

October 16 - November 5, 2026

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Representative Ben Harrison To
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From The Porch...

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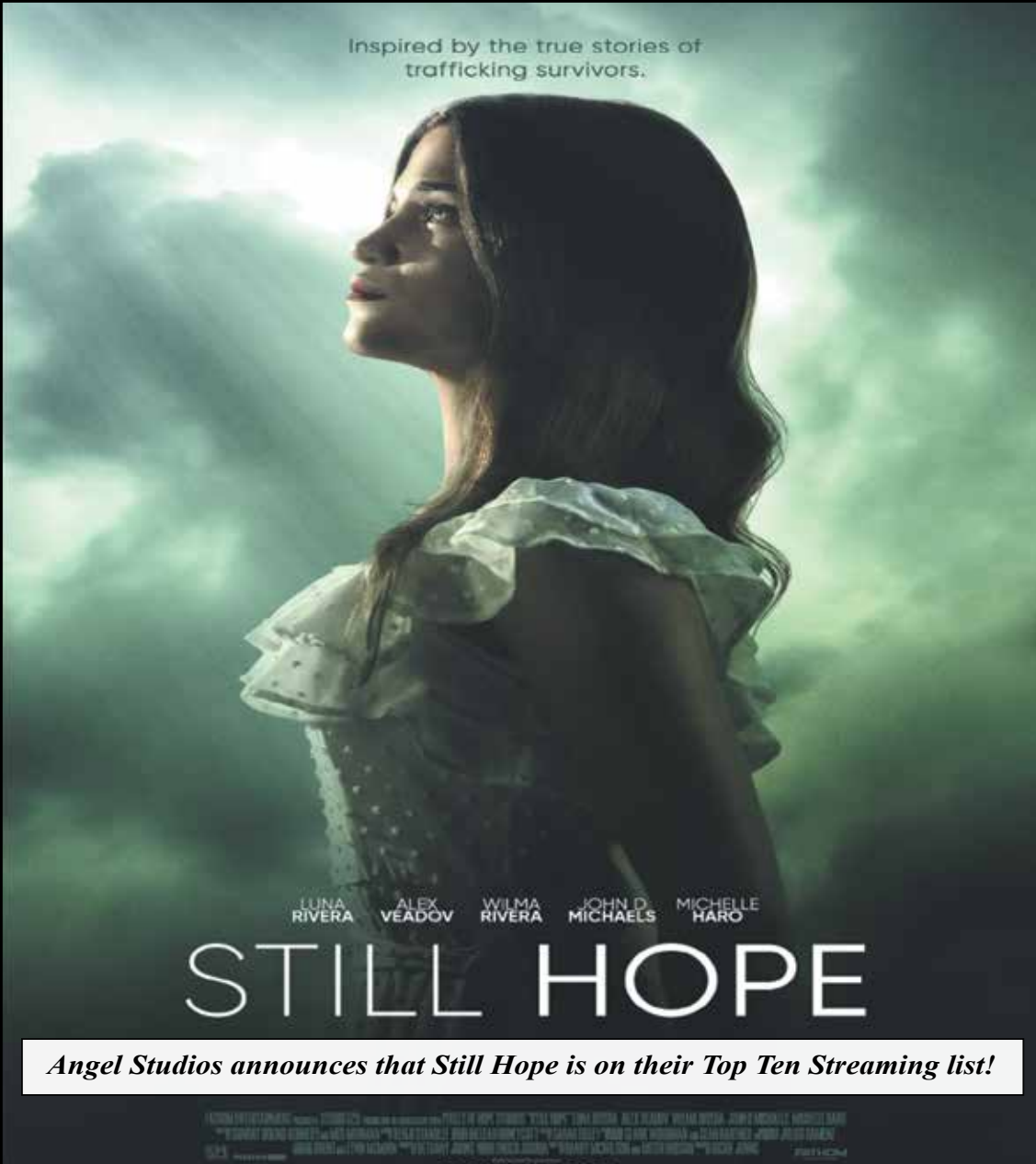
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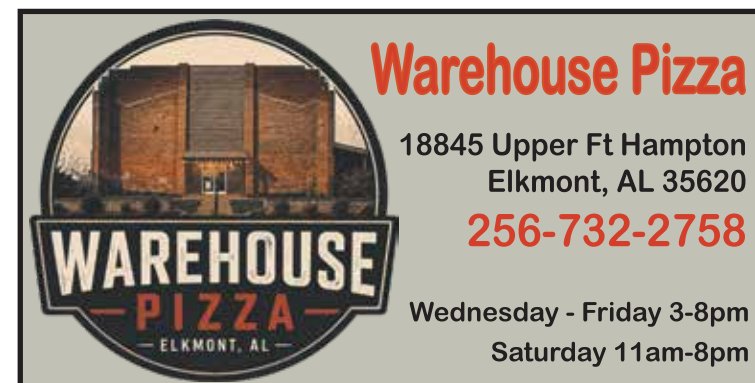
STILL HOPE

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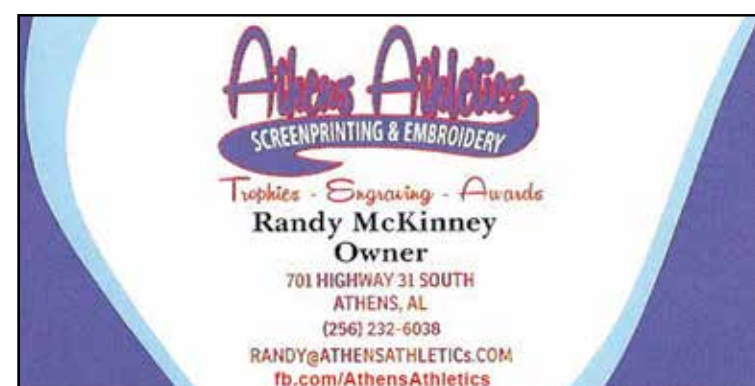
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Publisher's Point

Virtue Signaling? Nah, Just Vote Virtuously

It's that time again, when we get to do what we have come to take for granted, and that is vote. It is impossible to convey what an honor and privilege it is to come to a poll, cast your ballot, knowing your safety is assured, and at least at my polling place, the people are appreciative that you took the time to do so.

I have spoken many times both here in *Athens Now* and on the *TN Valley Spotlight Radio Show* on *WKAC* about what it was like to watch a nation cast its first true vote. That was Iraq, that was 2005, and it still has a profound effect on me. For those of you who are not familiar with that story, here is the elevator version: people

were willing to DIE for the chance to vote and proved it by putting a target on their back by having to put their index finger in a small container of purple dye when finished with voting. This signaled in "living color" that they had defied Al-Zarqawi, who promised and, in some cases, delivered death if they voted. They bought coffins, knowing that there was a good chance they could end up in one at the end of the day.

I think most of us have a feeling these days that the attempts to mess with the process of voting that were present in days gone by are largely in our rear-view mirror, and Alabama led the charge in that. Not to hit the snooze button

and go back to sleep on this issue, but we need to remember that our state government worked uber-hard to make sure that only registered voters who had the actual right to do so could vote, and their example also helped states across the nation as well.

I don't have any particular way to freshen this message that is so central to who we are as Americans -- that of voting. But let's clear the air when it comes to slinging around the term virtue signaling and trying to apply it to expressing ourselves via a ballot that was purchased with the blood of our forebears. The term first appeared a little over a decade ago in the UK with the intent of calling out, particu-

larly on social media, the act of expressing a particular moral or philosophical opinion in order to gain the approval of others. Newsflash: you can't really virtue signal at the ballot box. Ya wanna know why? Your vote is secret, and that is what makes it so powerful. So, go ahead, make your choice, and note that you have to slide it into a machine with no one looking over your shoulder or "liking" what you did. Selfies are not allowed, and memes can't be made as a result.

Showing up and voting certainly sends out a signal, and that is that your right to choose is guaranteed by people who don't know you, may not agree with you, and may not care what you think. But they do care that you voted, and Americans would properly say it was virtuous to do so. It is also the least you can do. Go vote, and if you want, be loud and proud about it. Or, keep your choices to yourself. Either way, it is the best way to honor those who fell in battle on your behalf.

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News From The Vets' Museum

Event News From The Alabama Veterans Museum

by Yvonne Dempsey



The fall season has come to our area along with several events of interest to veterans, their families, and the general public. As you may have read in the previous Athens Now, the annual Storytelling Festival is taking place on the campus of Athens State University, October 22-24. On Thursday, October 22, at 6:45 p.m., veterans and one guest can enjoy the show for free. Veterans must show Military ID and will receive two tickets for the program. Carol Cain as "Rosie the Riveter" will be featured as well as the rest of the storyteller lineup. Please see the flyer for more info.

Two events will be held on Saturday, November 7. At 8 a.m. is our monthly Coffee Call, free breakfast for veterans and their families held in the museum's event venue at 114 W. Pryor St., Athens. At 9:30 a.m., there will be a dedication held at the I-65N Welcome Center at Elkmont, for the new military memorials. For many years, the Korean War Memorial and the Vietnam Wall Memorial

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This project has been made possible by a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

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have stood on hallowed ground at the Welcome Center. The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 511 spent the last few years planning the cleaning and restoration of the existing memorials as well as designing new me-

morials commemorating WWI, WWII, the Global War On Terrorism, and also The Battlefield Cross monument. Now that they are completed, we ask everyone to join us as we dedicate these beautiful monuments honoring the

memory of our brave patriots.

And lastly, the museum will once again host the Veterans Day program and catered lunch sponsored by Athens State University on Wednesday, November 11 at 11

a.m. Registration is free but space is limited, so all attendees must register. You can get tickets at the ASU website at www.athens.edu or at Humantix at <https://events.humantix.com>. We hope to see y'all at these events.

Ali Elizabeth Turner
Publisher

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Cozy Compass Travel Consultants: *Your Next Adventure Starts Here!*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Les and Kaz Ehart are seasoned citizens who love living the entrepreneurial lifestyle. Though they are technically retired from their careers, they are full on in “4th Quarter Life,” and they are on the go with their endeavors and adventures. They are both creative—Les can fix anything and Kaz loves to create just about anything. They also both love to travel, and it is that love that made them curious about the feasibility of having a travel consulting business. Turns out, you can indeed become a certified travel consultant, help people save money, and have fun in the process.

The name of their business is Cozy Compass Travel Consultants. Kaz explains that the would-be traveler(s) is never charged a fee for the service, and through the industry, they are able to help clients save money. What she loves to do is help people plan a dream trip and avoid the overwhelm that can come with it. “We handle all the details so you can focus on making memories,” they

say. Cozy Compass Travel Consultants holds the travel service seat in our Limestone Leaders Business Network International group, and several members have become raving fans of their services.

Cozy Compass Travel Consultants handles everything from a peaceful, secluded cabin in the woods to a customized theme trip. Les and Kaz told me about a client that loves to get away annually for a solitary retreat in nature. For this client, it is the perfect opportunity for reflection and reset, and hunting for a place in the past has been somewhat of a pain. They were able to lift that load and help their client enjoy the trip even more.

By contrast, if what you are interested in is a resort or theme park trip that is going to help a family make memories that will last a lifetime, they can do that as well. Disney, Universal, MGM, Six Flags, and others are all waiting to deliver on your customized Cozy Compass Travel Con-



*The Eharts are products of their own product.
This is an actual Cozy Compass Travel Consultant vacation.*



sultant Experience.

These days the vacation home rental business is booming, and has been at times notable for the headaches that can occur with dealing with the private sector. If you are wanting to have your vacation base of operations be a home and not a hotel, you can be sure that the facilities have been thoroughly vetted. “It’s like we get to do travel detective work,” says Kaz, and it is clear that she loves what she is doing.

They can handle rental cars and all the extras that go with a trip, and remember, there is no cost to you. They can also do cruises. The Eharts themselves also have been able to enjoy the fruit of their labors by being able to travel through their own company, and they also have some more travel dreams of their own that they want to see come true. For Kaz, it’s going to Hawaii. The Eharts got married on Valentine’s Day, 2026, and even while they honeymooned, the dream trip to Hawaii is something that was calling her. She told me that she has never left the lower 48, so this would be “a thing.” By contrast, Les, who has

spent a lot of time in Hawaii both while he was in the Navy as well as a contractor (and has also been all over the world), wants very much to go to Alaska. Kaz does, too, and they are not sure which one they will do first. Their company can help make that happen for them at a deep discount.

Here are some options that Cozy Compass Travel Consultants offers their customers:

You can explore the beauty of the United States with our expertly planned domestic travel packages. From bustling city breaks to serene national parks, we’ll find the perfect itinerary for you. Or, you can embark on an international journey with confidence. We offer comprehensive booking for accommodations and activities across the globe, ensuring a seamless and enriching experi-

ence. Beyond traditional hotels, we specialize in finding and booking Airbnbs, vacation homes, and exclusive rooms that are often unavailable during peak seasons, giving you unparalleled access to prime lodging. You could also set sail on an unforgettable cruise or immerse yourself in the magic of world-renowned theme parks. Our tailored packages provide seamless booking and insider tips for an extraordinary travel adventure.

Let Cozy Compass Travel Consultants do the legwork for you so that you can get to the beach, the ship, the cabin, or all four corners of the earth with a custom-planned trip whose memories will live on in your heart and that of your family. Call them today for a free, no obligation call at 256-755-5977, or 913-424-5266.



Calendar of Events

Limited Edition 24k Gold-Plated Christmas Ornament Sale

Celebrate Limestone County's heritage with the Historical Society's annual Christmas ornament. This year's beautiful collectible honors *America 250*, marking our nation's historic milestone, and will be available in October. Where to buy & details: Collectors, this will be our only ornament sale this year and the 250 numbered supply will sell out quickly. \$35 each. Exclusive retailer: Osborne's Jewelers, Athens. During October only. Benefits the Limestone County Historical Society.

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.

Athens Honey Bee Festival 2026 October 17

Come out to the Athens Farmers Market on Saturday, Oct. 17, for the first ever Athens Honey Bee Festival. 10:00AM-3:00PM. 409 W. Green St, Athens, AL 35611

Limestone County Night of Bands October 19

The Annual Limestone County Night of Bands Performance will be on Monday, October 19th, at East Limestone High School. Tickets are available on GoFan! 6:00 PM-8:00 PM. Canner Field at East Limestone High School. 15641 E Limestone Rd, Athens, AL. Tickets: \$10 for adults & \$5 for students.

Free Harvest Festival Community Trunk or Treat Event October 24

Games, Prizes, Food, Fun, Photo Op-- Something for Everyone. New Hope Baptist Church, 13110 Mooresville Road, Athens AL. 1-3pm

Canned Food Competition Thru October 28

Limestone County High Schools Canned Food Competition, Sponsored by Community Table. Support your favorite LCHS by donating canned items by Wednesday, Oct 28! Winning school will be announced on Oct 29, with media coverage to follow. Your friends and neighbors thank you.

Swamp John's October 29

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

Make A Way's Fall Festival October 30

Make plans to join us October 30th for a Fall Festival for special needs adults. To help us plan, let us know you're coming by registering below. You do not have to register here, you can register onsite. Click the link to register: <https://bit.ly/fallregistrations>. 10:00 AM-1:00 PM. Home of Henry and Marsha White, 2431 South Hine Street, Athens, AL.

AMVETS Veterans Parade November 11

11:00 AM-1:30 PM. Assemble at AHS travel down Pryor St, left on to Shaw St, right on to Hobbs St, left on to Jefferson St, left on to Market St, right on to Marion St, right on to Washington St, left on to Jefferson and end at Athens-Limestone County Public Library.

2026 Athens-Limestone Tinsel Trail November 19

It's time to start thinking about lights, ornaments, creativity and a little holiday magic. Businesses, organizations, families and groups can decorate a tree and be part of one of Athens-Limestone County's favorite Christmas traditions. Big Spring Memorial Park. 350 Market Street E, Athens, AL.

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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Special Feature

Pup-Pup And The Pups Are Looking For Good Peeps

My name (at least until I get my forever name and my forever home) is Pup-pup. My dad was an Australian Kelpie and my mom is a Pyrenees. We surprised everyone with our arrival back in May, and we are eleven strong! That's right, there are eleven of us. Six of us look like I do, and the other five are light colored. It's tough to get a picture of us these days because we are always moving, so for now I get to be our representative. We are bouncy boys and girls, and we are available for sale. We need training, and we are smart. We need someone to love us, and we will love them right back, believe me.



A recent pic of my mom and me

All kinds of things have been said about us and our purpose, but what we want most is a forever home with people who will be good to us. We are playful, not too loud, and generous with our kisses. Will you consider choosing us and making us your pals? If you are looking for great dogs at

a good price, please call Karin at 256-431-7473 and make an appointment. On behalf of my brothers and sisters, I thank you!

-- Pup-Pup

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The Flying Machine

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

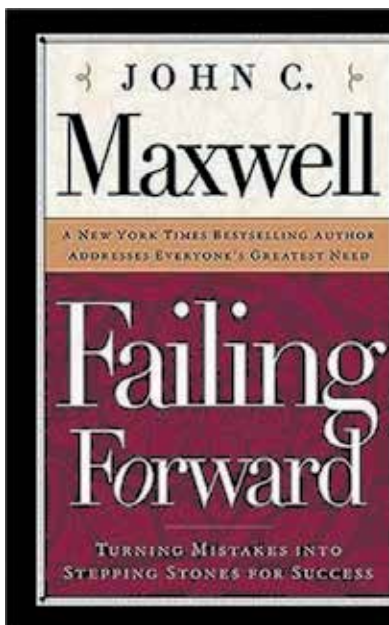
Over the 15 plus years that we have been doing the Ronnie column, it has been important to Mayor Ronnie to go through various books that have spoken to him, particularly in the realm of leadership. The unopposed master in the field of leadership training is John Maxwell, and for this edition we are going to talk briefly about his book with the uncomfortable title of *Failing Forward*. It is a timely tie-in to the kickoff month of the 14th Mayor's Youth

Commission, something that has developed into a resource not only for our community and its future, but has caught the attention of mayors nationwide. As we marveled at how quickly the time has gone and double-checked to make sure we had the annual number correct (14th), Mayor Ronnie told me about the process of putting together each year's commission.

First of all, the mayor doesn't pick those who are selected from the public schools,

private schools, and homeschoolers. He reads the applications, he may make recommendations, but has no vote, just like in City Council. He also told me that this is not a "4.0 GPA-All-Star-Beauty-Queen-Quarterback-has-discovered-the-cure-for-cancer" type of selection process. (My words, not his.) "There have been kids with completely average GPAs, but there was just something about them that came through in their application, and we all knew that they needed to be a part of this year's group," he said.

Nobody likes to fail, but if kids and grownups can really embrace Maxwell's premise, that "the difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure," by grace we will be able to flip the script on failure and turn it into something positive. This year, the Mayor's Youth Commission kids are going to be learning just that courtesy of Dr. Maxwell. From the book, one of the examples of failure that ultimately became the triumph of



someone else is that of the flying machine.

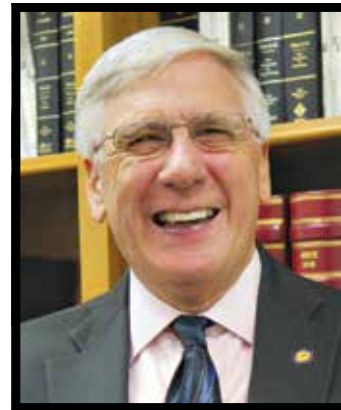
The short version is this: Dr. Samuel P. Langley was a brilliant professor of mathematics and astronomy, and was the director of the Smithsonian. He stood in line to be the guy who invented the manned flying machine and got it to stay in the air. He had the backing of his colleagues, along with our government, and if he had succeeded, the Wright Brothers and Kitty Hawk would have never been part of our history books. At first Langley endured the expected criticism, including when his prototype got caught up in the launch

gear. Media called it "Langley's Folly," but Langley kept going. The Wright Brothers were nipping at the heels becoming "the guys," but they were absolutely not the favorites. No degrees, no fame, no backing, and a bunch of failures. What happened? In a word, Langley quit just before victory. He not only quit, but two years later had a stroke, and a year after that he died. Why?

He either couldn't or wouldn't see that failure isn't really failure, and most importantly, he let his reputation and actions be dictated by others; whereas the Wright Brothers had a fire in their bellies that consumed outward failure and ultimately parlayed it into history-changing success. This is what the Commission kids are going to be perusing this year, and the results should be fascinating.

Speaking of kids, we both talked about the fact that the Storytelling Festival is coming up, and our favorite part is School Days, the three days when kids have to be device free and be awash in the truth that learning can indeed be hilarious. To watch them go from sullen to smiling is always worth the price of admission.

We prayed, like we always do, and especially focused our prayers on our kids. And then, it was time for Ronnie to roll.



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Be Nice... To Yourself

by Anna Hamilton

Every day, most of us are nice. We smile at the person passing by us in the grocery store. We hold the door open for the person coming in behind us. We buy gifts for our friends and family. We say please and thank you, yes ma'am, and yes sir. Overall, we are nice, but are you nice to yourself?

I am not always nice to myself. I am not kind when I need to hear an encouraging word. I am not gentle when I need a helping hand. I criticize myself when I can't do things like everyone else. I tell myself I am not good enough when I don't look like others around me. I am not a nice person...to myself.

As Christians, we are called to love others, but we must also love ourselves. Love comes straight from God. "Dear friends, let us

love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7. "We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19. Love is at the core of everything we should be as Christians. You can have the most faith, the most hope, and have racked up the most attendance points for going to church, but if you don't have love at the center of your life, none of it matters.

So, I have decided to start doing something nice for myself every week. I'm not sure yet what all that will look like, but I am ready to start! I think this week, I will take time to do my fingernails and toenails. I have always loved doing my nails, but usually I do it quickly before I walk out the door. I am going to take the time to do them nicely and pamper myself.

continued on page 22

Fall Fruit Salad

Ingredients:

Dressing:

- 1 orange*
- 2 Tbsps. maple syrup*
- ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon*

Fruit Salad:

- 16 oz red seedless grapes*
- 12 oz blackberries*
- 1 cup chopped pecans*
- 2 large sweet apples*

Directions:

In a large bowl, add the zest and juice of one orange. Add maple syrup and cinnamon. Whisk to combine.

Then add grapes, blackberries, and pecans. Cube apples into bite-sized pieces and add to bowl. Toss to coat fruit.

Serve immediately or store covered in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Stir the garlic mixture (you could use the whole head of garlic, or 1-2tsp mashed roasted garlic for a milder taste) and the



juice of the other half of the lemon back into the potatoes along with your fresh basil, using a spoon to gently mix the roast potatoes with the baked feta.

Drizzle the honey, scatter the shredded basil, and then top the potatoes with the red chili flakes. Serve and enjoy!

Arrival Of Autumn

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



Its time is here!

After many months of (glorious) sun-drenched days and hot-sky nights, the one whom many of us have been pining for has finally bought its ticket to Athens and it arrived in September... however, we have just begun to notice its accoutrements.

We will finally feel that autumn has arrived in all its splendor starting this weekend with the cooler weather and all the delights that autumn brings when it visits. By the time you read this, our plaid-and-pumpkin-spice friend will be greeting us with its familiar voice of migrating geese and the delicious crunch of dried leaves on a sidewalk.

Its petrichor perfume will mingle with the scent of wood smoke and apples and will waft down every street and through every

forest.

I find it fascinating, this changing of the guard from summer sun to autumn air. I love summer. I long for summer. But this year I am quietly and imperceptibly tilting my chin at summer, gesturing toward the door of seasons. Summer has places to be, people to warm and delight. It is time for summer to go.

And go it does. Suddenly. Abruptly. Like it realizes it's late for an appointment on the other end of the planet. I get it. I too have sometimes lingered longer than I had intended because I didn't want to leave those I was with alone.

So autumn is arriving just in the nick of time. Summer can hand over the mornings and evenings, the air and the rain. The two seasons will compare

notes this weekend, then summer will hasten south as autumn welcomes each of us with a wink and a cool kissing wind.

"Oh my!" I think, feeling like a terrible hostess. Still with 4th of July items strewn about my office, I have not made plans for myself and autumn yet! Autumn has arrived, and I am still in my wholly unprepared, white-after-Labor-Day mind, disoriented by how long summer had lingered in the calendar.

Autumn's presence is upon us as I write this; I saw the arrival announcement as I drove up Monte Sano last week. Like a sign in an airport, the changing leaves and mist along that winding road stated mutely that the rest of autumn's entourage was due to pull up to the gate soon. I marveled at the colors, not the message, and was glad summer had come to our church picnic.

But here we are with summer packing up fruit and blossom, green leaf and white cotton, and leaving in a cloud of fireflies as autumn slips gently into the town that missed it so much.

Coffee will get warmer as the days get colder. Popsicles will be replaced (eventually!) by icicles. The red of the June rose, long released from dried, fallen petals, will dance gaily across cheeks, making even the honored eldress look like a blushing maiden again.

My neighbors and friends! Quickly! How will we welcome our

long-away friend, autumn? Help me think of ways to delight in its presence!

Wait! I know! I know autumn loves trails and woods. Let's make lots of time to greet it with a thermos of warm tea and hearty spiced cookies as we shuffle through pine and oak confetti.

Then let's go shopping and adorn our porches and offices and homes with autumn's favorite mums and straw.

And over the weeks, as autumn turns the white sun gold, let's reflect that light in our eyes and hearts. Let's make this season one of thankfulness and time, of love and friendship, of leaves and laughter.

Autumn has arrived. Let's go meet it together.

Opportunities to Enjoy Autumn's Arrival

Merchants Alley Happy Hour Music Series: October 16, 2026, 5:30-7 p.m. at Merchants Alley

Athens Honey Bee Festival 2026: October 17, 2026, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Athens Farmers Market

October 14, 18, 21, 25, & 28: Judgement House — Sponsored by First Baptist Church, Ardmore, Alabama.

October 18: Autumn at Eagle Creek Farm — Ribbon cutting at 12:45 p.m.; open house and vendor market from 1-5 p.m.

October 18: Benefit/Memorial Ride in Loving Memory of Michelle and in Support of Domestic Violence Awareness —

Ride begins at Sweet D's Family Café at 2 p.m.

October 18: Harvest Festival — Sponsored by Wooley Springs Baptist Church, 4-6 p.m.

Limestone County Night of Bands: October 19, 2026, 6-8 p.m. at Cavnar Field at East Limestone High School

Storytelling Festival: October 22-24 Athens State University

Merchants Alley Happy Hour Music Series: October 23, 2026, 5:30-7 p.m. at Merchants Alley

Make A Way's Autumn Adventure: October 24, 2026, 2-4 p.m. at Limestone County Sheriff's Rideo Arena

October 24: Hometown Harvest — Sponsored by Main Street Mercantile, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

October 24: Bluegrass Night at the Barn — Sponsored by The Homeplace Events & Lodging. Food trucks begin serving at 4:30 p.m.; concert begins at 5:30 p.m.

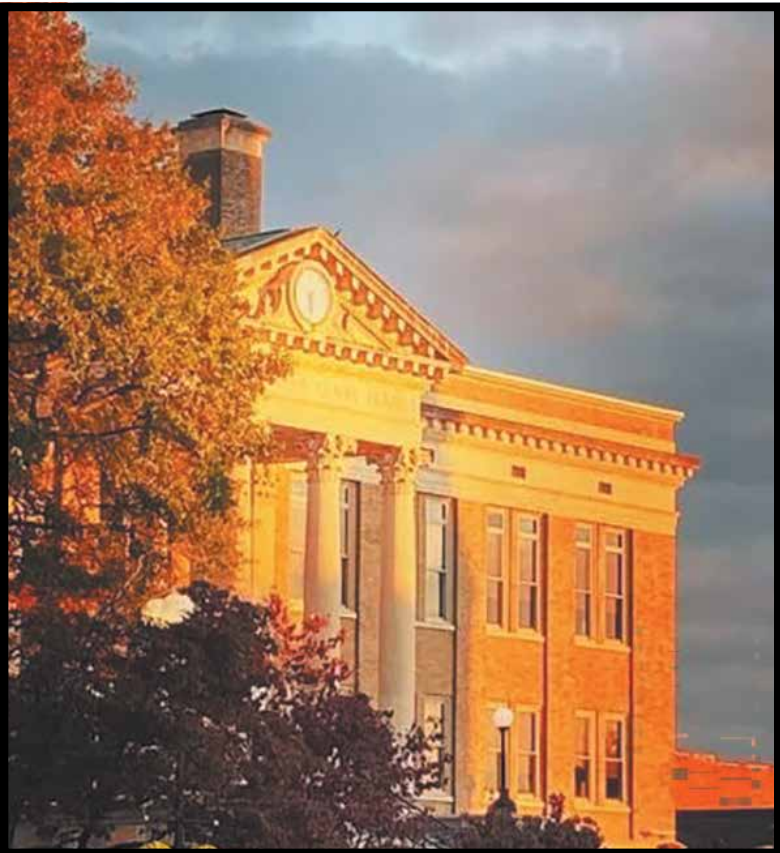
Make A Way's Fall Festival: October 30, 2026, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at the home of Henry and Marsha White

Merchants Alley Happy Hour Music Series: October 30, 2026, 5:30-7:00 p.m. at Merchants Alley

October 31: Café 53 Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting — 10 a.m.

October 31: Hallelujah Festival — Sponsored by Piney Grove Baptist Church at Ardmore Town Park, 5-7 p.m.

Christmas Open House November 20-22



The View From The Bridge

Embracing The Season, Cherishing The Moments, And Trusting God Through Loss

by Jackie Warner

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

There is something special about the fall season. Even for those of us who are not particularly fond of winter and the cold that follows, autumn arrives with a beauty that seems to touch the soul. The changing leaves paint the landscape with brilliant shades of orange, gold, brown, crimson, and deep purple. The air becomes crisp, the chili pot comes out, and families begin making plans for holiday gatherings and treasured traditions. As the years pass, however, the season begins to feel different.

When I was younger, Thanksgiving was the holiday in our home. Family would gather around the table, laughter would fill every room, and I would pull out all the stops in the kitchen. Cooking became my love language, a way to express gratitude, joy, and affection for the people God had blessed me with. The aroma of favorite dishes, the conversations around the table, and the presence of

those I loved made the season complete.

But time has a way of changing the landscape of our hearts. We lost one loved one. Then another. And then another.

Now, when the leaves begin to change and the holidays draw near, memories sit differently in my spirit. What once brought only excitement now carries a sacred mixture of gratitude and grief. The empty chairs are noticed. The familiar voices are missed. The traditions remain, but they have been reshaped by loss.

Lighting a candle for a loved one has become a meaningful act of remembrance. Yet even in those moments, there is an ache that words cannot fully explain. It is then that I find myself remembering the wisdom of my grandmother and those elders who came before us. As a child, I would hear them say: "Enjoy life." "If it's the Lord's will." "If I am here next year."

At the time, those words

seemed distant and unnecessary. Now I understand them differently. They were not speaking from fear. They were speaking from experience. They understood the fragility of life and the gift of each day God gives us.

Scripture reminds us:

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

"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12, KJV).

So this autumn, embrace the season. Celebrate the memories. Honor those who have gone before us. Treasure those who are still here. And above all, trust the One who remains faithful through every season of life.

For if it is the Lord's will, we will see another fall. Until then, let us live fully, love deeply,



and walk closely with Him.

Reflection Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the beauty of every season and for Your presence through both joy and sorrow. Comfort those who are grieving and strengthen

those carrying heavy hearts. Help us to appreciate the gift of today, cherish our loved ones, and walk faithfully with You. May this season bring healing, gratitude, reflection, and renewed hope in Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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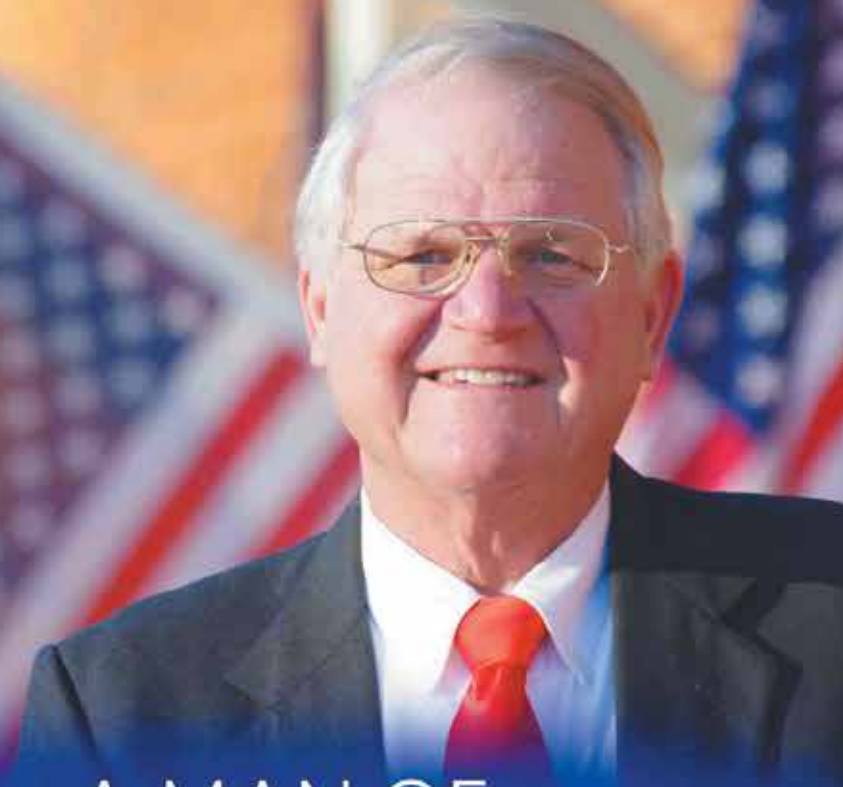


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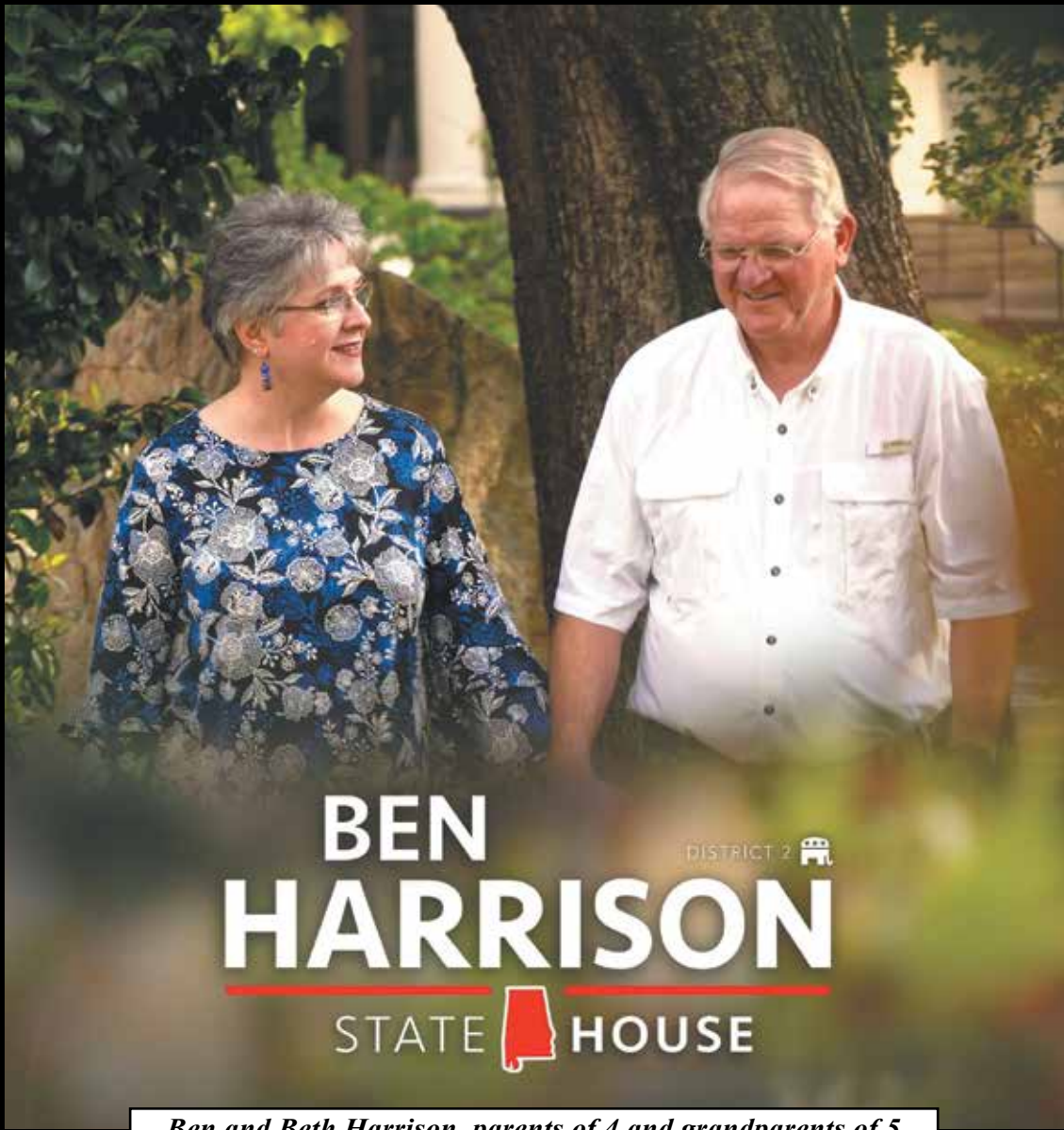


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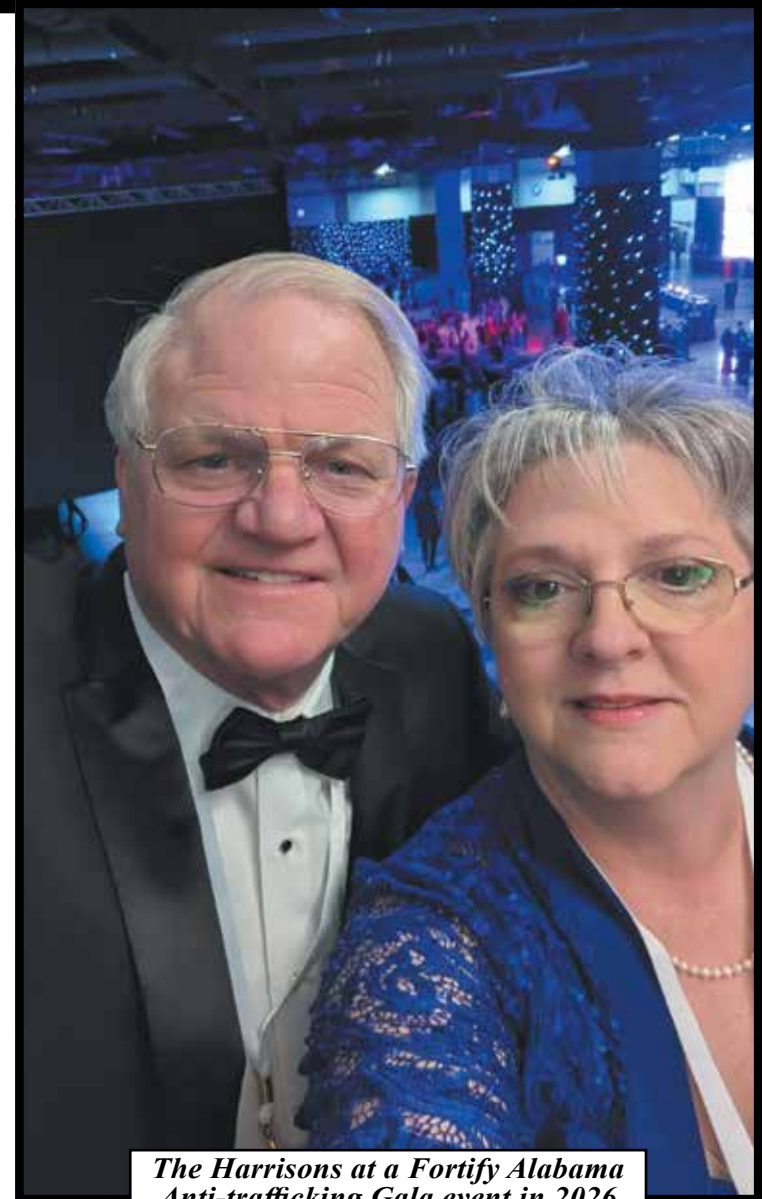
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Ben and Beth Harrison, parents of 4 and grandparents of 5



The Harrisons at a Fortify Alabama Anti-trafficking Gala event in 2026

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Captain's Log

You've Got Mail... Or Not!

by Brenda Wilkerson

Ugh, the FIRST story I am reluctant to share...

So, I nudged a mailbox in cul-de-sac #7 this morning. A cul-de-sac I have bus danced with for 7 months! I let myself get distracted from total focus. I thought I knew this turn like the back of my hand.

But...I hit it.

A slow reverse nudge, strong enough to knock it over with the loud crash of the tumbling bricks that couldn't resist the brute strength of Ol' Yeller.

A nudge that got the kids extremely excited.

In a matter of nanoseconds, my reputation crumbled like

those mailbox bricks, from 'Rock Star' to 'Crazy bus driver lady that almost killed us all.' Some kids were terrified, some cheered, and several couldn't wait to tell every single additional rider about the Great Event.

I kept cool as the questions pelted me all the way to school.

"Are you going to tell someone?"

"How are you going to fix the mailbox?"

"How will they get their mail today?"

"Can I go look at the back of the bus for damage?"

Upon arrival at the school, while waiting for two buses



ahead of us to unload, I talked to my kids through the intercom.

I told them that everyone makes mistakes. Everyone

has a decision to make about how to clean up after an accident. I told them I had 3 choices.

1. DENY or pretend it didn't happen.
2. BLAME the rowdy kids.
3. ADMIT the mistake quickly, apologize, own it, and get to the steps of a solution quickly.

By a show of fingers—1, 2, or 3—the kids voted.

Honestly, it didn't matter what a bus full of elementary kids thought. As hard as it was, it was up to me to Lead. By. Example.

With one last sentence to the kids, I said firmly, "Oh, and I'm going to tell Mrs. 'Assistant Principal' (who meets us every morning) FIRST before you can tattle on this ol' girl!"

I dashed the hopes and dreams of a few who desperately wanted to rat on the crazy bus driver as soon as they took their last step off my bus. Nope, took that right away from them, too!

Once the excited bus was unloaded, I had to follow through with the steps of re-

porting an incident. I had to radio it in (like, everyone in the shop could hear). I was told to call Mr. Bus Transportation.

When I finally got through and introduced myself, I heard, "Oh, is this Crash?!"

...

Lord, help us learn from the many hard life lessons we face and struggle through each and every day. Teach us to act quickly, fess up, admit guilt and responsibility, apologize, and work patiently to fix any damage—physical or relational—in our lives.

Help us stay laser-focused on what You have put us in charge of (kids, job, students, family, neighbors, friends, church family, etc.).

--- I need Thee, oh, I need Thee, every hour I need Thee!!! --- (hymn #428)

PS — This mailbox has now been replaced 3 times by the school system. He knew exactly where this happened and how much it costs to replace it. Then he asked me if I knew how to lay brick.

#nervouslaugh

Brenda

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McGhee On Management

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Needed Today Like Never Before

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

The daily life of recent weeks has provided me with many opportunities to display my personal level of (or lack thereof!) emotional intelligence. "EI - The ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you."

The world seems in chaos, and it seems that everyone I know is being hit on multiple levels with some deep, complicated, frustration-filled, fearful, situations. They seem to be coming one after the other, and with no respite between. Physical problems on one hand, spiritual and/or emotional issues on the other - upon ourselves, soon followed by physical problems for those we love and are involved in caring for... just when financial or emotional problems fall heavy upon us, giving no chance to catch our breath before yet another crisis descends.

One cancer diagnosis, followed by another, swiftly followed by a loved one in a wreck, a friend with marital crisis, just after learning that a job has been terminated, and a new debt has been added.

How are we expected to cope?

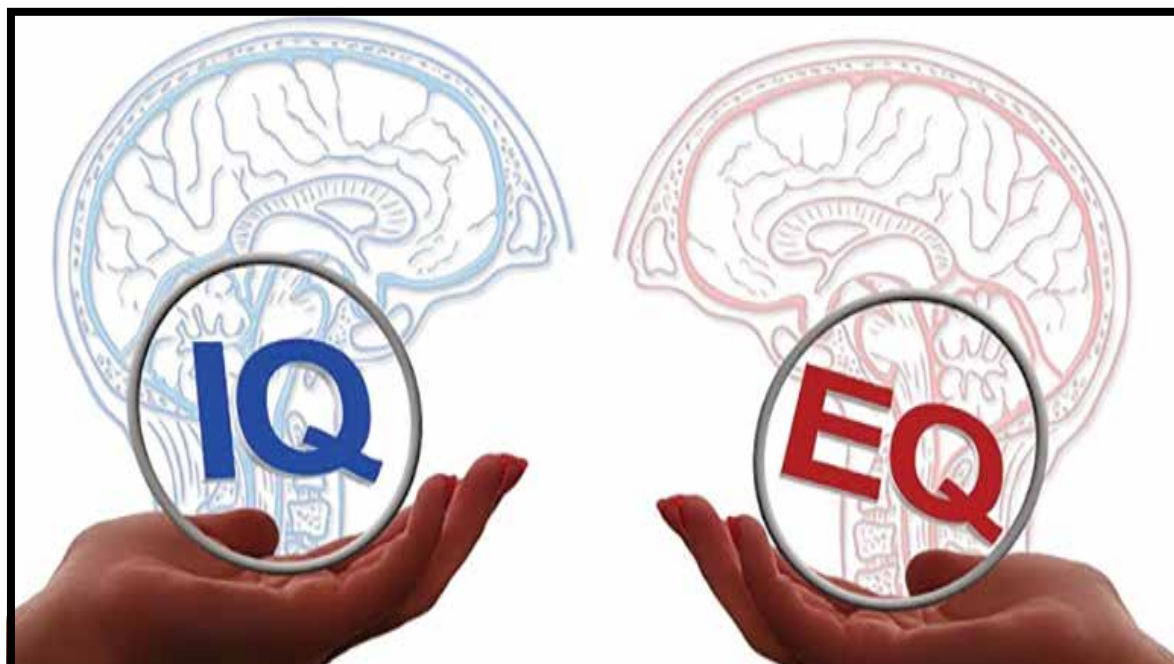
All this exposes our strengths and our weaknesses. And, now - more than ever - it is crucial that we develop our character, define our goals, eliminate stumbling blocks, and set

our minds and hearts toward developing the skills we already have, and obtaining the skills we yet lack, but can have if we are willing to pay the price. The price is not always - or even primarily - paid in money.

Most often, the costliest price of "growing up well" is paid in the soul, the will, and the heart. If you are eager to pay that price, you are indeed a rare being. I have never met anyone who enjoyed being corrected, criticized, confronted, and castigated, no matter what the promised results would be. And yet, I have never seen anyone grow in peace, patience, and maturity without passing through the fires of life to emerge cleansed of the impurities that were interfering with the purity of the soul and the joy of living.

For the third time in my life, I submitted to a personality profile test. Curious to see what I might now look like to others, I answered their many questions as honestly as possible. In all three - spaced almost 50 years apart - my basic temperament/profile/personality remained remarkably the same. But the major changes were in my understanding and application of my natural strengths and weaknesses.

In my early 20s, seeing my strengths and weaknesses in black and



white was overwhelming. First, my strengths seemed too good to be true. And my weaknesses felt too overpowering and ugly to accept. Now, both seem like simple facts and guidelines I can use to make my life and myself better for myself and for others.

So, I encourage you to take a little time to see who others think you are! I am NOT compensated by this company I used, and there are many for you to choose from. I mention this one because it was the one I used, and their report was timely, well done, easy to get, and very reasonably priced. They also offer some deeper support if you are interested. If I remember, it was \$1.99 up front and \$27.88 monthly until cancelled, which I did immediately after printing my report, with no problem. www.mypersonality.net

For an even deeper,

more meaningful study in personality strengths and weaknesses, I do not think you can beat the book, *Spirit Controlled Temperaments*, by Tim LaHaye. My copy was published in 1966, and I have never found a more powerful, useful, life-changing, and easy-to-comprehend and apply teaching on the temperaments of mankind. Other places use other terms, but the truths and the applications of this work earn your investment of time and application.

I hope you are one of the few who are determined to be the best "YOU" that you can be! May

you know the joy of never seeking perfection from yourself or others, but demanding excellence from yourself and inspiring excellence in others. I am praying that your emotional intelligence skills are increasing daily, and increasingly blessing you and all those you encounter.

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

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

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

Smashing Pumpkins

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

When Halloween is over and the fall decorations begin to come down, many of us are left wondering what to do with our pumpkins. Before tossing them into the trash, consider giving them a second life by donating them to a local farm! Those pumpkins that once decorated your porch, front steps, or yard can become a tasty treat for livestock while helping reduce waste in our community.

Keep Athens-Lime-

stone Beautiful encourages residents to consider donating eligible pumpkins to local farms, including Trousdale Acres Tiny Hiney's Travelin' Farm, B&C Farm, or other small farms with livestock that can benefit from this seasonal treat.

Why throw away something that still has a purpose? Pumpkins are more than just festive decorations. They can provide a nutritious seasonal snack for certain farm animals including

pigs, chickens, goats, and other livestock, depending on the animal and the farm's feeding practices. Pumpkins contain moisture, fiber, and nutrients that can supplement an animal's regular diet. Many animals enjoy investigating, nibbling, and breaking apart these colorful fall favorites.

For small farms, donated pumpkins can also be a welcome resource. Caring for livestock requires time, effort, and money, and extra food resources can help farm owners stretch their budgets. A few leftover pumpkins from a household may seem insignificant, but when an entire community participates, those donations can add up to a substantial seasonal treat.

Pumpkin donations also help keep waste out of our landfills. Every year, countless pumpkins are discarded after Halloween and Thanksgiving. Although pumpkins are biodegradable, sending them to a landfill is not the best use of a perfectly good resource. When organic materials break down in landfills, they can produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Donating suitable pumpkins to farms offers a practical way to keep them in use instead of sending them straight to the trash.

This is a simple example of reducing waste and making better use

of the resources we already have. Rather than throwing away a seasonal decoration, we can turn it into something useful for animals and local farmers. Small choices like this demonstrate how everyday actions can make a positive difference for our community and the environment.

Before donating, keep a few important guidelines in mind. Only donate pumpkins that are free of paint, glitter, artificial decorations, candles, and other foreign materials. Pumpkins treated with paint or other decorative products should not be given to livestock. Avoid pumpkins that are moldy, rotten, or contaminated. Remove candles, plastic pieces, and other decorations completely before delivery. If you have carved pumpkins, check with the farm first to make sure they can accept them.

It is also important to contact the farm before dropping off your pumpkins. Each farm has different needs, available space, and feeding practices. Not every animal can safely eat every type

or quantity of food, so farm owners should decide which pumpkins are suitable for their animals.

Let's make this fall a season of giving! Instead of placing your pumpkins beside the trash can, reach out to Trousdale Acres Tiny Hiney's Travelin Farm, B&C Farm, or another local mini farm with livestock. Ask whether they are accepting pumpkin donations and arrange a convenient drop-off. By donating pumpkins, you can support local farmers, provide a seasonal treat for livestock, and help reduce unnecessary waste. It is an easy, family-friendly way to teach children about reuse, responsible waste management, and caring for our community.

Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful believes that protecting our environment begins with simple actions. This fall, let's give our pumpkins a second purpose and turn post-holiday waste into an opportunity to help our local farms.



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Slinkard On Scriptural Success

If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes

by D. A. Slinkard

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

I have always found it interesting how people can be dissatisfied with where they are in life, yet be completely unwilling to change anything about how they are living. They want different results, but they keep following the same routine. They want to accomplish more, but they continue making the same excuses. They want tomorrow to look different from yesterday, but they do absolutely nothing different today. I think about the definition of insanity, and it is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. If we want things to be different, then we must be willing to try different things.

There is an old saying that I believe contains a tremendous amount of truth: "If nothing changes, nothing changes." I want you to think about that statement for a moment. It is incredibly simple, yet it explains why so many people find themselves in the exact same place year after year.

We sometimes convince ourselves that things will eventually get better simply because time passes. However, the passing of time does not automatically produce improvement. Just because another year goes by does not mean we have grown, learned, matured, or accomplished anything. The reality is that change usually requires a decision, and that decision must eventually be followed by action.

One of the keys to having success in life is knowing when to draw that proverbial line in the sand and say, "Enough is enough!" The problem, however, is that many of us do not know where to draw that line, and oftentimes, by the time we finally decide to draw it, we have already waited too long. Instead of being proactive, we find ourselves being reactive.

This is a dangerous place to be because when we spend our lives constantly reacting to whatever comes our way, we allow our circumstances to dictate our decisions. Rather than taking charge of our lives, we find ourselves simply trying to keep up with everything that is happening around us. We find ourselves just treading water... and eventually we are going to sink.

Think about how often this happens. We wait until our finances are in trouble be-

fore we decide to establish a budget. We wait until our health begins to deteriorate before we start taking better care of ourselves. We wait until relationships are strained before we decide to invest time in them. We wait until we are completely overwhelmed before we realize that something in our lives needs to change.

The sad reality is that many of these situations did not develop overnight. They were the result of little decisions, neglected responsibilities, and warning signs that we chose to ignore along the way. I have learned that there is a tremendous difference between making a decision because you recognize something needs to change and making a decision because you have finally run out of options. One is proactive. The other is reactive.

Now, do not misunder-

stand me – life is always going to throw things our way that we cannot anticipate or control. There will be unexpected problems, disappointments, and circumstances that require us to react. However, there is a difference between responding to an unexpected situation and living our entire lives in a constant state of reaction.

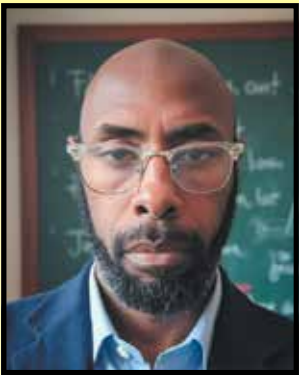
We cannot always control what happens to us, but we can take responsibility for what we do next. Sometimes success begins with a simple decision that we are no longer going to continue doing things the way we have always done them. We are going to stop making excuses, stop putting things off, and stop waiting for circumstances to force us into making changes that we should have made long ago.

After all, if we know something needs to change, why

wait until it gets worse before we do something about it? Yet, this is exactly how many of us live our lives. We wait until the situation has spiraled out of control before we finally decide that something needs to be done. We ignore the warning signs, convince ourselves that things will eventually get better, and continue doing the very things that contributed to the problem in the first place.

The reality is that problems rarely fix themselves, and time alone does not guarantee improvement. Many times the longer we wait to address something, the more difficult it becomes to correct. Eventually, we have to stop waiting for things to change and start making the changes that are within our control, and we have to understand that if nothing changes, nothing changes.





Learning As A Lifestyle

The Connection Between Gratitude and Growth

by Eric Betts

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

Science tells us that an "attitude of gratitude" is a good health choice. Being more grateful more often makes us happier and more optimistic and more hopeful. Gratitude is not about ignoring the hardships, disappointments, and failures of life to simply focus on the metaphorical bright side. It is much different than the dynamics of positive thinking. It acknowledges the pain and suffering that one may experience but makes the choice that despite all the negativity that exists, to find ways to show appreciation. One may have had the negative experience of a house fire. While that is an extremely traumatic event, one can show appreciation for the outpouring of love from the community in the aftermath. One can show appreciation for the clothing donated, the cooked meals

that were sent over, or for the family that welcomed them into their home while they sought for lodging.

Gratitude is often mistaken for being the same as thanksgiving, however, they are indeed different. Gratitude is an attitude or quality of being; it is a feeling that is expressed in practical ways. Indeed, it involves being thankful but does not need something good to happen beforehand in order to have gratitude. Gratitude is a mood or attitude, while thankfulness is a response to gifts and positive occurrences. Gratitude is the habit of being appreciative as it relates to one's feelings and disposition. It flows from the heart in natural and instinctive ways. The mind that is continually in a state of gratitude is sometimes a gift and learned behavior. It exists without expression

but is truly gratified when the opportunity to express gratitude is given.

Having the natural mood or developing a heart of gratitude is not only personally beneficial, but also professionally.

Kevin Eikenberry is a leadership expert and the Chief Potential Officer of a consulting company that helps Clients reach their potential through a variety of training, consulting and speaking services. There are three points that Eikenberry makes that illustrates how gratitude helps in the area of professional growth.

First, he says that gratitude is important to growth because it attracts what we want. "The universal law of attraction says that we will attract into our life the things we think about and focus on...Re-

member that when you are consciously aware of your blessings, and are grateful for them, you are focusing more clearly on what you do want in your life - and are attracting more of those things into your life."

When gratitude becomes a lifestyle, it impacts the mood of the individual, and consequently creates naturally positive body language, non-verbal communication and facial expression. This becomes an attractive and inviting persona that develops opportunities and connections which otherwise would not exist. The very opposite of gratitude creates a demeanor that is uninviting and unwelcoming. At least in this sense, Kevin Eikenberry's law of attraction concept becomes practical.

Additionally, he teaches that gratitude improves relationships. Eikenberry makes an interesting point about gratitude and relationships. He says, "Think about those people that you know who are most appreciative of you - and let you know it. How do you feel about them?"

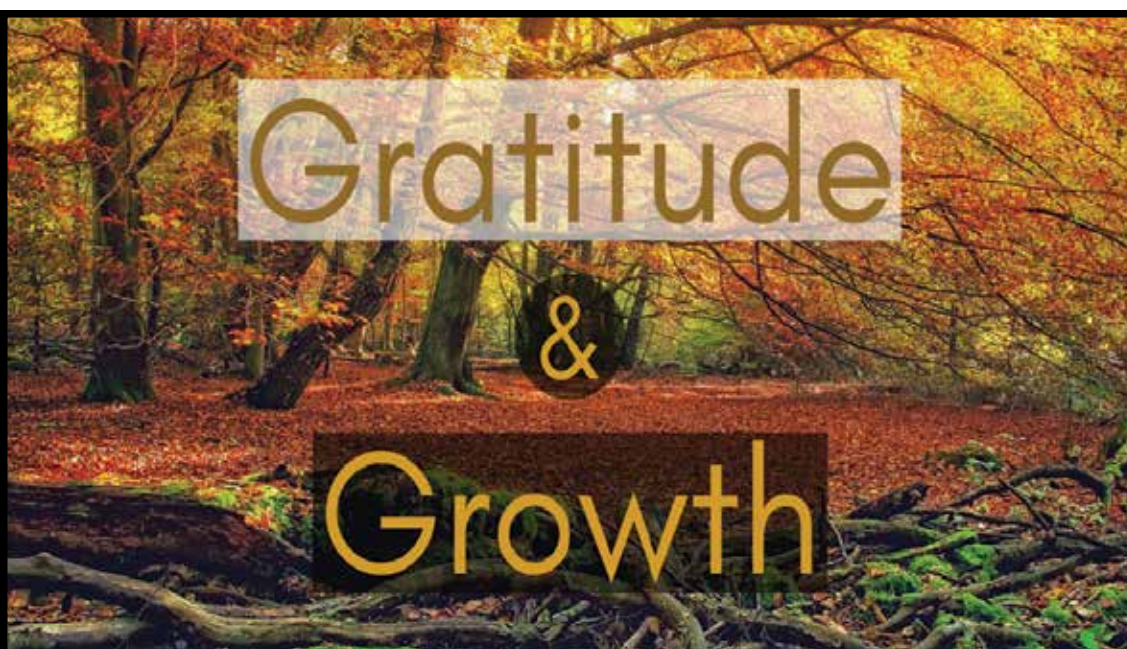
The person who carries a spirit of gratitude has an authentic way of expressing their appreciation not only for what they do but for who they are as individuals. Gratitude says,

"I acknowledge and appreciate your uniqueness along with your attitude, gifts, and skills." It encourages those you interact with and draws them close to you. People tend to want to form bonds and relationships with people who appreciate them and make them feel good about themselves.

Finally, Eikenberry suggests that gratitude improves problem solving skills. This is because, according to Eikenberry, "We also enter a problem-solving situation with a perspective of improvement and opportunity rather than challenge or issue." Persons who face problems and complain about them, unwittingly close the door to creativity and imagination. Those who are grounded in gratitude have a different lens through which they approach the challenges of life. The person who has gratitude sees problems and is grateful for the chance to be helpful and overcome the challenge. While gratitude is not itself limited to positive thinking, it is itself an attitude that is consistently positive and therefore more inclined to creativity when crisis strikes.

Eric M. Betts, PhD

*Curtis Coleman Center
for Religion, Leadership
and Culture
Athens State University*





The Alternative Approach

Starvation Nation

by Roy P. Williams

Over the last century, modern food production and preservation were developed, which prevented mass starvation. Those productive methods led to ultra-processed, nutrient-poor food that allowed the United States to feed most of humanity while at the same time creating a disease burden that we are suffering from today.

The World Health Organization reports that noncommunicable diseases caused at least **43 million deaths in 2021**, representing **75% of all non-pandemic deaths worldwide**. Noncommunicable and non-pandemic, simply means diseases that are not contagious. In other words, people worldwide didn't starve to death, they died due to a food supply that is terribly lacking in the nutrients necessary to sustain a long healthy life.

That included approximately:

- 19 million cardiovascular deaths
- 10 million cancer deaths
- 4 million chronic re-

spiratory deaths

- More than 2 million deaths from diabetes and diabetic kidney disease

Unhealthy diet, inactivity, tobacco, alcohol, and air pollution are major drivers. Elevated blood pressure alone is attributed to about 25% of global noncommunicable-disease deaths.

A major Global Burden of Disease analysis estimated that poor diet was associated with approximately **11 million deaths in 2017 alone**, principally from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. Importantly, much of that burden came from inadequate consumption of protective foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains, not merely from eating too much.

In America, the CDC states directly that most chronic diseases are caused by a short list of factors including **poor nutrition**, inactivity, smoking, and excessive alcohol use. **Chronic deficiency diseases are now the leading causes of American illness, disability, and death.**

Therefore, modern food production solved one enormous problem but helped construct another. Was the original transformation worth it? **Absolutely.** Allowing hundreds of millions to starve would not have been morally acceptable.

Was the present system worth it? **No.** Once humanity possessed the ability to produce, preserve, and transport enough food, there was no necessity to turn most of that food into refined starch, sugar, industrial fat, artificial flavoring, and nutritionally incomplete calories.

The intelligent path would have been to produce food abundantly, preserve it safely, and replace the nutrients that were destroyed through processing. The food production companies completed the first two steps and then allowed profit, convenience, and appetite engineering to override the replacement of the nutrients.

So, the final judgment is obvious. Yes, modern farming techniques, food processing, refrigeration, and shipping kept millions of people worldwide from starving but neglected to replace the nutrients lost from those same processes. Another way to say it is, modern ultra-processing kept people alive long enough to develop diseases produced by the food environment itself. At the same time those deficiencies fuel the sick care system we



have today. Almost everything from arthritis to cancer and everything in between can be associated with deficiencies of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

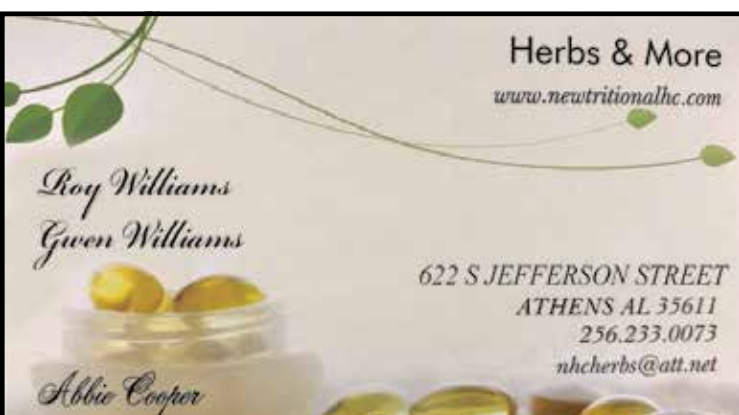
Thankfully, more and more people are learning that to be able to live a long healthy and productive life, you must account for the deficiencies by supplementing the standard American diet with the nutrients that simply aren't in the food most of us consume today. It has been that way for about four decades now, and as a result, America is now recognized as a nation that takes more prescribed drugs than any other country on earth.

We are suffering from arthritis, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, heart disease, and cancer just to name a few of the disorders that are costing us trillions of dollars in sick care. The medical profession or the pharmaceutical industries refuse to even talk to their clients about nutritional deficiencies even though the WHO admits that all the major health issues could be prevented and, in many cases, reversed through proper supple-

mentation.

Some of you might be thinking, how do I know which supplements I should be taking? Thanks to Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, and our parent company NEWtritional Health Care it is easy to learn just what you need. We have been supplying some of the highest quality, most effective nutritional supplements since 1999. We have formulated over 40 products that have proven to change people's lives. We are a full-service company with several health enhancing systems such as Electro-Dermal-Testing, Bemer Matt, Massage Therapy, Whole Body Vibration, and free consultation. Come by to see us or check us out online at www.nhcherbs.com. You can also learn more by listening to Today's Health Update on Rumble, online, or through the free Rumble app on your phone. Just type [todayshealthupdate](https://www.rumble.com/todayshealthupdate) in the search bar and there we are.

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GenZ With JP

Keep Alabama Conservative

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

I'm a Huntsvillian through and through. Born and raised in that great city, I've seen it grow and flourish right before my eyes. For the better, and unfortunately for the worse.

I believe this story tells it all for Huntsville, and it took place right in my childhood neighborhood. In our cul-de-sac of the house I grew up in, that of which my parents still live in to this day, there's a light pole that's been at an angle as long as I've remembered it.

During Alabama football halftimes, we'd go in the yard and throw football through the power lines running through this pole. From the countless times we nailed these lines with our throws, amazingly, we never took out power in our neighborhood.

This pole, sitting at almost 45 degrees at the center of our cul-de-sac, just sort of faded into the background of our neighborhood. Nobody thought anything of it, since it's never moved in 20+ years.

As I was helping my dad bring in groceries on a weeknight, I noticed a U-Haul truck in the driveway of the house across the street. New neighbors were out and about, and the father of this new family noticed us across the street. Almost immediately, he came running across the cul-de-sac towards us in a panic.

"Hey! Somebody needs to call and have that pole

fixed. It's about to fall over!" he said.

My father and I looked unfazed, and I said, "It's been like that for about 25 years."

He then proceeded to tell us he was moving into town from Colorado for government work, and noticed a lack of liberal talk radio on our airwaves.

I remember leaving that interaction feeling rather concerned for our state, and the great city I love. It wasn't just about the light pole; it was about liberal newcomers coming into our city and state and seeking to change us. That light pole represented my childhood, and the city I grew up in. It represents the values and beliefs that shape our identity. Yet almost immediately upon entering, it was under fire.

Even though I welcome the incoming boom to our state economy, I would like to impress upon my fellow Alabamians the urgency to hold strong to what's made our state so beautiful. As Huntsville starts to turn purple from these newcomers, I pray we lifelong Alabamians across the state remember the Alabama we grew up in, and keep it that way.

Alabama is the most beautiful state in our Union. I admit my bias as someone who has never lived anywhere else in my entire life; but as I grow and learn more about this great state, I hold it increasingly dear. When I travel across America, I admire the beauty of Wyoming, the innovation of Los An-



geles and New York, etc., but nothing quite hits like home.

Of course, I love the white beaches, the waterfalls, and the towering pine trees. But what I admire most is our state's righteous stubbornness to be not of the world. We hold tightly to Christ in a world that seeks to destroy Christianity, standing strong against those who seek to uproot our values.

This is not solely a love letter to the state I call home, but a call to action to those who love it as well, to keep Alabama beautiful.

Alabama is considered a hidden gem for a reason. It's becoming increasingly hard to find strong Christian culture in a country that appears to be running as far away from it as possible. Self-indulgence and debauchery run the show in so many parts of America today, which makes our

great state stand out.

Not only has this aspect invited more newcomers, but our business-friendly policies have opened a floodgate of innovation. I applaud our elected officials for bringing Alabama a booming economy; however, I must also give a warning to us Alabamians not to let our great state be transformed.

The way we do this is at the ballot box. Civic disengagement is paramount in how communities are overrun. The democratic process only works when the citizens engage. I urge my fellow Alabamians who love this state to get out and vote to keep Alabama conservative.

Make your voice heard that we want to keep this state unabashedly Christian, and it will be seen through our policies. Let it be known that we want this state to continue to be the conservative strong-

hold that puts the rest of our nation to shame. Send a message to liberals in this state who seek to capitalize upon the flood of newcomers to upend Alabama: we will stand strong for what we hold dear.

Keep Alabama, Alabama.

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)

Be Nice... To Yourself

by Anna Hamilton

Next week, who knows?

What are you going to do this week to be nice to yourself? I encourage you to do something that makes you truly happy. Spend time with friends, read a good book, find mental relief in prayer, take care of your body, forgive yourself, encourage yourself, and most importantly, remember that you are a child of God.

This week's recipe is a fruit salad. I know you think fruit salad is something that your old granny brings to the family reunion, but trust me, this one is a modern take with an autumn flair. It is so yummy! I know my family loves it, and I am sure yours will too.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." 1 John 4:18.



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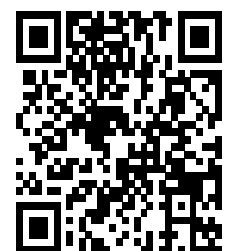
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Health and Fitness

The Clock Is Ticking, But You're Not Finished Yet

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

At some point in life, we start allowing our age to dictate what we believe we're capable of doing. We accept that our knees are supposed to hurt, our backs are supposed to ache, and getting out of a chair is naturally going to become more difficult. We begin treating the loss of strength, mobility, and independence as an unavoidable part of getting older. But what if we challenged that way of thinking? What if instead of accepting that our best physical years are behind us, we started working toward making the years ahead as good as possible?

That's exactly why we created our Legends program at CrossFit Athens.

Legends is a fitness class designed specifically for adults 55 and older, regardless of their current fitness level or exercise experience. Whether you've never stepped foot inside a gym, haven't exercised in 20 years, or already have a routine but need more guidance and accountability, this program was built with you in mind.

Every Monday and Wednesday from 10 to 10:45 a.m., our Legends members come together to work on something that becomes increasingly valuable as we age: their ability to continue living life on their own terms.



We're not training to become professional athletes. We're training to get off the floor without assistance, carry groceries into the house, play with grandchildren, climb stairs confidently, and enjoy hobbies without our bodies holding us back. We're working to improve strength, mobility, balance, cardiovascular fitness, and, most importantly, confidence in our own physical abilities.

One of the biggest misconceptions about aging is that once we lose strength or mobility, it's gone forever. That's simply not true. Our bodies retain the ability to adapt and improve well into our later years. Building muscle, improving balance, and increasing our fitness aren't privileges reserved for people in their twenties and thirties. They're opportunities available to us throughout our lives, provided we're willing to put in the work.

And that's where having a coach and a community makes all the differ-

ence.

You don't need to know how to exercise before joining Legends. That's our job. Every class is led by a coach who provides instruction, modifies movements to your individual abilities, and helps you progress at a pace appropriate for you. There's no expectation that you keep up with anyone else. Your only responsibility is to show up and make an effort.

Twice a week. Forty-five minutes. A small investment of time that can make a tremendous difference in your quality of life.

I think too many people reach a certain age and start living as though they're simply running out the clock. They stop challenging themselves, stop pursuing improvement, and slowly surrender the physical abilities that allow them to enjoy life.

But growing older doesn't mean we have to stop getting better.

You may not be able to

turn back the clock, but you absolutely have a say in how you spend the time ahead of you.

If you're 55 or older, I want you to know that you belong here. You don't have to be in shape, you don't have to have experience, and you certainly don't have to prove anything to anyone.

You just have to be will-

ing to start.

Legends at CrossFit Athens - Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-10:45 a.m. Because your age should never determine your potential.

Coach Nick

Owner

CrossFit Athens

www.crossfitathens.com



From The Porch

From The Porch...

by Amy Hogan Clem



Editor's Note:
We are thrilled to welcome Amy Hogan Clem to our writing crew. Can hardly wait to read "the rest of the story" and more.

As we visit the local historic neighborhoods in Athens, there are so many things to admire and enjoy. There are various architectural styles, paint color combinations, roof styles and materials, exterior finishes, landscaping, and the like. One of the most prominent architectural elements I notice is the porch. There are so many names associated with 'the entrance' to a house. The veranda, portico, plaza, stoop, and the list goes on. Whatever you call it, I think of it as a public extension of one's home.

The porch functions as a landing to give one pause before the transition from the outdoors to the indoors. The porch also can serve as a receiving area without invading one's personal space of one's home. This is a safe place to be outside with the protection from the elements or to watch for approaching danger or watch for changes in the weather.

I imagine my Southern ancestors sat on the porch in the cool of the late afternoon after dinner was over and the dishes had been put away. Perhaps they were sitting in a swing, or in a rocking chair shelling

peas. They were likely discussing the events of the day, work, unfinished chores, maybe politics, or family members. Neighbors and friends may have seen them sitting on the porch and viewed this as a welcome to stop by and visit without a more formal invitation. Perhaps they would gather on the porch and share casual conversation, ask questions regarding mutual acquaintances, and share suggestions or advice.

Thinking along those lines, I would like to create a scenario on the back page of Athens Now, as you close your newspaper, to reflect on real estate and how significant the dirt is to each of us as we build our homes in Athens and Limestone County, Alabama.

Allow me to introduce myself. I was born in Athens, and I have lived most of my life in Limestone County. My grandparents have lived here since the turn of the century---that other century! I began working in the real estate industry in the '90s. I became a real estate broker in 2004 and opened my own brokerage in Elkmont. I began helping people with real estate by teaching first-time homebuyers' classes at Alabama A&M University. I realized how much this was needed, and I became an Alabama state certified real estate instructor and

opened my school, Acumen Real Estate Academy in 2022.

The real estate market in our area is incredible right now, and I believe it affects all of us, whether we are buying or selling or simply living here. We, as a community, need to know more about it in order to make good decisions for ourselves and our

family. My desire is to use this format to share some valuable information with you and something that will be beneficial to you as the reader and for generations to come.

Often, when one hears the term "Real Estate," one thinks of buying and selling homes. Rightly so, this is a growing industry in our immedi-

ate area now. But there is so much in that connotation. I plan to present topics for your muse beginning with "Dirt First." I believe you will find this to be informative, but fun at the same time.

*Looking Forward,
Amy Hogan Clem*

