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FEB. - APRIL 2024

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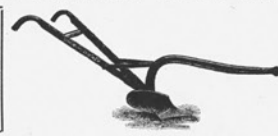
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EAST POINT NEW

The Art of New Beginnings

Embracing new friendships and letting go of grudges

Noah Galilee
noah@cullmantribune.com

In the grand tapestry of life, the threads of our relationships define much of its color and texture. Each interaction, every shared moment, and all the disputes and misunderstandings weave together to create the complex picture of our existence.

As we step into 2024, I find myself contemplating the importance of new friendships, the necessity of laying down old grudges, and the power of moving forward with life. This year, I am committed to extending the olive branch of peace to those willing to accept it, while simultaneously standing firm in my convictions. However, it's essential to clarify: this calmer, more calculated version of Noah is not a sign of weakness but a testament to strength.

In the past, disputes and misunderstandings marred the potential for many relationships. Some individuals were not open to sitting down and engaging in genuine conversation to get to know me. This barrier to understanding has been a source of much reflection. Yet, in 2024, I am determined to shrink these gaps.

The journey toward reconciliation and building new friendships demands vulnerability and the courage to approach others with an open heart. It requires us to confront our past with honesty, acknowledging where we may have faltered and where we held onto grievances too tightly.

Letting go of grudges is not an act of forgetting the harm or misunderstandings that occurred. Instead, it's about recognizing that holding onto anger and resentment binds us to the past, preventing us from experiencing the fullness of the present.

It's about understanding that forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves,

freeing us from the weight of negative emotions that cloud our judgment and impede our growth. As I navigate this path of reconciliation, I am mindful that not everyone will be receptive to this approach. And that's okay. Making peace with those who seek it is my goal, but I am also prepared to stand my ground should conflicts arise.

This new approach does not signal a retreat from defending my principles but rather a strategic shift in how I choose to engage with the world around me. Gone are the days of moving with a loud bellow; now, I move in silence and in daylight. There is transparency in my actions and intentions, leaving no room for misunderstandings. This shift is not about evading confrontation but about choosing my battles wisely, focusing on constructive outcomes rather than perpetual conflict.

To those who may mistake this deliberate quietude for weakness, I offer a word of caution. The still waters run deep, and the calm that now guides my actions is powered by a resolute spirit. There is strength in silence, in the ability to listen and observe before acting. This is not a warning but a declaration of a newfound maturity that chooses peace over turmoil, dialogue over discord.

As we move further into the new year, let us all consider the value of new friendships that await just beyond the horizon of our comfort zones. Let us be willing to lay down the burdens of past grievances and open ourselves up to the possibility of understanding and growth. Life is too short and too precious to be spent in the shadows of unresolved conflicts.

In 2024, let us move forward with intention, seeking peace where possible but always ready to stand firm in the light of our truth.

Community Matters

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PUBLISHER
Noah Galilee

Cayla Grace Murphy
Cheyenne Sharp

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Dustin Isom

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Sherry Brown
Martha Needham
Bill Piper
Mike Witcher

CONTRIBUTORS
Sammy Confer
Lauren Estes
Nick Griffin

SALES
Janet Chandler
Robin Winton

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Be a local tourist

Cayla Grace Murphy

caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

You don't have to drive to Huntsville or Birmingham for a fun-filled day with great meals and experiences; between the busy Warehouse District and peaceful parks, upscale dining and meat-and-threes, along with plenty of spaces for indoor or outdoor recreation, there's an abundance of opportunities to experience the local community in a new way.

This spring, think like a tourist and bust out of your hometown box to experience Cullman with fresh eyes. Check out the guide below for some ideas to make the perfect date night or self-care day - no matter your budget!

*Price ranges are based on two people and are subject to change.

LESS THAN \$30:

Paint and picnic in Art Park

So you're a little low on cash flow - that doesn't mean you can't have a fun and meaningful experience with your partner, especially as the weather warms up.

Grab a lunch, spread out an old blanket and challenge yourselves to a fun art adventure in the picturesque and inspiring grounds of Art Park on the west side of Cullman. Try painting each other in different art styles: cubism, pointillism, impressionism or maybe even more abstract. It doesn't have to be perfect - the more unique, the better.

Not only will this activity flex your creative muscle, but it might also be surprising to see how much you remember about your partner's appearance!



CULLMAN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Art Park

For the perfect picnic lunch, think heartier Southern deli classics like chicken and potato salad.

A quick trip to Publix, located conveniently down the street from Art Park, will be perfect to pack your basket and top it off with a sweet treat to share.

SHOPPING LIST

Five Below

- Watercolor paint set, \$5.55
- Sketchbook, \$5.55

Publix

- Rotisserie chicken, \$7.39
- Potato salad, \$3.69 per pound
- Sweet bakery treat to share, approx. \$3

LESS THAN \$70:

S'mores at Smith Lake Park

As a Cullman County resident, it may be easy to forget that

we have some of the best outdoor recreation areas in the Southeast.

Set up shop at Smith Lake Park for an evening of tent camping and enjoy the crisp spring weather before the mosquitos wake up from their wintry slumber!

Pop into the Dollar General just before the turn into the park to grab all your s'mores supplies and settle in for a night of stargazing, memory making and connection.

Pro-tip: When you pack up in the morning to check out by noon, stop by Whitlock's Cafe on your way out for some of the best down-home grub the county has to offer. You won't regret it!

SHOPPING LIST

Smith Lake Park

- Tent camping site rental, \$30.80

Dollar General

- Marshmallows, \$1.95
- Honey graham crackers, \$3.25
- Hershey's XL milk chocolate bar, \$2.50

Whitlock's Cafe

- Lunch, approx. \$25 with tip

LESS THAN \$150: A Saturday in the city

With a little extra scratch in your pocket, you're set to enjoy a Saturday in downtown Cullman by soaking in some of the best eats and activities the city has to offer, all while supporting locally owned businesses! Begin your morning with a freshly brewed coffee from Karma's Coffee House and a delicious treat from Flavor's Bakery as you window shop through the Warehouse District, soaking in the sounds of busy people »

and background music.

Just can't resist buying yourself or your partner a little something? Stroll into Leldon's to bring home a piece of locally made art for yourself, stop by Kernel Kullman to indulge in a sweet and savory popcorn treat or pop into any of the multiple boutiques that call the Warehouse District home to freshen up your wardrobe with the latest styles.

When you're exhausted from shopping, finish off the afternoon with a light lunch at the famous All Steak to enjoy a delicious Prime French Dip sandwich and fries or a lush Caesar salad with salmon. It's the weekend, so treat yourself to a little bubbly or a freshly poured craft cocktail - and of course, you can't forget the freshly baked orange rolls, complimentary with every meal, so save some room!



CAYLA GRACE MURPHY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

A cocktail and orange roll at All Steak

\$10 with tip

SHOPPING LIST

Karma's Coffee House

- Two small coffees, approx. \$10 with tip

Flavors Bakery

- Two small pastries, approx.

Shopping

- \$60

All Steak

- Prime French Dip, \$17
- Caesar salad, add blackened salmon, \$22
- Drinks for two, \$20



STOCK PHOTO

S'mores

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Guide: Local spring events

Cayla Grace Murphy
caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

FEBRUARY

19th Annual Empty Bowls of Cullman County at Cullman First United Methodist Church

- Monday, Feb. 19, 4-6:30 p.m.

- Enjoy a deliciously spiced bowl of chili and a toasty grilled cheese sandwich to support the battle against food insecurity in Cullman County. With every ticket purchased, you'll be supporting a local food bank and receive a one-of-a-kind handmade bowl crafted by local potters, symbolizing the Empty Bowls' mission to combat hunger and fill the hearts of those in need. The evening will be rounded out with live music and a silent auction with items donated by local businesses. Every dollar raised, every note played and every spoonful enjoyed will make a significant impact on the lives of those facing hunger in the community.

Cullman County Natural Resource Planning Committee's Annual Tree Sale at the North Alabama Agriplex

- Saturday, Feb. 24, 9 a.m.
- Refresh your landscape and give your spring gardening plans a boost with trees and shrubs native to Alabama. The sale kicks off at 9 a.m. and runs until noon, or until sold out; with trees and shrubs costing only \$3 each, you'll want to get there early!

Render Aid's Winter Wellness Festival at the Cullman County Agricultural Trade Center



CULLMAN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Eclipse watch party

- Saturday, Feb. 24, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Render Aid's inaugural Winter Wellness Festival is a great opportunity for affordable family fun! Kiddos can enjoy face painting and inflatables while grown-ups learn about wellness-centered resources in the area. Don't forget to grab some lunch from a local food truck while you're there!

MARCH

Hanceville Irish Festival in downtown Hanceville

- Saturday, March 15, 2024; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Celebrate all things Irish at the Hanceville Irish Festival;

enjoy shopping from local craft vendors, listening to live music and indulge your potato cravings with local food trucks dishing out Irish-inspired grub!

APRIL

Flourishing in Cullman Mardi Gras Bingo and Silent Auction at Traditions Bank

- Saturday, April 6, 6 p.m.
- Let the good times roll at Flourish of Cullman's inaugural bingo fundraiser! The theme is Mardi Gras, so don your Bourbon Street best to beat the competition, win the costume contest and be the first to cry out, "Bingo!" A traditional Cajun feast of shrimp boil followed

by toasty and flaky beignets for dessert are sure to please. Your support of this event will bolster Flourish's mission of creating employment opportunities and advancing life skills for the differently abled in the community.

Solar Eclipse Party at Cullman Electric Cooperative

- Monday, April 8, time TBA
- Celebrate the partial solar eclipse visible from Alabama at the Cullman Electric Cooperative! Special eclipse viewing glasses will be available as well as fun activities for the kiddos and fresh eats from »

local food trucks.

St. Paul's Lutheran School 5th Annual Alumni and Friends Dinner and Auction at Traditions Bank

- Saturday, April 13, 5 p.m.
- The evening acts as one of the school's largest fundraisers and recognizes individuals who have made an impact at St. Paul's. This year, St. Paul's will present the seven founding families of St. Paul's Lutheran School with the Impact Award. With a delicious catered dinner, fellowship and exciting auction prizes, you'll want to bring your pocketbook and be prepared to bid (and win!) big!

7th Annual Links for Literacy Golf Tournament at Terri Pines

- Monday, April 15, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
- This event has been a critical fundraising opportunity for The Link's educational programs since its inception in 2018 and serves to boost all of its educational programs, ranging from kindergarten readiness camps, financial literacy classes and ESL classes. Come swing some clubs for a good cause!

40th Annual Bloomin' Festival Arts and Crafts Fair at St. Bernard Prep School

- Saturday, April 20 and Sunday, April 21, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- This event is a two-day spectacle that's sure to impress. Drawing in over a hundred unique vendors and thousands of visitors annually, Bloomin' Festival is located on the beautiful grounds of St. Bernard Prep School, right next to the world-famous Ave Maria Grotto. The festival is the largest fundraiser annually for the operation and maintenance of the school.

Cullman Regional Foundation's



SHERRY BROWN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Bloomin' Festival

Annual Spring Gala at Loft 212

- Saturday, April 27, time TBA
- The annual Cullman Regional Foundation Gala is the largest fundraiser for the medical center and features a dinner, dance and silent and live auctions. This volunteer-organized event raises funds for various programs and services at Cullman Regional. The H.C. Arnold Humanitarian Award recognizes a local humanitarian for his/her contributions in advancing health care in the community. The Herman C. Ensor Award is given to a physician on the Cullman Regional medical staff recognizing excellence in medical care. Tickets for Spring Gala XXIII start at \$175 and can be purchased at <https://cullmanregional.com/foundation/events/spring-gala-registration>.



CAYLA GRACE MURPHY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Hanceville Irish Festival

'At the end of the day, it's for them'

Cullman's Therapeutic Recreation Program

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

The Field of Miracles is located on the west side of town, near the Cullman Wellness and Aquatic Center and the Donald E. Green Active Adult Center. While many have driven by or perhaps attended a youth ball game within the fences, not many know the story of the field with painted-on turf, tightened diamond and lightly padded grounds; this is the field that the Miracle League calls home.

Children and adults with different abilities are able to step onto the field and play a game of ball, just like everyone else. With a rubberized flooring to decrease any injury from accidental falls or impacts and easily managed exits, the Field of Miracles, managed by Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism, is a safe environment for fun to be had.

"The Miracle League Baseball, which is huge, obviously everybody loves that. We have two teams, 4 to 12 and 13 and up, and we do a spring and a fall league. We have probably 125-140 participants between all age groups and it's just fun. The littles, they're just starting out and don't know what to do," smiled Therapeutic Recreation Director Kelly Pulliam, who began to laugh as she recalled a typical early season game, "and it doesn't matter. It's OK if they just want to run. The perimeter is fenced in. It's fine. That's the best part aside from the smiles, because everyone gets a home run."

Community support behind the Miracle League is immeasurable, as outside organizations and individuals such as the Friends of Miracle League and

the Saints Motorcycle Club come together to raise funds for the program, ensuring that each individual who has a desire to play in the Miracle League can do so.

Youth sports are notoriously expensive, a potential barrier for some households. Pulliam said one of the mothers of the Miracle League took matters into her own hands to ensure the game would continue to be for all. "One of our moms, Brandy Evans, began Friends of Miracle League and they're part of the motorcycle club the Saints; they do benefit rides for us every year. She wants anyone that wants to play Miracle League to be able to do that. Because of her, anyone that wants to play can do that for free."

The Miracle League is an integrated part of Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism's adaptive and inclusive Therapeutic Recreation Program, but is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what the Therapeutic Recreation has to offer. The program serves individuals within the community who have special needs or are differently abled, giving them opportunities and experiences they may not be afforded otherwise due to financial hardship, time constraints or behavioral concerns. The needs of the participants range in severity and complexity, from invisible disabilities to physical impairment. The program team works in tandem with participants and their families or caregivers to expose them to as many experiences as possible.

"We help them enjoy all the things that a quote/unquote 'typical' child could do as far as recreation skills, socializing and basically just provide a quality of life for them," said Pulliam.



CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

"We have events throughout the year; we try not to repeat things too often."

In addition to festive themed parties, family days and outings, and the Basketball League Hoop Stars, one of the favorites of the participants is the day the group ventures to WildWater, Cullman's water park.

"We offer for the participating individual to get in free at WildWater, and that has been huge; everyone has loved that," Pulliam said. "With the extra expenses that they could have, they may not have that expendable income. It could also be very overwhelming and they may only be there for 30 minutes. It's very nice that they can go, even if it's only for 30 minutes they still get to experience that."

The special needs and differently abled community is tight knit, and Pulliam and her team know that a great deal of stress falls on the shoulders of caregivers. Program events focus on the needs of the participating individuals but also the needs their families or support teams.

"A lot of families have become really good friends with others;

they have found those companions that really understand. I always tell people at events when their child is running around, 'It's OK. This is the place. It doesn't matter. Everyone here is in the same boat. You can relax a little,'" Pulliam smiled. "You can just see their face relax and they know."

New therapeutic play center TheraPlay often partners with the Therapeutic Recreation Program, with clients mingling and overlapping as they often do in the world of the differently abled. When worlds collide, sparks can happen. Pulliam noted that since the program has partnered with TheraPlay for events and other happenings, the program's numbers have increased.

"It's so nice to be able to partner with all of these people from all these different organizations, because at the end of the day, it's for them," she beamed.

To get more information on the Therapeutic Recreation Program, contact Kelly Pulliam at kpulliam@cullmanrecreation.org or 256-734-9157.

Focus on the Cullman County Public Library System

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

A public library is a place for imagination to take flight, knowledge to take root and sense of adventure to flourish. In a public library, income and education levels are irrelevant. Inside a library, the mundane tasks of the everyday world can seem light years away, as if the words of an author can open a portal to another dimension.

The Cullman County Public Library System (CCPLS) is a resource available to residents of Cullman County; while the main branch is in Cullman, satellite branches in Holly Pond, Hanceville, Colony and Garden City ensure locals from every corner of the county can access the system.

The main branch has been a longtime resident of Clark Street Northeast, near Cullman's Warehouse and Historic Districts. It hosts activities weekly and nearly daily, in an effort to increase community usage and involvement.

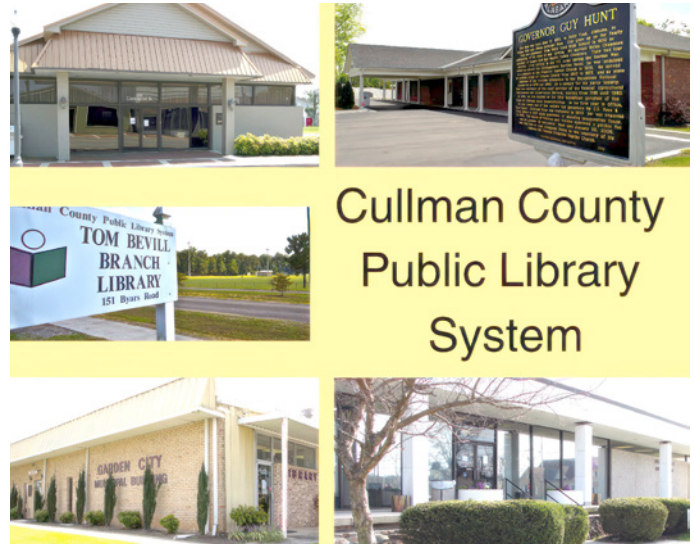
"We want the community to know we are more than just books, although we have a passion for reading and lifelong learning. In addition to books, we have thousands of DVDs, music CDs, books on CD, pickleball kits, disc golf sets and musical instruments for checkout. We have school readiness kits for preschoolers available to check out in our Easy Reader room, along with Hooked on Phonics kits and educational Launchpads for kids, ages 3 to 10," said Circulation Manager Laura Benton. "In addition to all of the above, we have a Special

Collections room that patrons can do historical and genealogical research in. We offer Ancestry.com access at the library for conducting research. We have a collection of newspapers on microfilm dating back to the 1940s for The Cullman Tribune and The Cullman Times. We also have a sizable collection of yearbooks from surrounding schools in the county."

Colony Public Library is known to the community as Tom Bevell Library and is located in the Tom Bevell Educational Complex. A small library for a small corner of the county makes sense, but looks are deceiving. Children can peruse the aisles of books, join in one of the many scheduled activities or borrow books from their Little Free Library, located in the parking area. Tom Bevell Library is located at 115 Byars Road, and the hours are Monday-Thursday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Holly Pond's Public Library is known to the Broncos as the Guy Hunt Library, located at 60 Lions Park Road. A staple of the Holly Pond community, the library opened its doors in 2012. As a staple of summertime entertainment for children enjoying school break, it offers a variety of special programs for students and families. Shows and events from the McWane Science Center and the North Alabama Agriplex, along with magic shows and more are scheduled regularly to entice young ones into the library. The Guy Hunt Library also has a large assortment of genealogy books.

The Guy Hunt Library is



CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

home to a museum as well, preserving Holly Pond's history for the future generations. Miniature creations and sculptures of notable buildings around the small town such as Holly Pond School, the post office that was built and donated by James Scott and community staple, Shaw's Grocery.

The Guy Hunt Library and Museum is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and 1-5 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays.

Hanceville Public Library on Commercial Street in downtown Hanceville is a hub for the community, due largely in part to librarian Shirley Burden. Burden, a respected member of the Hanceville community, has devoted her efforts and time to organize summer reading and activity programs for children. When asked about her affinity for reading, she simply stated, "It's important for children."

Homeschool activities for children and students of all

ages from Pre-K to high school are regularly held, adding to the sense of community inside the walls of the Hanceville Public Library. The Hanceville Public Library is located at 200 Commercial St. and the hours are Tuesday-Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. with the library closed from noon-1 p.m. each weekday for lunch. It's also open Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Garden City Public Library, like Colony's Tom Bevell Library, is a hidden gem. Rows of stories and texts circle the rooms, waiting to serve their purpose. Serving and providing education and resources to the residents of Garden City since its erection in the 1970s, the library had a welcome and needed interior facelift in 2016. Summer reading programs and weekly activities are scheduled for children of the community to enjoy. Garden City Public Library is located at 501 First Ave. S and the hours are Monday-Thursday from noon-5 p.m.

Good Samaritan's Jolanda Hutson celebrates decade of service

Cayla Grace Murphy
caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

Good Samaritan Health Clinic Executive Director Jolanda Hutson is known in the community as a game-changer in the realm of making health care accessible for residents without insurance. Hutson has served in varying capacities with the clinic for nearly 10 years, and said she is looking forward to celebrating a decade of service and helping bolster the clinic as a resource for those in need in Cullman County.

Good Samaritan Health Clinic started seeing patients without insurance in January 2004, and over the 20 years it has been in operation has cared for thousands of patients, treating ailments and creating plans for long-term wellness along with assisting with prescription medication - all at no cost to the patient. Hutson's involvement with clinic began in 2014, and she maintains it was God all along who helped her use her talents in helping Good Samaritan Health Clinic thrive and grow into what it is now.

"My background is really in marketing and strategic planning. I originally worked with the UAB Health System, and I really enjoyed that a lot, but I wanted to stay home with my boys," said Hutson, noting that besides working with UAB strategic planning, she also has a background in consulting and planning with several other physicians in the north Alabama area. Her passion for helping others combined, with her »



Good Samaritan Health Clinic Executive Director Jolanda Hutson smiles from her desk.
CAYLA GRACE MURPHY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

technical and analytical skills, made her a marketing powerhouse in the realm of health and wellness – something Good Samaritan Health Clinic desperately needed.

“When I got my master's degree in marketing from the University of Alabama, I did an internship with DCH Regional Medical Center. That's when I decided this is what I wanted to do,” said Hutson. She shared that while she's always been ardent about her desire to help others, she realized that she wasn't exactly skilled to be in a hands-on role with patients.

“I've always wanted to be in a role where I could help people, but I learned that being a clinician was not for me. It's not necessarily how I was gifted. I have a heart for people who need care that really can't

access it,” said Hutson, saying that working in the background of things comes naturally for her.

Hutson said the opportunity to join the ranks of Good Samaritan came from a chance meeting with an old high school friend. The board of Good Samaritan at the time was looking for someone to form and foster relationships between the clinic and local churches, and her friend believed Hutson to be the perfect fit. Hutson submitted her resume, and said a few months went by before she heard anything back – but that didn't stop her from leaping at the opportunity when she finally got the call.

“I said, ‘Lord, if it's not for me, then close the door,’” she explained. “In October of 2014, I got the call and was offered

the job, originally as a marketing and fundraising coordinator. They changed the position to executive director a few years ago, so I've just transitioned into that role.”

Ever humble, Hutson maintained that the true heroes of Good Samaritan are the six full-time staff members, along with a host of volunteers, who provide the quality and compassionate care for which the clinic is known. She emphasized that while her part in the clinic may be the most visible as the one receiving the checks in photo ops, the integrity and reputation of the clinic wouldn't be near what it is without the dedicated clinicians on staff.

“It's very exciting! But it's just a team effort of wonderful people here. I don't have the privilege of interacting daily

with patients – I'm the only staff member who does not get involved with patient care – these six other ladies are amazing with our patients,” she said. “I do get the honor and privilege of having a little part, and hearing the impact that the staff is making in the community.”

Hutson shared that while some may be surprised that a marketing professional like herself is the head of a health clinic, as a woman of strong faith, it wasn't her plan – it was God's.

“I look back and see God's hand in everything that has been involved with the clinic. I don't mean that so cliché sounding,” laughed Hutson. “When I was given the opportunity, I didn't have to do it myself. He had prepared the way.”

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Seed-Harvest Music Academy

Planting seeds for a lifetime

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

Brittany Simpson and her husband Micah had hit a brick wall. The two were both music educators in the public school system, graduating from The University of Montevallo with degrees in music education. Soon, their new family was stretched thin by the demands and time requirements that are too often accompanied by teaching in the public school system.

Simpson said she was tired of working 10- and 12-hour days, the only time available to see her child around an hour each night before bedtime. Seeing only one way out of their current situation, the couple was at a crossroads. The two options were keeping their dream of owning a music academy on the back burner, yet again, or risking it all and jumping feet first into following their passions – teaching music and owning their own academy while maintaining a close family bond. The small family of three chose to forego a planned offer on a new home, as the challenge and cost of opening a business took all the savings the young family had.

“We were about to make an offer on a house when Micah and I just decided to jump in and open a music academy,” she said. “It was 2015, and my daughter was young. I wanted to be able to teach but also spend as much time as possible with my children.”

While the seeds of the



Seed-Harvest is a family owned music school in Cullman. Owned by Brittany and Micah Simpson, it has been immersing children and young adults in music since its opening in 2015.

academy took a while to take root, the Simpsons are reaping the benefits of their harvest daily, proving that hard work pays off. The schedule of the classes and lessons is centered around typical young family needs: multiple school car lines, after-school homework and a few extracurricular practices a week. To ensure that each child, whether a student at the academy or the Simpsons' own child, can attend lessons and group classes, after registration, Simpson messages each caregiver, finding a time that is feasible for each family's schedule. Simpson said she

knows the financial struggle of raising a family, so there are scholarships and financial aid for families unable to afford full tuition.

Lessons are available at Seed-Harvest in private and group settings. Brittany and Micah Simpson are highly educated, both with degrees in music and early childhood education from the University of Montevallo.

Micah Simpson has also completed master's level coursework at Kent State University. While there is no looking down on musicians who learn through tutorials

or home lessons instead of a traditional instructional setting, Brittany Simpson said there is a benefit to attending lessons with someone who is trained in planting the musical seeds in a young child's brain.

“There are studies that show if musical theory and methods are introduced to young children, they'll continue to develop musically through their whole life,” she said. “People will say, ‘I can't carry a tune in a bucket,’ and that's actually very rare. Most people are very musically inclined, it just needs to be fostered from a young age.” »

Seed-Harvest Music Academy's Seedlings is a fast-paced, rhythmic-based class for 3- to 5-year-olds. Simpson described the class, saying, "They sing, move and play games to learn about primary music principles, like finding and keeping a beat, using their voices, matching pitch and other basic concepts."

The Sprouts class is for children 6-9 years of age. "Sprouts students further their rhythmic capabilities and even learn how to read basic music. They are also achieving basic music theory knowledge on scales, chords and rhythms," she said.

Instrumental ensembles are a large part of the Academy's roster. The three heavy hitter classes are the Sweet Keys (a

piano course), String Beans (a course comprised of string instruments such as violin and cello) and a student favorite - World Percussion (a class exploring beats and drums around the globe).

Simpson described her classes, saying, "Our keyboard classes are divided into two separate classes, the Preschool Keyboard Class for ages 4-5 years old and the Elementary Keyboard Class for ages 6-8 years old. These classes are geared toward introducing children to the piano in a fun, low-pressure, age-appropriate environment.

Private lessons can be too intense for very young students, so these classes ease your child into musicianship without the stress on them and have the

added benefit of preparing them for more serious study in the future.

String Beans is a violin class for ages 4 through 8 years old and is divided into two groups of beginner and experienced players. In this class, beginners are introduced to violin in a low-pressure, age-appropriate environment and those who are more advanced are challenged according to their ability levels."

About the World Percussion, a course that was brought back by popular demand after a brief hiatus, Simpson shared, "World Percussion classes are for children aged 6-9. We utilize drums and other instruments derived from West Africa and Latin America to teach steady beat, basic rhythm and independent musician skills, and

have fun while doing so! We use tubanos, floor toms, bongos, gankogui, cowbell, shekere, maracas and more."

According to Simpson, running the school has been a blessing beyond measure for her growing family, now with four children; it's a blessing that the Simpsons are thankful for every day.

"Through opening Seed-Harvest Music Academy, we have made friends that feel like family," she said. "More than that, we have gotten to see these children truly blossom and come into their own skin. It's a beautiful thing to be a part of."

Seed-Harvest Music Academy is located at 1607 Third St. NE and can be reached by phone at 205-358-2186.

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Tips for spring gardening

Cayla Grace Murphy

caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

Spring is in the air: temperatures are rising, grounds are thawing and all across the county, gardeners - seasoned and novice alike - are dreaming of freshly grown produce and lush, beautiful flowers. But there's more to a successful garden than just picking out seeds and hoping for the best. Cullman County Extension Office Coordinator Kira Sims sat down with The Cullman Tribune to give readers prime tips and suggestions for a successful growing season.

Sims said for those interested in starting a garden from scratch, the best suggestion is to plan ahead. Determine what you want to grow by considering what fruits and vegetables your family enjoys, and what pops of color you want to see in your yard. Then, compare those crops to crops that do well in the region. Sims said crop success also depends on the soil used.

"You will also need to know where you will plant the crops; the soil should be well drained and receive at least eight hours of sun, as that's what most vegetable crops need," she said. She also suggested if you're the least bit unsure of soil makeup, or maybe even starting a garden for the first time, to sample your soil to see what, if any, remediation it might need.

"You can take a soil sample of that area so you know how to fertilize it, and if you need any lime," Sims explained, noting soil test kits can be picked up from the county Extension



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Office. Sample tests are just \$10, and directions and follow-up advice can also be given at the county office.

Sims said the secret to successful growing is to keep in mind your region, saying that north Alabama plants about two to four weeks later than the rest of the state for warm season vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers, and about two weeks earlier for cool season vegetables like spinach or kale.

"We are fortunate to be able to grow a variety of different crops, from classic green beans, squash and tomatoes to sweet potatoes, kale and radishes," Sims highlighted, noting that a planting guide for the region can be found

on the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's website (cited below), and may come in handy for those just starting to work on their green thumb.

Sims also emphasized that the Cullman County Extension Office is available to answer any gardening-related questions, noting the importance of using programs provided by the Extension and other local nonprofits like the North Alabama Agriplex, which offers educational outreach programs to help gardeners, growers and ranchers alike, both new and experienced.

"We offer a lot of resources online on gardening. We also teach classes throughout the year on a variety of topics," smiled Sims, noting that one

in particular gardeners may be drawn to is a summer garden prep class hosted at the Cullman County Public Library on Thursday evening, Feb. 22 beginning at 5. Sims suggested that any gardener who might need help planning, or who wants to get that suggested head start, attend the class. The library is located at 200 Clark St. NE.

Online resources

- Alabama Cooperative Extension System www.aces.edu

Planting guide

- www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/planting-guide-for-home-gardening-in-alabama



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Sincerely,
Sen. Garlan Gudger, District 4



Healthy recipe guide

Lauren Estes

lauren@cullmantribune.com

This year, change up your normal late-winter, early-spring family dishes for something creative and different featuring healthy, fresh alternatives that are sure to impress and be a little easier on the calories.

Here are a few recipes we've found that incorporate healthier ingredient options but still have big flavor!

ONE-DISH GROUND TURKEY SWEET POTATO SKILLET

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 3 cups chopped fresh kale
- Dash crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 medium ripe avocado, peeled and sliced
- Minced fresh mint, optional

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook turkey, onion, shallot and garlic over medium heat until turkey is no longer pink and vegetables are tender, 8-10 minutes, breaking up turkey into crumbles; drain. Add tomato paste; cook and stir 1 minute longer.

2. Add sweet potato, broth, smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Simmer, covered, until sweet potato is tender, about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add kale and red pepper flakes;

cook and stir until kale is wilted, about 2 minutes. Serve with avocado, and mint if desired.

Nutrition facts

1-1/3 cups: 318 calories, 14g fat (3g saturated fat), 76mg cholesterol, 628mg sodium, 24g carbohydrate (8g sugars, 5g fiber), 26g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 3 lean meat, 2 fat, 1-1/2 starch

www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/one-dish-ground-turkey-sweet-potato-skillet

ROASTED VEGETABLE AND BLACK BEAN TACOS

Ingredients

- 1 cup roasted root vegetables (see associated recipe)
- 1/2 cup cooked or canned black beans, rinsed
- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. ground pepper
- 4 corn tortillas, lightly toasted or warmed
- Half an avocado, cut into 8 slices
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- Chopped fresh cilantro and salsa for garnish

Directions

1. Combine roasted root vegetables, beans, oil, cumin, chili powder, coriander, salt and pepper in a saucepan. Cover and cook over medium-low heat until heated through, 6 to 8 minutes.

2. Divide the mixture among the tortillas. Top with avocado. Serve with lime wedges. Garnish with cilantro and/or salsa, if desired.

Nutrition facts (per serving)
343 calories, 17g fat, 44g carbs, 8g protein



Roasted Vegetable and Black Bean Tacos

www.eatingwell.com/gallery/7927930/heart-healthy-winter-dinner-recipes-in-30-minutes

FLUFFY BANANA OATMEAL PANCAKES

Ingredients

- 2 bananas
- 1 cup oats
- 2 eggs
- 2 heaping tbsp. yogurt
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla or cinnamon(optional)
- 1 tsp. butter or coconut oil

Directions

1. Use your food processor, blender or hand blender and a bowl to prepare the batter. Simply blend everything together until smooth.

2. Heat a large non-stick pan

to medium, cover with butter/coconut oil and pour the batter forming small, palm-sized pancakes. Reduce the heat a bit (these burn fast if the temperature is too high!).

3. Once bubbles come up and the edges are done, flip using a large spatula. Cook until golden brown and then transfer to a plate.

4. Serve immediately like this or top with your favorite toppings - fresh fruit, maple syrup, peanut butter or honey and butter.

Nutrition facts

427 calories, 17g total fat, 58g carbohydrates, 14g protein

www.homemademastery.com/healthy-oatmeal-banana-pancakes

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SENIOR LIVING

Weight training for seniors

Strength training — or good, old-fashioned lifting weights — can help defend your body against age-related muscle loss, keep your bones strong, help you stay mobile and balanced, and even fight depression and cognitive decline.

Staying safe

First, talk to your doctor. Once you're cleared for strength training, learn the proper form to keep yourself injury-free. Consider hiring a trainer to help you until you can get it right. Start with just using your body weight, no additional weights. Perform three sets of 10-15 reps and, when it starts feeling easy, progress to weighted workouts.

How much weight to use

Start with the smallest amount of weight available. Try to perform three sets of 8-12 reps, keeping your form as best as you can. When those reps start to feel easy, consider increasing the load as you feel comfortable.

When to strength train

Add weight training to your routine three or four days per week on nonconsecutive days to give your muscles time to recover. Alternate weight training or resistance training with cardio days. Remember that it may take you longer to recover from exercise nowadays. Give yourself plenty



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of time to recover between training sessions.

Some exercises to try

Becoming stronger can help you live more freely. Try some of these exercises to get you started.

Incline pushup. Stand facing a table, dresser or wall. The more upright you are, the easier the move. Place your hands on the surface or the edge of the object, slightly wider than

shoulder width apart. Move your feet back until you're at a comfortable angle, keeping your arms straight and perpendicular to your body. Bend your elbows and slowly lower your chest toward the wall or object, pause, then press back to straighten up. Make sure you engage your abs and squeeze your buttocks. Try to do 10-15 reps.

Stationary lunge. Stand tall with your arms by your side.

Step back with your right foot, placing your toes on the ground and keeping your heel lifted. Then, bend your front (left) knee to slowly lower your body as far as you can comfortably. Allow your back knee to bend until it hovers just above the floor, but keep your weight in your front heel. Draw your lower belly in and lift your chest. Pause, then press through the front foot to raise your body back to standing. Aim for 10-15 reps per side.

SENIOR LIVING

Why it's important to stretch

Stretching before you work out can help protect your muscles and joints from injury, but it's especially important for seniors, whether you're about to work out or not.

As we age, our ability to build muscle strength and flexibility declines. You can combat this by stretching. Try to stretch all your major muscle groups for at least 10 minutes, two days per week.

How to stretch

Before you stretch, warm up by taking a short walk or otherwise moving around for a little bit. Then, take a deep breath. Slowly exhale as you stretch. Hold each stretch for 30 seconds to give it time to work on the muscle. Don't bounce or hold your breath, and only stretch until you feel tension. Dial it back if you feel pain.

Neck stretches

This is important for posture and for driving. Slowly bring your chin toward your chest and turn your head to the right. Hold for 15 seconds, then turn to the left. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat as needed.

Shoulder stretches

Hold a towel in one hand over your head and let it drape down your neck and back. Grab the free end with your other hand and gently pull down until you



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feel a stretch in the arm over your head. This stretch focuses on shoulder mobility, which is important when you get dressed or reach for items over your head.

Chest stretches

This is another stretch designed to improve posture. Extend both arms to the side with your palms facing forward. Reach back with your hands until you feel a stretch across your chest and in front of your

arms. If you have a hard time holding your arms up, lean against a wall, stepping forward until you feel a gentle stretch in your chest. Switch it up and stretch both sides.

Ankle stretches

Stiff ankles can cause poor balance. This stretch will help. Sit in a chair and slowly move your foot up and down and then side to side. Hold each position for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other foot. Make

sure to do both feet each time.

Lower back stretches

These stretches will help maintain mobility in your spine, giving you better posture and balance. Lay down on your back with your knees bent and your feet together. Keep your feet flat on the floor. Keep your knees together and lower your legs to one side, twisting your torso until you feel a stretch in your lower back. Hold and repeat on the other side.

'Motion is lotion'

Lauren Estes

lauren@cullmantribune.com

Years ago, I was told a phrase that has stuck with me. I have started using the phrase in fitness talks, encouragement for clients and wellness meetings, and I practice it daily.

I have found a way now to "Lauren-ize" it in the process.

What is the phrase, you ask? "Motion is lotion for your joints."

Honestly though, it's so much more than that.

Motion is lotion for your wellness, your fitness, your mental health - your LIFE.

If you can practice continual motion in your daily habits, you will find yourself with a healthier body, mind and spirit.

Here are five ways I gave gathered from personal experience, education and research to get and stay healthy through the idea of motion/activity.

1. Exercise/strength training

Most doctors recommend 150 minutes of exercise weekly. I personally have enjoyed strength training for the last 15 years.

Research has identified multiple ways it can benefit older adults, including maintaining muscle mass, improving mobility and increasing the healthy years of life.

Forbes Health shared that research suggests "strength training can reduce resting blood pressure, cholesterol levels and risk of cardiovascular

disease as well."

All in all, motion is lotion for the longevity of your health.

2. Sleep/recovery

Along with properly stretching your body and allowing it to recover following training, sleep is vital to a healthy mind and body.

Muscles and tissues repair and rejuvenate as we sleep, so if you're not getting a sufficient amount of rest each night, it's going to be harder for your body to recover properly.

During sleep, cells in the body produce proteins. These proteins are the building blocks for the formation of new cells needed during the healing process.

Experts recommend that adults sleep between seven to nine hours a night. Adults who sleep less than seven hours a night may have more health issues than those who sleep seven or more hours a night. Sleep and recovery are forms of lotion for your healthy, daily function.

3. Food as fuel: Eating for fuel/energy/purpose

A healthy diet is essential for good health and nutrition. It protects you against many chronic noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Eating a variety of foods and consuming less salt, sugars and saturated and industrially produced trans-fats are essential for a healthy diet.

Having a healthy diet:

- May help you live longer
- Keeps skin, teeth and eyes



PHOTOS: LAUREN ESTES/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Lauren Estes, CPT, CSN, gym owner

healthy

- Supports muscles
- Boosts immunity
- Strengthens bones
- Lowers risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers
- Supports healthy pregnancies and breastfeeding
- Helps the digestive system function

Healthy eating is lotion for your overall wellness.

4. Bask in sunshine

Our bodies produce vitamin D when exposed to sunlight

- about 15 minutes in the sun a day is adequate if you're fair skinned.

Since vitamin D helps your body maintain calcium and prevents brittle, thin or misshapen bones, soaking in sun may be just what the doctor ordered.

Sunshine also:

- Kills bacteria
- May reduce high blood pressure
- Can regulate the immune system
- Strengthens bones
- Boosts mood

»



- Can improve sleep quality

Sunshine is lotion for your mood.

5. Daily steps

Walking is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health. Just 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat and boost muscle power and endurance.

According to the U.S.

Department of Health and Human services, "Evidence suggests that accumulating up to 10,000 steps per day is helpful for reducing chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancer."

So, what I am trying to say is: motion is lotion for your joints, but so much more.

If you are persistent you will get it, and if you are consistent, you will keep it.

Remember to consult with

your doctor before beginning new exercise programs if you have pre-existing conditions.

Research used:

- www.whitehallofdeerfield.com/blog/5-important-ways-that-sleep-helps-you-heal
- www.nia.nih.gov/news/how-can-strength-training-build-healthier-bodies

we-age

- www.cdc.gov/nutrition/about-nutrition/why-it-matters.html
- www.kumc.edu/about/news/news-archive/jama-study-ten-thousand-steps.html
- www.forbes.com/health/fitness/benefits-of-strength-training

On the run with Fairview's Whitney Haynes

Lauren Estes

lauren@cullmantribune.com

Local teacher, track and field coach, farmer and mother of six Whitney Haynes starts each day before the sun rises and pours into the many hats she wears daily.

Haynes, her husband Ben and their six children live in Fairview, where they maintain a farm and general store. Haynes is also a family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher at Fairview High School.

If you ask her what her typical day looks - she says that no day looks the same, but that's part of the fun.

"Obviously school days usually start out the same way - Ben is usually able to stick around and help get everyone out the door," Haynes said. "During the winter months, he and the little boys check cows before he takes them to daycare. We are about to have our first child with a driver's license, but as of right now, the remaining kids and I get to school together. Every day is a logistics game for after school between the kids after school activities, the farm, church, meetings, coaching responsibilities, etc. Our family really does work well as a team, so it's usually all hands on deck, every day. One big non-negotiable is supper. Regardless of the season, we try to always sit down together. In the summer, that may mean a super late meal, but it's worth it for that time together. We use up all the time we're given, for sure! Not that I try to write it out; I'm not sure how it all gets done, but we seem to usually make



Ben and Whitney Haynes (left) with their children

it happen."

Haynes began her teaching career in 2007 at Good Hope High School and moved to Fairview in 2009. Along with teaching FCS, she serves as an FCCLA advisor, and coaches the Aggie track and field team.

"I had an amazing FCS teacher, Doris Patterson, who really impacted me during my most formative years," Haynes said. "I knew early on that I wanted to be an FCS teacher in hopes of making some sort of similar impact on my students. The skills we teach in FCS, and through FCCLA, will be applicable through a child's

entire life - food and nutrition, parenting, child development, housing, just to name a few. Hobson Hite pushed me as a young kid to become a runner, which I still love! Running/track and field has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember! The Fairview track and field program has seen a lot of success over the years and we are working hard to continue to build the program. Ben and I are both Fairview alumni and our farm is located here, so this really is 'home' for us. I really feel fortunate to be on campus with four out of six of our children each day."

When asked to put farming in layman's terms, Haynes described it as a very faith-driven, relentless and constant job.

"Sometimes I think we're a little bit crazy, honestly. So much of the work we do is out of our hands, but God has been and continues to be so good to us," Haynes said. "Every time I think about it, putting a tiny seed in the ground and praying for God to send the increase...it's just a miracle every single time. That's not to say it works out perfectly every year! Ben and I married in 2006, which was the start of »

an almost two-year drought. Things got pretty scary, but I always think back on those times when days are difficult. Our faith was tested in those years for sure and we talked about a lot of different Plan B, Plan C, Plan D income options, but eventually the rains came like we knew they would! We've had some pretty devastating years in farming since then, but those definitely stick out most in my mind as a new farm wife. I think people have an idealized picture in their mind of what farming is like, but it's probably accurate about 5% of the time. Farming is honestly just really hard work. It is absolutely a 24 hour a day, seven day a week job. You're basically always 'on call.'"

Haynes described her farm as very diversified as they have something going on every season.

"Right now, in the winter, all of our momma cows are calving, so most of Ben's days are spent checking cows and looking for any potential problems and documenting new births," Haynes said.

"Ben is a phenomenal note-taker and record-keeper. He can tell you every single calf any of our cows have birthed. In the spring/summer when he is spraying crops, he can probably tell you the wind direction of any specific day of the year.

"It's amazing, really. Winter months also consist of keeping hay, forage and feed in front of all the animals. As soon as calving season is finishing up, we look toward spring and begin making preparations for planting season and hay season. During spring and summer, the cows need much less attention, allowing us to hopefully get crops in the ground before it is time to wean calves. Weaning, for us, typically takes place in the late summer. All of our cattle are worked and given health checks; calves are weaned and moved to their own pastures.

Then comes fall, and harvest begins. One of our favorite seasons, but depending on the weather (it) can be over before Thanksgiving, or may stretch out longer through the winter. And then the process starts over again.

"Those are just the big parts of each season, but so many other things are accomplished on a daily basis - equipment maintenance, fencing, fertilizing, land maintenance, to name a few. Also, add in our custom meat business and you can stay the farm keeps us all busy!"

She continued, "I think another thing people do not realize is the amount of research and knowledge that goes into our daily decisions. We don't just roll up to the Farmers' Co-op and ask them to load our seed. Whether it is genetics or seed choices, there is a lot of research that goes into the seed we buy, the genetics we use, minerals we choose for our animals, fertilizers we use, etc. Farming, like all industries, is constantly changing, but it is so important to us as farmers to be involved in organizations that can educate and help advocate for farmers and the agriculture industry. We must remember that most of the public is becoming further removed from the farm and rural life in general, so it is important for us to be proactive in sharing our story and be open about how we operate."

Haynes shared that all of their kids are active in sports, and with her running experience it's been a neat experience sharing that with her children.

"As they have gotten older, they have begun to be more selective about what all they are involved in," Haynes said. "This year, our two oldest children will be participating in track and field for the first time, so I'm very excited, but also a little nervous about that experience. I'm pretty tough

on my own kids, so I hope we are able to find a good balance in our parent/child/coach/athlete relationship. Ben has coached the boys in various sports throughout the years, so they are accustomed to a parent being involved from an early age. Our kids have grown up at track practices and meets, so they know what all is involved - from workouts, prep for home meets, stocking the concession stand, you name it, they've probably been involved. I also have some phenomenal assistant coaches, so that is a huge asset. It has always been important to us that our kids are around coaches that see the importance of coaching the 'whole kid' and not just the basketball player, or runner or baseball player. Because in the end, it's always more than just the sport, right? As coaches, I feel like we should be working to help raise good young adults as well. My high school and college coaches had such a pivotal impact on my life and I think that really dictates the way I see kids and coaching."

If Haynes had to name a couple things that really shine in her life, she said, she truly enjoys that her family is always on the move.

"I think I really thrive in 'chaos.' Every day is different and presents new challenges, but I really do love getting things done and finding new things to keep us moving," Haynes said. "Working with Ben and our kids is one of my favorite things. I come from a long line of hard-working people and I hope our children see that in Ben and myself. One of the big things I love about our custom meat business is meeting our customers and building those relationships. It is not lost on me that we literally put food on people's tables, and that truly brings me such joy. I love to hear about their families, their recipes and just their stories - where they are from, what brought them here,

etc. We have one customer that paints rockets for NASA and I always laugh and say we are a tiny part of sending rockets into space! It's amazing to me the reach that a little farm in Fairview, Alabama, can have. But there are family farms all over the state doing what we are doing, and doing it well! If you can't shop with us, support your local farms. You have no idea of the impact your support has on their family."

Her favorite thing about coaching - she wants her athletes to be proud of themselves and proud to be a Fairview Aggie.

"Going to meets and competing against athletes all over the state can be intimidating sometimes, but we have athletes that can compete with the best of the best," Haynes said. "I hope all of my athletes realize the value of hard work and what they can accomplish when they have a will to work. The fun thing about track and field, for me, is that every athlete has the opportunity to get better every single day. We always tell them, the stopwatch doesn't lie, the tape measure doesn't lie - if you don't do the work, you won't see the results. If they have a mind to work, they will get it done and typically exceed our expectations."

Haynes said a couple fun things about herself all are centered around her living a very simple life.

"I love to read anything, and I sneak in reading time as often as I can," she said. "I also love old movies - black and whites, musicals and historical movies. I don't get to watch TV often, but when I do, my family knows my go-to movies. Lastly, if I could, I would probably go 'off-grid.' I try to live with a content heart and I think I'm pretty low maintenance. I love home, cooking for my family, working in the yard/flowers and just enjoying time together with my family."

- ARTIST SPOTLIGHT -

Emily Rochelle of FanciER Leather Goods

Cayla Grace Murphy
 caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

FanciER Leather Goods had humble beginnings, starting three years ago as a simple way to unwind from work as a nurse for artisan Emily Rochelle. As an avid fan of Western culture, and a newlywed on a budget, Rochelle said her inspiration to dive into the heritage skill of tooling and stamping leather came from an expensive tooled leather belt that caught her eye during a scroll session on social media.

"I wanted this custom leather belt, and it was \$350. I thought, 'Oh my gosh! Why is it so expensive? I could probably do that,'" she laughed, joking that once she started, she immediately realized why the belt was so expensive - and that it was worth the investment. Rochelle was hooked, and began honing her skills of stamping and tooling at the kitchen table she shared with her husband in a trailer as they patiently waited for their home to finish being built.

"So, I was hooked. I kept buying more stuff, because you do need quite a bit to get going," Rochelle said, noting that eventually she graduated from the kitchen table to an old rolltop desk, still in the kitchen. These days, Rochelle works out of a finished building on their property - climate controlled to protect the integrity of her leather materials - with an impressive industrial sewing setup and collection of »



Local artist and owner of FanciER Leather Goods, Emily Rochelle, imprints a belt.

CAYLA GRACE MURPHY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE



Local artist and owner of FanciER Leather Goods, Emily Rochelle, poses with a vintage tooled leather bag crafted by her uncle Bill Peinhardt.

CAYLA GRACE MURPHY/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

stamps and impressions. Rochelle shared that the sewing setup was a gift from her husband, who has been a massive support to FanciER since its inception.

"I was hand sewing everything, and that takes forever. And of course, when you're starting out, you're not making any money!" she grinned, noting how pricy industrial leather sewing machines can be. "So my husband was kind enough to get me a leather sewing machine. It was huge for me. It sped me up so much, and opened the door for me to make so much more."

While she's taken a few in-person classes, Rochelle maintained that like many other Millennial artisans, she's self-taught, learning many of her techniques from YouTube. Rochelle said YouTube tutorials allow her to learn at her own pace and remotely, which works well for someone like her in the medical field.

"On my work days, I'm not out here at all. I leave here at 5 and don't get back until 8. It's really on my off days or weekends that I'm out here. But it's important for me to make time for it," explained Rochelle, saying that while she enjoys the downtime of getting to unwind and enjoy some tactile creation, leatherwork itself is a craft that can take a lot of time.

"Leatherwork takes so much time. It's a lot of steps. You have to wet it, then work on it, then allow it to dry. It's something you have to really plan out," Rochelle emphasized, saying that can be challenging for a professional procrastinator like herself.

"Procrastination and leatherwork do not go together!" she laughed. She said that while orders always get done by the deadline, she enjoys

the challenge of beating the clock and her clients just enjoy wearing the fruits of her labor. Lately, Rochelle has been making more wearable items like belts - an item she swore she'd never make a market for in her own business.

"When I first started, I was like, 'I'm not doing belts,'" Rochelle chuckled, noting with belts, there's a wider margin to make mistakes; "They're very tricky as far as making sure the fit is right, the width is right; they're very personalized and just, well, tricky. And of course, when people think of leather, they think of belts. I have really started to enjoy them. I never thought I would!"

Rochelle said second to wearable items like belts, she enjoys making baby-centered items like pacifier holders and wipe holders. With plenty of options for customization, she said the possibilities are endless for a unique gift that parents appreciate.

"I just love them. I like to give them as baby shower gifts and put the baby's name on them," said Rochelle, "And people love them! That makes me happy. If you like what I'm making for you, that's all I need."

Rochelle said despite making more "mainstream" pieces for sale on her social media and brick-and-mortar stores like Leldon's in the Warehouse District, she still holds firm to her flashy Western culture roots as far as inspiration goes for her more customized pieces.

"In my personal life, I love the Western culture. The turquoise, silver and boots. I really like that! I find myself making things that I like, which sometimes in this area is not a great thing because it's so specific," Rochelle said. "But I'm like every girl. I'm on Instagram, I'm on Pinterest. I'll see an influencer

and think, 'Oh, that's really cool, I wonder if I could make something like that.' I'll come out here and try to make myself something just like it."

Rochelle shared that another key piece of inspiration is from a vintage tooled leather bag given to her by fellow leatherworker and great-uncle, Bill Peinhardt.

"My great-uncle Bill Peinhardt did leatherwork when he was a child. I didn't know that when I got started," she mentioned. "But since I got started, he and I bonded over it. He showed me his work shed where he was raised, and offered me some of his tools. It was really cool!" she said, noting that Peinhardt gave her a hand-tooled leather bag he created as a child for her to restore. She keeps it tucked onto a shelf above her

workspace, serving to inspire her to keep creating.

Rochelle said that at the end of the day, the simple gratification of being able to work with her hands, and growing a thriving artisanal business from seemingly nothing, keeps her motivated to continue learning new skills and techniques with leather.

"The biggest thing that I'm most proud of, is that this all grew from nothing. Literally, from the kitchen table. Every little thing has been such a blessing," she smiled.

Follow FanciER Leather Goods on Facebook at www.facebook.com/fanciERleathergoods, or view Rochelle's art available for purchase at Leldon's in the Warehouse District, located at 117 First Ave. NE.



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- SENIOR SPOTLIGHT -

Morris memories, bananas in Brazil and life advice with 100-year-old Fred Little

Cayla Grace Murphy

caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

A lot can change in a few years - or a century. Just ask Cullman resident Fred Little, who recently reached the incredible milestone of celebrating 100 trips around the sun, becoming Cullman's newest centenarian. Little boasts a storied life. He was born in the Morris area of Jefferson County on Dec. 24, 1923, and attended Mortimer Jordan High School where he met his high school sweetheart Willene Creel, whom he later married in 1945 and enjoyed 71 years with before her passing in 2017. The couple had one daughter, Elaine Little, now Fuller.

Little worked as a warehouse manager for Ashcraft in Birmingham for over 20 years before moving to Cullman and joining the staff at First Baptist Church. He is a Master Gardener, an avid mechanic and has been a member of the Masonic Lodge since he was 18. The Cullman Tribune was invited to meet Little and chat, learn about what life was like back in the day and gain some perspective on the secret to living so long.

"I'd be glad to give some advice, but I don't know if I »



This 2013 photo shows local centenarian Fred Little and his late wife and school sweetheart, Willene. The Littles were married for 71 years before Willene's passing in 2017.

CONTRIBUTED



Local centenarian Fred Little celebrates his 100th birthday.

CONTRIBUTED

have anything that would help you or not," chuckled Little, noting that while 100 years is certainly a milestone, it was not without challenges. He did agree he must have done something right to make it this far.

CT: What has been your favorite birthday so far?

FL: Probably this one - I'm just lucky to make it to 100.

CT: Where did you grow up?

FL: I grew up close to Birmingham. I was born at home in Morris. Back then, you hardly ever heard of people going to the hospital to deliver a baby. You had this old guy, I don't know what you'd call him, but he had a route that he made regular, about every two weeks, to look after all the women that were having babies. As long as you did what he told you, I had never heard of anybody not being born like he said they would be. He was pretty good.

CT: What would you say your favorite childhood memory is?

FL: Daddy worked all the time, and they pretty much just left me to play. I'd play with anything that came along. My older sister would get me down and have me read to her, that way I could practice. We'd get some magazines or catalogs. Sometimes I could read it, sometimes I couldn't. Sometimes I just wouldn't! I didn't do a whole lot of work; it was mostly just playing.

CT: How old were you when you met your wife?

FL: We went to school together. From about the sixth grade, all the way through. We had one daughter, Elaine.

CT: What do you eat for breakfast every morning?

FL: One or two cups of coffee, and powdered sugar donuts. That makes a meal for me! (Reporter's note: At the time of the interview, no less than three packages of powdered sugar donuts were resting on Little's side table.)

CT: What do you like to do to pass the time?

FL: Gardening is sure something to pass the time, and it helps out if you grow things you can eat or use. It helps out a lot. Just sitting here all day, it's not for me. I like to fish when I can. I really, really like to fish. But I'm living too far away from the lake right now... if I could get to the lake and have a good day of fishing, it'd really boost me up. (Reporter's note: Little's granddaughter, Suzanne Harbin, was in the room and helped facilitate during the interview. Harbin agreed to take Little fishing once the weather warms up.)

CT: Do you have a favorite place that you've traveled to, either personal or with the Merchant Marines?

FL: Brazil, I think. I was down there for about a year, in different parts, mostly helping gather fruits. There was a place

down in Brazil that I liked to go to, and they would always have this bouquet of fruit. It would sit on the mess hall table all the time, and any part of it, you were welcome to. Bananas, tangerines...all you had to do was walk by and get it. It made life a lot easier. I was about 20 or 21 at the time.

CT: What is the best advice you can give from your life?

FL: Do the best you can, all the time. Not just now and then. Be consistent.

CT: What is the secret to living so long?

FL: My secret to living so long is being active and doing what you think you need to do, instead of doing what someone else thinks you need to do. I felt like I knew a little bit more about what I needed than some guy that had never seen or heard of me. It's different for everybody. Think about what you need to do to make you happy, and go ahead and do it. These people that tell you all these things - what to do, how to live - what they're doing is guessing. And guessing don't always work.

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'Happy cows taste better'

Sullivan Creek Ranch

Cayla Grace Murphy

caylagrace@cullmantribune.com

Husband and wife ranchers Greg and Emily Anderson have become locally known for their high-quality, small-batch Akaushi Wagyu beef raised in the Jones Chapel area of Cullman County. The Andersons transitioned from full-time Navy pilot and muralist to full-time cowhands around 2016, and haven't looked back since.

"He always wanted to be a cattleman, but ended up being a Navy pilot," Emily Anderson joked. "He would tell stories about being a kid and setting up his farm sets and having a ranch. So it's always been a dream of his."

Greg Anderson got his chance to ranch after retiring from the Navy. He started flying jets privately in Birmingham, and on the hunt for ideal horse property, found a property in Jones Chapel that was perfect – and came with a commercial herd.

"He realized it was his chance to live out his dream while still being able to fly," Emily Anderson explained, noting that her husband traveled back and forth from Texas A&M and the ranch, learning how to manage the herd, always maintaining a goal of producing small-batch beef. Anderson maintained that the ranch's neighbors were also instrumental in the success of the ranch in the beginning, offering advice that can only



The arbor at the entrance of Sullivan Creek Ranch, featuring the ranch's brand, the flying A

be learned from a lifetime of ranching.

Around 2018, with 300 acres on the ranch, and 150 of that being pasture, Greg Anderson slowly started turning his herd over into red Akaushi, a specialty breed of cattle known for its smaller frame that produces world-famous Wagyu. The trade-off for smaller-sized cattle, Emily Anderson noted, is that the cows hang around the ranch longer than typical cows raised for beef to get the ideal fattening and marbling for that signature Wagyu look and taste.

"He's really good about it.

We're extremely good to our animals. If you're born here, and you're female, you're going to have a great life. You'll either get sold to breed, or you'll be a replacement heifer here.

"Then, the males that go into the steers or feed program, they're here almost 30 months – and they have the best 30 months a cow can ever have," she said, noting that it is important to the Andersons to produce high-quality Wagyu from their cattle – and that requires making sure the cattle's lives are high quality, too.

"When cows are stressed,

adrenaline shoots through their body and makes the meat taste bad. So you want your cows to have as few of those stress infusions as possible," said Anderson, noting that while some surprise stress is unavoidable in herd animals raised for meat, they have opted to move all their herding to a gentler horseback method since common options like four-wheelers or ATVs can cause additional stress to the animals.

"Happy cows taste better," confirmed Anderson, laughing, "and in general they're just easier to deal with!"

Anderson said happy »

cows are the bread and butter, or rather the meat, of Sullivan Creek's entire operation. With a smaller sized herd, about 100 head, Anderson said they are more able to meet the needs of the herd and manage it efficiently.

"With calves and everything, we have about a hundred. It's manageable. You get to know your cows by sight, and we go out every day and make sure no one is limping, just checking on them," Anderson said, emphasizing the importance of caring for the herd on a more personal level.

Better care makes better beef, according to the Andersons. But, being small-batch beef providers, and with the cattle taking longer to develop into the Andersons' signature Wagyu finish, she noted a few upcoming changes to Sullivan Creek's business model.

Anderson hinted at future possibilities for hosting events, like micro-weddings and vacation rentals, along with opening her art studio and the ranch's trading post to the public.

"Hopefully we will have packages soon, and we'll be able to update the website," smiled Anderson, excited at the prospect of letting the community in - during structured hours, at least - to see what it's like on the ranch, and share the work they've accomplished on the property.

Anderson said despite facing challenges as any small business owner does, they have experienced incredible support from the surrounding community, and hope to continue expanding - specifically in the realm of trail dinners hosted on the ranch.

"We are going to turn our beef inward, and we're going to



SULLIVAN CREEK RANCH

An Akaushi red bull raised by Greg and Emily Anderson of Sullivan Creek Ranch

start doing what we call 'On the Trail Supper Club.' We've got a chuck wagon cook who is a five-star chef, and we're going to start doing different stations on the ranch for ticketed dinners," she said, noting that while the ranch will still sell beef by the whole, half and quarter, retail cuts will then be specifically allocated for ranch events.

"I think it's going to be an experience that many people might not have ever had.

"You'll be able to eat your meal, talk to the chef, see the cattle," Anderson said, noting that while the ranch has dinners annually like its signature Steak and Sunset event, the trail dinner concept will be a new avenue to reach more

residents who are interested in indulging in dinners made of locally grown components and seeing the ranching way of life.

"It's the experience, not just the meal," Anderson smiled.

To learn more about Sullivan Creek Ranch, go to www.facebook.com/SullivanCreekRanchFlyingA.

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- LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT -

Home cooking at The Landing

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

The Landing at Cullman Regional Airport is a lesser known burger joint in Vinemont.

Sitting atop the airport's main building, the small café has tinted windows all around the small dining area and open kitchen, affording diners a view of the runways, incoming and outgoing aircraft and skydivers.

Regulars are scattered among the seats, each in conversation with a neighbor, some laughing loudly over their coffee, some shouting jokes and stories to their friends across the way.

Owners Morgan Griffin and Jason McCulloch have been together for 16 years, sharing their lives, their laughter and a dream. They are both incredibly talented cooks; after hosting friends and family with a large spread of specialty foods, word got out and soon the couple began catering gigs for friends, then friends of those friends, then eventually the pair started catering parties and even a few weddings until lightning struck in the form of one of McCulloch's friendships.

"I was talking to a friend, Ben Harrison, the manager of the airport. There used to be a café up here, but it closed years ago. I asked him, 'What are you going to do with the old café?' and he asked if we were interested, and we've always wanted this, so I said, 'Sure!'" McCulloch laughed. "Plus, it's got a really great view."

Catering parties and office luncheons was the tip of the iceberg for the set of cooks, now with a space to start a new venture and already possessing



Morgan Griffin and Jason McCulloch stand in the window at their café, The Landing at Cullman Regional Airport.

CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

crowd-pleasing recipes, all that was needed were customers.

"We really try to have real Southern cooking," said Griffin. "There's not many places in Cullman that have real Southern cooking. It's all homemade, just like I would make it at home with a pinch of that and about this much of that." She laughed, saying she learned to cook the same way many Southern women learn - over a hot stove watching their grandmothers.

McCulloch chimed in, "Our beef for our burgers is fresh, not frozen. We wanted to have a really good burger in addition to the Southern food. Everybody loves a good burger."

The menu options at The

Landing are vast and each one has its own appeal. There are breakfast platters with bronzed pancakes and fluffy biscuits, lunch items including fried pickles, wraps and burgers, as well as a number of fresh salad options. The star of the café is never on the printed menu; instead it's printed on a sign inside the door. The special rotates daily, each day a new spin on a classic meal, hardly ever a disappointment.

Visitors of The Landing may come for the food, but it's almost certain they'll come back for the view. Panoramic windows give diners a bird's eye view of small-engine planes and their pilots preparing for takeoff, initiating landings and

on certain days in the spring, escorting skydivers to the clouds above.

"We have had quite a few offers to move and expand into town, but we aren't ready to give up this view," said Griffin. "A move could possibly be on the horizon for us, who knows? Right now, we have the restaurant and we are still available for catering. Companies can even rent the conference room downstairs for their meeting and we will cater them. It's great."

The Landing at Cullman Regional Airport is located at 231 County Road 1360 and can be reached by phone at 256-775-2506. It's open seven days a week from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

- LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT -

'I wouldn't want to do anything else' Graves General Store & Diner

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

The sound of loud, boisterous laughter fills the air long before the doors to Graves General Store & Diner open, assuring hungry guests that Lori Graves is hard at work inside preparing the day's rations, mixing concoctions and cutting onions - and quite possibly a joke or two.

Graves is an unassuming retired service station off the side of Alabama Highway 157, just outside the Cullman city limits. The service station was just that - a run-down truck stop, a relic of the 70s and 80s left to time as more stations and stops were built closer to Interstate 65 exits. Thanks to a lot of love, laughter, sweat, blood, tears and stolen metal, Graves' dream of becoming a restaurateur was finally made a reality.

As with all good stories, it began with a dream. Graves had owned a service station that closed due to unforeseen events. She said a single call after chatting with a lifelong confidante about her trials and tribulations sparked hope, curiosity and determination to see her dream to fruition.

"When they were going to tear the store down, I didn't know what to do," she said. "I was talking to Michelle Wisner, and later, she called me back and said, 'I have a crazy idea - open a restaurant!' and I thought 'I can do that!'" Wisner's crazy idea was that Graves take and adapt the dilapidated vintage truck stop and create her own version of a diner, one that emulated the

feeling and smells of a grandma's kitchen.

"She (Wisner) owns the building, and the rest was history. God's been with me every step of the way. We got a bunch of men up here - Steve Wisner, Michelle's husband, Mike Brown and a bunch of guys, the whole nine yards, they came in and got it all up," laughed Graves as she recounted the story of how her friend Michelle Wisner acquired some of the metal that now adorns the walls and ceilings of the diner. "Half this metal is stolen from Steve's (Wisner's) chicken houses!"

Graves, with the help of her family, friends and community, pulled together and through hard work, Graves General Store & Diner was finished and opened to the public. The homemade Southern-style fare was an instant hit with locals and truckers alike.

Diner-style staples are always on the menu, including made-to-order juicy burgers, crispy chicken tenders and fried chicken sandwiches, hot dogs and Polish dogs on the traditional menu. The menu also includes rotating daily entrees, ranging from Keto Jalapeno Chicken to fried Conecuh sausage and potatoes, chicken fried steak and chili - the list goes on and on as each day sees at least two entrée options. Sides include black-eyed peas, potato salad, corn, creamed potatoes (loaded or creamy) and turnip greens.

"Everything is homemade except for one thing," said Graves, her eyes beginning to crinkle as she spilled the story. "I had a customer who loved my turnip greens. He said he's



CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Graves General Store & Diner is located at 11055 Alabama Highway 157 in West Point.

never had any that good in his life; he was always complimenting my turnip greens. One day, I asked him if he wanted to know how to make them. Of course he said yes, so I walked back to the kitchen and came out with a big ol' can of turnip greens. He said that day was worse than the day he found out Santa Claus wasn't real."

Joking aside, Graves said, she feels blessed to have been able to open her diner, allowing her to share her family with the community and her passion for cooking with her family. It's never a visit to Graves General Store & Diner without Graves herself popping out of the kitchen to hug a neck or to catch up with an old friend.

"I wanted something that I could have fun at, and people would have fun at, where I could still see my grandbabies; they're up here in the kitchen all

the time," Graves smiled. "This place lets me meet people and I just love it. I wouldn't want to do anything else."

A new addition to Graves General Store & Diner is the mobile coffee house, Farmhouse Coffee Co., owned by Cullman's Juanita and Paul Yoder. The mobile coffee shop brings new visitors to Graves that may not have visited otherwise. A good number of Graves' customers are middle-aged to older men, not exactly the kind to venture off to try a crafted coffee beverage.

"We have a lot of men who will meet their wife in the parking lot to buy them a coffee, just to turn right around and come in here for breakfast!" laughed Graves.

Graves General Store & Diner is located at 11055 Alabama Highway 157 in West Point.

- PREP SPORTS -

A look back at some of the best games of 2023

Sammy Confer
sammy@cullmantribune.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — 2023 saw more than its fair share of amazing games and fantastic finishes. Here's my list of the best games that I covered last year.

Hanceville vs. Etowah (Basketball - Jan. 10)

Hanceville took on Etowah in a huge region game at home. The Bulldogs got off to a fast start to the game, jumping out to a quick 9-0 lead, and later on, a Zach Campbell trey pushed their lead to 21-8. A basket by Will Calvert and an and-one by Campbell gave Hanceville a 26-12 lead going into the second period. Five straight points by Brayden Harris gave the Bulldogs a 33-18 lead and later pushed their lead to 37-20. A late run by Etowah, though, cut it to 43-35. Layups by Campbell and Braxton Broad pushed Hanceville's lead to 48-35 at the half.

The Blue Devils went on a huge run to start out the third period as they made it a 48-43 game, but a Harris three gave the Bulldogs a 52-43 lead. Etowah wasn't done yet, as another run made it a 52-48 game, and later on, they scored six straight points to take a 56-55 lead. A late layup by Campbell gave Hanceville a 57-56 lead »



MIKE WITCHER/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Fairview's Jake Harper (14) fights for yardage in the Aggies' 14-7 win over Lawrence County this season.

going into what would be a wild back-and-forth ending to the game.

Another fast start by the Blue Devils gave them a 63-57 lead early in the fourth quarter, but treys by Broad and Harris cut it to 65-63. Etowah later pushed their lead to 70-63 and then, to 75-68.

Hanceville made things very interesting after that, as Harris got fouled after drilled another three. He completed the old-fashioned four-point play, then Campbell hit a pair from the line to cut it to 75-74. The Blue Devils, though, quickly increased their lead to 81-74, but the Bulldogs looked to go on one last run to get back in the game.

Campbell put in a layup, then later on, put in a huge three to make it an 81-79 game, but three free throws by the Blue Devils helped them seal the 84-79 win on the road.

West Point vs. Brewer (Basketball - Jan. 13)

West Point faced off against Brewer at home in a huge area game. Offense was hard to come by early enough for both teams, and Brewer took a 9-4 lead into the second period. The Patriots quickly pushed their lead to 18-10 in the second and later, made it 21-12. Ashton Rodgers drilled a trey, and Pressley Burtis put in a jumper to cut it 21-17, but Brewer would end up holding a 27-20 lead at the half.

A hot start to the third quarter by the Patriots saw them push their lead to 31-20, but Rodgers brought the Warriors right back into the game, as he drilled a pair



Cold Springs' Ella Dickerson (24) pulls down a rebound during the Lady Eagles' 49-45 win over Fairview at last year's county tournament.

BILL PIPER/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

of treys and converted on his and-one opportunity, to make it a 33-29 game. Brewer held a 37-31 lead, but West Point looked to cut into their deficit

even more. Burtis put in a pair of shots, and Rodgers drilled a floater to cut it to 39-37 going into the fourth quarter.

A layup by Jay Lamar tied

the game up at 39 early in the fourth, but the Patriots scored the next six points to take a 45-39 lead. Kolten Perry put in a floater, then Rodgers »

split his free throws to make it a 45-42 game. Rodgers got fouled late in the game and drilled both shots from the line to cut it to 45-44. Brewer hit a pair of free throws of their own to take a 47-44 lead. Multiple attempts by West Point to tie the game up came up just short, and the Warriors dropped a heartbreaker at home to Brewer 47-44.

Cold Springs vs. Fairview (Basketball - Jan. 26)

The Cold Springs Lady Eagles faced off against the Fairview Lady Aggies in a semifinal game at the Cullman County Tournament. It was a low-scoring affair to start out the game. Cold Springs jumped out to a 6-0 lead, but Emma Garcia made both of Fairview's baskets in the first period, as the Lady Aggies made it a 6-4 game going into the second period.

A pair of Jayla Gorham free throws made it a 9-6 game, but a jumper by Ella Dickerson helped Cold Springs push their lead to 13-6. Dickerson added a pair of free throws to make it 15-6, but the Lady Aggies went on a little run of their own, as an Allison Davis made jumper cut it to 17-12.

Erin Bailey drilled a trey to give the Lady Eagles a 20-12 lead, and they ended up taking a 22-14 lead into the locker room.

After an Ella Bruer trey made it 25-17, a pair of free throws by Gorham made it 25-19, and later on, a Golden trey cut it to 27-22. Cold Springs went on an 11-4 run, and a Maci Brown trey pushed their lead to 38-26. The Lady Eagles took a 38-28 lead into the final period.

Each team traded a trey to keep it at a 10-point game early in the fourth quarter, but the Lady Aggies looked to make a run of their own to get back in the game. Baskets by Ava Thomas and Garcia cut it to 43-37, and later on, Fairview made it a 45-41 game on layups by Thomas and Garcia. Darby Nichols knocked down a floater to cut it to 48-45, but a huge steal and a free throw by Bruer helped seal the 49-45 win for Cold Springs. That win turned out to be number 700 for coach Tammy West.

Hanceville vs. Cold Springs (Basketball - Feb. 2)

The Hanceville Lady Bulldogs hosted the Cold Springs Lady Eagles in a big county game. Cold Springs got off to a quick start, scoring the first five points of the game, and the three-ball helped them push their lead to 16-4. The Lady Eagles would take a 21-8 lead into the second period.

Cold Springs continued to add to their lead in the second, stretching their lead to 30-12 on threes by Ella Bruer, Kenady Graves, and Ciara Calvert. Hanceville went on a 6-0 run to cut it to 30-18, but Maci Brown and Ella Dickerson each put in a long-range shot to give Cold Springs a 36-20 lead at the half.

The Lady Bulldogs slowly start to cut into the deficit in the third period, as an and-one by Alex Twitty and a pair of baskets by Kate Sterling cut it to 38-29. The Lady Eagles quickly pushed their lead to 43-29 on another Brown trey, and they took a 43-31 lead into the final quarter.

Hanceville got off to a red-hot start to the final period, as Aaliyah Twitty and Katelyn Boyd each hit a shot in the paint, then Boyd drilled a long-range shot to make it a 43-38 game. Another made shot by Sterling and a huge and-one by Alex Twitty tied the game up at 43.

The Lady Bulldogs ended up taking a 45-43 lead on a layup by Aaliyah Twitty. The game was tied at 47 after another made shot by Sterling, but five straight points by Cold Springs gave them a 52-47 lead. Savana McAnnally put in a pair of free throws to make it a three-point game, but a pair of Brown free throws gave the Lady Eagles a 54-49 lead. Cold Springs ended up barely getting past Hanceville 54-51.

West Point vs. Lawrence County (Softball - Feb. 27)

The West Point Lady Warriors hosted the Lawrence County Lady Red Devils in a big region game. West Point quickly got in the run column in their opening at-bats, as Bethany Minck launched a leadoff home run over the center field wall to give them the early lead. Singles by Maycie Brown and Brinlee Phillips put runners on first and second, then Sidney Burks connected on a three-run home run over the center field wall to give the Lady Warriors an early 4-0 lead.

Lawrence County got a run in the second and the third to make it a 4-2 game, but West Point made it 5-2 in the bottom of the fourth on a stolen base by Katie Beth Yovino.

The Lady Warriors later made it 6-3 on an RBI single by

Bethany Minck, but the Lady Red Devils quickly loaded the bases with one out. After a fly out, West Point was one out away from getting the win, but Lawrence County had other plans, however, as a bases-clearing double tied the game up at six. The Lady Warriors weren't able to break the tie in their half, so the game would be decided in extra innings.

Lawrence County quickly got three runs to take a 9-6 lead, but West Point answered right back in their half. Kara Jones hit an RBI single to make it 9-7, then after a double by Macayla Wilkins, Minck hit a two-run double to tie the game up at nine. A double-play, though, ended their half of the inning. The Lady Red Devils collected a run to take a 10-9 lead, and the Lady Warriors couldn't get anything going in their final at-bats, as they ended up dropping a heartbreaker to Lawrence County 10-9.

Fairview vs. Lawrence County (Football - Oct. 20)

The Fairview Aggies took on the Lawrence County Red Devils in a huge region game. It was a defensive battle to start out, as turnovers, a failed fake punt attempt, and several punts by both teams combined was the story for most of the first half. Another Red Devil punt gave the ball back to Fairview, and on the first play, an unsportsmanlike penalty on Lawrence County on the first play gave the Aggies a first down at the 44. The Aggies' running game started to get going after that, as runs by Kolt Redding, Carson Jones, and Barrett »

York helped them get to the 11. Redding capped off the drive in style, as he found Jameson Goble in the corner of the end zone for a seven-yard score, to give Fairview a 7-0 lead at the half.

The third quarter was more of the same, as fans saw way more than their fair share of punts from their respective squads. Fairview looked to add to their lead after forcing yet another Lawrence County punt, but another fumble gave the ball back to the Red Devils. The Aggies were called for pass interference on the first play, then Lawrence County broke free for a 76-yard run to tie the game up at seven with 7:29 left to go in the game.

Fairview looked to break the tie on its next offensive possession. Big runs by Jake Harper, plus big passes from Redding to Cade Yeager, had the Aggies inching closer and closer to the end zone.

A few plays later, Redding was able to find the end zone on a huge four-yard run to give Fairview a 14-7 lead with a little over three minutes to go in the game. The Aggies picked the perfect time to force their first turnover of the game, as Redding picked off a Red Devil pass with a little over two minutes to go in the contest. Jones picked up a huge first down, and Fairview knelt a couple of times to help seal the huge 14-7 win at home.



MARTHA NEEDHAM/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Fairview's Blake Rickard knocked down a go-ahead three with four seconds remaining to help the Aggies secure a 72-69 win over Good Hope in December.

Holly Pond vs. Falkville (Basketball - Dec. 12)

The Holly Pond Broncos took on the Falkville Blue Devils in a key region game at home. Holly Pond got off to a great start to the game, jumping out

to a quick 6-0 lead on treys by Kollin Brown and Sawyer Olinger. A three by Carson Ryan and back-to-back baskets by Cade Allbright

pushed the Bronco lead to 13-2. A big run by Falkville, though, saw them tie the game up at 13, and the first period ended with both teams

tied up at 15.

The second period saw more than a handful of lead changes. A made jumper by Brown gave Holly Pond a »

23-22 lead, but another run by the Blue Devils saw them take a 29-25 lead into the locker room.

Falkville pushed their lead to 35-27 in the third period, but a pair of free throws by Olinger and a Nik Goodwin made shot in the paint made it a 35-31 game. A pair of Brown free throws cut it to 35-33, but the Blue Devils scored the final five points of the quarter, as they took a 40-35 lead into the final quarter.

Two more free throws by Brown made it a 42-36 game, but Falkville quickly pushed their lead to 45-36, and later on, to 51-42.

The Broncos, though, looked to make things really interesting in the end. Goodwin drilled a big three to cut it to 51-45, and later on, Olinger banked in a long-range shot to make it a 53-48 game. Brown put in one of his own from the left wing to trim it to just a two-point game at 55-53, but a late layup and a free throw by the Blue Devils helped them seal the 58-53 win on the road.

Fairview vs. Good Hope (Basketball - Dec. 22)

The Fairview Aggies faced off against the Good Hope Raiders in a big county matchup. It was a close first quarter, as Good Hope held a slim 8-5 lead on a driving layup by Jacob Haynes. Five straight points by Tyler Cone pushed the Raider lead to 13-7, but a trey by Blake Rickard cut it to 13-11 lead. A pair of layups by Haynes gave Good Hope a 17-12 lead going into the second quarter.

A jumper by Tucker Malin and another basket in the paint

by Haynes gave the Raiders a 21-14 lead early in the second, but Fairview went on a big run of their own. Baskets by Jac Dunn, layups by Rickard and Carson Jones, and a long-range shot by Kobe Payne, gave the Aggies a 25-23 lead. The Raiders finished the first half strong, as a rebound and putback by Weston Hancock, plus a Cone trey, gave them a 31-29 lead at the half.

Five straight points by Malin pushed the Raider lead to 36-29 and later on, baskets by Malin and Cone made it a 40-32 game. Four straight points by K'mal Bell increased Good Hope's lead to 48-38. The Raiders would push their lead to 54-41. After Fairview cut it to 57-46, a late basket by Bell saw Good Hope take a 59-46 lead into the final quarter.

Hancock put in three shots from the free throw line to give the Raiders a 62-46 lead early in the final period, but all of a sudden, Fairview started to claw their way back into the game.

Landun Smith put in a shot in the paint, then Cade Yeager scored five straight points, and Rickard scored three straight points, as it was now a 62-56 game. Bell stopped the bleeding with a basket on the other end, but the Aggies were just getting started.

Jones put in a layup, then Payne banked in a short jumper, and Rickard put in a trey to cut it to 66-65. Jones collected a steal and a layup to give Fairview a 67-66 lead. Free throws by Payne and Rickard gave the Aggies a 69-67 lead, but a pair of free throws by Dakota Overton

tied the game up at 69 with 25 seconds left to go in the contest, setting up the stage for the biggest shot of the game.

The Aggies carefully milked the clock and the ball ended up in the hands of Payne close to the out-of-bounds line. He ended up finding Rickard in the right corner for the enormous three to give Fairview a 72-69 lead. Good Hope had a chance to tie the game up on its final possession, but the three-pointer fell just short, and the Aggies picked up a huge three-point win at home.

Cold Springs vs. Winston County (Basketball - Dec. 28)

The Cold Springs Eagles hosted the Winston County Yellow Jackets on December 28th, as they looked to build some momentum going into the new year.

Cold Springs got off to a 5-1 lead, but Winston County tied the game up at five. Cole Bales scored five straight points to give the Eagles a 10-5 lead, but a pair of treys by the Yellow Jackets gave them the lead right back at 11-10. Bales hit one of his own from long-range, as Cold Springs took a 13-11 lead into the second period.

Zane Brown and Ethan Day each hit a trey in the second to push the Eagle lead to 19-11. They continued to add to their lead after that, as Bales continued his red-hot start to the game, hitting another three, and converting his and-one opportunity, to give Cold Springs a 26-15 lead.

Winston County cut it to 29-20, but the Eagles' red-hot shooting from three

continued. Day and Bales each added a shot from long-range, and the Eagles ended up taking a 35-22 lead into the locker room.

The Yellow Jackets found their shooting stroke to start out the third quarter, as they scored the first 14 points of the third, to take a 36-35 lead. Josh Winfrey finally stopped the run with a jumper from the free throw line to give Cold Springs a 37-36 lead.

Winston County went on an 8-0 run to take a 44-37 lead, but a basket in the paint by Bailey Gann cut it to 44-40. The Eagles went into the fourth quarter trailing, 46-40.

Tycen Kilgo collected a steal and ended up finding Bales for a basket to make it a 46-42 game. Day cut it to 46-45 on a trey, and later on, he hit a layup to make it a 51-50 game.

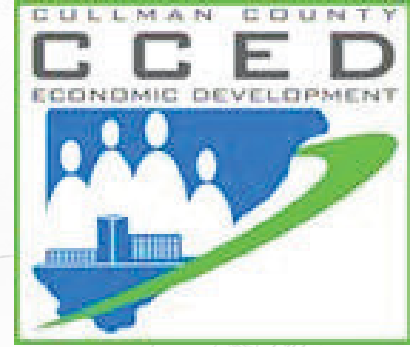
Seth Ingram drilled a trey from the right wing to give Cold Springs a 53-52 lead, but a pair of Yellow Jacket baskets gave them the lead right back at 56-53. The game got a little crazy after that, as a technical foul was called on Winston County for having too many players on the court. Bales put in both shots from the free-throw line to make it a 56-55 game.

The Eagles had a shot to win the game, and Day ended up getting fouled with 1.2 seconds left to go in the game. The freshman ended up hitting both free throws to give Cold Springs a 57-56 lead. The Eagles got a huge defensive stand on its final possession of the game, and they ended up getting a huge 57-56 win at home.

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Head Coach Nick Saban retires after 17 years at Alabama

Nick Griffin

nick@cullmantribune.com

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — After 17 seasons on the sidelines as the head coach of the Crimson Tide, Nick Saban announced his retirement in January. Alabama captured three BCS National Championships, three College Football Playoff National Championships and nine SEC Championships during Saban's tenure.

"The University of Alabama has been a very special place to Terry and me," Saban said. "We have enjoyed every minute of our 17 years being the head coach at Alabama as well as becoming a part of the Tuscaloosa community. It is not just about how many games we won and lost, but it's about the legacy and how we went about it. We always tried to do it the right way. The goal was always to help players create more value for their future, be the best player they could be and be more successful in life because they were part of the program. Hopefully, we have done that, and we will always consider Alabama our home."

Saban compiled a 297-71-1 (.806) collegiate coaching record, including a 206-29 (.877) mark in Tuscaloosa. His teams won a combined 11 SEC titles, going 11-1 in SEC Championship Games, including nine at Alabama (9-1 record) and two at LSU (2-0 mark). He also won 15 games with the Dolphins in 2005-06.

In Saban's six national championship seasons at Alabama, his teams went



MARTHA NEEDHAM/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

21-2 against top-10 opponents, and, since 2008, the Crimson Tide was 37-15 overall against top-10 teams. Alabama was also ranked No. 1 in the Associated Press Poll for at least one week for 15 straight years (2008-22), which broke the record of seven established by Miami (1986-92).

"Simply put, Nick Saban is one of the greatest coaches of all time, in any sport, and The University of Alabama is fortunate to have had him leading our football program for the past 17 seasons," said Alabama Director of Athletics Greg Byrne.

"Throughout his career as a head coach, his teams have won seven national championships, 11 conference

championships and 312 games, and he's developed an NCAA-record 49 NFL first-round draft picks and, most importantly, hundreds of college graduates. He is the consummate coach, mentor and leader, and his impact is felt far beyond the football field.

"Coach Saban and Ms. Terry have touched countless lives in our community and the state of Alabama with the work they've done through the Nick's Kids Foundation. While his time as our coach may have come to an end, his legacy will live on forever. What an honor it has been for us to have a front-row seat to one of the best to ever do it. A truly remarkable career for Coach Saban."

Saban coached four Heisman Trophy winners, joining Notre Dame's Frank Leahy for the most in college football history.

He is the only coach to ever coach Heisman Trophy winners at three different positions (RB, WR, QB).

The Alabama program had just six individual national award winners when Saban arrived on campus, but Crimson Tide players have secured 60 national awards since 2008.

His players at Alabama have won 66 All-America honors by 58 different individuals over the past 16 seasons. Eight players have been named two-time All-Americans along with 46 consensus honors and »

25 unanimous selections. Will Anderson Jr. became the first two-time unanimous All-American in Alabama history.

"Words cannot adequately express our appreciation to Coach Saban for his exemplary leadership and service to The University of Alabama over the past 17 years," said Alabama President Stuart R. Bell.

"His commitment to excellence has set the standard for our program, both on the

field and in the classroom. We are grateful for the lasting impact he has made on the lives of our student-athletes and the incredible memories his teams have created for our students, alumni, fans and supporters.

"Coach Saban and Ms. Terry are tremendous ambassadors for The University of Alabama and our community and we celebrate their many contributions and indelible legacy."

Saban's success has also translated to NFL success for his players with a record 49 players chosen in the first round of the draft (44 at Alabama).

His Alabama players have been paid over \$2 billion over the last 16 NFL seasons.

Alabama's success on the field over the past 17 seasons has coincided with the Tide's success in the classroom.

Since Saban's arrival in 2007, Alabama football has

seen a total of 656 degrees earned, including 103 master's degrees.

The Sabans Nick's Kids Foundation is a vibrant example of the family's continuing concern for disadvantaged children.

Since Nick and Terry arrived in Tuscaloosa, over \$12 million has been distributed to students, teachers and children's causes at over 150 charities through the Nick's Kids Foundation.



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- COUNTY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT -

Fairview edges West Point 33-28 to claim back to back JV county titles

Sammy Confer

sammy@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — West Point and Fairview clashed in Saturday's second county title game and for the second consecutive season, the Aggies are JV Boys County Champions. Points were hard to come by for both squads but a three-pointer from Zayden Cruce with 35 seconds on the clock put Fairview up by three and helped seal a 33-28 win and a county championship for the Aggies. Fairview Head Coach Logan Baird said his team relied on its defense throughout the game and was proud of the way they maintained their focus when shots weren't falling.

"We leaned on our defense and our defense was there for four quarters. I'm just really proud of these guys for the way they finished those four quarters."

Both teams dominated on defense to start out the game. Zayden Cruce knocked down a floater in the first few seconds to give Fairview the early lead, but Colton Thrower drained a trey from the right wing and Ayden Ennis added a basket in the paint to give West Point a 5-2 lead. Calin Collins buried a pair of free throws to cut it to 5-4, but a free throw by Asa



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The Fairview Aggies defeated West Point 33-28 Saturday to win their second consecutive JV Boys County Championship.

Sutter and a layup by Teagan Heaton gave the Warriors an 8-4 lead going into the second period.

Conner Scott knocked down a floater, and Cruce put in a jumper to tie the game up at eight. Nolan Franklin and Kolt Redding each traded baskets to keep the game tied up at 10. J.J. Minck banked in a floater, and Heaton added a basket in the paint to give West Point a 14-10 lead. Redding split his free throws to trim the Aggie deficit to just three at 14-11. The Warriors would take a three-point lead into the locker room.

Camden Cullen scored off a West Point turnover to cut it to 14-13, but a basket on the other end by Franklin gave the Warriors a 16-13 lead. Collins' and-one tied the game up at 16 early in the third. Later on, a trey by Ennis gave the Warriors a 19-18 lead. Redding, Cruce and Ty Babb each hit a free throw to give the Aggies the lead right back at 21-19 and they took a 2-point lead into the final period.

Collins and Thrower each traded baskets to keep it at a two-point game early in the fourth. A made shot by Cruce gave Fairview a 25-21

lead, but a steal and a layup by Franklin cut it to 25-23. A huge and-one by Asa Sutter gave West Point the lead right back at 26-25. Franklin added another steal and a layup to make it a 28-25 game with less than four minutes to go in the contest. Collins drilled three free throws to tie the game up at 28 with 2:23 remaining in the game. A big trey by Cruce from the left wing gave the Aggies a 31-28 with 35 seconds remaining in the contest. Collins added a pair from the line to help Fairview seal the 33-28 win over West Point to win the JV boys' »

county championship.

Collins finished with 12 points for Fairview in the win, and Cruce added 10 points. Franklin led the way for West Point with eight points in the loss.

JV Boys All-County Tournament Team

- Camden Cullen, Fairview
- Zayden Cruce, Fairview
- Nolan Franklin, West Point
- Sawyer Harris, West Point
- Ayden Black, Good Hope
- Kyle McSwain, Good Hope
- Hayden Robinson, Vinemont



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- PREP VOLLEYBALL -

'We play as a family and as a team'

Fairview's Kailyn Redding talks track, volleyball

Sammy Confer

sammy@cullmantribune.com

FAIRVIEW, Ala. — Fairview freshman Kailyn Redding represents the Aggies in both track & field and volleyball and she's coming off great seasons in both. Redding talked about what she learned during both seasons and shared some of her favorite experiences.

"I felt like I did really good. I got to state as an eighth grader in high jump. My even is definitely high jump. Our team, overall, did good. We always worked hard in our events, and we were like family. I learned how to jump really good. I learned the most from Abby Smith. She helped coach Haynes with all the events.

"Abby was the jumper coach. She, along with my mom, was really good at high jump. All three of us are all tied for the highest high jump at 5'2". Overall, my team was great, and I learned a lot that season. I can't wait for the season to start. I learned to keep pushing, even when you get tired. It will make you better. Never give up."

Redding learned a lot from some great people and some amazing coaches.

"Being around this group of people was amazing. I loved the environment, and there were some great people I got to hang around with every day. Track introduced me to more friends. I made so many more friends, and they were some great teammates. I learned

how to pace myself. They helped me, while running, how to pace myself in the running events I was in," Redding said.

"My coaches were amazing. They were some of the best coaches I've ever had. They push you to be the best of your ability every single day with no shortcuts.

"I can't wait for next season. I learned how to be a great teammate. They always taught me how to be a great teammate towards others. They also taught us to have a great and positive attitude."

Redding saw a ton of improvement in her performance throughout the season. She talked about some important goals for herself and for the team this upcoming season.

"I saw a ton of improvement in my performance. From the beginning, I was jumping 4'6", and now, I'm jumping 5'2", trying to beat the record me, my sister, and my coach currently hold. I improved the most on my high jumping," she said.

"My goal is to beat the school record. Our team goals are to push hard every single day and meet our standards that we have set for ourselves."

She talked about what made this group of people special to be around, how important it is to be a role model for the younger girls that are watching her compete in track and field, and what she learned the most about herself and this team »



Fairview's Kailyn Redding

KAILYN REDDING

this past season.

"They all wanted to work hard. We always got there and was ready to work. I really loved this group," she said.

"It's very important. Giving your best shows the younger girls to try their hardest. I love being a role model for the younger girls. I want to show them how to put the work in.

"What I learned the most about myself this past season is that I am a really positive athlete. If you get out there and work, it will pay off in the end.

"From this group of people, I learned that, even though we're all at different paces, we should still work our best, and that's enough. If you give it your all, then that's all you have to do."

Last season was Redding's first year on the JV volleyball team and she had a lot of fun during this experience and took away so much from last year.

"I think the season went very well. We had some really good hitters and passers. I think we played great overall as a team. We lost some games, but learned from those mistakes and fixed them at practice; we came out next game and did our best.

"I learned a lot, mostly from coach Stanley and from my sister, Kabri. I improved a lot on my hitting from what I learned from them. Overall, I think the season went very well," she said.

"One of the main things I learned from last season was how to improve on my hitting. At the beginning of the season, I was struggling with getting the ball down, but coach Stanley watched multiple videos, and at practice, I would come in and fix it.

"Of course, it didn't take one day, but after weeks

of working on it, I finally improved and fixed my hitting. I also learned a lot about my passing. I would always swing and not move my feet, but with the higher passing percentage, a lot of people on my team helped me out with that, and I definitely improved a lot on my passing."

She loved playing with this group of teammates and learned so much from not only them, but from coach Stanley as well.

"It was definitely one of my favorite things. Even though we cut up and had some fun at practice, we also had points where we got the job done. I was so close with every one of these girls on the team.

"They are so kind, and every girl on this team was determined to push and put in the work to reach our goal. I definitely loved these girls. I learned how to not only be a better person, but a better teammate.

"Even though we cut up in practice, we still got in there and put the work in. I really enjoyed being around them. They were the girls that pushed me to work harder every day and who were there every play and every game. They were definitely a great group of girls to be around."

She added, "Coach Stanley was one of my favorite coaches. It was her second-year coaching, but my first year playing for her. She was a very sweet coach but pushed us to put the work in to achieve our goal.

"She definitely knew how to coach, and she was very good at it. I loved her style of coaching. She would get to practice early, and she would leave late, so anyone that needed extra work; she could work with them. She would, individually, tell you what you did wrong and how to fix it.

"That's what I loved the most. Overall, she was an amazing coach, and I loved playing for her. The one thing that stuck that I learned from her is how to push myself. She would strive me to push myself every day.

"She motivated me to put the work in. She watched videos of me hitting all the time and came to practice and helped me fix it. She would go above and beyond to do everything she could to help me get better. She definitely taught me a lot about my hitting. She helped me improve a lot."

Redding saw her game improve greatly from the start of the season until now and talked about her goals and the team goals for next season.

"I improved a lot, mainly in my hitting, but also in my passing. All the drills in our practices really helped a lot with those. I improved the most on my hitting. Towards the end of the season, I was getting a lot stronger and definitely hitting it a lot harder," she said.

"My goals are to get up every day and put in the work, be one of the best hitters on the team, and be a leader. I work every day, and I want to lead the team one day. Our team goal is to win the county championship.

"Last season, we came up just short of winning the county championship. It is definitely our goal to win it this year."

She was happy to be a part of a special team last season, and the Lady Aggies will definitely look to have another special season in 2024.

She talked about her role model in volleyball and some great advice that her dad, Aggies head football coach George Redding, gave her.

"This team had something really special. I think the culture part was big. We

were always ready to work. We had every girl on the team doing their part and working their hardest to make this team great. The way we play together will be what will make us special to watch next season. We play as a family and as a team. We were all really close, and I think we played really well together," she said.

"My role model is definitely my sister, Kabri. She pushed me to work every day. At the end of the JV season, I got to finish the season on varsity, and it was my first and last chance to ever play volleyball with her. It was such a great time.

"I loved getting a chance to play with her. I learned how to not get down on myself when I mess up. When the game is faster and it's a big step up from JV, you will make mistakes, but Kabri really taught me to not get down and make it up on the next play."

She added, "My dad always say to give it our best and give it your all every day. He's my number one supporter and the one that I can go to for anything about sports. He's the person that pushes me harder than anyone."

Redding talked about how important it is to be a role model for the younger girls that are watching her play and what she learned the most about herself and this team.

"I think it is very important. They watch every move, even though, sometimes, you don't think they are. You're always being watched by someone, so working hard every day will definitely encourage the younger girls to do the same," she said.

"I learned that if I work hard, it will all pay off in the end. As a team, we all worked hard, and it paid off in the end."

- COUNTY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT - JV Lady Raiders capture county title with 43-32 win over Cold Springs

Sammy Confer

sammy@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — We tipped off Championship Saturday the Cullman County Tournament with the JV Girls finals between Good Hope and Cold Springs and the Lady Raiders led on the scoreboard from start to finish, defeating the Lady Eagles 43-32 and capturing the county title. Good Hope led 21-6 at one point and had to withstand a rally from Cold Springs to earn this year's county championship. Good Hope Head Coach Nina Moss was proud of the way her team fended off the push from the Lady Eagles and credits the extra work she has seen them put in all season.

"I'm just really proud of the girls. They've worked really hard, and this has been our goal all season," Moss said. "They put a lot of extra work in outside of practice time and I think that's what made the difference."

Maddie Davis put in a basket in the paint to put Cold Springs on the scoreboard first, but a driving layup by Ella Gossett tied the game up at two. Lexi Marshall drilled a trey from the left wing, and Lucie Adams knocked down a layup to give Good Hope a 7-2 lead with 3:35 remaining



NICK GRIFFIN/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The Good Hope Lady Raiders defeated Cold Springs 43-32 to win this year's JV Girls County Championship Game.

in the opening period. Layups by Marshall and Cadence Watson stretched the Lady Raider lead to 11-2. Jordan Sanders banked in a floater to make it a 13-3 lead for Good Hope late in the first quarter, but a trey by Avery Gerstman from the right wing cut it to 13-6. Lucie Adams scored the final four points of the quarter for the Lady Raiders, including a three before the buzzer, to give them a 17-6 lead going into the second period.

Layups by Gossett and Adams pushed Good Hope's lead to 21-6 early in the second, but four straight points by Baylee Perdue

and a jumper off the glass by Kaydance Williams made it a 21-12 game with 3:26 remaining in the first half.

A rebound and putback by Marshall gave the Lady Raiders a 23-12 lead, but Perdue drained a long jumper to cut it to 23-14. A rebound and putback by Williams made it a 24-16 game late in the first half. Good Hope would take an eight-point lead into the half.

Both teams traded a few baskets to start the third period, then a layup by Sanders and a floater by Gossett increased the Lady Raider lead to 32-20. A pair

of free throws by Macie Huffstutler made it a 33-22 game with a little over two minutes to go in the third quarter.

Sanders put in a layup, then later on, Gossett scored through a foul and made the free throw to give the Lady Raiders a 38-24 lead going into the final period.

Huffstutler drained a three to trim the Good Hope lead to 38-27, but a layup on the other end by Gossett made it a 40-27 game. Perdue split her free throws, and Williams made a basket in the paint to cut it to 40-30, but a trey from the left corner »

by Adams gave the Lady Raiders a 43-30 lead. Good Hope would go on to collect a 43-32 win over Cold Springs to take home the JV Girls county championship.

Adams led the way for

Good Hope with 14 points in the win and Gossett finished with 10. Perdue posted 11 points for Cold Springs and Williams added nine points.

JV GIRLS ALL-COUNTY

TOURNAMENT TEAM

- Ella Gossett, Good Hope
- Jordan Sanders, Good Hope
- Lucie Adams, Good Hope
- Maci Huffstutler, Cold

Springs

- Kaydance Williams, Cold Springs
- Mary Beth Penn, West Point
- Millie McBee, Holly Pond
- Blakely Baggett, Holly Pond



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- COUNTY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT - Good Hope downs West Point 60-39 to win 3rd straight county championship

Nick Griffin

nick@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — For the third consecutive season, the Good Hope Lady Raiders are Cullman County Champions. Good Hope built a 34-22 lead in the first half and pulled away in the final two periods to earn a 60-39 win over West Point and a third straight county title. After the game, Raider standouts Bailey Tetro and Ava McSwain, along with head coach Justin Aby, shared their thoughts on the latest county title.

"It feels great. I love this team very much and I'm just proud of us," Tetro said. "I think it just shows that all the hard work we're putting in is paying off and I'm excited for the rest of this season to see what we can do."

"It means a lot," McSwain said. "It was a great win and we've been preparing really hard for this but this is not our end goal."

"Like the girls said, this means a lot to us and I'm extremely proud of them," Aby said. "This is the third one in a row that we've won and it's really a reflection of how much work and time these girls put in. It's a great group



MARTHA NEEDHAM/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The Good Hope Lady Raiders defeated West Point 60-39 Saturday night to claim their third straight county championship.

of girls who love the game of basketball."

The Lady Raiders got off to a great start. Baskets by Ivey Maddox and Ava McSwain put Good Hope in front 4-0 and Maddox added back to back three-pointers to make it a 10-0 game. Bailey Tetro laid one in and split a pair of free throws to give the Lady Raiders a 13-0 lead, but Laklin Shadix scored the next five points on the other end to get West Point on the board

and cut the lead to 13-5. However, Good Hope capped the opening period with a 9-0 scoring run and went into the second leading 22-5.

Camryn Faulker drilled a three-pointer and Kylee Quinn scored in the paint to bring the lead down to 22-10 early in the second but baskets by Heather Tetro and Jolee McHan helped keep the Lady Raiders in front 26-11. Quinn sank a pair of free throws and Liberty Shadix laid one in to

make it a 26-15 game with three minutes remaining in the half. Baskets by Maddox and McSwain gave Good Hope a 30-17 lead with less than two minutes two on the clock and Charly Johnson scored a pair of buckets in the final minute of the period to put the Lady Raiders ahead 34-22 at the halftime break.

A basket from Liberty Shadix and a free throw from Laklin Shadix made it a 34-25 game early in the third »

but baskets by Johnson and Maddox on the other end kept Good Hope in front 38-25. A Kealie Harbison bucket helped trim the lead to 40-27 midway through the third quarter but three-pointers by Maddox and McSwain helped build the Raider lead back up to 48-29 later in the period. Harbison exchanged scores with McHan in the final two minutes of the third to make it a 50-31 game with just eight minutes to play.

Maddox laid one in to give Good Hope a 52-31 advantage early in the fourth quarter and later in the period, Heather Tetro buried a three-pointer

to make it a 56-35 game. Maddox knocked down another three to give the Lady Raiders a commanding, 60-37 lead with a minute to play and Good Hope went on to claim its third straight county crown with a 60-39 win over the Lady Warriors.

Maddox led the way for the Lady Raiders with 22 points in the win, followed by McSwain with 13. Quinn and Laklin Shadix each posted 10 points for West Point in the loss.

Varsity Girls All-County Tournament Team

- Ivey Maddox, Good Hope

- Ava McSwain, Good Hope
- Heather Tetro, Good Hope
- Liberty Shadix, West Point
- Laklin Shadix, West Point
- Hallie Wheeler, West Point
- Malaya Taylor, Cold Springs
- Maci Brown, Cold Springs
- Whitney Quick, Vinemont
- Maggie Burks, Vinemont

Varsity Girls All-County Basketball Team

- Bailey Tetro, Good Hope
- Heather Tetro, Good Hope
- Ivey Maddox, Good Hope
- Ava McSwain, Good Hope
- Liberty Shadix, West Point
- Hallie Wheeler, West Point
- Jaelyn Faulkner, West Point
- Ella Bruer, Cold Springs

- Maci Brown, Cold Springs
- Ella Dickerson, Cold Springs
- Ava Thomas, Holly Pond
- Madison Butts, Holly Pond
- Reagan Robinson, Vinemont
- Whitney Quick, Vinemont
- Kate Sterling, Hanceville

2024 Charlotte Cummings Memorial Scholarship Winner

- Kamryn Tankersley, Holly Pond

2024 Bill Shelton Award Winner

- Ivey Maddox & Bailey Tetro, Good Hope



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- COUNTY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT - Raiders claim County Championship with 69-55 win over West Point

Nick Griffin

nick@cullmantribune.com

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — Good Hope and West Point battled it out in Saturday night's final County Championship Game and the Raiders put together a dominant second quarter to create some separation and held off the Warriors in the second half to win it 69-55 and capture this year's county title.

The Raiders went into the locker room with a 19-point lead at halftime, but Head Coach Drew Adams knew his team couldn't afford to get too comfortable.

"I've always been about never being comfortable until a game ends and this team knows we can't be comfortable because we blew a 16-point lead to Fairview in December, so we know that no lead is safe against a good team. Fairview was a good team and West Point is a good team. So, I think we were up 19 or 20 at halftime but we knew it wasn't safe," Adams said. "The main thing is on the defensive side we just have to continue to get stops so no we were not comfortable with that one until there was about a minute left."

The county championship isn't the only goals the Raiders have set for themselves this season but Adams is proud of the way his guys competed throughout the week to bring home some very meaningful



MARTHA NEEDHAM/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

The Good Hope Raiders defeated West Point 69-55 Saturday night to win this year's County Championship.

hardware.

"These guys know that the one thing that has gotten us in the last five or six years is, we've won some county championships but man we want to get back to Regionals and make some noise there so that's the ultimate goal," Adams said. "But, like I've told some other people, people around here make a really big deal about this tournament so if we're going to get to play in it, we want to do well, and the guys played really hard. They left nothing out there and they were relentless on Friday and Saturday night so even though this is not our

ultimate goal, it is a rung in the ladder that we wanted for accomplishing that goal."

K'mal Bell drilled a three-pointer and Tucker Malin scored inside to give the Raiders a 5-0 start in the opening period and after Bell split a pair of free throws, Malin knocked down a jumper to make it 8-0. Kolten Perry split a pair of free throws on the other end to get the Warriors on the board, but Weston Hancock scored in the paint to put Good Hope in front 10-1. Baskets by Perry and Jacob Harbison trimmed the lead to 10-5

midway through the first, but the Raiders responded with buckets from Bell and Tyler Cone to make it a 14-5 game. JD Cochran hit a pair of free throws to bring the lead down to 14-7 and West Point managed to cut it all the way to 17-11 by the end of the first quarter.

Cade Welborn nailed a three to cut the deficit to 19-14 early in the second quarter but it was all Good Hope after that. The Raiders finished the period on a 22-6 run, fueled mostly by Bell and Cone, to take a commanding, 41-20 lead into the locker room at halftime. »

Baskets by Cochran and Perry made it a 41-24 game to start the third quarter, but Malin answered with another three-pointer and Cone dunked one in transition to keep Good Hope ahead 46-24. Maddox Chapman and Cochran both scored in the paint to hold the lead to 18 and Jay Lamar laid one in to trim the lead to 46-30.

A pair of Harbison baskets cut the lead to 55-39 early in the final frame but Bell sank a pair of free throws and Dakota Overton converted an and-one play to keep the Raiders in front 60-41 with five minutes to play. Bell

lobbed one up for Cone in transition and he caught it at the rim and laid it in to make it a 62-41 game. Back to back buckets by Cochran on the other end brought the lead down to 62-45 midway through the fourth and the Warriors wouldn't go away, cutting the lead to 13 with just over a minute on the clock. However, the effort wasn't enough to overcome Good Hope's lead and the Raiders captured this year's county crown with a 69-55 win over West Point.

Bell led the way for Good Hope with 23 points in the win and Cone finished with

19. Cochran led the Warriors with 20 points in the loss.

Varsity Boys All-County Basketball Team

- Tucker Malin, Good Hope
- Tyler Cone, Good Hope
- K'mal Bell, Good Hope
- Weston Hancock, Good Hope
- Kolten Perry, West Point
- Jay Lamar, West Point
- Carson Garrett, Hanceville
- Noah Jones, Hanceville
- Kollin Brown, Holly Pond
- Coles Bales, Cold Springs
- Blake Rickard, Fairview
- Kobe Payne, Fairview
- Isaiah Jones, Vinemont
- Jordan Eller, Vinemont

Varsity Boys All-County Tournament Team

- K'mal Bell, Good Hope
- Tucker Malin, Good Hope
- Kollin Brown, Holly Pond
- Jay Lamar, West Point
- Kolten Perry, West Point
- Landun Smith, Fairview
- Kobe Payne, Fairview

Eli Thomas Memorial Scholarship Winner

- Cole Bales, Cold Springs

Joe Shults Award Winner

- Kollin Brown, Holly Pond

Sammy Confer contributed to this story.

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- PREP CHEER -

'Work hard and never give up on yourself, your team, or your goals'

West Point's Roxy Orshoski enjoying freshman season

Sammy Confer

sammy@cullmantribune.com

WEST POINT, Ala. — West Point freshman cheerleader Roxy Orshoski is enjoying her first season as a varsity cheerleader and has already learned a lot from her teammates and coaches.

"It's definitely a big change from middle school. It's way tougher to be a varsity cheerleader, but it is so worth it. It's been such an amazing experience, getting stronger and creating bonds with lovely people. It's a whole lot more competitive. I've learned that hard work pays off. We've all worked together as a team this year, and we've come so far. We have all developed skills to make us stronger athletes. We have accomplished things that we haven't done before, all because of the hard work and effort everyone has contributed."

Orshoski feels blessed to be around an amazing group of teammates and has learned so much from all of them. She also talked about how much having guys on the team has helped her become an even stronger cheerleader.

"It's been so fun and enjoyable being around these amazing people. I've watched, first-hand, as all of them have improved in so many different ways. They are all so »



West Point's Roxy Orshoski

ROXY ORSHOSKI

kindhearted and thoughtful people. There's never a dull moment with any of them. I've learned so many different things from each person. For example, I feel I've picked up leadership skills and social skills from them. I've also learned reliability and accountability. They have all taught me so much."

She added, "I love having the guys on the team. They are all such bright people. It's been different, but in such a good way. They have been important assets to the team. All of them are so strong in so many different ways. They contribute to the success of our team."

"They are all so strong and have improved in everything. I've got to say that their jumps are so high, and that the co-ed stunts they throw up are so strong. I've learned to be stronger with them on the team."

Orshoski has already learned a lot of important things from head coach Kristy McCrickard. She has been cheering for six years now and has soaked up so much from that experience so far.

"She's outstanding, not only as a coach, but as a person. I think I speak for everyone on the team when I say that she has taught us all determination and kindness. She's helped me to grow as an athlete and as a person in general. She's truly a role model and an amazing coach," she said. "I've learned what I'm passionate about and to become a better athlete. It's truly been a blessing to be able to cheer for West Point all this time. I wouldn't trade it for anything else. I'm so very thankful for this experience."

Orshoski has seen so much

improvement in her performance from the start of the season to now.

"I've improved so much in stunting, tumbling, and my jumps. At the beginning of the season, I wasn't even thinking about having a back-tuck, but I've been working on them and almost have one. My jumps have not only improved in height, but they have also improved in sharpness. I've also worked with several stunt groups to achieve new skills."

"What I've improved on the most is my tumbling. My eighth-grade year, I couldn't even do a standing back hand-spring, but now, I have round off to multiple backhand springs, and I'm working on my tuck. I've gotten a lot of help from my teammates and my coaches along the way."

She talked about the team's goals they set before the season and what they've already accomplished so far.

"Our goal was to make it to state, and we exceeded that goal. We got a bid to Nationals. We will prepare better for Nationals next year. In conclusion, we not only achieved going to state, we placed first in the 5A division at Super Regionals and got

a bid to Nationals. It felt so amazing to achieve all of it. I was so proud of everyone, and as soon as we achieved all of our goals, that's when I knew that all of our hard work had paid off."

Orshoski talked about a few of her role models in cheerleading, what has made this cheer team special to be around and the best advice that someone has ever given her.

"Emma Kimbril is basically my cheer big sister. She's inspired me in so many ways. She always makes sure I'm taken care of and always helps me with anything that she can help me with. She is a great cheerleader, and I've created a special bond with her this season. I also not only want to thank coach McCrickard, but also Ashley Wilbanks and Kristy Patterson. They have helped us improve tremendously, and I am so thankful for that," she said.

"What has made this cheer team special to be around is that they all have good qualities and amazing personalities. They're also easy to work with, and I feel like that's the most important attribute a team should have.

The best advice that someone has ever given me is to do my best, even if I feel unnoticed."

Even though she is only a freshman this year, Orshoski still feels like it's really important to be a role model for the younger cheerleaders, and she talked about what she has learned the most about herself and this team so far.

"It's so important to me that I am a role model to the younger cheerleaders, because I was them at one point, and I always looked up to the older cheerleaders and wanted to be like them. I believe it's important that, not just me, but everyone on our team sets a good example for the younger cheerleaders," she said.

"I've learned that becoming a stronger cheerleader requires hard work and dedication. I've learned that being able to work with your team is really important, especially this team, and I've learned that this team has been very successful."

Orshoski gave the younger girls that want to be in her shoes one day some advice.

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Hidden gem: Vintage Magnolias



CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

Vintage Magnolias Owner Maggie Sotelo rests against an antique table in one of her vendor booths.

Cheyenne Sharp

cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

Sandwiched between the Hanceville Public Library and Hanceville Drug Company along Commercial Street is a treasure hunter's dream, Maggie

Sotelo's Vintage Magnolias. There are rows of booths with vintage and handmade items, with each booth vetted and chosen by Sotelo, a purveyor of vintage and antique items.

Sotelo said she wanted the atmosphere of her store to

encourage openness and a calmness, not the cluttered, overwhelming stimulation one might feel in a typical thrift, antique or vendor shop.

Each vendor must have a cohesive product to fit Sotelo's brand, one that is working well

for her store.

"I've always been a lover and collector of antiques; it's always been my thing," said Sotelo as she looked around the booths and shelves filled with displays of quirky and collectible items. "My career was in marketing »

in southern California.

"So when I retired and we moved to Alabama I was looking for something to do, and I started volunteering for hospice for quite a few years and started making little bookmarks.

"I rented a little shelf space and sold my bookmarks. I began collecting beautiful brooches and items as I grew into larger booths. My collection grew and I knew I wanted to open a nice antique store, one where we could all just hang out.

"In this business, you find that we have all been in this business for years and everyone is so kind and I wanted to create a friendly environment."

Spotlighting local artisans is what it's all about in Sotelo's eyes, as the first vendor in a customer's line of sight upon walking in the door is an extraordinary potter, teenager Marie Rhodes, the high schooler behind Mud Toad Pottery.

A large buffet is home to Rhodes' creations, including fired vases and dishes in bright cobalt blue, the imperfect swirls lending to the beauty of each piece.

"Her work is so beautiful, I have quite a few of her pieces myself," Sotelo mused.

One shining vendor in the shop specializes in primitive antiques, or antiques from Colonial times or the very early American era. Lakeside Lodge lends some of its items to be sold inside Sotelo's shop, mostly purchased by cabin and lake homeowners.

Housing items from antique children's rockers to hand-woven and beaded Native American trinket baskets, the booth is a unique collective of days gone by.

"They're really experts in this field. They bring in a lot of

tools, a lot of their merchandise is from the New England states," Sotelo said. "They offer a lot of magazines and brochures that specialize in that era. They participate in and bring a lot of their things into the Peinhardt Farm Days for their living history programs."

The wares the vendors of Vintage Magnolias offer are unique and likely one of a kind.

While antiques were the main draw of the store, one vendor's handmade creations have taken the community by storm: Gypsy Soul Creations by Terry Kinderman Preston.

Upcycled and new clothing items hang on racks surrounded by hand-quilted bucket hats that Sotelo said have been

all the rage this season. Hair clips and embroidered pillows fill baskets and shelves and a wicker cabinet holds the booth's top sellers: stuffed animals of all kinds - horses, unicorns, pigs and cats - all made from vintage handmade quilting.

"Terry is so talented; her booth is a huge hit with our customers. It's easy to find gifts in here (Vintage Magnolias) because there is almost sure to be something for everyone," Sotelo smiled.

Some of the vendors in Vintage Magnolias aren't antique, vintage or handmade, as one booth is a new and exciting venture for Sotelo and her store.

The new second-hand boutique space is packed out with trendy boutique items such as Umgee and Cello at a fraction of boutique costs.

The light and airy shop has an upscale, vintage feel, with wood finishes and exposed beams revealing the building's true history and heritage.

The atmosphere is a testament to Sotelo's dedication to providing a friendly and comfortable experience for shoppers.

Vintage Magnolias is located at 111 Commercial Street and can be reached by phone at 256-385-0652. The shop's operating hours are Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

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Meet honky-tonker Jerry Parker

Cheyenne Sharp

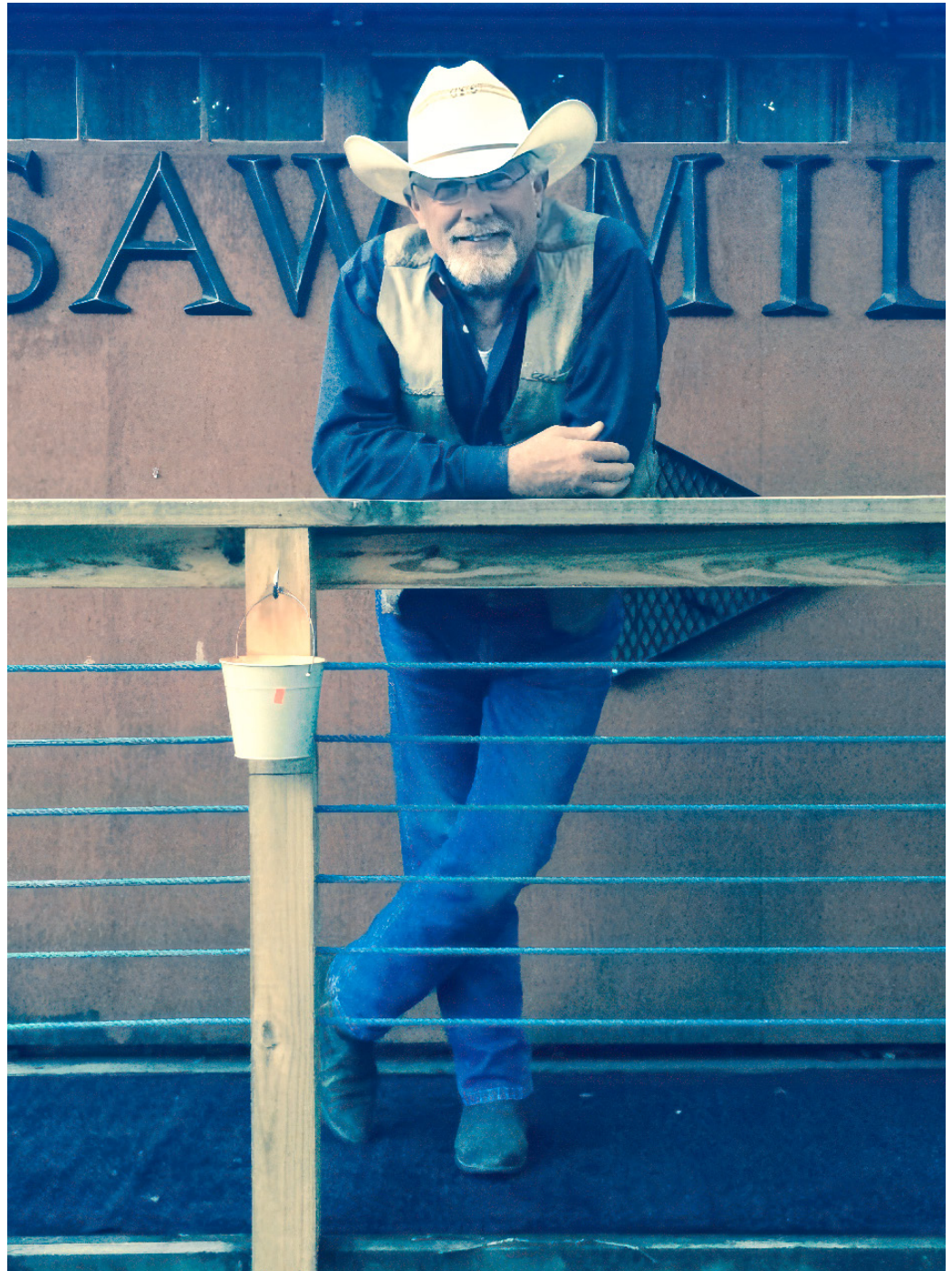
cheyenne@cullmantribune.com

Pulling up to Jerry Parker's pride and joy, The Saw Mill, is like nothing you'll find anywhere else in Cullman County. Tucked behind the Deer Run subdivision along rows of picture-perfect homes and manicured front lawns lies a twisting driveway that leads to Cullman's very own honky-tonk - a place for the community to come together and have a great time, The Saw Mill.

"We built the house about 33 years ago and the woodshop that would eventually be The Saw Mill three years after that," said Parker.

The house on the hill didn't always have neon lights and thumping music; 33 years ago, Parker and his wife Becky chose a plot of land and decided to build a sweet, unassuming home and quaint woodshop. Parker is an educated machinist by trade, a Navy veteran by honorable discharge and a community pillar by his own doing.

A jack of all trades, Parker has had his fingers in many career pies, from a blossoming photography business that »



Jerry Parker stands outside The Saw Mill.

CHEYENNE SHARP/THE CULLMAN TRIBUNE

was locally successful and featured in local restaurants and businesses, to lead machinist for large corporations, to a handyman for hire.

Moving the way the wind blows is an atmosphere in which Parker thrives, and when an opportunity to create a handyman for hire business presented itself, he said he jumped and jumped fast.

"At the time I was the only handyman service in Cullman County," said Parker, chuckling as he remembered the "glory days." "I worked for 350 widowed women. They would call me to change a lightbulb!"

When another handyman swept in and cut Parker's business in half, Parker said, he decided that was the right time to shift career paths once again, this time pivoting toward woodworking.

At first, he thought a cabinet shop was a good fit, but after speaking with friend Eddie Williams, who owned his own cabinetry business, Parker decided to go the route of what he called a "bastard Shop," meaning he had no specialty - it was all his specialty.

"I started building fireplaces, dining room tables, furniture; then I got into 40-foot conference tables for corporations," Parker said.

"I was doing most of my work in Homewood and I got hooked up with Shaia's Men's Store in Homewood and they were sending me their customers that wanted

custom woodworking. The Bruno's family, Mr. Cheathwood that owns the Milo's stores, Dr. Andrews the sports surgeon were all people I worked with."

Business slowed as time went on, and Parker said he saw the perfect opportunity to officially retire from the traditional 8-5 world. He chose to spend time with his wife and begin chasing dreams he put on the back burner throughout the years.

The Parkers have always been avid dancers and proponents of a good time.

After a night of dancing the western two-step and tripping over other couples on the dance floor, Parker said, he had enough and decided right then to create his very own honky-tonk, a place that allowed freedom of expression and the right to do whatever he wanted with his space - which included a larger dance floor.

When Parker retired from his woodworking business, he sold off all his specialized equipment, leaving him with an empty shop and space to make his own hang-out and dance spot with enough room for all.

Somewhere folks can come have a good time, sing karaoke and listen to live music performed by up-and-comers and old-pickers alike.

Pointing to the new stage at The Saw Mill, Parker smiled and recalled, "I sat right there on a sheetrock bucket with my sketch pad and I started plans on a honky-tonk. Then I started working on it."

After unsuccessful bids

for mayor of Cullman and a seat on the Cullman County Commission, Parker said, he made plans to make Cullman County a better place on his own. Opening his property to friends in a safe way was the goal.

His backyard shed was quickly transformed into what is now a neon-lighted music joint, with tables, chairs, updated bathrooms and a full stage for live performances - a place where people can hear new artists, safely cut loose and enjoy

each other's company.

An offshoot of his dream - Parker's nonprofit Saw Mill Records - assists and helps prepare hopeful musicians for a career in the music industry by connecting them with contacts all over the country for help with demo tracks, composing and more.

"It's all about helping people," smiled Parker. "Helping them through life and what they want to do and having a good time while doing it."

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