

June 4th - June 17th, 2021

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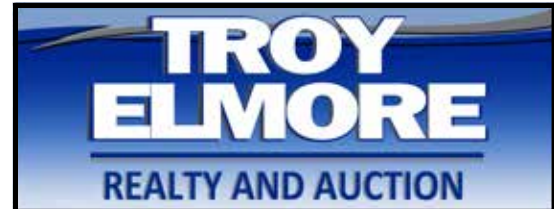


E-MAIL: info@athensnowal.com

ADVERTISING:

Ali Elizabeth: 256-468-9425

Degan Wilder: 256-426-2493



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All Things Soldier

Introducing USAF
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Bates, Founder Of
Poemspeak...

Last week, I had the
pleasure of meeting
Steven Bates, a
medically discharged
Air Force Tech Sgt
who is...
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Tina's Tales

*Up From the Grave I
Arose...*

It's been almost a
decade since I stood
at the crossroads.
The decision before
me was quite simply
LIFE or DEATH...
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Tourism

*Celebrate Fresh Air,
Family-Fun, And Local
Favorites this June...*

June is here and
it's time to think
about outdoor fun –
especially...

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Allsport Of Decatur Showcasing Spartan Mowers

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

On April 6, 1974, lifelong motocross racing fan Steve Armstrong opened a power sports store in Decatur three days after the legendary tornadoes of that year. The storms were so strong that the bikes arrived with every single one of the shipping boxes stripped off, but they were unscathed, and Steve's shop was off and running with a \$5,000 loan, a floor plan, a box of tools, and stunning customer service.

It didn't hurt that Steve had spent 14 years racing for Team Yamaha, and his time coach-



Continued on pages 16-17

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Publisher / Editor
Ali Turner

Copy Editor
Yvonne Dempsey

Sales & Distribution
Degan Wilder

Graphic Design
Jonathan Hamilton

Web Design
Teddy Wolcott

Contributing Writers

D. A. Slinkard
Lisa Philippart
Leigh Patterson
Anna Hamilton
Joel Allen
Cayce Lee
Jerry Barksdale
Steve Leland
Lana Woody
Tina Cook

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Publisher's Point

Waymaker

In 2015, a Nigerian female gospel singer by the name of Sinach (pronounced Sin 'atch) was on a long flight from the States back to Africa, which gave her plenty of time to inwardly wrestle with God about the story of Abram before he became Abraham. She knew she was being called out of her emotional and spiritual comfort zone into an unknown place, and it was on that plane that He assured her that He was the Way Maker and the Promise Keeper. It was also on that flight that she wrote "Waymaker," and recorded it when she got home. Sinach went on to top playlists and win several awards, and as of a year ago, it had 150 million hits. In ways she was surprised by what happened, and in ways

the impact was something consistent with things she had experienced between her and her Lord when she was a little girl in an unsettled nation.

By 2020, the song "Waymaker" had become a "surthriver" song as we faced a weird global pandemic, and the song had virally circled the globe. People gathered in parking lots outside of hospitals and sang it. Italians on their balconies sang it, as did Koreans, Brazilians, and more than 50 language versions showed up on YouTube while people were hunkered down riding out this strange pestilence. Korean kids did an unplugged version, there is a reggae version, and prior to the lockdown, there were versions sung with thousands in the

room at once.

Michael W. Smith had a number one hit version of the song, and he sang it at his drive-in concert in Nashville last year. He also recorded it in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Forbes Magazine wrote an article about Smith's cover entitled, "Michael W. Smith's Cover Of 'Waymaker' Becomes the Go-To Comfort Song In A Global Pandemic." The Pentecostals of Alexandria did an 11-minute version, and you need to see the passion with which the female drummer fulfills Psalm 150. It is a sight to behold. Here are the lyrics, and I would encourage you to find the version that most lifts your spirits into a place of worship, and then get after it.

Waymaker

Verse: 1

You are here, moving in our midst/ I worship You, I worship You

You are here, working in this place/ I worship You, I worship You

Chorus:

And You are Way maker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the darkness My God, that is who You are

Verse: 2

You are here, turning lives around/ I worship You, I worship You

You are here, healing every heart/ I worship You, I worship You

Chorus: several times

Bridge:

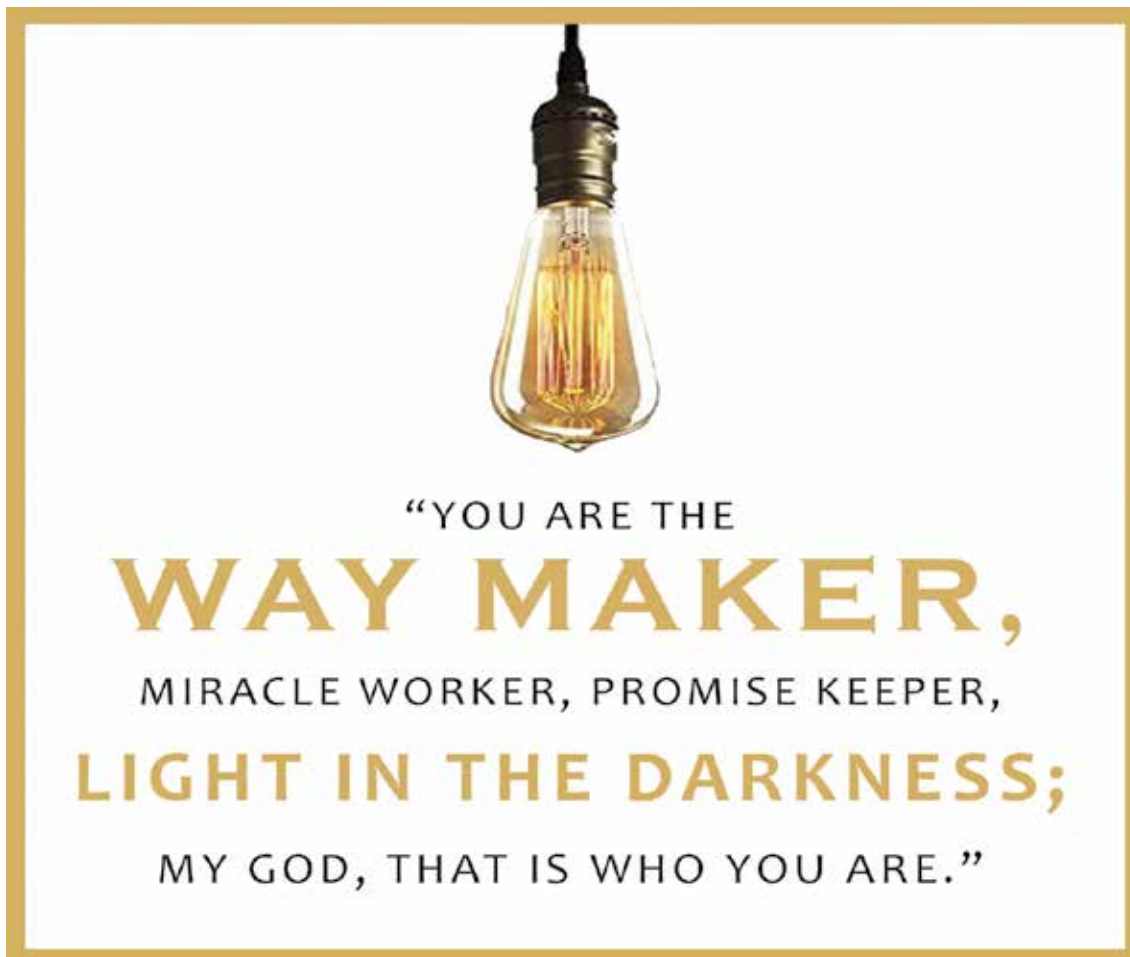
Even when I don't see it, You're workin'/Even when I don't feel it, You're workin'

You never stop, You never stop workin'/You never stop, You never stop workin'

Chorus and bridge until you are finished reminding yourself of who He is, and loving Him for it. And remember, even when you don't see it or feel it, He's workin'. He never stops, He never stops workin.' He can't help Himself!

Ali Elizabeth Turner

Ali Elizabeth Turner
Athens Now
Information & Inspiration
256-468-9425
ali@athensnowal.com
Website:
www.athensnowal.com



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Introducing USAF TSgt (DV) Steven Bates, Founder Of Poemspeak

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting Steven Bates, a medically discharged Air Force Tech Sgt who is totally transparent about his being disabled from PTSD. One of the ways Steven fights back is through writing poetry, and in addition, he has been deeply involved with helping vets who are fighting suicide, along with the families of vets who have experienced it. How is he so effective with the people I have just described? He is an attempt survivor himself, and has earned the right to speak to a profoundly painful set of topics with grit and hope.

Steven had several "large T and small t traumas" converge to form a perfect storm that just about took him out more than once. Some have been

service related; some have stemmed from suddenly being betrayed and becoming a single dad to a 7 month old while he was serving in Desert Shield; some have been physical, mental, and spiritual. The good news is, that rather than give in, he has chosen, along with his wife, Sandra, to give out and give back. They formed a 501(c)3 by the name of Poemspeak, and have given away countless copies of Steven's books and poems to strengthen strugglers, survivors, and their caregivers.

The fact that he was able to give almost twenty years of his life to honorably serving his country speaks to his integrity, determination, and love for others. He served in several capacities, including military



police and criminal justice, both in the Air Force and in the private sector.

Here is some of what he has to say about himself from his own bio, and more can be found out about him and the organization from www.poemspeak.org:

Steven's work in suicide prevention has continued to expand in

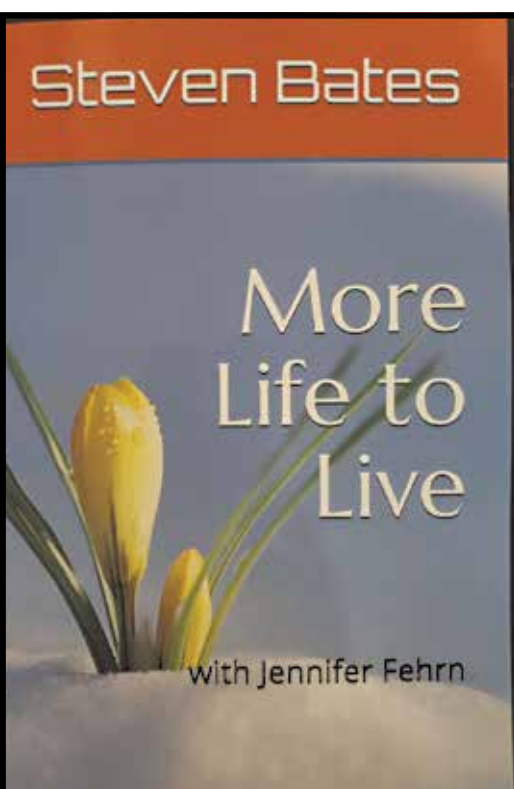


many ways. He has become certified in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), and

completed the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team Certification training course. For three years he served as a co-facilitator for a Suicide Attempt Survivor Support Group known as the Lived Experience for the non-profit Grace for 2 Brothers Foundation out of Cheyenne Wyoming.

Steven and his wife moved to Athens, Alabama, in December of 2020 when his wife gained employment at the Redstone Arsenal. He has immediately taken to Athens as his new home and established the Athens Adventurers, a Facebook group that meets at least once a month to play tabletop and board games at the Athens Library. He just released his fourth book of poetry, More Life to Live and is hoping that his poetry will continue to help others that are struggling by giving them hope.

As Steven, Sandra, and I sat at lunch after the Memorial Day ceremony, we laughed and got misty eyed about everything from suicide to cinema. We ended up deciding to share a table at tomorrow's Earth Day celebration at Big Spring Park from 11-2. I hope you will stop by and get to know a most excellent "surthrivor" veteran, husband, poet, and our new friend, Steven Bates. See you then!



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your sanity, your will to stay
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and it's taken you past the edge too far
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Healing comes to those who wait who take the pain along with fate for wounds will close, scars will fade
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spell them out and you will see they stand for what I promise you friends
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Tina's Tales

Up From the Grave I Arose

by Tina Cook

Director, Athens-Limestone County Family Resource Center

To my Debra & Vicki: Thanks for helping me pedal

It's been almost a decade since I stood at the crossroads. The decision before me was quite simply LIFE or DEATH. If I chose life, I knew exactly what it meant! You see, I've never really been a middle-of-the-road sort of person. In fact, I have always lived on one end of the spectrum or the other... either thriving or self-destructing with nothing in-between. So for me, choosing life was a decision to no longer flip-flop through life. The contradiction of who I had become was bizarre: I was the epitome of a pregnant woman who walks into an abortion clinic wearing a SAVE THE WHALES t-shirt. I also knew without a doubt what it meant if I did not choose life. It meant there would be no going back...no coming HOME to anything I had ever held dear. I would be choosing to let go of anything and anyone that had kept me from tumbling into the abyss. Yes, I was at the crossroad that would determine the rest of ME.

Believe it or not, the decision was hard. This seems unfathomable now but at the time, death really had its hooks in me. Fear was assuring

me that I would never fit into THAT world...hopelessness was reminding me I might as well not even try...the attraction of living on the edge was enticing me to stay. I had to dig really deep and make some unfamiliar choices to shush the voices enough so I could find a semblance of faith... a smidgen of hope... and just enough strength to begin tuning out my physical ears and mind so I could start tuning in my spiritual ones.

The further away from the voices and vices I got, the more I questioned how and where I had ended up! I started to wonder if perhaps familiarity is the enemy of blessings. For decades, I had consistently chosen what was familiar at the expense of God's favor, my family, friendships, and quality of life. I had done this over and over and over again in spite of the despair...the destitution...the destruction...the danger of my deadly lifestyle. It dawned on me that I was literally clawing myself out of the grave I called my life. Worst of all, that grave didn't want to let me go! The climb was so excruciating at times; it would have been easy to simply let myself slip back down



Tina and "her Debra"

into the comfortable numbness I knew awaited me. Ahhhh...but I had been doing some new things during my climb. I had been diving into Scripture and praying to be changed. Isaiah 55:11 says that God's word will accomplish all He wants it to, and it will prosper everywhere He sends it. It did just that for me right in the middle of the county jail. I decided on an improved death for

myself...the resurrecting kind that would release me from my self-induced grave and deliver me to safety so I could regain my lost dignity. So right there in my jail cell, I utterly died to Tina Cook and held a funeral to the woman who had been the walking dead for far too long.

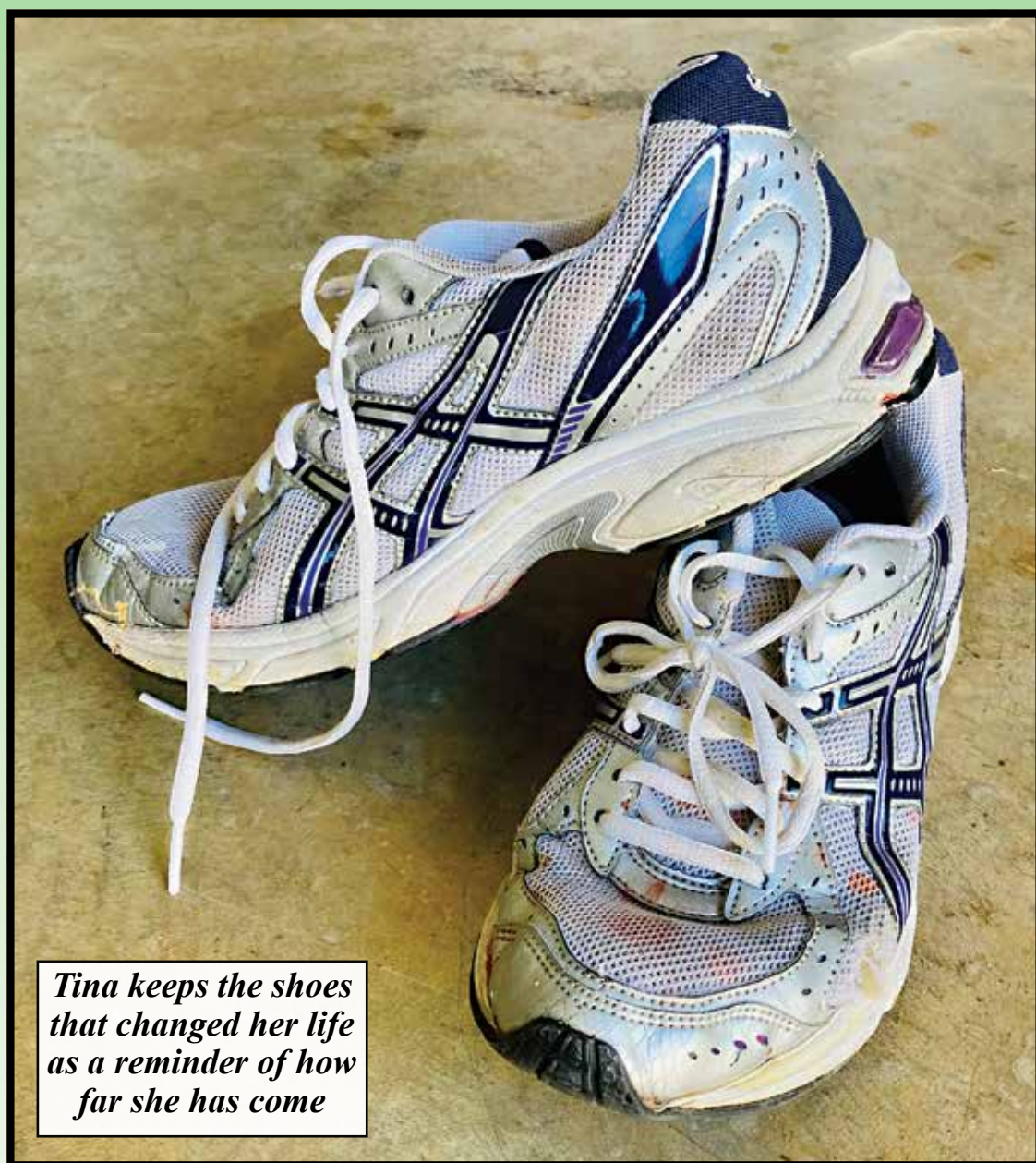
What I didn't know at the time was that I would face more than one death. I have held many more

funerals for myself since then. To really live, daily dying to opinions, desires, unforgiveness, and unbelief is required. In simple terms, I have to give up my own thoughts and behaviors so I can give in to obedience and trust. Believe me when I tell you, dying is NOT pretty for me! It hurts like the dickens. If not for my stubborn determination along with lots of God's saints keeping

me hemmed in, I might have reverted to the old, familiar death of drugs and all that they imply. The belief that I only had to sincerely offer myself to God one time likely stemmed from a mindset that God would simply change ‘stuff’ in my life without grasping that required ME to change.

I remember vividly the day God transformed that mindset...the events leading up to it...the stage God set to turn me around for the long-haul. I had been out of jail for about 2 months and was racking up back rent at a half-way house that was giving me a chance. I was getting very nervous they were going to kick me out, and I had nowhere to go except back to the streets which were patiently waiting for me. So, I reluctantly called one of the only connections to home I had left: Debra Fleming. She had already shipped me some things I needly desperately including my birth certificate so I could get an ID. She asked me what she could do to help me, and I said, “Debra, if I had a bicycle, it would change my life! I could ride to more places further away to apply for a job.” So, she told me she would put a \$50 Visa card in the mail so I could

get myself a life-changing, used bike. The very next day, I got a call from Vicki who managed a dry-cleaning production plant within walking distance from me. After some tears and begging on my part, Vicki agreed to give me a chance to work part-time at minimum wage. I was so happy...until the end of the workday! My feet were absolutely killing me because I was wearing practically worn out, hand-me-down shoes. By the time the Visa card arrived, I couldn’t have cared less about changing my life. I just wanted my feet not to hurt so badly. So, I called Debra to tell her, “I got a job! But I didn’t buy a bicycle with that Visa card you sent to me. My feet were killing me from walking on a concrete floor all day. So, I bought me a pair of tennis shoes instead. It seemed more important to change my days than to change my life!” We had a good laugh about it. She wasn’t upset at all that I had bought those shoes. She just wanted to help me because she knew I needed it and could see I was determined to do some pedaling. Two days later, I was at work when some people I met at the homeless ministry pulled in. I told my co-worker I was taking a break and went out the door to say



Tina keeps the shoes that changed her life as a reminder of how far she has come

hello. As I ran toward their jeep, they began pulling a bicycle out of the back of it. As clearly as if He were running alongside me, I heard God say, “You change your days...I’ll change your life!”

It took a while for me to grasp all that those words

truly meant. I knew they were profound and life-changing without understanding that they encompassed the moment that fully pivoted me toward freedom and stability. In that moment, I let go of trying to change, do, be, and have everything which was what I had always endeavored. “If I just had this...once I do that...if I were this...when I have that...etc.” God’s words set me free to live one day, one step, one breath at a time which is all I could ever handle anyway!

I will end this with a quote from Mitch Albom’s book, Tuesdays with Morrie. “So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they’re busy doing things they think are im-

portant. This is because they are chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning in your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives purpose and meaning.” I am well aware that my life is an extreme makeover. But the truth is, many people walk through life in a deadly state: no joy, no purpose, no meaning. They are constantly seeking that elusive thing they believe will make life worthwhile. So, if you need a pivotal moment, please borrow mine! The words are freely shared with all: “You change your days...God will change your life!” Be blessed everyone...



The miracle bike that changed everything

A Memorable Memorial Day

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

Our usual Monday meeting day fell this year on the literal 2021 Memorial Day, the first one after we have begun to slowly crawl out of our cultural Corona Cave and be in the same room without fear. Last year, we had to go without something that has been going on in our country since just after the Civil War, and it was so good to be back together for this time-honored gathering. Mayor Ronnie and I had agreed to meet after the Memorial Day event held at the new location of the Alabama Veterans' Museum, and it was so encouraging to see that the place was packed. There was excellent live music provided by local high school honor bands, and an inspiring message from Major General Robert Rasch. MG Rasch is the Program Executive Officer for Missiles and Space at Redstone Arsenal, and has spoken at this cer-



emony before. He read the moving story of how Ardmore native James Larry Downs gave his life in Vietnam in 1970 by changing his artillery position so he could better protect his fellow soldiers, and Downs' family as well as other Gold Star families were honored amongst the attendees. There was also the playing of Taps, and the 21-gun salute fired off by Limestone County Veterans Honor Guard.

There were seven veteran organizations and four aux-

iliary units represented, and the placing of floral wreaths for the fallen from all the branches of military service. There was also the roll call and striking of the brass bell for those veterans who gave their lives for us. One veteran that we lost to illness in 2020 was Jerry Barksdale, who used to read various famous poems at the ceremony, and we talked about how much we missed the sound of his voice. If he had been with us this year, this is what Jerry would have read to us:

Mayor Ronnie mentioned that he was glad that the interview he had done just moments before with WAFF was in front of the windows to the new museum. "This is a great thing for our community," he said, and while the Memorial Day ceremony served as the soft opening, the Veterans Museum is

looking forward to a Grand Opening later this summer. And, as always, Mayor Ronnie was concerned that young people grow to understand and appreciate the sacrifices that have been made for their freedom. It was my turn to thank Sgt. Marks for his service in Vietnam, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.



In Flanders Fields

by John McCrae, May 1915

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*



Local officials attended the Memorial Day ceremony at the new Alabama Vets' Museum

From (l) to (r) AL State Rep Danny Crawford, Limestone County Commission Chair Collin Daly, AL State Board of Education Member, Wayne Reynolds, Major General Robert Rasch, AL State Sen Tom Butler, Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks, and Limestone County District 1 Commissioner, Daryl Sammet

Calendar of Events

Opening Day at the Athens Saturday Market June 5

State-certified farmers market. Enjoy fresh produce, baked goods, music, art, and crafts at the Green Street pavilion, 409 West Green Street in Athens from 8AM to 12PM. athensmainstreet.org

Summer Reading Kick-Off Party June 5

With Athens-Limestone Public Library. 603 South Jefferson Street in Athens. From 10:00AM-2:00PM. Bring the whole family and help kick off the Summer Reading Program with games, activities, and food trucks. Storyteller Barry Pugh and his pup Jasper will perform at 11:00 and 1:00. Kids who register for Summer Reading can earn an entry into the summer giveaway -- one lucky kid will win an iPad at the end of Summer Reading! For more information: (256) 232-1233 or visit <https://www.alcpl.org/summer-reading-2021/>

3rd Annual Addiction Eviction Rally June 5

Swan Creek Park. 98 US Highway 31S, Athens. 11am - 7pm. Free meals, school supplies, hygiene bags, back to school drive, diaper drive, food boxes, 3 scholarships awarded. Powerful testimonies, praise and worship, prayer wall and memorial. Facebook: Lori Suzannah Masonia or Ride With Me Addiction Support. For more info contact Lori Masonia at 256-374-3202.

KALB 2021 Earth Day and Outdoor EXPO June 5

Big Spring Memorial Park. 100 North Beaty Street in Athens. 11:00AM-2:00PM. This year's event will look a little different and be a little smaller but will still be fun for the whole family. The event will be outdoors and socially distanced with kids' activities, vendors with earth-friendly products, demonstrations, and fun for all ages! Enjoy 3 shows with Steve Trash, Rockin' Eco Hero, at 11:30AM, 12:30PM and 1:30PM. Learn more at KALBcares.com

D-Day Remembrance June 6

A day to remember D-Day and the landing of Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy, France in 1944. Step inside the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives (100 Pryor Street W in Athens) and explore the life of our military as well as their families on the home front. Free and open to the public (donations welcome). If you are entering the State of Alabama on Interstate 65 South, you have the chance to stop at the Alabama Welcome Center. At the base of the towering Saturn 1B rocket are the veterans monuments. The public is invited to pause and reflect upon the names of each monument.

Limestone Child Advocacy Center Spirit Night June 9

With Zaxby's, 221 French Farms Boulevard in Athens. From 5:00PM-8:00PM in Drive-Thru or Dine-In. Drop off a copy of your Spirit Night receipt and a percentage of all collected receipts will benefit LCAC.

Community Block Party June 10

With Clements Baptist Church. 8690 U.S. Highway 72W in Athens. From 6:30PM-8:00PM with inflatables, snow cones, waterslide, food, and games. Children must be with an adult.

4th Annual Gas & Oil Show June 11 - 12

Candlelight Antiques. 26051 Upper Fort Hampton Road in Elkmont. Starting at 8:00AM each day with a variety of vendors and good inside and out. For more information: 256-423-2746

Alabama Free Fishing Day June 12

Alabama Free Fishing Day is a statewide event held in conjunction with National Fishing and Boating Week that allows residents and visitors to enjoy the outstanding fishing opportunities of Alabama's waters. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com Check out Our Waters and Tournaments

The Hidden Place BBQ June 17

At Willow Oak Farm. 17434 Morris Road in Elkmont. Starting at 6:00PM for an evening of delicious food, items for auction and sale, and an update on what's happening with The Hidden Place - a non-profit which provides Christian camps for children in the vicinity of Johannesburg, South Africa. Tickets \$5.00 each; Children 5&under free. To purchase tickets: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeIB2WxT6tr6mjstn-m_PJewX7xL6x6X_UiEvpaxqfleGzfyg/viewform



For the health and safety of our volunteers and the public, we regret that the VVA Spaghetti Day has been canceled until further notice. Thank you for your support and understanding.



Tourism

Celebrate Fresh Air, Family-Fun, And Local Favorites this June

by Cayce Lee

Social Media Specialist, Athens-Limestone County Tourism Association

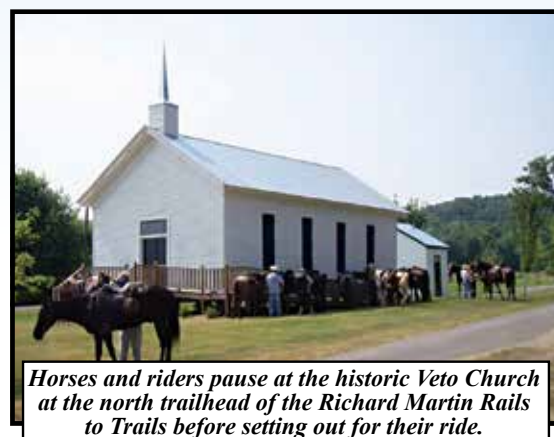
June is here and it's time to think about outdoor fun – especially since it's National Great Outdoor Month! This a great time to hit the water or the trails in Athens-Limestone. You can find a variety of trails dotted around the community, and all you have to do is stop by the Athens-Limestone Visitors Center to get yourself a few brochures to plan and set out for adventure. Don't forget to celebrate National Trail Day on June 5... if you need ideas to walk, peddle, paddle, or plod – check out some of our trails digitally at www.visitathensal.com/plan-your-trip and look for the Trails, Tracks & Treks collection.

It's also National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month... and the reward is all the great finds at our roadside stands like Isom's Orchard and Little Pink Houses Produce, or the soon to be open, Athens Saturday Market at the Limestone County Farms Market on Green Street in Athens. It's a great way to support our local farmers and celebrate the freshness of locally grown food.

Find more ideas for live music, kid-friendly fun, and other events at VisitAthensAL.com/events...plus all the details you need for the featured events here.

Family-friendly Fun...

June 5 is packed with family-friendly fun like Summer Reading Kickoff Party at the Athens-Limestone Public Library, the Marbut Bend Accessible Trail Guided Tour, Earth Day in Big Spring Memorial Park,



Opening Day at the Athens Saturday Market, and Cruise-In on the Square.

The fun continues on June 10 with a Community Block Party with Clements Baptist Church and another great outdoor day for the family on June 12 with Alabama Free Fishing Day when residents and visitors can fish pub-

lic waters without a license and includes the waters at Joe Wheeler State Park. You'll want to be back on the Square in the evening on the 12th for the Truck Invasion Cruise-In.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated returns for the family is the Athens Lions Kid-die Carnival which will have

its inaugural 2021 weekend June 24, 25, and 26! This beloved seasonal attraction was sorely missed last year, and we're anticipating the love of all things Kiddie Carnival will be on display this season.

Toe-tappin' Time...

Another big event for June

5 will be honky-tonkin' at Mildred's in Ardmore as Cecil Shields pays tribute to some of the biggest names in Country music like Hank Williams Jr., Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Charley Pride, and other favorites during a 3-hour concerts.

A local crowd favorite will be taking to the steps for an evening of music as the Athens-Limestone Tourism's Summer Concert Series: Singing on the Square welcomes Matt Prater and Friends on June 25 in conjunction with Athens Main Street Fridays After Five.

If that's not enough music for you, you can find more on the event calendar at VisitAthensAL.com as weekly announcements of performing artist are added from area venues.

Restaurant News....

Take time to welcome these new eateries to Athens-Limestone when you get a chance....

Fly Nutrition at 25525
Levie Davis Driven in
Elkmont

Wildcat Nutrition at 28881
Alabama 99 in Elkmont

Mad City Nutrition at
12090 County Line Road,
Suite C in Madison

Cash & Jack's at 1406
South Lindsay Lane in
Athens

Mike's Cafe at 21000 Tillman Mill Road at Alabama 99 in Elkmont

New Owners...

Samurai Hibachi 702 U.S.
Highway 72 West in Athens... so swing by and see what's new.





Slinkard On Success

Work To Achieve Success

by D. A. Slinkard

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

The first five months of 2021 are now complete, and there are a mere seven months remaining in this year. What do the past five months say about your current year? Are you getting the results you hoped for? Are you barely getting by? Only you can answer this question, but you must be honest and open with yourself. The world has been interrupted since last year because of the corona virus and we have yet to return to normal. Will we soon? Who knows, but we cannot worry about the things we cannot change. We need to focus on what we can change and make the necessary adjustments to hit our desired results.

In the last article, I wrote about having the right approach and that today is the day for you to make the necessary changes in your life. Have you started implementing these changes? If not, what is it going to take for you to make the necessary changes in your life to finally be able to achieve your desired results? It has been my experience that people do not take the necessary action to raise themselves up out of their current situation. What steps and actions do you need to take? Just because something is hard does not mean it is not worth doing.

You have seven months left to make something out of your year, and if you are not careful, the seven months is going to dwindle down to just looking forward to the following year. Go ahead and decide how the rest of your year is going to play



out. Go ahead and decide now whether you are going to be the hero or the zero with the time you have remaining. Are you going to do something great to make your family proud or are you going to be all right with achieving the same old mediocre results as in years past? Sadly, too many people are going to be all right with just barely doing enough to get by.

Only you can decide how this year is going to end for you, and I already know the majority of people are going to end up making excuses why they cannot get motivated to make the necessary changes they already know need to be made. Many people have already given up on this year when they should be motivated to make something out of each day. Why give up now when you have so much time left? That is just it, though, a person must realize they have something worth fighting for. What are the things worth fighting for in your life? Take the time to name that which

is important to you. You may surprise yourself when you realize how much you do have worth fighting for.

In my life, the thing worth fighting for is my desire to provide for my wife and my daughters. These three individuals are the motivation I need to find success. What motivation do you have? What motivating force do you have for people who

would want to see you succeed in 2021? Take the time and think about these people. Take the time and think about your motivational reasons and then implement a plan to achieve your desired results. However, many people struggle with this concept right here because we all know what we want to achieve, yet not everyone is willing to do what is required

to achieve those results.

It is not too late to make something out of 2021, but you must make the conscious decision to do something today. It does not matter what you have done or have not done thus far in 2021, these things are all in the past. The only thing you can focus in on now is the future and what lies ahead for you. Do not get caught up on what you have not accomplished, and start thinking about what you will accomplish. Go ahead and determine your motivation for the remainder of this year, and then make the decision to just do it. The biggest mistake people make in life is they fail to make the decision to just do it. They try to plan, plan, plan, but they never take the time to just go do it. If you want success, just make it happen and stop putting off today what needed to be done yesterday. You can achieve what you want, but it is going to take effort and work to achieve success.

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Clean, Green And Beautiful

“My Neighbor’s Yard Is Overgrown/Unkempt/Has Junk Piled Up. What Can I Do?”

by Leigh Patterson - Executive Director - Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful

Springtime has almost passed and the summer months are quickly approaching, which means that it is the time of year when homeowners have to stay on top of their lawn care, and mowing is basically a weekly necessity. This is also the time of year when we at KALB receive several phone calls each week asking questions such as, “What can be done about my neighbor’s yard? It hasn’t been mowed in several weeks.” Another question we are often asked is, “My neighbor has garbage in their yard and junk piled up. What can be done?”

If you live within the Athens City limits, there are ordinances against these types of things, and they can be turned over to law enforcement to be dealt with. I will cover this a little later on.

The question has been asked, “What can I do?” First of all, I would like to encourage you to check on your neighbors! I understand that this may not always be a safe option, and I certainly do not want you to put yourself in an unsafe situation. If you notice a neighbor that you are at least familiar with whose yard is not being cared for as usual, then please check on them. Don’t wait until the yard grows to a foot’s length or higher.

They may be suffering through an illness, caring for a sick loved one, working overtime to pay bills, or having a family crisis, and they may just need someone to step in and help them through a hard time.

Having said that, unfortunately that is not always the case, and other actions must be taken. The City of Athens has specific ordinances to deal with overgrown and unkempt properties that include high grass and weeds, litter, junk, and nonconforming vehicles. These ordinances can be found on the city’s website at www.athens-salabama.us under the Government tab in *Ordinances*. They are located in Chapter 46, Article 42, Division 2. Please note that grass and weeds must be over 12 inches to be considered breaking ordinance. Also, if there is junk on a property, and it is located under a carport, garage, or covered porch, it is NOT considered breaking ordinance even though it may be an eyesore.

Properties that are breaking ordinance do need to be dealt with because problems arise from these. When grass continues to grow higher and higher, it brings with it unwanted pests, such as snakes or rodents. Junk, such as old tires, that lies around can hold water for long periods of time attracting mosquitos to



breed. Abandoned properties can be dangerous if they are falling in, or can sometimes house unwanted illegal activity. No one wants these types of properties in their neighborhood, and they should be reported.

If you notice a property in the City of Athens that is breaking ordinance, you may call KALB (256-233-8000), and we will be happy to talk to you about it. We will ask questions to make sure that the property in question is not in compliance. Please be sure to provide us with the correct address of the property if possible.

After collecting the information, we will then turn it over to law enforcement to look into. **We are required to provide the officers with your name and phone number.** Your information is kept confidential and will not be shared

with anyone other than law enforcement, and they will not share it with the property owner.

Once a complaint has been turned in, the officers look into it. If the property is found to be breaking ordinance(s), the owner is given a warning to correct the issue(s) within five days, whether it is mowing, cleaning up junk or litter, or moving nonconforming vehicles. After five days, if nothing has been done, then the property owner is fined up to \$200.

Speaking of our law enforcement, these officers are doing a great

job. They receive many calls regarding these types of issues, and they often have other issues to deal with on top of these. Please be patient with them if it takes a few days for them to respond.

Let’s all do our part to keep our city clean, green, and beautiful, whether that means caring for our own property and cleaning up after ourselves, checking on our neighbors and helping if needed, or letting someone know when there is a property that is truly in need of attention.



(256) 233-8000

KALBCares@gmail.com

www.KALBCares.com



Cooking with Anna

When Is It Next Year?

by Anna Hamilton

I recently heard a song by Donovan Woods entitled "Next Year." It dives into a problem that most of us have. We make all kinds of wonderful plans and dream about when we can accomplish them, next year. The chorus of the song truly made me stop and think.

*"Another day down, another week gone
You're always just talkin' about tomorrow
You can't beg, steal, borrow
Or make time*

*So you make plans and hope for the best
Life moves on so fast
Another twelve months flies on by, you're still here
But it's never quite next year
No it's never quite next year
No it's never quite next year
It's never quite next year."*

Next year I will start that diet, next year I will commit myself to the Lord, next year I will go back to school, next year I will think about having children, next year I will make peace with my family, next year I will forgive myself.

In my life, it is never quite next year. If I added up all the plans I've made that I have never followed through on, it could fill up a swimming pool. Why do we put off what can be done today for some time in the future? In Matthew 19:26, Jesus tells us that "with God all things are possible." When we put God smack dab in the middle

of our plans, all things are possible.

We as humans have a huge fear of failure. We feel that if we start a new project or try to achieve a new goal in our lives and fall short or stumble along the way, we have failed. That is far from the truth. In my last article I talked about waiting for God to open the door we are to walk through. God will not let you fail. If you keep him the center of all your plans, hopes, and dreams, he will lead you down the correct path and will open the doors for you.

Let's stop putting things off until next year. Let us commit to making the most of the time we have now. With God's help, you can stop putting things off until next year. He will help you where you are now to achieve what you need.

This week's recipe is perfect for a meatless Monday meal. It is packed with protein courtesy of chickpeas. They are delicious and take on the flavor of whatever you put them with. This Mediterranean Chickpea Salad is sure to become a family favorite!

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." James 4: 13-17

Mediterranean Chickpea Salad

Ingredients:

*3 cups chickpeas / garbanzo beans canned
2 cups English cucumber, chopped into 1 inch cubes
1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced
1 cup feta cheese, crumbled
1/2 cup red onion, thinly slice
1/2 cup Kalamata olives, sliced
3 tbsp. parsley, chopped finely
1 tbsp. Za'atar Spice (delicious Arabic Spice Blend)
Salt and pepper to taste*

For the dressing:

*2 tbsp. olive oil
2 tbsp. lemon juice
1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
Salt & pepper to taste
2 cloves garlic minced
1/2 tsp. mustard powder*



Directions:

Chop all the vegetables and place them in a large mixing bowl.

Rinse and drain the chickpeas and add them to the mixing bowl. Add Za'atar and salt and pepper to taste.

In another small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients for dressing. Add the dressing to the vegetable mixture and toss to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator for at least an hour or overnight.

Take it out of the refrigerator and enjoy with fresh pita bread!

“Mantras” Work, At Times

by Steve Leland

We don't hear as much about mantras these days, but in my growing-up years we ran into the concept now and then. It generally was attached to a group that was defined as a cult. In those contexts, it was a word or phrase that the group, or an individual member, would repeat over and over, expecting there to be a spiritual benefit.

While some mantras were sounds or phrases designed to aid in concentration, other mantras were affirmations centered around positive thinking or assertions. It has been proven that

affirmations do have an effect on people. The bad side of the equation would be negative statements towards others, especially towards those that are young. Then again, too many positive affirmations heaped upon those that haven't earned them also have negative consequences. (I am all for encouragement, don't get me wrong, but there is a balance.)

But beyond the psyche, have you ever spoken something into reality? I've just had this experience where for some months I have teased the people that I work

with about whether they had a certain lucrative opportunity available. (These situations are short term.) A couple of months ago they did have one that hit one of the qualifications perfectly and was great, but a bit short on the financial part. It still paid pretty well, I'm not at all complaining. This month they had an opportunity that fully hit the target in all aspects and provided me the time to do something that I needed to do in the middle of it. I had only been kidding with my continual positive question, but it surprised

me by bearing fruit. Who knows, maybe angels are able to arrange things sometimes?

I'm told that some people have been known to bring their own blood pressure down by speaking calming words to themselves. The first time that someone told me that they could, I was quite surprised. But it makes total sense when you think about it.

Mostly, my most consistent “mantra” is lifted from two prayers. I have mentioned this in one of my previous columns. The first part is from the prayer that our

Lord, Yeshua, taught His disciples to pray and the second part is from His final prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will, not mine, be done.” Sometimes I add the rest of the phrase in the first prayer, “...on Earth as it is in Heaven.”

I pray this often over my life, over my family, and over many situations where I am not exactly sure what Yah's will would be. How much effect it has. I will leave to the Almighty. But I'm not rich and famous yet... so I'm probably not rich and famous in Heaven either.



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Don't Sleep On Insomnia: Tips To Help You Get More Sleep

courtesy BrandPoint content

(BPT) - Have you ever struggled with sleep? Many people know what it feels like to have jet lag when traveling, or to toss and turn at night when they're anxious and overwhelmed by life. But how do you know if your sleep problems have turned into insomnia? Read on to find out.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia is a common, yet complex medical condition that can make it hard to fall asleep, stay asleep, or make people feel like they're not getting the amount of sleep they want. If you have any of these symptoms at least three nights per week for at least three months, you may have chronic insomnia.

Up to 48% of older adults experience insomnia, and Dr. Michael Breus, PhD, a board-certified clinical psychologist and sleep specialist, knows how frustrating it can be to struggle with sleep night after night.

"Unfortunately, in today's fast-paced, high-pressure world, many adults are unable to get the sleep they need," explained Breus. "While life events and lifestyle habits may be a factor, it's important to know that there can also be a physiological component that's due



to a miscue between the sleep and wake systems in the brain. As we age, our sleep cycles change, causing the wake signals in the brain to override the sleep signals. This leaves your brain in an overactive state and could result in insomnia."

Although insomnia is more common in older adults, it doesn't have to be accepted as a normal part of aging. Sleep hygiene can help, but sometimes changing habits isn't enough to improve sleep. You should speak with a health care professional about other ways to tackle your sleep problems.

Tips for better sleep

If you regularly struggle with sleepless nights, follow these tips to help get back on track:

Adjust the lights: For two hours before bedtime, avoid using digital devices because the type of light from computer, television, smartphone, and tablet screens can change your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Instead, consider doing something relaxing such as reading a book. Also, at bedtime, the less light in the bedroom, the better. Keep your bedroom as dark as possible while you sleep.

Ignore the clock: Focusing on the sleepless minutes ticking away can cause more concern about being awake. For a simple fix, turn the clock around so you can't see the time.

Get up and leave the bedroom: Lying in bed worrying about falling asleep may cause your

brain to be more active. It may also start to link your bedroom with feelings of frustration instead of sleep. To avoid this, try a relaxing activity in another room, such as reading a book or listening to soothing, instrumental music. When you start feeling sleepy again, go back to the bedroom.

Consider lifestyle changes: Eating and exercise habits can also affect sleep. Try not to eat large meals before bedtime that can cause indigestion and avoid coffee and alcohol within three hours before bedtime. In addition, while exercise is beneficial, you shouldn't exercise within three hours of going to bed.

Talk to a health care

professional: Lifestyle changes might not be enough for some people, so don't hesitate to talk to a health care professional about your insomnia. They can create a personal plan to help you get more sleep, that may include lifestyle changes, taking medication, or both.

Learn about behavioral therapy: A type of therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy can help you recognize your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward sleep.

Don't sleep on insomnia. Visit WhySoAwake.com to learn more about sleep and how to work with a health care professional to find an insomnia treatment plan that works for you.

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Allsport Of Decatur Showcasing Spartan Mowers

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

ing two winning high school girls' soccer teams taught him even more how to build his organization into one of the most successful power sports companies in north Alabama. Steve is the type of business owner that has no problem cleaning the bathrooms or taking out the garbage. He also feels that his employees are part of his family, and has instilled in them high standards for their behavior both in and out of the store. All of the hard work, team sports, and customer care has paid off, and Allsport grew until they needed the space available at their address of the last

14 years -- 2608 Beltline Rd, Decatur, AL 35601. Over the years, Allsport has added to their lineup of 3- and 4-wheel ATVs, personal watercraft, side-by-side ATVs, and lawnmowers. In 2021, Allsport carries Kawasaki, Yamaha, Triumph, and Royal Enfield motorcycles. Royal Enfield was originally made in the UK and these days is produced in India. It is a high quality, high-end bike.

Allsport was all set for the 2020 spring season when COVID hit, and while last year was tough, they got through it by grace, teamwork, and customer care. What they are showcasing this spring and summer are lawn-



Steve Armstrong, owner of Allsport of Decatur

mowers, and the brand they enthusiastically endorse is Spartan, which is made in Arkansas. Steve told me an interesting story about his introduction to the Spartan brand, which they have sold for several years, and now is the only one they carry. There was a

very successful business man in Decatur that told Steve he needed to go visit the Spartan plant in Arkansas with the intent of featuring the Spartan line at Allsport. Steve said he was not interested in the slightest, and couldn't take the time off from work. Well, the

businessman happened to have his own private jet, offered to cover the flight and get Steve to Batesville, and they took off from Pryor Field for a trip that would change everything.

When they got to the Spartan plant, Steve





was impressed by the fact that the owner, Robert Foster, was out on the floor positively engaging with the employees, and they with him. Steve told me, "I have never seen employees so happy," and Steve has been to fabrication centers in the US, China, Japan, and India. Steve could tell that all the employees took great pride in the quality of their work, no matter the task. At the time of Steve's visit, Spartan was working on building more plants, and one employee expressed excitement on the possibility of having a larger place because he actually WANTED to produce more units in a day.

Here is some more information on the Fosters and their products:

Robert and Becky Foster own six companies headquartered in Batesville, Arkansas: Intimidator UTVs, Spartan Mowers, Bad Dawg Accessories, Ground Hog Max, Gourmet Guru Grills,

and eNVy, which is a high-end personal neighborhood transport vehicle like a Mule or a golf cart. Robert has always loved lawnmowers, and back when he was about eight years old, he would collect catalogue clippings of several types of American mowers, and dreamed about making one from the ground up.

That first dream came true in 1998. He and Becky already owned two companies, and sold one so that Robert could develop and build what became known as Bad Boy Mowers. The brand did well, and was sold all over America as well as overseas. However, Robert is a true entrepreneur, and he couldn't shake the feeling that he had another better mower "still inside of him." This time he wanted to build something that was heavier and could handle all kinds of terrain.

More of Robert's story is from their website:

"For six months, in his garage in Batesville, Arkansas, Robert literally built the Spartan

from the ground up. He started with the Rear Radial Tires (a standard feature on all Spartan mowers with decks larger than 54", by the way), and went from there. He took the features and elements of leading mowers on the market, the things that really make a mower stand out, and improved upon them. He focused on ride, cut, design, and frame. After hours of research, testing, design, and redesign...the Spartan Mower was born.

And that's how it hap-

pened. Spartan launched on October 21, 2015, at the GIE Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. Sure, it's a work in progress. There are tweaks, and changes, and growing pains. But Spartan is here, and it's here to stay.

Clearly the Spartan is Robert's "baby," and he loves the creation that started with cutting up pictures from catalogues:

"This machine, it's special. It's the culmination of so many years of design and dreaming, so many mistakes learned from. Truly, I have put my heart and soul into the Spartan. I am so proud of this mower, and my team. It's my dream, and with every mower built, I am so thankful."

And finally, here is Spartan's mission statement:

"To offer an American-made mower that drastically changes the turf industry by giving the consumer a premium product with an all new level of performance, durability, and design at an incredible value."

Steve came away from Arkansas with a solid relationship with an inventor and manufacturer whose integrity and excellent product he knew he could trust and promote in Alabama at Allsport. Steve told me, "The Spartan costs less and is built better. The factory robotics are unlike anything I have ever seen. Spartan also has impeccable warranties." The man's a fan, and has staked the reputation that he started building in 1974 on Spartan mowers. Come see them today and see why Spartan is the only mower that is carried by Allsport, and let them make your summer mowing season a true joy.

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Ma And Pa Take Taos: Part 1

by Jerry Barksdale

www.jerrybarksdale.com

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My good friend (and sometimes red-head) Pat and I were off on another adventure, this time across the purple sage to Taos, New Mexico. It has been described by one resident as “wacky and weird.” That’s where my daughter, Shannon lives. As usual everything started off going my way – downhill.

First, I had a toothache. Then, when I presented plastic at Huntsville Airport to pay a \$25.00 baggage fee, it was rejected – and in front of many people. “There must be a mistake,” I said. She swiped it again. “No mistake.”

When we arrived in Atlanta I called Barclay Bank. Someone in North Dakota had charged \$6.30 on my card. I’ve never been to North Dakota. My card was cancelled on the first day of our vacation. Perfect timing. And my tooth was about to jump out of my mouth.

On the flight to Albuquerque, we encountered 100 mph head winds. “Look!” Pat exclaimed. “The wing is flapping.” I needed tranquilizing. I ordered a scotch and handed the hostess a ten.

“Sir, we don’t accept cash,” she said. What kind of country rejects your credit card and doesn’t accept cash? And on the first day of vacation! It’s written on the face of a bill, “Legal tender for all debts.”

And that includes scotch! It was dark in Albuquerque when we went to pick up our Thrifty rental car. Pat had arranged for an economy car, knowing that I’m a thrifty kind of guy. The young clerk explained that we needed to upgrade. “It’s a Mitsubishi Mirage and has only three cylinders and isn’t suitable for mountain driving,” he said.

“Does it also have three wheels,” I asked. He frowned. No humor. We couldn’t find it in the parking lot. No wonder. It was parked between two VW beetles. It was aptly named Mirage. It sort of looked like a car, but it really wasn’t. Pat christened it, the “three wheel sewing machine.” I call it the “Runt.” We hummed up I-25 looking for a Best Western. Had to call Siri. That hussy kept yelling, “TURN AROUND NOW!” I didn’t like her tone of voice. She’s probably a red head. How could I turn around in six lanes of 75 mph traffic?

The next morning, we hummed northwest on State 550 into Indian country. Big blue skies, distant buttes and mesas, endless purple sage, pinon and juniper trees and chamisa, a gorgeous plant that hates my guts, filled the landscape. Everything was still going my way; sinuses in panic mode, nose stuffy and bleeding, and tooth aching. On the edge of the Jemez Reservation, we stopped at CWW Feed

Store in tiny San Ysidro and asked directions. Several Indian children were out front near pens holding goats and the fattest hog I’ve ever seen. Nearby was a corral of horses. Chili riestas hung from the front porch of the old store building. That’s where I met Connie Collis, the proprietor, a friendly, late fortyish blonde. “I’m from Alabama,” I said. “I own a Bible, have a permit to pack heat – and I’m lost.” She grinned. “Sounds okay to me,” she said. Connie has been living in San Ysidro for 20 years. Her husband, a big game hunter, had died on a hunting trip in Mexico. Afterwards, she dedicated her life to rescuing critters. She cares for 51 rescue horses – some are wild mustangs – including others, for a total of 92; one fat hog, one cow, 7 goats and two dogs.

“Why do you do it?” I asked.

“It is my heart,” she said. “It gives me a reason to get up in the morning.”

The store name “CWW” stands for crazy white woman, a handle given her by local Jemez Indians. Working with Connie was Taylor Clark, a 24-year-old, attractive red head originally from Albuquerque, who is a rock climber. Taylor was working on a volunteer therapy horse ranch and studying for a masters’ degree when she went to work for Connie rescuing horses. Two thumbs up for these ladies. I

yanked the crank cord on the Runt and we hummed up State 4 and across the beautiful Jemez Mountain, toward Los Alamos.

There we toured the museum, learned about splitting atoms and saw where some of the scientists had lived during WWII. “Fat Man,” the first atomic bomb, was developed at Los Alamos and dropped on Hiroshima to bring WWII to an end. From start to finish, it took only two years. When our backs are against the wall, Americans excel. Why can’t we discover a cure for cancer? If we can develop a blue pill to raise the dead, surely we can find a cure for cancer.

In old Santa Fe (elev. 7198 ft), we had a late lunch at La Fonda, a Pueblo style hotel on the plaza. That’s where, after eating a burrito smothered with red chili and black beans, I developed my new theory about atom splitting. That lunch also led to me to make a pact with the Lord that night. Why split uranium atoms and endanger the environment? Split the bean! A plate of black beans produces enough methane gas to power every taxi in New York City for a day.

That night, I woke in a miserable state. My tooth ached, my nose bled, I couldn’t breathe, and my stomach was about to explode. I was desperate. I reached for Mama’s favorite cure-all- Vicks Salve. Rub it on the chest for coughs, apply to hem-

orrhoids, and poke it up the nostrils for a stuffy nose. I figured if I could scare off a hemorrhoid, it could open a stuffy nose. The label warned: “DO NOT PLACE UP NOSTRILS,” but I figured that was meant for idiots who used the same finger. Anyway, up the nose it went. Ahh, thank you Mama.

It was around midnight when I asked the Lord to strike me dead if I ever ate another black bean. There ought to be a law requiring black beans be sold with this warning: “Consumption may result in loud praying, methane emissions, and global warming.”

We overnighted at El Rey Inn on Cerrillos Road. Very Santa Fe-ish. First constructed as a motor court in 1936, it reminded me of Melody Ranch, Gene Autry’s cowboy movie set. Next morning, we breakfasted nearby at the Pantry, opened in 1948. Nothing slick about it, simply the best. I ordered an egg white veggie omelet. Old Satan was up early, tempting me, having heard about my pact with the Lord. “Sir, do you want black beans with your omelet?” asked his servant, our dark eyed waitress.

“HECK NO!”

I’ve since learned that a raw carrot cooked with black beans will absorb the methane gas. Don’t eat the carrot! He-he-he. Give it to your ex.

To be continued....

Listen To Your Dog!

by Joel Allen



Hello, folks! About a week ago, my sister told me about an interesting situation that happened at her home. She had a date with a guy and it was going to be their first date. Well, he showed up and approached the house, and as he got closer, my sister's dog, Escanor (Eski-nore), Husky/German Shepherd mix, growled at the guy and bared his teeth. This dog never does anything like this. So, when my sister saw this, she told the guy that the date was off and the guy got upset. Escanor was not having it. I have always told my sister to listen to her dog because I believe dogs can see things we cannot, and they are guardians of our lives in many ways.

Another time, many years ago, Scrabbles, my Mantle Great Dane was stay-

ing with my mom while I was stationed in Korea. I had an aunt, Aunt Lynn, who lived next door to my mom. Scrabbles loved Aunt Lynn and would always greet her at the door. One day Aunt Lynn came over and Scrabbles met her at the door as always, but this time he began to growl. As she came closer to the door, his growling intensified until he almost seemed like he would eat her up. Aunt Lynn backed up and went back to her house. Mom saw the whole thing and went to find out what was wrong. As she approached Aunt Lynn's home and entered the house, she found Aunt Lynn looking around as if someone or something was talking to her. I have always believed you should be careful of your sins because if you anger

the Lord and he lifts His hands of protection, then anything evil can come and torment your life. So, when Mom saw that Aunt Lynn seemed to be listening to something she could not see, she asked her if she was hearing voices. Aunt Lynn told her of three shadowy figures just outside her peripheral, telling her to do awful things. So Mom got her help and once she was on medicine, the figures and voices were gone. Until that happened, Scrabbles had stop letting her come over. But once those spirits were gone, he was all right with my aunt again and she was allowed to come over to Mom's place. Dogs are amazing judges of character and will protect the family.

So, has anyone ever had or seen a similar situation unfold? How was the situ-

ation handled? Was the dog ignored or scolded and then put up? A lot of people don't think about what their dogs are telling them. They make, in my opinion, a bigger mistake and put their dogs up. This can cause the dog's behavior to worsen, and if ignored, the dog can become aggressive toward new visitors that it deems are not family. This treatment of putting the dog up takes away from its social life with people, and that lack of interaction can bring out negative behavior. Some people never see these warning signs.

Now, everyone needs to understand that sometimes a dog just does not like someone for whatever reason. I have run across a few in my life that just did not like me. One I did not like from the start and she

showed me that the feeling was mutual...LOL. Another one that does not like me is a Great Dane named Rachael. Georgie Girl, her mom, will fight her off me if they are together when I come into the yard. I have never seen that before, but the last time Rachael came after me Georgie Girl jumped her and stood between me and Rachael. I wish I could win her over but it is what it is. Some of my readers are probably thinking, "What does Rachael see that we don't?" LOL...well, I can't be all bad because most dogs do love me.

Let this article and those stories I shared stir everyone's thinking. It could save a life or deter harm. The rule at my home is if my dog does not like someone, I don't like that someone, and I will tell them to leave. Have I done this before? Yes...and because of this, I believe that I saved myself a headache or two.

Again, I hope this has been helpful, and be sure to listen to your dog. I got the feeling that someone needed to read this and believe in their dog. Don't forget dogs can see things we cannot. Have a happy June and be safe!

"Remember to love your dogs because they love you. Maybe not the way you want them to, like chewing up your favorite shoes or what not, but that is just love chewing. Be thankful for the time you have with them always."

**Joel Allen
256-651-2211**



Healing From Childhood Sexual Abuse

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

“During your healing journey from any type of childhood abuse, you will inevitably come to a crossroads in your life. The only wrong way is backwards.”

Trigger warning: This article contains sexual content that may cause emotional distress. Reader discretion is advised.

Have you noticed a pattern to my articles? In general, in the first article on a particular topic, I try to provide information, clarification, and details. In the follow-up article, I try to answer the question, “Now that I know this, what can I do about it?” In my last article, I attempted to provide information on whether sexually abused

children grow up to have abusive/unhealthy relationships. In this article, I will attempt to provide some suggestions on ways to begin healing from childhood sexual trauma. Healing can begin at many starting points and everyone’s journey is different. It is important to find someone to talk to about your experiences and feelings, either someone you know and trust, or a professional counselor experienced in trauma work. Unfortunately, childhood sexual trauma is not gender specific (1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before the age of 16), and the average age for the first time of abuse is 8 years old. Often, survivors of childhood sexual abuse may believe that since the abuse happened so long ago, it would be better

not to rehash the past. They may avoid feelings and memories in order to function in their day-to-day lives. Clues that may help you to realize that you should seek support include:

Are you reacting unusually to situations differently than before?

Are you having emotional or sexual problems that are not getting any better?

Are new events or circumstances making you more aware of past experiences?

If you are a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, know that you are not alone. Survivors have found that acknowledging what has happened to them and speaking about their experiences can be one of the most vital components of the heal-

ing process. Some survivors experience a delayed recall of the abuse. Traumatic amnesia is a particular response of the brain that prevents a child from having any conscious recall of the event. Memory loss has a reason. When childhood survivors were young, they were not able to form thoughts or put feelings into words. These memories cannot be forced; they will come back when the brain is ready to handle them. However, triggers (internal or external reminders of the trauma) may bring up unresolved emotional issues. Some examples of these trigger memories may include the way your partner touches you; certain smells or colors; kinds of furniture, vehicles, sounds, or music. These flashbacks are re-experiencing the abuse as if it were occurring in the moment.

Every survivor has developed coping mechanisms...both healthy and unhealthy ones. Healthy strategies include: exercising, eating comfort foods in moderation, enjoying music, aromatherapy, spending time with safe people, and seeking out counseling. The unhealthy ones are consuming drugs or alcohol, self-harm, and promiscuous sexual activity. A positive coping strategies toolbox is incredibly important to the heal-

ing process. Other ways to take care of yourself include:

1. Keeping a journal. Some survivors find that recording thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary helps them manage their emotions.
2. Connections with others. Cultivate relationships with people who make you feel good about yourself and make it a priority to spend time with friends and family. Consider joining a support group.
3. Learn relaxation or meditation techniques such as prayer or breathing exercises.
4. Make time to do activities you enjoy.
5. Get involved in a sport or hobby.
6. Learn positive self-talk to develop a positive sexual self-concept by replacing old ways of thinking with new healthy ones. (A therapist can help you with this.)

Begin your journey only when you feel ready for it. Go slowly and trust yourself. Sexual healing is a challenging personal growth journey.

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who divides her time between her own private practice in Huntsville and providing personal counseling services at Athens State University.



The Alternative Approach

Just Walk It Off

by Lana E. Woody



The definition of pain is "physical suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury." There are several types of pain, the two most common being acute and chronic. We all feel pain in many different ways. Some pain is permanent or chronic; some pain is temporary and no matter how much it hurts, it will subside. We even feel emotional pain that can cause us physical pain making our hearts hurt or our heads hurt. I think it is safe to say that pain is something that we all have in common. Everyone alive has experienced pain in some form or another. The interesting part about this is that pain is literally all in our heads. At least that is the first place we feel it. Our bodies do not register pain until our brain sends an impulse to it.

To say that we don't feel pain would sound crazy because we all feel pain -- we all have and we all will. To be completely pain free is impossible and it will never happen. It is a natural part of life. Something we have no choice but to deal with. Our brains are the real reason we feel pain. Our

brain actually communicates every signal through our body's circulatory system to the area of our body that is in pain. Pain receptors in our brain tell our body to feel the pain it is experiencing. This is the reason over-the-counter drugs are effective in killing pain.

Killing pain is what is killing us, for real. What we do to take the pain away is usually more harmful to us than the pain is long term. This applies to emotional pain as well. Many people seek an easier way out than taking the time to find out the source, or root cause, of the problem and fix it. Do you want to take the

easy way out or do you want to find an alternative route? The problem with the easy way out is that eventually it stops working. When we mask the pain rather than deal with it, it only gets worse. Everyone has this problem too; we don't even have time to be in pain with the rat race we live in today. There is so much pressure in society presently that some people even take their life because society has told them they are a failure. The truth is we are all worth something, we all have a reason to live and find a way to deal with the emotional and physical pain that is healthy. We are all good

enough; it is what we do with it that defines us.

Being healthy is a big part of pain management. Remembering to take care of your mind and your brain is essential to pain relief. Taking care of the rest of your body is too. Even over the counter painkillers are hard on your liver. Anything synthetic is hard for your body to process and ends up stored in your liver. It also causes your body to be in more pain afterward. There are reasons sometimes it is absolutely necessary, but is harmful over periods of time.

Oddly enough, people who have pre-existing

conditions, such as diabetes, almost always have chronic inflammation, chronic pain, and arthritis. So taking care of our liver is just as important as the pain that we are dealing with. If you are struggling with chronic pain, taking the time to see a chiropractor and find out what supplements you can take that can support the rebuilding your body and help give you the relief that you need. Take the time to feel the pain and then do something about it. Find the best plan for you that works for you. If you ever have any questions about what supplements are right for you come into Herbs and More in Athens, NHC in Killen, or Reflections in Lawrenceburg TN, and get our free CDs on natural health, and other free information we have. We have knowledge and products such as Relief, MSM+C, and The Beemer for spot injury treatment that uses NASA technology, and a wide variety of supplements that support proper pain management. From the gurus of good health, remember to love thy neighbor as thyself. Try to turn the other cheek. Be kind, change the subject. Let yourself not be the reason someone else is in pain. Be the reason someone else feels good today not the latter.

*Your Friend in Health,
Roy P. Williams*

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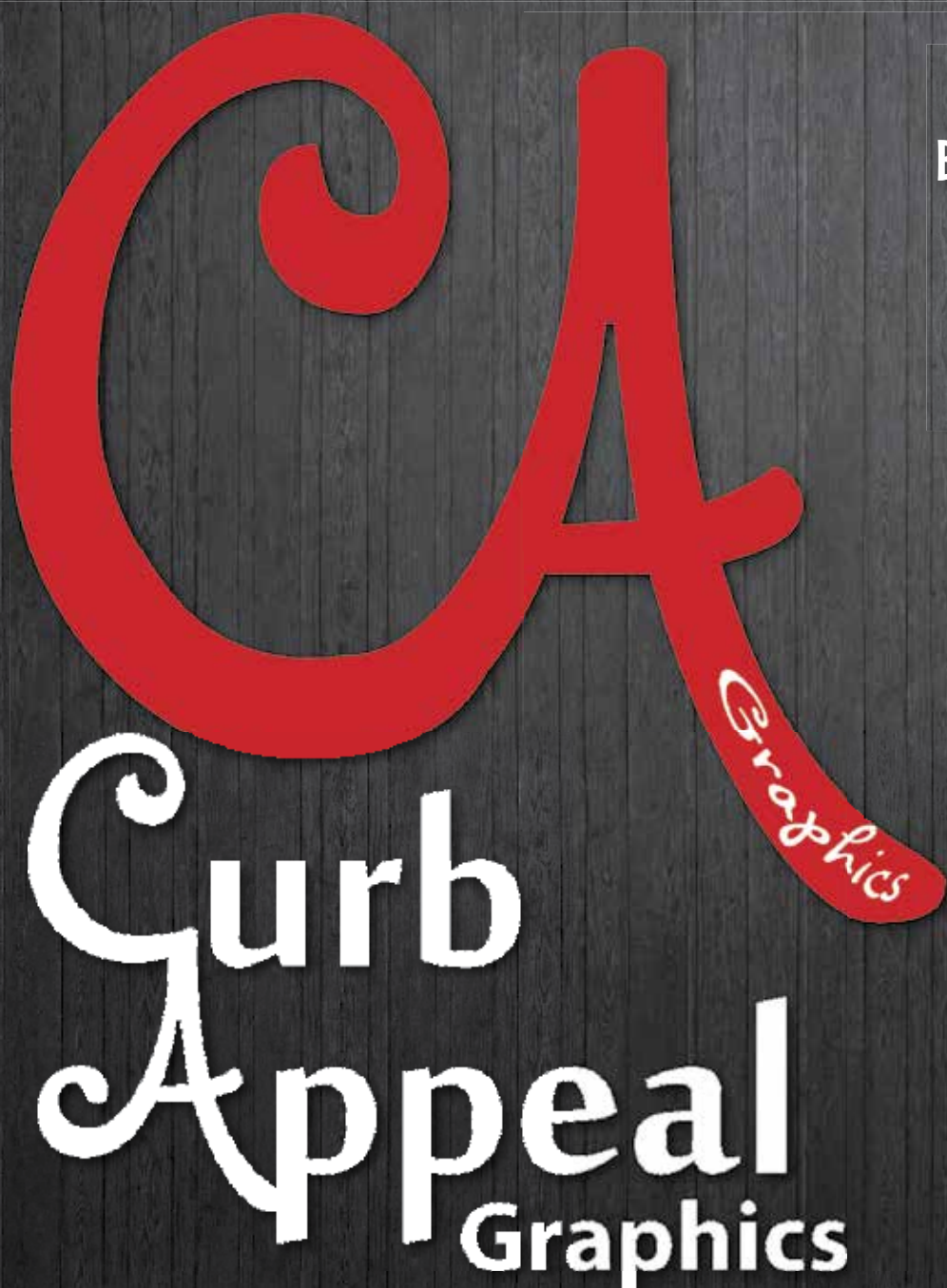
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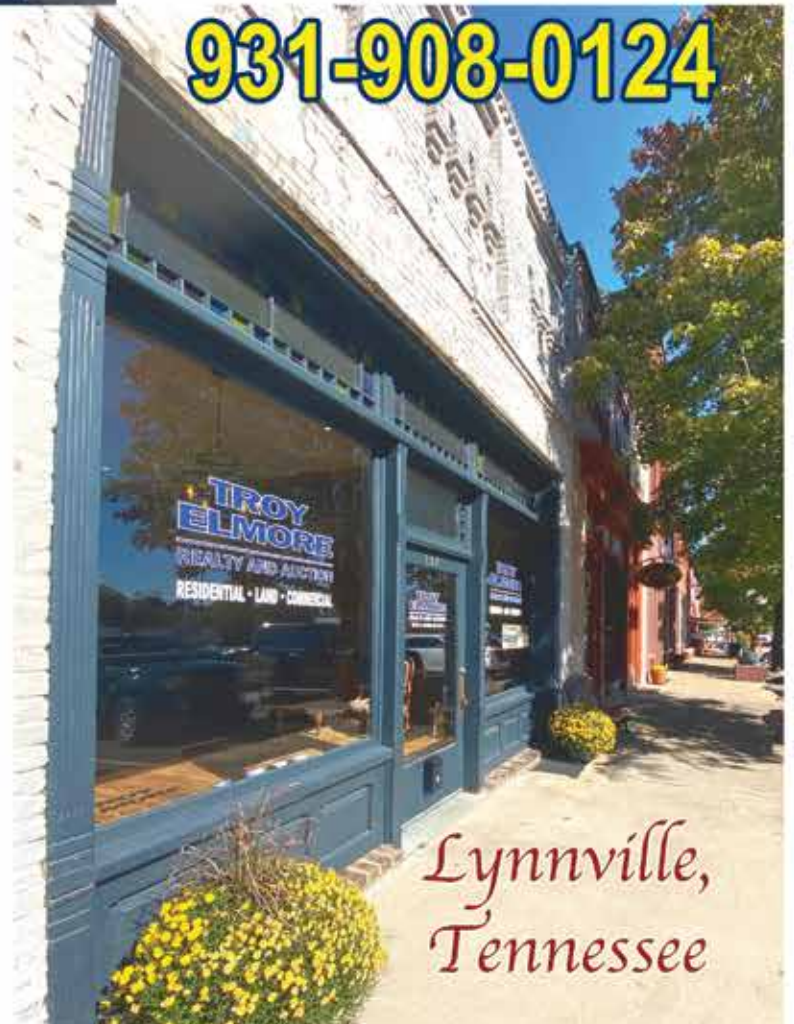
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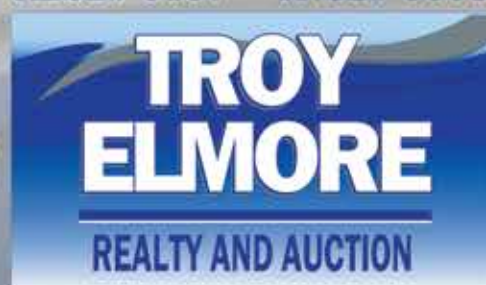
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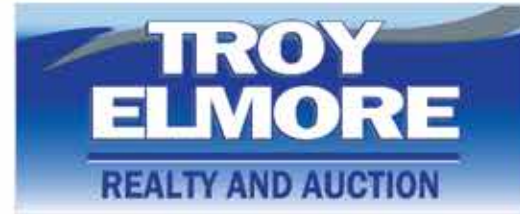
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*"No act of kindness,
no matter how small,
is ever wasted."*

~ AESOP



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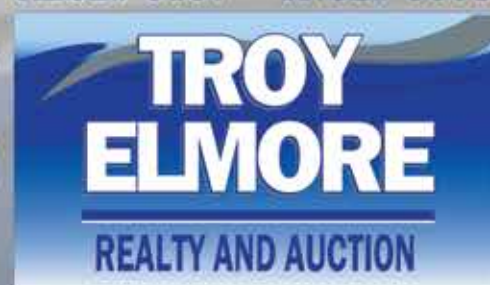
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