



Community Matters

AUG. - OCT. 2024

PRESENTED BY

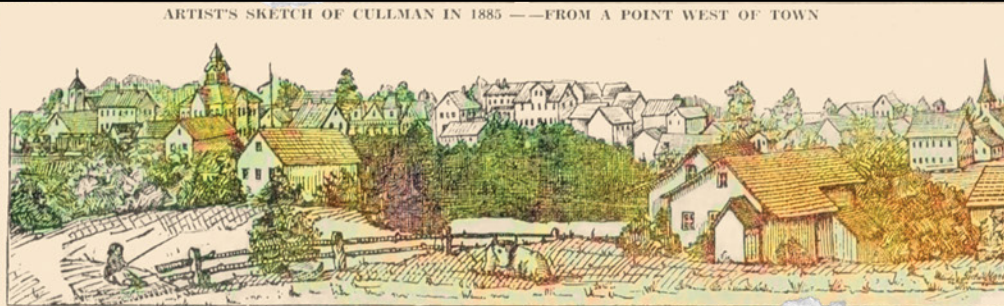
The Cullman Tribune.

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF SERVING CULLMAN COUNTY

OKTOBERFEST GUIDE • COMMUNITY PROFILES • RECIPES • FOOTBALL SCHEDULES • TOURIST GUIDE



STUDYING CULLMAN FARM LIFE — Miss Rose-Marie Bunz of Germany is living in the Max Meyer home this week seeing first hand how a farm family in Alabama lives. Shown above are (left to right, front) Ann Meyer, Johnny Max Meyer, (back) Miss Bunz and Mrs. Max Meyer.—Photo by Schlosser.



ARTIST'S SKETCH OF CULLMAN IN 1885 —FROM A POINT WEST OF TOWN

Railroad and Depot; Court House; J. G. Cullmann's Dwelling; Springer Hotel; Dwelling; Catholic Church and School; Koopman's Store; Pioneer Hotel; Public



COLONEL JOHN G. CULLMANN

German Teachers Study Cullman City Schools

Accompanied by Dr. Henry Haap of Peabody College, four young German elementary school teachers visited Cullman City Schools on Wednesday and Thursday. They are making a six months study of schools in the United States and returning to teaching positions in their own country.

Decision Favorable To Alabama

Good news is the decision of President Eisenhower to leave the German scientists at Huntsville under the supervision of the Army. This assures the continuation of the team of missile experts. Their work is vitally needed by Americans during this space race with the Russians.

From an economical viewpoint, the presence of Dr. Wernher von Braun and his 2,100-man space team in Huntsville means that the huge federal appropriations for rockets will come to this North Alabama area.



German University

PRESENTING SPONSOR CITY OF CULLMAN



EST. 1873

CULLMAN

ALABAMA



(PHOTO BY SCHLOSSER)

GERMAN WOMAN VISITS CULLMAN — The Cullman B. P. W. Club is sponsoring the visit here of other women and 50 members.

German M.D.'s Report 'Fantastic' Chiropractic Results

Speaking on "Secretarial Work As A Career", Miss Dorothy Jackson, speaking on "Secretarial Work As A Career", Mrs. Carlie Burkart speaking on "Homemaking As A Career", Mrs. Tennie Webster from the Southern Bell Telephone

Advertiser Index



Mrs. E. Hauk receives three dollars in merchandise from Home Improvement Company this week for her prize winning recipe, Sauerbraten. This is one of those old German recipes which has such a delicious, distinctive flavor that it never fails to please. Although it takes time to prepare this roast, you will find it well worth your effort after you have served it. To make it even more complete, it has a gingersnap sauce.

Sauerbraten
 4 lbs. beef (chuck, rump, round)
 2 teaspoons salt
 ¼ teaspoon pepper
 1 onion, sliced
 3 bay leaves
 1 teaspoon peppercorns
 2 cups vinegar
 2 cups water
 Fat for browning
 ¼ cup sugar
 ¼ cup raisins
 4 to 6 gingersnaps, crushed
 Rub meat well with salt and pepper. Place in a large dish with onions, bay leaves and peppercorns. Heat vinegar and water, and pour over meat to cover. Cover dish and let stand in refrigerator three to four days, turning occasionally. Brown meat in fat in a Dutch oven. Add onions and a small amount of spiced vinegar. Cover and let simmer until tender, about three or four hours. Melt sugar in a skillet, add the strained meat liquid very gradually, then add raisins and gingersnaps and cook until thickened and smooth. If desired add a tablespoon or two of thick sour cream to the gravy.
 For a summer treat, try this Chocolate Icebox Cake. Since it may be kept in the refrigerator for as long as two weeks, you may prepare it far ahead of time and serve it to your unexpected guests. Your family will find it a delightfully cool dessert for these hot days.

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ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH 85th ANNIVERSARY

85th Anniversary Services
 7:30 P. M., Thursday, April 20th
 Dr. Harry W. Bostling, Speaker

OLDEST CHURCH IN CITY
 St. John's Church, organized on May 3, 1876, is the oldest church in Cullman. The pastor of the city, John G. Cullman, was a charter member of the congregation and the service was in the German language.

7:30 P. M., Friday, May 1st
 Rev. James H. Lightbourne, Jr., Speaker

10:30 A. M., Sunday, May 3rd
 Dr. James H. Bostling, Speaker

Ed P. Masterson is President of St. John's Church and the Rev. Richard Probst is Pastor.

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THE CULLMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT URGES YOU TO STAY SAFE

and Community Services

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SAVE THE DATE!

NOVEMBER

Friday, November 8th
 Saturday, November 9th
 Sunday, November 10th

Join us for the Cookie Crawl, participate in the Window Decoration Contest, and more!

Local fun, festivals and fundraisers

Cheyenne Sharp, Gauge Day
The Cullman Tribune

Cullman residents and visitors alike need just look around any corner of the county to find a fun outing, event or festival to attend. Here are some taking place this fall.

SEPTEMBER

28th annual Sweet Tater Festival

- Sunday-Monday, Sept. 1-2
- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. and 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Smith Lake Park
- 403 County Road 386

This family friendly festival will feature live entertainment, food vendors, arts and crafts vendors and, of course, locally grown sweet taters. Monday, Sept. 2, is Labor Day, and will see the Sweet Tater Festival Car Show held from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Each admission armband is \$5 and allows entry both days.

www.facebook.com/CullmanCountyParks

8th annual Bernard Blues and BBQ

- Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 7-8
- 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- St. Bernard Abbey and Prep School
- 1600 St. Bernard Dr.

This soulful and smoky festival brings together the best blues music and mouth-watering barbecue while showcasing artisans and craftspeople. Admission is a \$10 donation and children younger than 12 get in free. Please note that no pets are allowed. Guests can also tour the Abbey's world-famous Ave Maria Grotto at a reduced admission of \$5 all weekend long.



Burgermeister Dale Greer arrives in style as the head of the 2023 Oktoberfest parade on Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023. The opening ceremony took place soon after.

CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

www.stbernardprep.com/bernard-blues-bbq

United Way of Cullman County Community Health Fair

- Saturday, Sept. 7
- 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center
- 17465 U.S. Highway 31 South

This free health fair will feature free health screenings, information on local nonprofits in the health field, free mental health screenings and free produce for children through the North Alabama Agriplex's Power of Produce Program. There will also be inflatables, live music, door prizes and plenty of food trucks. The Red Cross Bloodmobile will also be on-site.

www.uwaycc.org

Harvest to Home Local Foods Dinner & Auctions

- Thursday, Sept. 12
- 5 p.m.
- Dr. William F. Peinhardt Conference Center at Wallace State Community College
- 801 Main St. NW

This annual event benefits the North Alabama Agriplex. Tickets go on sale Aug. 1. A meal prepared with local ingredients will be crafted by Chef Aaron Nichols and Wallace State Culinary Pride. There will be silent and live auctions.

www.agriplex.org

Cullman County Fair Parade

- Saturday, Sept. 28
- 2 p.m.
- U.S. Highway 31 in downtown Cullman

Registration for the parade

begins on Sept. 3 at 9 a.m. and ends on Sept. 25 at noon. The parade will begin at the intersection of U.S. Highway 31 and Sixth Street Southwest and follow Highway 31 north to just past the intersection of Arnold Street.

www.cullmanfair.org/fair-parade

41st annual Cullman County Band Exhibition

- Saturday, Sept. 28
- 5:30-10 p.m.
- Oliver Woodard Stadium at Cullman High School
- 510 13th St. NE

Come out and see all local high school marching bands, including Cullman Middle School, perform their halftime shows. Look for Cullman Bearcat Band on Facebook or visit the website for »

admission price.

www.cullmanband.com

OCTOBER

Oktoberfest

- Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 3-5
- Times vary
- Cullman Festhalle and surrounding area
- Downtown Cullman

Kicking off on Oct. 3, at 4 p.m. with the Burgermeister tapping the keg of Goat Island's Oktoberfest Brew and running until the closing of the Hofbräuhaus Biergarten on Saturday, Oct. 5 at 11 p.m., the three-day German-inspired party will be filled with live music, cultural displays, community events and delicious German goodies. Oktoberfest Senior Day will be Friday, Oct. 4, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Festhalle.

www.cullmanoktoberfestival.com

Cullman County Fair

- Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 3-12
- Times vary
- Cullman County Fairgrounds
- 1501 Sportsman Lake Road NW

Family friendly fun with exhibits, pageants, food, rides and more. The opening ceremony will take place Thursday, Oct. 3, at 5 p.m. Get ticket info and see a full calendar of events on the website.

www.cullmanfair.org

11th annual Smith Lake Bass Fest

- Saturday, Oct. 5
- First light
- Smith Lake Park
- 403 County Road 386

With massive, guaranteed payouts and prizes for Big Fish and highest scoring parent/

child team, the tourney is set to be a day of fishing fun. Registration for the tournament will be open until Sept. 26. and there will be a pre-tournament meeting on

Oct. 4 at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center at 6 p.m. Entry fees are \$175 per team and teams who register at the pre-tournament meeting will be cash only and have a

late registration fee of \$25. Registration can be completed online at www.smithlakepark-bassfest.com or by mail with a check or money order to: Smith Lake Park Bass »

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www.smithlakeparkbassfest.com

Peinhardt Farm Days

- Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 19-20
- 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Peinhardt Living History Farm
- Tally Ho Street Southwest near the North Alabama Agriplex

Experience history in a setting that will take you back in time and allow you to participate in some hands-on work. Exhibits and demonstrations are spread over 40 acres. Events have included old time wood-working (hewing, splitting, crosscut sawing and old tools);

mules, horses and wagon rides; antique tractor shows; crops; animals; sorghum syrup making; grist mill; blacksmith - horseshoeing; and sawmill. Admission is \$10 per person (age 2 and younger free). Cash or check only.

www.peinhardtfarm.com

Sullivan Creek Ranch Steak and Sunset

- Friday, Oct. 25
- 5:30-8 p.m.
- Sullivan Creek Ranch
- 151 County Road 1047, Vinemont

This event offers a luxurious dining experience set in a stunning location on the grounds of Sullivan Creek Ranch. Guests will be served pre-dinner drinks



Classic automobiles on display at the 2023 Sweet Tater Festival at Smith Lake Park

CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

and appetizers, followed by a locally sourced, farm-to-table gourmet dinner that showcases ingredients expertly paired with the ranch's Akaushi steaks.

www.sullivancreekranch.com

Tickets can be purchased on the ranch's website.

NOVEMBER

The Link of Cullman County Annual Fundraising Gala: 'Fruitful'

- Friday, Nov. 1
- 6 p.m.

»

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- Cotton Creek Warehouse
- 417 Third Ave. SW

The theme of this year's gala is 'Fruitful,' paying homage to the work and services The Link offers to the community and the impact the organization has in the lives of its neighbors. There will be a rustic Italian dinner, a silent auction

and plenty of opportunities for fellowship and giving. Festive cocktail attire is requested. The Link is currently seeking sponsorships for the gala. Interested individuals, businesses or organizations should contact tiffanywright@linkingcullman.org. Tickets will be on sale soon. For more information, call 256-775-0028.

www.linkingcullman.org

Cullman County Veterans Day Celebration

- Saturday, Nov. 2
- 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Cullman Regional Airport
- 231 County Road 1360

This family friendly event will feature Huey helicopter rides,

a free lunch for veterans and spouses, military equipment displays, a P-40 aircraft, a Chinook helicopter, an air demonstration, WWII reenactors, a car show and more. Admission and parking at the event are free.

www.cullmanveteransday.com



www.cullmanballettheatre.com

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Kernel Kullman, Cullman County Museum, Grumpy's

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

There's no shortage of unique hometown destinations for a full day of fun! Here are three options for you (and your family, a group of friends or even a solo adventure!) to enjoy. Get out there and enjoy yourself!

Kernel Kullman

This novelty sweet shop is a staple in Cullman's Warehouse District, providing the masses with gourmet flavored popcorn and the treats and sweets of days gone by, transporting them to decades past as they indulge their sweet teeth.

The store is a local favorite for after-school (or work) snacks and treats to save a bad day. Walking through the glass double doors is akin to stepping back in time; swing music flows through the speakers and rows and rows of vintage candy and a variety of chilled bottled sodas are available.

Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and

Saturdays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Kernel Kullman is located at 113 First Ave. NE.

Cullman County Museum

The Cullman County Museum is easily recognizable to anyone who grew up here. The building itself is a replica of Cullman founder Col. John G. Cullmann's home. The museum is home to many local historical artifacts, articles and items related to Cullman's founding and history, allowing visitors to view and experience the small town's growth over the last 150 years.

Some of the items at the museum include an incredibly preserved atlatl, a hunting tool used by Native Americans in the region when they inhabited the area, and one of Cullman's first lighted business signs. Other exhibits showcase pioneer life in Cullman, as well as medical advancements, war efforts, music, pictures and media from throughout the life of the city, with sections that focus on John G. Cullmann and his family and life.

Open Monday through



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Kernel Kullman is located at 113 First Ave. NE.

Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., the Cullman County Museum is located at 212 Second Ave. NE. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and \$3 for students.

Grumpy's Down Under

In the basement of Grumpy's Italian Grill, Grumpy's Down Under is Cullman's sports bar answer to the up and coming live music scene while also offering trivia nights and karaoke.

Regularly featuring new

local musicians trying to make a name for themselves, Grumpy's Down Under keeps the atmosphere alive with bumping bass and huge vocals for guests to enjoy while chowing down on the restaurant's offerings of wings, pizza and pasta.

Grumpy's Down Under is open Monday through Thursday from 4-11 p.m., Fridays from 4p.m.-midnight and Saturdays from 11a.m.-midnight.

Grumpy's is located at 402 Fifth St. SE.

Smith Farms

Lauren Estes

lauren@cullmantribune.com

Locally owned and operated, Smith Farms is a Cullman treasure located right off Exit 308 near Interstate 65.

Smith Farms features a variety of meats, cheeses, wines, jams, jellies, pies and more.

It's also known for wine tastings, and Manager Amanda Swann said they have seasonal wine tastings featuring wines to complement the time of year.

"We typically try to do them once a month," Swann said. "We had one a few weeks ago and our next is aimed for September to feature more fall wine varieties."

Smith Farms has a 16-wine-bottle tasting machine and also includes up to 10-12 additional wine options for tasters.

"Back in October we hosted a tasting that had close to 30 wines for the fall season," Swann said. "Our most recent summer tasting featured more rose and bubbles types and we had around 22 options."

The wine tastings are \$10

a person and each participant gets to keep his or her wine glass. Every Friday-Sunday, Smith Farms has smoked chickens, ribs and Boston butts available for purchase.

"If you follow us on our Facebook page - we post our deals, plans for wine tastings and more," Swann said. "We also do our gift boxes that we create for the holidays."

Smith Farms is located at 1825 Fourth St. SW in Cullman. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/smith-farmscullman or www.SmithFarmsAlabama.com.



LAUREN ESTES/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Smith Farms is known for its wine tastings.

Flavors, the Shrine and Cullman Bowling Center

Katie Spicer

Tribune Correspondent

Looking for a fun way to spend the day with your significant other? Trying to find exciting activities you and your friends can enjoy together? Maybe you are seeking a solo excursion? If any of those sound like you, Cullman County is the place to visit!

Morning

Start the day with a made-from-scratch breakfast from Flavors Bakery. This hometown bakery is open Tuesday-Friday from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. From pastries to coffee, prices range from \$2-5 per item.

"Come to experience Flavors Bakery's unique atmosphere where we make scratch baked goodies including our delicious orange rolls, cinnamon rolls and other sweet treats," said Flavors'

Lisa Durcholz. "We offer a variety of sweet options including gluten free, sugar free, dairy free, plant based and keto friendly."

Flavors is conveniently located in Cullman's Warehouse District, so there are also numerous shops to explore once you've had your fill!

Flavors Bakery is located at 101 First Ave. NE, Ste. 100 in Cullman.

Afternoon

Spend the afternoon sightseeing at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament. "Hidden away in the countryside of northern Alabama, the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament is a peaceful place of spiritual renewal and prayer. The Shrine, visited by thousands each year, is also home to Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, where the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration live a life consecrated to God." (www.olamshrine.com)

Located in Hanceville, the Shrine is open throughout the summer from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. daily, with guided tours available Wednesday-Saturday at 10:30 a.m. (Guided tours require reservations.) Sample itineraries can be found on the Shrine's website at www.olamshrine.com/visit.

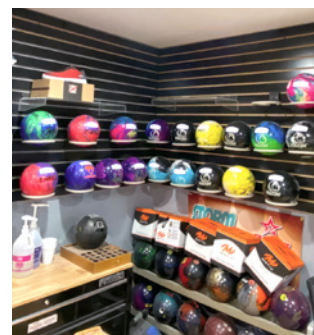
Know before you go: "The Shrine is a Temple of the Lord. Clothing must be suitable to a holy place. Shoulders and knees must be covered. Temporary apparel is available at the Reception desk if needed."

There is no cost to tour the Shrine.

The Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament is located at 3222 County Road 548 in Hanceville.

Night

Wrap up the day by enjoying the nightlife at the Cullman Bowling Center! It's open daily, and bowlers can get their game on for as little as \$5 an hour per person. After 5



FACEBOOK/CULLMAN BOWLING CENTER

The Cullman Bowling Center/Valley Tavern & Grill are located at 1710 Tallyho St. SW in Cullman.

p.m. prices increase to \$10 per person an hour. Glow Bowling takes place every Friday and Saturday night starting at 9.

After working up an appetite, bowlers can stop by on-site eatery Valley Tavern & Grille. Not only does it offer affordable, tasty meals, it also hosts Karaoke Tuesdays and live musicians every Thursday-Saturday.

The Cullman Bowling Center/Valley Tavern & Grill are located at 1710 Tallyho St. SW in Cullman.

Local nonprofit invested in lives of those in Cullman County who have little

Gauge Day

gauge@cullmantribune.com

"Feed my sheep."

This was the divine call that propelled Melissa Hudson following the devastation of the April 2011 tornadoes. In response, she founded a local nonprofit that would do just that.

Delivering food throughout the county during that extreme time of need, she felt God's calling in her life to continue providing food to those in need. In October 2011, she established The Crossing, a Cullman-based nonprofit that embodies the spirit of unity and compassion witnessed in the tornadoes' aftermath in Cullman. The creation of The Crossing ushered her and other volunteers into fulfilling the purpose God had given her in life: to feed His people.

Since the beginning, Hudson has made the nonprofit's mission clear: to provide hope and essential resources to the people of Cullman County by addressing hunger, homelessness and their spiritual needs. This includes providing Bibles to those who don't have one and praying with them over their needs and concerns.

Much of Hudson's drive and inspiration for the services The Crossing provides is from her own life experiences.

"I grew up in a family of six, and we experienced lean times. My father was a pastor and I remember our church having a 'pounding' for our

family and all the people of the church would put nonperishable foods in a big box to feed our family. So, I experienced the goodness of God through His church. Our home was the house all the kids came to and my parents instilled in me the love for God and His children," Hudson recalled.

These early experiences instilled in her a profound love for God and His children, laying the foundation for her future works in ministry.

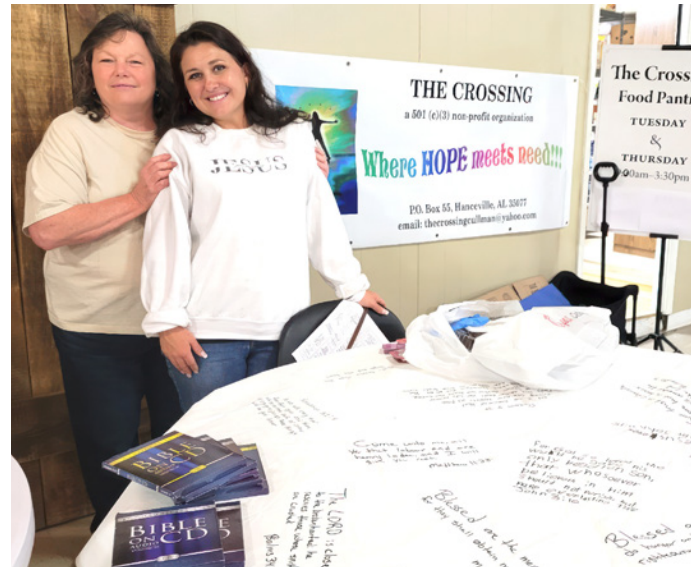
While the needs of people are at the forefront of The Crossing's mission, its entire foundation is deeply rooted in the teachings of Matthew 25:35-40, where Jesus emphasized the importance of caring for the needy.

"In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus was telling the people that when they had provided food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, it was as if they had done it unto Him. I feel that every time we provide food, drink, clothes and prayer to those we come in contact with, through The Crossing, we are doing it unto our Father in Heaven. What an honor and a privilege He has given us to do this, on His behalf, for the people He loves, with all His heart," Hudson shared.

The story of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem also holds significant meaning for The Crossing.

"In Nehemiah, the Israelites joined together in unity to fix the broken places in the wall. In our community, we must do the same," Hudson noted.

With a focus on addressing poverty by tackling the challenges of food insecurity, homelessness and hopelessness, The Crossing aims to



Melissa Hudson, founder and director of The Crossing, with her friend Jenny Dupre, stand alongside the beginnings of their Bible and Prayer table. Scripture adorns the table, with a hope that all the tables in the future will be covered in the Word.

rebuild much of the brokenness in Cullman County.

The organization currently offers a range of services, providing food, Bibles and hygiene products to those in need. Despite recent challenges, such as relocating to a smaller facility that temporarily halted its clothing ministry, The Crossing remains committed to its mission.

"We had to relocate on June 21 to a location that does not have the space needed to continue with our clothing ministry at this time, but we are continuing our search for a space adequate to pick this part of our ministry back up," Hudson assured.

Keeping the shelves stocked is a community effort. The Crossing shops at the local stores and the Food Bank of North Alabama. They apply for various grants and seek monthly contributions from churches, companies and

individuals to be able to purchase the items needed to keep its food bank stocked.

"Donations of goods can be dropped off at 1503 Second St. SW, Cullman, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Financial contributions can be made on our website at www.the-crossingcullman.org, or by mail at The Crossing, P.O. Box 55, Hanceville, AL 35077. The Crossing is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so all donations are tax deductible," Hudson said, highlighting the various ways the community can support its efforts.

"I feel that The Crossing's biggest impact is on the people we serve. It's showing them love and kindness and letting them know that someone cares about them, and I pray that we always point them to Jesus, the answer to all that they are going through and to be sure that they know, Jesus loves" »

them, died for them and never leaves them. People come to us for prayer and then, they come back with praise reports, and what an honor to be a part of that," Hudson reflected.

With success stories abounding and many individuals returning to share praise reports of answered prayers and expressing gratitude for the kindness they received during tough times, The Crossing is truly meeting its mission where the people are.

Engaging with volunteers and the broader Cullman County community is crucial for ensuring success in its various initiatives. The Crossing utilizes social media and its website, as well as word of mouth, to help engage with the community to bring awareness to its initiatives and the issues it faces daily. This awareness helps foster new volunteers for projects, allowing it to better grow and provide for the needs of the community.

Collaborations with other local organizations, such as the food pantry at Fairview Methodist Church, amplify The Crossing's impact. It also supports local recovery homes with food and clothing when available, fostering a deeper network of care and support within the community.

The Crossing sees its fair share of challenges, particularly financial constraints and space limitations that are ongoing. However, Hudson remains optimistic.

"The biggest challenges we face in ministering to our community would be finances and space. We desire to offer more food choices, hygiene products, clothing, shoes and undergarments and would like to offer other household items to those in need. We continue to seek God's guidance on how He would like for us to proceed and we seek the advice of those who have gone through these obstacles and have overcome

them," Hudson explained.

In the next five to 10 years, Hudson's vision for The Crossing goes well beyond where it began in 2011.

"The vision of The Crossing is to purchase land to build on so that we can expand our ministry to include a garden for fresh vegetables, space to accept donations of household items, as well as restart our clothes closet.

"We also want available space to offer discipleship classes for those interested in a closer walk with God," Hudson shared about where she believes God is leading The Crossing.

As a leader within the community, Hudson finds immense reward in knowing that people feel loved when they visit The Crossing.

"The most rewarding aspect of my involvement with The Crossing is knowing that people feel loved when they are visiting with us. The other day, a lady

who I had not seen for a couple of years came by to see us. When she came into our room, she didn't stop at the chairs, she came right past my desk for a hug. She hugged me and said, 'I'm 90. I made it.' Then a lady that we had been praying with for quite some time came in and was so excited. She said that because of the love of Jesus that we had shown her, she was going into the ministry and that she wanted to share the love of God with others," Hudson continued.

"Many of our guests just want someone to care about them, and The Crossing loves doing that," she said.

Hudson's message to the community is one of invitation and hope: "If they want to be a part of and support a ministry that loves God and loves people, The Crossing might be for them. We are a small group, but God has big plans for The Crossing and we are listening for His next step."

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Cullman churches celebrate 150 years of local ministry

W.C. Mann

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In the spring of 2024, Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church and St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church both celebrated 150 years of ministry to the Cullman community. The congregations demonstrate a heritage of faith that goes all the way back to the city's founding, and compete in friendship with each other over the question of which came first.

Highlights of Sacred Heart's history

Mary Hayden Hovater, a lifelong Cullmanite and Sacred Heart parishioner who became the congregation's first official historian/archivist a few years ago, provided the following narrative, including an earlier than previously noted starting date.

A number of Catholic families were already living in north Alabama prior to the construction of the church building. Monsignor John Baasen conducted Masses across the region starting in 1872, and referred to all of north Alabama as "his parish" as Col. John Cullman's first settlers arrived.

The land on which Sacred Heart Church is located was deeded to Bishop John Quinlan of the Diocese of Mobile in 1873 by the Kyle, Madden and Osborn families for a Catholic Church to be erected, according to the records of the Diocese.

On April 9, 1874, the first church was officially named "Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" and was blessed by Msgr. Baasen with approval from Bishop Quinlan, becoming a mission of the Diocese of Mobile. A 1915 Tribune article »

recorded early memories of the first building:

"Located in a grove of woods surrounded by partially burned stumps and underbrush, the crude structure was windowless and had only one door. The rough-hewn floor boards were not fastened down and would often spring up to slap the worshippers faces when stepped on. The walls and altar were unfinished wood. Mother Carolina later covered the altar with white oil cloth and had a chasuble sent from Notre Dame Motherhouse in Milwaukee. Trestles, with rough logs laid across them, served as pews."

During 1874 the Catholic community grew so much that it was able to establish a board of trustees that included John Fromhold, August Gruenger, Herman Lehring, John Maier and Ferdinand Krellhaus. Later that year the South and North Alabama Railroad Company gave four lots to the trustees for use by the Catholic Community for a rectory and school.

On April 29, 1875, Martin Fromhold was the first recorded death at the newly established Sacred Heart Church. The first recorded First Holy Communion at Sacred Heart Church, according to Msgr. Baasen's records, was on May 7, 1876, for a class including Joseph Behrens, Mary Madden, Odilia Mayer, Henrietta Hersant, Josephine Stricht, Michael Nish, Catherine Risse, Mary Spraul, Anna Fromhold and Frances Sackfield. Baasen also recorded the first known marriage at Sacred Heart Church on Oct. 10, 1876, of Julia Hassenbein to Joseph Schmidt, and on Dec. 18 of the same year Anne Weggman married William Bellenger.



Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church ca. 1900

SACRED HEART ARCHIVES

On Oct. 30, 1877, the first resident pastor, Fr. James Meurer, a German-speaking priest, arrived at Sacred Heart. On Nov. 1 of that year, Sacred Heart became an official Parish with a blessing by Msgr. Baasen under the authority of the bishop of Mobile. Soon after, construction of a new second church, a small house for the pastor and a small convent for the sisters began and was completed before December 1878. Also in 1877 Joseph Fromhold deeded land for Sacred Heart Church to Bishop Quinlan, and in 1878 the trustees transferred the title of all the property given to them by the South and North Alabama Railroad to the Bishop as well. The first recording of baptisms at Sacred Heart also occurred during 1877: Guiliemus Mulkin and Helena Schmidt.

The Sisters of Notre Dame arrived on Dec. 14, 1878, and the convent was opened. Construction of a schoolhouse began on July 1, 1879.

The church was updated in 1887 to include a steeple and bells, and the Sacred Heart

Cemetery was deeded. In that same year, Fr. Gamelbert Brumer O.S.B. succeeded Fr. Meurer as the Order of St. Benedict took over leadership of the parish. Priests from the Benedictine St. Bernard Abbey have led the congregation ever since.

By 1889 the school needed to expand, so construction of a new larger schoolhouse was started. "It had three large classrooms, a cloak room and meeting room for church societies on the first floor with a large hall of exhibitions, concerts, and fairs on the upper floor. The nuns then occupied the old school and took in orphan girls or girls who lived a great distance from the school as boarders," according to records. It was completed the same year and blessed on Oct. 27, 1889.

In 1890 a twelve room priest residence was built and Fr. Brumer started the pre-Thanksgiving Turkey Festival, a tradition that has continued in various forms to the present day.

St. Bernard Abbey was founded in 1891, and Sacred Heart Convent followed »

in 1892.

On Oct. 24, 1910, ground-breaking for a larger church took place. The third Sacred Heart Church building was built of stone during the pastorate of Rev. Ignatius Mayer, O.S.B., who became pastor in 1905. The cornerstone was laid on July 3, 1913. The third and current stone church was dedicated in 1916.

The matching stone school was built during the pastorate of Rev. Marion Schwallie, O.S.B. in the late 1940s.

Sacred Heart's current building exemplifies the German Revival of the Romanesque style. The building was laid out in the popular cruciform style, and local sandstone was used on the exterior. The stained glass windows were designed by the Von Gerichter Ecclesiastic Studio of Columbus, Ohio in 1914. Twenty-four of the windows were built in Munich, Germany, and when a couple of them were ready to be shipped to Cullman, the outbreak of World War I necessitated their burial to protect them. They were dug up and shipped to Cullman after the war, and installed in 1920. The pipe organ, one of the largest in north Alabama, was built in 1921 and was acquired by Sacred Heart in 1959.

Rev. Cletus Meagher, O.S.B., of St. Bernard Abbey, launched the Family Life Center program in 1991. The year was spent refining the design and visiting numerous churches from Birmingham to the Tennessee line. The "Best of all Possibilities" included offices, classrooms, conference room, youth room, kitchen, locker rooms, gymnasium and stage, and a remarkable fireplace designed by Brother Jude Johnston, O.S.B., of St. Bernard Abbey.

In the fall of 1999 an extensive repair and restoration project was begun on the church steeples and roof. Sacred Heart's most prominent

feature, the gold crosses atop its steeples, came into being as part of the restoration project. Copperworks Corp. of Decatur used 23 tons of zinc and 600 pounds of solder for the job. There are 4,000 shingles on each steeple; each held in place with five nails.

The latest cleaning and restoration of the stained glass windows was in 2011 under the leadership of current Pastor Rev. Patrick Egan, O.S.B. He began studying for the priesthood in 2003 after retiring as a colonel from the United States Army, and was ordained in June 2008. He was assigned as pastor in August 2009. The restoration ended with the installation of three new rose windows in the sanctuary and a new rose window in the school building. A new, elevated pulpit, or ambo, as well as a display cabinet for the sacred oils, were also installed.

Said Hovater of her work on the parish's history, "It is an honor and a privilege to work in our archives. Every day I get to work in there I discover something new and learn more about our Sacred Heart history, as well as gain a deeper appreciation for the over 2,000 years of Catholic history of which we participate."

Highlights of St. John's history

St. John's current Pastor, Rev. John Richter, provided The Tribune with the following narrative of the congregation's history.

When Cullmann and his band of German settlers arrived in north Alabama in the 1870s, they brought with them a host of presuppositions about life and faith. Although Cullmann himself appears not to have been a particularly religious man, he tended to the spiritual concerns of the people he recruited, becoming a charter member of St. John's, established May 1, 1874, as First Evangelical Protestant Church. Some sources indicate



St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church in the 1920s

a dedication service was held as early as February 1874 at the original site of the first church building, suggesting the informal beginnings of St. John's go back further than the official May date.

Names like Beckert, Stoback, Grell, Kobert, Zeigler, Rumpel, Keston, Hellman, Betz, Knoechel, Henning, Dietz, Wiltkomper, Kunz, Bauer, Brodrecht, Albes, Scheuing, Dreher, Kullman, von Gerichten, Prinz, Hoffmeyer, Ruehl, Kessler, Schwan and Fricke graced the original charter.

Early congregants constructed their first building on the west side of town between Fourth and Fifth Avenues under the direction of Rev. Joseph Schmalzl. Christopher Conrad Scheuing was the first child baptized and Frederick Lessman and Caroline Wegener were the first couple to be married in the church.

The congregation seems to have had no formal denominational ties at its founding but clung tenaciously to its German ethnic heritage, recruiting German pastors to minister to the spiritual needs

of Germans and German-Americans. Seeking its ministers through various denominational agencies (primarily Lutheran), the congregation paid dues to those organizations without necessarily pursuing lasting ties.

The original constitution of St. John's clarifies the desire of the early settlers of Cullman and founders of the church to maintain their German heritage. Like many first-generation immigrants, the German settlers of Cullman often lived with one foot in the new world and one in the old. For example, Article 1, Section 2 reads, "We cling to the symbols of the church of our old German fathers and defend the protestant faith and freedom of mind. We also believe in our salvation through Christ and recognize the Holy Scripture as the common rule and guide of our faith and life..."

Likewise, Article 1, Section 4 affirms, "In church rituals, for instance Holy Communion, Holy Baptism, Confirmation and in observing Sunday and Holiday services, we follow strictly the old custom of the fatherland and declare ourselves firmly »

against all modern ideas which have been borrowed from the English Sects, therefore against the so-called new rules of kneeling, penitence bank, longer services and so on." Though the exact context evoking these remarks unfortunately remains unknown, they are indicative of an ardent fervor to maintain familiar expressions of the faith. One foot in the present. One in the past.

Indeed, that ethnic impulse was dominant enough that at least some services at St. John's were conducted in the German language until 1932 when they were limited to twice a month. That arrangement continued until 1941 when the congregation discontinued all German-language services.

The year 1881 witnessed exciting changes as the congregation decided to construct new facilities in what is the congregation's current location.

Reverend John Koenig led the charge. His pastorate was followed by that of Reverend J. Koehler who oversaw the addition of a Sunday school building and parsonage in 1884-85.

On Dec. 31, 1922, cornerstone of the present church was laid, and the dedication was held on March 18, 1924. The parsonage construction, sponsored by the Ladies Aid Society (later Women's Guild), began in 1928 and was completed on May 4, 1930.

The German pulse of the congregation remained strong well into the 20th century and it was not until 1968 that St. John's called its first non-German pastor. In July of that year the congregation installed George Fidler as senior pastor.

The gamble to call this North Carolina native proved a good decision as the congregation experienced a great revitalization. Fidler introduced a more gospel-oriented musical style to worship, including the formation of the enduring and locally popular Revelations Quartet. For

decades, and through numerous iterations, the Revelations blessed St. John's and the wider community with the sounds of faith in their own Southern Gospel style.

Likewise, Nell Kirby served at St. John's through much of Fidler's tenure, as organist and choir director, contributing to the ongoing musical evolution at St. John's. Toward the end of Fidler's pastorate, Reverend Jim Walker arrived to lead the music ministry.

It was also during this season that St. John's staff expanded in other areas to an associate pastor (Herb Young, Randy Otto, Steve Nyquist) and a full-time director of youth ministry (Greg Hollingsworth).

The congregation called the Reverend Robert Kurtz as senior pastor in 1993, and installed him in office in 1994. Under his leadership, the congregation renovated the Ruehl Building for ministry purposes, founded Little Lambs Preschool and expanded the physical footprint of the campus to include Christ Hall, the Atrium, a student ministry center, as well as children's classrooms for the preschool and Sunday school. Jim Walker continued serving during much of Kurtz's tenure and his self-described "bapti-costal" style saw the music ministry of St. John's soar to new heights.

Chris Hester, serving as minister of parish life, helped oversee an expanding young adult and discipleship ministry with lay leaders like Wade Warren. After Chris' departure to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy, Steve Wood and John Richter would be added to the staff as associate pastors, while Brian Ferguson and Ben Karwoski served in youth ministry.

Pastor Kurtz's retirement in June 2012 both marked the end of a period of joyful renewal and met with uncertainty in the search for a new senior pastor. Associate Pastor Rev.

John Richter served as interim before formally being installed as senior pastor in 2014.

Approaches to music evolved further during this time as the church saw transitions from Adam King to Stephen Folmar to Brandon Miner, Tiffany Richter and Duke Cleghorn. The variety of musical styles added led to a more contemporary flare for worship in services conducted in Christ Hall, while worship in the sanctuary continued with a more traditional vibe.

Over the course of 150 years, five other congregations – four in Cullman – have formed out of St. John's:

- St. Paul's Lutheran Church, founded in 1885 by a pastoral candidate who remained in Cullman after being passed over for the job. A year later in 1886, and perhaps in response to the founding of St. Paul's, the congregation adopted the name St. John's after the apostle of the New Testament.

- St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church of Birmingham, founded in 1898 by a group of St. John's Cullman members who had relocated to the industrial city for work

- Christ English Lutheran Church, founded in 1922 by a former pastor who chose to remain in the community

- New Life Christian Church, founded in 1989 by former St. John's members

- Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, founded in 1992 by former St. John's members

The narrative provided by Rev. Richter concluded, "St. John's celebrates its German roots and Reformation heritage as a church that emphasizes the authority of Scripture for life and faith, as well as a salvation that is in Christ alone by his grace alone through a Spirit-inspired faith. Accordingly, the

overarching structure of the Heidelberg Catechism, elucidating themes of human guilt, God's grace and self-sacrificing gratitude, characterizes well the congregation's understanding that the Christian life should be one of living in the grace and truth of Jesus for the glory of God alone. The many people who have shaped and been shaped by this history and heritage can't all be mentioned in a short survey and therein lies the betrayal of history.

"To truly know St. John's and the work God has done here is to know the testimony of those who have been a part of this fellowship. Some have come and stayed a lifetime. Others have made it a small part of their pilgrimage. Few who have traversed this way, however, have not felt the impact and warmth of this storied family of faith."

So who was first?

The question of which congregation came first is a loaded one whose answer depends on what landmarks in time one considers. Should it be based on the start of worship services in a particular tradition? Should it be based on the opening of a dedicated facility? Should it reflect the date of official naming and chartering? This article does not seek to answer the question, but to provide information for consideration.

- **1872** – The itinerant priest who would pastor Sacred Heart until the arrival of its first settled pastor began conducting Masses in the area.

- **1873** – A sufficient number of Catholic families were located in the area that would become Cullman to warrant the donation of land for the construction of what would become Sacred Heart Church, and Col. Cullman's German settlers (including the founders of St. John's) began moving into the area. »

- **February 1874** - According to some sources the group that would form St. John's held a dedication service at the site where its church would be built in Cullman.

- **April 1874** - Sacred Heart's first building was completed and dedicated as a mission of the Diocese of Mobile.

- **May 1874** - St. John's was formally chartered as an independent local church.

- **1877** - Sacred Heart was formally designated as a parish.

Sacred Heart's Hovater told The Tribune, "We do not care about being first; we are just happy to have some of our forgotten history restored. If folks are focused on being first, then

they aren't focusing on the right thing: praise and worship of our loving Triune God."

The final word

The question of who came first may be a fun one to ponder over coffee, as long as the debate stays friendly, but that consideration must ultimately be subordinated to the celebration of two institutions that prove the existence of a community of faith here since Cullman's very founding.

Rev. Richter said, "In the course of 150 years there are stories too numerous to tell. The human condition, glorious and broken as it is, means there have been plenty of highs and lows, but the stories that will endure are those of redemption and reconciliation, of inspiration and fellowship. The beauty of the

milestone, of course, is Christ himself, who has continued to be faithful to preserve a work he began in our community so many years ago. St. John's is blessed to have been here basically since the founding of Cullman and is blessed to be here today. Such a blessing is

also a part of our high calling—to be a beacon of grace and truth for those who are in need of hope and healing today. We pray it will be so."

Sacred Heart Church did not respond to The Tribune's request for a statement from Rev. Egan.

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Drew Green retires from Cullman County Museum

Cheyenne Sharp

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If you've visited the Cullman County Museum over the past 14 years, you've more than likely bumped into Drew Green, longtime director. Having been on staff since 2012, Green has seen thousands of faces come through over his nearly one-and-a-half-decade tenure. For the hobby historian, his employment there was more like a dream than a job.

"For me, it has been true what Mark Twain once said, 'Find a job you love, and you will never work a day in your life.' I certainly loved my time at the Cullman County Museum," he said.

Green's love of history and research began at a young age. He said he was shaped by historians and history lovers his entire life. His mother, Dean Drake Green, was a lifelong history teacher and enthusiast, and he said many of his past teachers instilled a love for the wonder and rich knowledge buried in history. A desire to learn and an inquisitive spirit led a childhood Green on "treasure hunts" around his family's properties, and some of those items ended up in the first display at the museum during its opening in 1975.

"Growing up, my cousins and I liked to explore the woods at their farm. One of my favorite things to do was to search through the old 'trash pile' for treasures. When the museum opened in 1975, I

donated several of my 'treasures' to the museum, which was then under the direction of Margaret Farr," said Green. "Mrs. Farr was excited to get these items, including some old Graveman's Dairy glass milk bottles, and made me feel special by displaying them with my name."

That love of history and inquisitive nature led Green to Birmingham Southern College (BSC), where he earned his bachelor's degree in history. It was at BSC where his love of Southern and local history became a driving force in his life. While researching Alabama Governor "Big" Jim Folsom, who called Cullman home, Green discovered the archives at the Birmingham Public Library, completely immersing himself in the printed black and white words of past generations.

Said Green, "It was fascinating researching his life at the Birmingham Public Library, which at that time allowed you to look through the actual archives."

Later, Green returned to school after several years in retail management, which left the historian at heart yearning for more history in his life. Green earned a master's degree from Spring Hill College.

His achievements and accomplishments at the Cullman County Museum were hard earned, including when he was tapped for the director position when previous director, Elaine Fuller, retired. He was hired as an employee in 2012 and transitioned into



Drew Green has been the director of the Cullman County Museum since 2014, 2024 marks his retirement from the post. Green (left) recently received a certificate of recognition from Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs (right)

the leadership role in 2014.

Another massive feat was in 2019 when Green was named director of the Cullman County Bicentennial Committee. Green noted he was able to work with people from all areas of Cullman County for this significant occasion, and the local committee was recognized by the Alabama Bicentennial Committee as one of the best in the state. Green said he saw this as a true honor. Several of the museum's projects spearheaded by Green were recognized for their significance during the Bicentennial, including "Celebrating Our Places," which saw signs placed around the county at significant and historic locations, along with an easy-to-follow driving brochure so residents and visitors alike could learn more about the history of the

Cullman area.

"Every time I look at the bronze plaque in the museum foyer recognizing this achievement," Green said, I have many warm memories of the people and hard work who helped make this possible."

Green said he will miss museum work, including giving tours, helping people with research, finding exciting pictures and stories to post on the museum's Facebook page and participating in the community discussions the artifacts and information generate.

"I won't have much time to feel sorry for myself as I have about a decade's worth of yard and housework to catch up on," Green smiled. "I also plan on doing some traveling and seeing other parts of our state, country and hopefully a trip back to Germany."

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DO NOT TEXT AND DRIVE

Tackle laundry mountain with Rachel's Laundry Service

Cheyenne Sharp

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Laudry is one of a household's never-ending tasks. Wash, dry, fold until the end of time. One local woman, Rachel Bailey, is aiming to rid Cullman homes of the daunting piles of worn articles by offering a laundry service. This allows families and individuals to spend time doing what matters most to them instead of devoting their lives to the turn of the spin cycle.

Rachel's Laundry Service was born out of necessity during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. Bailey, a wife, mother of two small children and lifelong Cullman resident, found herself unable to work or contribute financially to the household. Instead of succumbing to the circumstances, she used the time to chase her dreams and start her own business.

"Picture it: Covid pandemic, 2020. I was working as a hostess for Jim N Nick's when 'Meemaw' (Gov. Kay) Ivey closed the restaurants. I was out of work and stuck at home," recalled Bailey. "I was sitting on my back porch, day 4,634 of quarantine, watching my kids play, and I got to thinking about how much I love doing laundry, and, on the contrary, how much everyone else hates it."

That small fleeting thought was the beginning of Bailey's growing empire, a local, in-home laundry service dedicated to picking up, treating, washing, drying, folding and returning the freshly laundered duds directly to the owner.

Learning to love the calm and studious work of laundering clothes from time spent with her own mother, Bailey vividly



FACEBOOK/RACHEL'S LAUNDRY SERVICE

Rachel Bailey is the laundress behind Rachel's Laundry Service, a local, in-home laundry service.

remembers the days spent with her mother over the washing machine, sorting lights and darks and measuring the exact amount of detergent needed for each load.

"I have loved doing laundry since I was little, always begging my mother to let me help. The entire laundering process is soothing to me and brings me joy. I guess everyone wants to do what they love for a living," shared Bailey.

The idea of eliminating a friend's overwhelming stress stemming from an overflowing basket or the insurmountable

pile of suitcase contents when neighbors return from a trip – paired with the ability to raise her own family securely – led Bailey to begin planning the largest endeavor of her adult life.

Within days of that initial thought, Bailey had begun the road to small business ownership. She turned to social media to build a client base and start cleansing the county of dirty laundry, one client household at a time.

"I created a Facebook page in five minutes, invited my friends list, made a few public posts and I had my first customer the

next day," Bailey said. "Rachel's Laundry Service was the only positive thing that came from being quarantined. I want to say that I studiously researched business ownership, pricing and taxes before I created this business, but that's far from the truth. I created it on a whim."

What started as a whim four years ago has blossomed into a thriving business. With its growing clientele and a strong social media presence that boasts over 1,000 followers across multiple platforms, Rachel's Laundry Service has become a household name »

in the area. Her hard work and dedication to immaculate articles and ticking off tedious tasks have earned her the affectionate title of "The Laundry Lady" among her clients and their children.

For Bailey, the time spent slaving to the wash is important. The job allows her to be at home with her own children while

taking a heavy load - literally - off the plate of another stressed-out mother. The relationship is beneficial to all parties.

"I do laundry from the time I get up until the time I go to bed, and I love every second of it." laughed Bailey.

Rachel's Laundry Service is a personalized takeaway or

drop-off laundry service that charges by the pound and is available to residents in and around Cullman County. The pick-up and delivery cost is \$7 within Cullman city limits and \$12 for surrounding areas and counties. The services Bailey provides include washing, drying, folding, sorting and bagging.

Pricing is \$1.50 per pound, and \$1.25 per pound for law enforcement, health care workers, first responders, military and regular clientele.

Rachel's Laundry Service can be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/rachel-slaundryservice or reached at 256-735-6348.



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Run, Jack, run!

Lauren Estes

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Jack McGee has never claimed to be an all-star athlete. In fact, he only began his running venture back in August 2016. But looking at his racing times, accomplishments and overall work ethic, you'd think he'd been running his whole life.

The 59-year old firefighter will tell you, he is running FOR his life.

"Back in 2016, I had a couple in their 70s present me with a challenge on whether I could run a 5K, so I thought I would show them I could," McGee said. "I did finish, but suffered terribly, and they both beat me to the finish pretty easily. At that moment I realized I wasn't in the shape that I thought I was in. I also realized that I needed to take better control of my health and fitness, which created a new series of goals and challenges for myself."

Since then, McGee said he has averaged about 25 races per year! If you do the math, that's about a race every other weekend.

He was born in Bessemer, but claims Baileyton as his hometown. He works for the Baileyton Volunteer Fire Department and also in Huntsville in the field of protective technologies.

If you ask McGee what some of his ultimate achievements include, you'd think he would name winning his age division or a master's division in a race; instead, he said beating himself is one of his favorite feats.

"Anytime I can achieve a faster race finish time or place in a run is special to me, but I honestly enjoy pacing and helping others achieve their goals," McGee said. "Although

running through the mountains and canyons of Utah was a spectacular site, there have been so many moments that have been special to me over the last almost decade."

Mid-way through the year, I asked McGee what his goals were in 2024, and what were some he had already accomplished.

"Well, I just completed a marathon in Utah this summer and that was my main goal, but I had a 30-minute PR," McGee said. "But if I stay injury free, I will be running the New York City Marathon, complete a 100-mile run in October and hike across the Grand Canyon, to name a few. My biggest goal is to keep my body healthy so I can continue to get better in this sport."

In the eight years of racing, McGee guesstimated he's finished over 200 races since he began this journey. "I really have no idea on the shorter races, but I would say around 150 5Ks, 15 10Ks, 30 half marathons, 12 full marathons, three 50Ks and four 100Ks," McGee said. "I can't wait to see where the next eight years take me."

McGee shared how thankful he is that this new passion started in the way that it did.

"I never participated in any sports and was terribly out of shape when I began this journey," McGee said. "I started this to prove to someone else I could do a simple run, and it turned out — it actually showed me how unhealthy I really am. I have continued once I saw the overall health benefits exercise has brought me and all the wonderful new friends I have met along the way. I highly encourage you, if you aren't working on your health or have a healthy hobby — it's never too late to start."



JACK MCGEE

Jack McGee, right, with his son, Baileyton Volunteer Fire Department Chief Zack McGee.







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5 ways to stay fit headed into fall

Lauren Estes
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Here are five ways to ensure you have a firm foundation to build on going into the late summer and fall months.

1. Get your daily steps in

Experts say getting 7,000-10,000 steps daily decreases mortality risks - particularly cardiovascular disease. The National Library of Medicine shared a study comparing older women who had a higher daily step rate versus those with a lower step rate. In those who had

a higher number of daily steps, mortality rates progressively decreased.

2. Stay properly hydrated

Hydration is incredibly important for your overall health. Hydration significantly affects your brain and energy levels. It helps with cognitive function and assists with overall brain performance. It can also improve both your physical performance and appearance, according to an article in Mobile IV Medics.

3. Find a way to sweat and elevate your heart rate

Find an exercise regimen, gym, group class format or something similar that will keep you accountable in working toward being your best, healthiest self. Getting your heart to beat faster trains your body to move oxygen and blood to your muscles more efficiently, helps you burn more calories and lowers your cholesterol, MD Anderson Cancer Center said.

4. Focus in on proper nutrition

Nutrition is vital to overall health because a healthy diet prevents malnutrition and protects you from cancer, obesity, heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

By prioritizing nutrition, you can ensure you're giving your body the vitamins, minerals and nutrients it needs to thrive. This can help improve your energy levels, mood and overall well-being.

5. Prioritize good sleep habits

Getting enough good quality sleep is essential for your overall health because it helps your body restore itself, process information and consolidate memories, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute said. It also affects different parts of your immune system, heart and circulatory system and hormones.

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The advertisement features a collection of wooden team journals and circular ornaments with various logos, including Vinemont, CSH, Fairview, and others. The items are displayed against a background of stadium lights and a green football field.

Recipes you can take to the bank - without breaking it

Lauren Estes

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With fall right around the corner, busy sports seasons about to take over and a limited time for preparing meals for your family - we've put together four main course ideas that bring healthy flavor without breaking the bank.

CHICKEN FAJITA FOIL PACKETS

Fajita seasoning mix ingredients

- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. paprika, plus more for adding color to the chicken breasts before cooking, if desired
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Other ingredients

- 3 6-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 white onion
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, rinsed and drained
- Lime and jalapeño for garnish, if desired

Directions

1. Prepare a grill to medium-high heat or set the oven temperature to 400°F.
2. In a small bowl, mix the chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, ground coriander, paprika, kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Sprinkle half of

the seasoning on both sides of the chicken breasts and set aside.

3. In a large bowl, add the cut vegetables with the drained black beans. Toss with the remaining seasoning. Set aside.
4. Tear off a few lengths of aluminum foil in 12- to 14-inch pieces. Place one-third of the seasoned vegetables in the center of the foil and top with a seasoned chicken breast. Sprinkle the chicken breasts with more paprika for color, if desired.
5. Fold the two long edges toward one another, then over once or twice and crimp tightly. Fold and crimp each short end of the foil toward the middle so that the edges are tightly sealed.
6. If cooking on the grill, place the packets vegetable side down, close the lid and cook for 5 minutes, then turn to the seam side down and cook for 20 more minutes or until chicken is cooked through.
7. If cooking in the oven, place the packets chicken side down and cook for 25 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.
8. Let the packets rest for 5 minutes before serving with lime wedges and jalapeños if desired.

These foil packet dinners can be made and refrigerated up to two days before cooking. Link: www.foodiecrush.com/chicken-fajita-foil-packet-dinners/#recipe

30-MINUTE CAPRESE CHICKEN

Ingredients

- Boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Butter
- DeLallo Simply Pesto Traditional Basil Sauce

- Sweet Campari tomatoes
- Fresh mozzarella cheese
- Fresh basil
- DeLallo Modenacrem Balsamic Glaze
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

1. Cut boneless chicken breasts in half lengthwise so they're thinner, cook faster and go further. Or is that farther? Either way, it makes more chicken for your buck. Thinner chicken breasts are also easier to gauge for doneness and have more browned and crisped areas to enjoy.
2. Sear the chicken in a combination of extra virgin olive oil and butter. Adding butter to the EVOO raises the smoke point so neither burns and adds a lovely golden color to the cooked chicken breasts.
3. Cook the chicken breasts undisturbed until they release easily from the pan. There's no need for flipping back and forth. When the chicken is seared, the developed crust will easily be released from the pan. The chicken will continue to bake in the oven.
4. Add the caprese components. Thick cuts of fresh mozzarella cheese and sweet tomatoes are classically caprese. Use garden fresh tomatoes, or if out of season, try the smaller and sweeter store-bought Campari (or cocktail) tomatoes to make this recipe all winter long.
5. Transfer the skillet to a 400°F oven for about 10 minutes to finish cooking. Finish cooking the chicken in the hot skillet as the mozzarella melts and the tomatoes warm and lightly roast. Use an instant-read thermometer to check the chicken breasts for doneness.
6. Before cutting, allow the

chicken to rest for a few minutes. Keep the juices in the chicken meat by giving it a minute to rest before taking a knife to it. Save any of the juices left in the pan for a tasty, savory drizzle.

Link: www.foodiecrush.com/caprese-chicken-recipe

EGG ROLL BOWL

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh ginger
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 1 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1/2 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 1/4 green cabbage, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. sriracha
- Kosher salt
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

Directions

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat vegetable oil. Add garlic and ginger and cook until fragrant, 1 minute.
2. Add pork and cook, stirring occasionally, until meat is golden in parts and cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes, breaking meat into small pieces with spoon or spatula.
3. Push pork to the side and add sesame oil. Add onion, carrot and cabbage. Stir to combine with meat and add soy sauce and sriracha. Cook until cabbage is tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Season to taste with salt.
4. Transfer mixture to a serving dish and garnish with scallions and sesame seeds.

Link: www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a56236/egg-roll-bowls-recipe

AUTUMN GLOW SALAD WITH LEMON DRESSING

Salad ingredients

- 1 cup freekeh or other grain (quinoa, bulgur, etc.)
- 1 head cauliflower
- 2 sweet potatoes
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- Sprinkle of dried spices that you like, or a few sprigs of thyme, rosemary, etc.

Lemon dressing ingredients

- 1 bunch parsley (about 1 cup)

- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup olive oil
- Juice of one lemon (more to taste)
- 1 tsp. agave (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Pepper to taste

Directions

1. Rinse the grains and place in a rice cooker with the appropriate amount of broth or water (refer to package directions - it depends on the grain). Set on the white rice setting and prep the other stuff while it cooks.

2. Preheat the oven to 425F. Chop the cauliflower into small florets. Peel and chop the sweet potatoes. Place on a baking sheet and drizzle with oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and add a few sprigs of thyme or other dried spices if you have some that you like. Roast for 20 minutes, stir and roast for another 10-15 minutes. When they are golden brown and soft, remove from oven and set aside.

3. While the veggies are roasting, combine all dressing

ingredients in a jar with a tight lid and shake to combine. Chop apple and set aside.

4. When the grains and vegetables are done, toss everything together. This can be done when everything is hot or when it's cooled, although the texture will be different (heavier) when hot. Store leftovers separately (salad and dressing) if possible.

Link: www.pinchofyum.com/autumn-glow-salad-with-lemon-dressing



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From the small town of Vinemont, to the award-winning BBQ stage

Maylon Jones' journey with Hootenanny BBQ

Gauge Day

gauge@cullmantribune.com

From the small town of Vinemont, Alabama, a local alumnus has turned his passion for barbecue into a thriving business that serves up smoky, delicious flavors in each dish. Maylon Jones, alongside his wife Mary, is the driving force behind Hootenanny BBQ, a name that has become synonymous with high-quality, live-fire cooking.

Before embarking on his barbecue journey, Maylon Jones honed his culinary skills as a professional chef. Working at St. Bernard Prep, he had the opportunity to prepare meals for a diverse group of students and staff from around the world. This experience broadened his understanding of flavor profiles and helped him develop a nuanced approach to cooking — a skill that would later define Hootenanny BBQ.

With his professional background and an inspiration to do something bigger than himself, Jones immersed himself in the competitive BBQ circuit. And so, Hootenanny BBQ was born.

The creation of Hootenanny BBQ can be traced back to 2015 when Jones entered his first BBQ competition. At the registration desk, he was asked for his team's name — a detail he hadn't given much thought to. Jones, with no clue what his team's name could be, turned to the tried-and-true dictionary for inspiration. He began with the letter A, and worked his way through until he stumbled on a word that caught his intrigue.

"Hootenanny" was that word, which is Southern slang for festival or party, perfectly capturing the spirit he wanted to bring to his barbecue venture.

Hootenanny BBQ found its early identity in competitive cooking. Jones' competitive background grew with each successful competition, adding notches to his belt. Numerous awards and trophies attached themselves to the Hootenanny BBQ name, even as recent as this year when it won the 2024 WingFest People's Choice Best Wing Champion award and in 2023 when Jones and his team won the Nashville Rib Festival.

As time passed, Jones longed for more than just the competitive circuit of BBQ. He learned early on that with each award and successful BBQ competition, he lacked the freedom and creativity he longed for in developing and cooking his signature BBQ.

"My experience on the KCBS (Kansas City Barbecue Society) circuit was fun, and I was blessed to walk away with many awards and had a great time competing," he recalled. "But I soon found that I wasn't able to cook 'my way' but the competition way. It's a completely different style of cooking."

Just a year into his journey with Hootenanny BBQ as a competitive BBQ team, their success began reaching new heights. This drove Jones to officially kick off Hootenanny BBQ as a business in early 2016, with a focus on competition while he dabbled in catering. With the evolution and growth



Maylon Jones and his wife, Mary, owners of Hootenanny BBQ, the award-winning competitive BBQ and catering business

that Hootenanny BBQ experienced during its developing years, Jones searched for new ways to become more efficient as a company while ensuring he didn't compromise the quality and care provided to his customers through his food and those who knew its standard from the competition front.

"Hootenanny BBQ has evolved a lot since 2016; not so much the food itself but how we approach things from a business standpoint," Jones explained. "For example, in 2016, if I trimmed a brisket, I'd throw all that fat away. Now I wouldn't dare; that fat can be rendered to have beef tallow on hand for greens or even substitute for butter to make cookies or use it to make soap to give out for marketing."

Like any other barbecue

business, quality reigned as the star of the show for his company as it slowly moved from the competition focus to catering. As Hootenanny BBQ grew, Jones knew that the focus had to be on ensuring that each brisket had the Hootenanny BBQ staple flavor, regardless of whether it was the third or 40th brisket of the day.

"What started with two briskets on a smoker has grown to cooking 40-50 at a time all while maintaining the same high standards. One thing I pride myself on is my motto, 'You lay one brick as perfect as a brick can lay until you have a wall.' It is the little things that count. It is the little things that add up to losing the quality of your product," shared Jones.

So how do Jones and his team offer that type of »

quality regardless of what is ordered? Jones puts stock in their live-fire way of cooking, a method that has been diminished since the introduction of pellet smokers and other digital technologies that make cooking easier for companies and the everyday at-home cook.

"One of the most popular items on our menu is the pulled pork. But what makes it special? It's special because it's cooked over live fire. We pride ourselves in live fire cooking as we feel it's a dying art and we are proud to say we are preserving that method of cooking. We still burn wood down and shovel coal for everything that we cook," said Jones.

Live fire cooking has its own requirements, as does the business as a whole. A typical day for Hootenanny BBQ starts early.

"On a Friday, for example, I'm up at 3:30 a.m. and at the pit by 4 a.m. to start burning wood down and shoveling coal," Jones described. "Once all the meat is on the pit by 6:30 a.m., I'll respond to emails and phone calls about catering orders and questions regarding the food truck. By 8 a.m., I'm back in the kitchen preparing sides. By 11 a.m., I'm wrapping up the meat or checking it on the smoker. By 1 p.m., I'm doing inventory and by 5 p.m. I'm either answering more emails and texts or calling around price-checking meats."

With a day as stacked as his, he knew he couldn't do it alone without an incredible team and his dynamic duo partner, his wife Mary, who stands alongside him in the Hootenanny BBQ adventure. Jones testified that without her, Hootenanny BBQ wouldn't be what it is today.

"Mary brings a lot to Hootenanny BBQ. She is behind all those awesome desserts you see and handles a lot of prep work through the kitchen," he shared. "Mary keeps me level and I think that's why we work so well together. I can have

100 things going and start to get overwhelmed, and she can swoop in and save the moment. She is the clutch shooter on the team for sure and handles stress very well."

"It's because of her that I believe that we offer world-class customer service. We do it all together. We have worked together for so long now that we know how to play off each other's weaknesses and strengths," Jones expressed, sharing his deep affirmation for his wife and the role she plays in Hootenanny BBQ.

While a strong part of their relationship is co-located in their business and what they provide to the community and their customers, Jones spoke on the need for a great work-life balance and why that has been the key to their relationship and their commitment to their business.

"Well, I believe a work-life balance is important and I feel like you have to just have an understanding and a great support system, something we have for each other. When we are working, I know Mary wants nothing but the best for the business just like I do. She is as emotionally invested as I am so there is trust and respect built into and outside of our business," he explained.

With a powerful relationship having been a key part of their success, his team is another crucial component of Hootenanny BBQ's operation.

"My team is very important to me. They are what makes this entire operation run like a well-oiled machine," Jones said. "The team is made up of family and friends. Anyone who puts that Hootenanny shirt on, I know will give their 100% every time, which is why we have great reviews and receive a lot of compliments from customers."

As Hootenanny BBQ enters its eighth year of business, the landscape looks much different. Jones and his wife acquired



Hootenanny BBQ

The award-winning Hootenanny BBQ pulled pork sandwich with its signature sauce

their first food truck this year to complement the catering truck they use for day-to-day business. Looking to the future, Jones said, he envisions further growth for Hootenanny BBQ as well as getting back to his roots.

"Over the next five years, Hootenanny will be a brick-and-mortar establishment. The concept is not 100% nailed down yet, but it is the plan we are currently working toward," he revealed. "One of the plans I have is to get back to Cullman. I have had a ton of people asking me, wanting to know how to get a hold of some of my food. Well, it's on the horizon. I think it will be soon."

As a graduate of Vinemont High School in Cullman, Jones attributed much of his success to the local community and the mentors who supported him along the way.

"One of the notable heroes I have who I feel stewarded me to where I am today from Cullman would be Faith Whitlock. She believed in me from a very early age in high school and saw something in me that I did not," Jones said.

"Todd Johnson and Robin Netherton from Vinemont High School are two other individuals that I have the highest respect for. They taught and coached me not only on the football field but also in the game of life. They are two great men in my life," he continued.

With all the great success that Jones, his wife and his team have earned, Jones said he keeps his eyes focused forward on the hopes that Hootenanny BBQ will continue to grow and provide exceptional customer service alongside his staple, live-fire barbecue food.

Hootenanny BBQ stands as a testament to the power of a passionate young man, who came from the small town of Vinemont, Alabama, with a dream to show what his cooking was all about.

To those aspiring to be something bigger than themselves and have a dream that they long to achieve, Jones offered this advice: "There are no secrets to getting started. One of the best lessons we can learn is failure. Just get out there and learn. You've got to start somewhere."

5 things to do in Cullman this spooky season

Lauren Estes
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With fall and Halloween arriving soon, we've put together a must-do list of things to do in Cullman this spooky season.

Grab a friend, your favorite costume and any other spooky necessities and check out fall and Halloween adventures in our backyard.

1. Visit 4D Farm for a pumpkin patch and more

For kids' rides, games, farm animals - and all things fall and Halloween - check out 4D Farm. A family friendly attraction, 4D Farm has special Halloween-themed attractions in October, like "spooktacular" nights with

fireworks and the Goblin Glow light show! Bring a flashlight to go through the corn maze after dark.

4D Farm is located at 7182 County Road 703 in Cullman. Find out more at www.4dfamilyfarm.com.

2. Drive to Hanceville for the Haunted Trails of Terror

Open Wednesday-Saturday nights in October, the Haunted Trails of Terror begin on 34 County Road 590 in Hanceville. According to owner Brian Hancock on Facebook, in addition to the trails, the newly added haunted hayride will transport visitors up the street to a haunted house.

"Come check it out - it's a scary good time," Hancock said. "We have had 15 years of the longest running haunted attraction in Cullman, Alabama."

For more information on this annual fright-filled favorite, visit Haunted Trails of Terror on Facebook.

3. Book an apple picking tour at Steele Orchard!

Looking to explore an orchard, pick your favorite apples and get a fried pie and some cute photos? Venture to the Steele Orchard, Inc. Facebook page and book your tour today!

Located at 1695 County Road 1141 in Cullman, Steele Orchard also offers apple cakes, mini muffins and a variety of other variety items in its store.

For more information, call 256-734-5249.

4. Join in on the 2024 Les Dames Witches Ride and Carnival!

This fun event will take place in the Warehouse District on

Oct. 20 from 2-5 p.m. Grab some friends and dress like your favorite girl group, witch or group of witches - all for a good cause. The Cullman Witches Ride will feature a parade for kids, live bands, bounce houses, food, drinks and more!

All proceeds go to support high school girls in our area. For more information or to get involved, visit www.lesdames-cullman.com.

5. Enjoy an area trunk or treat!

Every year, there are dozens of trunk or treats across Cullman County, with locations ranging from local churches to the Cullman Police Department. All these, plus any area festivals, will be published on The Cullman Tribune Facebook page. Look for details in early October!



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Sincerely,
Sen. Garlan Gudger, District 4



'It's a calling'

St. Bernard Abbey's Fr. John O'Donnell talks life, ministry, daily schedules

W.C. Mann

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It takes a lot of Bs to define Fr. John O'Donnell: baseball, basketball, badge, Benedict, Bernard and busy! At 72, the Catholic priest and monk runs circles around some much younger people, keeping a schedule that would tire a man in his prime. Maybe Fr. John is just coming into his.

About the Bs:

▪ **Baseball and basketball** - He's a huge sports fan, and these are his favorites. He once served as the athletic director for St. Bernard Prep School, though his enthusiasm for sports has been tempered in recent years as he has seen extravagant professional player salaries lead to increasingly extravagant lifestyles and increasing numbers of less than admirable role models. "It's lost the game appeal; it's now a business appeal," observed O'Donnell.

▪ **Badge** - Badge? Yes! Fr. John is a chaplain serving the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, and he spends a day every week riding with deputies in the field, and another day ministering to inmates in the county jail.

▪ **Benedict and Bernard** - Fr. John is a monk of the Order of St. Benedict, living at and ministering from St. Bernard Abbey on Cullman's east side for the last 40 years, almost 26 of those as one of the Abbey's priests.

▪ **Busy** - Let's talk about that. . .

A week in the life

O'Donnell lives a somewhat contrary life: a 72-year old man

working a 27-year old's schedule. A typical week looks something like this:

▪ **Monday** - Riding with CCSO deputies

▪ **Tuesday** - Visiting and taking Communion to the sick, and assisting Sacred Heart Pastor Fr. Patrick Egan with confessions and Mass for Sacred Heart School during the school year

▪ **Wednesday** - A rare "flexible and open" schedule

▪ **Thursday** - More sick calls, and Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church

▪ **Friday** - Ministering and teaching at the Cullman County Detention Center, and officiating Mass for the nuns at Sacred Heart Monastery across the road from the Abbey

▪ **Saturday** - At the Abbey in the morning, to Sacred Heart Church for confessions in the afternoon and vigil Mass in the evening

▪ **Sunday** - 8 a.m. Mass at St. Boniface Church in Hanceville, followed shortly by another Mass at Sacred Heart Monastery. "I am free in the afternoon on Sunday," noted O'Donnell.

Even with all of his priestly duties, the Father is also a brother, keeping a regular schedule (even in the "flexible and open" times) of multiple daily prayers with the other monks of the Abbey. Around the Abbey, he carries out certain duties we wouldn't normally associate with a priest.

He said, "I also work on the grounds. I cut grass, pull weeds - maintenance."

In the hottest days of summer,



W.C. MANN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Fr. John O'Donnell, O.S.B., at St. Bernard Abbey

he will take it easier, not doing so much yard work. He was even willing to admit that his age and health start to concern him at times like that. He also confessed, though, to getting out sometimes in the slightly cooler evenings to get his hands dirty.

"I enjoy doing it," said O'Donnell. "It's not a job to me."

CCSO chaplain

Fr. John has, for years, carried a CCSO badge, though no gun of course, and his ministry takes him all the way from the jail to the passenger seats of deputies' cruisers.

O'Donnell observed, "It's a form of service. I'm serving not only the people in the community, but the police officers. I help them, keep them company, talk with them, talk about everything.

"Sometimes I'm on call; which means that I get called if someone - usually in jail - would have a relative die, and I have to tell them what's happened, things like that. That's once every three

months or so."

Santa Claus is coming to school!

Many of the students at Sacred Heart Elementary School and St. Bernard Prep know Fr. John mainly for one thing: wandering the halls of the schools during Advent season in an oversized Santa costume, wishing everyone a merry Christmas and passing out baseball cards and other trinkets from his big bag of goodies, along with a lot of seasonal joy and blessings.

"Makes the kids laugh," noted O'Donnell. "It's a great experience, to bring love to the people. Sometimes I have someone that I help; I'm also a helper."

The calling

Before he decided to enter the monastery 40 years ago, O'Donnell's last secular job was tending the kitchen bar in a seafood restaurant in Philadelphia.

He said, "But I realized, »

at that bar, that wasn't what Jesus was calling - that wasn't the way of making people happy. I got a calling; at the bar I got a calling to be in religious life. Priesthood came later and everything, but to religious life. It's a calling to serve God, basically, and God wasn't too happy with me serving that way, even though I enjoyed the job. Thinking about what I was doing, it wasn't good."

As a monk, O'Donnell became the athletic director for St. Bernard Prep without much interest in the academic side of school, but there was something else to do, that would take him back to the books.

"God was getting after me, because I could feel God wanted something from me that I didn't want to give right away, but I knew it was the right thing to do," said O'Donnell. "Something I really love is sports, at that time; loved it more back then. I was

happy doing what I was doing, but there was something more.

"Priesthood was hitting me, but it wasn't me that came up with that. It was people who knew me said I should be a priest. And my aunt was one of the people. She was a nun. She said, 'You should be a priest,' and who's going to argue? I did argue, but I lost! She could tell I had a call. I gave her all the excuses I could, but it didn't work. She felt I should be a priest."

Yes, his aunt the sister told her nephew the brother that he needed to be a father. Someone had to say it. And it worked. Through the encouragement of trusted family and friends, O'Donnell discerned a calling to the priesthood and became Father John.

What should people know about religious life?

"It's a blessing," said O'Donnell. "I feel blessed that God has given me this opportunity.

"It's all about God. I'm glad He put me there to serve, and I feel obligated to work hard at service.

"And that's preaching and all the other things that go with it, like visiting people and all that. I'm not doing it for myself. It's not about me; it's about God.

"I'm trying to do it well. I feel more pressure now than ever when I was in school, because I'm still in school: the school of the Lord's service. And Jesus doesn't worry about my age; that's just a number. Just get to it, and do what you have to do for God. God's a tough boss!"

What would you tell young people who think they might be called?

The periods of discernment and

development for monks and nuns go on for several years, and more so for priests, so Fr. John encouraged a curious spirit and a relaxed attitude.

He said, "Try it out. Give it a shot, see how it goes. Put it in God's hands. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out.

"But it's definitely a calling; you can feel it. But don't rush in and rush out. Give it time, because like every calling, you're going to have ups and downs."

As we finished our conversation in the Ave Maria Grotto gift shop and prepared to go out for pictures at the head of the gravel road to the Abbey cemetery, the last route the monks of St. Bernard will travel, we talked about how Fr. John hopes to be remembered in the future. His desire was simple.

"I hope they remember Christ, not me, that I did a good job serving Christ, the best I could."

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Oktoberfest



Mayor's welcome

As the mayor of Cullman, and on behalf of our city council, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to our annual Oktoberfest celebration. This festival is a cherished tradition that not only honors our rich German heritage, but also brings together the best of our community in a vibrant showcase of culture, camaraderie and fun.



Cullman was founded by German settlers, and our roots run deep. The spirit of those early pioneers lives on in our streets, buildings and, most importantly, in our community events like this one. Oktoberfest is not just a festival; it's a reflection of our collective history and a celebration of the unity and strength that come from embracing our diverse backgrounds.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism event team and the dedicated Oktoberfest Committee, whose tireless efforts make this event possible year after year. To our sponsors, area businesses and local churches, your continued support and commitment are what fuel this great festival, making it a beacon of community pride and joy.

To everyone attending, whether you are a longtime resident or a first-time visitor, I encourage you to explore all that Oktoberfest has to offer. From authentic German cuisine and lively music to traditional games and crafts, there is something here for everyone. Also, take a stroll through our historic downtown, visit our local shops and eateries and experience the warm hospitality that Cullman is known for.

This celebration is a fantastic opportunity to support our local merchants and restaurants. Every purchase, every meal enjoyed and every memory made during Oktoberfest not only enriches your experience, but also contributes to the vitality of our beloved city. Let's make a conscious effort to support those who work hard to maintain the charm and spirit of Cullman.

As we gather to celebrate, let us also remember to extend a warm welcome to all our visitors from across the country. Your presence enriches our celebration and reminds us of the joy that cultural heritage can bring.

Enjoy the festivities, make new friends and create lasting memories. Let's raise a toast to our beautiful community, our enduring traditions and the bright future we are building together.

Here's to a wonderful Oktoberfest! Prost!

Warmest regards,
Woody Jacobs
Mayor of Cullman

Oktoberfest 2024 to host 2 biergartens

Cheyenne Sharp
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Lager lovers, rejoice! This year, Cullman's annual Oktoberfest, to be held Oct. 3-5, will house not one, but two specialty biergartens during the celebration of Cullman's German roots. A biergarten at the festival has been a staple since the town went wet in 2011. However, 2024's event will mark the first occasion with two separately designated biergartens.

Last year's Oktoberfest saw the addition of the Hofbräuhaus under the Festhalle, which will return in 2024.

German brews flow from the tap inside the community space allowing patrons to taste the authenticity and connect to the town's German heritage.

The amazing reception of the Hofbräuhaus, the festival's growing popularity and attendance rates increasing yearly led Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism to invite Cullman's Goat Island Brewing to take part in the festivities and host its own biergarten to widen the availability of the German drink and give more festivalgoers the opportunity to explore all of the flavors and brews the Germanic event has to offer.

The second biergarten will allow patrons to taste at their own pace and learn "ale" about the German beverage and its connections to Cullman while enjoying a shaded spot to take in the sights of one of Cullman's most popular festivals.

"We're thrilled to host this biergarten, show off our German beers and be a part of this amazing festival," said Mike Mullaney, 2022 Oktoberfest Burgermeister and co-founder of Goat Island Brewing.

The Goat Island Community Biergarten will showcase some of Mullaney's concoctions from the

brewery, such as freely flowing Blood Orange Berliner Weisse; Richter's Pilsner; Peace, Love, & Hippieweizen; Mango Weiss Wheat Ale; and the award-winning Duck River Dunkel, which received a silver medal at the Great American Beer Festival. Although not a German beverage, Goat Island's Goatopia Juicy IPA will also be available within the biergarten.

"The IPA might not be a German beer, but it's loved by many, so we couldn't leave it out!" laughed Mullaney.

Goat Island's Oktoberfest Lager, the official festival brew, will be amply available throughout the biergarten and a keg of the same brew will be publicly tapped to signify the opening of the 2024 Oktoberfest events and activities.

Shared Mullaney, "The Oktoberfest Lager is a beer brewed only during the late summer and early fall. It is a crowd favorite and people anxiously await its release every year."

Events and activities kick off in the Goat Island Community Biergarten at Oktoberfest's opening on Oct. 3 with the tapping of the famed Oktoberfest Lager keg under the Goat Island tent.

Goat Island Community Biergarten attendees can expect a packed schedule of activities, and a wide selection of German-style beers. Live music will also be rocking at the Goat Island Community Biergarten, with local favorite bands such as Fireproof and Avenue G closing out the festival.

The weekend leading into Oktoberfest, Goat Island Brewing will host its own version of the festival - Goatoberfest is a weekend of live music, fun and German celebrations starting on Friday, Sept. 27 and ending on Sunday, Sept. 29.

Get more details about Cullman Oktoberfest at www.cullmanoktoberfestival.com.

Celebrating tradition

Amy McAfee Wood named 2024 Burgermeister of Cullman Oktoberfest

Noah Galilee

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In the heart of Cullman, where tradition and community run deep, Amy McAfee Wood has been named the Cullman Oktoberfest 2024 Burgermeister, a title that she said fills her with immense pride and joy. As vice president of Cullman Cabinet and an interior designer with The Added Touch, Wood's connection to her hometown is profound and multifaceted.

When asked about how she felt on learning about her new title, she shared, "I was overwhelmed. I am incredibly proud to say I am from Cullman and to represent my hometown as the 2024 Burgermeister." Her enthusiasm and genuine love for Cullman are evident once you speak with her.

Wood's story began in Birmingham, but her heart has always belonged to Cullman.

"I was born in Birmingham, but have always lived in Cullman," she said. "My roots run deep in Cullman, beginning with my great-great-grandparents."

As a graduate of Cullman High School in 1992 and Auburn University with a design degree in 1997, Wood has dedicated her life to both her family and her community.

Her professional journey is closely tied to her family's business.

"I have worked in my family's business as an interior designer for 27 years. It is a blessing to have spent my childhood at Cullman Cabinet and then to spend my adulthood working hand-in-hand with my family to grow the business," she explained.

Wood's passion for design and her commitment to helping clients in Cullman and the surrounding areas with both residential and commercial projects has made her a beloved figure in the community.

Nathan Anderson, executive director of Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism (CPRST), shared his excitement about Wood's new role. "Amy McAfee Wood is the perfect choice for Burgermeister. Her dedication to Cullman and its residents is unparalleled," Anderson said.

He emphasized that Wood's long-standing commitment to the community and her involvement in various local projects have made a significant impact on Cullman. He said, "She's always been a strong supporter of our events and initiatives, and we are thrilled to see her recognized in this way."

Cullman has celebrated its rich German heritage for nearly half a century. In 1982, building on the success of Sacred Heart's German Festival, which began in 1977, local businesses, churches and civic groups united to officially launch the first Cullman Oktoberfest.

Anderson highlighted the festival's enduring success, stating, "Decades later, we are still going strong. The 2023 Oktoberfest boasted record-breaking attendance, with nearly 40,000 people celebrating with us. This enduring success is a testament to the creativity, hard work and dedication of countless entities and individuals. We are deeply grateful to all our sponsors, committee members, vendors, businesses, churches, schools and civic groups who invest countless hours and resources into this festival. Thanks to their efforts, this cherished tradition is set to thrive for the next 50 years and beyond."

Beyond her professional achievements, Wood's greatest joy comes from her family. "My greatest joy is being the mother of four Cullman High School graduates: Olivia, Nicholas, Alexander and Wilson," she proudly shared. Her deep connection to her family and community has always been a driving force in her life.

Being named Burgermeister is a significant honor for Wood, who has always cherished her hometown.

"I have enjoyed visiting many cities in the US. However, I always love coming home to Cullman. We have something special. I am humbled and proud to be selected as this year's Burgermeister. I just love Cullman," she said with heartfelt emotion.

As Burgermeister, Wood said, she looks forward to participating in all the Oktoberfest events.

"I am looking forward to all the events planned in Cullman for Oktoberfest from the (Burgermeister) Ball to the tapping (of the keg). Most of all, I look forward to visiting with friends and family, welcoming guests from out of town and showcasing our German heritage," she shared excitedly.

Anderson noted that Wood's involvement would undoubtedly add a special touch to the festivities. "Her enthusiasm and pride for Cullman will enhance the experience for everyone attending Oktoberfest," he said.

Wood's dedication to her family, her business and her community embodies the spirit of Cullman. As she steps into her role as 2024 Burgermeister, her love for her hometown and its traditions will undoubtedly shine through, making this Oktoberfest a truly memorable celebration.

This year is particularly special, according to Anderson, as Wood will inaugurate the opening ceremony using a custom mallet crafted by her late father, Danny McAfee, for the ceremonial tapping of the keg. Wood's role as Burgermeister and the use of her father's mallet will add a deeply personal touch to the festivities, embodying the community and family spirit that makes our festival so unique.

2024 Burgermeister Amy McAfee Wood - Courtesy City of Cullman »



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FROM LEFT: COUNCIL PRESIDENT JENNY FOLSOM, PRESIDENT PRO TEM JOHNNY COOK, MAYOR WOODY JACOBS, CLINT HOLLINGSWORTH, DAVID MOSS, JR. AND BRAD SMITH
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CULLMAN OKTOBER FEST

★ FESTIVAL GUIDE ★

THURSDAY

Welcome to the Cullman Oktoberfest 2024! Your adventure begins on Thursday with a visit to the Hofbräuhaus Biergarten at Festhalle or the Goat Island Community Biergarten at Depot Park, both offering a delightful selection of beers. Families can enjoy the Kids' Zone, featuring inflatables, carnival rides, and a new large Ferris Wheel. The Oktoberfest Celebration Parade in the Warehouse District kicks off the evening festivities, followed by the Opening Ceremony with the Tapping of the Keg featuring our 2024 Burgermeister, the crowning of Miss Oktoberfest, and live German music.

You're likely to catch performances of the Good Bellows perusing around the festival with the best German Polka music around. Be on the lookout for We Flip featuring Bavarian themed juggling and acrobatics. Don't miss the Brat Eating Contest, Historic Cullman Candlelight Walking Tour, and the Adult & Kids' Costume Contest. Cap off the night with the exciting Stein Hoisting Contest and the lively Dueling Pianos performance at the Hofbräuhaus. Be sure to grab a selfie with the Hay People!

FRIDAY

Friday at Oktoberfest is packed with activities for all ages. Start your day with Senior Day at Festhalle, then explore the Vendor Market and let the kids have fun in the Kids' Zone, full of kids attractions and the Ferris Wheel. The Goat Island Community Biergarten and Hofbräuhaus Biergarten are open for those looking to enjoy a refreshing drink. In the evening, bring the kids to participate in costume, stein hoisting, and pretzel-eating contests. Adults can join the Brat Eating Contest and later compete in the Stein Hoisting and Costume Contests. The night wraps up with another entertaining Dueling Pianos session at the Hofbräuhaus. Don't forget to indulge in authentic German cuisine like brats, currywurst, pretzels, and schnitzel. Ballet South will also be on site to teach traditional German dances and perform Maypole dances throughout the weekend.

SATURDAY

Saturday promises a full day of excitement at the Cullman Oktoberfest. Both the Hofbräuhaus and Goat Island Community Biergartens are open all day with performances by the Happiness Band, along with the Vendor Market and Kids' Zone, which includes inflatables, carnival rides, and the Ferris Wheel. Enjoy a performance by the Cullman Community Band in the morning, followed by the adorable OktoFURfest featuring Wiener Dog Races and a costume contest.

You'll still find the We Flip performers out and about throughout the day. The local musicians and singers will also perform during the day, adding to the festive atmosphere. Afternoon highlights include the Brat Eating Contest and Kids' Contests. The evening brings more adult fun with the Stein Hoisting and Costume Contests, culminating in the final Dueling Pianos show at the Hofbräuhaus. Be sure to visit the Hay People for a memorable selfie and savor the delicious German food available throughout the festival. Enjoy every moment of this vibrant celebration!

SEE THE FULL SCHEDULE AT CULLMANOKTOBERFESTIVAL.COM

DAILY SCHEDULE

THURSDAY

- 4 PM-10PM Hofbräuhaus Biergarten
Goat Island Community Biergarten
Kids Zone
- 6:00 PM Oktoberfest Parade
- 6:30 PM Opening Ceremony, Tapping of the Keg,
Crowning of Miss Oktoberfest, Street Entertainers,
Live German Music
- 7:00 PM Brat Eating Contest (16+)
Historic Cullman Candlelight Walking Tour
- 7:30 PM Adult & Kids' Costume Contest
- 8:00 PM Stein Hoisting Contest (21+)
- 9PM-10PM Dueling Pianos at Hofbräuhaus

FRIDAY

- 10:00 AM Senior Day
- 10AM-8PM Vendor Market
- 10AM-10PM Kids Zone
- 10AM-11PM Goat Island Community Biergarten
- 2PM-11PM Hofbräuhaus Biergarten
- 6:00PM Kids' Contests
(Costume, Stein Hoisting, Pretzel Eating)
- 7:00PM Brat Eating Contest (16+)
- 8:00PM Stein Hoisting & Costume Contest (21+)
- 9PM-11PM Dueling Pianos at Hofbräuhaus

SATURDAY

- 10AM-11PM Hofbräuhaus Biergarten & Goat Island
Community Biergarten
- 10AM-8PM Vendor Market
- 10AM-10PM Kids Zone
- 10:00AM Cullman Community Band
- 11:00AM OktoFURfest
(Weiner Dog Race, Costume Contest, & Parade)
- 3:00PM Brat Eating Contest (16+)
- 4:30PM Kids' Contests
(Costume, Stein Hoisting, Pretzel Eating)
- 8:00PM Stein Hoisting & Costume Contest (21+)
- 9PM-11PM Dueling Pianos at Hofbräuhaus

Schedule Subject to Change

SEE THE FULL SCHEDULE AT CULLMANOKTOBERFESTIVAL.COM



Cullman Oktoberfest boasts an exceptional lineup events that keep fans coming back night after night, and year after year. Come be a part of this unforgettable celebration of Cullman's German Heritage.

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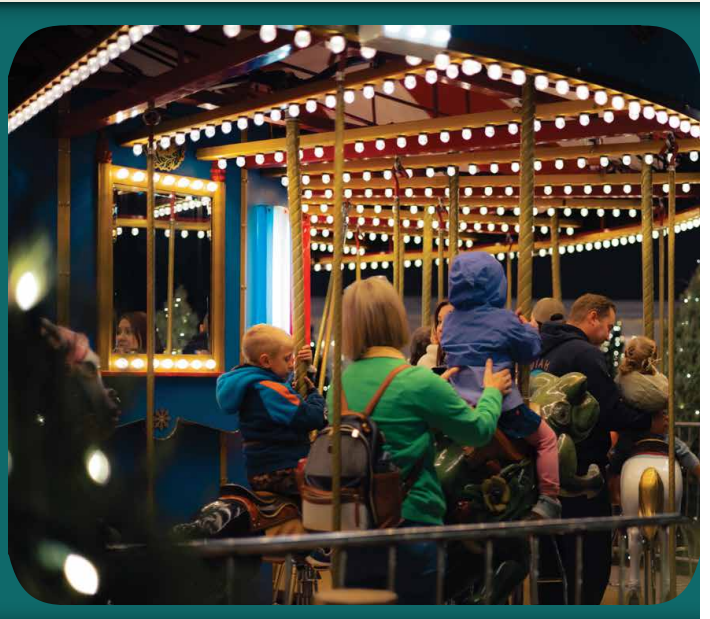
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Widlöcher's: 'A family secret since 1906'

Cheyenne Sharp

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Widlöcher's, a newer addition to the north-central part of town, has been tantalizing the taste buds of patrons since opening in May 2024. Each morning, the shop unveils a tempting array of small-batch baked goods, inviting groggy-eyed folks to start their day on a sweet note.

The shop is carving out a niche for itself, and its unique offerings - like the nearly pool-ball-sized rich chocolate cake balls and prized dessert, (a "family secret since 1906") rich and creamy homemade cheesecake - are winning hearts and taste buds, one slice and customer at a time.

Holly Jennings, owner of Widlöcher's and imagineer of most of the shop's recipes and baked delights, gestured to the piles of freshly baked goods and laughed, "I have a horrid sweet tooth."

Growing up, Jennings said, she recalls spending countless hours with her mother in the kitchen, measuring and mixing and stirring and baking the Widlöchers' "family secret" recipe. The cheesecake, said by scores of Widlöchers and descendants to be near perfect, was a staple that appears throughout her childhood memories. The generational recipe, indeed, dates back to 1906, when Jennings' great-grandfather, Otto Widlöcher, immigrated from Germany to a small town in Pennsylvania and began a bakery. It was in that small

Pennsylvania-Dutch bakery where the first "famous" cheesecake was created. The recipe is a closely guarded secret.

"I grew up watching my mom make this cheesecake; I grew up enjoying this cheesecake. It's a big part of my childhood," smiled Jennings. "I still keep it a secret."

The secret of family recipe spread throughout her church congregation. Jennings said she sat in a Sunday school class one morning and one question during the lesson was, "What secret have you been entrusted with?" Jennings said she immediately thought of her family's precious cheesecake recipe. Her group agreed the following Sunday that her phenomenal cheesecake was among the best.

Soon after, commissioned cheesecake requests began pouring in for the stay-at-home mother of five. What was once a nostalgic family sweet that was made once in a while, the cheesecakes became regular fixtures in the home - transforming a small, family sized kitchen into a well-oiled machine, sometimes producing multiple cheesecakes a day.

Jennings shared, "I brought one the next Sunday and it just snowballed from that. I was doing it at my house; people kept asking for them and I knew I couldn't continue in my home. We didn't have the space, and we weren't supposed to (referencing Alabama's Cottage Food Law). That's how we got here; that's how it became this."

On May 13, 2024, Widlöcher's opened its doors,



CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Sweet onion tarts, cinnamon crescents and scones sit atop the counter at Widlöcher's.

offering a delightful array of sweet and savory baked goods, including the famous cheesecake. The small shop, with its sleek storefront, quaint wooden seating and butcherblock countertops, highlights the family's pride in sharing their craft. Keeping the family traditions alive for another generation, Jennings' oldest son, Noah, is an integral part of the bakery, honing his baking skills and contributing to the bakery's menu offerings.

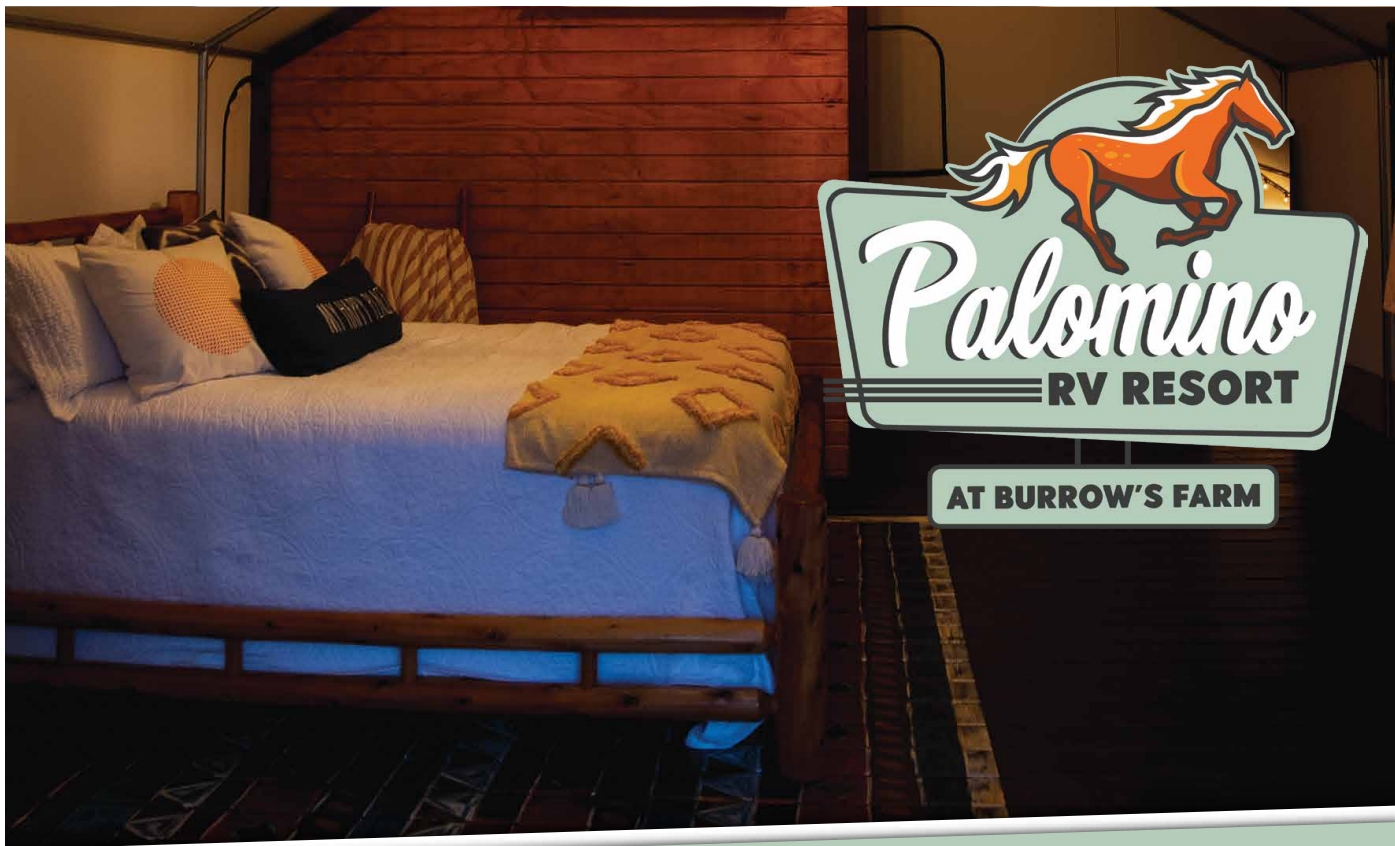
"My oldest son wants to be a baker, so I thought, what better way to accomplish that than on-the-job experience?" said Jennings. "He will find something online he wants to try, or we will see a recipe that looks good, and we will try it out."

Even though some of the goodies behind the glass are made from online recipes,

quality is not just a goal, but a commitment for Jennings, who takes time to curate her menu based on the locally sourced ingredients available at the Feshthalle Farmers Market. The availability of Widlöcher's blueberry scones, sweet onion tarts, savory vegetable quiche and other offerings often changes because Jennings refuses to compromise on the quality of her products, choosing to source locally and as close to home as possible.

"A lot of the products, the base is the same so you're able to add in all of those great local flavors and create some awesome things," Jennings smiled. "A lot of our flavors are based on what we can get locally. The closer the better."

Widlöcher's is located at 1410 Second Ave. NW. It's open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 7 a.m.-5 p.m.



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German and Bavarian recipes: From savory to sweet

Katie Spicer

Tribune Correspondent

SPAETZLE

(www.allrecipes.com/recipe/11793/german-spaetzle-dumplings)

Comfort food is one thing that Southerners and Germans both pride themselves on. One popular dish that has influenced Southern cuisine is spaetzle - the German cousin of dumplings!

Ingredients

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 pinch freshly ground white pepper
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

Directions

1. Fill a large pot halfway full of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and bring to a simmer.
2. Meanwhile, mix together flour, nutmeg, salt and white pepper in a medium bowl.
3. Whisk eggs together in a small bowl. Add eggs alternately with milk to dry ingredients. Stir until smooth.
4. Working in batches, press dough through a spaetzle maker. Alternatively, you can use a large-holed colander or metal grater. Transfer the pressed dough into simmering water. Cook 5 to 8 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain well.
5. Melt butter in a large skillet. Add spaetzle and cook, stirring gently, until heated through.
6. Serve sprinkled with parsley.

BREAD SOUP

(hessische brotsuppe)

(www.germanfoods.org/bread-soup)

Another example of a delectable German comfort food is bread soup, also called hessische brotsuppe. This easy recipe is perfect for a chilly day, or to help reduce waste by reusing day-old bread!

Ingredients

- 4 oz. ham
- 1 bunch chives
- 2 oz. butter
- 6 slices hearty wheat bread cubed*
- 3 cups beef broth
- 1/2 cup cream
- 1-1/2 ounces Allgäuer Emmentaler cheese
- 2 egg yolks

Directions

1. Melt half the butter in a saucepan and gently fry 3/4 of the bread cubes. Pour in the beef broth, bring to a boil and beat with a whisk until smooth. Beat together the cream, cheese and egg yolk with a whisk until blended and add to the soup. Stir until both sets of ingredients are blended.
2. Chop the ham and chives and sprinkle over the soup.
3. Melt the rest of the butter in a frying pan and fry the rest of the bread cubes until golden brown and sprinkle over the soup.

OLDENBURGER GREEN CABBAGE

(www.germanfoods.org/oldenburger-gruenkohl)

Get your greens in the German way by indulging in Oldenburger green cabbage. This traditional dish is a winter time favorite among many Bavarian families.

Ingredients

- 4 onions
- 2 cups beef or chicken broth
- 1-1/4 pounds frozen kale
- 1 pound pork belly
- 1 pound smoked pork chops
- 4 small frankfurter sausages such as Meica, or other smoked boiling sausage

Directions

1. Peel and dice the onions, place in a large pan and steam for 15 minutes in the meat broth.
2. Add the thawed kale and pork belly and simmer for 1-1/2 hours.
3. After 45 minutes of simmering, add the pork chops and then, in the last 20 minutes of cooking time, add the sausage.
4. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

BREMER BUTTERKUCHEN

(www.germanfoods.org/bremer-butterkuchen)

Looking for something sweet to celebrate a special occasion? This popular German dessert is often used to celebrate weddings or comfort families at funerals.

Ingredients

- 14 oz. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 oz. fresh yeast*
- 1/2 cup lukewarm milk
- 6 tbsp. butter ideally unsalted
- 2 eggs
- 1-1/2 ounces sugar

For the topping

- 10 tbsp. butter ideally unsalted
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 6 oz. sliced blanched almonds
- 6 oz. sugar

Directions

1. Sieve the flour into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together half of the lukewarm milk, 1 tsp. of sugar and the crumbled fresh yeast. Cover and keep in a warm place for about 10-12 minutes to prove.
2. Melt 6 tbsp. butter gently and allow to cool. Add the melted butter, salt, eggs, rest of the sugar, milk and yeast-milk mixture to the flour and work into a smooth dough in a food processor with a dough blade or the kneading attachment of an electric mixture. Cover and allow to rise for about 20 minutes.
3. Grease a 17 1/2 x 14 inch baking sheet. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured surface to a size that fits the pan. Spread the rolled out dough on to the baking sheet and push the edges up at the sides. Use your fingertips to make small dimples in the dough, cover and allow to stand for another 30 minutes.
4. Beat together the remaining 10 tbsp. butter and salt and pipe or spoon the butter into the dimples. Sprinkle the sugar and almonds over the cake.
5. Bake the butterkuchen on the middle shelf at 350F for about 20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean and the cake is golden on top.



DARINGGOURMET.COM/TRADITIONAL-GERMAN-PORK-SCHNITZEL
Schnitzel

SCHNITZEL

(www.daringgourmet.com/traditional-german-pork-schnitzel)

One of the most well-known German delicacies is the schnitzel. There are two main types of schnitzel - a wienerschnitzel, which is schnitzel made specifically from veal, and a schweine-schnitzel, in which pork is substituted for veal.

Ingredients

- 4 boneless pork steaks or chops
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour combined with 1 tsp. salt
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3/4 cup plain breadcrumbs
- Oil for frying (use a neutral-tasting oil with a high smoke point)

Directions

1. Place the pork chops between two sheets of plastic wrap and pound them until just 1/4 inch thick with the flat side of a meat tenderizer. Lightly season both sides with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
2. Place the flour mixture, egg, and breadcrumbs in 3 separate bowls. Dip the pork chops in the flour, the egg and the breadcrumbs, fully coating all sides. Be careful not to press the breadcrumbs into the meat. Gently shake off the excess crumbs.
3. Ensure the cooking oil is hot enough (about 330F) and quickly transfer the pork from the mixture into the oil.
4. Fry the schnitzel for about 2-3 minutes on both sides until a deep golden brown.
5. Serve immediately with slices of fresh lemon and parsley sprigs. Serve with French fries, spätzle or German potato salad and a fresh leafy green salad.

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'Teach what you love, love what you do, and the kids are going to love you'

Good Hope's Anita Whitlock retires after 25 years of teaching

Sammy Confer

sammy@cullmantribune.com

GOOD HOPE, Ala. — Good Hope High School English teacher Anita Whitlock has spent 25 years in the classroom and celebrated her retirement at the end of the 2023/2024 school year. Whitlock impacted many lives during her years at Good Hope and in this interview, she shared some of her favorite memories from working with so many students over those years.

"I started teaching in 1999, and my kids were older children when I started teaching, so I got into the profession later in life. It has been good to me. It has been really good. For 25 years, I've gotten up. Almost every day, I've loved it to no end. I loved the students and the people I worked with. I was in real estate, and you work in real estate with small children. Real estate is mostly weekends and after hours after people get off work. That doesn't work with children, so I had always had this dream of being a teacher and having my own classroom," Whitlock said. "I went back to school and became a teacher, and I haven't looked back at all. When I was in school, we had bulletin board class, so they taught me how to put up a bulletin board. I love stuff like that. I knew I was in the right place when I started doing that kind of stuff, and management classes. With my temperament, I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to manage high school kids, but it just clicked. You have to build a rapport with them. They

have to respect you, you have to respect them, and it just comes together. There are some kids that you have to work really hard with to connect with, and those kids that you have to build that relationship with. It's hard work with some of them, but for some of them, it just clicks. It's easy. They see a smiling face, and they're going to smile back at you. When that happens, you're like, 'Okay. I'm doing something if I can get this kid to smile'".

Whitlock learned early in her teaching career that the best way to get her students to invest in the material is to show them how much she enjoys sharing it with them.

"I have learned so much. I thought I would walk into the English classroom, and everybody, just absolutely everybody, would love William Shakespeare, because I was going to teach William Shakespeare like nobody else has ever taught him before. I learned that I had to love what I taught, so I had to put that spin on it, had to find that happiness and that joy that it brings me, and the kids would enjoy it. They would learn from that. I learned that you have to love what you do. You have to love every minute of it. You have to get out there and share that love. There have been lots of blessings, and I think that's number one."

Whitlock had many teachers that she looked up to early on in her teaching career and took away so many lessons from each of them.

"When I first started teaching, Ann Harris, she was just the



ANITA WHITLOCK

Anita Whitlock (left) and Pam Couch (right)

sweetest, and she felt that I was abrasive about a lot of things. She would come over, and she would just encourage me and just tell me that everything's going to be okay, you're doing a good job. It's good to hear things like that. It's good to have somebody up here and say, 'Hey, you're doing a really good job', and that's what Ann Harris did. There were so many others, like Susan Harris, Phyllis Hunt, and Pam Couch. They were all so supportive, and that's what it takes to be in the work force. When you have that backup, that friend,

that somebody to go to and say, 'I'm having one of those days', and that friend picks you up. I had so many of them."

She added, "From Ann Harris, I definitely learned that you have to mean what you say. She was so good about that. She had the business education, and she walked the walk and talked the talk. To me, that was some things that I learned from her that I had to do. From Susan Harris, who is the most intelligent person I know, I learned that not only do you have to be a caring teacher, but »

you have to be a knowledgeable teacher. She still, to this day, is still teaching and learning every day and she's out there, giving those kids an education they deserve. Even the teachers I worked with today, I'm inspired with the teachers that come along beside me, young teachers with good ideas and young ideas. I get fired up just from being around these young teachers who may have just gotten out of school or have been out a few years. They come in with really good ideas that may not have been around when I was in school, so I soaked that up a bunch. It's so important to share your ideas, because those are the best PDs too. When I sign up for professional development, the number one professional development topic is what we get to share with our peers. I learned more from them, and I loved learning from the teachers."

Whitlock has impacted countless students' lives over the course of 25 years in the classroom and she leaves Good Hope with a wealth of great memories as well.

"I think about the impact that the students have made on me, and I tell my kids all the time, 'Look, when you graduate, if I see you at Wal-Mart, I want to hear about your life, your school, your college, your family, and whatever else is going on in your life. I want to know about it. I want to be a part of your life, not just these four years, but please keep me in the loop'. Social media gives me a connection with my former students, and I learn about their families and all of the wonderful things that are happening to them. I always think, 'I had a small part in that person's life'. It's just definitely the relationships, number one, as far as what has meant the most to me throughout the years."

She added, "There are so many memories. It's just one right after the other, but I loved the little unique things. I have put

together little festivals and all sorts of activities for the kids that are above and beyond the classroom, something outside the classroom. I love my classroom, but when I get to do something extra, the festivals, the cultural events, all of those things, I think those are the things that live with me, even still. I can relive the moments, whether it's music or arts. There have been so many things and I love seeing the kids enjoying something that they don't normally enjoy, something cultural, things like that. I love helping with those things. I'll remember those kids, and I will always love them."

She will deeply miss being a teacher at Good Hope this upcoming school year but has known for a while that her 25th year in the classroom would be her last.

"I will definitely miss the people I work with, the kids, the relationships, and the parents. Wal-Mart's always a Good Hope reunion. You walk in there, and you're going to see somebody you know. I seek out those kids, and they're not kids anymore. It's been a good run. I've had a good time. Those kids will always be my kids, and I think they know that in some way," Whitlock said. "They know they look at me and they're like, 'I was a kid in her class', and they'll always have that. It's a special bond. It's a special relationship that nobody else, if you're not in education, you can't understand what being with these kids, day in and day out, you can't understand what kind of bond you build. You see their struggles, you see their achievements, you feel their hurt, and you see their happy times. Being a teenager is a difficult time, so it's just that you're with them through all of those things. It's a really amazing thing. I'd known for four years that my 25th year would be the last year. So, I've lived every moment of those four years, knowing that it's going to end soon. I'm glad

that I made the plan, and I'm glad I've had the time to wind down and to just think about things, get my head in a good place. It's the right time. I've met some amazing people. I've been around the best, and of course, I love being a Good Hope Raider. It's just time."

Whitlock shared some of her favorite stories from her teaching career.

"I was a younger teacher. I tried to be really strict, and that's not who I am. This one particular young man, he said something, and I gave him detention right away, because I felt it was inappropriate. Come to find out, it wasn't really that bad. I was telling this story not too long ago, a good friend of mine, who was a librarian, she and I dressed up in some costumes from the Beverly Hillbillies. We dressed up as Jed and Jethro, and the coaches were all having a BBQ. We ended up crashing their party, and we thought it was so funny," Whitlock said. "We just had so many funny memories just like that all the time. One thing that strikes me about the kids, kids will bring you little things. They'll do some little origami, and these are high school kids. They'll write a little note, and they'll bring it to you. I've saved all of my little notes and all of my little Post-it notes. I was looking through them not too long ago, and those are the sweetest notes. They go back to the beginning, and sometimes, you'll just get a long letter, telling you what you've meant to that person. I can name student after student after student. They are still a part of my life, and that became a part of who I am. I've learned so much from the students. When you have a school, you have all of these walks of life under one roof. You have different backgrounds, different desires, different wants, different goals, all of these things, and everybody learned from each other. The teachers learned from the students, and the students

learned from other students. That might be the best thing I've learned is that it's not just the teachers doing the teaching and it's not just the students doing the learning. We all learn from each other, and that goes on through the rest of your life. I'm always going to be a life-long learner."

The thing that Whitlock will miss most about teaching is building new relationships with her students. She still hears from some of her former students about the things they enjoyed about her class and for Whitlock, hearing those stories is the most rewarding part of the job.

"It means everything, even still today. I still have kids, who I taught my first year, and they're like, 'Hey. I remember being in the Romeo and Juliet play, or I remember the wedding'. They always remembered the little things I did, and they don't know when they say that my heart just explodes," Whitlock said. "That's just the coolest thing to me, just the absolute coolest. I love it. Now, I have kids of kids, a lot of kids of kids, even my daughter was in my first class. I had her daughter in my last class, so that brings it full circle. That's crazy to me. teaching will always be part of me, and the kids will always be part of me. The people I worked with, I take those stories, those fun things and the lessons. You become a family who you work with."

Whitlock shared some advice to those that want to become teachers themselves one day.

"First of all, get out there and just love your students and build relationships with them. Build a relationship with your students. Let them know who you are. You can be firm, but yet, loving as a teacher. As a new teacher, that's a really fine line, but you can do it. Mostly, just love what you do. Teach what you love, love what you do, and the kids are going to love you."

'Your job is to be the best you can be'

Good Hope head coach Drew Adams reflects on coaching path

Sammy Confer

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GOOD HOPE, Ala. — Drew Adams took the reins as the head coach of Good Hope's varsity boys basketball team in 2016 and the Raiders have put several strong teams on the court in the years since. Good Hope has claimed four of the last six county tournament championships and made multiple deep postseason runs and in this interview, Adams discussed his path that led him to the sidelines at Good Hope.

"After I graduated from Holly Pond and played for coach Mitch Morris, I walked on at UAH and played one year. I ended up finishing school out at Athens State. I actually got my first teaching job at West Point Middle School. I was their middle school girls' coach for two years. It was a really good experience for me, because I wasn't ready to coach high school yet, and I had a really good group of girls. We had a pretty good team. I had a lot of support around me. I was able to work with Blake Thompson, who's the boys' coach. He's the principal at the middle school now. It was really good to just kind of get some coaching experience under my belt," Adams said. "I still wasn't sure if I was even ready when Dr. (John) Hood hired me to be the boys' coach at Good Hope. I was thankful that he took the chance on me. I had to kind of learn on the fly. It's all about having some really good people around you. I started with



PHOTOS: NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Good Hope Varsity Boys Basketball Head Coach Drew Adams

Justin Aby and Jody Maddox as my assistants, and now, I've got my dad, Scott Adams, and Griffin Morris. You're only as good as the people around you, and I've had some really good ones."

Adams added, "Those first two jobs, first of all, you're only as good as your players. Coach Acuff, who was at UAH when I was there, always says there are two different types of coaches: Those that are humble, and those that are about to be humble'. I realized that for coaches, if you're a little bit down one season, your job is to be the best you can be. If you're really good, then your job is to just kind of stay out of their way and not mess it up," Adams said.

"Our thing is to just put our players in the best situations possible, and then just let them play. We don't pride ourselves. We don't want robots. We want them to play with freedom. We get them freedom offensively, as long as they're playing really hard on the defensive side. That's the biggest thing that I've realized. Just use your players' strengths, because you're only as good as the players that you got."

Adams has coached a lot of great players during his coaching career but a couple of the people he's enjoyed working with the most are his assistant coaches, former Holly Pond standout Griffin Morris and his father,

longtime Lady Broncos head coach Scott Adams.

"It's a dream. I never thought it would happen. He had retired right before I got the varsity job, and he was involved. He came to our games and watched us from a distance my first couple of years.

"Then, when coach Aby got the girls' job, we needed a JV coach. He was kind of interested in getting along, and I was also wanting him to jump on board, if he was willing to, and he was. He coached JV for a year, and he's been our varsity assistant ever since. I've said, for the last three years, we've got the best assistants in the state. My dad can be a »

varsity coach anywhere in the state if he wanted to be, but he's willing to be behind the scenes. He's done a ton of our scouting. He's done a ton of our stat work. He breaks down film for us. He does things that nobody ever realizes, besides me and our guys. Our guys really love being around him. He's kind of a fatherly influence for them, and even though he holds them accountable and holds them to a high standard, our guys love him for it. I'm as guilty as anybody in getting caught up with wins and losses, but with me having my dad and Griffin around me, two really good Christian guys, they do a good job of reminding the guys, even when we're in the midst of a long season, what's most important," Adams said. "We want to share the Gospel with them. We want them to love Jesus, but we also want them to be great fathers and great husbands one day. We want to win games. We spend a lot of time on this. We want to win games. We want to be competitive, but your time playing basketball is really short. After they leave that locker room for the last time, we want them to be prepared to take on life, too."

A lot of the players that he has coached have gone on to do a lot of great things in athletics and Adams is really proud of them for everything that his former players have been able to accomplish after leaving the program.

"It's awesome. Cole Maddox was my first All-State player. He's still playing at Montevallo on a full-ride scholarship, which is awesome. Tanner Malin was another All-State guy for us. He played some college football, and now, he's actually about to play college basketball this year

at Stillman College," Adams said. "K'mal Bell just graduated and was a Third Team All-State guy, and we've got some really good guys coming up: Tyler Cone, Tucker Malin, Jacob Haynes, and Gavin Pace. We've got a really strong group of seniors this year that really challenge our younger guys. We're thankful for what we've been able to do in the previous years. We've got a really good group that we're excited about this upcoming year as well."

The Raiders have put together some great seasons in Adams' tenure and he shared memories from some of his favorite games and moments during those runs.

"One of my favorite coaching memories so far, I would say, came in 2020, when we won our Sub-Region game at D.A.R. to get to the Sweet 16, and that was the first time that a Good Hope team had made it to the Sweet 16 in 15 years.

"They had beaten us the previous year in that same Sub-Region game in kind of a heartbreaker game. Then, we went over there, and Cole Maddox scored 41 that night, and we beat them and advanced to the Sweet 16 at JSU. Another one was when we won last year at Randolph to get to our second Sweet 16. Those are tough games to win, the Sub-Regional games, on the road, so you always remember those. We've been fortunate to win some county championship games. Those games are always fun. I've been fortunate to have some really good players that play their best when the lights are the brightest. A season's long.



It's a roller coaster, and it's a grind, so when you're able to win those big games, you just got to really cherish them, because they don't happen much."

With a lot of experience returning on the roster this fall, Adams is excited to see what this year's Raiders squad can do.

"We have five seniors: Tyler, Tucker, Jacob, Gavin, and Isaiah Turner. We've been starting the five seniors all summer, and we're just surrounded by a great group of guys off the bench. Tyler, Tucker, and Jacob have been with me since they were freshmen. They've been playing big minutes since ninth graders, so they're finally seniors," Adams said. "They've gotten bigger, faster, and stronger and have improved their game. It's up to them to set the tone. I told them this is their team. We want player leadership. We've got some younger guys

coming off the bench, and they play fearless. They play really hard, so it's a good group. It's an experienced group, so we're hoping that, you know, we can make some things happen this year."

He added, "One of our strengths is athleticism. It's one of the most athletic groups that we've got. Tyler and Tucker are 6'3" guards who can shoot it, get to the rim and can guard and rebound. If we're playing with confidence, it's one of the best shooting groups that we've had. We've shot it around 35%, 36%, from three as a team this summer, and it's a decent clip. We've got a couple of guys shooting over 40%. They can run the floor, and we let them shoot it with freedom. When they're running the floor, and they're letting it fly, they're shooting it freely and confident, they can be pretty tough."

Gavin Pace made the »

move from Fairview this off-season and Adams is looking forward to coaching him and helping his development as well.

"Gavin's a really good shooter. He's a really good kid. He works really hard, so we're excited about what he's going to bring to the table. K'mal Bell was one of the best shooters I've ever coached. K'mal's really hard to replace, but Gavin is another good shooter that Jacob and our guys can create for and can get shots up. At our level, 4A's really tough. You've got to be able to hit shots, so any time that you've got another guy that can hit a three for you, it's big."

For Adams and his coaches, creating a fun, hard-working culture in the program is crucial. They believe that everyone, coaches and players, can achieve more if

they enjoy working with one another.

"It's awesome. We've got 23 guys in our program: varsity and JV. They're awesome kids. Plus, coaching with dad and Griffin, it's like a dream. They become your best friends. You want to be with coaches, and you want to be with players that you are willing to lose with if things aren't going well. You want it to be guys who you are willing to go through adversity with, and we've got guys that we just love. We challenge the crap out of them, but they respond in a good way. We have a blast. We work hard, but we also have a blast. It's a great group of guys to coach, and it's a good group of coaches to be around as well."

Success on the basketball court is important for Adams and his coaches but they also care deeply about

their players' lives outside of basketball. Adams has had the opportunity to build many great relationships with his players and he's been just as proud to see them developing as adults as he was to see them develop as athletes.

"What I've enjoyed the most about coaching at Good Hope so far are the relationships along the way.

"Whether it's been faculty members that I've become friends with, or the players that you've coached throughout their high school career. I've seen a bunch of guys go from ninth grade to seniors.

"I've attended some of their weddings, and I'm seeing what they are accomplishing after high school. I've got one that's working a good engineering job in Huntsville. It's just fun to see them go enter the real world, and be successful in

life after high school, because there's so much more after high school basketball. It's just enjoyable seeing them go from point A to point B to where they eventually get to in their 20's," Adams said. "It's our prayer that they love Jesus and that they trust in Him as our Lord and Savior. We also want them to be great citizens. We want them to be great fathers and great husbands one day and just be the best that they can be after high school. There're so many different directions you can go when you graduate high school. You can go down a lot of different paths, and we just want them to go down the right path, what's best for them and what's best for their future families. We want them to make good decisions and put others first. We hope and pray that they make those right decisions."



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'It's been very rewarding'

County Sports Hall of Fame Chairman Jackie Satterfield shares his story and the history of the Hall

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CULLMAN, Ala. — Since its inception in the late 90s, the Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame has highlighted the athletic achievements of individuals from all of our communities across Cullman County. 22 classes have been honored since the first class was inducted in 2000 and the Hall's current chairman Jackie Satterfield shared the history of how the organization's founders originally came up with the idea for the Hall and the steps they took to make it a reality.

"Felton Easterwood and Bill Shelton had discussed starting a hall of fame for several years. They had never done anything about it they just talked about how they thought Cullman County needed one and with both of them having a sports background it was of interest to them. When Bill Shelton moved into a nursing home and his health started to go downhill, he called Felton in 1998 and told him if they were going to get the hall of fame started in his lifetime, they needed to get the ball rolling. So, Felton called some of his friends like Dafford (Smith) and Bill Lay and a bunch of coaches and former athletes that he knew in the community that could get things done and they had meetings to organize the hall of fame. In 1999 they drew up the bylaws and a constitution

and got everything going and in 2000 they inducted their first class. We've had a class inducted every year since 2000 except for the year we skipped because of Covid."

Satterfield says he owes his start with the hall of fame and his opportunity to further his education to former Holly Pond principal and Class of 2001 hall of fame member Felton Easterwood.

"I graduated from Holly Pond and Felton (Easterwood) was the principal when I was there, so he and I have a good relationship but I have no reason why. I didn't see anything in me but Felton saw something in me. When I graduated from high school I was like most boys in high school and I was probably more trouble than I was worth but Felton got me a scholarship to go to college. I was working in Virginia doing construction work and when I came home my mother said that Graf Hart had called and wanted to talk to me about going to college at St. Bernard. So I called him and he came out to the house and met with me and they said Felton Easterwood had recommended me for a scholarship to attend St. Bernard. They asked if they gave me a half scholarship would I go to St. Bernard and I said it was a very gracious offer and I appreciate it so much but I wouldn't have the money to pay the other half. We had no money. Me, my brother and sister and my mother all lived together and there were times



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame Chairman Jackie Satterfield.

when we probably couldn't put all four of ours money together and have \$2. So then Graf Hart said 'Well what if we give you a full scholarship' and I said then I think I could go."

Something that was important to the original organizers of the hall of fame was that all of the county schools were represented in each class and nominees were never competing for spots with athletes from other schools.

"One of the unique things about the hall of fame is because it's the Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame, people from Good Hope don't compete against athletes from Cullman. Cold Springs athletes don't compete against Holly Pond, so each school gets to put someone in each class.

That way each community has representation every year. Another thing they wanted to do and were able to start doing the second year was giving scholarships to a senior student from each school. One of the requirements is that they must play a sport, they don't have to be a starter or be a stud, they just have to play a sport. So, we give those out every year and we've had a lot of success."

Satterfield has seen many worthy individuals earn scholarships and earn places in the hall of fame over the years but what he's enjoyed most is getting to know all the inductees and getting to hear all their stories.

"We've given out a lot of scholarships and inducted a lot of people but I'll »

tell you the best part of being the Chairman is getting to call all those people to talk to them and getting to hear their stories. That would be if not my favorite, one of my favorite parts of being involved in the hall of fame is you get to find out all these things. Like Wayne Chappell telling about how he had been given a scholarship with four other boys from Cullman to go play football at the University of Alabama. They worked out all summer because Bear Bryant told them when they come to Tuscaloosa they better be in shape. So, they worked out all summer and Wayne Chappell had received a call to enter the ministry and he didn't have the courage to tell Bear Bryant so he just kept working out all summer. When the week came to report to Alabama he had to tell Bear Bryant that he wasn't coming so he had wasted all those workouts at that time

but he did answer the call and served in the ministry until he retired. When I talked to him I asked him if he had any regrets and he said his biggest regret was he always wondered if he would've been good enough to play. I always tell him that if Bear Bryant thought you were good enough, you were probably good enough."

Athletic achievements from school sporting events are a little easier to record and find information about but something that's important to Satterfield and the Hall is maintaining all of Cullman's sports history, including some leagues that are no longer active.

"When I was growing up, independent baseball in Cullman County was still a big, big thing. Those guys would work all week and then on Saturdays and Sundays they would play baseball. People from all the different communities would come and watch

them. There were big crowds at those baseball games, and they'd have barbecues, and it was so much fun. When I tell people about Dafford Smith and how good an athlete he was or I tell people about your granddaddy Bill Griffin playing ball, I actually saw those men play ball and those guys were good. Those guys that played ball back in those days weren't just bunch of rag tags that needed something to do and didn't want to play checkers, they could play ball. Every community had a ball team back then. Walter, Berlin, Brushy Pond, Cold Springs, Vinemont all had teams and all had good athletes too. We still have good athletes and we might have boys that are stronger now and maybe faster because they have more equipment and more people to help them achieve that but we don't have the quality of athletes that we had in those days top to bottom."

For Satterfield, the most rewarding part of serving as chairman is getting to see so many local legends at the banquet each summer and trading stories back and forth, helping keep the communities' rich sports history alive.

"This will be my 12th year with the hall of fame. 2012 was the last class that Felton inducted, and I took over after that. I've made it a point in my life that if Felton Easterwood ever asked me to do something, I did it. It's been very rewarding. Being in the same room with that many great athletes and being able to look around the room and see all those people is special. Some of them are old now and can't play ball anymore but they weren't always old. They could go at one time. The second most rewarding thing is being able to give those scholarships to those kids because I know without one I would've never gotten to go."



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Legendary local coach Dafford Smith dies at 88

Nick Griffin

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CULLMAN, Ala. — One of the communities most respected sports figures, Cullman County Hall of Fame Coach Dafford Smith, died Sunday at the age of 88. Smith spent decades across his coaching career impacting countless lives throughout the community and his legacy still holds firm to this day, most notably in the form of Dafford Smith Stadium, the home field of the Fairview Aggies. After serving as West Point's varsity football coach from 1973-76, Smith joined Cullman High School's coaching staff as an assistant on the undefeated 1985 Bearcats team. Just one year later, Smith accepted the position as Fairview's head football coach. Over the next 12 seasons, Smith led the Aggies to a pair of regional championships and six playoff appearances, including the program's first 10-win season in 1994. Smith retired from coaching in 2006 after spending three seasons as St. Bernard's head football coach.

Dafford Smith Stadium was closed in 2014 due to the need for structural repairs but when the stadium renovations were finally completed in 2016 and Fairview prepared to play its first true home game in three seasons, Coach Smith was honored before the game to put the finishing touches on a special night of Aggies football.

"In my 25 years in education, I've never experienced excitement like I did last week," Fairview Principal Chris Gambrell told The Tribune in 2016. "From the faculty

and staff to the students, it was the topic of every conversation. So many of our students have not had the opportunity to cheer for their team at Dafford Smith Stadium, so it was special in so many ways. Unless you have gone through it, you can't imagine how important one game was. For three years I have imagined what that night would be, but I never imagined it would be like it ended up being. The community, leaders and students got to come home."

"It really got to me when Coach (Dafford) Smith was honored in front of the whole stadium," Aggies Head Coach George Redding told The Tribune in 2016. "It was a privilege to a part of that and to witness that. Also, when we were standing on the sideline with our band and cheerleaders in victory formation... WOW! That was truly an amazing moment."

Several members of the community reached out to share their thoughts and some of their favorite memories of Coach Smith.

Fairview Head Football Coach George Redding

"We truly lost the greatest. I'm so grateful for all that Coach did in my life. I wasn't even headed into coaching until he called one day about coming to help him. I'm so thankful for all the opportunities he gave me. I'm so grateful for all the lessons and words of encouragement. No matter what I came to him about, he would speak with such a calm and reassuring voice making sure that he knew you could do it and everything would work out. I loved Coach Smith



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Legendary coach Dafford Smith waves to the crowd of Aggie faithful just prior to kickoff on Friday, Oct. 21, 2016, Fairview's first game back at Dafford Smith Stadium since 2013.

with all my heart and what an honor it was to play for him and coach alongside him."

Dr. Lance Boyd

"Coach Smith was a role model for me. During our teaching days at Fairview High School, we taught next door to each other, and I marveled at how he made every child feel loved. He taught me to get the school annual and memorize each child's name. He said it would make the children feel special. That is what Coach did each day of his life here on earth: make you feel special. I was also blessed to have been his assistant football coach at Fairview and he taught the players to not only excel in athletics but to also be the best they could be in all their endeavors in life. He was an encourager and had a heart as big as his smile. I loved and respected Coach Smith

so much and will miss him on this earth but know that we will be together for eternity with our Father in heaven."

Cullman County Sports Hall of Fame Chairman Jackie Satterfield

"The thing about Dafford was he was an exceptional football coach, and he coached a lot of good football teams with a lot of good football players but more than that, Dafford had a big impact on peoples' lives. Not just the people who played football for him, but the entire student body. Everybody thought the world of Dafford. You don't meet people like that every day, but every once in a while, you meet a person that nobody dislikes. Dafford was that kind of person. He always had a smile on his face, and he always had a positive attitude about getting things done."

2024 Cullman County

— Football Schedules —

Addison Bulldogs



1A, REGION 7

Aug. 23 - @ Winston County
 Aug. 30 - @ Decatur Heritage
 Sept. 6 - vs. Shoals Christian
 Sept. 13 - @ Cherokee
 Sept. 20 - vs. Hackleburg
 Sept. 27 - @ Good Hope
 Oct. 4 - @ Waterloo
 Oct. 11 - @ Meek
 Oct. 18 - vs. Vina
 Oct. 25 - vs. Phillips Bear Creek

Cold Springs Eagles



2A, REGION 6

Aug. 23 - @ Hanceville
 Aug. 30 - @ Curry
 Sept. 6 - vs. Susan Moore
 Sept. 13 - @ Cleveland
 Sept. 20 - vs. Winston County
 Sept. 27 - vs. Lynn
 Oct. 4 - @ W. End Walnut Grove
 Oct. 11 - @ Coosa Christian
 Oct. 18 - vs. Southeastern
 Oct. 25 - vs. Falkville

Cullman Bearcats



6A, REGION 7

Aug. 22 - @ Bob Jones
 Aug. 30 - vs. Mortimer Jordan
 Sept. 6 - vs. Athens
 Sept. 13 - @ Jasper
 Sept. 20 - @ Muscle Shoals
 Sept. 27 - @ Brewer
 Oct. 4 - vs. Hartselle
 Oct. 11 - vs. Columbia
 Oct. 18 - @ Decatur
 Oct. 25 - vs. Buckhorn

Fairview Aggies



5A, REGION 7

Aug. 23 - vs. Pisgah
 Aug. 30 - @ Springville
 Sept. 6 - vs. West Point
 Sept. 13 - @ Ardmore
 Sept. 20 - @ Lawrence County
 Oct. 4 - @ Russellville
 Oct. 11 - vs. Priceville
 Oct. 18 - vs. Sardis
 Oct. 25 - vs. East Limestone
 Nov. 1 - @ Good Hope

Good Hope Raiders



4A, REGION 5

Aug. 30 - @ West Point
 Sept. 6 - vs. Fultondale
 Sept. 13 - @ Haleyville
 Sept. 20 - @ Cordova
 Sept. 27 - vs. Addison
 Oct. 4 - @ Curry
 Oct. 11 - vs. Hamilton
 Oct. 18 - @ Fayette County
 Oct. 25 - vs. Dora
 Nov. 1 - vs. Fairview



Hanceville Bulldogs



3A, REGION 5

Aug. 23 - vs. Cold Springs
 Aug. 30 - @ Holly Pond
 Sept. 6 - @ Gordo
 Sept. 13 - @ Carbon Hill
 Sept. 20 - vs. Oakman
 Oct. 4 - @ Vinemont
 Oct. 11 - vs. Midfield
 Oct. 18 - @ Winfield
 Oct. 25 - vs. Phil Campbell
 Nov. 1 - vs. Oak Grove

Holly Pond Broncos



3A, REGION 8

Aug. 23 - vs. Appalachian
 Aug. 30 - vs. Hanceville
 Sept. 6 - @ Sylvania
 Sept. 13 - vs. Brindlee Mountain
 Sept. 20 - @ Geraldine
 Oct. 4 - vs. Whitesburg Christian
 Oct. 11 - @ Asbury
 Oct. 18 - @ Fyffe
 Oct. 25 - vs. Collinsville
 Nov. 1 - @ Cleveland

Meek Tigers



1A, REGION 7

Aug. 23 - @ Lynn
 Aug. 30 - vs. Winston County
 Sept. 6 - @ Hackleburg
 Sept. 13 - @ Phillips Bear Creek
 Sept. 20 - @ Waterloo
 Oct. 4 - vs. Shoals Christian
 Oct. 11 - vs. Addison
 Oct. 18 - vs. Cherokee
 Oct. 25 - @ Vina
 Nov. 1 - vs. Carbon Hill

Vinemont Eagles



3A, REGION 5

Aug. 23 - vs. Falkville
 Aug. 30 - @ Southeastern
 Sept. 6 - @ Phil Campbell
 Sept. 13 - @ Midfield
 Sept. 20 - vs. Carbon Hill
 Sept. 27 - @ W. End Walnut Grove
 Oct. 4 - vs. Hanceville
 Oct. 11 - vs. Gordo
 Oct. 18 - @ Oakman
 Oct. 25 - vs. Winfield

West Point Warriors



5A, REGION 7

Aug. 23 - vs. Haleyville
 Aug. 30 - vs. Good Hope
 Sept. 6 - @ Fairview
 Sept. 13 - vs. Lawrence County
 Sept. 27 - @ Hayden
 Oct. 4 - vs. Priceville
 Oct. 11 - @ East Limestone
 Oct. 18 - vs. Russellville
 Oct. 25 - @ Ardmore
 Nov. 1 - @ Brewer

To the shepherds who guided us - tributes from the community

Gauge Day

gauge@cullmantribune.com

A shepherd is someone who tends, guards and takes care of a flock of sheep.

For many, the word “shepherd” brings to mind someone special in their lives. That shepherd may be a father, a mother, a pastor or someone who stepped up to ensure you always had what you needed. Some of the shepherds in our lives are still here, something we can be grateful for. For others, their time on Earth has since passed, and the memories and lessons left behind by their guiding hand are all that is left.

It is an honor to take this opportunity to share about the shepherd in my life, as well as share some of the community submissions for the shepherds who made a difference in people’s lives in Cullman.

As a young man, I didn’t have many great examples of men in my life. It wasn’t until I entered the youth group at Faith Baptist Church that I met the man, the shepherd, who helped guide my life in a direction that gave me the best opportunity to be successful.

His name is Scott Carpenter. I can say with all honesty that I am not the only one who would consider Scott a shepherd figure in their lives. For many years, Scott served not just as a youth pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Vinemont, but also as a counselor within the Cullman school system.

Many young people’s lives have been changed because of his dedication to ensuring that he found paths to get the best for their lives. Because of



Scott Carpenter is surrounded by many of his “grown up” youth members as he continues to find ways to be present in their lives. Top row, left to right, are Maeghan Long, Stephen Long, Scott Carpenter, Shalea Sartin Bone, Brad Steele (in the back) and Jason Makemson. Front row, left to right are Brittney Briggs Stevens, Shara Sartin Black, Gauge Day and Karlie Day.

Scott, many who didn’t have anyone felt like they finally had someone in their corner cheering for them for the very first time.

Scott showed up at all the ball games for his students. He would make sure students who didn’t have rides had a way to get to wherever they needed to go. Scott challenged us with the hard questions in life to push us to think critically and grow. He has an uncanny ability to see through the masks people wear in their day-to-day lives and has a way of softly dismantling them to get to the real issues.

I was no different. I wore a

mask. My life was a mess. My family situation never seemed to fluctuate toward the good. Things would go from bad to worse, and seemingly hover around bad for what felt like an eternity. Yet, from the day I met Scott, he saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself. He made it his goal to show me this person he saw when he looked at me.

For a shepherd protects. A shepherd leads the pack. A shepherd fends off the wolves.

Scott protected me when my family divorced and I lost my father. Scott led when he flew out to Indiana and showed up

for my father’s funeral on his dime. Scott showed me how to live as a man who valued other people’s lives above his own. Scott fended off all the wolves – the temptation, the darkness, the nights where my grief would come for me, and always ensured I had a place to feel protected.

Scott never left anyone behind, as any good shepherd wouldn’t, and the testimonies that surround his name are evidence of that.

I am honored to say that I believe through Scott’s love for Jesus Christ and the direction God gave him in life that »

I got to meet Scott at a cross-roads where I needed him most. It was there that I joined the flock that Scott had taken such good care of for all these years, and grow closer to Jesus.

In many ways, Scott saved my life. It was because of that realization that my first son carries Scott's name as well.

Scott Carpenter is the epitome of a shepherd who loves, nurtures and follows the example of the shepherd who left the 99 to find the one. Thank you for being that shepherd in my life.

BETTY SMITH A SHEPHERD HER ENTIRE LIFE

Written by Tommy Hutchins

This past weekend Alabama legend Bo Jackson was inducted into the Kansas City Royals Hall of Fame. The Royals wanted to celebrate his accomplishments and honor him as someone who made exceptional contributions to the Kansas City Royals baseball team. He became the 28th member of their Hall of Fame, which was established in 1986.

As I approach the celebration of my 50th year on this Earth, I wonder who will be in my Hall of Fame. Who would I honor as someone who made exceptional contributions to my life? My family would be chosen, but without a doubt, the additional first-ballot Hall of Famers in my life would be Ronald and Betty Smith of Crane Hill. I don't remember a time when they were not involved in my life. As a kid, attending church together, the Smiths, who had four kids, would sit in the last row of the church and our family would sit in the row right in front of them. I think we always sat in the back in case one of us kids needed to be taken out for being too loud.

I was always excited to see Betty. I knew she would be there, and she always

was. While the Smiths did have four children, they were all girls. I was always treated like the son they didn't have; so much so that Betty called me "Tommyson." I remember nights in their home, and my first jump off a diving board was in their pool. The memories as a kid are something I will cherish; however, the lessons they taught me as an adult are so much more meaningful.

As I became an adult with children of my own, Betty and I would talk regularly about things going on in our lives. She was my secret keeper. When I would struggle with my parent's health issues and I didn't want to pile it on within my own family, I went to Betty. What surprised me was that she would talk to me as well. She would admit to me some shortcomings she had and just tell me to pray for her. That alone was shocking to me.

The lady I admired beyond words had humbled herself enough to ask lowly me to pray for her. What a tremendous testimony. She taught me that we all need prayers, even someone I had put on a pedestal like Betty.

As a youth director, you always want to make the youth feel like a part of the church. Betty made my job easy. If I came up with a game where the youth had to interact with a member of the church, Betty was one of the people the youth would fight for. I guess because Betty had raised four daughters, she always took an interest in the girls of our youth group. We were fortunate enough to be blessed with several girls who came through our youth group who were really strangers to the church. As they attended more and more, Betty would start to talk with them and encourage them via social media. I didn't even know she had social media! Several moments she would come up and ask, "How are my girls?"

We would joke and I would



Miss Betty Smith alongside two of her favorite girls, Lani and Emma

tell her she needed to be more specific because every girl through the years, if kin to Betty or not, was one of "her girls." If she saw a new boy in the picture with one of them, I would get the call asking me what I knew about him. She was fiercely protective of her girls.

I could fill up pages of what Betty meant to me, my family and our church family. One of my favorite stories is a conversation Betty and I had. I remember being angry at God and making the comment, "I don't understand." Betty hugged me and said she didn't understand either. Then she said this: "I guess it is good that we don't need to understand everything to get to Heaven; just have to know Jesus, and everything else if faith."

That same conversation was had several times. Some of those times we would swap roles, but it always came back

to Betty's original words. We don't have to understand everything; just know Jesus, and everything else is faith.

Betty's name might not be on a wall for the entire world to see, but she is in my Hall of Fame. We have a bulletin board in our office at home with the verse of Colossians 3:23. On that same bulletin board are pictures of women who have passed who made an impact on our lives, a constant reminder of the lessons they taught us and reminders of who we should be.

I have not added a picture of Betty to that bulletin board yet. I can't bring myself to do it even though it has been over six months since she changed her address to Heaven. When it does happen, there will be no special ceremony or speeches, just another special moment between the two of us. I'll probably think to myself why and I will hear Betty's »



Pastor Jeff Steele alongside Amelia as she presents him with a gift during a church service

words.

"We don't have to understand everything; just know Jesus, and everything else is faith."

LISA JONES

Written by Kayla Thursby-Sellman

I know of a great shepherd. Her name is Lisa Jones.

I was once a drug addict and in jail. She came to the jail to minister to the women. Once I got out, she continued to minister to me and tons of other girls. She literally stood beside me and lifted me in prayer and taught me. I've been clean five years and God has turned by whole life around.

JEFF STEELE

Written by Amelia Stevens-Sutter Moyer

There are no words to describe what Jeff Steele has meant to my family over the 18 years we have known him. Jeff has been more than just a pastor to my family - he has been and is a great friend.

When I first met Jeff in

2006, he was just the pastor of the church. My late husband Robert told him he was too evangelistic.

But over the years Jeff has become a close friend.

He has loved and prayed for my kids and has been there for every surgery not only for myself, but also for every member of my family including my grandchildren. He has sacrificed time with his family to minister to me as well as other church members. We have laughed, we have cried, we have been scared and on our knees in prayer, but every step of the way I have never faced a trial alone.

In good times and the most devastating times, not only was God with me but so was Jeff Steele. Jeff has taught me so much in my Christian walk and strengthened my faith. He has challenged me to look at the same old stories I have heard all my life with a new, fresh different perspective and understanding.

I am so blessed that God put the Steele family in my life. I truly would have hated to do the last 18 years without them.



CHASITY MCRAE

Pastor Gary Waddell as he brings the Word for his congregation set to the backdrop of the three crosses

GARY WADDELL

Written by Chasity McRae

My dad has been a pastor for 46 years. It hasn't always been easy being a preacher's kid, but the increasing impact it has had on my life is what truly defines it for me. In him, I see a true example of a Godly man, one with love for people with zero judgement.

Today's world is full of judgmental, unforgiving people who are quick to throw the first stone. My dad, my pastor, my shepherd, leads by example and shows me and the world how to love and forgive like Jesus, how to trust Him and how to serve Him.

Dad is a light in a dark world. One of his favorite sayings is "This too shall pass." Throughout my entire life, he has shown me that no matter what, the good and the bad, that "this too shall pass," because God is always with me and fear and worry have no control over me. That is a lesson and reminder that is invaluable.

Not only has he been that Godly example in my life but

also in my children's lives as well. He was not only able to baptize my brother and I, but also baptize both of my children. Like myself, they look to my dad for direction, advice and how to live a Godly life. As a parent, that means the world to me.

Many people are lucky to have good dads, but I am blessed with a great, Godly dad. And yes, there is a difference. When I have fallen short, he has not only prayed for me, but with me. When I was younger, I didn't see the significance and the importance as I do now, but my daddy, my pastor, my shepherd, this servant of God, has had an immeasurable impact on my life.

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