

August 7 - August 20, 2026

Athens Now

information & inspiration

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Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful is proud to recognize and thank the Alabama RC&D Council and Together Renewing and Improving Limestone (T.R.A.I.L.) for their...
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Bingo That Builds And Benefits

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Since November of 2025, I have enjoyed working with Realtor® Scott Robinson as an *Athens Now* client and Chamber of Commerce member. I have learned much from his stories of enduring the Las Vegas real estate market meltdown of 2007 and other business adventures, and his perseverance and creativity have inspired me. He moved here to Athens to take care of family, and I have found that he has a heart for helping fellow real estate agents as well as the community. He also has a strong

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Some of the "Bs"-- Scott, his "boats," and the real estate bingo game

Vervic Human Capital Solutions: Positive, Principled, And Proven

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

When Mike Bean and Rob Murphy put their heads, hearts, and decades of combined human resources experience together to form a new company, they coined a unique name for their organization that reflected their purpose. "Vervic," means "energy" along with
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Recent ribbon cutting at the Decatur Office



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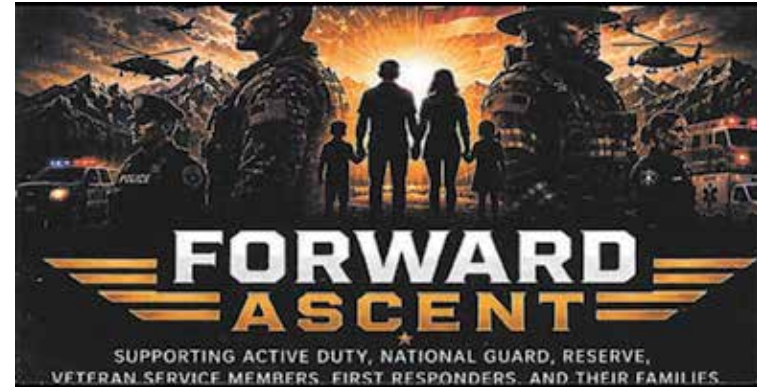
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STILL HOPE

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



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Publisher's Point

My Garden Full Of Posey

This gig called Life ain't easy for anyone, no matter who they are, and it's not supposed to be. I am sure I am not alone in whining sometimes when things aren't going *my* way, and God continually has mercy on me in the form of a simple daily gesture that I have affectionately named my "garden full of Posey." Let me tell you about the "gardener," Romanda Posey.

I met Romanda at the office where she used to work and I deliver *Athens Now*. I loved her from the get-go, and it concerned me that she was often alone while working. So, I taught her about wasp spray. Digressing for a moment, if you are in a working situation where things could go sideways in a New York minute courtesy of a ne'er do well, having a can of wasp spray at the ready can be a literal lifesaver. It needs to be the "point-and-shoot" kind that has a trigger built into the top, because having to get a cap off first can cost precious seconds. It shoots about 12 feet and is better than pepper spray. If someone's intentions toward you are to commit an "office invasion," this will buy you time to get the heck out of Dodge and call for help.

So, I bought Romanda



her own personal can of wasp spray, and would check on her to make sure she was in the habit of having it within reach. That began what has become a relationship that strengthens me powerfully. And, as I hope you'll understand in a moment, the "point of the *Point*" is that "little is much when God is in it."

So, here is how Romanda strengthens me, and how I now have a collection of encouraging messages that I can lean on any time I need them. On weekday mornings, usually around 6:30, I will hear a familiar chime that lets me know I have a text message. When I check, and I see it's from Romanda, I immediately open it because I know that there is an engaging, encouraging message waiting for me, and it will be full of promises just for that day. She

doesn't create them, but I am telling you, on more than one occasion they have felt like a personal greeting card from the Home Office, meaning Heaven.

More than once I have cried when I have read it and let it soak into my soul. More than once I have written back, "Girl, are you living rent free inside my head?" I always thank her, and it's not a chore to do so. Sometimes the graphics are beautifully crafted cups of steaming coffee that show the sun peaking over the horizon. Sometimes there are lots of flowers, sunrises, cottages, puppies, sunsets; things that evoke thoughts of simpler times and their simple pleasures. Sometimes

they have scriptures and prayers. Sometimes they are sassy. Sometimes there are marching orders. But always, I get to start my day way better than if she hadn't bothered to hit "send."

So, my dear Romanda, let this open letter to Heaven and the planet remind YOU when YOU need it that your acts of kindness toward me are more appreciated than I can say. Thank you, and I love you. And, may you NEVER have to use your can of wasp spray!

Ali Elizabeth Turner

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The History of The Purple Heart

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

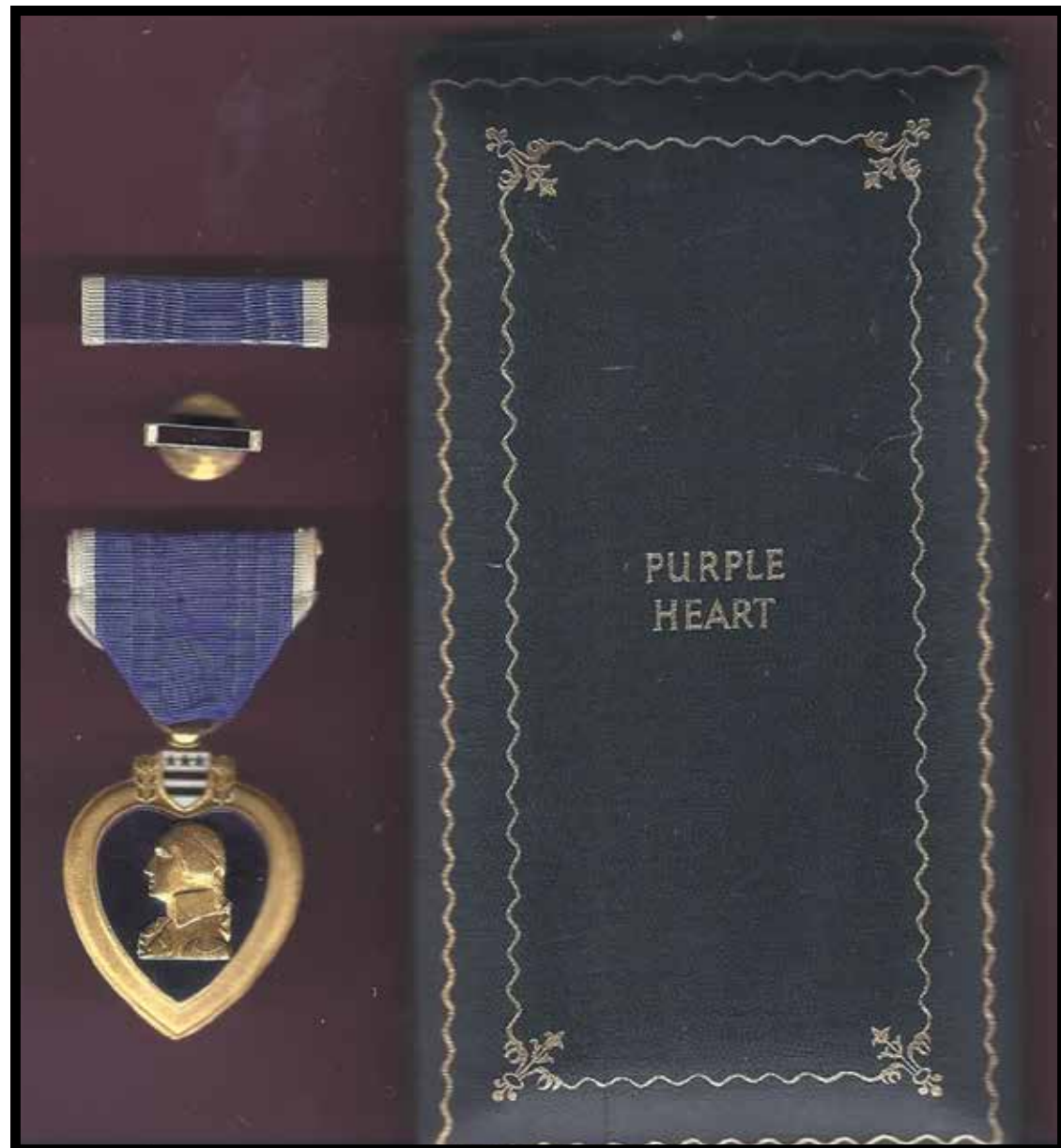


August 7 is officially Purple Heart Day, and it is to honor the nearly 1.8 million service members that have received it. We are still full on in the year-long celebration of our nation's 250th anniversary, and it was 244 years ago on August 7, 1782 (not long before the British surrendered), that Continental Army General George Washington crafted one of the most honored awards in the military, now known as the Purple Heart. The award is reserved for those that have been wounded or killed in battle or severely mistreated in captivity, and it is one of the oldest awards in our military.

Originally, it did not carry the profile of Washington on it, but had the word "merit" stitched on the ribbon, and it was the cloth itself that was both purple as well as heart-shaped. The Badge of Merit uniquely reflected the nascent American nation's desire to uphold the concept that "all men are created equal," in that it was one of the first medals that could be received by lower-ranking service members. Previously,

medals were reserved for officers that had been responsible for bringing about decisive or grand victories, but the Badge of Merit/Purple Heart could be awarded to anyone who deserved it. At that time, it was not necessary to have been wounded to receive it, only brave and honorable.

Over time, the Purple Heart faded from our national memory, as did many important facts about the Revolutionary War, and it was Douglas MacArthur that worked to revive it in time for George Washington's 200th birthday. It was at this time that the medal began to bear the image of George Washington, and MacArthur was only interested in having service members who were either U.S. Army or Army Air Corps be eligible to receive it. Ten years later, FDR opened up the qualifications for bestowing it to deserving service members of all the branches. It was at this time that the qualification became having been wounded or killed in battle, and could be awarded posthumously and given to family members of the fallen.



Only one U.S. president has been the recipient of a Purple Heart, and that was John F. Kennedy. There have been two animals that have gotten Purple Hearts, both of the rank of sergeant. One was Sgt. Stubby the dog, and Sgt. Reckless the horse.

Several actors received the medal, including James Arness, Rod Serling, James Garner, and Charles Bronson. Writers Oliver Stone and Kurt Vonnegut are Purple Heart recipients as well,

and John Kerry claims that he did not discard his Purple Heart at an anti-war demonstration in 1971.

Women have received the Purple Heart, the first being Lt. Annie Cox in 1942. She was an Army nurse when the Japanese attacked at Pearl Harbor, and Cordelia (Betty) Cook was the first woman to receive both a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. In the interest of honoring the melting pot of various people who make

up this great nation, there have been Purple Hearts awarded to service members of every color and creed. Some were born in slavery, one was Japanese and served the United States during WWII, and it is my honor to pay tribute to the nearly two million people who have been harmed that we may be free. Think about that the next time you see a Purple Heart designation on the license plate of a car, and if you can, thank the occupant.



Forward Ascent: *Together We Climb, Together We Rise*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

In the last couple of weeks, my life has been powerfully impacted by a young woman by the name of Emily Larson, who, with the support of her husband Rich, has launched a 501 (c)(3) support group for veterans, first responders, families, and caregivers that is called Forward Ascent. I find the name fascinating, as it captures the two things in life that are the most challenging—moving forward AND moving up, especially after things like deployments, combat, PTSD, trauma, or just plain life throwing hard curves and smacking us. We don't usually blend the two movements in conversation, but really, when you think about it, the title of the organization itself serves to give determination and strength.

Emily was inspired to start this group for the sake of others as well as pursuing her own "forward ascent," and she knew that number one, she didn't want to do it alone; and number two, the power of community, the grace of God, and "ohana" is something that should be available to

those who have experienced the call to put themselves in harm's way for our safety and freedom. At first, she thought she was going to primarily focus on women, but having remarried a good man who served in Desert Storm as well as OIF caused her to see she needed to increase the size of her vision.

Emily is in the life-long process of letting God turn pain into purpose, and her story is all too common. Her first husband, who had served in the military, secretly struggled with substances, and when Emily was 3 months pregnant with her daughter Faith, he unexpectedly died in his sleep as a result. What came after was a nightmare quagmire of discovering that nearly everything he had told her was a lie, their affairs were in complete disarray, benefits would not be forthcoming, and more. On this side, Emily will never have the answer to the question, "If something like Forward Ascent had been in place to help him, would he have been able to straighten his life out?" But she is determined

to make sure that others don't have to experience what she did.

Here is where the Hawaiian concept of "ohana" comes in, and amusingly, it comes from the cartoon film and TV series, *Lilo & Stitch*. When Emily was young, she loves the characters and how they transformed into the extended ohana family that includes being chosen as a family member and never abandoned. *Stitch* was changed by that love and commitment, and over time goes from being a creator of chaos and mayhem to a family member that goes to great lengths to protect his adopted tribe. He becomes a "redeemed rascal," and lives out the decision that no one gets left behind, and no one has to do it alone.

That quality is what Emily and Rich want as the foundation of Forward Ascent. They met in 2024 at a Combat Vets Bikers event and were married just a few months later. "I was done, and so was Rich, when it came to the idea of ever remarrying," Emily told



The Larson Family--Rich, Emily and Faith

me, and we all laughed about how God laughs at our plans. Rich completely backs Emily in her endeavors, including being crisis trained, getting her life coach certification, and starting Forward Ascent. He also loves being a dad to Faith.

The first launch meeting, or Rally Point for Forward Ascent occurred at the Scout House in Athens on July 20, and focused on vets and first responders. The second was on July 23 and primarily was for families and caregivers. The scope of what is offered includes fellowship, resources, crisis prevention, and a safe place where people and families can move forward together, even if it's inch by inch.

I asked Emily why I should choose Forward Ascent when there are so many veteran and first responder/family and caregiver organizations

already in existence and who are doing good work. And while I have come to observe firsthand how she supports other groups and has no desire to compete, her answer was simple and no surprise to me: "Ohana. I'll be with you."

If you want to be on the ground floor of an organization that has as its mission statement to "empower, guide and lift those who serve---and those who stand beside them---by building connections, providing support, and offering the tools and resources to thrive," then come to the next Rally Point meeting at the Scout House at 313 E. Washington Street on Monday, August 17 from 6 to 7:30 p.m., and see if this is your tribe.

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- WE GUIDE**
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- WE BUILD RESILIENCE**
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- WE LIFT**
Help individuals and families keep moving forward—together.

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- FIRST RESPONDERS**
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- CAREGIVERS**
Those Who Support Our Heroes Every Day

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For all Service Members & First Responders
Share experiences, build brother and sisterhood, and support one another.

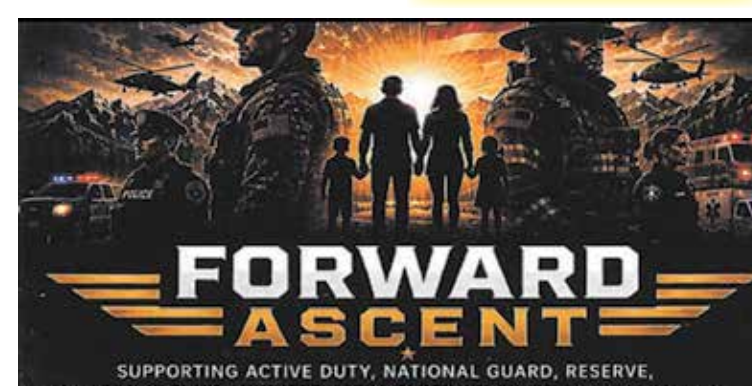
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A place for families and caregivers to connect, share, and find support with others who understand the journey.

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- Safe & welcoming spaces
- Share experiences & be heard
- Build lasting connections
- Access support, resources & meaningful activities
- Know you don't have to face the good days or the tough ones alone
- Strength for the journey
- Hope for the future

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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.

3rd Annual Downtown Athens Culinary Month Entire month of August

Athens Main Street is thrilled to host the 3rd Annual Downtown Athens 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

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.

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.

Preserving the Harvest August 8

Join the Limestone County Master Gardeners for their workshop on how to Preserve the Harvest. 10-11AM Limestone County Extension Office. 1109 W. Market St., Athens, AL.

Summer Sippin’ August 15

Athens Main Street invites the community to beat the heat and explore Downtown Athens at Summer Sippin’. This fun and flavorful afternoon invites visitors to explore participating shops offering unique summer-themed drinks and seasonal sales. Each stop provides an opportunity to sample creative beverages, discover great deals, and cast votes for the coveted title of Summer Sippin’ Champion. 3PM - 7PM. Downtown Athens.

Pep Rally on the Square August 21

Will kick off the first home game with the traditional Pep Rally on The Square. Band, football team, cheerleaders and fans. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM. East side of the Limestone County Courthouse.

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series September 24

Please join us for a special performance by Wyatt Ellis Band on Thursday, September 24 at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 7:00 PM. 300 N. Beaty St., Athens. Purchase your tickets today! <https://athensstate.ticketspice.com/wyatt-ellis-band-fiddlers-concert-series>

Pink Lady Walk 5K Race October 10

Participate in the Pink Lady Walk 5K Race to promote breast cancer awareness. 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM Race will start at 8:00AM at Big Springs Park in Athens, AL.



Carissa's Corner

The Delay

by Carissa Lovvorn

Those who know me personally know that I am always on the go. Whether it's spending time with my girls, caring for my family, volunteering, or working, I stay busy. Honestly, I often feel guilty when I need to rest. But lately, physical exhaustion has made this difficult.

For years, I've pushed my body to work through the fatigue, but it eventually reached a point where I simply couldn't keep going. Over the past several months, I've been trying to get to the root cause of my worsening health problems. Test results revealed that my iron stores were severely depleted.

The remedy? An iron infusion. Relief washed over me as I imagined how much better I would feel after one treatment.

I came prepared for the three-hour appointment with my book, headphones, and a fuzzy blanket. I snuggled into the recliner and willingly held out my

arm, ready for the IV.

The first part of the infusion process included steroids and an antihistamine to prevent any mild allergic reactions. During the wait after receiving those medications, I struck up a conversation with the woman sitting beside me. She was there for her second-to-last chemotherapy treatment and shared how excited she was for her final appointment just a few weeks away. We talked, laughed, and prayed together.

Then it was time for the iron.

The nurse administered a small test dose. As she injected the medication, I scanned my body for signs that something might be wrong.

About twenty seconds in, I sneezed. Then my throat began to itch...a lot. Within moments, my face flushed, eyes turned red and swelled, my voice changed, and the itching spread throughout my



body. After receiving only a few milliliters, I had a severe allergic reaction to the medication, prompting immediate treatment to counteract the symptoms.

The doctor canceled the infusion and ordered a different type to be administered over the course of three weekly treatments. Just like that, my plans for a quick recovery disap-

peared.

Yes, I was disappointed. I wanted immediate results so I could get back to my old self.

After the nurse returned with my updated appointment schedule, my new friend smiled and said, "Wait, you'll get to see me ring the bell!"

My third infusion had been scheduled for the

exact same time as her final chemotherapy treatment. Knowing I would be there to celebrate with her changed my perspective. Suddenly, what felt like another setback became an unexpected gift.

When the day finally arrived, the bell rang out through the hallways. Tears streamed down her face as she proclaimed, "God is good! He brought me through."

What a privilege it was to witness such a sacred moment. Sometimes we're so focused on our own plans that we miss the purpose God has placed right in front of us. I'm thankful He opened my eyes to see that my delayed infusion wasn't an inconvenience. It was a divine appointment. My prayer is that we all continue to seek God's will and remain open to the moments He places before us.

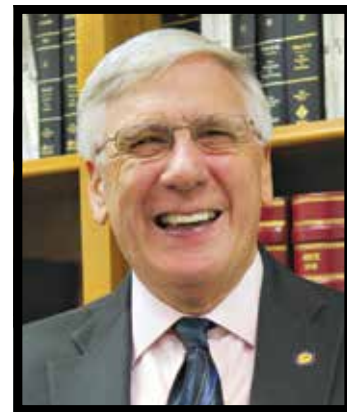
Blessings,

Carissa Lovvorn



Teacher's Institute And TVA

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

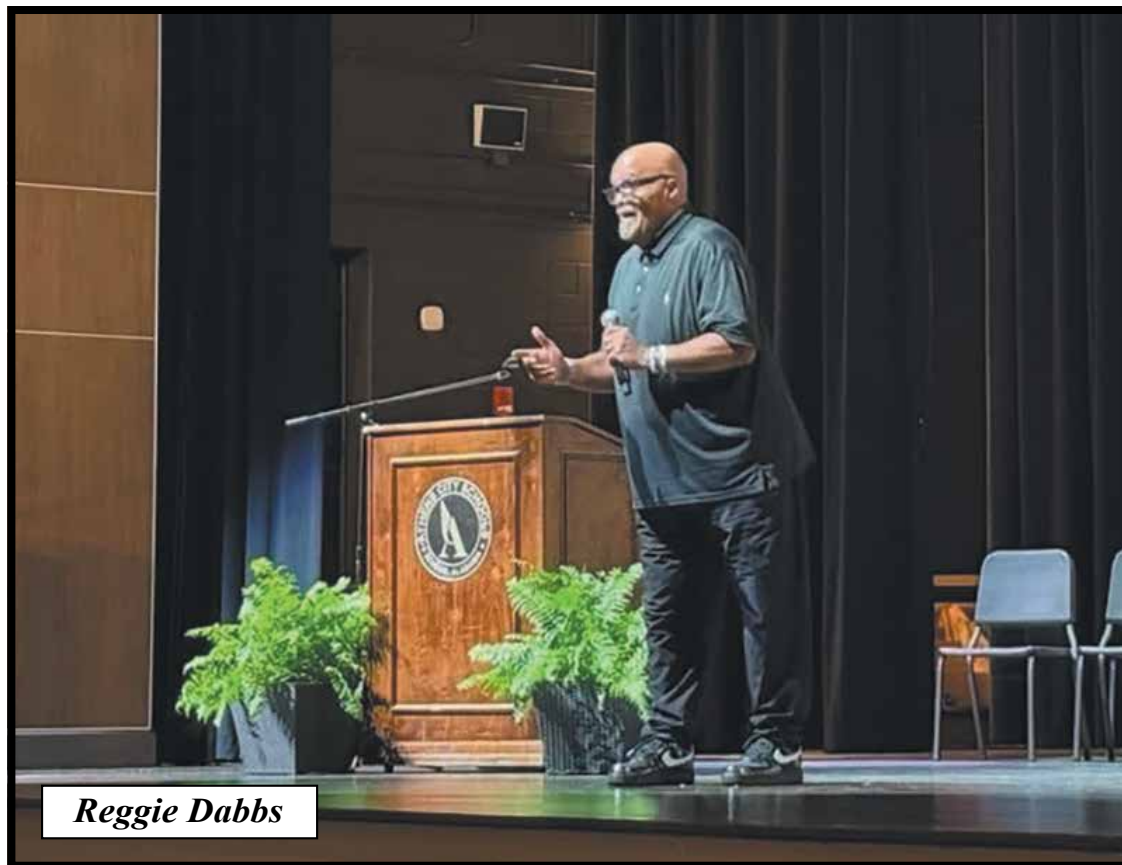


It had been a week where Athens and Limestone County had been "soaked" (literally and figuratively) in blessings, and Mayor Ronnie had barely scratched the surface. It is estimated that the Velcro Pygmies event as part of Fridays After Five on July 31 drew close to 4,000 people. The event was a complete success, and a great way to focus on Fall Festival Season.

The Teacher's Institute, sponsored by Athens Public Schools, was on Monday the 3rd, and its purpose was to honor teachers of every grade, subject, and tenure for the ways they lay down their lives for our kids. Some of the teachers present at the event were just beginning their careers and so excited to get started. Other teachers were excited that this was their last year. They wanted to finish

strong just as much as the new ones wanted to start strong. "This is a great time to keep our teachers and kids in prayer," said Mayor Ronnie.

The keynote speaker was Reggie Dabbs, a man who by all odds shouldn't be alive, let alone a successful public speaker. It is safe to say that Reggie's life was saved by a teacher. His mom was a pregnant teen who was living in a chicken coop, and she then remembered that a teacher told her class to call if they ever needed anything. The family took in the teen, who gave birth to Reggie. The father was unknown, and for years Reggie didn't have a last name until the Dabbs's officially adopted him. He went on to play football at Tennessee and made the Athens audience laugh when he told them that he couldn't stand Alabama OR Au-



Reggie Dabbs

burn....when it came to football! Reggie also plays a mean sax, and doesn't hide the fact that when he started playing in the 6th grade, his adoptive parents "made him" play a musical instrument and he hated it. Now he is forever glad that they did not back down. Mayor Ronnie and Holly Hollman were deeply moved by his presentation, given the fact that once upon a time, long, long ago, Mayor Ronnie taught high school math and science, and Holly has given

years of her heart to the Mayor's Youth Commission, which has gone on to be a model for student leadership development for several mayors and cities across the country.

Wednesday morning was a day of rejoicing for the not-for-profits in our city and county. TVA has had a TVA Cares program since COVID, and matches funds that are earmarked by the City of Athens to improve the quality of life in our town for all. The recipients are as varied as

can be, and include agencies that align with TVA's priorities. They are:

- Education, in particular STEM related activities.
- Workforce development/training.
- Environment/community stewardship.
- Disaster relief/emergency response.
- Health/hunger/housing.

All in all, sixteen agencies will be receiving \$46,000, which will serve to improve the quality of life for the people of Athens-Limestone County.

We spoke about people facing things such as cancer and other challenges, and there was just one thing left to do, and that was pray. So, we did, and once again it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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Don't Let the Blessing Become The Burden

by Anna Hamilton

"Every good and perfect gift is from above..." (James 1:17).

Have you ever stopped to think about the prayers God has already answered?

Perhaps you once cried out for a new job because you were struggling to make ends meet. You prayed for a spouse because you longed to share your life with someone. You begged God for children, a home, a ministry, healing, or simply another chance.

Then, slowly, something changed.

The job became stressful. The marriage required sacrifice. The children demanded your time and energy. The ministry became exhausting. The answered prayer began to feel more like a burden than a blessing.

The enemy has a subtle strategy. He cannot steal what God has given you, but he will try to steal your appreciation for it. He whispers complaints where there should be gratitude. He magnifies the difficulties until you forget the miracle.

continued on page 22

Crock Pot Cheesy Potatoes and Chicken

Ingredients:

8 potatoes, peeled and cut into small cubes
1 onion diced
1.5 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into cubes
1 cup of shredded cheese
2 cup milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Put potatoes, chicken, onion, milk, and salt and pepper into a 6 qt. slow cooker. Place the potatoes on the bottom of the crockpot.

Cover and cook on low for four to six hours or on high for two to three hours. About half way through cooking, stir in the shredded cheese. Enjoy!



Y'all, It's Still Summer!

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



I work in tourism (yes, I know you know that by now).

Because our industry plans for future events, we start ordering fireworks in January and Christmas trees in July. In fact, this morning I was reviewing a press release that mentioned changing leaves and cooler evenings, fully aware that we are under a heat advisory for today. And tomorrow. And also the day after that, I think.

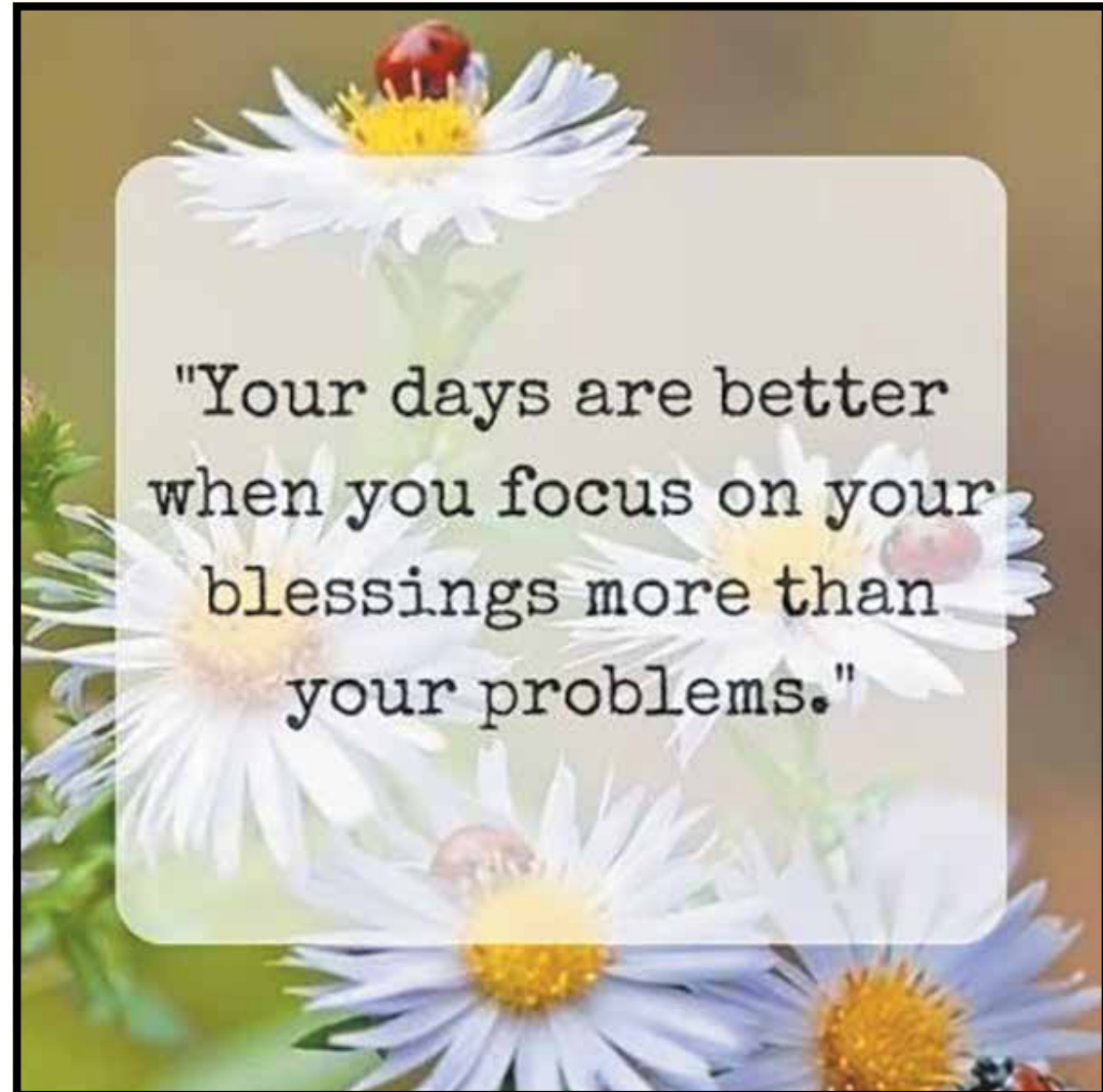
I talked with a gentleman who used to work at a shoe shop about how fall shoes were ordered when people were still looking for sandals. I myself have been frustrated by pumpkins scooching beach towels off the shelves in the middle of summer. And ironically, I couldn't find any red, white, and blue clothing until after Memorial Day! The one time I needed stores to anticipate the season, I couldn't even find a red shirt!

As I write this, the kids are already getting prepared for back to school. In the blink of an eye our summer was over, gone, done, spent. Oh,

not just "summer break" but I mean our concept of summer. As a society, summer is baked in (literally, if you live in Alabama) as the season of rest, of family, of vacations to the beach. It is a time when you tend to work a little less and garden a little more. Even if you have to work every day, the summer life is just outside the glass window of your office, steady as the thermometer in August.

It isn't just how summer goes so quickly now. It's every season, every year. I remember being a kid and Christmas was at Christmas, and Thanksgiving was at Thanksgiving, and summer was hot, glorious, and LONG.

I thought about how it might have been back before technology took over, when the day was regulated by the light, and the year by the season. Now, I love my K-dramas and Amazon deliveries, but just imagine how life might look if we didn't have any visual pressure for the future. Oh sure, we would still need to plan for crops and retirement and such, but what if there wasn't that visual noise of To-



day was over yesterday and tomorrow is already here and you are already behind?

I think about how our society and social media, the news and Facebook ads and YouTube, are forcing this "skip over this season of (the year, your life, the planet) and frantically get ready for the next" mentality. "Don't focus on the blessings of now because soon school, bikini season, whatever is fast approaching and you need to think about it excessively!"

Now, I am a planner girl. I love plans. I love being

ready. But there is a difference between devoting a few minutes planning for the future and missing out on today because all the focus is on tomorrow. There is such a tendency to ignore the sun overhead while dreading the moon. Or a tendency to miss the beauty and quiet of the night because one is pinning for the dawn.

It's still summer. I am going to turn off my computer (yes, it's okay. I have the half-day off) and go on a truck ride with my fabulous husband to get feed for our ducks and turkeys. I am going to sit on an up-

side-down bucket in my chicken run. I am going to let the sun beat down on my skin, then eat watermelon and blueberries to cool off. Maybe I'll even convince myself and DH that we need to swing by Kreme Delite.

And then in September, I will flip the switch to fall, regardless of any heat indexes or Christmas decorations. I will start looking up soup recipes and sipping pumpkin spice everything. Autumn will be glorious...in September.

But right now, at this moment, it's still summer.

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Bingo That Builds And Benefits

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

sense of adventure in the usual sense and has done something I have not heard of in the 26 years we have been here: kayaking nearly every square inch of Athens Creek from top to bottom! I truly did not know that was possible. He has also spent a goodly amount of time kayaking on the Elk River, which in places can be daunting even for a seasoned kayaker.

Recently Scott reached out to us to do an article with the strict agenda of “It’s not about me,” and wanted *Athens Now* to do a story that has a whole lot of the letter B in it: Bingo, Blessing, Building, Benefiting, and even some Beyond. Let’s start with “Bingo” and “Building.” Scott knows it has been a wet, wild, and unpredictable summer both in terms of the weather as well as the real estate market. He wants to celebrate the end of summer with other realtors by playing a brand of Bingo that is his brainchild and that he has tailor-made to members of his industry. On August 27, he is inviting fellow agents to come to the model home located in his actual neighborhood, and the address is 16971 Orleans Dr., Athens, AL 35611. The entrance to Covington Cove is at the intersection of Quinn Road and Orleans Drive. The “Building” has to do with the community at large as well as networking amongst agents that “benefits” everyone through stronger relationships.

There will be refresh-

ments, some fresh-baked goods, and the chance to win some gift cards. The actual Bingo game is designed for agents, but if you are a “civilian,” you can try your hand at it as well. You do need to register because space is limited, and you can do so at scott.robinson1@lennar.com.

On to the other Bs in the line-up, these being Benefit and Bless. As many Athenians know, Michelle Crawford, owner of Driftwood Dragonfly, is in a fierce battle with glioblastoma, a particularly aggressive type of brain cancer. Michelle is the mother of four boys, two grown and two still at home, and is dearly loved in this town. The community is rallying

around her in a number of ways, including an in-store (at Driftwood Dragonfly) benefit that includes sales, raffles, a silent gift bag auction, and vendors. The event will be held on August 28 from 3-8 p.m. and August 29 from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. The first 25 customers each day will receive a free mini cheesecake and a tea of their choice. Options to participate in GoFundMe for Michelle will be on her Driftwood Dragonfly Facebook page, as well as at the shop. Driftwood Dragonfly is in Athens at 405 West Washington, just west of Kreme Delite.

We’ll close this article with the “Beyond” piece. In the times that I have interviewed Scott, there has not been one interview



where he hasn’t been inundated with requests for help from other real estate agents, particularly those that haven’t been in the business for long. He knows what it is

like to be “green,” just having gotten your license and needing advice, suggestions, and mentoring. Regarding his own story, Scott was trained in the print industry and made a career change at what was the worst possible time in 20th century real estate history. He endured the particularly brutal Las Vegas meltdown and lived to tell the tale. He also came through that storm with his love for real estate still intact, as well as his desire to help people in general and realtors in particular. Scott is grateful for the help he got when he was new and remembers when help was nowhere to be found. Scott is brainstorming (there’s another B) about ways to organize a way for agents new and experienced to band together to help each other.

If you wish to become involved in the upcoming “Bs,” you can contact Scott at scott.robinson1@lennar.com or text him at 256-321-0789.



Tennessee Valley Spotlight



Mondays at 10am
1080 AM WKAC

Vervic Human Capital Solutions: Positive, Principled, And Proven

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

“victory,” and that is what they commit to bring to HR challenges. They met through Vantage Leadership Center in September of 2024 and started Vervic in January of 2025. They have grown quickly as well as expanded their reach in North Alabama with several locations. As men of faith they see themselves as stewards who have a responsibility to find solutions for their clients that are positive, based on timeless and ethical principles, and which provide proof that victorious energy can indeed prevail in the most challenging of situations.

Human Resources is a complicated field. There are considerations to be made in a constantly changing employment environment. Government regulations as they pertain to HR can be extremely challenging. Politics can and does affect how companies operate. Businesses that range all the way from start-up to seasoned often experience frustrations with which they need help. Vervic offers a complete range of traditional services we’ll cover below, but will focus for a moment here on what is known as “fractional HR.”

A fractional HR professional is highly skilled and often works on a part-time basis. The term started in the finance industry, and in the HR field, it largely referred in the past to consultants that would be hired for specific projects such as turning around a failing company. During

the COVID-19 era when remote work became commonplace, the fractional HR professional became standard for many companies. It is a rapidly growing designation, having had approximately 2,000 such consultants in 2022, and in 2024 more than 110,000. Vervic is well equipped to provide fractional HR assistance for companies that otherwise could not afford a full-time HR person.

As it pertains to the more well-known aspects of HR services, Vervic will handle recruiting and onboarding, as well as temporary, seasonal, and contract-to-hire staffing. They deal with employee relations, payroll and benefit administration, executive searches, leadership training and more. Here is what they say about themselves:

Every growing business eventually reaches a point where finding the right employees becomes more challenging than expected. Open positions can remain vacant for weeks, workloads can increase for existing staff, and productivity may suffer while hiring managers search for qualified candidates. It is no surprise that many business leaders begin searching for “staffing

agencies near me” when they need a faster and more effective way to strengthen their workforce.

At Vervic Human Capital Solutions, we work with organizations throughout North Alabama, including Huntsville, Madison, Athens, Decatur, and surrounding areas, to help them navigate hiring challenges and build teams that support long-term business goals. Through staffing, recruiting, executive search, and human capital solutions, we help employers connect with qualified professionals while reducing the time and resources often associated with traditional hiring methods.

I asked Mike and Rob why I should choose Vervic, and besides their deep commitment to being men of integrity, they had some fascinating stories and accomplishments. Both men have advanced degrees and numbers of certifications. They have what is known as “deep industry experience,” and at times other HR professionals look to them for help and solutions in their own firms. Rob in his 20s was hired by a Christian school to build a



sports program essentially from scratch, and let’s just say it was a challenge no one else wanted to take on. No money, no resources, not much parental support, and in a few years Rob built a winning program that put the school on the map. Rob told me he felt that one reason for his success at the Christian school was his ability to listen even when it was difficult, a trait he has carried with him throughout his career. By contrast, Mike has more than 30 HR years of HR leadership under his belt, and has a gift for being able to sense whether a potential employee is a dud or a diamond in the rough. “Kids these days” don’t always know that it’s not a good idea to go to a job interview in their slippers, and Mike loves to teach “soft skills” in order to ensure success for both

the potential employee as well as the employer.

Jason Sowash is the Director of Sales and cut his HR teeth while serving in the Navy. He very much enjoys getting out to various sites, assessing their needs (whether for temps or permanent hire), and then finding just the right fit for all involved. One of the things that made Jason feel he had found a home with Vervic was the fact that they open every Wednesday at the office with prayer.

I have found over the years that there is a unique and unmistakable “vibe” when people are walking in their purpose, and you can indeed feel it at Vervic. Call them today for a no-obligation conversation and let them bring energy and victory to your HR challenges.





Papa's Perspective

You Have An Appointment

by Bob Felgar

Editor's Note:

Bob Felgar has joined his daughter Brenda Wilkerson, who writes Captain's Log. They are sharing the column, and as a result, we are doubly blessed.

The sticky on the fridge door is a reminder that you have an appointment with Dr. Payne at 10 a.m. this coming Monday.

When that appointment was made, it was a binding agreement. Time and place were settled, bring your med list. This appointment once confirmed was obligatory because if you were late, the next person would be escorted into the "inner sanctum," and you had a choice either to wait to see if you could be "worked in" or make another appointment and leave the facility. However, if you failed to keep your appointment, you would be charged a modest no-show fee.

Some appointments require preparation on both parties, some of course do not. A doctor's appointment does not but a loan closing does.

There is built into the appointment, a mutual respect for time. The office staff keeps the calendar full by

design. Some professionals charge by the hour to eliminate the small talk.

For the non-business appointments, there is far more flexibility. If your neighbor is suddenly called out of town the night before a shared meal that had been scheduled, plans are adjusted and a new appointment is set.

There are different types of appointments. The hair dresser appointment is quite different than the appointment to confirm a pregnancy. That is different than the appointment with the oncologist to learn if the tissue submitted earlier is malignant or not.

The disappointment of a missed appointment doesn't always lead to a re-appointment.

There is another type of appointment that has been recorded. It is unconditional, it is a decree. A divine decree.

The etymology of the word "appointed" in the Book of Hebrews carries the concept of certainty and reserved. Translating the words found in 9:27 says: "Every man has a certain day ahead for his or her death. It is non-negotiable, it is certain. I've told people before that I have an appoint-



ment, one that I won't be early for, and I sure won't be even one minute late.

The rest of that truth is that judgment is coming. For those who reject the concept of the salvation that comes only to those who believe this truth by faith, judgment awaits. This judgment boils down to everlasting separation from God and other things far worse.

For the believers, they will be present for another kind of judgment. This stage is like a rewards banquet.

Some will hear "well done thou good and faithful servant." Some won't. Those receiving rewards will immediately lay their rewards at the foot of the Throne, an act of thanksgiving and worship.

Don't mean to get "preachy," but since I'm somewhere between 84 and 100, some things are important and becoming more urgent by the day. You never know when your appointment will be. Are you ready?

~Bob



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Athens Now AL

Protecting Your Story
Telling It Well

The Power Of “Oh, Well...”

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

Looking back upon this week, I am reminded that there are times that it is harder to be a kind, thoughtful, patient, and cheerful person. Stress and fatigue are two of those triggers.

Stress comes from so many directions, and just as some stress is good, necessary, and profitable like the stress of the guitar string properly applied, when it is present in over-abundance, we can find ourselves acting in ways we wish we did not. Sometimes it can be embarrassingly bad, other times, just a cross or careless word that caused hurt where we meant none to be. That is where our level of *emotional intelligence* begins to become apparent to others.

I am helping a non-profit distribute over 2,000 books to children in grades 2 and 3. Reading levels among children are at dangerously low levels in nearly every school. This little book helps promote nutrition, good manners, thoughtfulness, friendship, and much more. We were supposed to have them delivered before school was out in May, but all 2,000 were delivered in damaged, torn-open boxes, most water soaked and muddy, as though they had been tossed in a shallow ditch before being thrown around from truck to truck before reaching my doorstep. All this in mid-May. The printing company blames UPS. UPS says the boxes weren't the right kind. So they won't



pay the claim. (I'm wondering what kind would survive such treatment!)

The publishing company I contracted with for the books won't reprint or compensate anything until/unless UPS pays up. So we are left with all the debt – everything pre-paid, of course -- and no books, and no replacement funds. Over 2 months now of being very patient, then mov-

ing to begging, pleading, speaking with attorneys, and placing numerous phone calls and messages that are never returned, we are now waiting to see if the state Attorney General's Office can help us. After that, only a lawsuit remains. (BIG SIGH!)

So, my friend...WHAT does a truly emotionally intelligent person do? How would/should they respond? What response

will guarantee that they are not later embarrassed or ashamed of how they chose to act? One very beneficial tool for becoming more emotionally intelligent is to remember to ASK and ANSWER that question *before* we act/react.

I chose this response: I looked at all my copious notes, asking myself, "If I were a very wise counselor and a client asked

me how to handle this situation, what would be my great, wise, beneficial reply?"

Well, the State Attorney General's Office asked me to allow 30 days for them to get a response. So, I saw that I do have another few days on that potential source of help. And, a friend who lives out of state is ill and needs help moving. So I packed up my ditty-bag and off I went to spend about a week under even more stressful circumstances – but a much DIFFERENT kind of stress. I realized that sometimes helping others frees our energies and mind to creatively and patiently deal with our own problems.

It's almost time to return home, and see if the AG has been able to talk some sense into someone...and if not, then we take the next logical step, which is a lawsuit and the pain/delay/frustrations there. Oh, well... While this "mess" will cause me a few minutes of frustration each day I have to deal with parts of it, I am thankful that I have learned the power of "Oh, well..." It will not ruin my day! Or even hours. Because, I *choose* to not let it.



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Clean, Green And Beautiful

In the Garden

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

Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful is proud to recognize and thank the Alabama RC&D Council and Together Renewing and Improving Limestone (T.R.A.I.L.) for their generous grant support, which has made an exciting community improvement project possible.

Thanks to these grants, the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful Youth Commission has had the opportunity to redesign the outdoor patio at the Athens-Limestone County Tourism Association, transforming it into a welcoming and educational pollinator garden for residents and visitors to enjoy.

The project was inspired by the Youth Commission's desire to create a space that is both beautiful and beneficial to the environment. By incorporating pollinator-friendly plants, the garden will provide valuable habitat and food sources for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other beneficial insects that play a vital role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. The new landscape will also serve as an educational example of the way attractive public spaces can support local wildlife while enhancing the beauty of our community.

In addition to the colorful pollinator garden, the redesigned patio features a decorative fountain that creates a peaceful atmosphere, as well as new tables and chairs where visitors can relax, enjoy

lunch, or simply take in the surroundings. The updated space will provide a comfortable gathering place for both local residents and travelers stopping by the Tourism office to learn more about Athens and Limestone County.

This project represents far more than a landscape improvement. It reflects the power of community partnerships and the importance of investing in young people. Members of the Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful Youth Commission have been actively involved in the planning and vision for the project, learning firsthand how environ-



mental stewardship, civic engagement, and community collaboration can create lasting positive change.

The Alabama RC&D Council has long supported projects that promote conservation, education, and community development throughout the state. Likewise, T.R.A.I.L. continues to make meaningful investments that improve the quality of life through-



Their generosity will leave a lasting impact, providing a vibrant public space that can be enjoyed for years to come while encouraging environmental awareness and appreciation for pollinators.

As work on the patio continues, we look forward to welcoming the community to experience this beautiful new outdoor space. We hope it will inspire others to plant pollinator gardens at home, support local conservation efforts, and recognize the difference that

community partnerships can make.

On behalf of Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful, our Youth Commission, and the countless residents and visitors who will enjoy this space, thank you to the Alabama RC&D Council and T.R.A.I.L. for helping turn this vision into reality. Your investment is creating a greener, more welcoming Limestone County—one pollinator, one visitor, and one community project at a time.



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Slinkard On Scriptural Success

Which One Are You?

by D. A. Slinkard

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

It is hard to believe we are already in the month of August. Every year seems to pass faster than the one before. It feels like we were just setting goals for 2026, and now we are already beginning to think about the final few months of the year. The older we get, the more we realize that time is our most valuable resource—and once it is gone; we never get it back.

Life moves at an incredible pace. Technology keeps us connected twenty-four hours a day. News changes by the minute. Calendars stay full. Before long, another season has passed, another birthday has come and gone, and another year is behind us. If we are not careful, we can become so busy living life that we forget to truly make a difference while we have the opportunity.

That brings me to a simple illustration. The people around you are either a thermometer or a thermostat. I want you to think about this for a second – a thermometer simply reports the temperature. Nothing more, nothing less, and it tells everyone else what is happening, but it has no ability to change anything. It merely reflects its surroundings. A thermostat, however, changes the environment. When the room is too hot or too cold, the thermostat takes action. It doesn't just recognize

the problem—it influences the solution. The same is true in life.

Some people spend their lives pointing out problems. They complain about the direction of the country, criticize their workplace, grumble about the younger generation, or talk about everything wrong with the church. They are experts at describing the temperature, but they rarely do anything to change it. They live like thermometers. I wonder who comes to your mind as you are reading this article – who did I just describe?

Other people will choose to be thermostats. These are the people that I like being around – I truly enjoy being around these individuals. They encourage people when everyone else is negative. They lead instead of waiting to be told what to do. They serve when no one is watching. They look for solutions instead of excuses. Wherever they go, they make the environment better because they influence those around them. When it comes to your life, what influence are you having on those around you? Is it a positive change or a negative one?

Sadly, our culture has become increasingly comfortable with doing the bare minimum. Many people want maximum reward with minimum effort. We have become accustomed to conve-

nience, shortcuts, and instant gratification. Too often people ask, "What's the least I have to do?" rather than, "How can I make the greatest difference?" I can remember being taught growing up that it takes no talent to run hard to first base.

Unfortunately, this mindset of doing the bare minimum can also find its way into our churches. Some Christians are content to simply attend a service, occupy a pew, and go home unchanged. They expect the church to thrive while someone else teaches, serves, gives, prays, evangelizes, and carries the load. God has not called His people to be spectators. He has called us to be laborers.

Real change always begins at home. Parents

must teach their children responsibility, character, hard work, and servant leadership. These qualities cannot be outsourced to the school system, social media, or someone else. Children learn far more from what they consistently see than from what they occasionally hear. At the end of the day – either the kids will be taught by their parents or the kids will be taught by the algorithms, but the choice is ours to make.

The church also has a responsibility to develop leaders rather than simply filling positions. Every believer ought to be growing spiritually, serving faithfully, and influencing others for Christ. Healthy churches are filled with people who don't wait for some-

one else to act—they willingly step forward themselves.

Jesus never called His followers to blend into the crowd, but said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" and "Ye are the light of the world." Salt changes whatever it touches. Light transforms darkness wherever it shines. Christians are called to influence the culture—not simply observe it. My question is: When people look at your life, do they see a thermometer or a thermostat? Do you merely describe the spiritual condition of your family, church, workplace, and community? Or are you actively helping to improve it? The world has enough thermometers. We need more thermostats.





Learning As A Lifestyle

The Ethics of Interpretation

by Eric Betts

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

Most people assume leadership begins with making decisions. I would suggest it begins much earlier—with interpretation. Before we decide what to do, we first decide what something means. We interpret conversations, financial reports, community needs, workplace conflicts, and even the motives of other people. Two leaders can look at the same situation and arrive at entirely different conclusions because they have interpreted it differently. Ethical leadership, therefore, is not simply about making good decisions; it is about developing the wisdom to interpret people and circumstances with fairness, humility, and truth. In many respects, leadership is less about the decisions we make than the way we learn to see the world before making them.

The reality is that every one of us views life through a particular lens. Our experiences, upbringing, successes, disappointments, and values all shape the way we understand the world around us. We have all experienced moments



when we later discovered that we had misunderstood someone's intentions or jumped to conclusions before knowing the whole story. Wise leaders learn to pause before reacting. They ask questions before making judgments and seek understanding before assigning blame. Often, the difference between conflict and cooperation is not the situation itself but the way it has been interpreted.

There is a timeless spiritual principle woven into this truth: the quality of our leadership is limited by the quality of our vision. If we see people only as obstacles, competitors, or problems to solve, our leadership will eventually reflect those assumptions. But when we learn to see others with dignity, possibility, and grace, our decisions begin to reflect those values as well. Character is formed not only by what we choose to do but also by how we choose to see. The clearest vision is seldom found in those who speak the loudest, but in those who remain humble enough to keep learning. The way we see the world eventually becomes the way we

shape the world. That is why learning to see well is one of the greatest responsibilities of leadership. The heart and the mind are never far apart. The interpretations we cultivate quietly become the character we display. Misinterpretation is rarely harmless. When we assign the wrong meaning to people or situations, even well-intentioned decisions can produce unintended harm and fracture relationships. Wisdom reminds us that seeing clearly is itself an ethical responsibility, for our decisions can never rise above the truthfulness of our understanding. Perhaps that is why the most successful leaders are rarely the quickest to speak or the fastest to

judge. They understand that leadership is not simply the art of making decisions; it is the discipline of interpreting life wisely. Long before our actions shape our reputation, our interpretations shape our actions. When we learn to see more truthfully, we begin to lead more faithfully. In the end, lasting success belongs to those who continually refine not only their skills but also the lens through which they view the people and opportunities entrusted to their care.

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The Alternative Approach

Brain Health For Life

by Roy P. Williams

Alzheimer's is a terrifying disease that affects over 5 million Americans—perhaps one of your own family members or friends. Once it is diagnosed, decline feels inevitable. Unfortunately, prescription medications have limited effectiveness and cause many side effects, so finding a way of stopping its progression can seem insurmountable. And as of yet, the medical profession or the pharmaceutical industry says, there is no cure.

However, cutting-edge research is finding that there are some very impressive results coming from all-natural ingredients that are proving to help slow—and possibly reverse—Alzheimer's disease or dementia. The following ingredients have shown noticeable improvements including;

- **Improved memory and recall**
- **Reduce damaging inflammation in the brain**
- **Breaking up amyloid plaques**
- **Preserve acetylcholine levels and neural signals**

The thought Alzheimer's disease is chilling. For

anyone who has ever had a family member diagnosed with this debilitating condition, there's a very real sense of desperation in finding some way—any way—of preventing or curing this disease. And it's not just for the sake of the afflicted person. Many people live with a very real fear that “they may be next.” Unfortunately, statistics don't provide much hope. By directly fighting back using all-natural supplements your future can be much brighter.

How prevalent is Alzheimer's disease? Let's look at the statistics.

- 6th leading cause of mortality in the U.S.
- 5.3 million Americans already have AD
- Someone develops AD every 70 seconds

What Changes in the Brain?

1. Plaques and tangles have been identified in the brains of AD patients.
2. Clusters of a protein called beta-amyloids can build up in the brain.
3. Clusters of dead and dying nerve and brain cells can interfere with communication points between brain cells.
4. Combine that with in-

creased inflammation and the problem the quickly becomes even worse.

Pharmaceutical interventions have had limited success. There are currently two classes of drugs that target the decline in brain function of AD. Some doctors even recommend against their use because they believe the cost and risks of terrible side effects outweigh the potential benefits. Remember these drugs are not a cure.

However, some very effective Natural Solutions for Alzheimer's have been studied and proven to slow the damage while shrinking the plaques with absolutely no known side effects and do not interfere with any other prescriptions the patient may be on.

The first one has been used to fight inflammation for centuries.

Curcumin, the compound from turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) has been the subject of numerous studies exploring how it can slow—and possibly reverse—the progression of AD.

Curcumin protects brain cells from damaging inflammation. It has been shown to reduce the beta-amyloid levels and shrink the size of accumulated plaques that interfere with brain cell signals by over 30% in experimental models of Alzheimer's disease. Other studies have shown that curcumin plays a role in regenerating neurons, creating new brain cells and refreshing cells that may have once been considered irretrievable.



A clinical trial at the McCusker Alzheimer's Research Foundation (supporting research at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia) is focused on learning more on the benefits of curcumin for treating AD. In this ground-breaking study, a specialized, highly absorbable form of curcumin is being administered to patients with mild to moderate dementia.

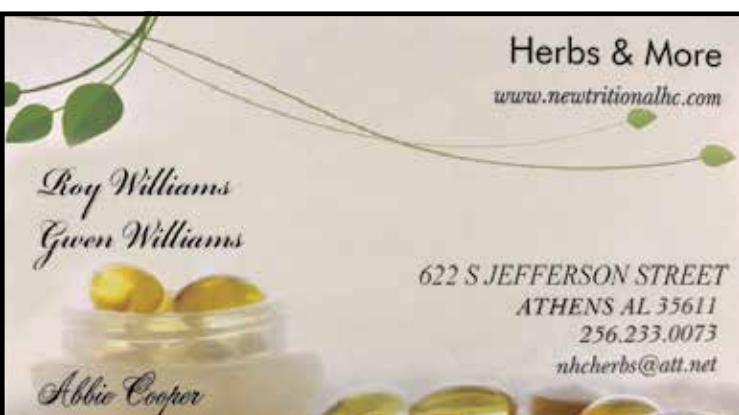
The NEWtritional Health Care product we recommend is called **Relief**, which comes from the highest quality and most absorbable forms of curcumin. **Relief** has been shown to cross the blood/brain barrier, meaning it can reach brain cells, something not every substance can do.

Because of its ability to reduce inflammation and pain we named it **Relief**. After seven years it has become one of our top selling nutritional supplements. When combined

with **MSM+C**, even more of all the nutrients in **Relief** are absorbed. Imagine having less pain, thinking clearer and improved memory. The **Healthy Brain Combo**, is what we call the combination of **Relief** and **MSM+C**.

Even if you are showing no signs of AD or dementia starting on low doses of the **Healthy Brain Combo** may allow you to stop these tragic disorders from starting in the first place. For those who already have signs or have even been diagnosed, this combination may slow down the progression and may actually begin the process of recovery. To learn more, go by Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, check out www.nhcherbs.com or call 256-757-0660. You will be glad you did.

Your Friend in Health,
Roy P. Williams





Mental Health Minute

Unhealthy Relational Patterns

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

“It’s better to be healthy alone than sick with someone else.”
- Phil McGraw

Emotional attachment is one of the most important capabilities we possess. Emotional attachment is defined as an emotional bond we form with someone at any time in our lives. The most common concerns brought to my attention during counseling sessions revolve around the development of positive and negative attachments. Unfortunately, someone with meager attachment skills often has developed unhealthy relational patterns, which are characterized by poor boundaries, poor personal insight, and poor judgment. These clients ask me to explain what unhealthy relational patterns look like so

they can begin to understand how to “attach” in a healthy way. I believe there are five patterns or limitations that are common to those with attachment challenges:

1. Those who become too close too soon. This is part of setting up and maintaining appropriate boundaries. Have you heard or said anything like, “I know I’ve only known him for two months, but...?” Relationships take time to form and develop. It’s okay to connect with people and enjoy connecting with new people. But red flags should be raised when you or someone you know is too emotional or connects too fast with nothing but shallow interactions.
2. Those who go to great lengths to be close to anyone positive. Some people seek to enthusiastically connect with those in perceived power.

I’m sure you know people who love to be surrounded by authority figures, actors, politicians, supervisors, professors, doctors, or administrators. Their “power” causes individuals to either become romantically involved or believe they can receive some kind of love or affection, or even a transfer of that power. People with this skewed relational view taken to the extreme become stalkers.

3. Those who overidentify with strangers. These are people who attach themselves to others who show them the slightest amount of attention or affection. This leads to believing that all encounters are closer than they really are. As a therapist, I have had clients who desire a close relationship to a parent so much that they begin to see me as fulfilling that parental role. I have



had to maintain appropriate boundaries so that neither of us gets sucked into that emotional neediness. (Think: Bob in What About Bob?)

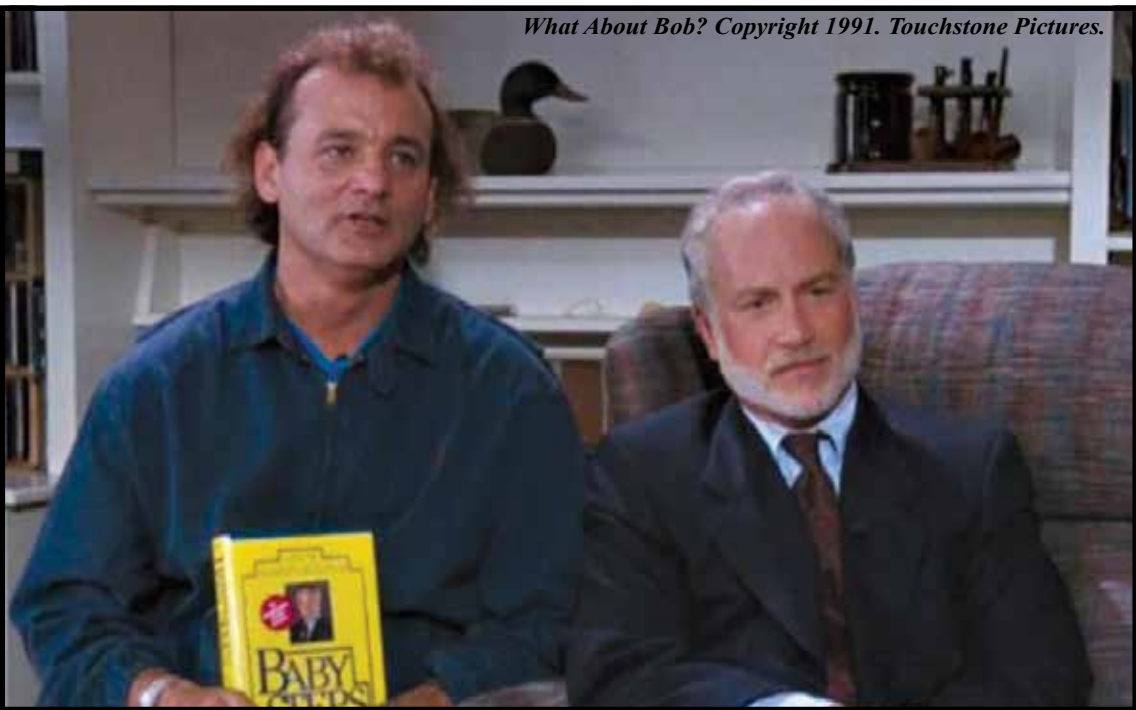
4. Those who become clingy. This is emotional attachment to the extreme. These are people who think they cannot live without a certain person, and that their connection is somewhat “divine.” There is a delusional element to their emotions, which tends to distort the reality of the relationship. A person who is clingy needs someone else to meet his or her needs in that relationship, which will never be enough. Sadly, these people are starving for a connection that they won’t be able to experience.

5. Those who get sucked into the status quo. If you lack an identity, or

a certain level of self-confidence, you will be forced to seek people to mimic or emulate. Such individuals might pursue ways to fix personal flaws or seek friends who are attractive. They make a lifestyle out of pursuing things that keep them attractive and current. But, what they are truly seeking is some sort of relational validation through shallow compensation.

As you can see, individuals with poor attachment issues can become needy and emotionally hungry. Look for my follow-up article on how to break the cycle of unhealthy relationship patterns through positive emotional attachment.

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What About Bob? Copyright 1991. Touchstone Pictures.

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GenZ With JP

The Truth Always Prevails

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

Everybody has some form of COVID trauma. Whether you tragically lost a family member to the virus, your high school graduation was canceled, or you experienced it yourself. It seems as if it was ages ago; however, it was a time when our lives were put on hold, and that's a period that we will never get back. As a 23-year-old, I didn't get to experience the second half of my junior year of high school. My baseball season was cut short, my friends didn't get their graduation, and my senior year was riddled with 50-50 attendance where I could only see half of my friends every day. That's two years of formidable memories I will never get back, and many have a similar experience.

The virus itself is a different discussion, one worth far more than a single column. However, in light of the release of Fauci's diaries and his "testimony," in which he did nothing but plead the 5th, one thing is evidently clear. The COVID pandemic was hijacked and perpetuated by a self-absorbed man with a God complex who cared little to nothing about the American people and solely about his celebrity status. Anthony Fauci is an evil man who did not act sincerely in his role and lied to the American people time after time during the pandemic.

His diary excerpts revealed an overwhelming desire to be famous off the backs of dead Americans, and even refused to disclose the blood clot he received in his lungs shortly after his COVID shot. The same COVID shot he rebuked others for questioning. Why didn't he share this? Because it would undermine his mission of playing God and being one who can do no wrong.

Senator Tommy Tuberville was correct when he said that Anthony Fauci should've left D.C. this week in handcuffs. Fauci forced families to spend holidays away from each other. People died alone in hospitals while their loved ones were shut out. Lives were ruined and memories taken away because of the fearmongering of Anthony Fauci. And for what? Well, if you read his diaries, it's so he could get front-page news stories written about him. It's so he could outshine President Trump, and become the world's most recognizable person. So that he could meet other celebrities, and become the most important man in the world.

When you lie and cost Americans lives in the pursuit of selfish gain, you deserve justice. And yet, what we saw at Fauci's testimony was more smug arrogance by him and his lawyers. He refuted his own statement in 2022 that if he were to testify before Congress,



he would gladly comply because he had nothing to hide. But when he sat before the American people who deserve answers as to why their lives were ruined by the lies of this man, he hid. Even after a pardon by President Biden, he shrank behind the 5th Amendment and continued to play the victim. His lawyer made a mockery out of the sacredness of our Congress and had to be escorted out, all for show. The truest sign of evil and insecurity is the ability to be a perpetual victim, even when caught in tremendous wrongdoing.

Six years after the COVID pandemic, the chief fearmonger has been exposed to be what we on the Right knew he was all along. An evil liar who sought nothing but popularity. We were smeared,

we were silenced, we were shamed, and we were ostracized as conspiracy theorists and science deniers. For some of us, our lives were completely ruined, all for telling the truth. Those who perpetuated the lies could not stand on their lies alone, so they had to silence the opposition. But God has a sense of humor, and the truth always prevails.

The main story of Anthony Fauci is this: You're not God. Anthony Fauci sought to belittle and silence anyone who questioned his knowledge and the overall messaging surrounding the virus. He believed that if he just shut people up with enough force, he would stand tall as the hero of humanity. The truth cannot be silenced. No matter how strong you think

you are, God is always stronger. Perhaps one day, all of us who suffered in various ways from the COVID pandemic will receive the justice that we deserve. Putting Anthony Fauci behind bars is a great start.

Justin "JP" Plott is the production manager for Rightside Media, and Producer for Rightside Radio. JP joined the Rightside team in late 2024 after working at WVNN in Huntsville, Alabama. He quickly became a top-notch, multi-media producer and a voice of Gen-Z conservatism.



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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

Don't Let the Blessing Become The Burden

by Anna Hamilton

Before long, the very thing you once prayed for becomes the very thing you grumble about.

Scripture reminds us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Notice it doesn't say to give thanks only when life is easy. Gratitude is a choice we make, even when the gift requires sacrifice.

Think about the Israelites. They prayed for freedom from slavery, yet after God miraculously delivered them, they complained about the wilderness. They forgot the chains because the journey became uncomfortable. How often do we do the same?

We can become so focused on the responsibilities attached to God's blessings that we lose sight of the One who gave them.

The truth is, God's blessings often come with responsibility. A healthy marriage requires forgiveness. Raising children requires patience. Meaningful work requires effort. Serving God requires surrender.

The weight you're carrying today may not be evidence that God has abandoned you. It may simply be the weight of the blessing He entrusted to you.

When your perspective begins to shift, pause and remember.

Remember the nights you prayed. Remember the tears you cried. Remember the doors God opened. Remember the

prayers He faithfully answered.

Gratitude has a remarkable way of changing our vision. It doesn't always change our circumstances, but it changes our hearts within those circumstances. It reminds us that even when life feels heavy, God is still good.

Today, take a moment to thank God for the blessings you've grown accustomed to. Thank Him for your family, your home, your work, your church, your friends, and even the opportunities that stretch you. They may not be perfect, but they are gifts from a perfect Father.

Don't let familiarity rob you of thankfulness. The blessing is still a blessing.

Father, forgive me for the times I've allowed frustration to replace gratitude. Help me remember the prayers You have answered and the countless ways You have provided for me. Open my eyes to see Your blessings with fresh wonder and thankful hearts. When life feels heavy, remind me that You are still carrying me. May I never take Your goodness for granted. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This week's recipe is a back-to-school, easy one pot dish. It is easy to prepare and a hit with the entire family. I hope you guys enjoy it as much as mine does!

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trust in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him" (Psalm 28:7).

Challenge Yourself

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

One of the biggest misconceptions about aging is that life is supposed to become easier because we stop doing hard things. In reality, the opposite is often true. The moment we stop challenging ourselves—physically, mentally, or emotionally—is the moment we begin to decline.

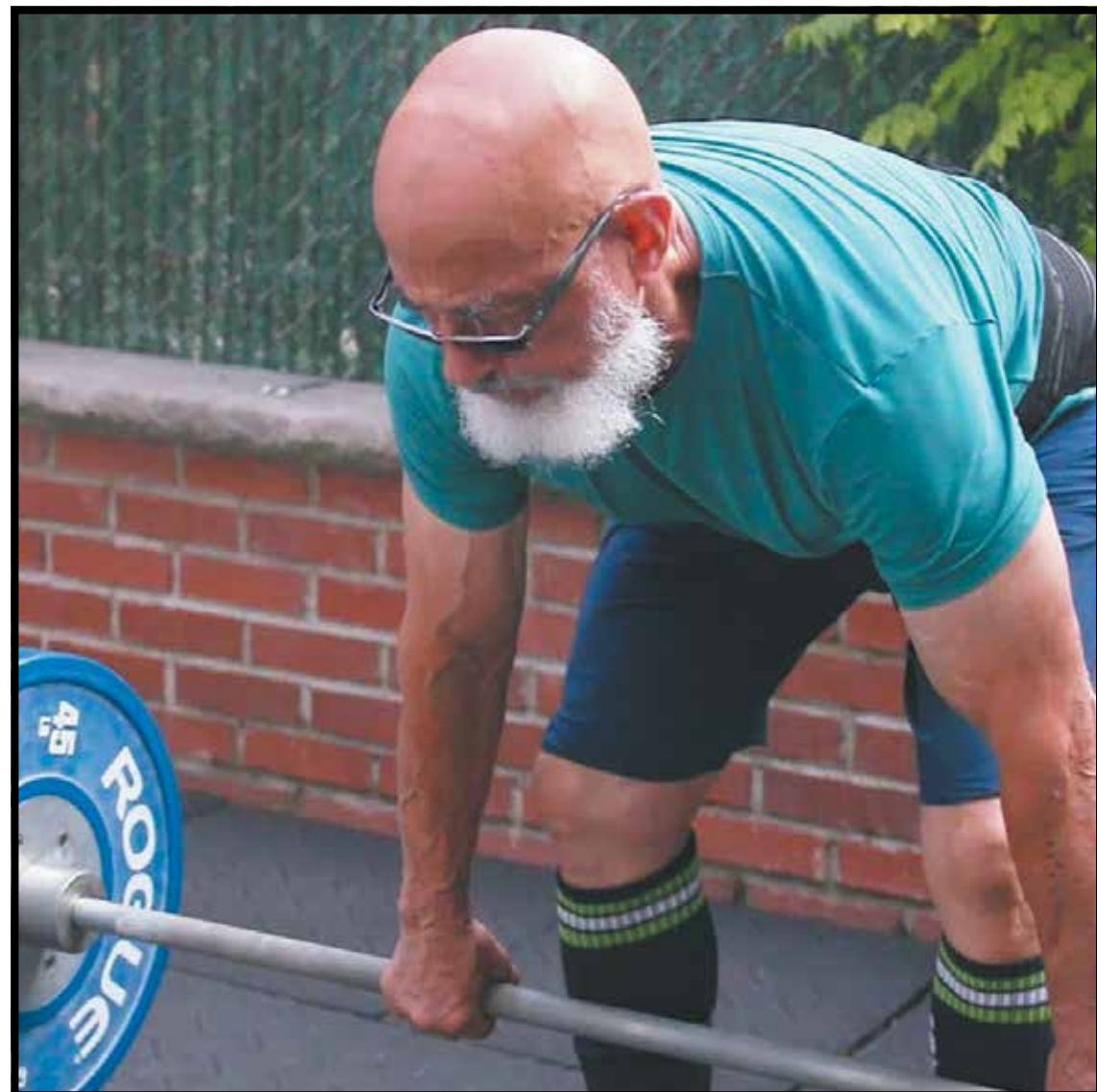
Our bodies and minds were designed to adapt. Muscles grow stronger when they're challenged. Bones become denser when they're loaded. Our brains build new connections when we learn something unfamiliar or solve difficult problems. Growth has always required resistance.

Think back to some of the moments you're most proud of. Chances are they weren't easy. Maybe it was graduating college, raising children, starting a business, running your first 5K, or walking into a gym for the very first time. Those moments stand out because they demanded something from you. They required courage, discipline, and perseverance.

Unfortunately, as we get older, many people begin organizing their lives around comfort instead of growth. We avoid activities that make us uncomfortable. We stop learning new skills because "I'm too old for that." We skip the hike because it seems difficult. We pass on the workout because we're tired. While those decisions may make today feel easier, they quietly make tomorrow much harder.

Life has a way of becoming exactly what we train for. If we train ourselves to avoid challenges, even small obstacles begin to feel overwhelming. But if we regularly place ourselves in situations that require effort, we build resilience that carries over into every area of life.

This doesn't mean you need to climb Mount Everest or compete in the CrossFit Games. Challenge looks different for everyone. For one person, it may be learning to get off the floor without assistance. For another, it may be deadlifting their bodyweight. It could be reading a new book every



month, learning a musical instrument, taking a cooking class, or finally traveling somewhere you've always wanted to visit. The goal isn't comparison. The goal is progress.

One of the greatest gifts of CrossFit is that it gives people a safe place to continue being challenged. Every workout presents a new opportunity to overcome something difficult. Some days you lift a little more weight. Some days you move a little faster. Some days the victory is simply showing up when you didn't feel like it. Those small wins accumulate over time and create confidence that ex-

tends far beyond the gym walls.

I've watched members in their 60s, 70s, and even 80s accomplish things they never imagined possible—not because they were naturally gifted, but because they refused to stop challenging themselves. They continue to prove that age is not the deciding factor. Mindset is.

No matter what stage of life you're in, don't stop seeking opportunities that stretch you. Do things that make your heart race a little. Learn something new. Lift something heavy. Walk a little farther than

you planned. Your future self will thank you for every challenge you choose to embrace today.

At CrossFit Athens, our goal has never been to simply make people sweat. Our mission is to help people build lives that are stronger, healthier, and more capable year after year. Because the best way to prepare for the future isn't by avoiding challenges, it's by continuing to rise to them.

Coach Nick
Owner

CrossFit Athens

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