



FREE

THE GROUNDHOG

“Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain”

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Public art display coming to Moon Lake Village

Little River Arts Council seeking artists for grant-funded project

by Stephen V. Smith

The slogan “art is for everyone” will take on new meaning this spring when Moon Lake Village becomes the site of a public art installation.

An outdoor display will be located on the grounds of the former school in May, forming an east gateway to public art for the greater Mentone community. “Our area is rich in fascinating history, with cultural significance seldom found in towns of our size,” says Juli Jordan, president of the Little River Arts Council board of directors.

A portion of the Village grounds at 5688 E. River Road, just off Alabama Highway 117, will be professionally landscaped and readied for installation of a sizeable piece of public art secured to a 42-inch by 42-inch concrete pedestal. “This project will invite people

to reflect on Mentone’s rich heritage of cultural, historical, and natural resources,” says artist and LRAC board member Deedee Morrison,” including how, as a community, we can honor our past and celebrate our future together.”

LRAC pursued and was awarded a \$30,000 grant for the project from the Lyndhurst Foundation, a Chattanooga-based foundation that focuses on the enhancement and enrichment of the natural, educational, cultural, and urban environment of Chattanooga and the surrounding 16-county region.

The fitting title of the project is “Firmly Planted, Moving Forward,” which served as a slogan for Moon Lake Elementary School. When the school closed in 2021, the DeKalb County



This watercolor by Mentone artist Lydia Randolph of the proposed public art display site accompanied the application that earned a Lyndhurst Foundation grant.

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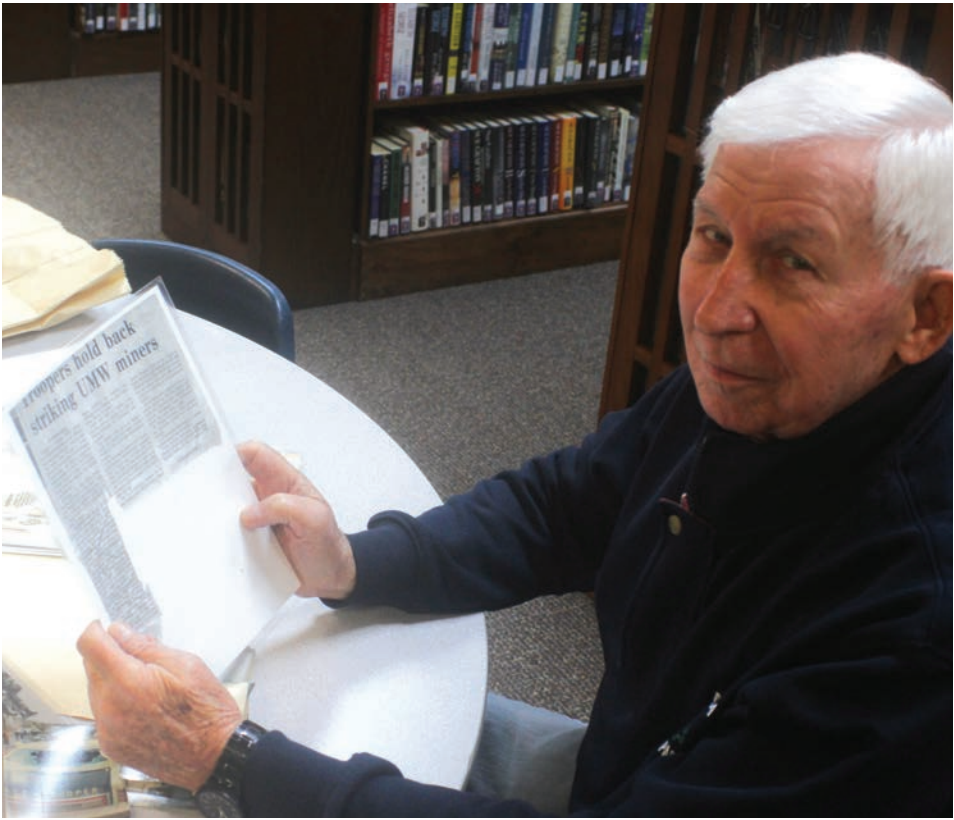
The Battle of Tutwiler Gap

by Holley Midgley

The incident became known as the Battle of Tutwiler Gap. It wasn’t fought on a sundrenched hill in Virginia in 1864, or the sandy beaches of Iwo Jima in 1945. The battle took place in the bitterly cold early morning hours of late January 1978, around the intersection of Highway 117 and Tutwiler Gap, about half way up Lookout Mountain between Valley Head and Mentone. The combatants were a large contingent of Alabama State Troopers and several hundred union coal workers who were members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). When the battle was over, dozens of miners were in jail and trooper cars had been badly damaged, but order had been reinstated.

The issue at hand was an attempt by the miners to coerce non-union coal workers on Lookout and Sand Mountains to join UMWA in support of a national strike which occurred between December of 1977 and mid-March of 1978. In the ranks of the troopers that day was Corporal Ron Ogletree; miners from west Alabama’s coal fields made up the opposing force. But before we get into the details of that pending clash, a little background is in order.

Some say coal was first identified in the state in the 1820s by American soldiers who had settled in the Alabama Territory following the Battle of New Orleans. One story says two boys who were camping out near the Big Cahaba River had built a stone fire ring to cook supper. When they woke during the night, they were shocked to see some of the stones on fire! Frightened, they raced to their homes, only to decide later that what they had seen were burning lumps of coal they had used for the fire ring. Soon, large deposits were being discovered along the Warrior River north of what later would become Birmingham. Alabama’s long association with coal had begun.



Retired Alabama State Trooper Ron Ogletree

Eventually, five major coal deposit regions were identified across north Alabama: three were located in Jefferson, Walker, and Tuscaloosa Counties. Another was identified on Sand Mountain and a fifth was found on Lookout Mountain. The coal industry employed thousands of miners, some of whom were state and county prisoners “leased” to the owner/operators for minimal wages. This system lasted for decades, and Alabama was the last state to prohibit such employment practices.

The discovery of large deposits of coal and iron ore around Birmingham was responsible for the incredible growth of that city beginning in the 1870s. Thus, its nick name: the “Magic City.” In fact, Birmingham had not even existed until mining and steel production put it on the map. It took its name from Birmingham, England, which was a

center of coal and iron production there.

The mining of coal and the production of iron and steel had a similar but smaller impact on this area. In 1888, geologists identified deposits of both iron ore and coal on Lookout Mountain above the little town of Fort Payne. Developers and investors, mainly from New England, flocked there, building steel and rolling mills, operating mines, constructing houses, hotels, all kinds of businesses, and a new train depot. Fourteen miles of railroad track were laid from Fort Payne up the mountain via Beeson Gap (before Highway 35 became the main route up Lookout). Hundreds of area men went to work in the newly created mines and factories. These “Boom Days” lasted a scant three years before the veins of coal and iron ore were determined to be far more limited than anticipated. The

economy of Fort Payne subsequently collapsed. Coal miners were thrown out of work, houses were torn down and the lumber sold, and most of the new arrivals left for greener pastures. Fort Payne was shaken but survived. But it wasn’t the last time such a boom happened in DeKalb County.

Five miles north of Valley Head, new discoveries of limestone, iron ore, and coal (the ingredients for making pig iron) were confirmed in 1902. According to an article by Landmarks of DeKalb County, J. G. Battelle, of Ohio, organized the Lookout Mountain Iron Company and began building a town he named after himself. Fifteen thousand acres located in the valley and stretching up to the top of Lookout were acquired. There was a blast furnace complete with an 85-foot stack. Additionally, four stoves, a boiler plant, a powerhouse, 200 tenement homes, two hotels (one for whites and one for “Negroes”), a two-story school, a church, a large store, and other facilities were built. Men from across the region, including from the area around Mentone, Valley Head, and Hammondville found coal mining employment once again. But by 1905, this new boom was also a bust. Supplies of coal and ore were simply not sufficient for the facility to compete with those around Birmingham. During World War I, the British bought and dismantled the furnace and moved it to Calcutta, India where it continued to operate until the mid-1900s. Once again, area coal miners took a hit.

Fast forward to the 1970s. Techniques for surface mining had improved, making it a profitable approach to coal mining. People living around Mentone in those days will remember a fleet of garbage truck-sized vehicles which traveled down virtually every road in the middle section

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The Groundhog

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Groundhog woodcut courtesy of Meg Justice/Bee Spring Studio

Deadline for Internet Discount

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) will stop accepting new applications and enrollments on February 7, 2024.

This program offers a monthly discount on your internet service and associated equipment and a one-time device discount on laptops, etc. for qualifying households.

SOME ways to qualify:

- SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, Lifeline benefit, household income, etc.

ALL HOUSEHOLDS WITH DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL AND FORT PAYNE CITY STUDENTS QUALIFY.

For more details visit [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov) or call any internet company.



Mentone Matters

by Mayor Rob Hammond

The Town of Mentone received a generous donation from Barbara and Soc Sennett, in memory of their son Chuck Sennett, to rewire the Moon Lake School building. An electrical engineer will design plans for the work. Once that is complete, the town will ask for bids.

The Little River Arts Council received a grant through the Lyndhurst Foundation. As a part of this grant, a “Firmly Planted, Moving Forward” Art-on-Loan sculpture will be on display for three years in a newly landscaped area at the entrance to Moon Lake Village. This project will greatly enhance the beauty of the campus and provide another place for people to enjoy being outside.

Ladd Environmental will soon be submitting the



plans for the sidewalk addition to ALDOT for review. The environmental plans have already been submitted to ALDOT. Hopefully this project will be moving forward soon. 🐾

From the Editor For the Love of Community

by Anna Mae Horn

Two months is a long time between papers. I feel like it was a year ago when I last wrote this column, or maybe it was just a different year. So many exciting things have transpired since then!

Several of our contributors shared news of grants received – the Town of Mentone, Moon Lake Library, Mentone Arts Center, Little River Arts Council, and MERF. These grants play a significant role in making Mentone and the larger community a special place to live. Each of these grants represents a company or an organization that cares about enhancing people’s lives; they reflect the caring society that we live and thrive in. Each grant also represents the recipients’ dreams and ideas that will come true, and the dedication to those ideas to reach out for funding and take action. Each grant represents lives improved. Most of these grants represent volunteers working hard to make our community great.

Valley Head School has been active with fun adventures and activities for students, as well as opportunities to teach them to volunteer. Many of

these students will be our next generation of active community members, dreaming of innovative ideas and taking action to make them come true.

Let the articles and photos in these pages inspire you to dream and to take action to support a nonprofit organization or town program that you believe in. February is National Spay/ Neuter Month, and there are many ways to support that program if it speaks to your heart. If Valentine’s Day pulls your heart in other directions, I challenge you to find a way to show love to that cause and support it. Another important theme for Valentine’s Day (and every day) is self-love and self-care; be sure to read those tips in this edition.

Staying warm was certainly at the top of everyone’s self-care list this past month! I’m thankful those sub-freezing temperatures are a rare occurrence here. Those frigid days were a wonderful time to curl up with a blanket and catch up on past issues of The Groundhog, though. Don’t get behind, be sure to read front to back this month, and enjoy! 🐾

—Anna Mae Horn

Public Art (continued from page 1)



Above is a rendering of the grounds in front of Moon Lake Village, readied for installation of a grant-funded public art display.

Board of Education deeded the campus to the Town of Mentone, which has renovated the property and reimaged it as an artisan village and event space. In addition to many shops and galleries located in former classrooms, the site most recently hosted the Mentone Fall Festival.

The public art installation is designed to engage artists and community members with one another, and with the town; preserve Mentone’s heritage and natural beauty; promote tourism and economic growth; and strengthen community pride and identity.

This significant project holds tremendous potential for Mentone, those who live in the town, and the thousands of travelers who visit the area each year. According to the Association for Public Art, “Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression.”

The Little River Arts Council is accepting proposals from artists in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee who have a vision for the power of public art. “There are certain requirements that must be met for a piece of work to be considered,” explains Jordan. These include:

1. The piece must resonate with the Moon Lake Village campus atmosphere and environment.
2. The work must be structurally sound and able to be secured to a concrete pad.

3. The project must be of a scale large enough to be clearly visible.
4. It must be capable of withstanding adverse weather conditions, including hot summers, cold winters, rain, wind, and snow for a period of three years with little or no maintenance.
5. The work must be suitable for pedestrian interaction with a low exposure to injury. The public must be protected from possible injury from materials and the work must not include moving parts.
6. The work must be original and preferably related to features of Moon Lake Village Campus or Mentone. Works that interact with the wind to create sounds/musical tones are also acceptable.

The chosen work will be on display from installation in May of 2024 to removal in April of 2027. After the three-year period, the art will be removed to make way for a new piece of public art. The three-year lease agreement between the artist and LRAC brings with it a stipend of \$4,000 — \$2,000 after the successful installation of the artwork, and the remaining balance upon de-installation.

Entries are due by March 15, 2024. Artists can email info@littlriverartscouncil.org for a copy of the Request for Proposal using the subject line “MLV Public Art Project.” They will use the same email address to submit their proposal packet. 🐾



Whiskers and Granny represent those who have lived in these parts (or places like this) all their precious lives. They are related to almost everybody around, and they surely do have tales to tell! If you have a good ol' fashion tale that's been passed down, we'd love to share it here. Please change the names to protect the embarrassed. See page two for contact information.

A Lot of Halves

One of Whisker's old friends was L.M. Flannigan. L.M. lived here at Mentone his whole life. He was a sweet, simple, faith-filled man. And he did know how to make people smile. L.M. told people that Mrs. Kathryn Jones wasn't a very good teacher. That she had kept him in first grade for three years, and she still hadn't taught him to read. When he was a young man, L.M. was interested in a local young lady. He had helped George Kirby with his sugarcane crop and was going to get a portion of the sorghum when it was processed. L.M. told the young lady, "Now George is going to get half, and I'm going to

get half, and my Momma is going to get half, but if you'll marry me, I'll give you half too!"

When Times are Cold

Granny has an underwear story to tell on Whiskers, since he told about her undies and the grocery store and all... It was COLD weather [like we had last month], the kind of cold weather that made Whiskers wear his long johns under his overalls. He came home from the fields one cold evening and when he undressed, he had a perfect circle, about the size of a quarter, cut. in the seat of his long johns. Granny asked, "Why, what in the world happened here?!" Whiskers said he "had to pee, bad", and found that he had his long johns on backwards, so he took his pocketknife and cut a hole where it needed to be. Granny asked him why didn't he just pull them down? And he said, "Well, I never thought of doing that!" Those long johns are still around here somewhere, and they never fail to make Granny laugh, and Whiskers blush. 🐾



National Spay/Neuter Awareness Month

- Benefits of Spaying (female) and Neutering (male)**
- Less desire for pets to roam
 - Decreases aggressive behavior in males
 - Cost savings from unexpected litters
 - Lessen the risk of some tumors, cancers, and diseases
 - Reduce number of unwanted animals
 - Prevent overcrowded shelters and rescues

Did you know...

- In the US, dogs have a population of 15 times the human population. There are triple as many cats.
- Dogs will live 1 to 3 more years and cats will live 3 to 5 years longer after sterilization.

North Alabama Spay and Neuter Clinic is a 501c3 non-profit organization. They offer payment assistance for low-income households. (info@nalspayneuter.org, (256) 489-0418, or 2115 Jonathan Drive, Huntsville)

Friends of DeKalb County Animal Adoption Center offers a reimbursement of \$65 for a spay and \$55 for a neuter. (Contact through Facebook)

Daisy Spay (501c3 est. 2015) offers low cost spay/neuter for dogs to anyone in order to save dogs' lives. (PO Box 680724, Fort Payne or on Facebook)

Let's Fix DeKalb County Pets offers an inexpensive opportunity to spay and neuter pets. (Contact through Facebook)

Spay Neuter Jackson County sometimes allows DeKalb County pets into their transport program. (Facebook, snjca.org, or PO Box 972,W Scottsboro) 🐾

Medicare and Glaucoma

It is important to keep an eye on vision health. About half of all people with glaucoma do not even know they have it! Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss and even blindness. Some forms of glaucoma do not have symptoms, so you may have the disease and not even realize it.

- You are considered high risk for developing glaucoma if you:
- have diabetes
 - have a family history of glaucoma
 - are African American and age 50 or older
 - are Hispanic and age 65 or older

Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) covers glaucoma screenings once every 12 months. After you meet the Part B deductible, you pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount. In a hospital outpatient setting, you also pay a copayment.

If you get a glaucoma test and start treatment early, you may protect your eyes from serious vision loss. Please call the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 256-845-8590 and ask for Lynn Hixon if you have any questions. 🐾



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DOWNTOWN MENTONE DOLLHOUSE Recently renovated and offers 3 BR, 2 BA & an office space! This home offers SO much potential as income producing or primary home!! DON'T MISS OUT!! \$359,000. #21844021



MENTONE BLUFFS CABIN Under Construction - Check out this cabin located just north of Mentone. 1 BD, 1BA & loft area. Front porch is the perfect place to sit & see the views and amazing sunsets! \$249,900 #21842209



LEVEL SHADED LOT IN MENTONE! 3 BR 2 BA home. Newer central heat/air & roof. Not far from downtown Mentone. Shared circular drive. \$329,900. #1836773



THE ELKMONT RETREAT Warm, cozy cabin atop Lookout Mountain near Brow Park, includes furnishings! This property is primed for full-time residence! \$424,000. #21848923



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BROWZZING FOR SALE on the brow of Mentone atop Lookout Mountain overlooking a panoramic view of the valley! This stately home has many extras. Has a gated entrance & circle driveway. \$1,350,000. #21844207



BRICK ESTATE ON THE MENTONE BROW! 17 acres w/ fencing & gated entries. 8 bedrooms, 6 baths, 2 half baths & basement. \$849,000. #1837843



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LOTS & LAND

MIDDLE FORK of Little River. Approx. 6 acres. \$48,900. #1034997

200 ACRES located near historic Mentone! Mature trees, creek, paved road frontage. \$1,000,000. #1781133

GREAT POSSIBILITIES WITH AN AMAZING VIEW! This 2.3 BROW lot is a great location for your dream home. \$350,000. #21844211

BROW LOT W/ A PANORAMIC VIEW Don't hesitate, just move forward with building your dream home! \$195,000. #21844213

152 FEET OF RIVER FRONTAGE in West Fork Subdivision, Mentone! 3.01+/- acre lot (#60) \$89,000. #21845080

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GREAT POSSIBILITIES! This Mentone property offers road frontage on Hwy 117 in the business/alcohol district. A rare opportunity as this is one of very few vacant lots in this area! \$75,000. #1801221

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Love’s Thermometer Moves Up and Down

by deJoly LaBrier

Oh, My! The month of February has been designated the “Month of Love” (and Romance). All the stores are filled with pink hearts in the form of cards, candies, balloons, and more. Anything pink covered in the words “I love you” are in great abundance.

You may have thought of someone you want to give these messages to. You’re in love, and you want that person to know he or she is the object of your affection. Your person may already know you’re in love and appreciates the added attention to the love relationship. You’re overwhelmed with joy!

Or... Has this been an up and down experience for you in the past, or even now? Has love come and gone and come again in your life? You’re not alone. It’s ok to be messy in our feelings, we’re human. It’s okay to not know what our feelings are.

What I’ve learned is that the best and first person I could fall in love with is ME. This is not a self-centered action, but one that goes back to the innocence of childhood. When we come into this world, our focus is on us. We are captivated with our toes and fingers and all things in our environment. We see the world as a place that will adore us and give us all the things we need to flourish. We’re applauded when we begin to walk, when we eat our first carrot or say our first words.

Unfortunately, this kind of attention isn’t always present in our family of origin, and soon the fears, limitations, and judgments of those we live around begin to close in on us, and we buy in to the negativity of those more powerful than our infant and toddler selves.

As years pass, and those people and experiences in our immediate realm of influence begin to change our perceptions of ourselves, we may wander into self-doubt, self-denial, and self-harm through negative inner talk. We may even get to a place where we feel

unlovable, especially when that is being reflected back to us by those people we hang out with.

Looking outside ourselves for validation and love can keep us from living our dreams. Looking inward is where we need to start.

Personally, this has taken years for me to move into.



My childhood was one of deep trauma and negative messaging. Can you relate? As an adult, wanting to live an abundant, joy-filled and meaningful life, I’ve struggled to overcome the negative messages. My nay-sayers are mostly gone from this earth but have been

kept alive in my head. So, that is where I started — in my head. I had to make the connection between my head and my heart to see with clear vision what my dreams are. I’m not always perfectly aligned with this connection, yet I see progress in my relationships, business, and spiritual life.

The best part of this movement toward our innocent child-like self is that we can embrace the journey of learning about our emotions, especially love, with support from others who are also searching for clarity and meaning in their lives. Sometimes little actions are big actions. If you are alone, setting the table with candlelight or fresh flowers and preparing a delicious meal for yourself are actions of self-love.

You are worth it. The mercury moves up as you shower yourself with loving actions and words. Giving yourself moments of celebration for taking tiny steps is vitally important to gaining the confidence that your dreams can come true.

So, this year, I hope you can fall in love with yourself. Enjoy the journey. Gather people around you who support your best self, while at the same time allowing you to be imperfect on the path. Allow yourself to be that person for others, and your dreams will definitely come true! 🍀

deJoly LaBrier is a local author. Find her on Facebook or at her website deJoly.com

A Promise Kept

by Mary Ann Robbins

A sixty-nine-cent fiddle ordered from the Sears and Roebuck catalog for a 9-year-old has transpired into a tradition that has entertained passersby for years and kept a promise made nearly a decade ago.

You may not know it, but there is a group of musicians who play together every Friday afternoon in Mentone and have been for years. It’s a tradition that was started by Gene Ivey, a musician who lived in Ider on Sand Mountain, and who, for decades, made and played traditional bluegrass instruments, hand-crafting more than 270 fiddles, guitars, and mandolins. (Ivey gained some renown; several of his fiddles are on display at the Smithsonian.)

Gene Ivey’s musical journey began as a 9-year-old with a 69-cent fiddle his folks got him from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Ivey taught himself how to play on that fiddle and would go on to teach music to dozens of others, always without charge. Ivey has been recognized as a ‘Musical Achiever’ by the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, and the title “Fiddle Arts Council Master Folk Artist” was bestowed upon him by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

For years, Ivey owned and operated Ivey’s Service Station and Tire Center in Ider, where folks were known to gather for friendly banter and impromptu music-making. When Ivey retired from his tire business in 1993, he built his own music shop. To promote the music in his hometown, Ivey started an annual potluck Fiddler’s Picnic that continues to this day.

Before his passing in 2014, Ivey exacted a promise from fellow musician Wilma Fletcher to continue their weekly tradition of getting together to play music. Ivey chose his promise keeper well, as Fletcher, to this day, gathers musicians from nearby cities and towns like Birmingham, Chickamauga, Ringold, and Dogtown to play together on Friday afternoons.

If you have ever strolled past Mentone Realty on a Friday afternoon, you may have heard them playing on the porch. Here’s how that came to be. You may remember Wilma Fletcher as Mentone’s town clerk from 2009-2019. One day in 2014, not long after Gene Ivey’s passing, and mindful of her promise, Fletcher looked out her office window and noticed, right across the street, that Charlotte Gentry’s real estate office had a roomy porch. She asked if the musicians could meet there. Gentry said yes.

Always welcoming of newcomers, the musicians not only invited Charlotte Gentry to watch but, also, encouraged her to learn an instrument. Around that time, Gentry was selling a home that had an old cabin on the property. Gentry spied an old dulcimer up in the rafters and asked the owner of the property if she could purchase it from him. The owner suggested she take it and see what could be done to make it playable, then come back and pay him what it was worth. Gentry took the dulcimer to Mentone resident, Mickey Luck. Luck, who has a pretty extensive musical background, cleaned it up, replaced the strings and put a new bridge on it, then it was fit to play. Gentry went back, paid the man \$30 and often played that dulcimer with the group. One of Mentone’s police officers at the time named the group the Porch Pickers, and that name has stuck.

They have since moved to the Moon Lake Village Pavilion by the playground; on chillier days, they meet in the MLV gym. They play an eclectic range of songs from sacred, country, and folk to rock and roll on a variety of instruments – dulcimer, steel guitar, fiddle, guitar and more. Often going around the circle one by one, a song will be played with the others joining in with their instruments and voices. The pleasure, respect, and encouragement are palpable. Stop by any Friday between 2:30 and 5:00.

Gene Ivey is buried at New Hope Cemetery, and every year on the day before Decoration Day, the group decorates his grave, assembles in their traditional circle, and plays at his gravesite. It is a tender homage to the man, the music, and its traditions.

Future editions of the Groundhog will feature recollections and stories of some of the other members of the Porch Pickers. We hope you stay tuned to enjoy more stories of the musical richness of our area. 🍀

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Jacksonville State University’s Little River Canyon Center to host the 7th annual Winter Jazz Dinner Show on Friday, February 16th. TAD of Jazz will return to perform various contemporary and traditional jazz styles. Doors open at 5:30 pm CST, dinner follows at 6:00 pm CST, and music at 7:00 pm CST. Tickets are on sale now.

Sweet T’s Event & Catering’s menu will feature local raised beef roast accompanied with roasted potatoes, carrots, and French cut green beans; preceded by a garden salad. Decadent triple chocolate cake and red velvet cake will complete the meal. Iced tea and water will be served but you may bring your favorite beverages.

“We are excited to have Anniston’s TAD of Jazz back for another music-filled evening of outstanding jazz,” says Director Pete Conroy. “No matter what style of jazz you enjoy, TAD of Jazz has something for everyone, performed with jaw-dropping, technical proficiency.”

“We expect a sell-out event again this year, so make your reservations early,” says Sales & Services Manager, Anna Lindsey. She continued, “We encourage guests to let us know if they have any special needs so we can ensure everyone is as comfortable as possible.”

Advanced tickets are available online, onsite at the Canyon Center Gift Shop, or by calling 256-845-7213. Online tickets are \$75 in advance for adults and \$50 for students with a valid student ID. Contact the Canyon Center to reserve or sponsor a table for parties of eight or more. Please make your reservations by Saturday, February 10, 2024. For more info visit our website canyoncenter.org or call 256-845-3548.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. CST, dinner at 6:00 p.m. CST, and the music begins at 7:00 p.m. CST. Admission includes both a meal and entertainment. Seating is first come, first serve, so guests are encouraged to arrive early. 🍷





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Mentone Ukes

It seemed like such a simple song...

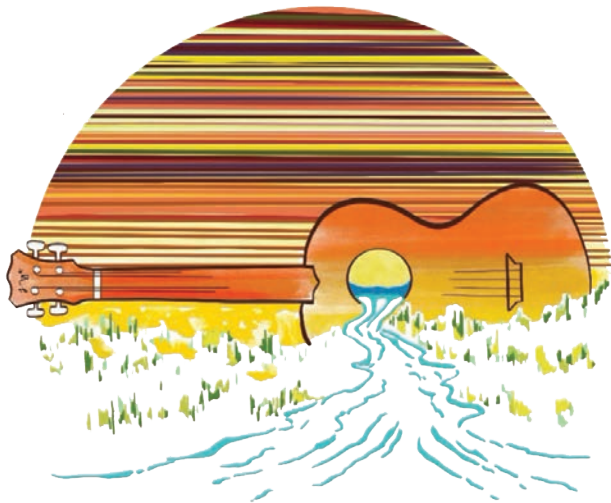
by Debra Fey

February is the month of love. But it was back on Thanksgiving Day, 2023, when Jerry introduced me to “The Wedding Song (There is Love)” by Paul Stookey (Peter, Paul and Mary). First, we listened to it on YouTube, then Jerry read the back story to me of an article written by Stookey for Guideposts entitled “The Song I Had to Give Away” (1993). Stookey says he didn’t write the song, but rather the song was divinely inspired—an answer to his prayer, a gift for his friend and partner Peter Yarrow’s upcoming wedding.

Such beautiful lyrics and such a beautiful story behind the song: Oh, to read each word of the lyrics and feel the divine presence of our Creator behind those words. “For whenever two or more of you are gathered in His name, there is love...”

I told Jerry I wanted to learn how to play the song. Usually, I am focused on songs to learn and later introduce at an upcoming Mentone Ukes session, but this would be a song for just the two of us to play together. Typically, the songs we introduce at our sessions average about 3-5 familiar and/or new chords per song. First, I find the lyrics of the song online, and sometimes the song will be available in different keys, so I try and find the song in a key that our group is most familiar with playing or to incorporate one or two new chords for the group to learn.

But this time my search was different. I searched for the song version that really fleshed out the chord progressions of the original composition only to discover (to my surprise) that the song, in its superior simplicity, takes twelve different chords to play! Some are major chords, some minor, some suspended, some diminished, and some major and minor seventh chords. Some chords were familiar. Other chords—many, actually—were new to me. The bridge takes some getting used to. The instrumental portion builds in anticipation. It takes a lot of work to make a song sound so simple! But Paul Stookey said it was inspired. If you read the words of the song here, I think you would agree.



*He is now to be among you at the calling of your hearts
Rest assured this troubadour is acting on His part
The union of your spirits here has caused Him to remain
For whenever two or more of you are gathered in His name
There is love... There is love*

*Well, a man shall leave his mother, and a woman leave her home
They shall travel on to where the two shall be as one
As it was in the beginning, is now until the end
Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again
And there is love... There is love*

*Oh, then what’s to be the reason for becoming man and wife
Is it love that brings you here or love that brings you life
For, if loving is the answer, then who’s the giving for?
Do you believe in something that you’ve never seen before?
There is love... There is love*

*Yes, the marriage of your spirits here has caused Him to remain
For whenever two or more of you are gathered in His name
There is love... There is love.*

After I got the lyrics and chords together properly and took the time to become familiar with the new chords, I was able to play through the song later that day. In that span of time, I felt like I was really beginning to connect with the deeper message of the song, and its striking chord progression. With its four nylon strings, the ukulele is an easy and welcoming instrument to play. The ukulele desires to be played and our group the Mentone Ukes proves that it is a social instrument. It has no preset boundaries — you can become as good as you choose to be. I can simplify and play the song without those embellished chords, and it still sounds good. But to reach farther, dig a little deeper, and take the time to learn those new chord progressions — well, the end result is deeply satisfying. And such it is with each new song. It is a journey, and that’s how we grow.

The Mentone Ukes sessions provide the tools to learn to play the ukulele. We provide a free beginners introduction to the ukulele at every session. We have a comprehensive beginner’s booklet for each newcomer, and we have loaner ukuleles available to try out. We introduce songs that contain chords that will become very familiar chords over time and are the backbone for literally thousands of songs. New chords challenge the individuals in the group as well. These tools, and the friendship and encouragement our group has towards one another, allow each of us to learn at our own pace as songs inspire and move us to grow in our own uniquely personal ukulele journey. 🍷

JOIN US for our FREE ongoing sessions on February 3rd and 17th at 1:00 p.m. CT at the Moon Lake Library. For more information please contact Debra Fey (debrajfey@gmail.com) or Hank Allen (hank.d.allen@gmail.com) Find us on Facebook or on the web: www.mentoneukes.com.

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Mentone Arts Center

features songwriting workshop, glass beadmaking, dry brush watercolor; salutes Artist of the Month Cal Breed

by Randy Grider

Despite what the temperature may read, classes are heating up inside the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts building.

This month features a linocut printmaking class led by artist/instructor Meg Justice on Saturday, Feb. 3. The one-day class sold out early, though we are keeping a waiting list and hope to schedule another class in the near future.

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, the regular Music on the Mountain Songwriters Series will host a songwriter’s workshop from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The workshop is free to the public, and all interested in songwriting are encouraged to attend.

We also have a two-day glass beadmaking class Feb. 10 and 11 taught by Terry Hale and limited to 10 students. There were still four spots left at press time. Tuition is \$195 plus a \$35 supply fee paid directly to the instructor on the first day of the class.

Glass beadmaking, also known as lampwork, is an ancient art that is still an honored craft. In this introductory, students will learn the amazing process of making glass beads. Students will work with rods of beautiful colored glass that they will melt over an open flame torch. Students will then work on basic shaping followed by adding dots, lines, sprinkles of color, and much more. Detailed safety instructions will be covered throughout the day. At the end of class, students will learn how to wear and display the beads and be offered some interesting ideas for using them in non-wearable ways. This class will be a perfect first step for those interested in pursuing the art of lampwork.

About the instructor: Terry Hale is an artisan glass beadmaker and jewelry designer in Madison, Alabama. She taught a class here at the arts center this past September. Her skills at the glass torch began in 2003 when she took her first class in working with molten glass, studying with Marjorie Langston in Chattanooga. In 2006, she opened a brick-and-mortar studio that was also a classroom and gallery for local artists. Very soon after, she was invited to teach at John C. Campbell Folk School (Brasstown, NC) where she still regularly teaches beginner to advanced classes in torchwork as well as jewelry making. She also teaches at the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell (Nauvoo, AL), Miami University (Oxford, OH), Appalachian Center for Craft (Smithville, TN), and semi-annually at Essence of Mulranny/Mulranny Arts (Mulranny, County Mayo, Ireland.)

Another upcoming art class with a returning instructor features Alan R. Young. March 15 thru 17, Painting in Dry Brush Watercolor is a two-day plus beginners’ class that actually runs Friday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The class is limited to 10 students. Tuition is \$195 plus a \$25 supply fee.

Students will explore the technique of painting by subtraction: the lifting of watercolor paint to create highlights. They will learn the layering process for hard and receding shadows. Each step is followed by a drying period and students are encouraged to work on multiple, simultaneous projects. Using various tools, such as sandpaper and hard edges, some students may try their hand at pre-texturing the watercolor paper for interesting effects found in nature. For more advanced students, examples will be available for the Chiaroscuro effect painting (total contrast). Dry Brush Watercolor, unlike traditional watercolor, is designed for better control.

About the instructor: Award-winning wildlife artist Alan R. Young exhibits his watercolor paintings and illustrations throughout the Southern Appalachians.



His works are primarily of indigenous birds and reside in private and public collections throughout the eastern United States. These collections include Coca Cola, Georgia Power Company, and Atlanta Gas. Nonprofits include Georgia, Ohio, and New York Audubon Societies. Young also offers group and individual classes in his “Dry Brush” technique, a more controllable alternative to traditional watercolor. He regularly teaches at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

For more on these classes or to register, see contact information at the end of this article.

This month, Mentone Arts and Cultural Center spotlights Cal Breed as the February Artist of the Month.

Cal and his wife, Christy Breed, own and run Orbix Hot Glass on Little River Canyon near Fort Payne, where Cal and his team make functional and decorative glass along with his sculptural works. The functional work has been used for years as a tool to sharpen his sensitivities to the material as well as to teach and refine the craftsmanship and the artistic skills of his team. The studio’s proximity to this National Preserve has served as a wellspring of artistic inspiration while exploring in and around these natural areas. Breed believes that time spent in quietness is important, and much of his work is intended to encourage the viewer to pause, think, question, ponder, and wonder.

As a tool for learning, Cal has made it a habit to seek out mentors to learn from and share experiences with. Among these are many glass artists including Cam Langley, Paul Cunningham, Ruth King, Jack Wax, Dante Marioni, Dick Marquis, Lino Tagliapietra, Pino Signoretto, Benjamin Moore, Karen Willenbrink-Johnsen, and Richard Royal at Ohio State University, The Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Pilchuck Glass School, and individual studios. To continue this heritage of sharing through mentorship, Cal makes it a part of his lifestyle to share with younger learners and artists of life. His studio is set up as a sort of incubational space for younger artists to develop. Along with teaching the young artists in his studio, Cal also has taught classes at Pilchuck Glass School and Tennessee Tech.

Inspired at an early age by the inquisitive work of the marine explorer Jacques Cousteau, Cal pursued the process of learning to see the unseen through the study of the sciences and immersing himself in a lifestyle of adventurous exploration. This search has manifested itself in a variety of ways.

Years of repetitive walks in the woods from home to the studio have allowed him to see hidden details by observing inconsistencies within the consistencies of the familiar walking path. Hyper focused rock climbing of intricately detailed textured stone skins has made a way for exploration. By blocking out much of life’s distractions he sees the hidden gifts of beauty in a physical movement of balance or the tiniest plant finding its home in an unusual space. Even sailing the atmospheric cycles of flow amongst clouds upon a paraglider has provided situations to gain a new variety of perspectives and points of view.

These layers of observational information are accessed only through time and practice of awareness, which is achieved many times by taking a moment to stare upward or squat down for a closer look. Observing



February Artist of the Month — Cal Breed



Glass Beadmaker and Jewelry Designer — Terry Hale

on a macro scale and a micro scale as well as pushing and pulling time inform much of his decision making as he builds sculptural meditations.

Numerous awards and honors have been given for Cal’s work including, the Alabama State Council of Arts Individual Artist Grant for 2005 and 2015, the 2004 Niche Award, scholarships to Pilchuck Glass School, scholarships to Haystack Mountain School, and 2007 Corning Foundation Award from Pilchuck Glass School.

Cal’s work is found in many private and public collections, including The Huntsville Museum of Art, The Wiregrass Museum of Art, and The Montgomery Museum of Art.

Also, Cal was featured in an Alabama Public Television Documentary entitled “Alabama Crafts: Tradition and Innovation”. The arts center has numerous Orbix artwork on display and for sale. 🐿

Randy Grider is executive director of the nonprofit Mentone Arts and Cultural Center. He can be reached via email at mentoneartscenter@gmail.com or by phone at 256-674-3366.



ON-FARM MARKET

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Mentone Educational Resources Foundation

is off to an exciting start in 2024.

by Anna Mae Horn

Valentine’s Day. Spring senior lunches will kick off on February 14 at The Farm at Windy Hill. Camp DeSoto loves MERF and the seniors dearly. They will be treating us to lunch at The Farm. The last lunch will be at The Hatter Café. Other lunches will be back at Moon Lake Baptist Fellowship Hall. All lunches are served at 11:30 a.m. sharp on Wednesdays from Valentine’s Day through the end of April. There will not be a lunch on April 3 (more on this in a moment). The primary purpose of these lunches is to give our local retired persons a chance to socialize with each other, so be sure to arrive about 11 a.m. and visit with each other. Often, we have singing or activities afterward, so don’t plan to rush off.

Now, why aren’t we having lunch the first week of April? We will be setting up the annual Taste of the Mountain and Art Auction! MERF is excited to return to Camp Skyline’s dining hall on April 6 to showcase our local artists of all ages. Organizing the art auction and dinner is just beginning. Volunteers plan, decorate, collect artwork, take photos, make calls, post signage, help at the event, and more. If you’d like to help with this, contact information is below. Many community members work together to make this a delightful night of fun for the everyone. Tickets will be on sale in March. Student artwork for the auction will be chosen at Ms. Paula’s Family Fine Arts Night. The public is encouraged to attend this fun exhibit of artwork and musical performances by students from Ms. Paula’s class. (See details at side.)

MERF will be hosting mock interviews for the Valley Head High School business class again this year. It was a great success last year, helpful volunteers enabled eager students to interact and practice for future job interviews. Would you like to help during the last week of February? Interview questions will be provided, and contact information is below.

Mentone Educational Resources Foundation (MERF) is excited to collaborate with Valley Head School (VHS) on a program for Jr. High students. Funding for the “Outdoor Adventure to Develop Leadership, Confidence, Empathy, & Community for Valley Head Students” is made possible by a grant from the Harland Jones Fund of the Community Foundation of Northeast

Alabama (CFNEA). This will be a fun learning adventure that teaches students to work together and have confidence in themselves! Thank you CFNEA for supporting MERF and making this program possible!

MERF is proud to announce five recipients of the Sue McLaurin Henry Memorial Scholarship for the 2024 Spring Semester. These students excel inside and outside the college classroom. If you know them, congratulate them on their excellence. Eian Baine is majoring in physical education with plans of coaching at Valley Head School and bringing home a state title in football to bolster pride in the community. Connor Cash’s college accomplishments include making the Dean’s list and All Academic All-Conference. Caitlyn Collins is pursuing a Master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health and is a member of the Psychology Club, Psi Chi Honor Society, and the Public Relations Student Society of America. Ellie Cox is a Psychology major recently inducted into Sigma Kappa Delta, Epsilon Alpha chapter, who looks forward to using her education to help our local community. Emma Harrison is majoring in Kinesiology to work as an athletic trainer; she is currently one of the managers of the men’s basketball team at her college. MERF wishes all these students a great college experience!

The Sue McLaurin Henry Memorial Scholarship application opens annually in November for college students who meet the required criteria to help with the cost of the following semester. It is funded through memorial donations, so the amount available fluctuates. The fund began in memory of founding board member Sue Henry, who was a strong advocate of education. Recent donations have honored the memory of local legend Buffalo Jack Martin, the respected Reverend Dr. Benjamin Booth, and local favorite Poppy Buchanan. They have each impacted the local community (and farther away). Jack, Ben, and Poppy will all be missed, but it is heartwarming to see their memory honored. 🍷

Anna Mae Horn is the executive director of the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation. For more information or to volunteer, email MERF.mentone@gmail.com, call/text 256-635-8775, or visit MERFhouse.org.



Eian Baine



Connor Cash



Caitlyn Collins



Ellie Cox



Emma Harrison

VALLEY HEAD ELEMENTARY

Family Fine Arts Night

Thursday
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Valley Head Elementary Gymnasium

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• Feb. 21	• April 3 – NO LUNCH
• Feb. 28	• Apr. 6
• March 6	• April 10
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• March 20	• April 24 – last lunch at The Hatter

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When you support the arts, your community flourishes

by Stephen V. Smith



Mentone is known for many things. Its summer camps. The great outdoors. Its array of unique shops and restaurants. But perhaps more than anything, Mentone is recognized across the region for its focus on the arts — a community where creativity flourishes, and creators and collectors alike are embraced and supported.

A strong arts council is vital to fostering a community’s creative spirit, and the Little River Arts Council has been doing so for almost two decades.

Membership is key to this support. When you become a member of the Little River Arts Council, you do more than provide operating funds for the Council’s projects. Your membership is also a show of support that speaks loudly to others that you believe “the arts are for everyone.”

As you consider becoming a member, the following are some common questions:

What are my membership dues used for?

Membership dues are the foundation of LRAC’s operation. This money covers the non-profit organization’s normal operating expenses.

Why are membership numbers important to an arts council?

More members means a more active, engaged community. Further, it signals to potential grant funding sources that the council is a thriving organization with widespread community involvement — and grant funding is critical to LRAC’s programming.

Do I have to be an artist to join the Little River Arts Council?

Not at all! If you enjoy the arts, please join us! We believe strongly in our slogan, “the arts are for everyone.” Your support will help LRAC continue to foster the visual, performing, and literary arts in the Mentone area.

Is the Little River Arts Council only for residents of Mentone?

No. Our mission is to “enrich the quality of life for people in Mentone and neighboring communities.” Plus, many of our members are property

owners and visitors to the Mentone area.

And how do you accomplish that?

The rest of our mission statement reads, “by raising funds for the arts; sponsoring events; providing educational opportunities; and strengthening cultural resources for the benefit of all businesses and citizens in the Mentone area.”

What are the available membership levels?

Dues are low and reasonable to make membership available to everyone, with higher levels for those who want to provide greater support to LRAC:

- Student: \$10
 - Individual: \$25
 - Family: \$40
 - Supporter: \$100
 - Patron: \$500+
- Does membership benefit artists directly?**

Yes! Artists who are members of LRAC get first notice for events and grant opportunities. As a new feature, they also receive discounted fees for festivals in which they wish to

participate. Further, artists are included in the Artist Registry portion of the LRAC website (regardless of their membership status).

Any other reasons to join?

Need another reason to become an LRAC member? Your membership helps us provide operational support to a wide range of artists and art organizations throughout the area. It also helps with the vital resources necessary to develop new and innovative arts programming for children and adults in our community.

Further, you’ll be invited to fun membership socials and our annual membership meeting. You’ll also stay on top of all the arts news and events through our email newsletter.

As we begin the new year, we’d like to say a special thank you to your current members (this list is current as of 1/17/2024). We’d love to add your name to our list! 🐾

Stephen V. Smith is a board member of the Little River Arts Council.

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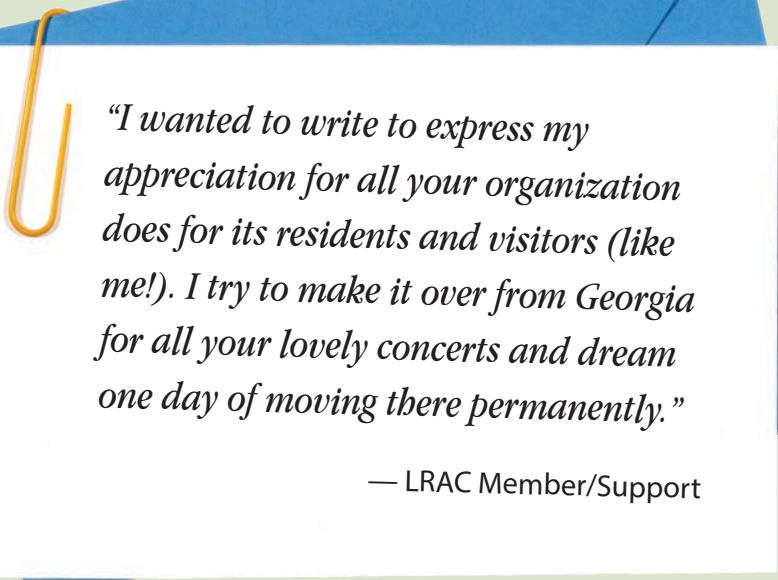
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Visit the LRAC website at www.littleriverartscouncil.org to become a member. You can also mail your dues to the address below. Be sure to include your name as you want it to appear on our membership list.

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River Ridge Escapes now has nine tiny home communities near and atop Lookout Mountain in NW Georgia and NE Alabama. There are several Airbnb Tiny Homes in our various locations to come experience tiny home living, downsizing, the community, and explore the surrounding areas.

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Rhododendron Garden Club News

by Mellanie Tuttle and Rhea Pirch



The Rhododendron Garden Club (RGC) gathered in the home of Kathryn Norris for its December luncheon. Unlike the year when all the side dishes were potatoes, only one person brought a sweet potato casserole. Another member was supposed to bring Scalloped Potatoes, but she could not face the daunting task of peeling five pounds of Russet potatoes. Mary Shurett's Mocha Punch was the most asked for recipe.

Before the partaking of deliciousness, twenty members witnessed Jean Jackson, President of Rainsville Garden Club install the newly elected officers - Rhea Pirch, President; Carol Argo, Vice President; Julie Cash, Secretary; and Pat Parmelee, Treasurer. Special thanks to outgoing Secretary, Alyce Kenney, who not only supplied timely minutes but also wrote the articles for the Groundhog. Thank you to Treasurer extraordinaire, Dianne Kuehl, who worked the room collecting dues so she would have an accurate membership count for her award-winning yearbook creation. A personal thanks to Rhea for becoming President. New faces and new ideas for 2024-25. For her meditation, Kathryn Norris chose two



poems The Christmas Holly by Eliza Cook and another by Becky Helmsley called Breathe. Kathryn reminded us that trails abound around Mentone. Get outside, go for a walk, make the time in 2024 to connect with nature and Breathe.

Fifteen members gathered for the January meeting held on Tuesday the 9th at the Moon Lake Library. Our role call subject was to name something green growing in your yard that is not a conifer. All is not lost to the winter weather. Turns out, our members still have herbs growing, such as rosemary, sage, and parsley, and other greenery in the form of ferns, holly, Jackson vine, and horsetail brush. Colorful flowers are blooming, too, like hellebores, Lenten rose, and the camellia flower "April Remembered."

Member Carol Argo read the poem "My Secret Garden" for our meditation, then business commenced. We discussed old and new business and set the date for our winter seed swap, which will be on Saturday, February 17th at Moon Lake Library. All are invited to attend! Bring your saved seeds and pick from a selection of an assortment of seeds that will be available.

After business was wrapped up, member Pat Parmelee gave her informative and engaging program on daylilies. If you need something easy and delightful to grow that gives a wealth of variety, daylilies should be your choice!

The meeting then adjourned until next month when we meet again on Tuesday, February 13th, 10:00 at Moon Lake Library. Green thumbs, brown thumbs, all thumbs, no thumbs are welcome.

Mellanie Tuttle and Rhea Pirch are members of the Rhododendron Garden Club.

- » For your consideration and inspiration: reflectionriding.org
- » For Desoto Park happenings: alapark.com/parks/desotostate-park/park-events
- » Becky Hemsley Poetry at www.beckyhemsley.com or YouTube - Becky recites poems Battle, Breathe, Like a Girl, and Fairytale

The Rhododendron Garden Club is a member of the

- National Garden Club, Inc.
- Deep South Garden Club, Inc.
- Garden Club of Alabama, Inc. District II
- Northeast Alabama Federation of Garden Clubs

Mentone American Legion Gets New Adjutant

by Barry Morton

A new Adjutant is sworn in at the Mentone American Legion by Richard Pope, County Commander over 3 of the 8 Posts in the District. The District Commander Kenneth along with his wife Rene, who is the Marshall County Commander, were also in attendance. In fact, there were, including me, five American Legion Commanders in the swearing-in ceremony.

Adjutants are the personnel officer and personal point of contact for individual members of the post. The adjutant keeps membership records and minutes of meetings; assists the work of other officers and committees; and publishes official orders, announcements, and instructions.

Claire Baroni is the new Adjutant. Claire was an Air Force Active Duty and Reserves with a combined total of 13 years. She served from 1996 to 2009,

deploying twice after 9/11. She currently works for the Department of the US Army and has over 17 years of total federal service. She has been an Adjutant for the VFW Post 8973 in New Orleans. She served her community through that post by helping to repair houses of disabled and/or elderly Veterans.

Claire will also be a member of the Post Executive Committee (PEC) along with Jay Skinner, Rich Pyell, Sandra Plummer, Mike Norris, Vice Commander Alan Lawson, and Dr. Carter Morris. The purpose of the PEC is to conduct the business of the Post. Claire writes that "her commitment will add to the betterment of the Mentone American Legion and its surrounding communities."

Barry Morton is Commander of the American Legion Post 215.





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Moon Lake Library

Free Tax Preparation at Moon Lake Library



Make an appointment for help filing your tax return on Saturdays during tax season. Library board treasurer Jay Robbins has trained in tax preparation and can offer free assistance to those who need help. Stop by the library to make an appointment and to pick up the initial paperwork. Jay can help with your return, at no charge.



Nucor Division Controller Adam Watkins (L) presents a \$2,500 donation to Moon Lake Library Chair Holley Midgley (R) to be used to support Library programs. Nucor is well known for its support of area community organizations.

February 2024 at Moon Lake Library

- Weekly Meet-Ups:** CHESS on Tuesdays at 1 p.m.; KNITTING and CROCHET Tuesdays at p.m.; SCRABBLE Wednesdays at noon
- Tax assistance** available by appointment on Saturday mornings. Contact info below.
- February 2** • 6 p.m. Family Game Night - Bring a snack to share and we'll enjoy board games and cards at the library.
- February 3** • 10:30 a.m. Little Library Learners, children ages 3-7
- February 3** • 1 p.m. Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.
- February 8** • 3 p.m. Friends of Moon Lake Library Board meeting; 4 p.m. Municipal Library board meeting
- February 10** • 10:30 a.m. Book Club – Our theme for this month’s discussion: Books about Books, either fiction or nonfiction. Need suggestions? Stop by the library.
- February 16** • 6 p.m. Friday Night at the Movies: Barbie (PG-13, 2023)
- February 17** • Community Seed Swap - Sponsored by Rhododendron Garden Club in partnership with Moon Lake Library. We'll also have Girl Scouts selling cookies.
- February 17** • 10:30 a.m. Little Library Learners, children ages 3-7
- February 17** • 1 p.m. Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.
- February 20** • 6-8 p.m. Art Critique and Discussion Group with Mikel Yeakle, sponsored by Little River Arts Council. Let’s talk about art. Artists, please bring a piece or two to share.
- February 24** • 12-2 p.m. Make a handmade book and collage with artist Lydia Randolph. Materials fee: \$38. Register by calling or emailing the library.

Moon Lake Library

4607 Hwy 117 • Mentone, AL • 256-634-2127
Tuesday-Friday 12-4:30 p.m. • Saturday 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
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Valley Head Senior Beta Students Volunteer with Operation Christmas Child

by Johnny Mann

Recently, several members of the Valley Head Senior Beta Club and their sponsors had a great day volunteering with Operation Christmas Child. The Valley Head Senior Beta sponsors are Mr. Jim Lasser, Mrs. Rhonda Lasser, Mrs. Christi Black, and Mrs. Cindy Harrison. The Senior Beta members who attended were Makayla Gilbert, Johnny Mann, Charity Smith, and Sadie Young. Operation Christmas Child, a project organized by Samaritan's Purse, collects shoeboxes filled with school supplies, hygiene items, and toys for distribution to children in need. The Valley Head team sorted and packaged shoeboxes for shipment to the Republic of the Congo at the Operation Christmas Child processing center in Kennesaw, Georgia. Some members were participating in this event for the first time. It was a wonderful experience, and the Valley Head Senior Beta Club looks forward to doing it again next year.



ABOVE: VH Sr. Beta volunteers and sponsors at Operation Christmas Child L-R Johnny Mann, Christi Black, Charity Smith, Rhonda Lasser, Jim Lasser, Makayla Gilbert, Cindy Harrison, and Sadie Young

LEFT: Sr. Beta student volunteers for Operation Christmas Child L-R Johnny Mann, Makayla Gilbert, Sadie Young, and Charity Smith

Minds in Motion Maker Fair at VHS

Valley Head elementary students participated in a Minds in Motion Maker Fair hosted by Abbey Thomas, Technology Integration Specialist for DeKalb County Schools. The Maker Fair allowed each grade level to use the design process to a meet specific STEM challenge. Some of the challenges were designing a frame for a self-portrait, constructing a structure that can be

balanced on the finger and nose, creating a monster that has a working light, and building a ramp that will allow a ball to travel at least four feet. The students enjoyed the unique activities and worked well together to accomplish the tasks. Mrs. Thomas stated, "As always, I was blown away by the students' creativity and imagination — not to mention their determination to complete the challenge."



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Family Fine Arts Night

Thursday, February 22, 2024

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Valley Head Elementary Gymnasium

There will be student artwork to enjoy, refreshments, art activities for you to share with your student and take home with you, a photo booth for fun pictures and musical performances by students at 6 p.m.

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Otherworld Gifts

The Sacred Earth Studio

Shigley Amphitheatre

Terrence Hill Basketball



February Community Events

*All times are central unless otherwise noted.
Calendar entries are subject to change.*

February 1 • Yoga on Main Street with Courtney • Join Courtney Willingham of Yoga on Main Street for a wind-down from your busy day! These sessions are open to all practice levels and abilities; no reservation is needed, but a donation is recommended for the class. While usually held in Hunt Hall, sometimes we will meet on the Opera House stage, a neighboring business, or Fort Payne City Park if the weather is nice. 6-7 p.m.

February 2 • Happy Groundhog Day!

February 3 • Introduction to Linocut Printmaking • In this introductory workshop, students will learn the basics of block printing from local artist and printmaker Meg T. Justice of Bee Spring Studio. Join Meg inside the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts, where you will be guided through the process of designing, carving and printing your very own linocut printmaking block. The class is limited to 10 students and tuition is \$100 plus a \$35 printmaking kit fee, paid directly to the instructor. To register for the class, please email MentoneArtsCenter@gmail.com or call 256-674-3366.

February 6 • Breakfast and Business • Join us for our first Breakfast & Business in 2024 at DeKalb MD on February 6 at 8 a.m. Learn more about individual and employee healthcare services provided by DeKalb MD and network with your peers.

February 8 • Winter Gallery Flip • Over the next few weeks in the gallery, we're freshening up, making improvements, and moving things around for an exciting 2024! Featured artists: Kay Sasser Jacoby, Trevor Hill, and Lily Payne. Come see the changes and join us at our 'Gallery Flip' event for a fun evening with other art lovers. Boom Town Makers Market in Fort Payne. 5-8 p.m.

February 8 – 10, 12 & 15 – 17 • Children's Advocacy Center Dinner and Play • Children's Advocacy Center presents their annual dinner and play written and directed by Eddie McPherson. The play will be held at the First United Methodist Church Life Center. Ticket prices vary and are by reservation only. For more information or tickets, 256-997-9700.

February 9 • Trail Trekker Hike: Waterfall Hike • Join DeSoto State Park staff & volunteers for a fun day of hiking through-out the park to see some of DeSoto's waterfalls, big and small. See Lost Falls, Laurel Falls, Indian Falls, and more water features like Laurel Creek and the West Fork of Little River. About the hike: the trail will be moderate, rugged terrain over approx. 3 miles. We will utilize the orange and blue trails for this hike. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Meet at DeSoto's Country Store on County Road 89. Free and open to everyone, no preregistration required. Weather-dependent, please call the Lodge at 256-845-5380 beforehand to check on status of hike.

Contact Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for any details. www.alapark.com/desoto-state-park/hiking. As with all outdoor events, if it is stormy or very poor trail conditions, we may have to cancel. If the weather is questionable, please call the park before you leave home to check if the hike is still on (256-845-0051)

February 9 • Alabama Ballet • NACC is proud to announce the return of the Alabama Ballet to our campus in February! Don't miss the romantic ballet, Giselle. 7 p.m. in the Tom Bevill Lyceum Tickets are \$10 and are on sale now! Contact Rachael Graham at 256-638-4418 ext. 2391 or grahamr@nacc.edu. Purchase tickets online at showclix.com/event/the-alabama-ballet-presents-giselle

February 10 • Adventure Hike-DeSoto Falls Basin • Set out on an adventure hike with DeSoto State Park staff to the bottom of one of Alabama's tallest waterfalls, DeSoto Falls! Learn about Little River, an outstanding water source with its clear water and plant and animal life. Discover the history of the area around DeSoto Falls. About the hike: This hike is approximately 1.5 miles total but considered moderate to strenuous due to the mountainous terrain and elevation. We will be hiking on rocky terrain down to the West Fork of Little River and walking upstream to the view of DeSoto Falls. Meet at DeSoto Falls Trailhead on County Road 613. Free and open to everyone, no preregistration required. Weather-dependent, please call the Lodge at 256-845-5380 beforehand to check status of hike. Email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov for more info or to pre-register.

February 10 • Gathering of Farmers • If you're a farmer, homesteader, or interested in regenerative growing practices- you're invited! Join us on February 10 at 4 p.m. at @bluejugoffortpayne for a time to gather together and share ideas and interests. Bring a dish to share and there will be drinks available to purchase at Blue Jug. We look forward to seeing you there.

February 10 • Jordan Rainer at the Pickin Post • 2023 Top 5 Finisher on The Voice will be at the Pickin Post. Tickets are \$25. Show starts at 6 p.m. Get tickets at Blacks Tire in Rainsville or Patterson's Pawn in Fort Payne. Call for more information. 256-657-3817 or 256-996-8910.

February 10 – 11 • Glass Beadmaking • We will host glass bead instructor Terry Hale of Hale Fire Glass for a two-day beginners glass beadmaking class at the Mentone Arts Center. Students will work with rods of beautiful colored glass that they'll melt over an open flame torch. Students will then work on basic shaping followed by adding dots, lines, sprinkles of color, and much more. Detailed safety instructions will be covered throughout the day. At the end of class, we'll talk about how to wear and display the beads and offer some interesting ideas for using them in non-wearable ways. For more information or to register for the class, email mentoneartscenter@gmail.com.

February 10 – 11 • Gun & Knife Show • The Fort Payne Gun & Knife Show will be held on Feb. 10-11 in Ft. Payne. This gun show is held at DeKalb County Fairgrounds and hosted by A.G. Gun Shows. All federal and local firearm laws and ordinances must be obeyed.

February 14 • Happy Valentine's Day •

February 16 • An Evening of Jazz • Join us for an evening of Jazz featuring TAD of Jazz and a 3-course dinner. Come at 5 p.m. for a social hour and silent auction before the concert. Little River Canyon Center.

February 17 • Hunter Education Course • This is a public event coordinated by UXO, hosted by the fine folks at the VFW Post in Ft. Payne and executed by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It is an all day, in-person event. Breakfast, snacks, drinks, and lunch will be provided on-site. One lucky person will be drawn for a lifetime hunting license from Team UXO. 8 a.m.

February 17 • Live Music Concert at the Cricket Theatre • The Sextons and Primitive Road will be performing at the Cricket Theatre, 4 p.m. Tickets for this concert are \$10 each. Purchase tickets at Collinsville Public Library, Collinsville Museum, Graves Hardware and Caroline's Cafe This is the first concert in a series of four concerts of various types of music presented by Collinsville Historical Association with support from The Alabama State Council on the Arts and local sponsors. All proceeds will benefit the continued renovations of the The Cricket Theatre.

February 17 • Down East Boys at The Pickin Post • A great gospel concert with "The Down East Boys" along with "Anthem Edition" formerly known as the "Old Paths" more info 256-657-3817 or 256-845-4115 \$20 tickets 6 p.m.

February 20 • Art Talk • Little River Arts Council presents an evening of art critique and discussion – this will be free to the public and open discussion is encouraged! Art is meant to be seen, and discussed! If you are an artist or an art appreciator, this is an evening for you. Mikel Yeakle leads another informal conversation about art, why we create it, and how it affects our lives. Mikel Yeakle is an art history buff whose knowledge and enthusiasm for art is engaging and delightful. Having worked as a professional artist all his adult life, Mikel has useful tips for anyone new to selling their work. All are invited to bring their artwork and share their process and inspirations. The conversation is open to anyone who is drawn to art, (pun intended) not just creators of art. In 2024, we look forward to showcasing more local talent from the Mentone area. 6-8 p.m. (CST) Moon Lake Library, Address: 4607 AL Hwy 117, Mentone, AL 35984 Fee: free and open to all! www.littleriverartscouncil.org

February 24 • CJB At Vintage 1889 • Enjoy a great night of music and food. Music starts at 6 p.m.

In Memoriam

Please email your loved ones Memoriam information to GroundhogNews@yahoo.com. They will be printed as space allows.



Poppy Pickering Buchanan
September 7, 1939 - January 3, 2024

Poppy Pickering Buchanan passed away peacefully at Ascension St. Thomas West Hospital on January 3rd, surrounded by her loving family

and friends. Poppy was born in Princeton, Kentucky on September 7th, 1939, to William Goebel Pickering and Ethel Gresham Pickering. She attended Southern Seminary, a boarding school in Buena Vista, Virginia, where she developed a deep love for reading, inspired by her English teacher, lifelong mentor, and dear friend, Sue McLaurin Henry.

While at Vanderbilt, Sue Henry encouraged Poppy to come work for a summer as a camp counselor at Camp Desoto. It was a summer that would change her life, as well as the lives of many others. Her passion for Camp DeSoto and the surrounding town of Mentone, Alabama brought her back often to the mountain as camp nurse for fifteen summers, where she forged cherished friendships.

Poppy will be remembered as an adventurous traveler, fierce card game competitor, avid art lover, and generous hostess. Laughter and good conversation flowed wherever Poppy was. She will be dearly missed by her many friends and family.

She is survived by her sister, Joann Gannaway; daughters, Mary Gresham Buchanan Barr (Rick) and Elizabeth Buchanan; her grandchildren, Thompson Barr (Annie), Bennett Barr, and Sarah Gresham Barr Maddox (Hunter), Poppy Krump, Duncan Krump, Aidan Krump, and Josephine Krump; and her great-granddaughter, Susan Barr.

Her family would like to thank and send our love to those who cared for Poppy so well in her final years, especially LaShana Bryant, Mary Day, Nancy Sanders, and Justin Smith.

A celebration of life will be held for Poppy in May—a party, as she would have loved. More details from the family will follow.

In lieu of flowers, please remember Poppy by giving someone a big hug today. Tell them that you really love them!



Wesley Earle Drennen II
1947- 2023

Wesley Earle Drennen II, 76, of Cloudland, GA, died peacefully at his home surrounded by family on December 28th, 2023.

Earle was born in Birmingham,

Alabama on December 2,1947 to Virginia Neal Drennen and Jesse Lafayette Drennen, Jr. He graduated from Shades Crest High School before attending the University of Montevallo and then graduating from The University of Alabama.

He co-founded Harmony Foods in 1972 with his first wife, Frances Self Drennen. They opened Manna Grocery and Deli together in 1980. He worked as the co-owner at Manna for 40 years, sharing his knowledge of natural foods and nutritional supplements with customers in the store and on his regular monthly appearance on the Jim Lawson radio show.

Later in his life, he returned to playing golf, an early passion of his. He took part in many golf tournaments across the Southeast and loved being on the golf course with friends.

Earle married Adelaide Wood in 2011. They lived in Tuscaloosa until Earle retired from Manna Grocery in 2020. Then, he and Adelaide then moved to Cloudland, Georgia. They loved hosting family and friends at their home on Lookout Mountain. They developed a large group of friends and a lively social life, and Earle continued golfing at many courses in the area and as a member at Terrapin Hills Country Club.

Earle and Adelaide loved to travel and took many trips to visit their children and grandchildren across the country. They also visited National Parks and traveled abroad.

He had a love for film and nature, spending lots of time with Adelaide and family on hikes that often ended with a dip in a swimming hole or watching movies at home and in theaters. He practiced meditation every day and took great care of his health through diet, yoga, and exercise. He loved following the PGA Tour and college football, especially the Crimson Tide.

Earle is survived by his wife, Adelaide Drennen; children Natalie Nisa Jones (Jeremy), Anna Grace Drennen (Baker Lawley), Daniel Vilayat Drennen (Jacquelyn), and Ilona Kathleen Drennen; stepchildren Victor Wood and Josephine Wood Agrawal (Saahil); and grandchildren Tristan, Phoebe, Chandler, Ford, Cleo, Finn, DeWitt, and Neera.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to First Tee of Birmingham or Cloudland Volunteer Fire Department, PO Box 277, Menlo GA 30731.



Jack Boyd Martin
1934 - 2023

Jack Boyd Martin was born “on the day before August 1934” in Lynchburg, Tennessee. He passed away on December 18, 2023, in the home that he loved, on that land

that he belonged to. Jack felt blessed to be the father of Cirreena Martin McQuiston and Ryan (G.E.) Martin; the grandfather of Amber Kirkland (Jason) and the great-grandfather of Camden Kirkland and Paislee Kirkland.

For 37 years, Jack worked with the Ford Motor Company in Wixom, Michigan, after having proudly served in the military during the time of the Korean War. In 1983, Jack bought property with a lake at Mentone and built his own home here on the mountain. He was known hereabouts by the name “Buffalo Jack”. You might have noticed that he was a snappy dresser, with his white cowboy boots and his purple shirts. He and his granddaughter, Amber, shared a love for purple; he even had a couple of purple vehicles - Fords, of course.

Jack Martin was known for his sense of humor. He liked to tell a joke, or two. At the MERF senior lunches, his regular drink was sweet tea, but that didn’t keep him from asking sometimes for buttermilk and sometimes for Jack Daniels. He liked to tell that when he was born his mother almost had twins... she was only off by one. And he said that he was a 10-month baby, and he’d been late ever since.

He had a way with his pets: buffalo, goats, peacocks, chickens- but no dogs. When Jack was a little boy, his granddaddy got bit by a rabid dog - and even after taking the series of rabies shots, his granddaddy died of hydrophobia. Jack held a grudge against dogs for the rest of his life.

Everyone who knew and loved him would have to admit Jack was strong-minded. He knew what he liked and what he didn’t like; what he would accept and what he refused to accept. When it came to music, politics, food, drink, animals, and people, he had strong opinions about what was good and what was not good. To his friends and family, he was generous, and he enjoyed every opportunity to visit and spend time together. He loved his home. His vision failed him some number of years ago and kept him from doing all he wanted to do, but the things he could still do, he did with pleasure and joy. His daughter, Cirreena, said, “He was the hardest working man that I have ever known in my life.” He was tough. Tough in mind and body and tough on his children. He taught them the value of hard work, taking care of things, and doing things right. “He was an amazing Father and Grandfather.” His granddaughter says she has a ton of memories of being at his home in Mentone. His animals, cars, 4-wheelers, and paddle boat. Her three-year-old got to ride a buffalo!!

Jack is also survived by sister Sylvia Eden, brother Olan Johnson, and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brothers John Johnson and James Johnson. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to the Bright Focus Foundation for Macular Degeneration Research (donate.brightfocus.org).

Mentone is a darker, quieter, more lonesome place since Buffalo Jack Martin is no longer here. His memory lives on, though. Can’t you imagine his smile and twinkling eyes as he says, “Take your time going, but hurry back.” or “ You never know what’s under a rock until you look.” or “If I’m not here, I’m somewhere.” Live on Buffalo Jack.



February Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	John Lawton Abby Bell Tammy Kirby Rindy Flannigan Fontana Stinson Thomas Blevins AJ Hairston	7	Jordan Sutton Tristan Rodriguez Haley Stinson Moore Carley Verdon Jase Kirby Norah Underwood Kevin Burt Haven Stone		Elliott Floyd Chuck Ables		Stella Pierce Joan Byrum Juanita McGuire Adam Battles Will Barksdale Elizabeth White James Ledbetter		1	Russell & Jan O'Dell Craig & Ashley Hulgan
2	GROUNDHOG DAY!! Beverly Smith Karen Nixon Zeb Kincer Elijah Rogers Lamar King Ben Windom	8	Wyatt Blackburn Crystal Smith Helen Brown Annette Johnson Sandy Tate Jay Thompson Tavontae Harmon Jr. Leon Drown	13	Belle Easley Gretchen Winder Carol Busby Craig Hall Isaac Pangle	21	Wendy Jones Lad Steinemann Bonita Gaston Jim Srock		3	Ray & Sandra Padgett Ernest & Faye Ross
3	Destin Padgett Drew Jones Melanie Potts Garrett	9	Kara Goss Jonnie Frost Cayden Collins Heath Jones Baker Stone	14	Valentine's Day! Abbi Gifford Eddie Manning Lillie Moses Sidney Ashley Hadley Ashley Baxter Austin	22	Justin Langston Johnny Mack Ferguson, Jr Corey Blalock Derek McMahan Jordan Bethune Jason New Beckett Hester Hubby Forter		4	Larry & Kathy Gray James Rhodes & Angela Eads
4	Angela Phillips Ava Bearden Carson Dan Frost Sophia Blair Brittany Daniel Aubree Lewchuk Cameron Norsworthy Katie Beth Woods Andrew Hairston William Tyler Lee Mandy Morton Mark Clark Rita Stutts Makenzie McDorman Sharon Burt	10	Joe McClure Leonard Keith Katie White Luke Hulgan Tim Jackson Katy Nowak	15	Ashley Coffman Diane Smith Brandon Davis Axl Blake Jones	23	Dallon Hairston		5	Don & Glenda Ingram
5	Yon Hopper Savannah Wallace Cameron Collins Brylen Deal Mike Burt Skye Kurts	11	Cayla Wigley Faith Nelson Gentry Grisham Amanda Ditmore Elizabeth Rich Rhett Davis Shinice Stout Kamden Mayhew	16	Katelyn Busby Mary Jane Gray	24	Michael Chambers Tom Emory Payton Lewis Melinda Easler Susan Collins Clara Jane Mauneys		7	Calvin & Myra Lanier Mack & Debbie Flannigan
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Battle of Tutweiler Gap (continued from page 1)

of Lookout. Equipped with geophysical surveying equipment, the trucks would stop every few yards, lower a large metal plate to the road surface, and fire a sound pulse into the ground, creating a loud BOOM. The feedback from that boom was detected and evaluated. Where coal was indicated in sufficient quantities to permit its profitable surface mining, strip mines were established. Once again coal miners found themselves back in employment.

Such mining was extremely destructive, but thanks to the newly created Alabama Department of Environmental Management regulations, the companies were required to reclaim the land from which they had extracted the coal. Such reclamation efforts were largely successful, and today it is hard to find evidence that the surface mines ever existed around the Mentone area. In DeKalb County, according to the latest available figures, there are now a grand total of 2 coal miners employed here. But thanks to surface mining operations, for a time in the 1970s and 80s coal mining and coal miners were once again thriving. Which takes us up to 1977, and the setup for the Battle of Tutwiler Gap.

The UMWA went on a national strike. Miners in the west Alabama coal fields were unionized; those in DeKalb and Jackson Counties were not. In an attempt to get this area’s miners to join the union and its efforts to gain better pay and working conditions, hundreds of west Alabama miners journeyed here in late 1977 and early 1978 to apply pressure and shut down the mines.

One of the state troopers who were mobilized was Ron Ogletree, who was raised in rural Clay County, Alabama. He and his family moved to Gadsden, where he finished high school at Emma Sansom. In April of 1966, he joined the Alabama State Trooper force. By the time of the Battle of Tutwiler Gap, he was a seasoned trooper and had attained the rank of corporal. Once, on a routine traffic stop, he and his partner attempted to arrest a drunk driver who managed to grab Ron’s partner’s pistol and shoot them both. Ron received a serious wound, but his partner was killed. He remembers lying wounded in a water filled ditch, and although he was alone, he could clearly hear a voice saying, “You’re going to be alright.” Clearly, Ron Ogletree was no stranger to danger- good preparation for his involvement in the Battle of Tutwiler Gap.



Troopers in formation



Trooper making arrests



Trooper-confiscated weapons

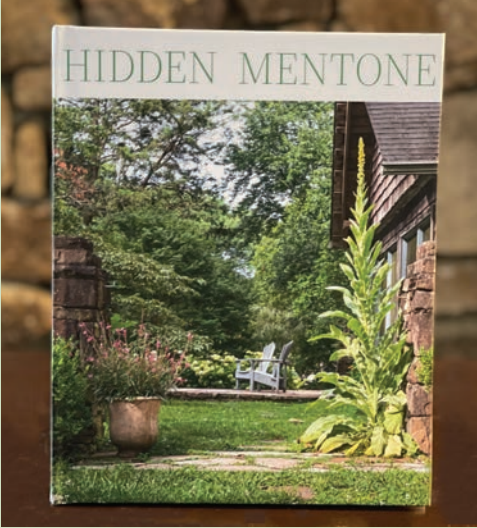
When the UMWA went on strike in ’77, non-union local miners here refused to join in. The UMWA decided to come here and try to close the mines. Ogletree says the Alabama Bureau of Investigation (ABI) had good intelligence on where and when the union miners would appear in DeKalb and Jackson Counties. Governor George Wallace ordered the commander of the state troopers, Colonel E. C. Dothard, to mobilize a trooper force and stop the strikers. One local mine had already been damaged. An earlier confrontation had taken place in December of ’77 on Highway 117 by the bridge at the old Whatley Store, next to the Middle fork of the Little River. There, a small force of troopers and area law enforcement had held off a large group of armed union miners. Law enforcement even had the support of local miners who told them, “We’ve got your back.” According to an article in the Fort Payne Times Journal, when the ABI discovered that 150 cars with 300-500 miners were headed to this area, a command post was set up in Rainsville. “We knew they were coming and about how many there would be,” says Ogletree. “We were told they were heading for Sand Mountain.” A swat team, an aviation unit, and 200 troopers were assembled. Some of the troopers had served in Viet Nam, and the aviation unit was made



Trooper car with damage

up of Viet Nam vets. Helicopters were modified so that they could hover, and as the confrontation progressed, they dropped tear gas on the strikers. Huge 65 million candle power “night sun” lights illuminated the whole area. The troopers had received training, twice a year, in platoon movements, acting as a unit, and they were heavily armed. “We had a drill instructor who was as tough as anyone in the military,” Ogletree remembers. Troopers, with the help of local law enforcement, completely shut down Highway 117 and Tutwiler Gap, trapping the strikers between them. The opposing sides were virtually face to face. Ogletree says he saw at least one rifle in the hands of a striker. The strikers were declared to be an unlawful assembly and received at least three warnings to disperse. When they didn’t, the troopers, wearing gas masks, moved up the mountain against the strikers and threw so many cans of tear gas at the crowd that Ogletree says it was thick enough to have run everybody out of Valley Head below!

The confrontation ended and dozens of strikers were arrested and booked into the jail in Fort Payne. Although none of the troopers were seriously injured, there was damage to their cars in the form of slashed tires and broken windshields. There were other confrontations in Alabama before the strike was settled in March of ’78. Ironically, the national coal miners’ strike resulted in no additional benefits such as pay raises or improvements in working conditions. “None of the troopers ran away from the fight- they moved toward it,” says Ogletree. “We were a band of brothers, and over the years, we were involved in such things as municipal workers’ strikes, Ku Klux Klan rallies, motorcycle gang invasions, and campus riots. You become a tight knit group, and you know you won’t be left behind.” Ogletree retired at 53 and took other positions in law enforcement over the years, including including three years as a patrolman for Valley Head and a two-year stint as police commissioner in Fort Payne. He says that in tight situations like those he faced over the years, the adrenalin flows and you don’t really get unnerved until after the fact, when it’s all over. Then you get thankful to God for pulling everybody through. 🐾



“Hidden Mentone” is a new book featuring photographs of Mentone’s architectural and natural beauty — scenes often overlooked by the casual traveler. The book is available for purchase at the Mentone Art Center, Mentone Market and The Hatter Cafe.



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Help The Groundhog Thrive

by MERF Board of Directors

As you all know, 2023 was a transition time for The Groundhog. Conceived on Groundhog Day 1982 and brought to fruition shortly after, The Groundhog has become a staple for dedicated readers. It began as a newsletter, transitioned to a paper that was laid out by hand for the press, and has expanded to having almost four thousand copies printed per month. Over the years, it has provided enjoyment for readers, topics of conversation for the community, and, sometimes, stress for one or a few volunteers trying to keep it going.

MERF (Mentone Educational Resources Foundation) knows the importance of continuing this community tradition. The MERF Board took over publishing the paper last October and has a group of paid staff and volunteers who are working to ensure its continued success.

In order to help The Groundhog thrive, we would like to reach out to you, the loyal readers. We want to unveil some of the tasks, processes, and needs of the paper to allow you to join the team and help The Groundhog to be a continued success.

The financial structure of the newspaper business is based on having enough ads to pay the publishing costs and turn a profit. Our area has many small businesses, so we want ads to start at a moderate price. Many businesses support The Groundhog through advertising. If you visit a business that runs an ad, let them know where you saw it. If you have a business, consider advertising with us.

Public newspapers charge for the individual papers. As a community newspaper, The Groundhog has always been free at local distribution points. Currently, there are 75 places from Summerville to Hammondville to Fort Payne and atop Lookout Mountain from Mentone to Little River Canyon Center.

Subscriptions simply cover the expense of

getting the paper to those who want a direct delivery. This is a terrific way to share The Groundhog with relatives who have moved away and for visitors to know what is happening in town.

Donors can make a significant difference. The Groundhog received a few donations in 2023. Thank you to those readers who sent those donations! Public newspapers are in business to make a profit. As a 501c3, MERF is not. We are on a mission to enrich lives, which The Groundhog does. If you appreciate picking up The Groundhog free each month, consider giving back to help it thrive.

Spending is the other side of the financial equation. In order to keep costs low and to create a true community newspaper, MERF utilizes many volunteers who help with labeling and mailing subscriptions, proofreading, and distributing the paper.

Our authors and monthly contributors are also volunteers. They send in captivating stories or highlights of organizational activities. This is, obviously, what makes the newspaper. Valuable stories shared amongst neighbors. Histories of our people preserved in print. Local events, accomplishments, and recipes shared with community members and visitors.

Would you like to be a part of helping The Groundhog newspaper thrive? We could use a few more volunteers, especially those who would like to capture local history or submit educational articles. If you write, we have stories that need to be told.

Do you know a bit of local history that hasn't been told or an interesting person? Even sending in an idea about an article will help the paper thrive. Collaboration and community are what The Groundhog is all about.

Let's collaborate and help The Groundhog continue to thrive! 🐻



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