my own struggles and challenges with anxiety, stress, worry, fear, apprehension, concern, unease ... whatever you want to call it, as examples to help my clients. It has taken me a while to figure out that overcoming my anxiety has required learning to face the situations which I would normally avoid. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) calls it Opposite Action. Opposite Action is an emotion regulation skill that is a deliberate attempt to act opposite of your emotion urge. For example, if you feel sad, rather than isolating yourself from others, you would choose to get out and do something to keep yourself busy. My favorite strategy involves an acronym to help you remember the steps. FACE stands for Find, Action, Coping, Evaluate. Let's take a look at each of these steps in detail.

If you tend to be an anxious person, you may have noticed that you get caught up in the cycle of anxiety. This cycle begins with anxious thoughts and feelings. The cognitive behavior therapist would attempt to convince you that your thoughts or beliefs initiate your feelings. In other words, how you think about someone or something determines how you feel about that someone or something. For example, if I see a dog running toward me, my belief will determine how I

feel about the dog. If I have been bitten by a dog before, my thought would be that this dog will bite me and, therefore, I will be afraid. If this dog reminds me of my own dog, my thought would be that this dog is friendly and I will be happy. When I experience anxiety, my go-to action is to avoid the situation or person. This is when Opposite Action can step in to divert this process. Otherwise, I go from anxiety to avoidance to leading a restricted life, which makes me feel even worse. And feeling worse make me anxious! And round we go again.

By using FACE, I have been able to work toward overcoming some of my fears and tendencies to hide and escape. F stands for find. Find and identify what you would like to be able to FACE, rather than avoid. Begin by writing a list of several targets to face, then choose one that is not too distressing.

For example, I would like to be able to feel less anxious when presenting to a group of people. Fear of public speaking is common. And if you are like me, you go through all the “what ifs”..... what if I trip on the way to the podium, what if I stumble over my words, what if someone asks me a question I can't answer, etc. A stands for action. Decide on the steps you need to take. I find it helpful to break it down into manageable chunks, like steps on a ladder. Start with step one on the bottom rung and list the clear movements needed to reach the top of the ladder. In my example, before a presentation, I put together a detailed plan for what I want to say and how I want to say it...and then I practice my presentation over and over. Each rung is a step in the process. C stands for coping. Write down all your coping strategies and use those that are

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going to be the most useful for that situation. What are your coping skills? It helps to have a master list of skills and ideas. In my example of public speaking, one of my most effective coping strategies is using aromatherapy to ground me and calm me down before I present. And finally, E stands for evaluate. After you have taken all the steps, review how things went. What worked? What didn't go so well? What could you do differently next time?

The goal of FACE is to learn to overcome your anxiety by


decreasing your tendency to avoid, leading to a more full and purposeful life. Give it a try!

P.S. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. What are you doing to take care of your mental and emotional health?

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.

FACE

Fear & Avoidance



FIND YOUR GOAL

ACTION TO TAKE

COPING STRATEGIES

EVALUATE



My Prayer For President Trump

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

The fall of almost every great leader has been the result of the same sin: pride. Napoleon, after conquering Europe, was ultimately humbled after deciding to unnecessarily invade Russia. King Saul disobeyed Yahweh and became a prideful king of Israel. After mercilessly trying to kill David, he found himself dead on his own sword, surrounded by enemies. Even King David, a man after God's own heart, fell to the sin of pride when he laid eyes on Bathsheba. This led to the death of his first son, and the sword never departed the House of David. This isn't just the sin of great leaders, however. Pride is the foundation of sin itself. When we sin,

we spit in the face of God. We claim to know better and choose to do things our way. Repentance requires acknowledging our sin and humility to step back and allow God to take over once again. This is something I have had to do countless times, and will have to do countless times more.

As a leader of a nation, you are appointed by God. He is entrusting you with an entire nation, and this is not something to be taken lightly. But just as God uses you to accomplish his will, he will drag you down when you become too proud. Just ask Nebuchadnezzar. This week, Trump rightfully drew the ire of Christians both nationwide and globally for his post depicting himself as

Christ. Amidst the uproar, he took it down while claiming he thought it was him as a doctor. JD Vance then said that it was taken down after Trump realized no one was understanding the joke. This is no joke. Blasphemy is a fruit of pride and has no place in a "Christian" administration. This post did not happen in isolation, though. Paula White, a spiritual advisor to the President, compared Trump to Christ at an Easter luncheon. "Jesus taught so many lessons through his death, burial, and resurrection. He showed us great leadership. Great transformation requires great sacrifice. And Mr. President, no one has paid the price as you have. It almost cost you your life. You

were betrayed, arrested, and falsely accused. It's a familiar pattern that our Lord and Savior showed us," she said.

This is the problem: Trump is surrounded by evangelical Christians who are propping him up as the Messiah himself. This is what leads to such posts where he is portrayed as Jesus. He is then shocked that anyone would have such a problem, because he faces no righteous pushback. The bottom line is this. President Trump is a force of nature. The Republican Party desperately needed Donald Trump when he arrived in 2015. There was no leadership, no courage, and no one who could forcefully take back the reins of our nation until Trump arrived. I firmly believe God used Trump to achieve his will in our nation. For example, the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* was a phenomenal step forward in protecting the unborn. God has a plan for America, and Trump was a part of that plan. That being said, President Trump, it has always been bigger than you. The key to being an effective leader for Christ is to recognize that your role is to be a vessel through which the Holy Spirit works. Not only is the will of God much bigger than you are, but the office of the presidency is as well. Regardless of your tremendous resolve and determination, which has allowed you to be such an effective tool for God, you are not God.

The sooner Trump realizes this and humbles himself, the sooner he can be used by the Holy Spirit for good.

The Kingdom of God needs a warrior in the White House. The leader of the free world must be a strong person who can withstand the weight of the position. If there ever was a man up for that job, it's Donald Trump. But what the Kingdom of God needs more than just any warrior is a warrior for Christ. This requires humility, self-awareness, and repentance. These are three things I believe President Trump needs more than ever at this time.

The beautiful thing about all of this is that there's still time to make a U-turn. Trump knows better than anyone how to make a comeback. However, until that comeback occurs and his pride subsides, he cannot be an effective vessel for the Holy Spirit. This is my prayer for our president. Take a look in the mirror, recognize your sinful humanity, and repent... before God decides to humble you himself.

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)

Popping Into Spring

by Anna Hamilton

exact way it is meant to happen. I often look around at other people who seem to have it all but are struggling with things that I do not see. I'm sure they look at me and wish they had what I have.

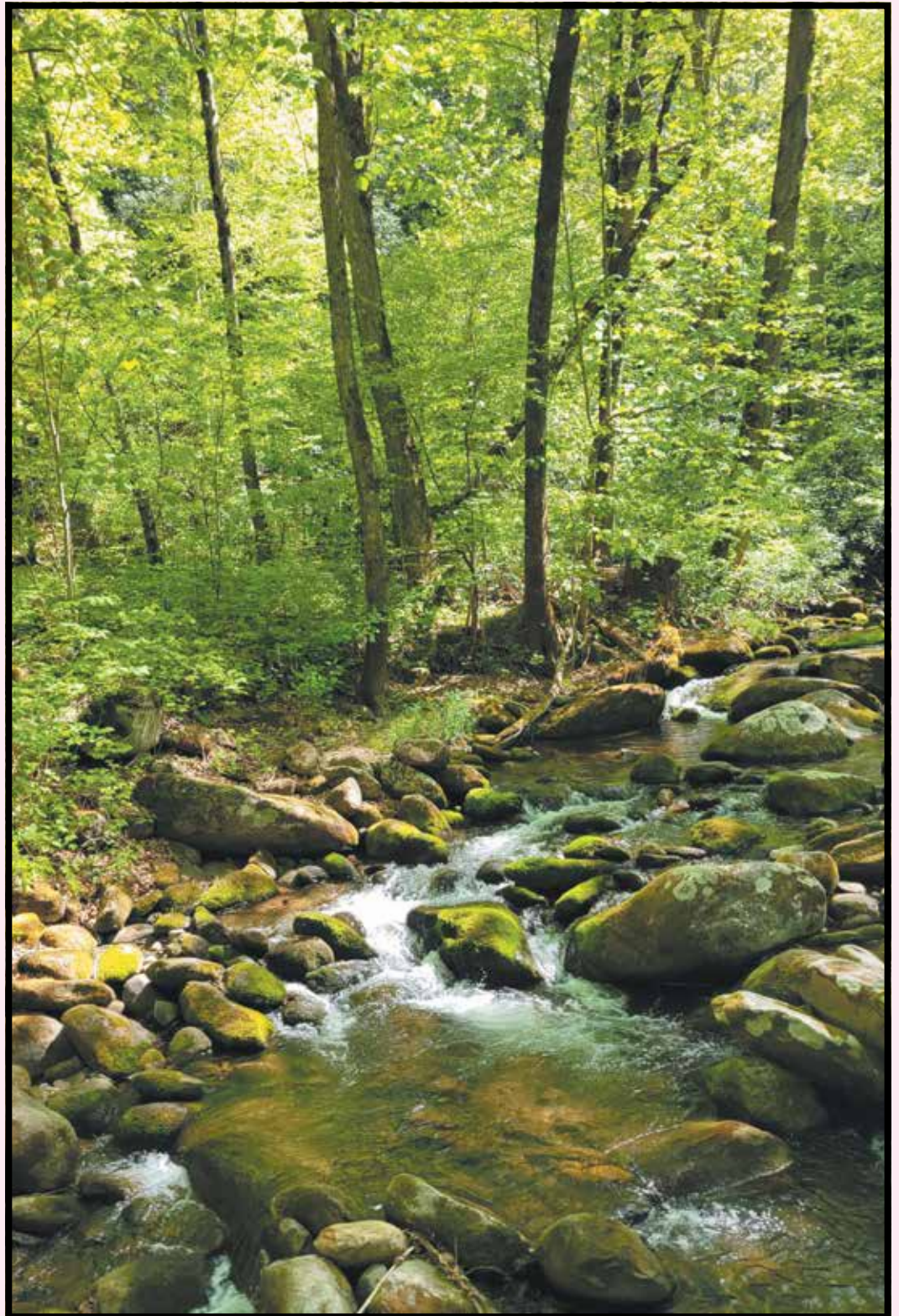
We do a good job teaching children to work hard for their dreams. We push them to achieve goals and dreams. Having the desire to go for your dreams is wonderful. But we need to also teach them that it is okay to fail, it is okay not to make the team, and it is okay not to get the lead role. Your time will come. Keep trying, work hard, and be grateful for the life you have. Be gracious when you see others achieve things you are working towards, knowing that your time will come.

Enjoy your time in the heat because you are eventually going to pop. Your turn to pop will come. Until then, enjoy where you are. Take in the scenery. Be thankful for your blessings and keep working hard to achieve your dreams.

In honor of spring “popping” up all around us, this week's recipe is a delicious popcorn snack, Apple Cinnamon Popcorn. It is healthy, it is delicious, and it is sure to please a crowd!

“Ask the Lord for rain in the

springtime; it is the Lord who sends the thunderstorms. He gives showers of rain to all people, and plants of the field to everyone” (Zechariah 10:1).



Eat Real, Whole Foods

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



Walk into any grocery store and you'll see it—labels promising weight loss, fat burning, low carb, low fat, keto, paleo, and everything in between. Most people approach nutrition with one goal in mind: lose weight. And while weight loss can be a by-product of better eating, it's not the real goal that should drive your decisions. Health is.

The problem is that diets are often short-term. They're something people "go on" for a few weeks or months, hoping to see the number on the scale drop. But eventually, life happens. The diet ends. Old habits come back. And the results disappear just as quickly as they came.

That cycle is frustrating—but more importantly, it misses the bigger picture.

Real change doesn't come from following a diet. It comes from changing the way you eat for life. And that starts with focusing on real, whole foods.

Whole foods are exactly what they sound like—foods that are as close to their natural state as possible. Think meat, vegetables, fruits, eggs, nuts, and healthy fats. These foods fuel your body with the nutrients it actually needs to function properly. They support your energy levels, improve your sleep, help regulate hormones, and reduce your

risk of chronic disease.

That's a lot more important than just losing a few pounds.

When you shift your focus from "How can I lose weight?" to "How can I improve my health?" everything changes. You stop looking for shortcuts. You stop chasing the next trend. Instead, you start building habits that last.

You begin to prioritize meals that are built around proteins, vegetables, and quality ingredients. You start to feel better throughout the day. Your energy becomes more consistent. You recover faster. You think clearer. And, yes—your body composition often improves as a result. But now it's happening as a side effect of getting healthier, not as the only goal.

This is where many people get stuck. They think they need something

extreme to see results. In reality, the answer is often much simpler: eat real food, consistently.

That doesn't mean perfection. It doesn't mean you can never enjoy a

meal out or have something that isn't considered "clean." It means that the majority of your meals are built on foods that support your body, not work against it.

At CrossFit Athens, we see this every day. The people who experience the most lasting success aren't the ones who jump from diet to diet. They're the ones who commit to small, consistent changes—starting with the food they eat.

If you're tired of starting over, stop focusing on the scale. Start focusing on your health. Build your meals around real food. Give it time. Stay consistent.

Because when you take care of your health first, everything else—including weight loss—tends to fall into place.

- Coach Nick
Owner / Head Coach
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