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Coming Soon: Red, White & BOOM, With Plenty Of Room...To Serve

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

In this 250th year of our nation's history, excitement is everywhere with regard to "The Big Party." As a nation, we are fixing to throw a bash to end all bashes, and as a state, Alabama has selected Athens to be one of more than 50 of the America250AL "celebration cities." It is both an

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It's July. A distant tinny melody floats like a sailboat over waves of water-soaked air. Your little kid heart beats faster as you sprint inside, "MOM! MOM! The ice cream truck! Can I get a Popsicle?...
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Publisher's Point

Lifting The Lid

For the last 19 years, *Athens Now* has had a tagline by which we endeavor to live before we go to print, and which was given to the co-founder, Deborah Huff in a dream. She and her husband, Wayne, who was a veteran of the community newspaper world were looking for a way to set the paper apart as to its purpose. "Information and Inspiration" were the words that Deborah received in her dream, and by God's grace I believe that you will see that each writer always accomplishes that dream-given goal to give useful information, whether it has to do with cooking, fitness, nutrition, faith, politics or "surthriving" in a 250 year-old experiment named America.

So, it is with industrial-strength hope, gratitude, and excitement that I get to provide an opportunity to inform, inspire, and potentially transform you through the generosity of leadership training veterans John Maxwell and Ed Mylett. These two, who are vastly different from each other, are great friends, and are men of faith, have collaborated to bring AT NO COST to anyone who wants it a 21-week seminar that is based on John's iconic *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. The seminar breaks each law down into weekly get-togethers and manageable bites



that you can watch at your own convenience. They have even devised a way to have Q and A sessions, and yes, I submitted a question myself with regard to running a newspaper and helping it to better help others.

They have even crafted a workbook for the sessions that contain what Ed calls a "rep," just one task that has high impact but is manageable in a busy life. I am staggered by this generosity, and I am also not surprised by it. Both men are north of 50, and one is pushing 80. They have worked hard, been blessed by God, been successful in all of its definitions, and are at the point in their lives where they know that their energy needs to go into ALL of the generations younger than they. If ever there was a time when solid, accessible leadership skills

need to be learned and implemented, it is now, and this is a "how."

"But I'm not a leader," you might say. "I'm just a...." whatever. Fill in the blank, and I have news for you. **Because you are a human made in the image and likeness of God, you've got a leadership position, even if it's only with yourself.** I am not implying that you were designed and destined to put people on Mars, although you might be. After all, in North Alabama we do live in the 'hood of Space Force.

What I *am* saying is that if you are drawing breath, you've got what John Maxwell calls a lid on your leadership abilities, even if by all metrics you are an excellent leader, and the first law has to do with "lifting the lid." In a word, examining where we are weak,

and taking the first step to do something about it.

We are all called in this life to "leave the campsite better than we found it," and that means impacting ourselves for the better so we can impact others for the better. I would love it if you join me, and I would love to hear your story of "lid-lifting." To register for the seminar and the workbook, you can go online and Google *Ed Mylett John Maxwell 21 Laws* for short and listen wherever you get your podcasts. See you on the other side of your "lifted lid."

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Alabama Veterans Museum Has New Director

by Yvonne Dempsey



On June 1, the Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives welcomed its new director for his first official day of work. Recently retired USMC Gunnery Sergeant Joshua Dempsey was hired to lead the museum after the retirement of long-time director Sandra "Sandy" Thompson.

Joshua is familiar to many in the area having lived in Athens since he was 4 years old. He started school at Brookhill Elementary, then went to Athens Middle School, and graduated in 2006 from Athens High School. Quite unexpectedly, Joshua had to leave for boot camp just a couple of hours after graduation... no time for parties, no time for long good-byes, no time to enjoy some rest and fun before entering military life. He was supposed to have two weeks after graduation before reporting for boot camp, but you know how the military is, things are subject to change in the blink of an eye. A phone call from his recruiter the morning of graduation changed everything.

Twenty years later, finds Joshua living in Elkmont, AL, with his wife, Megan McGee Dempsey, and his son, Matthew. His daughter, Braileigh, attends college in N.M.; so he is intent on keeping our veterans' legacy for these kids and others to come.

As the youngest of four

boys, Joshua was used to the rough-and-tumble childhood that came from having older brothers. He has always been patriotic, even being born on the 4th of July! As his mom, I often recall how Joshua would answer when asked, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" His answer was always, "I'm gonna be a Marine!" And he did just that, and excelled at it.

After training at Camps Lejeune and Geiger, NC, Joshua went to Fort Leonard Wood, MO, where he earned his license as Engineer Equipment Operator. He was then stationed in Okinawa, Japan, and had missions in the Philippines. After this assignment, he returned to Camp Lejeune, NC, where he had several jobs, including what he calls his "best job" as combat instructor for the Combat Hunter Program. Joshua and his family moved to Hawaii which was such a wonderful place for them...and a great place for his dad and me to visit, several times! He next returned to Fort Leonard Wood where he served as Course Staff NCOIC for the Basic Engineer Equipment Operations Course. Of course, his military career included much more than can be listed here, but it all led to where he is today.

Now, Joshua is bringing that same passion and commitment to his job



as museum director. He has volunteered at the museum over the years when he has been home and has some of his items on display. I asked him about his vision as museum director. "I look forward to continuing to build upon the great success that Sandy has had in growing this museum into what is has become and create a continuing legacy for our future generations. We cannot let the sacrifices of our

brave veterans be forgotten. Our museum is a priceless reminder of what our country was built upon."

Joshua is coming in with enthusiasm and has some ideas on how to market the museum, reach out to the public, develop events and programs showcasing our military history, and continue honoring our veterans. Joshua further explained, "Our history is more than a record

of the past, it's a gift to the future. By preserving and sharing the stories of those who came before us, we inspire future generations to learn, serve, and lead." And that is what he believes and will strive for.

For upcoming events, please check our new Facebook page at *Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives* and Instagram at *Alabama Veterans Museum*.

illuminating Fatherhood

by Carissa Lovvorn



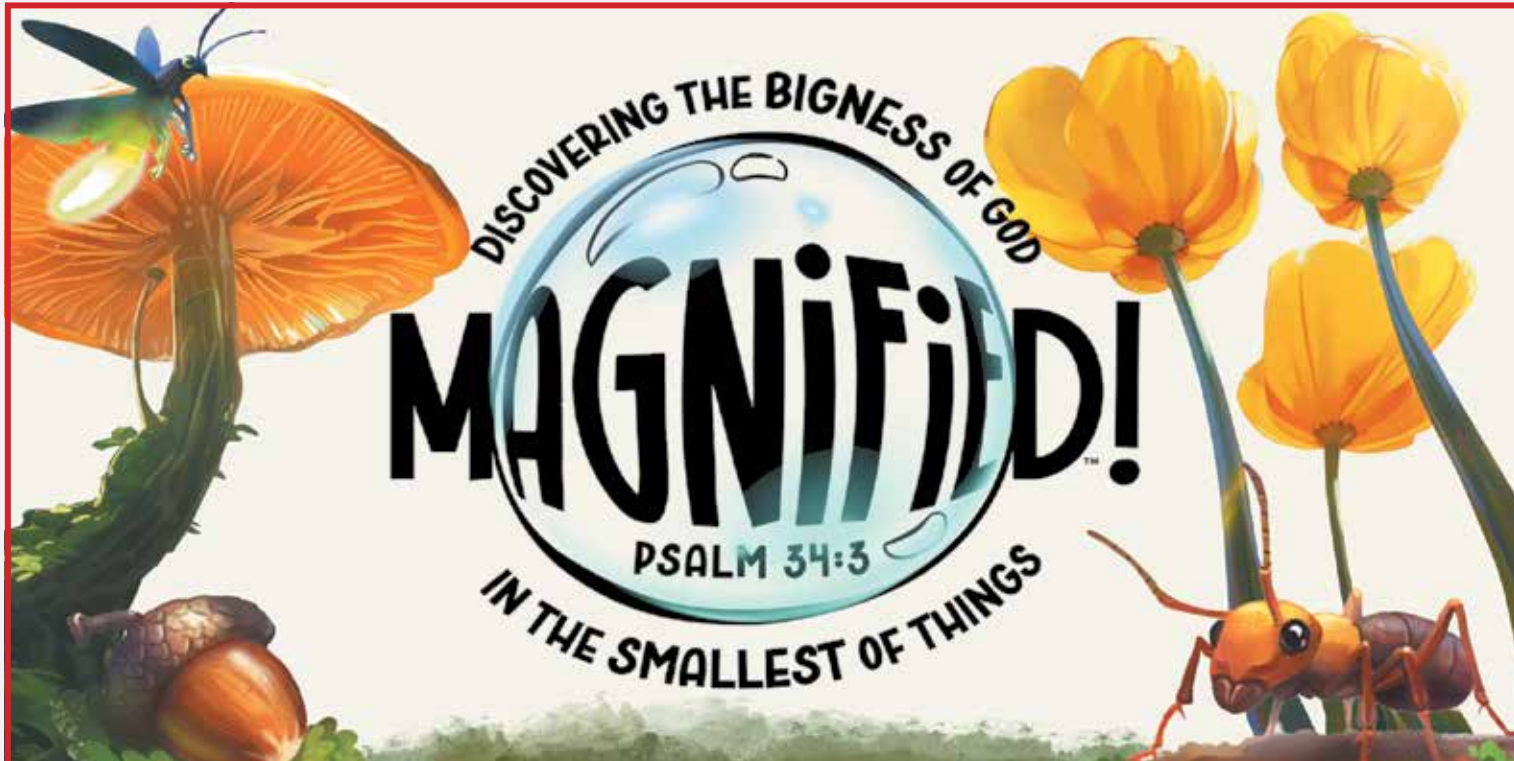
Well, here we are again, it's that time of year. Time for my house to be filled with random supplies from Hobby Lobby, Dollar Tree, and Lowe's in hopes of making our upcoming vacation bible school an exciting event for the participants. Instead of crafting oversized bugs and foliage that went along with last year's Magnified theme, I'm focused on shining different aspects of light around the church. Life-way's Illumination Station theme allows for a variety of colors, lights, and glowing aesthetics.

The other day, while putting together a large lava lamp made from a tomato cage, I needed to figure out a way to remove some pieces of the metal. Immediately, I thought, "I know what I need: bolt cutters!" I pictured the tool in my mind before running into the garage to retrieve them from the toolbox.

I attribute this resourcefulness to the time I spent working with my dad and granddaddy, building on the family farm and installing appliances through their work. It didn't matter that I was a girl. I could learn just the same as my brothers, and I made a great "gofer girl"!

I'm thankful for fathers who teach their children how to work. But even more importantly, like my father and grandfather did for me, I'm thankful for those who teach their children how to love and serve the Lord.

The Bible calls fathers to be spiritual leaders in their households: to discipline, provide, and protect. This calling doesn't end at home.



Men have a responsibility to be role models for those around them, becoming a reflection of the love, guidance, and grace we receive from our Heavenly Father.

During our church's VBS, you can see men serving in security, missions, Bible study, and my husband's personal favorite, preschool recreation. He really is just a big kid at heart.

Fathers and grandfathers need to invest their time in children. Planting seeds while they are young not only helps them grow in their faith but also sets the stage for the future. Take this Scripture, for exam-

ple: "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" (Psalm 78:5-6 NIV).

Now men, this call to action does not mean that you have to burn your fingers on a hot glue gun making VBS décor or dress up to a perform a coordinating skit. Everyone has their strengths. Figure out yours and find a way to plug in. I also encourage you to ex-

tend this beyond the VBS week. Children may not remember every decoration or activity, but they will remember the adults who pointed them toward Christ.

"But as for me and my household, we will serve

the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Wishing you a happy Father's Day and many blessings as you continue serving faithfully in your homes and churches.


Blessings,

Carissa Lovvorn

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Calendar of Events

Traveling Exhibit “My Wild Backyard” at EarlyWorks Children’s Museum Through August 31

404 Madison Street in historic Downtown Huntsville. The popular exhibit helps children get up close and personal with nature living in their own backyards this summer. A.A. Milne, creator of the cuddly teddy bear Winnie the Poo once quipped, "Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them." Children will have the opportunity to get to know the secret lives of critters, bugs, and plants found just outside their own backdoor this summer as the “My Wild Backyard” interactive traveling nature exhibit has arrived at EarlyWorks Children’s Museum. “My Wild Backyard” features hands-on, immersive experiences for children to "peer inside wildlife dens, crawl along the forest floor and swim along the pond bottom” all with a focus on the hidden world of insects, spiders, and creatures that live in yards, gardens, and urban spaces. Not only is “My Wild Backyard” an exciting living adventure, but it is an educational experience as well, aimed at teaching families about ecological changes that take place across seasons. The exhibit is included in general admission with prices ranging from \$10 to \$12.

MINDFIT June 6 and 13

2:45pm. Beginning Saturday, May 23, 2026 and running the next 3 consecutive Saturdays (same time) through June 13th, the award winning 4 part series, MINDFIT, addressing the mental health crisis in America. It will be presented at Lyle Hall, 1207 Pryor Street E., Athens, AL. For info: 256-658-7477.

Anderson Junkin' Days June 6

Come spend the day treasure hunting, selling and enjoying the community! Shop Local, Support Local, Love Local! 7198 AL Hwy 207, Anderson, AL. Vendors, food trucks, yard sales, and more. 256-762-8366.

Athens Lions Club Annual Summer Kiddie Carnival June 11 - July 25

309 E. Forrest Street Athens, AL. Thursday-Saturday nights, 6:30-9:30 pm from June 11th-July 25th. This year we will be closed July 2nd-4th weekend. Free Admission. Tickets: 50 cents per ride, cash only. Concessions available.

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.

3rd Annual Downtown Athens Culinary Month Entire month of August

Athens Main Street is thrilled to host the 3rd Annual Downtown Athens, Alabama Culinary Month. Calling all foodies and local food enthusiasts! It’s that time when Downtown Athens comes alive with flavors and culinary delights during the highly anticipated week. During August, you’ll have the chance to indulge in a delectable array of dishes and explore downtown Athens’s diverse culinary offerings. Downtown Athens Culinary Month isn’t just about delicious food; it also celebrates the local community and the hardworking chefs, restaurateurs, and staff who make dining in downtown Athens an unforgettable experience. So, please support the local restaurants that bring flavor and creativity to our town’s vibrant dining scene. Invite your friends and family to join you on this culinary adventure. It’s the perfect opportunity to try out new restaurants or revisit old favorites.

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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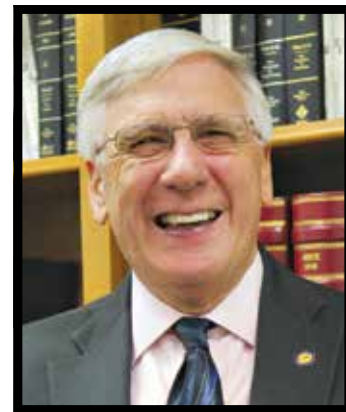
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STILL HOPE

Angel Studios announces that Still Hope is on their Top Ten Streaming list!

The Commitment To Communicate

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



After making coffee, Mayor Ronnie showed me the submissions for the America 250 art contest that were laid out in the city hall boardroom, with a description of what was being portrayed. The Athens Arts League is sponsoring the contest as part of our Red, White and Boom celebration, and the entries were fascinating. They ranged from Vincent Van Gogh to FDR to Sacajawea, and in some cases, the reasons why that character had been selected. There's more to come on that as we get closer to the Big Birthday Party... Food City has announced that its grand opening is going to be July 21, and the mayor had done a walk-through on Tuesday. The project is defi-

nately coming along, and it is also encouraging that there will be job opportunities for Athenians, especially young ones. You can't beat a brand-new building with good leadership at the helm, generous pay and benefits, and a chance to get gas and groceries in one stop on the West side of Athens.

We talked about the upcoming 4th of July, and heroes that bravely personified the power of communication, especially when doing so meant certain death. In both of our stories, the impact of that said commitment had had on the lives of the recipients was one of life and death. Mayor Ronnie once had the opportunity to meet Jeremiah Denton, the famous Mobile-born

and U.S. Navy Admiral Vietnam POW. Denton communicated through blinking Morse code with his eyes about the fact that he and his fellow prisoners were being tortured, and were certainly not receiving the humane treatment touted by the Viet Cong. "T-O-R-T-U-R-E" was the word he managed to blink out while talking to his interrogator, all the while pretending to have eyes that were reacting to the studio lights. He went on to serve as a U.S. senator for the Great State of Alabama, and served from 1981-1987.

For my part, I told Mayor Ronnie about a woman by the name of Elise Bauer. I had just learned her story the morning we met, and found it remarkable. Elise, by way of her clever communications as a prisoner in Ravensbruck during WWII, embodied the courage and commitment to communicate as well. Elise was 61 when she was imprisoned, and had been a church organizer. She developed a way of transmitting intel to other prisoners through hymns. She used lyrics, rhythms, and tempos which were varied to disseminate specific and vital information throughout the camp. She was dismissed by her captors as a silly old woman trying to comfort herself, and was never caught. After the war, the story of how many



hundreds of fellow prisoners were saved by her commitment to communicate became known, and when she died, people from six countries attended her funeral.

By contrast, we both felt the need to pray about artificial intelligence. It is moving so fast that even the experts are overwhelmed, and we both marveled at the potential for great good and great evil. Mayor Ronnie was aware of a court case being dismissed because an attorney used AI to create a brief, and I told him about some of

my own encounters that were inarguably unsettling. Trying to find out how to be "wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove" when it comes to AI is no small task, and it's not going away any time soon, nor the need for wisdom as to how to handle it.

"We can never get to the place where we no longer communicate face-to-face," said the mayor. I couldn't agree more. There was only one thing left to do, and that was to pray, so we did. And then it was time for Ronnie to roll.





Trusting God's Timing: *When Waiting Is Part of the Plan*

by Anna Hamilton

In a world that moves at lightning speed, waiting can feel unbearable. We live in a culture that encourages instant results, immediate answers, and quick solutions. When our prayers seem unanswered, our dreams delayed, or our circumstances unchanged, it's easy to become discouraged and wonder if God has forgotten us. Yet Scripture reminds us in Habakkuk 2:3, "Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."

God's timing is different from ours. While we often focus on the destination, God is equally

concerned with the journey. The waiting season is not wasted time, it is preparation time.

But, why does waiting feel so difficult? Many of our worries, frustrations, and disappointments stem from our desire to control the timing of events. We want doors to open now. We want answers today. We want clarity immediately.

We must remember that God sees what we cannot see. What appears to be a delay may actually be divine protection. What feels like a closed door may be God preventing us from stepping into

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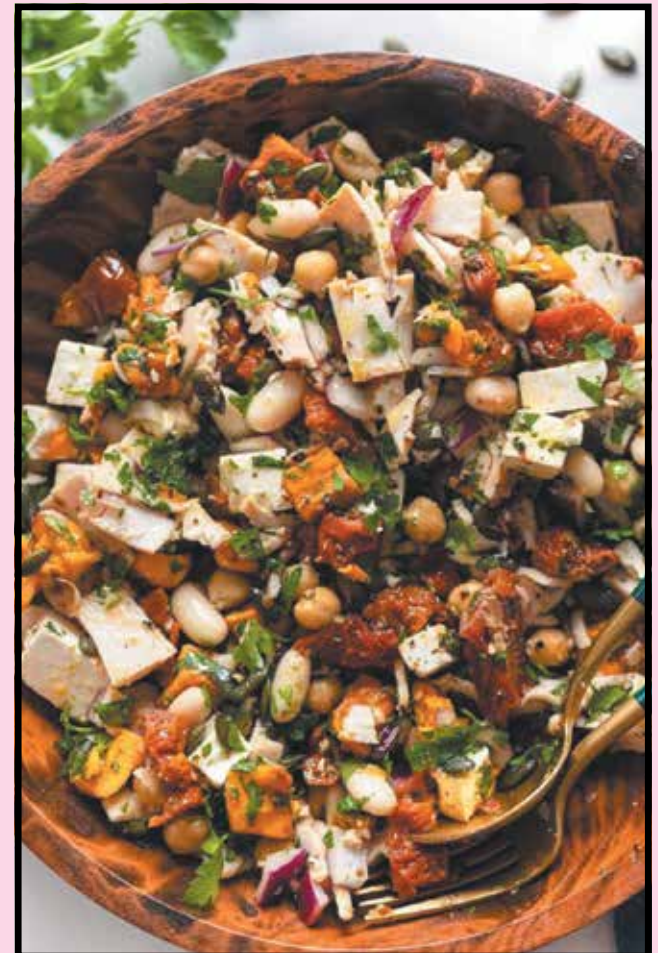
Dense Bean Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained*
- 1 can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained*
- 1 can kidney beans, rinsed and drained*
- 1 cup cucumber, diced small*
- 1/2 cup sweet onion, diced small*
- 1 1/2 cups cherry tomatoes, quartered*
- 2 bell peppers diced small (red, yellow or orange)*
- 3/4 cup banana peppers, chopped*
- 4-6 oz. provolone cheese, diced*
- 4 oz. deli turkey diced (or diced chicken breast)*
- 2 oz. salami or pepperoni, diced*
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, basil, or chives, finely minced*

Dressing:

- 1/4 cup red or white wine vinegar*
- 2 tbsp olive oil*
- 1 tbsp honey*
- 1 clove garlic finely minced*
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard*
- 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning*
- 1/2 tsp salt, more to taste*
- Black pepper to taste*



Directions:

In a large bowl, combine all salad ingredients. In a small bowl, add all dressing ingredients. Whisk together until fully combined. Pour dressing over the bean salad. Toss until thoroughly mixed and beans and veggies are coated with dressing.

Get Ready For July

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



It's July. A distant tinny melody floats like a sailboat over waves of water-soaked air. Your little kid heart beats faster as you sprint inside, "MOM! MOM! The ice cream truck! Can I get a Popsicle? Please?!" You hop from foot to foot as your mom digs a few coins from a black leather change purse with a gold snap clasp. You listen desperately to the music still playing on the block, afraid you might miss the treasure.

She drops the coins in your hand and you race out the door, your bare feet pounding the wooden porch in a reverberating "thud-thud-thud." You ignore the slight sting on your big toe as it catches the edge of a board step, running with all your might across a hot driveway then down the sidewalk.

He's still there! You stop, panting, behind the line of kids getting Nutty Buddies and ice cream sandwiches. You frantically scan the faded, peeling stickers on the side of the truck that show each treat offered. You are looking for The One. Before you can finish looking, though, it's your turn. "Um, do you have Bomb Pops?" you ask hopefully

"Yep, here ya' go," the ice cream man says as you stand on tiptoe to hand him the coins and take your treat.

"Thanks!" you say as the next child in line nudges you mindlessly

away from the window.

You walk over to the grass which feels refreshing after standing on the hot pavement. Slowly, carefully, you open the bottom of the package 'til you can grab the stick. Sometimes, the Popsicle is stuck to the paper, and you have to blow in the wrapper to unstuck it. But the July sun is friendly to impatient and vaguely overheated children, and the Popsicle slides out easily.

You take a moment to look at your treasure. Sweetly flavored ice in pale red, white, and muted blue immediately starts dripping in sticky sugar droplets which you lick quickly. Soon it becomes a race to see if you can catch the drips before they flow onto your hand. The ice starts melting faster and you put the whole Popsicle in your mouth. You smell as much as taste the wood of the stick, and you try to chew down the rest of the bomb pop before the brain freeze hits. This is the taste of summer.

It's July. You signed up for an early morning race on the 4th. You maybe aren't the strongest runner, but the nice tourism lady assured you that you can walk ("This is for fun! It's part of the whole celebration! Go as slow or fast as you like!").

Your footfalls -- steady, methodical -- provide a rhythmic beat to accompany the early morning birdsong. Lush branches,

heavy laden with chlorophyll emeralds, reach over your head to shelter you from the increasingly brilliant sun. You glance at the flat-rocked creek meandering beside you like a lazy, indolent, distractible pacer, and you wonder how much a quick dip would cost you in time.

The faint sound of music on the fresh morning air brings you back to focus. As you get closer, you realize it isn't music but cheering—you are near the end! Your feet, shod in Vibram-outsoled mesh, are protected from the boards of the covered bridge, and you briefly enjoy the extra loud thud-thud-thud reverberating through the wood.

You kick in a little burst of speed, as much as you can manage, to the finish. Yes, there is a line; yes, there is a timer; yes, there is a crowd cheering.

But you run past all those to the little truck just a little way up. "Do you have any Bomb Pops?" you ask through panted breaths.

"Yep, here ya' go," the man says as he hands you a giant Popsicle you earned.

"Excuse me," the person behind you says politely, and you step aside to the grass. You open the end of the wrapper. Mobile coolers being much better these days, you find the Popsicle is still frozen to the paper. You

smile briefly and blow into the end of the wrapper, instantly freeing your prize.

Frosted and sweetly flavored ice in pale red, white, and muted blue immediately starts melting in sticky sugar droplets which you lick quickly before it drips onto your hand.

This is the taste of summer. Again.

My fellow Limestonians! We are coming close to the AMAZING birthday of our AMAZING country, and we have so much planned for you to enjoy!

Our first event is the Red White and ZOOM Rocket Pop 5K!

This will be a beautiful morning jaunt down

Swan Creek, early enough to still be cool and a great way to kick off a day of remembering that we are a unique nation filled with amazing people—the land of the free and the home of the brave.

For you racing-racers, it is a certified course. For you amblers, this is a pleasant walk near the creek. For all, you get a swag AND a free Bomb Pop (one of the BIG ones!) at the end.

Please go to runsignup.com and look up "Red, White & ZOOM" or search by location (Athens, AL).

Can't wait to see you there! It's going to be a glorious day!



Make Emily Jones Your Choice For Alabama State School Board On June 16

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

Like many Americans, she paid attention to what was happening around her but didn't see many politicians who seemed interested in the concerns of everyday citizens.

That began to change in 2020, when Emily saw firsthand how government decisions could directly impact families and parental rights. She realized that if parents aren't willing to step forward and engage, government will continue making decisions without them. That realization set her on a path to outspoken advocate for Alabama families.

So, what happened? Let's just say that someone poked the mama bear, and she is a fierce protector of her "cub." Emily rapidly went from "didn't have time," to "I have to do something," and she has not stopped since. Recently Emily told me, "It all started around the time of COVID," and her child was being required to wear a mask while playing hard outdoors at recess. Dripping with sweat, her child was miserable, unable to breathe easily, and Emily politely inquired if she as a parent could request some latitude with regard to the mask. She was flatly turned down, citing all of the now-determined-to-be-bogus reasons that went with the times, and Emily did what any reasonable parent would do; she did research. What she found was disturbing with regard to the fact that masks didn't work, that hypercapnia



(the side effects of having to wear a mask for too long) were real, and began to realize that parental rights on more than one front were rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Emily would tell you, "I am running because I have a child in public school."

That first encounter led to another that involved actor and activist Kirk Cameron. Emily had become a part of Moms for Liberty, a conservative watchdog group that became a national movement, and the Madison chapter welcomed Kirk to come read and speak at a "See You At The Library" event. "We thought there would be maybe 20 people there," she said. The next that happened was that they were told that the event was cancelled because it was too controversial, and Kirk's legal team began to push

back. A local church offered the use of their facility, and more than 200 people attended. And, then, there were the demonstrators....

Next Emily went to a Moms for Liberty conference that was held in Philadelphia, and the protestors against the Moms were so dreadful that the Moms needed police protection. By this time Emily had become thoroughly immersed in the Constitution, and familiar with the explicit materials that were being passed off as educational. Her first-grader was being forced to participate in activities that were tantamount to therapy sessions independent of parental involvement. Emily was dealing with the Title 9 transgender athlete debacle that was serving to destroy women's sports in public school, and found that she was in the public eye. She

was speaking often and had a successful podcast heard on Right Side Radio called "The Controversial Mom." People began to ask her to run for the position that was becoming available due to Wayne Reynolds announcing his retirement from the Alabama School Board. Emily prayed fervently, sought counsel, and decided to run.

Emily is a DOW contractor and no stranger to research or statistics. She began to discover that our kids were falling more and more behind in the classroom, and that there were solutions that were proven to work. While technology certainly has its place, especially at the elementary level, its use needs to be restricted. "Old school" approaches have been vindicated due to the fact that solid neuroscience has proven something that was always known for centuries -- the 3 Rs all have an important role in encoding as well as skill development, and it turns out kids who are dependent upon devices are being educationally crippled. There is the additional

safety risk when it comes to online predators, and even the most vigilant of teachers is not in a position to supervise and protect a classroom.

The best way to describe why Emily is running and why she is the best one for the job are as follows:

Emily Jones is a candidate for the Alabama State Board of Education, District 8. A mother and longtime education advocate, Jones has built her campaign around strengthening academic outcomes, protecting parental rights, reducing classroom distractions, and restoring trust between schools and families. She is the Chapter Chair of Moms for Liberty—Madison County, and has been actively involved in education policy issues across Alabama for several years.

If you are looking for someone to fight for your kids, teachers, and the values you hold dear, then choose Emily Jones on June 16 as your Alabama State School Board member for District 8.

A red and white campaign graphic. At the top is a red elephant icon with three white stars above it. Below the icon, the name "EMILY JONES" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath that, the text "CONSERVATIVE FOR STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION" is written in smaller, bold, red capital letters.



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Coming Soon: *Red, White & BOOM,* With Plenty Of Room...To Serve

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

honor as well as a responsibility, and so right out the gate, the purpose of this article is to give you an idea of all the happenin's as well as ways you can help make this 4th of July utterly grand.

Recently, I spoke with Stephanie Reynolds, who is our Tourism Specialist for Athens-Limestone County as well as a columnist for *Athens Now*. She mentioned that last year's Red, White & BOOM was a huge success, and plans have been in the works all year to make this one even more spectacular. "Last year we added a party, and this year the party is going to be bigger and better," said Stephanie. The whole idea in 2026 is to have plenty of time to do several different Red, White & BOOM activities, enjoy your own family and friends, cook out at home, come back for the late afternoon events at the SportsPlex, and then watch the biggest fireworks display Athens has ever put on.

Here is a basic breakdown of all the events, as of this

publish date:

Our celebration officially kicks off on Friday, July 3, from 7-9 p.m. on the Limestone County Courthouse Square with an Art After Hours event. It features live rock-and-roll bands and free patriotic art activities for children. Athens Arts has sponsored a student art contest, and the winners will be announced. Food trucks and fun; be sure to come.

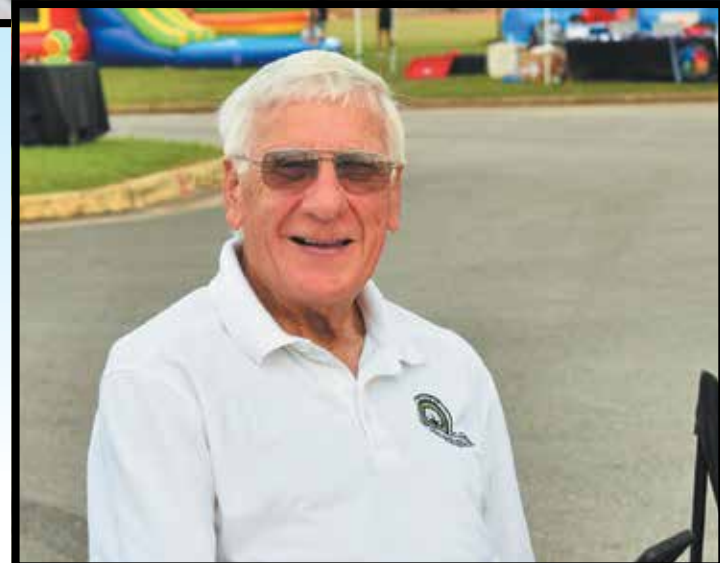
Red, White and ZOOM Rocket Pop 5K, Saturday, July 4, at 7 a.m. This is a certified race event that welcomes runners, walkers, strollers, parents, kids, and will have swag, medals, and a Rocket Pop when you complete the race. It will be held in Swan Creek Greenway, which is lovely and shaded. Cost for entry is \$30, and you can register at runsignup.com

Red, White & BLOOM, on Saturday, July 4, is going to be held at the Athens-Limestone Farmer's Market/ Doug Gates Park from 8 a.m.-noon. Vendors will be there per usual, and there will be an America250AL theme throughout. As it gets closer to the 4th, Athens Main Street will an-



nounce more Red, White & BLOOM-specific details

The rest of the day's events will be held at the SportsPlex beginning at 4 p.m. There will be a vendor fair, and if you are wishing to "display your wares," there will be one type of business per entrant. If you make soap, you are the only one, so you need to contact Stephanie ASAP to guarantee your slot. Your niche will be exclusive, and cost per table will be \$35. Remember, we are now less than a month out 'til the big day. To get more info, email stephanie@exploreathensal.org.



org.

Red, White & BOOM in the afternoon will feature a battle of the bands with cash prizes. There will be bouncy houses, face painting, food trucks, and more. Tourism will showcase a peek into the kinds of events that are part of the year's offerings. There will be a bit o' Fiddlers, Storytellers, and Tractor Pull.

Then, the skies will light up at 9 p.m., and this year's fireworks display is going to be something to remember. You cannot sit inside the stadium to watch due to safety concerns, but the viewing will be great at the Sportsplex.

Stephanie made a point

that this year, "We want to remind ourselves of our freedom and community through fellowship and celebration." If you would like to help support our community's celebration, contact Stephanie at stephanie@exploreathensal.org. The volunteer shifts are short and everything will help. For example, if early birds can come and help set up and man the 5K, the rest of the day is free and clear. Set up for the afternoon events begins at 1 p.m., so if you want to sleep in on Saturday morning, you can come later to lend a hand.

See you on the 4th and thank you!





Captain's Log

All The Feels

by Brenda Wilkers

Nobody that I know of has had to consider the mood of finality inside the school bus on the very last day of school. The younger ones are giddy and squirrely while the fifth graders try to drink it all in. Some board for the last time with Kleenex in hand and puffy eyes struggling with the decision for quiet reflection or to fully commit to living out these last moments together.

All ages reflect with the finality of the last day as a bus family. At one pivotal moment somewhere in the belly of the bus, deeply embedded within the 49 children, came a petite but powerful voice wailing our mood in her heavy voice... "Mamaaaaa, ooooooooooh, didn't mean to make you cry. If I'm not back again this time tomorrow, carry on, carry on as if nothing really matters... to meeeeeeee..."

Immediately, we all seemed to morph into li'l old grannies in a backroad country church fanning ourselves in the summer heat nod-



ding in agreement and offering 'Amens' of the melodic heartfelt truth! Somehow...some way, this innocent voice with perfect vibrato crooning "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen is exactly what this elementary school bus family needed to soothe our souls in

that very moment. Lord, I started this year begging for your guidance to see and love the ones you put before me. The end-of-year prayers are just as intense but very different. I pray this servant did what was required of this school year. Some of these kids, I won't ever see again but I pray that when they think of me they see and feel you. Thank you for trusting me with your little ones for a short amount of time. May we all finish as well as we begin.

~Brenda



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Protecting Your Story
Telling It Well

What You See Is What You Get

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



“God never intends us to keep what we have learned all to ourselves. Whether it is money, insight or truth. He wants us to share it with others.” From *The Life Principles Bible* by Charles Stanley.

I’m going to spare you the details of the lengthy and painful process that I have been going through leading up to today’s topic. Not because I don’t want to share it, but because time/space is so limited. Also, sharing the truth and blessing, rather than my story, lets you see how it may apply to you personally.

There has been a lot of talk lately about how the brain reacts to the process of writing things down with your own hand. Perhaps that explains why those who keep a regular diary often come to treasure that time, and the awakening that comes to them through that process. I find little mini journals here and there as I clean closets, weed through

bookshelves, and attempt to consolidate stashes of papers set aside long ago. Invariably, I uncover funny or heartwarming stories that I would never have remembered apart from the notes. Cute, funny, amazing things the spouse, children, or grandchildren did; cards or reminders of gifts from a special friend; memories that often remind me of what a wonderful time a particular moment was. Other entries center around answered prayer or petitions for those people and causes I love. When I find these it is such a wonderful treasure to remember those precious times with my special people or seeing how God has been so real and loving toward me.

I have another family member who keeps a daily diary – of sorts – but it lists what they had for meals, what they did that day (as in - went to doctor, what time they got up, what body part hurts

the most today, etc.), and what they did for others, if anything. And, of course, when they had a problem with a business or phone call. A day seldom passes without at least a small entry. Even rarer are entries that highlight what others did for them or what others accomplished that brought them joy.

My challenge to us today – yes, first to myself! – is to start handwritten notes on the blessings of life brought about by our very existence. Record the achievements of yourself and others, the kindness shown to you, things that bring you joy, situations that made you smile/laugh, stories of events that were special to you, even in small ways. And, occasionally, difficult times, especially after you begin to see how they made you grow, learn, or become more of the person you wish you were and strive to be.

One day while waiting

for the running water to become hot, I was somewhat overcome with gratitude for the clean, abundant safe water that we take so for granted! My mind flashed to those images of mothers holding fly-covered, lethargic babies as they watched them weaken and move toward death with every passing hour. Later when I spilled coffee, I was so thankful for water to clean up, a mop to make it easier, a floor not made of dirt, coffee made with clean water, a mug – decorated, no less – soap to keep it clean... and on and on. Once you start seeing and stating blessings, there is no end!

What I have observed is that we tend to see what we look for. A journal of only cold facts, limited almost exclusively to yourself, holds no real joy or growth in Emotional Intelligence. It can come in handy for checking how long you have had that cough, or where you were on a

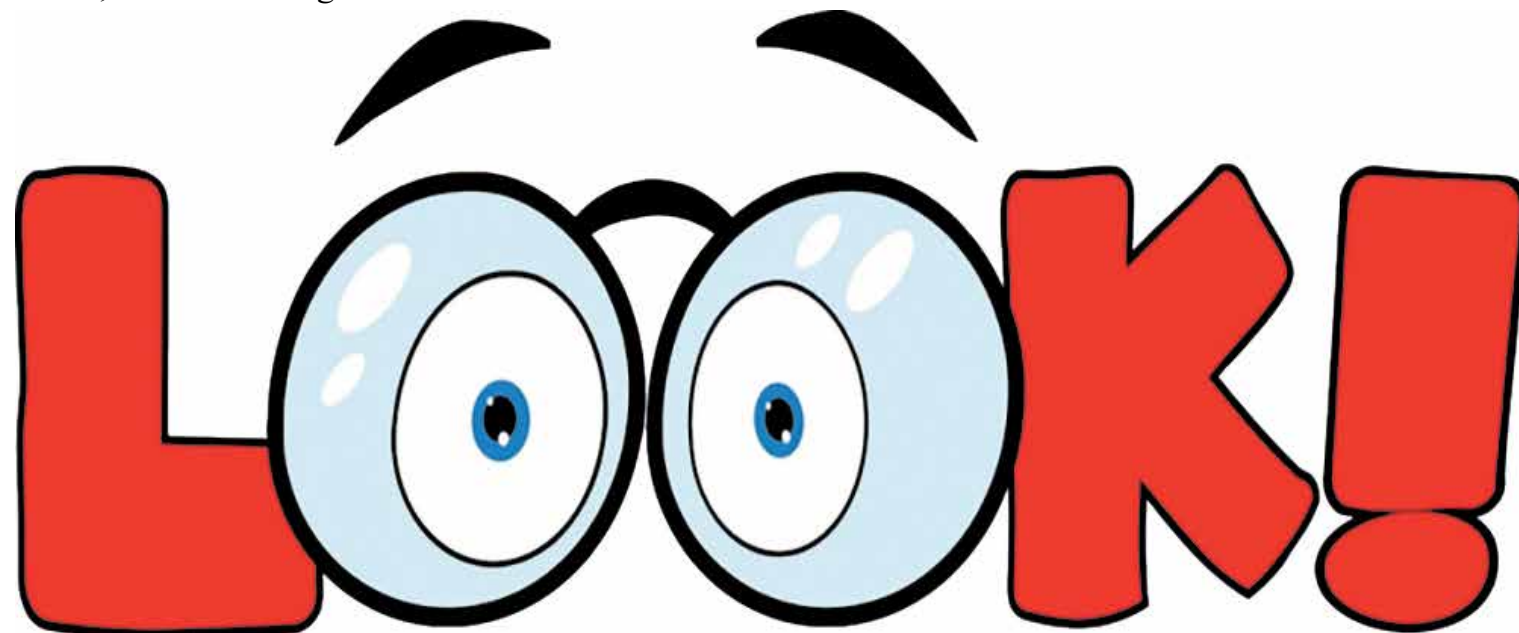
certain day and time – just in case you’re ever suspect in a crime -- but when you use that time to count your blessings, think of others, remember good/fun/funny times you will be participating in the untold blessings of Vicarious Joy! The blessings and joys of others become your blessings and joy also as you “live” these times with, through and for others.

Start small if this seems too large a commitment of time and energy. Or, if you are a habitual complainer, grouchy, and basically negative person, perhaps just a note on your daily calendar. “Saw a butterfly today.” Exercising the attitude is a lot like exercising the body: Painful at first. Not particularly fun. Hard to faithfully develop into a habit. But properly and consistently applied, and making yourself “push through the burn,” results in a joy that cannot be explained but must be experienced to fully understand.

Remember, you generally cannot see what you are unwilling to look for. Especially the finest things of life.

*Detri would love to hear from you.
Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com
Facebook:
Detri Atkinson McGhee*

Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismmanagement.com





Clean, Green And Beautiful

The Chemicals Between Us

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

It's finally time! The 2026 Household Hazardous Waste Collection will be held on June 13, 2026, at Limestone County Recycling, from 8 a.m.-noon, thanks to the Limestone County Commission. If you have never been there, it is located at 1301 North Jefferson Street where the old L&S Shopping Center once stood. Remember, this is a once-a-year event, so be sure to grab everything you need to dispose of. If you can't make it, ask a friend to drop it off for you!

As always, we will accept paint, paint products, lawn chemicals, household chemicals, automotive chemicals, pool chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, medication (no medical waste such as needles and tubes), and electronics. We will be accepting motor oil this year. If you happen to miss the event, Limestone County Recycling accepts motor oil and electronics year-round. Since this event will be held at Limestone County Recycling, we will be accepting household recycling as well. This includes cardboard, mixed paper, plastic, aluminum, and steel cans.

Since we are at a new location, things will run a little differently from years past. It is imperative that you do not get out of your vehicle.



We will have plenty of volunteers to unload all items for you. You will enter through the north gate of the fenced in lot. From there, you will be directed into two different lines depending on what items you have. Once you are in the correct lines, your vehicle will be unloaded by volunteers. If you have chemicals, you will be directed to drive into the building to unload. Once again, depending on what items you have, you will be directed to exit back onto Jefferson

Street, or onto 10th Avenue which leads to Houston Street.

Remember, DO NOT get out of your vehicle! And be sure to thank the Limestone County Commission. They are responsible for funding this event, and it can be very expensive. This is a service they do not have to fund, and we are forever grateful for their support as this is the only way to ethically dispose of most dangerous chemicals in Limestone County. We want all of Limestone County

to be as clean and green as we can be, and this event allows us to make great headway on this effort!

If you have any questions, please feel free to call KALB at 256-233-8000 or Limestone

County Recycling at 256-233-6422. You can also reach out via email-KALBCares@gmail.com or even message us on Facebook. We hope to see you there!



(256) 233-8000
KALBCares@gmail.com
www.KALBCares.com

Slinkard On Scriptural Success

How To Stay Motivated And Have Success

by D. A. Slinkard

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



One question that I hear oftentimes is: “How does a person get motivated?” It is a great question, and the answer may be disappointing. Are you ready? How does a person get motivated? It depends. I told you the answer would be disappointing, but the reality is that we are all motivated differently. Some people are motivated by money, others are motivated by praise, while others are motivated by other various things. Before you can figure out how to get motivated in your own life, you need to understand what motivates you.

Personally, I am motivated both financially and by praise. It is the best of both worlds, I guess you could say. Do not get me wrong though, I am motivated by achieving success. I want to be successful at anything and everything I try. Does it always happen? Not at all, but I do set my hopes and goals on achieving this success. I know what it is that I want to achieve, and this helps me maintain my focus. The biggest area people fail at in their life is they do not know what it is they want to achieve with their life.

I can tell you many times I have felt myself personally spiraling out of control because I was out of sync. I had not written down my goals in a while, did not

know what I was aiming for in life, and I was not in control whatsoever. If we were to take a trip to St. Louis, Missouri, from Athens, Alabama, we would map out our trip along the way. We know we would want to go to I-65 then to I-24 then to I-57 then to I-64. Of course, though, this is just one way of getting to St. Louis from here, but many options exist, and life is no different. Every one of us can get to the same ending point but by different routes.

Have you ever just driven around, turning down one road and then turning onto another road, and you stumble on an area you did not know you could get to by the way you went? I cannot tell you how many times I have done this while

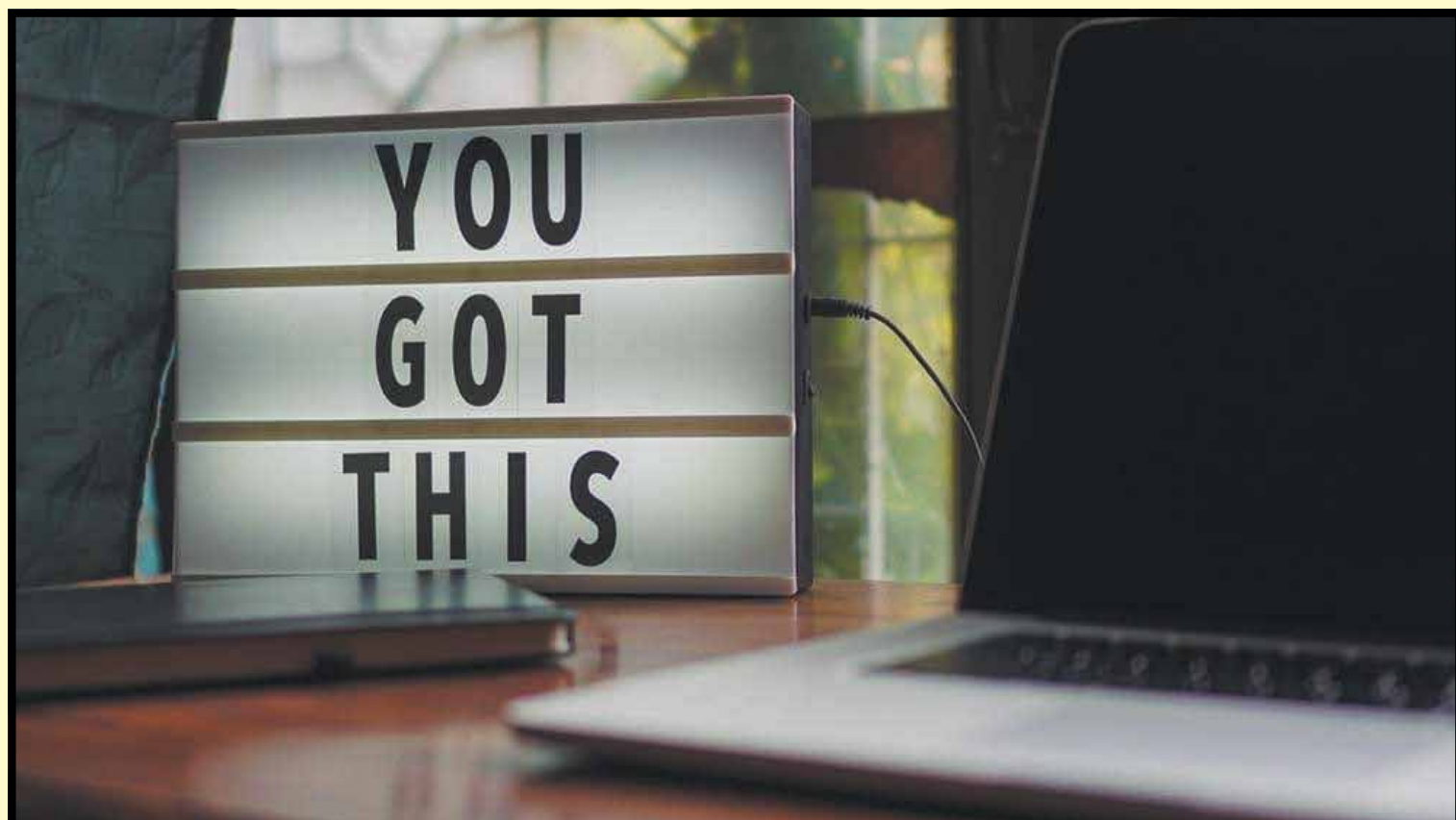
driving, and I cannot tell you how many times I have done this in my personal life when it comes to just everyday living. It is like driving to work, yet you cannot remember anything about the way you got there. You were settled into your routine and your body went into cruise control.

This is exactly what we need to try to prevent from happening. If we get into a mundane routine with our life, before we know it we will have wasted away our life. People die every day at different ages — young, old, middle-aged — the obituaries are filled with people of all ages. We never know when we will draw our last breath, but if you want to get the most out of your life, you need to start living

your life with a purpose. Stop drifting about from day to day; get your game plan together for what you are going to do. Learn how to attack each day. I personally cycle through various ways to stay on top of my day-to-day by writing down exactly what I want to achieve. It is amazing to me on the days I get away from the written-down lists, how easy it is for me to waste the day and not accomplish nearly as much as I would have liked to. Whether you use an app on your phone or use the good old-fashioned paper and pen, it makes no difference, except you just need to make sure you are being purposeful.

I have found that the easiest way to stay moti-

vated is to break down what I want to achieve into smaller steps. With this method, I can see quick successes, which is good for my thought process. When you can achieve small successes, it is like the snowball effect. When building a snowball, you start out small but as you keep working it, the snowball grows bigger and bigger. The momentum of small victories is no different. The more victories you get, the larger your motivational snowball will be, and the greater your success will be. This sounds easy although challenging, but when you map out where you want to be, it allows you to bypass obstacles in order to achieve success.



When Metrics Miss The Mark

by Eric Betts

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



Many people across businesses, churches, vocations, and organizations quietly sabotage their progress by measuring themselves with the wrong yardsticks. The core issue is simple: most default to external metrics, which involves industry benchmarks, growth curves, productivity formulas that were never designed with their unique strengths, purpose, or giftedness in mind.

When you measure a calling with someone else's ruler, the numbers will always lie. This mismatch creates a false sense of inadequacy, leading people to believe they're behind, ineffective, or failing, when in reality they're simply using the wrong scorecard. The discour-

agement deepens because many assume metrics are universal. They're not. A church with a mission centered on deep discipleship shouldn't compare itself to a church built for rapid expansion. A business built on craftsmanship and relational trust shouldn't measure success by the same speed driven metrics as a high volume competitor. A person whose vocation is rooted in creativity or care shouldn't judge their progress by the same markers as someone driven by scale or efficiency. When measurements don't match design, the result is frustration, burnout, and the illusion of failure.

Healthy metrics begin with identity. Before



choosing what to measure, leaders and individuals must clarify their vision, mission, and unique wiring. Metrics should il-

luminare whether you are becoming more of who you are called to be, not whether you are keeping up with someone else's trajectory. When metrics align with purpose, they become energizing rather than exhausting. They help you see progress that actually matters: depth instead of breadth, transformation instead of traffic, impact instead of imitation.

This shift turns measurement into a tool for growth rather than a weapon of comparison. Ultimately, the most powerful organizations

and individuals are those who embrace metrics that reflect their distinctiveness. They measure what aligns with their calling, not what flatters their ego or mirrors their competitors. They track progress toward their mission, not someone else's milestones. When you build your scorecard around your vision and mission, you create a sustainable path forward, which is one that honors your strengths, fuels your purpose, and keeps you anchored in the work you were uniquely designed to accomplish.

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The Alternative Approach

Why Are We Sicker Than Ever?

by Roy Williams

Your body's pH (potential of hydrogen) is a measure of how acidic or alkaline something is. Neutral is 7.0. Your blood must stay in a very narrow, slightly alkaline range of about 7.35–7.45 to sustain life. Even tiny shifts outside this can be dangerous; so your body has powerful systems (lungs, kidneys, and buffering minerals) to maintain it.

However, modern life creates chronic low-grade acidity through processed foods, sugar, stress, environmental toxins, lack of exercise, and certain medications. While your blood pH stays tightly controlled, the rest of your clear body fluids within tissues, cells, urine, saliva, and extracellular fluids can become overly acidic for short periods of time. However, this forces your body to work overtime, pulling alkalizing minerals (calcium, magnesium, potassium) from bones, muscles, and organs to neutralize excess acid. Even though all disease begins when the clear body fluids become acidic, the most prevalent one is cancer.

Why pH imbalance matters:

An acidic internal environment contributes to *chronic inflammation* - acidic conditions promote inflammatory pathways, worsening joint pain, stiffness, and conditions like arthritis; *fatigue and low energy* - our cells work harder, mitochondria become less efficient, and you feel drained as acidity increases; *hormone disruption* - including lower testosterone, adrenal stress, and imbalances that affect metabolism and drive; *poor recovery and pain* - lower

pH increases pain and slows tissue repair; *mineral depletion* - leads to weaker bones, muscle cramps, and other issues.

Acidity also weakens your immune system, which causes slower healing. Over time, this creates the perfect storm for the symptoms so many people accept as "normal aging": joint pain, low energy, stubborn weight, brain fog, and declining vitality.

Nutritional pH balancing:

This is where the specialized supplements from NEWtritional Health Care shines. Instead of forcing blood pH (which the body won't allow), quality pH-balancing formulas supply bioavailable alkaline minerals and compounds that support your body's natural buffering systems. They help shift urine and tissue pH toward a more optimal range, reduce acid load, and replenish the minerals your body would otherwise steal from itself. According to Bert Golding, CEO of Positive Power Nutritionals, all disease goes into submission when the clear body fluids move into the normal pH range.

Key mechanisms:

All NEWtritional Health Care patented formulas such as the Healthy Heart Combo slowly nudge the body's pH into the healthy range. The ingredients act as buffers, neutralizing acids without stressing organs. Our patented formulas improve nutrient absorption and cellular function. Cells thrive in a less acidic environment, supporting energy production (ATP), detoxification, and repair. As this happens,



the body heals quicker, pain is reduced, and energy levels go back to where they were 10 to 15 years earlier.

Almost all our formulas reduced inflammation. Less acid means less pro-inflammatory signaling to help slow down the inflammatory response. Less inflammation results in less pain and improved comfort levels. All of our formulas support better hormone and metabolic responses. This helps create conditions for optimal testosterone, thyroid, and adrenal function.

Studies on alkaline-forming supplements and diets show they can meaningfully raise urine pH (a marker of reduced acid load), improve mineral status, and support overall wellness — while normal blood pH is maintained.

Why our patented approach is different:

At NEWtritional Health Care, our 38 patented formulas are built on a proven pH-balancing foundation. These aren't generic mineral powders. They combine precise

ratios of highly absorbable alkaline minerals with synergistic herbs, vitamins, and compounds tailored for real results in joints (MSM+C), energy and hormones (Test Up), immunity (IS-3), metabolism, healing, and more. This pH base makes everything else work better: nutrients absorb more efficiently, inflammation drops faster, and your body moves from survival mode back to thriving.

The Bottom Line

You cannot alkalize your blood with diet or supplements alone... and you don't need to because God designed your body to maintain blood pH. But you can reduce the daily acid burden with the clear body fluids

that support your buffering systems, and stop your body from cannibalizing its own minerals. That shift is one of the most powerful things you can do for sustained energy, pain-free movement, strong hormones, and long-term overall health.

This is why supplementing with NEWtritional Health Care supplements is so important. We're not masking symptoms with drugs that carry deadly risks. We're giving your body the tools it was designed to use — pure, potent, pH-optimized nutrition.

Come see us and we'll help you understand your specific needs, build a custom plan around our patented pH formulas, and help you join the movement that's making real people stronger, healthier, and free from the medical trap.

The science is clear: Balance your pH foundation, and everything else improves. The revolution starts with one decision — yours. Visit us at Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen or visit our website at www.nhcherbs.com. To book an appointment for a free evaluation call 256-757-0660.

Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams



Paws On The Road: *Tips For A Dog-Friendly Vacation*

courtesy BrandPoint Content

(BPT) - Whether you're seeking sandy beaches or fresh mountain air, you can make your road trip even better with a furry co-pilot.

Traveling with your pup does require some preparation. To ensure a successful and stress-free journey with your four-legged friend, check out these five helpful tips.

1. Safety first!

If you haven't already, invest in a pet seat belt, car seat or travel crate so your dog can travel comfortably and safely. Not only will these safety products keep your pup safe, but they also prevent your pet from distracting you while driving. Find dog seat belts and more at Chewy.com. You can also use these Chewy dog seat belts, car seats and crates for everyday trips around town after your vacation.

2. Pack a travel kit

Put together a travel kit

with your pet's essentials. A travel kit should include items to help keep your furry companion comfortable, happy and safe while on vacation.

Besides water, food, treats, bowls and waste bags, make sure to include your dog's favorite toys, bedding and grooming supplies. Don't forget a leash and collar with ID tags just in case you get separated during your adventures.

3. Plan pet-friendly stops

As you choose your route, research pet-friendly stops, such as rest areas and parks that welcome pets. Plan to stop every 2-4 hours. However, you may have to stop more frequently if your pup has travel anxiety or becomes motion sick.

4. Prioritize exercise and playtime

Stops aren't just for meals and potty breaks. Just like you, your four-legged



friend needs to stretch their legs and burn off some energy. During rest stops, take time to exercise and play with your pet.

If you stop at a park with trails, plan to go hiking. At a pet-friendly rest area, play fetch or simply run around. Whatever physical activities you decide to do, exercise and playtime during a long road

trip will keep your dog engaged and entertained. You'll get a workout, too!

5. Keep cool and hydrated

Depending on where you plan to travel, your destination may get even hotter than what your furry family member is used to back at home.

Keep your pup cool and hydrated by offering plenty of fresh water dur-

ing rest stops. Consider purchasing a cooling mat or vest for your pet to help them stay comfortable. Most importantly, never leave your dog in a parked car on a hot day.

Are you ready to hit the road with your best friend? Follow these five tips, and you'll be well on your way to an unforgettable road trip with your dog.



Protecting Punxsutawney Phil And His Peeps

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Athens native and life-long resident Amy Fiscus has always been an animal lover, but she never expected to become at all fond of groundhogs, let alone protective of them.

A few weeks ago at our regular Tuesday morning Business Network

International meeting, she approached me with something that I found genuinely endearing, and that was a request for a Public Service Announcement to be printed in Athens Now that would raise awareness regarding groundhogs in

our town. She had discovered one in her backyard, did research on the little fellers, and then found out that they are actually mild mannered. They come out at sunset, are not aggressive, and they are not real good at protecting themselves.

“I want people to look out for them,” Amy told me. Since then, she has discovered that the firefighters at the Station located on Washington and Hine had taken up watching them, too. So, with a shameless reference to the classic flick, Groundhog Day, the request is that if you are driving anywhere on Hine Street or near the Hobbs Cemetery at sunset, keep an eye out for Phil and his peeps, please.

Alabama Republicans And The Case Of Missing Spines

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



Does anyone else have redistricting fatigue? It seems our Republican legislators share this sentiment. What we are currently witnessing is yet another chapter in the ongoing book of Republican inaction when it comes to Alabama politics. I once thought it was a matter of incompetence, then perhaps a lack of urgency. However, the current redistricting issues have led me to a more cynical perspective: perhaps many of the Republicans in Montgomery are not really who we think they are.

The United States Supreme Court gave the Alabama Legislature an opportunity of a lifetime when they lifted the injunction that has forced Alabama to draw its maps based on race for years now. Attorney General Steve Marshall, who truly is the hero of this story, understood the assign-

ment and stepped up when needed to deliver the state one of its biggest legal victories in history. These opportunities are extremely rare, and in this political environment, conservatives cannot afford to let them pass by.

And how did the so-called conservatives in the Alabama Legislature respond? Well, they played it safe, of course, by passing an already drawn 6-1 map claiming that this was the best they could do. Settling for the path of least resistance is not leadership, it's cowardice under the mask of fake action. If "hurry up and look busy" ever embodied a group of individuals, we saw exactly that during this last special session.

I urge the "Republicans" in Montgomery to look to their North and South. Look at Tennessee, which went from an 8-1 map to 9-0 under intense protests.

You think a couple of people shouting from the gallery in the Alabama House chamber was bad? Take a look at what transpired in the Tennessee legislature as they passed this new map. Tennessee could've chosen not to lift a finger and be satisfied with 8-1, but pushed through to make its state completely red. Take a look at Florida, DeSantis had a new map ready almost immediately following the SCOTUS ruling. That's true leadership, looking ahead and preparing how to strike best. That's called winning.

Alabama is in an even more unique position than these states, where SCOTUS essentially told us this week, "For the love..., please redraw your maps!" with the removal of our injunction. And yet, our Republican legislators crossed their arms and said, "Go pound sand." The unfortunate reality is that if they wanted



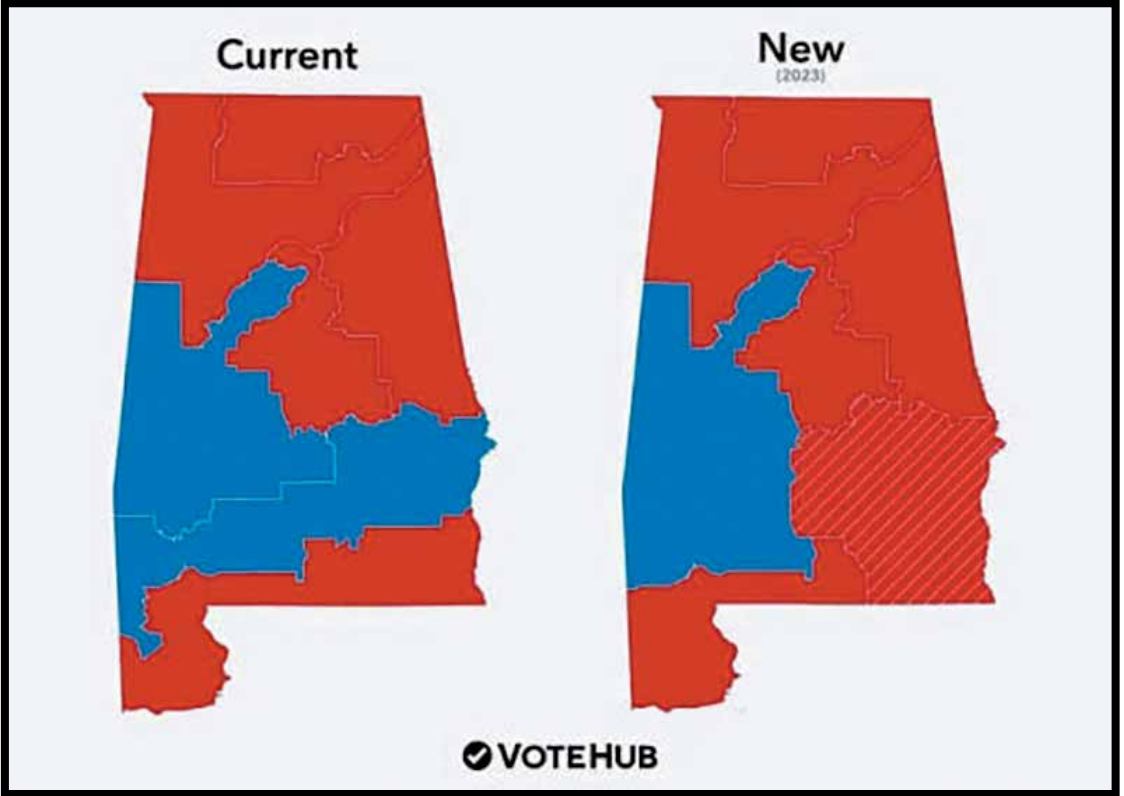
to, they would. If the Republicans in Montgomery truly wanted to paint their state red, they would. If they were truly conservatives as they claim, they would bite down on their mouthpiece, put their gloves up, and go to work. Instead, they fall back on the excuse of lack of time and expect you to be satisfied with that answer. They'll tweet out how they want a 7-0 when it's safe, and point the finger when they under deliver.

It seems, once again, Republicans in Alabama don't understand the gravity of the situation. The Democrats of 2026 want to do irreversible damage to our country. We can look at the current rise of political violence from the left and take it as a warning. If they ever come back to power, they're coming for blood. This doesn't appear to hit home in Montgomery. What they're essentially saying is that they're willing to send someone to Congress from this state who advocates for abortion, wide-open borders, and all of the other despicable policies of the current Democratic Party, because they want to. What other answer is there? After

what has transpired and been revealed through the redistricting process, this is the only place to land.

Attorney General Marshall did what he was supposed to. SCOTUS bent over backwards to hand you this opportunity, and you didn't just fumble it, you threw it in the stands and then claimed you won the game. If you're going to give refuge to Democrats in this state, just change that "R" to a "D" and call it a day. We'd have much more respect for you than we do right now.

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)

Trusting God's Timing: *When Waiting Is Part of the Plan*

by Anna Hamilton

something that is not meant for us. Sometimes the opportunities we are most eager to pursue are not the ones that will bring lasting peace or fulfillment.

There is danger in forcing doors open. Impatience can tempt us to take matters into our own hands. We may rush into relationships, careers, commitments, or decisions simply because we are tired of waiting. However, not every open door is a door from God.

Discernment is needed during seasons of waiting. A path that seems easy may lead us away from God's best, while a difficult season may be guiding us toward something far greater than we can imagine. When we force doors open, we often create unnecessary struggles. When we trust God, He opens the right doors at the right time.

What does God do while we wait? Waiting does not mean God is inactive. While we are waiting, God is building our faith, strengthening our character, teaching us patience, preparing us for future blessings, and aligning circumstances beyond our control.

Many of God's greatest servants experienced long seasons of waiting before stepping into their purpose. The waiting season became the training ground that prepared them for what was ahead.

Trusting God doesn't mean understanding everything. It means believing that His wisdom is greater than ours. When uncertainty arises, remember, God is never late. God's plans are never accidental. God's delays are not His denials.

What He has promised will come to pass in His perfect timing. The things that are truly meant for you do not require panic, manipulation, or desperation. They require faith, patience, and trust.

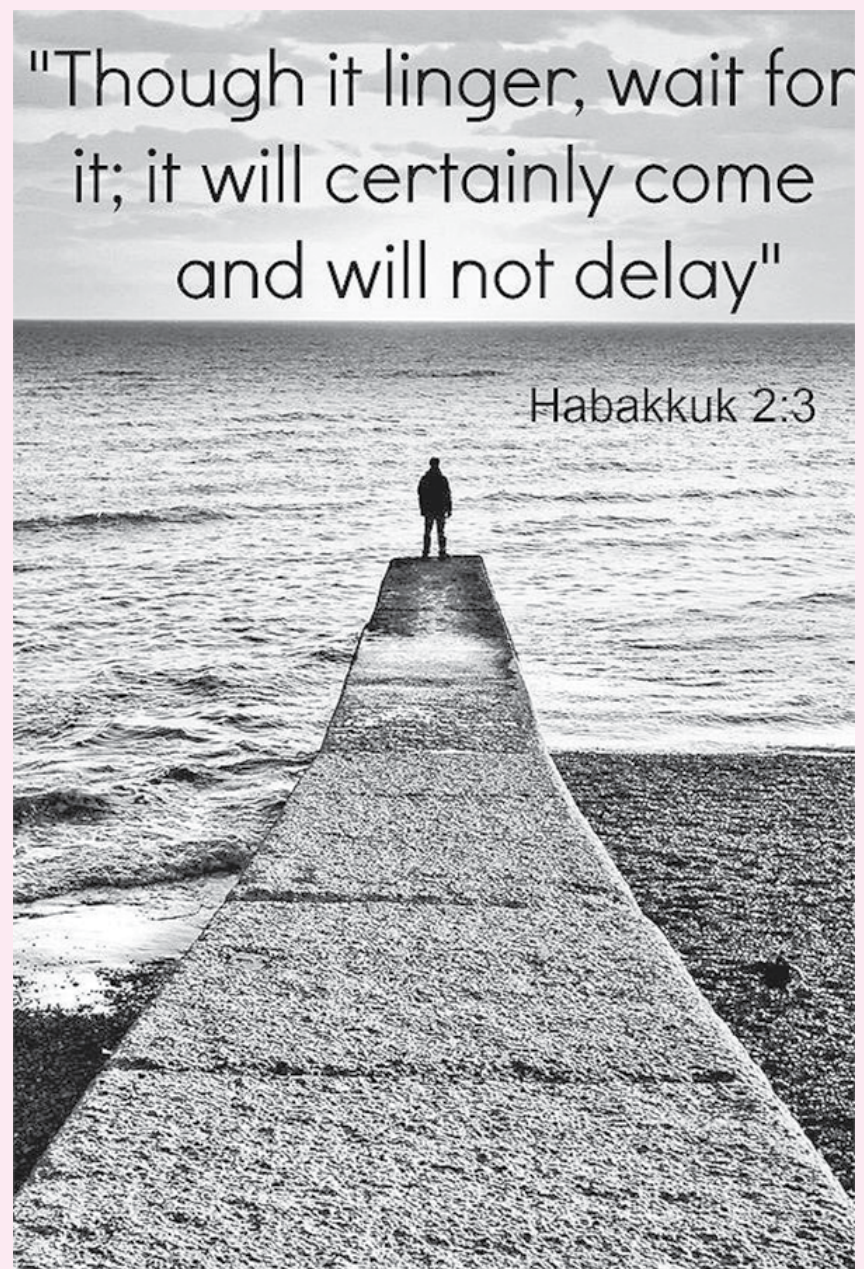
Waiting should be a season of hope. If you find yourself waiting today, don't lose heart. This season may feel slow, but God is still working behind the scenes. Every prayer is heard. Every tear is seen. Every moment of faithfulness matters.

The day will come when you look back and realize that what felt like a delay was actually God arranging every detail perfectly.

Until then, keep trusting, keep praying, and keep walking forward in faith. When God's timing arrives, everything will fall into place exactly as He intended.

This week's recipe is as easy as it gets! Dump all the salad ingredients in a bowl, mix up the dressing and toss together. It is truly that easy. Not only is it incredibly easy, but it is as equally delicious! My family loves this paired with grilled chicken or fish or a great steak!

"Wait for it; it will surely come at the right time" (Habakkuk 2:3).



The Power Of Routine

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens



There was a time when routines were simply a part of life. People woke up at similar times, ate meals together, worked alongside others, attended church, gathered with friends, and spent much more of their lives interacting face to face. Today, many of those routines have disappeared. We work from home, order groceries from our phones, communicate through text messages, and spend hours each day looking at screens instead of people. While technology has made life more convenient, it has also made it easier than ever to become disconnected.

The word "routine" often gets a bad reputation. People hear it and think of boredom, restriction, or being stuck in the same cycle every day. In reality, healthy routines are one of the most powerful tools we have for building a successful life. Routines are not the enemy. They are the foundation.

Your body and mind thrive on consistency. Going to bed at a consistent time, waking up with purpose, preparing healthy meals, exercising regularly, and interacting with other people are all routines that improve both physical and mental health. Without structure, it becomes incredibly easy to drift into unhealthy habits without even realizing it.

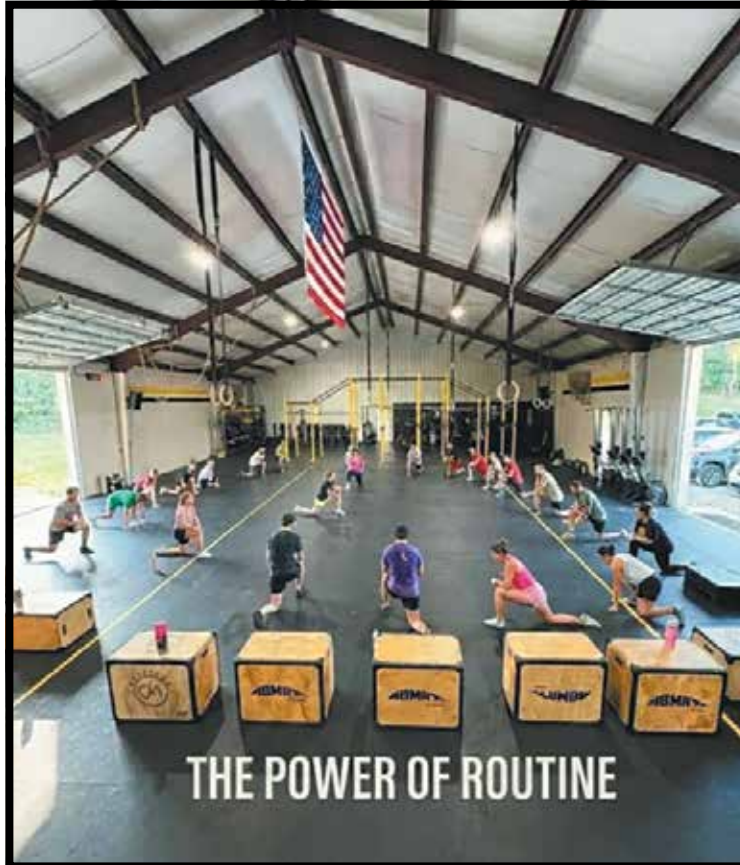
Many people today feel overwhelmed, anxious, tired, and disconnected. Part of that comes from

living in a world where every day feels unpredictable. We scroll endlessly through social media, answer emails at all hours, and constantly shift our attention from one thing to the next. There is very little stability. Creating routines helps bring stability back into our lives.

One of the most important routines a person can build is regular in person interaction. Human beings were not designed to live behind screens. We need conversations, shared experiences, encouragement, accountability, and community. A text message or social media comment will never fully replace shaking someone's hand, laughing with a group, or working alongside others toward a common goal.

This is one reason group fitness has become so powerful for so many people. At CrossFit Athens, members are not just showing up for a workout. They are building routines that improve their lives. They wake up early, see familiar faces, move their bodies, challenge themselves, and interact with people who encourage them to become healthier and stronger. That daily structure creates momentum that carries into every other area of life.

Exercise itself is important, but the routine surrounding it may be even more valuable. Having somewhere to be, people expecting you, and a consistent schedule can dramatically improve mental health, confidence, disci-



pline, and overall happiness.

Success rarely comes from motivation alone.

Motivation comes and goes. Routines are what carry us forward on the days we do not feel like

showing up. The people who stay healthy long-term are usually not relying on constant motivation. They simply build habits and routines that support the life they want to live.

If you feel stuck physically or mentally, start by looking at your daily routine. Small changes repeated consistently over time can completely transform your health and quality of life. Build routines that put you around people, keep you active, and create structure in your day. Those routines are not holding you back. They may be exactly what moves your life forward.

- Coach Nick
Owner / Head Coach
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