



THE GROUNDHOG

“Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain”

Serving the Mentone, Valley Head, Hammondville, Cloudland & Menlo Communities since 1982

Valley Head Students Learn Life Skills Through a Day of Adventure and Discovery

by Sarah Wilcox

On belay? Belay on. Climbing? Climb on. Zip line clear? Zipping. Aahhh – that was so fun! I’m glad I did it! Oh no, we lost another marshmallow in the Hot Chocolate River! Watch out for crocodiles, and don’t be like George of the Jungle. Watch out for that tree! These were words of good communication, encouragement, empathy, and leadership heard on Monday, April 22, and Thursday, April 25, by Valley Head students and teachers. Thanks to the Harland Jones grant from the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama, MERF was able to engage Higher Ground USA from Rome, Georgia, to provide a day of leadership and team building for 13 high school students and a day of stretching



Thirteen Valley Head high school students participated in the retreat.

limits, climbing walls, and climbing trees for the entire eighth-grade class at Camp DeSoto in Mentone. Higher Ground, which promotes Adventure with a Purpose, designed and executed each day of experiential education to develop communication skills, set goals, stretch limits, and develop ways for students to support classmates. The students were joined by Principal Dupree, Sharon Chappell, and Brittany Gilbert on Monday, while Coach Isbell and Coach Newsome joined the day of learning and fun on Thursday. The 13 high school leaders rotated through initiative and team building games with high ropes traversing elements in the morning, followed by an afternoon of flying on the zipline and V-swing. The 38 eighth-

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Culture and Nature Celebrated Through New Public Art Project at Historic Mentone Campus

by Stephen V. Smith

The Little River Arts Council has selected Deedee Morrison’s “Firmly Planted, Forward Moving.” sculpture for a public art project to be installed at the historic Moon Lake Village campus. The project invites people to reflect upon Mentone’s rich heritage of cultural, historical, and natural resources — including how, as a community, we can honor our past and celebrate our collective future. The 10-foot-tall white oak leaf aluminum totem pays tribute to the old white oak tree in front of the historic schoolhouse, which has occupied the site just off Alabama Highway 117 since 1928. The tree inspired the Moon Lake Elementary School motto, “Firmly Planted, Forward Moving.” LRAC will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the site on Tuesday, June 18, at 10 a.m. The public is encouraged to attend. “For this public art project, we wanted a sculpture that would relate to our belief that art is for everyone while celebrating the natural

history and beauty of the Mentone area,” says Juli Jordan, president of LRAC. “This sculpture honors the gift of beauty that nature has provided while also echoing the essence of its message: that we are a collective and each little part contributes to the health of the whole.” The metal sculpture features laser-cut pollinators, including indigenous bees and butterflies, that bring this message of collaborative communication to life. “It asks us to think more deeply about our role in the community and provides space to gather and converse,” Jordan says. The story of the oak leaf sculpture adds to the ever-present, collective story of Mentone and the historic Moon Lake campus. “It’s a story of community, creativity, connection, collaboration, and art,” says Jordan. “The school’s motto, reflected in the sculpture’s title, arose from a unified belief in education and the power of knowing one’s roots, values, and cultural heritage.”



Work is nearing completion on the site for the “Firmly Planted, Forward Moving” public art project. The sculpture is scheduled to be installed soon.

RIBBON CUTTING SET FOR JUNE 18
Join the celebration of the public art project at the Moon Lake Village on Tuesday, June 18, at 10 a.m.

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The Groundhog Turns a New Page

by Anna Mae Horn

Please extend a warm welcome to the new editor of The Groundhog, Stephen Smith! Stephen has actually been part of the team since MERF began publishing the paper last fall. He and his wife, Michele, have been an integral part of the smooth and successful transition. The couple has worked together for almost 30 years in the media industry, and they value the role this paper plays in our community. Michele has created a beautiful layout for the paper since joining the team and will continue to design the paper each month. Stephen has helped improve our processes behind the scenes and has been generous in sharing his editorial expertise, for which I am very grateful. I am also thankful to have someone knowledgeable and passionate about our readership receive the torch that I am ready to pass. The Smiths love being part of the Mentone community in a number of ways, including serving on the Little River Arts Council. Life is a process, full of change. Changes last fall led me to temporarily reprise my role as editor of The Groundhog, which I was glad to do. I am honored to be a part of this 40-year-old tradition, and I’ll continue working in the background supporting the success of the paper. Since MERF began publishing the paper, the feedback from you, the reader, has been wonderful. We all treasure the opportunity to read community news in a local paper and learn what our organizations are up to. This will stay the same. But we can also look forward to exciting new elements. Stephen and Michele have the vision, knowledge, and tools to advance the paper in a way that will inspire and inform. We hope you are as excited about this new “page” as we are. 🍌



Stephen and Michele Smith



The Groundhog

Published monthly
by the Mentone Educational
Resources Foundation

The Groundhog has been in publication since 1982. MERF is honored to continue this community tradition.

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Birthday calendar maintained by
Kayla Worthey

The Groundhog is a community newspaper, and as such we encourage submissions from readers. Send story ideas anytime. The deadline for articles is the 15th of each month prior to publication month. Thank you for reading The Groundhog!

Contact The Groundhog

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Groundhog woodcut courtesy of
Meg Justice/Bee Spring Studio

FIND US ON 



Did you know?

Alabama’s Official
Wildflower is the
Oak-leaf Hydrangea

The oak-leaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia* Bartr.) is a native woodland shrub that blooms in the spring. This deciduous shrub has pearl-white flowers that can be found in every part of Alabama, from the coastal plains to the Appalachian foothills. The oak-leaf hydrangea was named the official state wildflower in 1992.

Source: Encyclopedia of Alabama
encyclopediaofalabama.org/quick-facts/

Mentone Matters

by Mayor Rob Hammond

Being part of a rural community is such a blessing, despite the challenges these areas face. That’s why I’m excited about some projects taking shape that will spell real progress for Mentone, Lookout Mountain, and all of DeKalb County.

As we discussed briefly at the recent Town Council meeting, we are collaborating with Northeast Alabama Community College to establish a presence for the college at Moon Lake Village. Imagine the impact on our community, this part of the mountain, and even into Georgia, if students could take some core classes right here in Mentone. There’s even the possibility of some non-credit classes for the general public. Keep reading The Groundhog for updates as this develops.

I was recently appointed to the HH DeKalb Regional Medical Center board of directors. The “HH” stands for “Huntsville Hospital.” If you haven’t heard, the Huntsville Hospital Health System purchased DeKalb Regional earlier this year. This is excellent news for our county.

The Huntsville Hospital system operates hospitals in Huntsville, Athens, Boaz, Decatur, Guntersville, Madison, Moulton, Red Bay, Sheffield, Scottsboro, and Fayetteville, TN. “And now we welcome Fort Payne and all of DeKalb County,” system CEO Jeff Samz recently said. “We have much in common throughout our region. That’s why our connection through Huntsville Hospital Health System makes our hospitals stronger and better in caring for our patients and supporting our communities.”

I couldn’t agree more. Our local hospital’s membership in such a strong network will benefit our citizens tremendously. First, it reassures us that our hospital will not become another headline of small hospital closures across rural America. Furthermore, we will start seeing upgrades in equipment and service enhancements, along with an emphasis on recruiting more physicians to the Fort Payne area.

In my first meeting with the board, it was apparent that the new owners are dedicated to the communities



they serve. They want citizens to have the opportunity to get more of their healthcare needs met locally. As a non-profit organization, they are committed to high standards.

Another encouraging point is that they want citizen input. They want to hear from you, about your experiences being served there, and what ideas you have for services moving forward.

Mark your calendar for the ribbon-cutting ceremony that will take place on June 18 at 10 a.m. at the Moon Lake Village (see story on Page One). This will be a celebration of the public art display that will grace the front of the campus. This project has taken months of hard work on behalf of the Little River Arts Council, with generous support from the Lyndhurst Foundation.

As this treasured school campus continues to evolve, it takes on new meaning for our community while building on the treasured memories we all have of the former school. The fact that the arts are such an important part of that future ties in well with the heartbeat of Mentone. After all, public art is about more than creativity and expression — it can also be an economic driver for small communities. Please stop by June 18 to help us celebrate.

These may seem like separate projects. But when you think about education, health care, and the arts, they are all vital components of quality of life — and of the blessings we enjoy as residents of a rural community. 🍷

From the Editor

Building on the work of those who came before me

by Stephen V. Smith

The first time I hiked to the CCC quarry at DeSoto State Park, I was moved by the visible presence of history. There I stood among rocks where, a few decades before, young men had quarried the stones used to build so many of the structures we still enjoy at the park. They weren’t just building things, they were building a legacy.

I feel much the same way today in accepting the role of editor for The Groundhog. So many dedicated souls have come before me, doing the hard work to create and maintain a quality publication for the region. This newspaper is their legacy, one that continues to benefit us all.

Just as the state park system has built upon what those CCC boys created, I see the great work of my predecessors as a foundation. With MERF as its publisher, The Groundhog is in the ideal hands to become even more important to the communities it serves. I’m honored to be part of this work at such an important transition point.

You may have noticed my byline in these pages a few times since last fall. When MERF secured The Groundhog, my wife, Michele, began designing the newspaper. I’ve stepped in a few times to write some articles, including the occasional Little River Arts Council column (Michele and I both serve on the LRAC board). After 36 years of marriage and

28 years of working together, we’re pretty much inseparable. A package deal, if you will.

In the months ahead, I plan to learn more of your stories. Here’s a bit of mine. Growing up, my family spent a lot of time on Lookout Mountain. Mentone, Little River Canyon, and DeSoto State Park are the backdrop of so many memories, which I continued to foster as an adult when I started my own family. And I can’t leave out Valley Head. Both sets of grandparents went to church together at Bethel Baptist, where two teenagers met who would become my parents. I was always in awe of Winston Place as a child, riding by the historical treasure as we headed to the front porch of my great-grandparents for family gatherings. With three cousins who graduated from Valley Head High School, I saw my share of ball games there.

In the early 90s, I spent five years as a reporter, photographer, and news editor at The Weekly Post, a community newspaper based in Rainsville that covered DeKalb and parts of Jackson counties. It was a great experience, and where I learned much about how society functions, won some statewide awards, and met countless wonderful people.

One of my favorite memories from my newspaper days is a series I authored called “Doin’ DeKalb.” Like it sounds, I went all over the county

(continued on page 4)



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Seeing the nuisance through fresh eyes

by Ben Shurett

Hickory nuts are not my friend. They fall loudly to the ground and, when they hit my roof, it sounds like a baseball has been dropped from 10,000 feet. My car top is dimpled with pockmarks where these demons have fallen from 40 feet above. Run over these devils with a lawnmower and your ankles will be attacked by the shrapnel of the fruit of the beautiful tree.

Squirrels are cute to some, but not to me. I'm a bit ashamed I have referred to them as "tree rats" in the past. I have a reason for that.

There was a time when I thought them to be adorable, but that was before they infested my attic and caused more than \$4,000 in damage to wiring, alarm systems, and roof vents. Squirrels are not my friend.

One particular squirrel uses our front porch to torment me further. He dines there every morning, leaving a pile of broken hickory nut shells to be swept away after he clutters my stoop. No, hickory nuts and squirrels are not my friends.

But this morning, as I gazed out our front window at the customary pile of shells, there was a feast going on. Four different species of birds were dining on the shells, enjoying the fruit of the hickory nuts the squirrels had left behind. A verse of scripture came to mind, and I looked it up.

Matthew 6:26-27 explains what I saw. It said, "Look at the birds of the air, that they

do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"

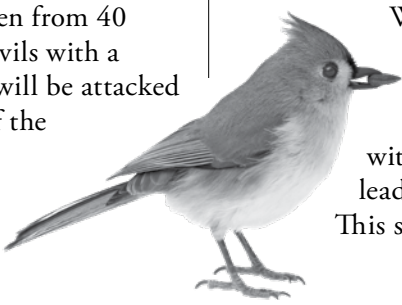
Worry? Cast it aside. Covid was real and I managed my life to avoid unnecessary risks, just like I try to do with other situations that might lead to uncalled-for dangers.

This scripture isn't just about God taking care of the birds. The hickory nuts, the squirrels, and the birds all have a place. More to the point, the squirrels and birds don't fret. God provides for them, as He will for us.

I thought the leftover hickory shells were nothing but trash, a nuisance to be swept away. When I saw with new eyes, through a different lens, I saw God at work in our world. All of God's creations, even the "tree rats," are part of His divine creation, each one interdependent on all the others to provide at God's direction.

The hymn "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" includes the lyrics, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free, For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." Be free. 🐦

For more than 30 years, Ben Shurett was a newspaper publisher in Alabama and Iowa. He retired in 2014 and has lived in Mentone since.



“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?”

— Matthew 6:26-27

Set Your Words Free

by Alyce Kenney

“Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance.”
— Carl Sandburg



Thanks for all the submissions to the May issue of The Groundhog! It is great to know there are such creative thinkers and writers in our community. Keep sending in your haiku!!!

Here are some tips to help you “flex” your poetry muscle if you feel stuck and it has been a while since you read any poems.

1. Don't approach poetry like it is school. Rest easy as you read a poem — there is no quiz at the end.
2. Don't worry about “getting it.” Trust what you are left with after reading a poem. Ideas, feelings, overall impressions.
3. Read it aloud. Poetry began as an “oral tradition” to tell the tales of the times and remember history.
4. Visualize the poem. Use your imagination. The pictures you create in your brain will illuminate what you are getting out of the poem.
5. Read a bunch of poetry. There are classics, like Shakespeare, and contemporary ones like Frost. Keep searching and reading to find what you like. (commentary from VS poetry podcast)

This is your column! Be yourself and express yourself or be anonymous. Just try haiku. Haiku contain three verses, using a specific phonetic pattern of five syllables, seven syllables, and five syllables. Originally, they captured a scene in the natural world, but today haiku can be written to illustrate anything one is drawn to.

Submissions for June from Groundhog readers:

*Strong and mighty oak
Provides and protects us all.
Like a father does.*
— A.L.T. Happy Father's Day, Dad!

*School's out, let's go play!
Baseball, swimming, camping, FUN!
Summer is the best.*
— A happy kid

*Underneath the tree
A spread fit for kings and queens
Ants march toward lunch*
— HJA

Submit your haiku to groundhognews@yahoo.com before the 15th of the month to meet the deadline for printing. Adults and kids alike are encouraged to submit. Set your words free for others to enjoy!!!!

JULY TOPICS: Independence Day, Fireworks, Baseball, or anything you wish to write about! 🐿



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National Day of Prayer Gathering Well Attended

by Victoria Gaston

The National Day of Prayer is observed annually, on the first Thursday in May. This day of prayer, designated by Congress, asks people to “turn to God in prayer and meditation.” People join in prayer by attending churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and monasteries, by joining in prayer groups, and by meditating on their own, while others attend interdenominational prayer events. The theme for this year’s Day of Prayer was, “Lift Up The Word - Light Up The World,” and the theme biblical verse reads, “For you are my lamp, O Lord, and My God lightens my darkness.” (Samuel 22:29-31)

Norah and Phil Gamble organized the Mentone Interdenominational Day of Prayer observance at the Moon Lake School Conference Room. It was well attended by members of the Mentone and surrounding communities. The



desire to be united together for the good of our nation and our community was evident.

The time of prayer was beautifully seamless as we sang hymns and shared in prayer. Ministers from each church in Mentone, along with representatives of civic organizations, businesses, first responders, and community members, were invited to pray for specific aspects of our common life in this area. The desire to be united in purpose regarding all aspects of what it means to live in harmony, in the encouragement and respect for the rich diversity and abilities of each and every person in this area, was powerful.

With great thanks to Norah Gamble, I hope you will place next year’s National Day of Prayer on your calendar and plan to attend Mentone’s special observance. All are welcome to join in and offer prayers, supplication, and thanksgiving for our nation and community. 🍀

Preparing for Future Healthcare Needs

by Lynn Hixon

Many people assume that their family members would automatically be able to make decisions about medical treatments if they were to become incapacitated. However, rules vary greatly from state to state. In some cases, decisions are left up to healthcare providers and institutions in charge of your care unless you have appointed someone as your legal representative. If the decision falls to your family, they may not all agree on the best course of action. For these reasons, it’s important to have a plan to avoid disagreements around treatment issues and ensure your wishes are honored. Here are different types of documents that can help you prepare for your future healthcare needs:

Healthcare proxy: a document that names someone you trust as your proxy, or agent, to express your wishes and make healthcare decisions for you if you’re unable to speak for yourself.

Living will: a written record of the type of medical care you would want in specified circumstances.

Advance directive: often refers to a combination of the living will and healthcare proxy documents. If you have an advance directive, be sure to give those documents to the hospital each time you are admitted.

Power of attorney: a document that names someone you trust as your agent to make property, financial, and other legal decisions on your behalf.

Call your local SHIP (state health insurance assistance program) counselor, Lynn Hixon, or the Senior Rx coordinator, DiAnne Callahan, for prescription drug assistance at the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 256-845-8590. 🍀

From the Editor (continued from page 2)

participating in interesting and fun things, documenting them to share with readers. The installment that stands out the most is when Bill Adams took Michele and me on a rafting trip from Billy’s Ford to Little River Falls.

It was also during this time that I met legends like Jack Jones. I recently ran across my copy of his book “Come Sit a Spell,” which he signed with a nice note to me. One of our most treasured art pieces is a painting Jack gave us of a couple standing at Billy’s Ford. Ironically, they look a bit like a younger version of us.

In December of 1995, the staff of The Weekly Post held its Christmas party at The Mentone Inn. It was there that I announced I would be leaving the newspaper to start a little communications firm with my wife. On New Year’s Day 1996, we launched WordSouth on one contract and a prayer, with two small children and no idea what we were getting ourselves into.

One of our first clients was Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative (FTC). We launched their Connected magazine in 1997, and I’m proud to say that magazine continues to this day. Our work in publishing and marketing expanded to other cooperatives, both telcos and electric, and we were blessed with tremendous growth. In 2020, our firm had grown to 30 employees working remotely from six states, serving clients from Texas to South Carolina and from Florida to Minnesota. That summer we were named to the Inc. 5000 list of America’s fastest growing independent companies.

It was also that summer that we finalized plans to sell our company to a strategic acquirer (a communications cooperative) on the other side of the country. With the pandemic shutting everything down, we culminated a year of negotiations across Zoom calls and emails, with none of the parties ever being in the same room together.

While we’ve continued to provide some management support to the new owners, Michele and I launched another mom-and-pop agency in 2021. We enjoy working locally again, providing social media and other communications support to groups like the Fort Payne Chamber of Commerce and DeKalb Tourism. Other fun projects include “Fred Hunter’s Alabama” and “The Lookout Sessions.”

Some of you have met our pride and joy, Ryder, the two-year-old grandson that changed our world. His parents are our son, Lucas (an audio engineer who runs Lucky Sound Studio in Fort Payne), and our daughter-in-law, Anna (a graphic designer and potter). Our daughter, Kayleigh, is Director of Theatre at Northeast Alabama Community College. Yep, we’re a family of quirky creative types.

I promise that my “From The Editor” column won’t be all about me (or this long) moving forward, but I wanted to give you a sense of how I view this opportunity to serve as The Groundhog’s editor. It’s personal, because this area is so special and important to me and my family.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of the MERF board of directors. They had the foresight to understand what an asset The Groundhog could be to their mission of educational support and community development. The wisdom in their vision will continue to reveal itself over time.

A special thank you to Anna Mae Horn. She stepped up at a crucial time to add editor duties to her already busy schedule as MERF’s executive director. She did more than “keep it between the ditches” ... she shepherded the paper through the transition like the true champ she is.

It is said that new friends are silver but old friends are gold. I must acknowledge a true golden friend in Ben Shurett, who was publisher at The Times-Journal way back when I was earning my stripes (remind me to tell you sometime about how we worked together on a project in the very early days of the web that practically broke the internet). It was Ben who reached out to Michele and me last fall as he was helping assemble a team to save The Groundhog. I never imagined it would lead to this, and I am grateful for the opportunity it has brought my way.

I’m honored to continue building the legacy of this newspaper. I appreciate what it means to the community today and the increasingly important role it will play in MERF’s mission. Exciting days are ahead. As a bonus, I’m thrilled at the opportunity to meet more of the wonderful people in this area, and to work with you on the future of this treasured publication. Drop me a note at stephenvsmith@me.com, or look for the Groundhog email address in the masthead. We’ll see you around town! 🍀

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MERF Awards Scholarships



by Anna Mae Horn

As an educational organization, not only does Mentone Educational Resources Foundation (MERF) support educational activities, we also award scholarships to very deserving students. There are many hard-working, academically successful students in our community. Choosing the recipients is difficult!

This year, MERF began administering the Mentone Heritage Scholarship. Northeast Alabama Community College provides this annual scholarship that covers tuition and books for a graduating resident in the Valley Head or Mentone area. Daxson Crow is this year’s recipient.

Daxson takes pride in being a fifth-generation Mentone resident. He recounts a family story passed down from the Civil War. “It was very interesting to learn about my heritage and to hear stories that have been passed down through generations about family members you will never have the chance to meet, but somehow seem to know through those stories,” he wrote. As an active community member and volunteer, Daxson is a fine example of our younger generation and a proud contributor to Mentone’s heritage.

The Carter Holland Educational Fund helps continue a legacy of good character, kindness, and leadership. After his death, Carter’s parents, family, and friends established this fund to encourage others to also have those qualities.

This fund provides money for the Mountain Spirit Award. This year it recognized a student each in sixth and eighth grades with a gift of Beat Studio headphones, plus recognized a graduating senior. These students are nominated by teachers and staff, then selected by the MERF scholarship committee. This fund also provides two scholarships to graduating seniors.

Jayden Bain was this year’s sixth-grade Mountain Spirit Award winner. Teachers said Jayden is honest and dependable with strong leadership skills. Eighth-grader Hunter Battles was recognized for being respectful, sweet, kind, and a hard worker. He is a Boy Scout just as Carter was.

Senior Brant Smith, who achieved Eagle Scout rank just as Carter Holland did, received \$1,000 for the Mountain Spirit Award. Brant is very active in the school and the community. Teachers said, “He

truly represents the very best of what our school aspires to be, and ... is the perfect candidate for the Mountain Spirit Award!”

Senior Vanessa “Aly” Head received the Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship for \$1,000 to any college. MERF recognizes her leadership skills at work as well as her overall good character. Aly truly enjoys helping others.

Senior Abigail Phillips also received a \$1,000 Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship. “Abby” leads by being a good example and helping teammates reach their goals. She is honored to serve the community and plans to give back through a career in criminal justice, protecting local citizens.

MERF is proud to recognize these outstanding students. We congratulate all 2024 graduating seniors as they transition into their adult lives by furthering their education or entering the workforce. 🎓

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



Daxson Crow is the recipient of the Mentone Heritage Scholarship



Vanessa 'Aly' Head receiving the Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship



Abigail Phillips is a recipient of the Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship



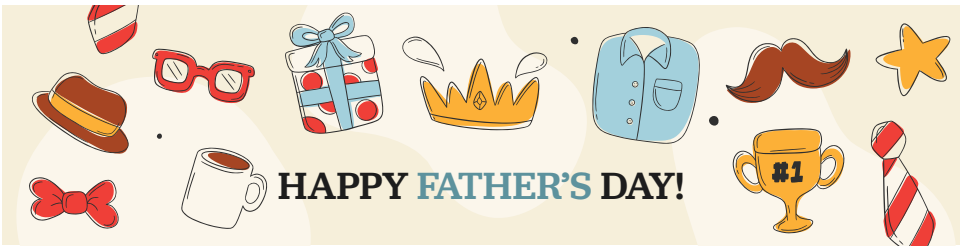
Brant Smith receiving the 12th grade Mountain Spirit Award



Hunter Battles receiving the 8th grade Mountain Spirit Award



Jayden Bain receiving the 6th grade Mountain Spirit Award





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Rhododendron Garden Club News

by Mellanie Tuttle



After my Dad’s death in 2008, my husband and I moved to Mentone from Florida to care for my mother. We attended Howard’s Chapel, and Dianne Kuehl casually mentioned one Sunday that I should come by on the second Tuesday to visit the Rhododendron Garden Club (RGC). I responded with a polite “Thank you so much” with no intention of following up.

I looked back on the Ladies’ Garden Club of Clifton in Jacksonville, Florida, which was an invitation-only club and not once in 26 years had I been asked. Additionally, the Officers’ Wives Club meetings were not ones of joy. Plus, my former sister-in-law’s mother was a flower show judge and she was scary! Spending all day, day after day, with a woman I could never please changed my mind pretty quickly, and suddenly the RGC was looking pretty good.

Monthly meetings were fun and informative, and the women were pretty awesome. The first flower show was a blur and totally confusing, but I was so hooked I became a flower show judge! What were the Northeast Alabama Federation of Garden Clubs (NEAFGC), District II, Garden Club of Alabama, Deep South, and the National Garden Club that kept appearing at the end of each Groundhog article? The RGC belongs to and pays dues to all these groups.

A flow chart would have been helpful, but here goes...

Cherokee Rose, Fort Payne, Rainsville, and RGC formed the NEAFGC with the purpose of having a flower show every fall at the DeKalb County VFW Fairgrounds. This year’s flower show will be Oct. 14-19. A plant sale each spring funds the show, so thanks to all who responded to the Facebook and Mentone Neighbor to Neighbor pleas to purchase member-grown horticulture. The sale was a total success! Other years

have included leftover plants from the DeKalb County Master Gardeners and were greatly appreciated.

Local clubs report their activities to a district director, who gives those reports to the executive board during fall meetings and at the spring convention. Bragging about the club’s accomplishments is satisfying, and hearing what other clubs are doing can be inspirational. Alabama has eight districts. District II has RGC and other clubs in the northeast area of the state.

The Garden Club of Alabama (GCA) was organized in 1932 with 71 delegates representing 50 Alabama clubs. Their stated goals were to “coordinate the interests of garden clubs in the state, to be a clearinghouse for information on all subjects pertaining to garden clubs, and to support and cooperate with the national council established for the purpose of national service in the floral and cultural world.” Today, 62 clubs and 1,000 members belong to GCA.

Individual states then belong to one of the seven regions. Alabama is in the Deep South region with Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Once a year, the Deep South Convention is held in one of those states, awards are given, and states with the most awards have bragging rights until the next year.

In 1929, 19 state federations saw the advantage of joining together to address common concerns, such as groundwater and parks, organizing into the National Garden Club, Inc., or NGC (not to be confused with the GCA). Another group concern in 1929 was the Quarantine 37 Act, regulating nursery stock that prohibited the importation of Dutch bulbs. Don’t mess with focused women on a mission! Today, all 50 states have garden clubs, with a membership of 190,000.

The NGC has lovely headquarters in St. Louis at the Missouri Botanical Gardens.

Convention. Symposium. Scholarships. Awards. Blue Star Markers. Conservation. Flower Shows. Topics for another day.

In 2008, the RGC had eight members. What a journey it has been, losing folks to death and moves and suddenly having more folks than space. Twenty-eight and counting and evolving to include men and even members under the age of 50, maybe even 40! Hope springs eternal. All are welcome. It’s a family with all the warts and love. 🍷

Mellanie Tuttle is a member of the Rhododendron Garden Club.

Join us!

The RGC meets at 10 a.m. each month on the second Tuesday. For information, email rhododendrongardenclub@gmail.com and find the group on Facebook.

RGC is a member of the National Garden Club; Deep South, Inc.; Garden Club of Alabama; District II and NE AL Federation of Garden Clubs.

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Live music and public art welcome the summer on Lookout Mountain

by Juli Jordan



June isn't just jamming in Fort Payne — there is a plethora of happenings in the village of Mentone. Following are the Little River Arts Council's contributions to the jam:

Music for the People

Saturday, June 8, from 6 to 9 p.m., the Music for the People: Summer Music Series features the return of the Black Sedan Band, a favorite for all ages. Put on your boogie shoes, gather your friends and family, grab your camp chairs and blankets, and meet on the grounds of the Mentone Inn behind the Linger Longer Pavilion for a magical night of your favorite cover songs from the 70s to today. Bring a picnic from home or from local restaurants! Fantastic Foods will be on site cooking up slow food made with love.



Sonya Clemons, The ArtLady, will make her mark on Mentone in June.

Make Your Mark on Mentone

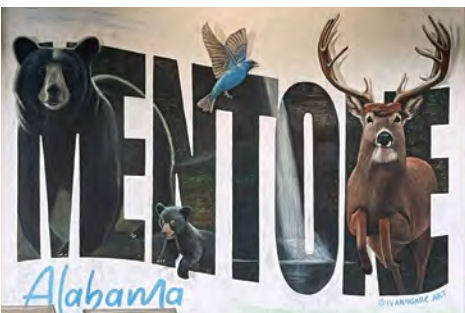
The ArtLady, Sonya Clemons, will be making her mark on Mentone beginning May 30 - 31. She is the next featured artist in our public art project Make Your Mark on Mentone, located at the corner of Alabama Highway 117 and Scenic Drive (on the grounds of the Mentone Inn). This chalk art project is funded in part by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Sonya's mural will feature flora, fauna, and tracks found on Lookout Mountain.

Known for her informational murals, Sonya teaches the viewer about the mural subject in a whimsical manner. Like the artist, her murals are full of energy.

"I am overjoyed to be working in such a beautiful setting, inspired by all the nature and such!" says Sonya. "And I'm truly honored to have been chosen to participate in this project."

Sonya earned an Associate of Arts degree from Northeast Alabama Community College and has since become a prolific artist and community leader. Her work has been featured in This Is Alabama, It's a Southern Thing online store, and AL.com. You can see her



Make Your Mark on Mentone artist Ivann Garc created a beautiful Mentone mural for the first chalk art installation in May.

painted murals in Madison, Huntsville, Stevenson, Bridgeport, and Scottsboro.

She has produced more than 50 murals focusing on arts in education and community for the Madison County School System. As a resident artist for the Jackson County Drug Court, Sonya started the Pictures of Hope program for people in recovery and their families. She has four painted rockets in the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville "Rockets on Parade," and was the poster artist for the 2022 Panoply Festival.

Join us on location for an official "watch party" on Friday, May 31, at 4 p.m. (rain dates are June 3 and 4), or have your own watch party anytime. Gather with friends and family and enjoy watching art in action! 🎨

Juli Jordan is president of the Little River Arts Council.



Little River

ART GALLERY

The Little River Art Gallery will soon open in Moon Lake Village's main building, next to Leonard Architects. This gallery and store will feature artwork for sale from member artists of the Little River Arts Council, along with apparel and merchandise celebrating our mission that "we believe art is for everyone." The gallery and store are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday through Saturday, or by appointment.

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Valley Head Happenings

by Mayor Karen Vest

May was a big month in our town! The 7th Annual Memories of Mayberry Festival, with Floyd the Barber (Alan Newsome), Deputy Barney Fife (Anthony Wood), and other beloved characters, drew nearly 1,000 folks to town. Whitney Tinker opened the festival by singing the national anthem. The main stage featured The Sharps, a Christian gospel group, and the band Stranded, a country rock band. Festival goers also enjoyed the music and dancing of the Square Dance Club on Commerce Avenue throughout the day.

More than 50 craft and retail vendors offered wares, such as wood crafts, jewelry, crocheted items, artisan soaps, barn quilts, porch signs, and much more.

The annual classic car Cruise-In was a big attraction. Car show winners were: Kendall Shankles (first place with his '39 Chevy); Byron Bailey (second place with his '55 Chevy); and Kenny Chamlee (third place with his '40 Ford Deluxe).

Congratulations to our Pickle Contest winners: Patricia Flory (first place with her Blue Ribbon Dills); Sandy Roberts (second place with her Cinnamon Pickles); and Robin DeMonia (third place with her Robin's Dill-Licious Dills). Thank you to all who submitted an entry, and special thanks to our esteemed judges, Jimmy Phillips, Todd Greeson, and Lamar Bray.

Pie Contest winners were: Nancy Stiefel (first place with her Blueberry Banana Cream Pie); Todd Greeson (second place for his Strawberry Delight Pie); and Chef Grady from the New Tiger's Inn (third place for his Salted Caramel Peach Crumble Pie). Thank you to everyone who entered this year and to our fabulous judges, Charley Vest, Chief Brad Gregg, and Judge Bell.

Our Town Council meetings are the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. The public is always welcome to attend.

I am so excited to share our news with you, and I'm proud to call Valley Head home. I hope you will come visit us soon.



Hammondville Councilwoman Felicia Harrison with "Barney"



Nancy Stiefel, 1st place Pie Contest winner



Patricia Flory, 1st place Pickle Contest winner



Kendal Shankles, 1st place Car Show winner with his '39 Chevy

Valley Head Fire Department Receives Thermal Imaging Camera

by Mayor Karen Vest

The Valley Head Volunteer Fire Department was gifted a Seek FirePRO 200 thermal imaging camera by the Alder Springs Volunteer Fire Department Chief James Edwards and Public Information Officer Buck Brown during their meeting on Monday, May 13.

Edwards started "Project Charlie," named after Charlie Carroll, a 7-year-old girl who was a victim of a house fire in Albertville on July 13, 2022. It was a night Edwards will never forget. Carroll's grandparents and a twin sister were rescued by the firemen. However, they couldn't find Charlie, who was crouched in her safe spot in a bathroom, until one of the firefighters found the girl by herself. Despite first responders giving everything they had, Edwards recalled, it was too late.

Edwards said he wants every department to have access to thermal imaging cameras, something he feels would make a major difference when trying to find someone who needs to be rescued from a burning building.

When asked how locals can support their own fire departments, whether volunteer or career, Edwards' response was simple: call them. "Ask what their needs are, because every department is going to have different needs, whether it be funds, volunteers, or hoses."

If you would like to donate to help purchase thermal imaging cameras, Edwards said you can mail your gift to the station at 5915 Hustleville Road, Albertville, AL 35951. You can also reach out to them on their Facebook page, Project Charlie for Thermal Imaging, or call 256-894-3473 for more information.

The Valley Head Volunteer Fire Department is very thankful to Edwards and his department for this generous donation.



The Alder Springs Volunteer Fire Department recently donated a thermal imaging camera — designed to help find people inside a burning building — to the Valley Head Volunteer Fire Department.



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Under Construction - New Construction in Fort Payne! Welcome Home to a 3 BD, 2 BA cottage in Downtown Fort Payne. This home boasts a living room with vaulted ceiling, & spacious kitchen with island. You will find this home has a private main suite with a view of lookout mountain. MLS# 21856887

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Mentone Arts Center

Music and art classes, Summer Social, and a salute to Sam Cordle

by Randy Grider

Bob Ross Class Is Back

The arts center kicks off the month with the return of the popular Paint Like Bob Ross class on Saturday, June 1, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Taught by certified Bob Ross instructor Gary Grider, the class is limited to 10 students, and tuition is \$100.

Songwriters Series

Join us Tuesday, June 4, from 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. as we host the Music on the Mountain Songwriters Series featuring Mike McCarrell. McCarrell began playing with local bands around Camp Lejeune while in the Marines in the early 1980s. One of the groups was the Super Grit Cowboy Band, an American country music band formed in North Carolina by Clyde Mattocks. After being honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, McCarrell returned to Austin in his home state of Texas, where he continued playing for local bands. Former bandmate and friend Mattocks referred McCarrell to country legend Vern Gosdin to try out for his 1990 tour. That tour led McCarrell to open for Nashville country stars like Steve Warner, Trisha Yearwood, Marty Stewart, and many others.

Today, in addition to performing, McCarrell focuses on songwriting. He is a member of the National Songwriters Association International.

The free event is hosted by award-winning songwriter Craig Hendricks. The night will begin with a round of three songwriters, including Scott Henderson.

Art Class with Bradley Wilson: Creating Through Play!

We are excited to announce that artist/instructor Bradley Wilson is coming to Mentone June 22-23 for a two-day class in the Bill Berry Room at Moon Lake Village. Tuition is \$195 plus a \$20 materials fee. Class is limited to 10 students and is open to all skill levels.

The theme of the class: Jumpstart your creativity through play! Using simple materials, such as decorative papers and acrylic paint, students will explore image-making that emphasizes creative expression and exploration. “Play” is the name of the game in this class, and students will learn how to approach the creative process with a spirit of adventure and joy.

Skills and techniques to be covered are collage, color, composition, intuitive creating, and finding your muse!

Wilson was born in Chattanooga in 1970. He is a visual artist and author who creates paintings,



drawings, and prints. He teaches studio art and art history part time at Lee University, Dalton State College, and conducts regular painting workshops at a variety of venues.

“My painting process is fluid and organic,” Wilson says. “I constantly make changes throughout the creation of a piece. I have no philosophy of painting other than to be open and responsive to the possibilities of the moment. Connecting with the present and finding the potential — this is what my work is about.”

Wilson and his wife reside with a multitude of dogs and cats in Charleston, Tennessee.

Summer Social

Our Summer Social honoring second-quarter Artists of the Month, Sarah “Mitzi” Roess (April), David and Lesa Cummings (May), and Sam Cordle (June), will be Thursday, June 27, from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. at the arts center. The public is invited, and light snacks and drinks will be available.

Our June Artist of the Month

Sam Cordle is a potter from Summerville. His appreciation for ceramics started at a young age, growing up around his mother's ceramics studio, herself an accomplished potter. Cordle is known for creating functional and aesthetically pleasing forms. With a deep commitment to utilitarian principles, he blends form and function to ensure each piece serves a practical purpose while enhancing everyday living. Drawing inspiration from nature and minimalist design, his work features clean lines and organic shapes. Cordle’s pottery is celebrated for its durability, sustainability, and timeless appeal.

Cordle studied art at Jacksonville State University, and since graduating has worked out of his mother's former studio in Menlo. His work is displayed at the Mentone Arts Center and Guess McCall Gallery in New Orleans. His work can also be seen on his website www.samcordleceramics.com.

For additional information about any of our events or to register for a class, please see contact info below. 📍

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.



Songwriters Series to feature Mike McCarrell



June Artist of the Month — Sam Cordle

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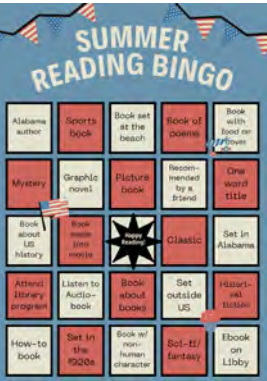
Summer Reading for All Ages at Moon Lake Library

Tie-dye, Trains, Falconry, and More Coming Your Way
by Anne McLeod

When I was young, I liked nothing better than penciling in book titles on my summer reading log. Watching the list of books I’d read over those lazy months get longer by the week gave me a feeling of accomplishment and helped me see myself as a reader.

If you miss that feeling, you can recapture it this summer. This year’s theme is “Adventure Begins at the Library,” and, whether you’re young or not so young, Moon Lake Library has a summer reading program for you in 2024. Some of our Saturday morning programs will be open to all ages!

Kids who attend at least three of our five sessions and keep a reading log will win prizes.



In addition, teens and adults are invited to keep reading logs and to participate in Summer Reading Bingo. Teens and adults who complete a Bingo will receive \$10 in used book credit, and their names will go into a drawing for one of our new long-sleeve

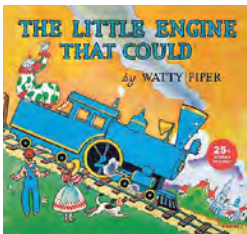
Wild About Reading T-shirts. Fill in the whole card, and we’ll give you a shirt at our Summer Reading Celebration July 27.

Can’t make it on Saturday mornings? We’ll have coloring sheets, origami paper, and other grab-and-go activities for kids, along with tickets for a personal read-aloud with the Moon Lake librarian!

- **June 1 at 10:30 a.m.** All ages are invited to join us for Ms. Lynn’s ever-popular tie-dye program. Kids 12 and under are eligible for a free short-sleeve library T-shirt to tie-dye. Adults may bring their own T-shirts and pay \$5 for the session or purchase a white short-sleeve library T-shirt and pay \$20. Kids can

pick up a reading log, and teens and adults will pick up their Summer Reading Bingo cards. Get ready to read!

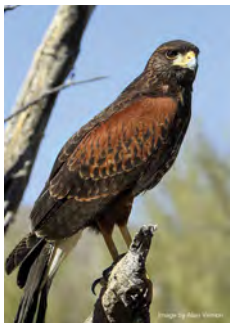
- **June 15 at 10:30 a.m.** Little Library Learners ages 3-6 will enjoy the Watty Piper classic The Little Engine That Could, which happens to be the welcome book for kids enrolled in



Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. Children enrolled in Imagination Library are invited to bring their own copies of the book, if they have received them, and read along with Ms. Lynn. We’ll also have fun with other activities related to trains.

- **June 29 10:30 a.m.**

All ages are invited to a program on falconry with Matt Whitfield and his Harris’s Hawk. Matt is the president of the Alabama Hawking Association and one of about 130 Abatement Falconers in the United States, which means he is licensed to use his hawks to keep birds away from crops and other sites where they can become a nuisance. This will be an educational program for the whole family, a chance to see a trained hawk up close.



- **July 13 10:30 a.m.** Little Library Learners ages 3-6 will read books about Smokey the Bear and learn about how to prevent wildfires.
- **July 27 10:30 a.m.** All ages are invited for a Summer Reading Celebration! We’ll have prizes, refreshments, and activities for the whole family! Watch for details in next month’s Groundhog. 🐿

Anne McLeod is the librarian at Moon Lake Library.

Adventure Begins at Your Library

June 2024 at Moon Lake Library

Weekly Meet-Ups: CHESS on Tuesdays at 1; KNITTING and CROCHET Tuesdays at 2; SCRABBLE Wednesday at noon.

June 1 • 10:30 a.m. Our summer reading program kicks off with a tie-dye session with Ms. Lynn. Note: This is open to all ages, but kids’ shirts and tie-dye are free. Adults can bring a cotton T-shirt of their own and pay \$5 for the dye session or pay \$20 to tie-dye a Moon Lake Library T-shirt.

June 7 • 6 p.m. Family Game Night – Bring a snack to share and we’ll enjoy board games and cards at the library.

June 8 • 10:30 a.m. Moon Lake Library Book Club – Our theme for June’s book share is Pride Month. Read a book, fiction or nonfiction, about LGBTQ+ issues or by an LGBTQ+ author and share with the group.

June 8 • 1 p.m. Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

June 14 • 6 p.m. Movie Night “The Birdcage” (1996 - Rated R - Under 17 requires adult parent or guardian). Robin Williams and Nathan Lane play long-time companions trying to play it straight in this hilarious farce.

June 15 • 10:30 a.m. Little Library Learners, children ages 3-7: “The Little Engine That Could”

June 18 • 6 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.

June 21 • 6 p.m. Family Game Night – Bring a snack to share and we’ll enjoy board games and cards at the library.

June 22 • 1 p.m. Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

June 29 • 10:30 a.m. Summer Reading Program for all ages – Falconry program with Matt Whitfield.

Moon Lake Library

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Book Review: The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War by Erik Larson (Crown, 2024)

Erik Larson is a favorite author among Moon Lake Library’s nonfiction fans. The Devil in the White City, Isaac’s Storm, and The Splendid and the Vile are just a few of Larson’s nonfiction bestsellers. His latest, The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War, explores the lead-up to the American Civil War, as Union troops at Fort Sumter find themselves in the crosshairs of South Carolinians determined to initiate an attack that will trigger war.



The author’s extensive historical research into well known and less familiar characters always makes the past come alive for readers. Demon of Unrest is no exception. Major Robert Anderson, commander of Fort Sumter, recognized his troops’ precarious position but hoped it would not come to a war with the South.

He was well known around Charleston, had grown up in Kentucky, and was married to a woman from Georgia. Although Anderson was not an abolitionist, the politics surrounding slavery frustrated him, and he was determined to fulfill his oath to the Union.

Another central figure in The Demon of Unrest is diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut whose husband was a Senator from South Carolina up until secession. Her diaries told the story of the plantation system and the war itself from the perspective of the upper class, though she herself was critical of the slave system that sustained her family’s wealth.

In contrast, “fire-eater” Edmund Ruffin of Virginia was a proponent of slavery and insistent that his home state secede. He is said to have fired the first shot of the war and would eventually commit suicide when the South was forced to surrender. He was a friend of Mary Boykin’s uncle, James Hammond, who as governor of South Carolina became involved in a sex scandal that would cause even citizens of the twenty-first century to

blush. Despite the furor over his private life, he would later become a Senator himself, until he too resigned in the lead-up to secession.

Larson has a gift for striking a balance between military and biographical history so that readers who are less knowledgeable about military strategy can grasp the essentials and stay engaged. Historians have described “the fog of war,” and readers will discover many examples of how uncertainty and miscommunication played a role in the events of the attack on Fort Sumter. It was impossible not to reflect how American history might look very different if nineteenth century elected officials and military officers had had access to telephones and email! The relatively small battle of Fort Sumter would loom large in our history, and Larson’s account of the people, places, and circumstances involved in it shines a spotlight on many of its lesser known aspects.

The Demon of Unrest is available for checkout at Moon Lake Library. 🐿



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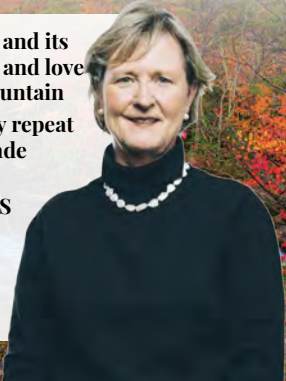


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Mentone Ukes Blame the Uke on My Roots

by Sandra Monk

I showed up with a uke... My ukulele journey started just this way at the Moon Lake Library, as I appeared with a borrowed instrument for my first free lesson. As a retired nurse and nurse educator, I am a lifelong learner who believes we all have potential for growth and development at every age.

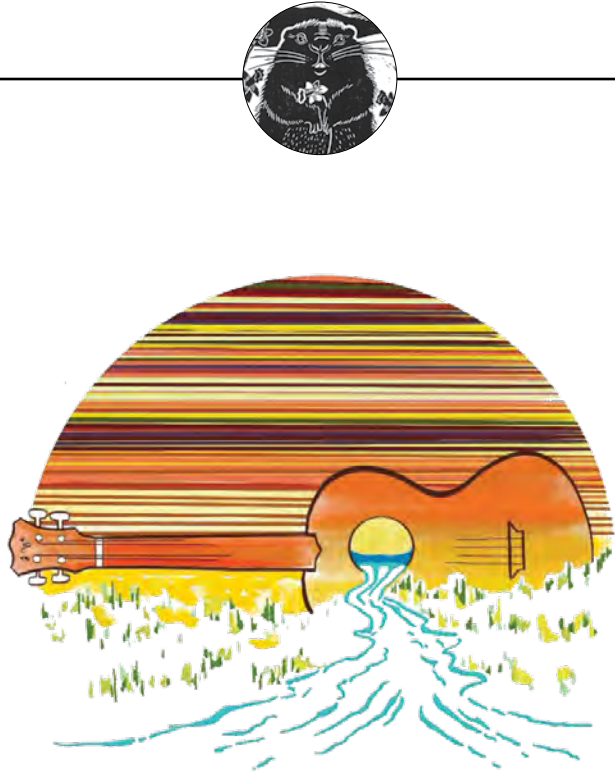
As I explored the world of ukulele music, I uncovered ukulele players in my family history. I found photos of three great-aunts playing ukuleles in the early 1920s in my grandmother's photo album. In addition, an unplayable soprano ukulele lay in the bedroom closet of my family home for as long as I could remember. Little interest was paid to the somewhat valuable Kamaka instrument by myself or family members.

Aside from family roots, my interest in ukuleles and music soared once I started playing with the Mentone Ukes. So far, the experience has led to a personal satisfaction of playing music for myself and others, an increased knowledge of music, and the pleasure of meeting like-minded people.

The ukulele has brought immense enjoyment and fulfillment to my life. The portability of it lends itself to going along on camping trips, vacations, and events with family and friends. Playing a ukulele is a delightful way to relax, reflect, and meditate. I have an appreciation of old-time, folk, and gospel music. I've found an abundance of music to add to a growing playlist. I now have a small collection of ukuleles, including two banjoleles.

My confidence has grown as I have challenged myself to play at nursing homes, my church, a few open mic opportunities, and jams at the Moon Lake Library. A few of us recently practiced and played in a coffee shop in Summerville and at my church for our senior adults. We hope this will become something we can do more often.

Moreover, learning to play the ukulele has increased my desire to develop a greater knowledge of music. I have been a member of church choirs all my adult life and still I only read enough music



to be dangerous. Now I want to learn more about playing solo and as a member of a group. The internet is an excellent resource for live play-along events and learning new songs and techniques from expert ukulele musicians around the world. I recently attended a

weeklong course at the John C. Campbell Folk School to gather more information about the music theory surrounding the ukulele and playing more spontaneously with others.

The more I learn, the more I want to know about this very playable instrument. Playing with others, including those who play better than I do, has been key to learning to play an instrument. The Mentone Ukes group is an extraordinary group of musicians from varied backgrounds who have served as mentors for me.

As a newly retired person, I wanted to stay connected to my community and explore some new ones as well. I now belong to a group of accepting and encouraging people of all ages and musical abilities. Members of the ukulele community are some of the most generous people I have ever met. The Mentone Ukes are no exception and have extended hospitality and friendships to me.

I would not have had the opportunity to meet friends in my neighboring states and around the world without the ukulele. Through it, I know I will continue to find joy in music, grow in knowledge of the instrument and music theory, and meet new friends and acquaintances along the way. You don't even need to show up with a uke to play with the Mentone Ukes every other Saturday at the Moon Lake Library. A ukulele can be borrowed for use at the library during your beginner lessons. 🍷



Sandra Monk finds a sense of community in music.

St. Joseph's on- the-Mountain Celebrates Vann McCary Scholarship Winners

by Tom MacMichael

The Vann McCary Scholarship fund was established by two St. Joseph's families with a deep commitment to the growth and prosperity of Mentone and the surrounding area, including Valley Head and Fort Payne. This fund has been making scholarships available for many years and fits nicely with the mission of St. Joseph's — to serve and support the community in ways that enrich residents of all ages. These scholarships are especially needed, given the high cost of college education.

Congratulations to the four winners of this year's scholarships, which total \$4,000. All students are enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education.

The winners are:
Arabella Marie Stokes — Arabella is a 2024 graduate of Valley Head High School. She plans to study marine biology at Northeast Alabama Community College. Arabella also received a loyalty scholarship at Northeast and won the DAR Good Citizenship Award. She is a resident of Mentone. This will be her freshman year at Northeast. Arabella will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

Emma Payton Harrison — Emma is a 2023 graduate of Valley Head High School and has completed one year of study at The University of Alabama. She is currently a student manager for the Crimson Tide basketball team. Emma plans to become an athletic trainer for college-level sports teams. Her course of study is kinesiology. Emma says she feels strongly that the blessing of her education should be used to make a difference in the lives of those around her. This will be her second year to receive the scholarship. Her award this year is \$1,000.

Brant Stacy Smith — Brant is a 2024 graduate of Valley Head High School. He dreams of working in the field of aerospace engineering. Brant will attend the University of North Alabama in the fall, majoring in engineering. He is an Eagle Scout (class of 2021) and was a delegate to the American Legion Alabama Boys State and a Top Graduate in the Fire Science Program. This will be his first year in receipt of the scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000.

Kolby James Dupree — Kolby is a 2024 graduate of Valley Head High School, where he played varsity basketball and varsity golf. He was a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and was ranked number one in his senior class, with a GPA of 4.2. Kolby's family always taught him to value education, and his record shows he did! He plans to become an athletic trainer or a physical therapist. Kolby will major in physical therapy and athletic training while minoring in business and marketing at Northeast Alabama Community College. This will be Kolby's first year to receive the scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000. 🍷

If you would like to see what this ukulele community might offer you, please join us at one of our free sessions on June 8 or 22 at 1 p.m. Central at the Moon Lake Library. Beginners and newcomers of all ages are always welcome. You can find us on Facebook (Mentone Ukes) or on our website, www.mentoneukes.com. For more information, please contact Debra Fey (debrajfe@gmail.com) or Hank Allen (hank.d.allen@gmail.com).



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Scenes from Valley Head School's Field Day



Valley Head Students Learn From Museum of Literature Project

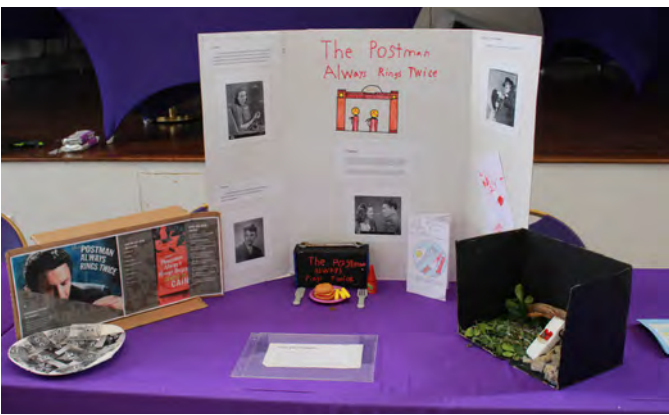
by Cindy Harrison, English Teacher

The group's assignment is to work as curators to create a museum exhibit for a novel that they chose to read on their own. In doing this, the students must consider what design would work best to convey their ideas of what the novel represents. The museum can be visually oriented, so that the viewer wanders from object to object; interactive, so that viewers can play with media or computer programs in which the visitor engages in activities that recreate particular episodes; or presentations known as "living museums," communities that recreate particular places and are filled with

actors and sights that make the tourist feel he is transported to another era. Each group must create an invitation to the opening of the museum, a brochure, a book jacket, an art piece, a time capsule from the timeline of the setting, a complete scene from the novel, a poem or ode, a commercial promoting the novel, a one-page tri-fold with themes and symbols, a newspaper, and a gift shop. The students have two months to complete the assignment and have different deadlines for each part of the project. This is a stressful but rewarding educational experience for the students. 🐻



The Museum of Literature project gave Valley Head students an opportunity to take a deep dive into their selected stories while developing research and presentation skills.



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Delivering Custom Tiny Homes Nationwide or to Our Communities

After Little River Escape Tiny Home Community was named one of the top six communities to downsize in by U.S. News & World Report, this community has become fully occupied and folks have come from 12 different states to live within our community.

With Little River Escape being such a success, we have decided to embark on a new journey by creating River Ridge Escape Tiny Home Dealership. At the dealership, tiny homes are available to tour and purchase. RRE is now delivering across the nation and also developing other communities to bring more folks to Lookout Mountain.

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.

Come Experience Tiny Living on Lookout Mountain!

Tours of River Ridge Escape's Tiny Homes — Mon-Fri 10-5 ET or by appointment.
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June Community Events

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

June 1, 8, 22 • Homestead Community Swap & Sale •
Come to our Homestead Community Swap & Sale! Set up to sell your goods or just come to shop and meet your fellow homesteaders at Barnyard Antiques, 4616 Desoto Pkwy., Fort Payne. Vendors must reserve their space by sending \$5 to CashApp \$highergroundherbs.

June 1 • 2nd Annual Open Car Show • Food, music, door prizes and more. No entry fees! Held at Southern Ceramic Solution, 1595 Main Street in Fyffe. Everyone is invited. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. For more information call 256-440-1520

June 1 • Trail Trekker Hike: DeSoto Scout Trail • The trail follows the West Fork of Little River and traverses a varied terrain of ridges, valleys, fern glades, rock formations, waterfalls, beside deep pools, riffles, through rhododendron tunnels, creek crossings, swimming holes, and sandy stretches. Hike is approximately 3.5 miles round trip, moderate to strenuous along rocky mountainous terrain with some slopes. We will go from Gilliam Loop Trailhead down Exit 1 and upstream to Indian Falls and back. Closed-toed shoes are preferred. 12-4 p.m. DeSoto State Park, Fort Payne. Meet at DeSoto’s Gilliam Loop Trailhead (past the Lodge on cabin road).

June 1 • Alabama June Jam • The lineup of artists scheduled to perform at the historic event will be ALABAMA’s Randy Owen and Teddy Gentry, joined by special guest performers Old Dominion (six-time reigning ACM and CMA “Group of the Year”), Grammy Award-winning Shenandoah, Lee Greenwood (“God Bless The U.S.A.”), Montgomery Gentry, featuring Eddie Montgomery, Mark Wills, Exile, John Berry, Taylor Hicks, The Malpass Brothers, The Castellows, plus a surprise performance by a hitmaking singer-songwriter.

June 6 • Canyon Kids • Join us for a hands-on adventure the first Thursday of each month in 2024! Children ages 3 years-3rd graders will want to attend ALL of these hands-on outdoor adventures! Join us in June as we learn about amphibians! Bring your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and neighbors to creatively learn about animals, plants, bugs, and more with JSU Field Schools. 10:30–11:15 a.m. at Little River Canyon Center. Please dress in layers appropriate for the weather and wear footwear suitable for hiking. Free event. Registration required. Limited availability. Email rmtaylor@jsu.edu or call 256-845-3548.

June 7, 21 • Family Game Night • Let’s play games! We usually have people interested in Rummikub, Mexican Train Dominoes, Hearts, Scrabble, and more. You’re invited to bring a family favorite or try a new game. Bring a snack to share if you can. We also have some on hand, so don’t let that stop you if you want to try Game Night! 6-8 p.m. at Moon Lake Library.

June 8 • Rainsville Freedom Run • Rainsville Freedom Run will have runners from across the country that will descend upon Rainsville for the 16th anniversary of the Rainsville Freedom Run 10K and 5K, “The Best Small Race in America”. The event is for runners and walkers of all ages. The race will begin and end at the DeKalb County Schools Coliseum located at 1504 Main St. E. 8-11 a.m.

June 8 • Community Bed Build • Come help Geraldine High School students build beds. We believe we are better and stronger together. We will come together to build beds for children in our community who do not have a bed of their own. There are a few things that will help you get the most out of your volunteer experience. 1) Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes early to park, check-in, and receive your station assignments. Even though you are pre-registered, you will still be required to check in at the registration table for this process. 2) Wear closed-toed shoes. 3) Wear old clothing. 4) Park in front of the old school gymnasium 5) Build site is in front of the new school gymnasium. 9 a.m.

June 8 • Folded Bark Basket Workshop • Since the earliest times, traditional cultures have had a need for containers, a place to store their stuff. Students in this workshop will use a pre-folded and dried bark preform to construct a basket (attach handle, rim supports, etc.), and have the opportunity to add various embellishments. For more information: www.alapark.com/parks/desoto-state-park

June 8 • Latino Festival at NACC • Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) plays host to the Latino Festival on campus Saturday, June 8, 12-4:00 p.m. Admission and all activities are FREE. Entertainment includes a Mariachi group, DJ and authentic dancers. Kids and adults can enjoy a climbing rock wall, trackless train, inflatables, giant Jenga, Mexican bingo, puppet show, photo booth, pony rides, and much more. Free ice cream and soft drinks will be served and there will be food vendors of authentic Mexican food.

June 8 • Music for the People – Summer Music Series – featuring Black Sedan Band • Sponsored by Little River Arts Council and made possible in part by the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Bring your own chair or blanket to enjoy this free concert, and enjoy some food from Fontastic Food Truck. 6-9 p.m. Linger Longer Pavilion behind Mentone Inn in Mentone (within 10 miles of DeSoto State Park) Address: 6139 AL-117, Mentone, AL 35984. Free and open to everyone!

June 8 • Bluegrass on the Rim • Join us for the 11th Annual

June 8 Fundraiser to Benefit Moon Lake Playground

Three local businesses have joined together to encourage everyone to come out for a plate lunch and arts and crafts shopping on Saturday afternoon, June 8, at Moon Lake Village to support completion of the playground. Zack of All Trades, Sub-Thermal Solutions, and DeeZ Cutz Barber Shop have organized this fun event. Chicken

and sausage jambalaya will be on the menu, and you can get a haircut by DeeZ on the spot! In addition to vendor booths, the village businesses and shops will also be open to all visitors that day. Proceeds from the plate lunches and haircuts by DeeZ will be added to any other donations to finish work on the playground. 🍷

Bluegrass on the Rim concert Saturday, June 8, at 7 pm. This year’s concert featuring Kelli Johnson & Foggy Hollow. This is an outdoor venue so bring folding chairs or blankets. Leashed pets and coolers are welcome. BBQ and other vendors on site. Come out and enjoy some of the south’s best BBQ and Bluegrass under the stars. Adult tickets \$25 in advance or \$30 the day of the show. Student discounted tickets are available for \$20 in advance or \$25 the day of. Kids 10 and under are free.

June 12 • Grand Camp at the Canyon Center • Children and their trusted adult will join us for grand adventures at the Canyon Center. Families will enjoy hands-on environmental education, outdoor fun, arts, and guided exploration of the natural world. Campers will explore the JSU Canyon Center and the Little River National Preserve in Fort Payne, Alabama. For more information call 256-845-3548. Wednesday, June 12 – Friday, June 14, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Little River Canyon Center in Fort Payne, AL. Fee: \$50/child. Registration required. Limited availability. Call 256-845-3548.

June 14–15 • BioBlitz 2024 • Have you ever wondered what kind of cool plants and animals can be found in Alabama? Do you love Little River Canyon? This event is for you! Join us Friday, June 14 to Saturday, June 15 to help us document the flora and fauna of the park. We will be exploring the park with scientists, naturalists, students, and professors (oh my!) and the public is encouraged to join us. So come out, get involved, and help us document the richness of Little River Canyon National Preserve! It will be 24 hours of fun! Call 256-845-3548 for more details. All outdoor activities are weather dependent. Snorkel Survey is dependent on water level of Little River.

June 15 • Creek Kids Watershed Workshop • Creek Kids’ Watershed Workshop is Learning about our water ... not just for kids! Hosted by DeSoto State Park. Experience a view of Little River’s watershed and how it connects to the rest of Alabama and our oceans. Many species of fish and aquatic invertebrates, including some types of crayfish, mussels, and snails, live only in Alabama. Participants of all ages will have a good chance of observing some species only found in certain Alabama streams and rivers; they will learn about the impacts of dams on waterways, and learn how pollution moves through aquatic environments. We will take a short walk to Laurel Creek and the West Fork of Little River for a dip to view native fish and invertebrates such as crayfish, mussels, and snails up close. A VERY fun way to explore and cool down at the same time! This fun workshop is based on the ‘Creek Kids’ program, a partnership between the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) and Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park. Meet at the DeSoto State Park Nature Center on County Road 89. Participants should bring lunch/ snacks/water, clothes and footwear suitable for the river. Free and open to everyone, kids to adults (we welcome all ages, whether you bring kids or not!). Please email Brittney. Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov. Pre-registration is required by no later than June 12.

June 15 • Picnic in the Park • 2024 Annual Picnic In the Park in Geraldine. Our Headliner Band this year is “Worth the Wait”. We have so many new additions to this year’s event and we are so excited to see our community come together. Live music by many local artists, face painting by Brandi Still, food vendors, craft vendors, kiddie train, balloon art by Moons Balloons, inflatables, and pony rides by Jesse Tatum. Here is the GOOD NEWS ... Face painting, pony rides, balloon art, kiddie train and inflatables are ALL FREE for the children!! We cannot wait to see you at the 2024 Town of Geraldine Picnic in the Park! Car show 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and music and other activities 2 to 5 p.m.

June 15 • Third Saturday • Third Saturday Sunset Cruise-In will be an afternoon of family fun activities in the Main Street District of Fort Payne. This public event will include food, live music, motorcycles, antique car show, and much more.

June 17-21 • VBS • Join us for Vacation Bible School at Mentone Community Church for ages 4 through 8th grade. 6-8:45 p.m.

June 21 • Meandering Moonlight Guided Paddle • DeSoto State Park staff offers this relaxing guided moonlight paddle trip on scenic Little River. Enjoy the peace and quiet of nature as we paddle upstream on the ‘coke bottle clear’ waters of the West Fork of Little River. Enjoy this flatwater paddle as the sun goes down and the full moon comes up. This trip is approximately 4 miles round trip on flatwater, spans a 3 to 3 1/2-hour period and includes kayak, paddle, and personal flotation device. Must be able to paddle upstream and back (no current). Weight limits: 300 pounds for singles and 450 pounds for tandems. Ages 8 to adult. Wear appropriate clothing for weather (you may get wet), and bring headlamp or flashlight, bug spray, snacks, and drinking water. DeSoto Falls Picnic Area – Miller’s Bend Paddle Shack (about 7 miles from main park area of DeSoto State Park) \$30 for single

Mentone American Legion Post 215

Upcoming Events

June 3 at 1:30 p.m.
District 13 meeting in Scottsboro
All newly elected officers will be sworn in at that time.

June 19
Post 215 regularly scheduled meeting.
All veterans are invited.

June 29
Rainsville Freedom Festival
Post 215 will have a recruitment and fundraiser booth set up.

Please come support our organization and enjoy all the entertainment and events.

kayak rental (2 person-tandem kayaks are available on a limited basis for \$50). Pre-registration closes June 17.

June 22–23 • Paint, Paper and Play Art Class • We are excited to announce artist/instructor Bradley Wilson is coming to Mentone for an exciting two-day class. Tuition is \$195, plus a \$20 materials fee. Class is limited to 10 students. Call 256-674-3366. This class is open to all skill levels. Presented by Mentone Arts Center and held at Moon Lake Village.

June 22 • Park After Dark • Join DeSoto State Park staff to get to know the park after dark! You never know what you can discover during the night; we will be using our senses to discover what can be seen, heard, or even smelled on this fun hike! About the hike: we will hike slowly on the orange trail from the campground, seeing what we can see and hearing what we can hear. Terrain is rocky and moderate, closed toed shoes are preferred. Approx. 1 mile. More suitable for ages 8 to adult. DeSoto State Park. Meet at DeSoto’s Country Store on County Road 89. Fee: 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.

June 25–28 • Canyon Camp • Join us for Canyon Camp for hands-on environmental education, outdoor fun, arts, and the exploration of the natural world. Campers will explore the JSU Canyon Center, Little River National Preserve, and Desoto State Park in Fort Payne. Registration is open to all 8- to 12-year-olds. For more information call 256-845-3548. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Drop off begins at 8:30 a.m. \$150/student. Registration required. Limited availability.

June 29 • Rainsville Freedom Fest • Come and have some fun! There will be lots of free kids activities from 3-7 p.m. The entertainment this year will be country singer Neal McCoy. We will end the night with some awesome FIREWORKS that start at 9 p.m.

MONTH OF JUNE • Orbix Hot Glass Classes • Looking for a unique event for your family or a group of friends to do? Come experience one of our glassblowing classes. You can pick between a flower, pumpkin or bowl making class. Each class is about one hour in length with a minimum of two people. Reservations and full payment are required. Please call us at 256-523-3188 or email us at info@orbixhotglass.com, or look online at orbixhotglass.com/events/ for more information.

- **Flower Class** – In this class, it’s all about a hands-on experience in a fun atmosphere with a final product we know you will love. After watching us shape glass into a flower, it’s your turn to sit at the bench to sculpt your own from an array of colors.
- **Pumpkin Class** – You pick the body and stem colors, and afterwards, our artists guide you through the process, stepping in to guide you as you shape the glass.
- **Bowl Making Class** – In this small “suck” bowl, participants will work with a teammate to blow, suck and craft a small concave bowl with colors of their choice.

The Food Pantry at St. Joseph’s on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church is open every Wednesday to Mentone/Valley Head/ Hammondville residents 9-11 a.m.



We do close four Wednesdays a year. (Holy Week, World’s Longest Yard Sale Week, Thanksgiving Week and Christmas Week.) We also welcome pantry volunteers and donations. For questions, call 256-634-4476.



June Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 1

Sible Hopper
Kayla Hellums
Rebecca Guinn
Braden Busby
Madie Durham
Josh Williamson
Chad King
Jacob Lee
Blade Cowart
Andrea Stephens
Dolas Bain
- 2

Lizzie Kate Williams
Skylar Venable
Steve Tate
Glen Black
John David Tedder
- 3

Brittney Coleman
Donald Stephens
Byron Haynes
Jack Johnston, Jr.
Missy Wooten
- 4

Lisa Crowder
Cecily Knowles
- 5

Finley Isbell
Doris Chamlee
Hannah Filmore
Hadley Gregory
Haley Hilliard
Aileen Robinson
Micah Wooten
Kenneth Aiden Busby
- 6

Angela Valentine
Keegan Johnson
Christy Harrison
Brayden Harrison
Caitlyn Collins
Nick Brown
Mike Campbell
Jake Smith
- 7

Luke Johnson
Donnie Goodman
- 8

Austin Cox
Nicole Phillips
Brantley Hawkins
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Benny Goss
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Cooper Hilyer
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Robert & Ilene Green
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Alfie & Kristi Chambers
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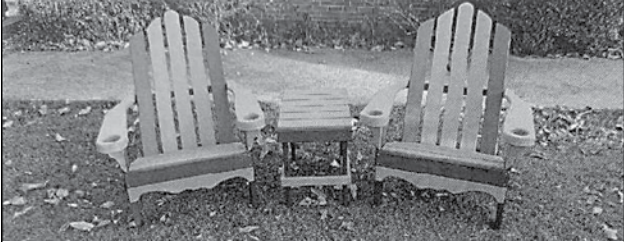
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Congratulations Class of 2024



Valley Head High School Senior Class of 2024 (Photo by SHEBEV ART & PHOTOGRAPHY)



Scenes from Valley Head's Kindergarten Graduation

Public Art Project *(continued from page 1)*

The school was closed in 2021 and the DeKalb County Board of Education deeded the property to the Town of Mentone. The Town has undertaken a major renovation and reimagining of the campus, creating an artisan village with vendors and art galleries as well as an outdoor amphitheater. The property is also the site for the annual Mentone Fall Festival.

“This oak totem offers Mentone the opportunity to honor our past by creating a unified narrative of the former school being transformed into a celebration of the arts,” says artist Morrison. “It encourages people to let the school evolve out of its past and into an enduring future. By understanding Moon Lake’s narrative, we can utilize the best aspects of what came before and create tangible momentum for the path ahead. The totem stands at that union between past, present, and future and invites us all to consider how they weave together.”

Landscaping and site preparation began May 1st on the front lawn of the campus. Installation of the sculpture is expected to be complete by early summer. “We believe pedestrians and travelers will have a memorable art experience that celebrates the history and importance of place,” says Jordan. “We encourage the public to visit the site and reflect on how we are all interconnected — to one another, to our culture and history, and to our collective futures.”

“Firmly Planted, Forward Moving” was funded in part by a grant from the Lyndhurst Foundation. Morrison will forgo the artist’s stipend that was part of the call for submissions. These funds will be available for LRAC to reinvest in the community for future public art projects. 🌱

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Cub Scouts Trip to the Gulf Packed with Adventure and Education

by Nathan Austin

This past spring break, Cub Scout Pack 4178 embarked on a historical, educational, yet fun trip to Mobile. There the Scouts and families visited the aquarium on Dauphin Island, the USS Alabama, USS Drum, Mobile History Museum, Fort Conde, Africatown Heritage Center, and several historic Mobile restaurants.

The pack, along with siblings and parents, was able to stay together in a beach house on Dauphin Island — all 19 of us! Despite the cold water temperatures, the kids swam in the chilly Gulf while parents watched them from the sandy white shore.

Cub Scouting helps children make new friends, embark on adventures, develop new interests, engage in service to others, and practice leadership skills that will greatly benefit them in the future.

Thanks to donations, fundraisers, and St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church, this trip was possible. Meaningful memories were made and good times were had with our new pack.

Thank you all for your support! 🐾

Nathan Austin is the Cubmaster, Cub Scout Pack 4178



Cub Scout Pack 4178 visits Mobile and Dauphin Island.



The Scouts enjoyed the aquarium on Dauphin Island.

Valley Head Students (continued from page 1)



Valley Head 8th graders participate in team-building activities at Camp DeSoto.

graders enjoyed and pushed themselves on the climbing wall, the zipline, and the traversing elements.

Having worked with Higher Ground since their inception in 2007, I thoroughly enjoyed doing low ropes on Monday, with games such as getting across the Hot Chocolate River using marshmallows, lining up by birthdays while blindfolded and mute, crossing the Mohawk traverse with imaginary crocodiles below, and getting the group to connect and stand up in unison. On Thursday, I had the joy of welcoming the eighth-graders up on the zipline platform and gathering their courage to take that difficult but safe step down the zipline with their best Tarzan yell! We talked a lot about healthy fears and how ropes course activities are much safer than most sports.

Both days the groups were treated to a fabulous lunch prepared by Tiger's Inn. Chicken fingers, mac and cheese, rolls, and delicious desserts filled the bill when stretching limits on a

beautiful day atop Lookout Mountain. So glad that Lethea Cortner from the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama (CFNEA.org) stopped by to see the fun and the learning achieved by these activities for Valley Head students.

Thank you, Kathy McMunn, Kathryn Norris, Anna Mae Horn, Mary McMichael, and Susan Noel for lunch setup and cleanup.

Most of all, thank you, Camp DeSoto, Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama, and Higher Ground for allowing MERF to provide a perfect day of learning and self-discovery. The students realized that they are capable of more than they may believe possible! And all of the students learned the value of encouraging each other and that success isn't always reaching the top but setting an attainable goal that matches their personal abilities (challenge by choice). 🐾

“The Leadership Training and ropes course at Camp DeSoto was a great experience. It gave us an opportunity to do something new while learning to depend on others and work together. Thank you, MERF and Higher Ground, for sponsoring and planning the event for us.”

— Eli Day (11th grade)



Students learned the importance of teamwork while participating in fun activities that develop communication skills, set goals, and stretch limits.

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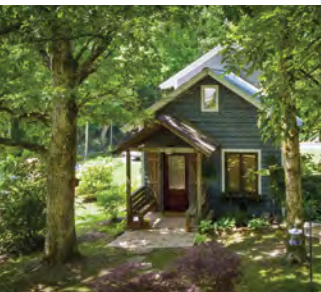
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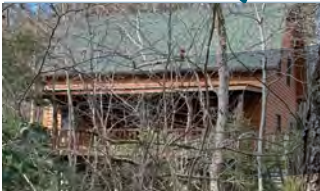
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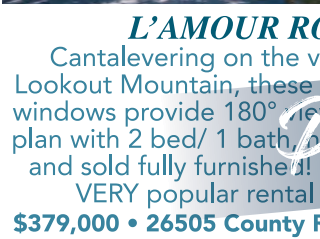
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