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Volume 40, No. 3

"Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain"

March 2021

Moon Lake School Ordered to Close by Kelly Leavitt

The Mentone community has been deeply shaken by the news that the DeKalb County Board of Education has voted to close the town's historic elementary school at the close of this school year. The recommendation was made by Superintendent Dr. Jason Barnett and approved by a unanimous vote by board members at a meeting on Thursday, February 18.

On February 11, Dr. Barnett made an unannounced visit to the school and told teachers and staff that he felt the vote to close was certain to pass. A meeting was scheduled for community discussion at Moon Lake Elementary School on February 16, but due to bad weather it was postponed until the 18th, when a few people were invited to speak at the board's work session in advance of the formal session when the vote took place.

The sudden news quickly spread through the Mentone community. Closure of the beloved school has been threatened many times in the past, but the strength of community support has always been such that the school has been allowed to remain open. Dr. Barnett cited low enrollment and a sizable debt of the lunchroom's Child Nutrition Program as the primary reasons for the closure.



Drawing of the historic Moon Lake Elementary School by former Moon Lake parent Cheryl King Keefer

At the meeting on the 18th, Mary Lance, Moon Lake's principal since 2017, was the first to speak on behalf of the school. "The parental and community support for Moon Lake Elementary is phenomenal," said Mrs. Lance. "It's the most support I've seen anywhere in DeKalb County. I've worked all over the county and I've never seen the support a school like Moon Lake has."

Following Mrs. Lance's emotional statements, Moon Lake parent and PTO member Jessica Harper-Brown spoke, explaining in some detail her reasons for driving her son each day eight miles from their

through the years:

"In front of Moon Lake Elementary School, a sprawling oak tree stands in the center of the school's playground, marking the seasons with elaborate color and shade. This is Moon Lake's most visible landmark, reflected in the school's motto 'Firmly planted, forward moving.' The site and the slogan weave together the contrasting qualities of Moon Lake's longstanding strength and stability and its constant progress toward new possibilities.

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Golf Tournament**
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Miss Rhododendron
(Virtual) *Pageant*
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THE GROUNDHOG

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MARCH CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Paula Easter, Kat Griffith, Sharon Habin, Rob Hammond,
Lynn Hixon, Mark Hoffman, Mary MacMichael,
Emily McCamy, Anne McLeod, Holley Midgley,
Rhea Pirch, Jay Robbins, Angie Shugart,
Ken Trowbridge, Sarah Wilcox
Birthday calendar maintained by Kayla Worthey

Contact *The Groundhog*

groundhognews@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 387, Mentone, AL 35984
(256) 289-2002

Contact MAPA

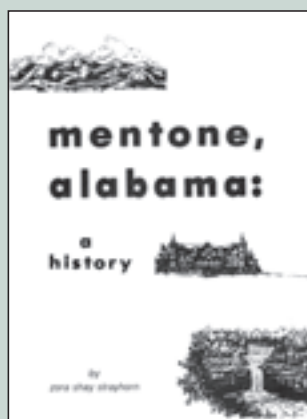
mapamentone.com
mapamentone@gmail.com
P.O. Box 50, Mentone, AL 35984

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Groundhog wood cut courtesy of Meg Justice

Do you have a story idea?
We welcome contributions!
Email groundhognews@yahoo.com



**Learn about the
History of Mentone**

**Zora Strayhorn's book,
*Mentone, Alabama: A
History*, is for sale at
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\$15; proceeds benefit
MAPA.**

Mentone Matters • by Mayor Rob Hammond

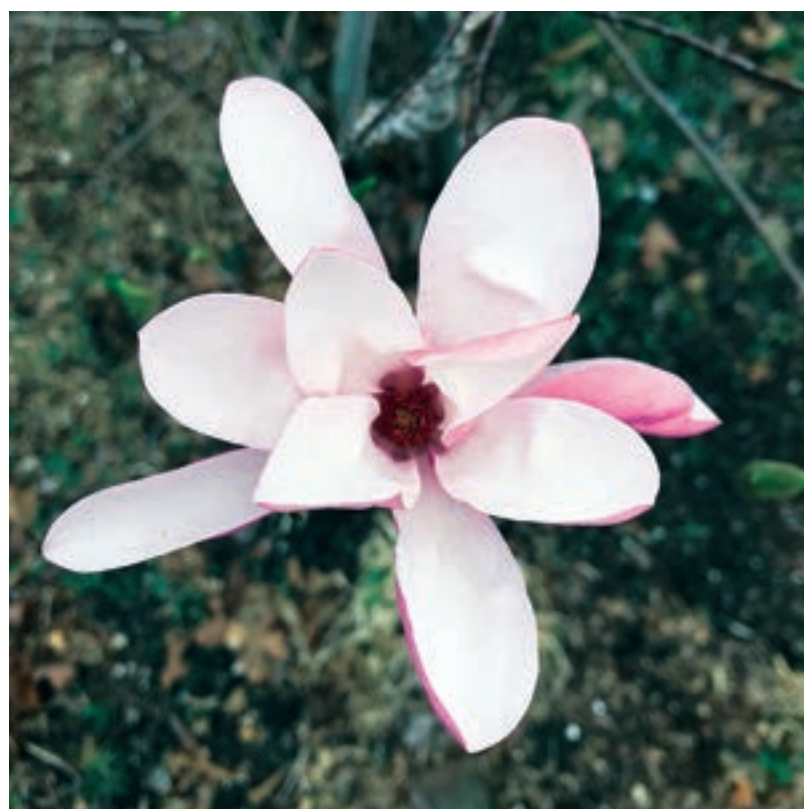
The Mentone community is feeling a significant sense of loss after learning Moon Lake Elementary School will be closed at the end of the academic year. Thanks to a dedicated faculty and staff and strong parental support, Moon Lake has been a top performing school. Moon Lake has always enjoyed tremendous community support.

The annual MERF auction of student art/Taste of Mentone was a fun community event raising thousands to support programs at the school. In the years before MERF, parents raised money to support the school at the annual Harvest Festival, and they have continued to do so.

In early March, I will meet with Dr. Barnett. Hopefully the town and the DeKalb County School Board can work together so the school buildings and campus can be preserved, and Moon Lake can continue to serve as a community center with programs for all ages. There are many possibilities. Several people have already reached out to Bill Berry with ideas.



On February 22, San and I had our first doses of the Moderna Covid 19 vaccine. The next day I experienced some soreness at the injection site and was a little lethargic—I have felt great since. I was impressed by the organization and professionalism of the staff of the DeKalb County Health Department. They could not have been nicer or more professional.



Letter from the Editor

Spring is on its way, finally. The days since last spring have brought many challenges in so many areas—health, financial, and even political. This year's spring season will likely feel just a bit more hopeful than in years past; such is often the case after facing great travail.

I am dearly looking forward to making a trip to The Pocket in a few weeks, when the spring wildflowers will be at their peak along the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail on Pigeon Mountain. If I'm fortunate, I'll be able to visit more than once, since each week different flowers make their appearance. If you've never experienced the joys of The Pocket, I encourage you to make a visit. It's always a refreshing day for me to hike with friends to the end of the trail and sit by the waterfall with a picnic lunch. It feels like food for my soul.

With so many challenges over the past year, we can look to the qualities of nature and community to sooth ourselves. Read about a new walking group on page 27, a hike to DeSoto State Park's waterfalls on page 23, and Mentone's annual community clean-up on page 11. All are great, free ways to rejuvenate our bodies and our land.

Many people have felt great sadness with the news of the closing of Moon Lake Elementary School. The closure will provide the opportunity for something new, even if that "something" remains unknown at this time. It's my personal hope that the community and its children will continue to be served and celebrated by whatever takes place of the school.

I wish you all an absolutely beautiful spring season! —*Kelly*



MAPA News by Mark Hoffman

Hello Mentonians and friends of Mentone. MAPA is grateful to be able to share another month of our wonderful small town publication, *The Groundhog*. We are looking forward to some sense of normalcy returning to our town and especially reinstating festivals. This past year has been a challenging time for many of us and most everyone has been faced with uncertainty while making decisions. I feel it is safe to assume most everyone misses the festivals! Sadly, we had to cancel the Rhododendron Festival this year. Our decision had to be made several months ago when there was still much uncertainty and cases were spiking. We start the festival planning months before the actual festival and at that time we could not feel safe to guarantee we could "bring it on" without unnecessarily risking the safety of the volunteers, artists, vendors, visitors and residents. Rest assured that the festivals are NOT going away—and we will do our best to make them better than ever in the future when they can safely be held. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, ideas or how you can contribute to helping with the festivals. We are very grateful for the hard work many in the community have contributed in the past because it takes great care and time to volunteer the hours to create the magic of the festivals. Please reach out and know your comments will be shared with the entire board who truly cares and are sensitive to preserve the culture of Mentone. Also please reach out if you know a community organization in need of help or ways that MAPA can contribute to protect and preserve Mentone and continue to fulfill our mission. Muchas Gracias! Until next time, you can always reach me at mhoffmanatty@yahoo.com.

Mark Hoffman is the president of the Mentone Area Preservation Association.

Miss Rhododendron (Virtual) Pageant

MAPA's 2021 Rhododendron Festival will not be held, however the Miss Rhododendron Pageant High School Senior division will be held as it was last spring online so that everyone can be safe in their own home. Entrants will be interviewed by three judges via Zoom on Thursday, May 6.

"The interview process should be treated as if it were an interview for education and employment opportunities, which is often done online these days," said MAPA Event Organizer Sharon Habin. This will be a gown-free pageant, but entrants are expected to dress for the interview in a professional, appropriate manner. Each entrant will be also required to submit a paper, short video, or some type of creative expression, showing/telling how she is learning to adjust to the changes the coronavirus pandemic has made to her everyday life, of school, family and friends.

The winner will receive a crown and sash. Alternates will receive a medallion.

Miss Rhododendron will be awarded a one-year scholarship to Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC admission requirements apply.) To be crowned Miss

Rhododendron, the contestant must be able to use the scholarship as described below:

The Miss Rhododendron scholarship to Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) is a one-year scholarship covering full-time tuition and fees for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. The winner must have a minimum 2.5 GPA and must be a senior in high school to utilize the scholarship. The winner must enroll full-time (12 semester credit hours) in the Fall and Spring to receive the scholarship. In-state contestants are eligible, as are those who are residents of the Georgia counties of Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Floyd, Gordon, Hardison, Polk, Walker, and Whitfield, and Tennessee counties of Franklin, Hamilton, Lincoln and Marion. The scholarship can only be awarded to the winner.

MAPA is very grateful to NACC for offering this generous scholarship.

More details and applications are available online at mapamentone.com/2021-miss-rhododendron. The application deadline is Thursday, April 29, at 5 p.m. The creative submission is due on Monday, May 3.

Join MAPA Today

Help us preserve Mentone's history and impact its future.

The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) is dedicated to preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone area.

One of MAPA's key missions is supporting local organizations and projects which seek to improve the quality of life in Mentone. Financial grants are made possible through MAPA

memberships, donations, sponsorships, *Groundhog* advertising and subscriptions, and by hosting annual spring and fall festivals which feature handmade arts and crafts and live music.

Individuals \$20/year • Couples \$30/year
Your membership includes a complimentary subscription to *The Groundhog*.

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Or mail your check to MAPA, P. O. Box 50, Mentone, AL 35984. Be sure to include your name(s), address, phone, and email address.

MAPA was organized in 1982. It is chartered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

👉 Calling All Golfers! 👈

Enjoy a spring day on Lookout Mountain playing in
MAPA's Spring Charity Golf Tournament at Lil Mole Run Golf Course.

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All proceeds go towards benefitting area non-profit organizations and emergency responders through financial grants.



Sponsorships are available for MAPA's Spring Charity Golf Tournament.

mapamentone.com/golf-sponsors

The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit-organization.

Moon Lake School (continued from page 1)

"Established 110 years ago on land donated by local leader Ed Mason, Moon Lake's dynamic history can be seen in a timeline created for its hundredth anniversary 10 years ago.

"Like the little engine that could, Moon Lake has always punched above its weight thanks in large part to the physical, financial, and moral support of its community. The school survived a devastating fire in the 1920s and was reconstructed in three stages during the Great Depression by local men. It withstood decades of rumors of threatened closure, which simply strengthened the can-do spirit of its students, teachers, and supporters.

"In 1965—when I was a second-grader at Moon Lake—the *Birmingham News* published an article titled 'Country school's last stand' on its second front page, lamenting the school's challenges and praising its successes. In the first column the writer reported that 'Mentone's citizenry is determined to keep their school, which for several years has been threatened by consolidation with Valley Head—a larger school just down the road.' She went on to say, 'The school board has pledged not to consolidate Moon Lake with Valley Head—on condition the Mentone community keeps the building in good shape and the principal keeps school finances in order.' Across the decades, the people and principal of Moon Lake Elementary School have kept their part of the bargain.

"The local Garden Club, Boy Scout Troop, DeSoto State Park, and the Mentone Area Preservation Association, among many other groups, have contributed enormously. The Community Library has provided creative programs and abundant resources. Mentone Educational Resources Foundation—known as MERF—has provided tutoring, field trips, professional development, and a teacher of art, music, and Spanish. The PTO has been the school's backbone and lifeblood through thick and thin. Moon Lake is truly a shining example of collective effort.



Dr. Bill Berry

"Moon Lake's test scores have always been among the highest in the county, and it has historically produced the majority of valedictorians and salutatorians of Valley Head High School—and even one of each at Fort Payne High School.

This record of achievement should be rewarded, not refuted. There are qualities found in a small school that are soon lost in a larger, less intimate setting.

"Ten years ago, in 2011, Moon Lake's then-PTO president Samantha Perrydore appeared before this body—the DeKalb County Board of Education—and said 'Moon Lake Elementary School has remained a constant in Mentone during its 100-year history. While its small size may be seen by some as a

negative, in reality it is a positive that promotes a spirit of family and unity—a place where children are nurtured, and parents are valued. Individualization isn't just a catchphrase at Moon Lake,' she added, 'it's an everyday reality. Funding comes and goes—today's financial crisis cycles into tomorrow's financial surplus.'

"Eighty years earlier, Ralph Libby, who was a leading citizen of Mentone several decades after Ed Mason, handwrote in his journal—dated December 4, 1931—"This P.M. we all went over to the meeting at Moon Lake School to devise some way to keep the school going on. Ernest Shigley had charge of the meeting and the patrons made up \$116 which, with the \$300 special

school tax, the teachers—Professor Adams, Miss Croley, and Miss Johnson—will get. Will keep them going three months after Christmas. I put in \$5.' Five dollars may not sound like much, but in today's dollars Ralph Libby's gift translates to \$81, and the total collected at the school that day translates to \$1,877 in today's dollars. And that was done at the height of the Great Depression!

"It is through such proven support as the gift of land by Ed Mason in 1911, the gift of \$5 by Ralph Libby in 1931, and the words of praise by Samantha Perrydore in 2011 that have allowed Moon Lake Elementary School to survive and to thrive. It would be a shame to see this support – and the support of countless others—tossed aside by the current conditions that will surely change with time and effort.

"As the seasons of color and shade come and go, the solitary oak stands as silent sentinel, witnessing the progress of students who pass through Moon Lake Elementary School and the growth of educational opportunities available to all the people of Mentone. Your support as the DeKalb County Board of Education can make possible the continuation of this exemplary school's rich legacy of enriching the living and learning of Mentone—and of DeKalb County."

The next speaker was Sarah Wilcox. As executive director of the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation (MERF), she has felt profoundly affected by the news of the school's closing. For 27 years, MERF has worked closely with Moon Lake School to provide enrichment and support for the school's students. "I've had a lot of community members call me in the last week to say, 'Please speak for us.' I do

speak for all of them to say that it is so important for our school to continue. We will do whatever needs to be done. That has been proven through the years."

She explained that in May 2019, the most recent time when school closure was rumored, she and a group of four others were assured by Dr. Barnett that if the issue were to arise again, ample time would be given to school leadership and the community would be allowed to be given the chance to once again rise to the challenge. She said he promised to supply financial numbers and enrollment benchmarks the school could start working toward and that a community meeting would be scheduled.

When Sarah followed up with Dr. Barnett, he explained that he said he



There was a strong show of support for Moon Lake School at the BOE meeting.

(continued on page 6)

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L to R: Molly Maniford serves as groundskeeper and "jack of all trades." Molly is the granddaughter of Butch Maniford, who built Lil Mole Run in 1990. Darlene Shore is the co-owner with her partner Tommy Roberts. Lisa Thacker is the general manager. Lisa owned Indian Ridge Golf Club in Adairsville, GA, for 10 years.

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Moon Lake School (continued from page 4)

would get back to her. "I believed that. I kept believing that. I told everyone who asked what's going to happen with the school that Dr. Barnett and the crew that we met with said they'll get back with us, and that we'd have a community meeting. I have not gotten anything back about how we could work to solve this problem. We have a community that really will try to solve the problem, if money is the issue. I don't know if it's a fear that if you give us a benchmark, we're going to meet it. Because we probably will. I hope that we can get some benchmarks before we close."

Marsha Merrell also spoke. She attended Moon Lake School as a child and is a current board member of MERF. "I know that there's a creative way that Moon Lake can go on. Why not let Moon Lake School become the elementary school for our service area? Make Valley Head a middle school and a high school," she proposed. Valley Head School currently serves grades pre-K-12. "Let Mentone and Moon Lake do what we do best," Marsha continued, "and that is take young children and educate them, nurture them, give them the best possible start that any child could possibly have to function in this world, to reach out and see things they wouldn't be able to see and do things they wouldn't be able to do—because Mentone is willing to do that. Think outside the box, just as you've had to this school year." This suggestion drew a great round of applause from the audience, which included many Moon Lake families and supporters.

After a break, the board convened for its regular meeting, when the vote to close was made without any further discussion among the board about the possibility of keeping the school open.

Sadness and frustration, anger and disbelief, resignation and understanding—all have been expressed by local residents. Moon Lake School has educated many generations of Mentone's children; it is perhaps the main thread of the fabric of the community. The people of Mentone have unwaveringly stood by the school for 110 years.

In the earliest years of the school, Frank Shigley made oyster stew, which he kept hot on a pot belly stove in the schoolhouse and sold by the bowl in order to pay the teacher. He was also known for selling pancakes to raise funds for teachers' salaries. The stories are seemingly endless, and we plan to print some of those stories in future issues.

The school staff is committed to making these last three months of the school year as enjoyable as possible for the students. Principal Lance is organizing a series of celebration days on each Friday until the end of school, with field trips and other special activities that will be based on weekly themes. These activities will be funded with money the school has raised in the past. Beginning March 1, a student of the day will be named, so each child can be celebrated before the end of the year.

A school-wide celebration is being planned for May and Dr. Bill Berry has graciously agreed to serve as the guest editor of the school's final yearbook. At this point, it is unknown what will become of the school buildings, including the library. Answers will likely come over the coming weeks and months.

The end of a powerful 110-year history will soon arrive. Memories will become more bittersweet, as well as important. If you attended Moon Lake School and would like to share your memories for a future issue of *The Groundhog*, please email groundhognews@yahoo.com. Each issue is archived for posterity, so your story will help mark the history of the school for years to come. If you have any questions, send us an email or call 256-289-2002.



Editor's Note: Have you ever wondered about the name "Moon Lake"? Many people don't know that there is an actual lake of the same name across the street to the west from Moon Lake School. Holley Midgley explains some of the property's history. Photo credit: Charlie Stone, Blue Sky Photography

A Brief History of Moon Lake by Holley Midgley

People familiar with Mentone's history may recall the names of John and Ed Mason. John came to Mentone in the 1870s, and began developing land starting at the brow and moving inland, including the property he named Moon Lake. Located approximately across Highway 117 from Camp Skyline, and along about a half-mile of the eastern bank of the Little River, the property contained an 8-acre lake, an 1880s-era grist mill, and the 2-1/2 story home of Mr. Mason and later his son Ed. Also adjacent to the property was the famous covered bridge over the river, built around 1880 by local citizens using materials furnished by the Masons. It collapsed in 1945. For many years, the Masons hosted local residents at Fourth of July picnics, horse races around the lake, and swimming in the lake and the river. One turn-of-the-century

flyer invited folks to come and enjoy jumping off the 100' diving board (although since the shallow lake's deepest point is only about 12', this seems a little unlikely, to say the least).

Beginning in the second decade of the 1900s, Ms. Martha Berry, founder of Rome, Georgia's Berry College, began buying acreage in the area, and eventually acquired the Moon Lake property. Ms. Berry built a large log and stone home at the lake in 1938. When she died in 1942, the property fell to her heirs, and in 1945 it was acquired by five businessmen from Gadsden and their families; it was incorporated as the private Moon Lake Club. Over the years, a total of five additional homes were built. Most of the homes are still owned by the descendants of the original five families. It is not open to the public.

Video of the DeKalb County Board of Education public hearing on February 18 can be seen here, thanks to Southern Torch: bit.ly/MLES-BOE-hearing. The board's vote in favor of closure, followed by comments by Superintendent Dr. Barnett and board members can be seen at the 20:20 mark at bit.ly/BOE-vote.



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SENIOR HEALTH

Medicare Coverage of Behavioral Health Services
by Lynn Hixon

Behavioral health care are services and programs intended to help diagnose and treat both mental health illnesses and addiction-related issues. A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, or mood. Examples of addiction-related issues are alcoholism and opioid use disorder. Behavioral health conditions are typically not the result of any single event or circumstance. Rather, they tend to be complicated conditions involving multiple factors.

Medicare Part A covers inpatient mental health services that you receive in either a distinct unit in a hospital that only treats mental health, or a general hospital. Medicare covers up to 190 days of inpatient care in your lifetime.

The Part A deductible, \$1,484 each benefit period, is a benefit period that begins the day you start getting inpatient care and ends when you have not received inpatient hospital or skilled nursing facility care for 60 days in a row.

If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, contact your plan to find in-network hospitals and learn about costs.

Medicare Part B covers outpatient mental health services, such as:

- Individual and group therapy
- Activity therapies such as art therapy
- Partial hospitalization programs
- Annual depression screenings

In order for Original Medicare to cover these services, it is important to see a provider who is Medicare-certified and takes assignment. If you have any questions please call Lynn Hixon, your SHIP Coordinator at the DeKalb County Council on Aging, at 256-845-8590.

Community Calendar

Mentone Town Council meets the 2nd Tuesday every month at 5pm at 5607 AL Hwy 117, across from Town Hall..

Valley Head Town Council meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday at 6pm at Valley Head Town Hall.

Hammondville Town Council meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday at 6pm at Hammondville Town Hall.

DeSoto Rescue Squad meets the 1st Saturday of the month at 9am at the MERF house in Mentone.

The North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District Board meets the 3rd Monday of every month at 7pm.

FREE FOOD for eligible persons and families. Wednesdays, 9-11am. New applicants are welcome during these hours. Joint effort between St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church (Community Outreach Ministry) and the Food Bank of North Alabama.

Ryleigh's Closet is a clothing closet that provides men's, women's, and children's clothing to those in need on 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 4-7pm. Mentone Community Church, 90 Summerville Rd. 256-634-4210.

Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 14. Remember to turn your clocks back!



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Rhododendron Garden Club by Rhea Pirch



It was a pleasure seeing the familiar faces of the Rhododendron Garden Club while we met via Zoom on Tuesday, February 9, at 1:00. Ten members were present for the abbreviated meeting and presentation on spring pruning, given by Rhonda Britton, Regional Extension Agent from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES).

Before the program started, Martha Wood (Horticulture

Chairperson) reminded us that the National Garden Club is providing classes via Zoom, making it easier to attend. Courses of study include environmental, flower show design, gardening, and landscape design. Finishing each course of four classes qualifies you to become a consultant in that area. The classes are open to all, but free to National Garden Club members. Further information can be found on their website, gardenclub.org.

Club President Marsha Merrell filled in for Environmental Chairperson Jan Wilkinson to give the environmental report. Sadly, there's been an upswing in the collapse of honeybee colonies again due to heavy use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Marsha urged us to plant plenty of native pollinators this spring to help save the honeybees. If your concern extends past growing pollinators, check out how to sponsor a hive through the Bee Conservancy, which places honeybee hives across the U.S. and Canada. More information on this program can be found their website, thebeeconservancy.org/sponsor-a-hive-overview.

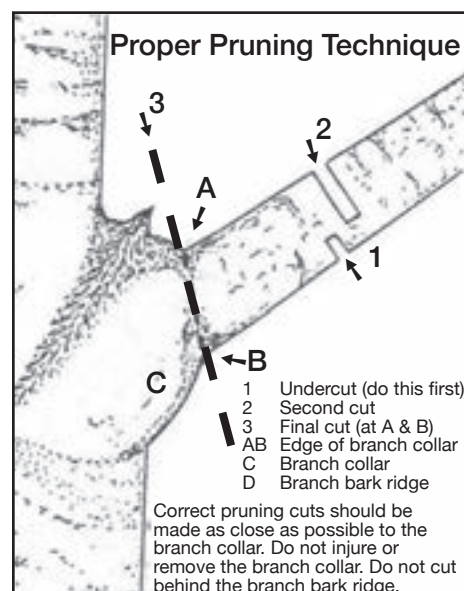
The presentation got underway as Rhonda Britton introduced herself and started her program by answering the question, "Why prune?" Pruning is about working with the plant's natural growth pattern. It improves the appearance of your trees and shrubs and keeps them healthy. This means getting rid of the dead and dying limbs, sporadic suckers and those wild tufts that like to sprout from shrubs. Pruning also encourages flower growth and helps provide better air circulation for fruit trees.

Rhonda continued by describing the pruning tools she likes to have on hand,

specifically a hand pruner, lopper, pruning saw, and a pole saw.

Hand pruners are designed to cut smaller stems and branches up to 3/4" to an inch in diameter. They're commonly used to cut off flower heads, fruit and vegetables, and for nipping off the wild tufts on shrubs. A set of high-quality pruners will have the ability to change blades and springs. They do run a little higher in price, but last much longer.

Loppers are great for limbs and stems that are up to two inches in diameter, and give you a longer reach for the higher limbs. A bypass lopper works like a scissors in that it has two blades that pass by each other, giving the cleanest and best cut, especially on live wood.



A pruning saw and pole saw are for those bigger cuts, above two inches in diameter. A pruning saw has a blade ranging from 10 to 16 inches long. They can be carried in a sheath, or conveniently folded up. The manual pole saw has a longer handle for those higher reaches and comes with a regular saw blade. Electric or gas pole saws have a chainsaw attachment on a pole with an action trigger, making cutting easier.

Rhonda emphasized the importance of keeping garden tools clean. Always thoroughly clean your tools with soap and water when you're done using them. She recommended carrying some rubbing alcohol and a cloth to wipe off the blades of your tools between cuts, to preserve

them and prevent carrying diseases from one plant to another. She also gave a tip on an easy way to keep tools clean and sharp: Simply fill a bucket with sand and about two cups of vegetable oil. Mix it up well, then plunge the blades of the tools into the mix. The gritty sand will sharpen and polish the tool while removing rust and dirt, and the oil will cover the blade with a protective layer that prevents rust.

When should you prune? Deciduous trees and shrubs are best pruned in late winter or early spring, just before their dormant period ends. The same is true for trees and shrubs that flower in the summer, like crepe myrtle or fruit trees. Spring flowering shrubs and trees should be pruned immediately after the flowers fade.

Some of these include lilacs, weigela, azalea, and beautybush.

Rhonda then described how to prune dead branches from trees. It's important to avoid ripping the bark off trees by shortening the branch to a stub before cutting it off at the branch collar. Use a sharp pruning saw and make three cuts as described here:

Step one: About a foot from the branch collar, make a cut from the underside, about a third of the way through.

Step two: About an inch further out from the first cut, cut through the top until the branch rips off. The branch should split cleanly between the two cuts.

Step three: Make the final cut by placing the saw beside the branch bark ridge and cutting downward just outside the branch collar. If the branch angle is very narrow, cut upward from the bottom to avoid cutting into the branch collar.

Rhonda ended her presentation by mentioning the practice of pollarding, which is a technique where all the branches of a tree are cut back to within a few feet of the crown of the tree. This method produces a ball-shaped canopy and is most often used to save space. You might see this method used when there is limited space for mature trees, like along a city street.

The meeting ended with a reminder that we will meet at the end of March outside the MERF House to plant some rhododendrons. The exact date is yet to be determined but will be announced as soon as it is set.

The mission of the Rhododendron Garden Club is "To promote the preservation and enhance the beauty of the Mentone area." Follow our Facebook page for tips on gardening and learning opportunities, and come join us! For more information, contact us through our Facebook page or at our email address, rhododendrongardenclub@gmail.com.

Rhea Pirch is the secretary for the Rhododendron Garden Club.

MAPA's Spring Charity Golf Tournament

Friday, April 23 RAIN DATE APRIL 30

Lil' Mole Run • Mentone, Alabama

Tee Off 8 a.m. Central Time

\$300 Foursome • \$75 Person UNTIL 4/8

\$340 Foursome • \$85 Person AFTER 4/8

Includes 18 holes of golf | Cart | Lunch

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Space is limited, so register early!



Register at mapamentone.com/golf

256.289.2002

Sponsorships available at mapamentone.com/golf-sponsors

Alabama Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

by Emily McCamy



It is TIME to apply for Farmers Market Vouchers! These vouchers are for low-income Alabama residents ages 60 and up that meet the income guidelines. Each person 60 and older in the household that qualifies, can register for a voucher booklet.

Voucher booklets include \$6 coupons to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs from farmers who display the "Farmers Market Nutrition Program" sign. They can only be used between April 15 and November 15, 2021.

No one is "entitled" to these Farmers Market Vouchers. They are first-come, first-served to whomever registers on the website. You can call us at 256-845-

8590 to register for you OR you can register yourself online at bit.ly/2YLo3re. Those who obtain them will receive them in the mail before June 1.

To qualify, you must be an Alabama resident age 60 or older the day of your application AND qualify within the income levels listed below (income before taxes): \$1,756 monthly for a household of 1; \$2,371 monthly for a household of 2; \$2,987 monthly for a household of 3; \$3,604 monthly for a household of 4; \$4,219 monthly for a household of 5.

Emily McCamy is the director of DeKalb County Transportation and Council on Aging.

It's Application Time for College Scholarships!

by Kat Griffith

What a different world our high school seniors are facing than some of their older siblings, aunts and uncles, parents, and grandparents! Covid lingers on and provides them with a constant question mark.

St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church wants the high school seniors in the immediate area surrounding Mentone to know about a scholarship opportunity that can help toward the fulfillment of an uncertain dream.

Every year, students apply and often receive financial help from the Vann McCary Scholarship Fund. Applications will be available through the church office at St. Joseph's-on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church in Mentone, or through the Guidance Counselor at Valley Head High School, starting March 15, 2021. If you are a reapplying applicant, a form will be automatically mailed to you.

Printable forms are available on the St. Joseph's website: stjom.dioala.org. Click under Outreach then under Scholarships. You will see three forms to download and print. All are necessary to the application process:

- Guidelines
- Family Finance Form
- Application

The scholarship is available for four years, yet all students must submit new applications for review and all guidelines must be met. The deadline for submitting applications is May 1, 2021. If you have questions or need more information, you can call the church at 256-634-4476 (Monday–Thursday 9 a.m.–2 p.m.), or Scholarship Chairperson Kat Griffith at 256-418-0092.



Community
SEED SWAP
Saturday, March 20
10 a.m. – 11:30 pm

Moon Lake Community Library will celebrate spring with a community seed swap in the library parking lot on Saturday, March 20, from 10 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. This informal gathering will allow folks to swap seeds with each other. Tables will be set up in the parking lot. Feel free to bring any seed you'd like to offer, and pick up any seed you might need. (If you are offering seed, please have them available for display by 10 a.m.) Although the event will be held outside, we do request that everyone wear face masks. Hand sanitizer will be available. Email moonlakecommunitylibrary@yahoo.com with any questions.

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Mentone Fire Department News

by Ken Trowbridge

Wes Pullen and Ken Trowbridge from North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District (Mentone Fire) recently attended an all-day class in Fort Payne on Traffic Incident Management presented by the Alabama Department of Transportation. The material covered provided guidance to First Responders on best practices for dealing with traffic accidents. Members of several fire departments, emergency medical services, highway patrol and police departments were in attendance. The goal of the class was to assist these various responders in understanding each others' roles and responsibilities, and to safely manage traffic control while maintaining safety among themselves. Topics included setting up a chain of command at accident scenes, setting up warnings to alert oncoming traffic to accidents, positioning of emergency vehicles for safety, traffic control to reduce congestion, and the types of safety equipment and personal protection needed for personnel. This information was valuable to our fire department as managing traffic due to accidents or fires is a frequent job our volunteers are called upon to do.

Fireman of the Year Wes Pullen



Wes Pullen was voted to be Fireman of the Year 2021 by the North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District (NLMFPD). Wes started his career in December of 1976 in emergency service and progressed to paramedic. He started in Fire Service in 1987 and worked with Mountain Brook Fire Department, where he retired in 2014. During that time, he was promoted to Lieutenant and also was Fireman of the Year in 1994.

Wes has several certificates from the Alabama Fire College. He is now professionally a Fire Investigator and is the Chairperson of the Arson Task Force committee of the DeKalb County of Association of Fire Departments. He has investigated various fires in the county.

Wes lives locally with his lovely wife, Helen. They recently became proud grandparents. In 2015, he joined the NLMFPD as a volunteer in 2015, and he now serves as the lead instructor for the Department. He is truly an asset to the Department.

Thanks to Mentone's V♥lunteer Firemen 2021

Joe Lee

Kaleb McMunn

Will Blackburn

Gene McKee

Mitch Gregory

Ken Trowbridge

Wes Pullen

David Tucker

Gary Smith

Nathan Lawton

Dustin Burt

Eli Durham

Jimmy Worthy (honorary)

John Chambers

Toby Manifold

Cameron Noisworthy

Steve Hartline

Ben Sudberry

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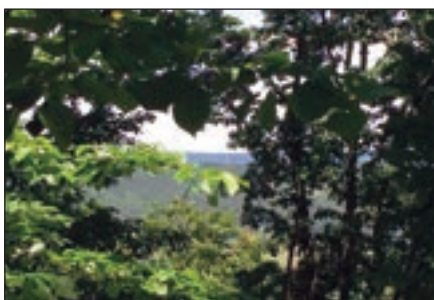
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Fort Payne, AL 35967 #904365

DeSoto Bluffs - West Brow of Lookout Mtn. Near DeSoto State Park. Panoramic View for miles on your back porch from this most unique 2.5 acres. Only \$100,000.

COUNTY ROAD 166
Fort Payne, AL 35967 #808434

A view from Lookout Mountain with owner financing available! Wooded Bluff lot with 1.3 acres, paved road frontage, city water and only \$30,000.

4621 CITADEL ROCK ROAD
Fort Payne, AL 35967 #600562

DeSoto Bluffs - Citadel Rock Road - Near DeSoto State Park - 1.07 Acre wooded tract, perfect for cabin. Across the road from the brow and Only \$17,500.



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MENTONE AREA ANNUAL
Community
CLEAN UP and COOKOUT
 VOLUNTEERS CALL LYLE NICELY 256-996-0169

Mentone Community Clean-up
 by Mary MacMichael

Mentone's annual Community Clean-up will be held on Saturday, March 27. This event has been organized by resident Lyle Nicely and supported by community members and businesses since 2002.

*Clean up Clean up Everybody Everywhere
 Clean up Clean up Everybody Do your share*

Know who said that? Barney...to little children who were learning to pick up after themselves after making a mess. Some folks passing through Mentone have forgotten how to clean up after themselves and have left a mess for others. Have you noticed how the beautiful area of Mentone has been marred with trash alongside the road? How it has blown into the woods, wrapped around the trees or drifted down our

streams? It has turned a pleasant walking experience into an aggravation and irritation—the exact opposite of what a walk in the woods is all about. Yes, the amount of litter is pretty bad right now.

Since 2002, Lyle Nicely has been the organizer of the Mentone Clean Up Day, when the entire Mentone community is invited to make Mentone beautiful again.

On Saturday, March 27, come to the Town Square (next to the Mentone Inn) at 9 a.m. Dress in long pants, closed toed shoes or boots, long sleeves, gloves, and a mask. Briars are not friendly, so dress accordingly! Lyle will have disposable gloves, bags, litter grabbers (such fun—maybe bring your own!) and will direct folks to locations already earmarked for trash pickup. Afterwards, everyone will meet at

the pavilion behind the Mentone Inn for a barbecue lunch provided at no cost to volunteers. Please feel free to bring a covered dish to share. Social distancing will be observed.

Throughout the year, many folks have done more than their fair share of picking up trash in specific areas around Mentone. Some have even adopted a road to keep clean regularly. Last year after the Clean Up Day in March, the area stayed free of debris for quite some time. The pandemic mandate of sheltering in place made it so businesses closed, restaurants and fast food establishments shut down, all sorts of jobs stopped and people stayed home until the entire country could grapple with Covid-19 and its consequences. Our area stayed quite litter-free during that earlier time. However, as things have 'opened up' the trash has increased.

Mentone Clean up Day is an event where ALL of us can cooperate and work on together. This past year has been a hard one with much uncertainty, challenging hardships, difficult conversations and at times, some inflammatory rhetoric. Coming together to solve this one issue may pave the way for handling other issues we may need to accomplish in the future!

*A wise old bird once told me, and I believe it's true,
 The world's full of different birds with
 different points of view.
 But sometimes there's a job so big,
 if we want to get it done,
 We've got to bring those birds together
 and all work as one.
 And that's cooperation.*

—Famous philosopher: Big Bird

Calling on all Mentone businesses, restaurants, families, churches, youth groups, knitters, book clubs, Scout troops, garden clubs, subdivisions! Invite a friend to come clean up with you! Let's keep Mentone beautiful! Hope to see you on Saturday, March 27.

Please contact Lyle Nicely with any questions at 256-996-0169.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WOW FACTOR! From the wrought-iron, fenced entry, to its panoramic views from over 350' of brow frontage, this 4.2-acre property has plenty of everything to WOW you. Spacious, cedar-sided cabin w/4BR/3BA; rich wood floors; great kitchen; generous back deck; walk-out basement w/views & great potential. Attached 2-car garage; detached 34x39 workshop (perhaps a future guest quarters or event building?) Half the property is fenced, & includes intriguing boulder-surrounded pond w/waterfall; fruit trees; so much more, & every feature keeps leading your eyes back to that magnificent view! \$695,000. (1155122)



LOOKOUT MTN LOG CABIN & 22 ACRES W/ STREAM. Compact, 1BR/1BA cabin is BIG on the possibilities it offers! Detached 2-car garage & small storage building; gorgeous land with nice woods & fields; stream; plenty of room for expansion! The cabin is beautifully simple in construction, yet could possibly be one of the best built, low-maintenance cabins you will find. All wood interior, practically-new appliances. A mountain playground, located just down the road from DeSoto State Park. Near the edge of the woods, there are two large, long-out-of-use, chicken houses, offering plenty of dry storage? future rental spaces? Whatever you may dream up! \$250,000 (1154959)



**.....
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NEW! TWO MENTONE BROW LOTS, A RARE OPPORTUNITY! Rare because there just aren't many left between Mentone and Desoto Park, even rarer because they have good depth to get some distance from the road, plus they extend over the brow to allow for tree trimming as necessary. Build that dream home now, enjoy beautiful mountaintop views, and top it off with spectacular sunsets. Priced at \$225,000 per lot. (1770794)

MENTONE. PLENTY OF ROOM TO ROAM! Enjoy 18.2, unrestricted, wooded acres of your very own, just minutes from downtown Mentone. Substantial, paved, county road frontage. Priced very agreeably at only \$85,000! (1152988)

NEW LISTING! GORGEOUS VIEWS & 2.2 ACRES. This Mentone brow-front property already has the major prep work done for you to begin building your dream getaway cabin or residence. Septic tank in place, driveway in place, building sites for a cabin & for a shop cleared & leveled. Incredibly priced at only \$89,000. (1775068)

46 ACRES, BARNS, PONDS & fencing. Lookout Mtn acreage, ready for whatever dream you have been considering. Privacy, peace & quiet await. Convenient to Little River Nat'l Preserve, Fort Payne, Desoto State Park, Mentone. \$220,000 (1155213)



13.34 ACRES, 3 PONDS, OLD FARM HOUSE, SHOP & VARIOUS OUTBUILDINGS. The old house needs a good bit of TLC. May not even be salvageable. Best feature is the stone fireplace. Decent little front porch, too. Ponds are thought to offer good fishing in all of them. Three wells on the property, one of which is clear, freestone water. (Public water has been run to the house). Fruit trees. There are so many possibilities for this place! We're not saying it's in A1A condition, so don't expect it. There's plenty of WORK to be done. That's why it's priced as it is. But, you're not going to find a better buy on the market right now at Mentone. \$129,900 (1155211)



How's the Real Estate Market?

If you're a buyer, looking for a place in Mentone, you are very aware there is precious little from which to choose. Properties often go under contract before appointments can be made to see them! And, with so few properties for sale, buyers are seeing prices continue to rise.

(At the time of this writing, there are only 9 residential properties on the market at Mentone, 3 of which are well over \$600,000!)

Happily, over the past few months, we've sometimes been able to match up buyers with sellers whose properties were not officially on the market. Sometimes it was just a matter of perfect timing, right place at the right time. Generally, though, it is easier to match up buyers and sellers when a property becomes available on the market.

On the other hand, maybe you've been considering selling your property. You haven't decided yet, but you'd like to at least have an idea of what it could bring on the real estate market today. Who knows?

That's where Mentone Realty, LLC can be of help. We offer a free Market Analysis to property owners. Our knowledge of the market, past sales and current listings, as well as what buyers are seeking in Mentone, better equips owners in deciding if it may be the right time to sell. Or not.

This service does not obligate you to do business with us. You won't be hounded with high-pressure spiels, or "pie in the sky" promises. But, if you're ready to sell, we will certainly work to get the job done!

Call us, or come by our log cabin office, located right in front of the Wildflower Café in downtown Mentone. We're open every day except Sunday.



LAKEFRONT CABIN. Just the right size, just the right details, just the right price, just the right time to make it your own! 2BR/2BA; all wood interior w/vaulted ceilings; beautiful built-ins for cooking & dining; granite, granite built-ins & cabinets in the cabinetry; 2-car garage/shop w/attic storage; decks w/lake views; under-house storage room; 150' frontage; small dock & owner will even throw in the aluminum boat! \$259,900 (1773282)



TRULY THE HEART OF MENTONE: the Hitching Post, rich with history & even a bit of mystery! Steeped with charm & interesting nooks, this building has potential to be most anything! Plenty of space for office/retail w/covered, stone-floored entryway. This is THE corner on the market...literally! But, there is also that magnificent, light-filled space upstairs (approx 2800 sq ft) for a studio or booths. Generous parking lot and potential for anything! \$350,000 (1143518)





River Voice by Angie Shugart

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." -Aldo Leopold

Spring will officially arrive on Little River Saturday, March 20, 2021. Blooms of ephemeral plants will begin to pop up. Mayapple, crested iris, several types of trillium, trout lilies, and woodland phlox are among some of the first glimpses into the season. These tiny, resilient flowers can be found sprouting up when the soil begins to warm and before the trees leaf out to shade the forest floor.

When plant communities are intact, there is a well-balanced ecosystem that contributes to clean water and good air quality for generations to come. While an increase in visitorship to the region highlights Lookout Mountain and its special attributes of outdoor recreation and more, it can also be detrimental if certain protections are not put in place. Studies show that the population within the tri-state region of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee will increase by nearly half a million by 2055—only 34 years from now. There are ongoing conservation efforts by several groups, including Little River Waterkeeper, who are working to educate people and preserve the integrity of this special place in the Southern Appalachians.

Our campaign to study, nominate, and designate sections of Little River into the national registry of Wild and Scenic Rivers would protect this resource for generations to come inspiring wonder, appreciation, and protection of the underwater rainforest found in our backyard. Little River is a unique and beautiful natural treasure of the great state of Alabama, and this would be a suitable recognition.

Little River adds to the amazing aquatic diversity of the southeastern United States and includes a population of the federally threatened Blue Shiner, a brightly colored fish that needs clear water for its courtship and spawning. The Kral's Water Plantain, found only in the Little River Watershed is a delicate plant species that blooms in May and survives in shallow clear waters. Impacts from unrestricted development threatens the very survival of each of the species. A Wild and Scenic designation would help provide recovery for these, as well as the many others

harbored in its clear waters.

Landowners throughout the watershed can be a part in this unprecedented effort of conservation that is taking place in our region. Simply by keeping the riverbanks and streambanks intact with vegetation will prevent sedimentation from entering Little River. Timber extraction or a developing homesites can negatively affect the health of the river that can not be reversed. Landowners can require a 20–50-foot vegetative buffer during excavation near streams and especially along the river. Conservation easements can be donated to organizations such as the GA/AL Land Trust to ensure protection of the river corridor. Only when we learn why we need to take responsibility and action will the river stay clean and pristine for our children and their children.

Angie Shugart is the executive director of Little River Waterkeeper, a 501(c)(3) water advocacy program and a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, a global clean water movement. Learn more at littleriverwaterkeeper.org. Donations are tax deductible. 215 Grand Ave. SW Fort Payne, AL 35967.

Why is Little River special to you? Stories by people who love Little River.

I grew up on the Cherokee/DeKalb County border not far from Little River. At age 5, I learned to swim in Little River and spent many summers there, at what is now Canyon Mouth Park within the National Park Service (NPS) boundary. I knew how special the river was to me but I had no idea how amazing a resource it was and how much of an impact it would have on my life and in my community.

Fast forward 20 years... My husband, Bill began working at a summer camp for boys that was built in 1938 on the East Fork of Little River where we raised our three daughters. Swimming and canoeing were our favorite pastimes as a family. In 2008, we started our own organization—One World Adventure—to give local youth the opportunity of a summer camp experience. For 10 years, we taught canoeing, fishing, rock climbing, and outdoor survival skills to thousands of children.

We were both fortunate to use our skills and love for nature to help spur nature-based tourism in the area with partners like DeSoto State Park and Little River Canyon Center. By guiding kayaking trips on Little River, we were able to teach visitors about the amazing resource and bring in sustainable tourism dollars to the area.

In 2012, we formed Little River Waterkeeper to begin monitoring water quality and the constantly changing landscape throughout the watershed. The organization now works with private landowners and other conservation groups in the region to prevent degradation, raise awareness and encourage conservation of the precious resource that we consider the life blood of our surrounding communities.

Endearing others to the natural world is a calling on my life and I'm grateful to have been placed in this special area. —Angie Shugart

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Mentone Arts & Cultural Center News

Songwriters Event Scheduled for March by Randy Grider

The Mentone Arts Center is kicking off a new series for songwriters that will be the catalyst for regular events and educational workshops.

The art gallery stage inside the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts will hold its inaugural “songwriters round” on March 10 from 6-8 p.m.

The event will spotlight three artists, Matty Croxton, Levi Abney, and a yet-to-be-named songwriter (after a presstime cancellation of an artist due to a scheduling conflict). Each will play a round of their original songs, as will featured singer-songwriter Pierce Pettis. Singer-songwriter Craig Hendricks will serve as host.

Due to Covid concerns, this kickoff event will be closed to public, but will air virtually across various platforms to be announced in the near future. Plans are to open future songwriters rounds and other events at the center to the public when it is safe to do so.

Feature guest and Mentone resident Pierce Pettis began his long career as a writer/artist at the legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studios and later as a staff songwriter for Polygram/Universal Music in Nashville. His songs have been covered by artists ranging from Garth Brooks and Dion to Joan Baez and Art Garfunkel.

“Unlike a lot of his contemporaries, singer-songwriter Pierce Pettis doesn’t belong to the ‘me generation.’ He’s more likely to sing of his surroundings than himself, and frequently draws on his Southern background for inspiration and color.” —*Washington Post*

Pettis’ fifth album for Compass Records (Nashville), “That Kind of Love” (2009), received rave reviews from XM/Sirius Satellite Radio, Paste Magazine, Performing Songwriter, American Songwriter, The (London, UK) Sunday Express, Image Quarterly . . . to name a few. More recently, “New Agrarians” —a co-effort with Kate Campbell and Tom Kimmel was released in November of 2014.



Singer-songwriter Pierce Pettis

“Father’s Son” is Pettis’ new solo project for Compass Records Group, released January of 2019.

Levi Abney is a resident of Fort Payne, who began his music career at the age of 15. He is a self-taught and experienced guitarist and songwriter. Abney has performed at many venue’s across Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee, including Tootsies Orchid Lounge on the legendary music row in Nashville.

Matty Croxton is another local talent, who is a popular draw at venues throughout the region. He has performed professionally around the Southeast as a solo performer and with his bands, Pioneer Chicken Stand and Matty and the Matadors, including special bands as tribute to Elton John, The Eagles, and the supergroup Alabama.

His 4-song original solo EP, “Southern Discomfort,” was recorded and released in 2016. Afterwards, a year-long tour followed with Trade Day Troubadours, a band with fellow singer/songwriters from his hometown, each promoting their new releases.

Event host Craig Hendricks is a touring singer-songwriter, who lives in Mentone. He is a 2020 Josie Music Award nominee, has multiple honorable mentions in American Songwriter Magazine, former wins for vocals and songwriting with Texaco Country Showdown and is a Nashville recording artist under contract with Century Records.

For updates on this and other events, please follow us on Facebook and Instagram. The gallery and gift shop are open Thursday through Monday from 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Randy Grider is executive director of the Mentone Arts & Cultural Center. He can be reached at mentoneartscenter@gmail.com or 256-674-3366.



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MERF News

[Mentone Educational Resources Foundation]

by Sarah Wilcox



My heart is heavy as I write this article. We have just learned that Moon Lake Elementary School will be closed at the end of the school year. MERF and MLES have had a synergistic relationship since MERF was founded. MERF came into being from the desires and the vision of the Moon Lake Principal (Dr. Bill Berry), two sets of parents (Marsha Hurt, Phil Hurt, Jean Corey, and John Corey), and an involved community member and owner/director of Camp DeSoto (the late Sue Henry). As many know, the 4.2 acres next to the school was purchased from the Bells with the school owning half and MERF the other half in 1993. This visionary group still believes in MERF and its mission to enrich the learning and living in Mentone. For over 26 years, MERF's location next to the school has allowed MERF to easily provide free tutoring, to grant opportunities for the children and senior citizens to interact, to bring artists in for the afternoon, to provide a remarkably successful arts program, to provide funding for teacher workshops, to publish three books that were written and illustrated by the children, and to experience educational and awesome field trips. Thank you, Bill Berry, Brenda Wisner, and Mary Lance, for allowing great learning opportunities for the children when you were the school principal. Thank you also to former and present teachers and support staff for dreaming of great ways to enrich the lives of your students. I am so thankful that we had a chance to take the entire school and personnel on the fabulous last field trip to the Alliance Theater a year ago. Thank you, Mary Lance, for working with me so well this last season of the best school in the county. Moon Lake has the most exceptional teachers and support staff! Hands down! Every time that I went to present for grants, I bragged on our involved school personnel, the inquisitive students, and the appreciative parents. It has been a pleasure to work with you all while learning and having fun.

Now do not worry, MERF will continue to support the children of this community but we do not know what that will look like at this time. Please email me any ideas that you may have as I explore opportunities and ideas. Thank you, Mentone community, for always supporting the school and MERF.

So, what is going on with senior lunches?! Cupid's elves fixed a great meal and sweets to deliver to our lunch bunch crew on Wednesday, February 10. We so miss gathering with the crew. Thanks to Paula Easter for making all the sweets and helping with delivery. And hearts of praise go to Carolyn Nail, Vicky Patrick, Dee Dee Dunkerley, Kathy McMunn,



Paula Easter is creative in the classroom and the kitchen as she made chess squares and brownie hearts for the lunch bunch crew deliveries.



Cupid elves Vicky Patrick, Paula Tally, and Carolyn Nail are getting lunches prepped for the delivery cupids to make their rounds.

Sue Schwarz, and Hazel Bickerstaff for being fun kitchen elves plating and delivering a heartwarming meal. We look forward to doing a few more meals this spring. I am working with several in our group trying to get the COVID vaccination so if you hear of a place talking appointments, please give me a call.

Rain, sleet nor snow cannot keep them away! Love seeing the Pathway to Community at the MERF house being used by many in all types of weather. Thank you to everyone for respecting social distancing and picking up after pups. When parking, please avoid the daffodils starting to come up on the edge of the lawn and be considerate of the school having access to their lunchroom. Christy Shull Ledford has started a WOW (Women Out Walking) group that is meeting at the MERF walking



May the force be with you: the cutest Jedi, CG, loves coming to MERF Moms for art and music with Ms. Paula (aka Granna)

track. Follow her updates on Facebook to see meeting days and times.

Don't you love the stories behind the pickets that Jay Robbins is gathering each month for *The Groundhog*? I look forward to reading them this month. If you want to share the story behind your picket, you can email Jay at jrobbins727@gmail.com. The fence still makes me smile and reminds me of all the great people in our community.

Sarah Wilcox is the executive director of MERF, the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is "To enrich the learning and living of the community by identifying needs and coordinating resources." If you would like to support MERF's programs, tax-deductible donations can be mailed to P.O. Box 107, Mentone, AL 35984 or contribute online at merfhouse.org. Contact Sarah at merf.mentone@gmail.com or 256-635-8193.



Thanks to Lisa Schad for this capturing this unique perspective of the Pathway to Community one of February's snowy mornings. In the foreground is the abacus which also serves as a 1/4-mile lap marker.



Moon Lake Community Library News

by Kelly Leavitt

We've done some early spring cleaning! We've taken out of circulation most of our fiction books that haven't been checked out in the last five years and added them to our sale shelves. This helps keep our collection fresh and up-to-date with books that our readers are interested in. We have hundreds of fiction books for sale, and we've reduced the sale price of hardcover former library books to \$1.

The trick, of course, is how to sell books while the library remains closed due to the pandemic. You can make an appointment to come in and browse the shelves, or wait for the first Saturday with good weather, when we plan to set up a book sale in our parking lot or at the Mentone Farmers Market. We're itching to sell some books! Keep an eye on our website or Facebook page for the notice of an outdoor sale.

In February, we held a Zoom discussion for people who love to read. It was very enjoyable to simply talk about books. Those who attended were so engaged with one another that the meeting lasted 90 minutes. Since the response was so encouraging, we'll be offering this book-lovers session every two months, so look for the next date in April's *Groundhog*.

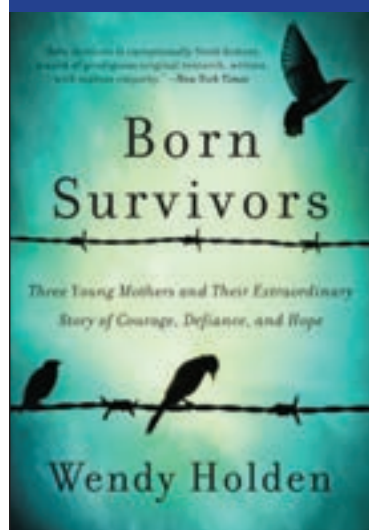
We very much look forward to the day, which we hope is soon, that the library will resume normal operations. In the meantime, we continue to offer curbside service with the ability to privately browse the shelves. Please visit moonlakelibrary.org to make your appointment or to browse our virtual book sale. Happy reading!

Kelly Leavitt is the librarian at Moon Lake Community Library.

Moon Lake Community Library has a box of hundreds of photographs taken at Moon Lake School in the past years and decades that are free for you to have (first-come, first-served). If you'd like to browse through the photos, email moonlakecommunitylibrary@yahoo.com for an appointment.



Moon Lake Book Club



Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope Tuesday, March 23 at 6:30 pm via Zoom

The Nazis murdered their husbands but concentration camp prisoners Priska, Rachel, and Anka would not let evil take their unborn children too—a remarkable true story that will appeal to readers of *The Lost* and *The Nazi Officer's Wife*. *Born Survivors* celebrates three mothers who defied death to give their children life.

Eastern Europe, 1944: Three women believe they are pregnant, but are torn from their husbands before they can be certain. Rachel is sent to Auschwitz, unaware that her husband has been shot. Priska and her husband travel there

together, but are immediately separated. Also at Auschwitz, Anka hopes in vain to be reunited with her husband. With the rest of their families gassed, these young wives are determined to hold on to all they have left—their lives, and those of their unborn babies. Having concealed their condition from infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, they are forced to work and almost starved to death, living in daily fear of their pregnancies being detected by the SS. In April 1945, as the Allies close in, the inmates are sent to Mauthausen concentration camp on a hellish seventeen-

day train journey.

On the seventieth anniversary of Mauthausen's liberation from the Nazis by American soldiers, renowned biographer Wendy Holden recounts this extraordinary story of three children united by their mothers' unbelievable—yet ultimately successful—fight for survival.

Born Survivors is available to borrow from the library. To learn how to connect to this free Zoom event, go to moonlakelibrary.org. Everyone is welcome to join the discussion!



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See page 25.

Uncertain Future for Moon Lake Library

by Holley Midgley

With the fateful decision by the DeKalb County Board of Education to close Moon Lake School, many questions remain to be answered about the future of both the school property itself and the adjacent Moon Lake School Community Library. The library's board of directors is scheduling a meeting with DeKalb County Education Superintendent Dr. Jason Barnett to see what can be done to save the facility. Dr. Barnett has expressed an interest in seeing that the school and library continue to serve Mentone, but exactly how that will work is a huge unknown.

Amazingly, before the library was created, the only non-textbooks available to students were a few volumes kept on a shelf in a janitor's closet. Many people were convinced that Mentone could and should do better, and with a lot of hard work (and fundraising) by parents and volunteers in the community, as well as significant cooperation and financial assistance from the county board of education, the dream was realized. Groundbreaking for the library, located on Highway 117 near the school, took place in 2001. Dr. Bill Berry, the Moon Lake School principal in those days, was the library's first board chairman. The facility opened in 2002, and its collection of books for children and adults has continually grown since then. Interestingly, when it was built, there were only two other dual use libraries (serving both children and adults) existing in Alabama. The hallmark of the facility has been the close relationship between the school and the library's board of directors. That relationship has worked for almost two decades.

The library has proved to be resilient even during hard financial times, not to mention the Covid

pandemic, thanks to the bountiful support of patrons, library lovers, and volunteers. What other town of less than 400 citizens do you know of that has such a facility? Our kids may go to Valley Head elementary in the future, but they continue to live here, and this is where their books are.

Meanwhile, the doors are still open, so to speak, but only for private appointments. [See the form on our website: moonlakelibrary.org]. Books and DVDs are also available for pickup at the door from our librarian, Kelly Leavitt; just go to our website to browse our collection. We will continue to offer author talks and other programs, via Zoom, for as long as we can. In the library we have shelves full of great used books for sale at ridiculously low prices, on every subject you can imagine. And there are two locations of our Tiny Libraries—at the country store at DeSoto State Park and in front of the Mentone post office—where you can pick up free books, or even donate a book. As pandemic conditions continue to improve, we will renew our used book sales at festivals, the Farmers Market, and pop-up locations around town. It's a fundraising mechanism that is important to the library's success.

The devil is in the details, and right now those details are

surrounded by question marks. At this point all our board of directors knows for sure is that we want to do what it takes to find a way to ensure that the library survives and continues to serve and strengthen our community. What we also know is that in order for that to happen, we will need the generous support of our citizens, our town government, and the county school board. Finally, dust off your checkbooks: we're gonna need your financial contributions if we are going to continue to operate. Stand by for further details, and for information about how you can help keep the dream alive.

Holley Midgley is the chairman of the Moon Lake Community Library board.



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Miss Rhododendron Pageant



Presented by Mentone Area Preservation Association

Thursday, May 6, 2020

via Zoom

Miss Rhododendron will win a One-year Scholarship to Northeast Alabama Community College
(NACC admission requirements apply)

For details, please see page 3.

Mentone Area Church Directory

Mentone, Alabama

Cove Road Baptist Church invites everyone in the Mentone and Cloudland Communities to services—Sunday School 10am (GA time) Morning Worship 11am (GA time), Wednesday Prayer Meeting & Bible Study 5:30pm (GA time). Bro. Brian Keith is the pastor. 2415 County Road 631.

Howard's Chapel (Church in the Rock) has regular services at 10am each Sunday. You are invited to attend these services or visit the church at other times. Casual dress is always acceptable. County Road 617.

Mentone Church of God of Prophecy has Sunday School at 10am, with Worship at 11am. Evening services begin at 5:30pm on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Bro. Whitney Smith invites everyone to attend. AL Hwy 117 (across from Mentone Post Office).

Mentone Community Church invites you to Crosswalk Sunday School (K through Adult) 9:15am, Adult Worship Service 10:30am, JC Kids Worship Service 10:30am. Pastor Tim Miller. Van Ministry for Children pick-up/take home, ages K-12, for all surrounding areas 8:15am (please call Donna Bunn 706-398-0720). Wednesday small group study 6:30pm. 90 Summerville Rd. 256-634-4210.

Mentone United Methodist Church invites you to come and worship with us. Each Sunday our worship service is held at 11am and is led by Rev. Heidi C. Bender. Sunday School is at 9:30am. The service of Holy Communion is held the first Sunday of each month and fifth Sundays are a service of music. 415 Cutler Avenue. 256-634-8006.

Moon Lake Baptist Church is a growing community of believers from various walks of life who endeavor to share the light, life, and love of Jesus with all we meet. We gather together for practical Bible study at 10am on Sunday. You can count on an encouraging and life-engaging message at 11am each Sunday. At 6pm, on Sunday, we enjoy a time of praying together. On Wednesdays at 6pm, we have groups for our children, students, and adults. 4671 Al Hwy. 117. 256-634-4568. Connect with us on Facebook at "Moon Lake" or Pastor Mike at "Mike Ellis".

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church offers Sunday School on Sunday mornings at 10am (EST) and Worship Service at 11am (EST). Pastor Jack Green. 10090 County Road 103. 706-862-6221.

St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church and Sacred Garden is open daily for prayer and thanksgiving; however, indoor service and group meetings have been temporarily cancelled due to COVID-19. You may join us for weekly services by visiting our website at stjom.dioala.org. We are continuing to support our community with outreach, so please call our church office at 256-634-4476 for more information. 21145 Scenic Hwy, PO Box 161, Mentone, AL 35984.

Spirit Expression Ministry, a Chapel of the Alliance of Divine Love, invites you to sit with us in sacred circle on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 11am Central at Heartwood Center, 7 miles from downtown Mentone. Reverend Cathy Haven Howard facilitates a spiritual wisdom topic. Email havenhoward1@gmail.com for directions and questions.

Summit Church of God in Mentone invites you to be in service Sunday morning 10:45am, Sunday night 5pm, Wednesday Bible Study 6:30pm. Pastor Lance Kincer.

Hammondville, Alabama

The **Church of God 7th Day** invites you to Sabbath School

*We suggest you
contact the churches
to inquire about how they are
currently holding services.*

classes at 9:30am and Worship Service at 11am. Visitors are always welcome. Located just off Hwy. 11 N. at corner of Hwy. 117 and Palmer Road. 256-717-5040.

Greater Vision Ministries Church of God invites you to Sunday School 10 am, Sunday Worship *10:45 am, (*Nursery & Kid's Church). MidWEEK re-charge Wednesday 6:30pm. Pastor Tim Coppock. 38623 US Hwy 11. 256-601-0679.

Valley Head, Alabama

Lea's Chapel Baptist Church welcomes you to worship with us. 10am Sunday Bible Study, 11am Morning Worship, 6pm Evening Worship. Wednesday 6-8pm Awana (ages 4-18); 6:30pm Praise and Prayer time. 4212 County Road 751. 256-635-1001.

Valley Head Baptist Church invites you to come and worship with us. On Sunday, Bible Study is at 10am & Morning Worship is at 11am; Kidz Connection is at 5pm, Evening Worship at 6pm. Kidz Connection & Youth meet on Wednesday from 5-6pm & a snack supper is provided. On the second Wednesday of the month, there is a church-wide covered dish Fellowship Meal at 6pm. 265 Church Street. 256-465-1242.

Visitors are always welcome at **Valley Head United Methodist Church**. Please join us each Sunday morning for a traditional worship service at 9:30am. Tony Gunter is the Pastor. All are welcome. 146 Church St.

Wildwood Seventh Day Adventist Church, Mentone Chapter, holds services in Moon Lake Baptist Church's dining hall. All are invited to attend. Sabbath School and Song Service 9:30-10:45am, Worship Service 11am-12:15pm. Pastor - Wilbur Atwood; Lay Pastors - James Hartley and Ryan Bunnel.

Fort Payne, Alabama

Since 1889, worshippers have gathered at the **Historic First Presbyterian Church PC (USA)** at 300 Grand Avenue North. We invite you to join us for worship this Sunday at 10:55am. 256-845-2915.

The **Fort Payne Christian Center** and Pastors Ken and Elaine Hollman invite everyone to join in Worship on Sunday at 10am, Wednesday evening at 6pm. 3610 Grand Ave. SW. 256-997-0047.

Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) invites you to Sunday School at 9:45am; Sunday Worship at 10:55am. 256-845-4756. 5760 Gault Ave. NE.

Gravel Hill Baptist Church welcomes you to Sunday School at 10am & Worship Service at 11am each Sunday. All are welcome. Wednesdays at 6pm, we have supper and a brief devotional time together. Pastor George Moses. 14701 Hwy 11 South.

New Oregon United Methodist Church is located just off DeSoto Parkway, 1/4 mile south of Fischer Crossroads. We invite you to worship with us on Sundays. Our worship services are at 11am and also on Sunday evenings in the Chapel 6pm. You can also worship with us on-line @ facebook.com/neworegonumc. We have Wonderful Wednesdays during the school year with Bible studies for all ages meeting at 6pm in the Family Life Center. Pastor Ian Conerly. 1204 New Oregon Drive NE. 256-

845-7446.

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church holds Sunday mass in English at 10am and 1pm in Spanish. Tuesday at 6pm in English, Wednesday at 5pm bilingual, Thursday at 6pm in English, Friday at 9am in English and Saturday at 6pm in bilingual. 2910 Gault Ave. N. 256-845-4774.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church holds regular Worship Services at 10am Sunday. Clifford Herd, Pastor. Everyone is welcome. 1519 Smith Gap Road (County Road 85). 256-845-4842.

St. Stephen Anglican Church invites you to attend service on Sunday mornings at 1pm. Sunday School is at Noon. 1519 Smith Gap Road NW. Father Rodney Jackson, 205-405-0055; Deacon Jack Gilbreath, 256-845-2605.

Walnut Grove Baptist Church, on Highway 11 north of Fort Payne, welcomes everyone at Sunday School 10am, Worship Service at 11am, Wednesday night youth meeting at 6pm, and Wednesday night Prayer Meeting at 6:30pm. 3606 Greenhill Blvd NW. 256-996-0929.

Cloudland, Georgia

Cloudland Presbyterian Church welcomes everyone to come join us for services, with Pastor Jan Warren-Taylor. Bible Study Sunday at 9am (EST) and Worship at 10am (EST). 150 Partain Road.

Menlo, Georgia

Alpine Community Church Pastor Jeremy Stroop welcomes each and everyone to worship service Sunday mornings at 11am GA time; Sunday School 10am (EST); and Wednesday night Bible Study at 7pm (EST). 1104 Hwy. 337, Menlo GA. 706-862-6641.

Menlo Church of Christ invites you to attend 10am (EST) and 11am (EST) Sunday services and evening services at 5pm (EST) on Sundays and Wednesdays. Visitors are always welcome.

Menlo Presbyterian Church (ECO) invites everyone to attend services with us. Sunday School at 10am (EST) and Worship Service at 11:15am (EST). Rev. Jan Taylor is our pastor. We are located at 70 North 6th Ave., next to the park in Menlo.

Summerville, Georgia

Redemption Worship Center invites you to "Find Love, Encouragement, & Purpose!" Wednesdays: Hour of Power Bible Study 6:30pm (EST); Chosen Generation Youth 6:30pm (EST). Sundays: Sunday School 9:30am (EST); Morning Celebration 10:30am (EST). Pastors Dr. David & Penny Reeves. 174 West First Avenue. 706-808-0909.

Summerville Seventh Day Adventist Church invites you to worship with us. Saturday morning Sabbath School classes at 9:30am (EST) and Worship Service at 11am (EST). Everyone is welcome. Services are held at the First Presbyterian Church, 116 College Street. The Pastor is Dr. Edward Skoretz. summervillesda.com

**Please send any changes to
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Life as We Have Known It

by Paula Easter

Many of you, I am sure, do not know that I am a “quoteaholic” (my word) but I love and collect quotes. I actually have journals filled with quotes and song lyrics, words put together that mean something to me or pertain to something special in my life. As I was contemplating this article about our incredible Moon Lake students, I thought of a quote that I love by Gandhi.

*A small body of determined spirits
fired by an unquenchable
faith in their mission
can alter the course of history.*

I believe that has been true of Moon Lake Elementary and its students since my first year here. So many incredible events and people who have made it so, but especially this past year and the events that have taken place.

A little background information for you, so that you know where I am coming from with this article.

Our 2019–2020 school year began like all the others, with much excitement and anticipation of what was to come during the new school year. Moon Lake students rocked along with new classmates, Grandparents Day, Red Ribbon Week, fall sports, an all-school Christmas musical, basketball season, and everyone was looking forward to a school field trip to Atlanta to the Alliance Theater in March 2020.

Rumors began in November and December about a virus in other countries. In January 2020, someone said the virus was now in the United States. Moon Lake students had the normal colds and allergies, but no virus yet. Fortunately we were able to go on our all-school field trip to Atlanta on March 3, 2020, but it was the last normal activity for Moon Lake students for the rest of the school year. From March 16, 2020, all county schools were closed.

Moon Lake students lived in quarantine with their families, learned to wear masks, socially distance, wash their hands countless times, always have hand sanitizer with them, give up their summer activities...

the list goes on and on....

Would students ever get back to school and what would school be like?

Moon Lake Elementary students started back to school in August 2020. School is different now, but remember the Gandhi quote... “determined spirits.” Students wear masks whenever they are up from their desks or moving from one building to another, in classrooms desks not tables are used, at lunch they socially distance, there are



Moon Lake students maintain social distancing in the lunchroom, one of many adaptations the children have made during the 2021–2021 school year.

no working water fountains, everyone has their own water bottle, no outside visitors allowed in the school, no field trips, hand sanitizer dispensers are in every hall along with sanitizing wipes, and a Fine Arts teacher on a cart instead of a classroom.

It has been amazing to see our Moon Lake students get through this school year. I am so proud of this group of young people. It hasn't been easy, but they have continued to be a “small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission.”

Paula Easter is the Fine Arts teacher at Moon Lake School.



Moon Lake students were given individual packets of supplies for their art classes with Paula Easter.



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Help Wanted: Supporters of the Arts by Anne McLeod

Would you like to be a part of what makes Mentone and the surrounding community a regional hub for the arts? Become a member of the Little River Arts Council (LRAC), which has long provided arts activities for the Mentone community, residents and visitors alike. If you've attended a summer concert at the Linger Longer Pavilion behind the Mentone Inn, perused artists' and crafters' work at Creative Spirit Market or Merrityme Artisan Market, or enjoyed the annual tour of homes and silent auction in the fall, you've seen Little River Arts Council in action. The Artist Registry on our website is aimed at connecting artists and customers. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the Arts Council has worked to spotlight the creative work of local artists and musicians in virtual events, understanding that



financial support of their work has never been more important.

Most events sponsored by Little River Arts Council are free or low cost and are funded by memberships, in addition to grants and donations. Join today via our website at littleriverartscouncil.org/membership. Dues are payable annually and at varying levels: Student \$10, Individual \$25, Family \$40, Supporter \$100+, Patron \$500+.

And, if you'd like to support the arts with your time and effort, the Arts Council is always on the lookout for members who'd be interested in volunteer work such as working at events, fundraising, or serving on the board of directors. Email us at info@littleriverartscouncil.org, and we'll be happy to answer any questions you have about how you can help.



Connect with local artists through the Little River Arts Council's Artist Registry. Whether you're looking for a painting, jewelry, woodcarvings, stained glass, pottery, or other media, you can find it at littleriverartscouncil.org/registry.

Local artists who would like to be listed on the registry can complete the form at littleriverartscouncil.org/registry-submit. Be sure to submit digital photos of your work.

Although you do not have to be a member of Little River Arts Council to be listed on the registry, we hope you will join at littleriverartscouncil.org/membership.

Bobby Lee Cook 1927–2021

Bobby Lee Cook, one of America's most celebrated lawyers, died peacefully at his mountain home in Cloudland, GA, on February 19, 2021, surrounded by family. He was 94.

Bobby Lee was born in Chattoogaville, outside the small northwest Georgia town of Lyerly, on February 12, 1927, where he was raised in a home without running water, helping run the family's modest grocery store and keep up with the farm chores. From this rural beginning, however, the son of Paul Cook and Alma Edge Cook embarked on a life's journey that few could have then imagined. He took his first step into the wider world when, as a teenager, he enrolled in Gordon Academy, a military school where he learned the value of personal discipline, duty, and a robust education.

These values were further shaped by World War II. As soon as he graduated from high school, he lied about his age (then only 17) to enlist in the Navy. He first saw the Atlantic Ocean from St. Simons, GA, on his way to combat in the Pacific. He never forgot that sight, which kindled a lifelong love of the Georgia Coast, and he later would buy homes on Sea Island, GA. During Naval training in New Orleans, Cook was also struck by how one would see ships burning off the coast on nearly a nightly basis. He boxed in the Navy, honing his innate fighting spirit which he never lost.

Peacetime brought new transitions that each played key roles in the rest of this life. First, he continued his education: Upon returning from the War, he attended the University of Alabama and Vanderbilt Law School. Second, he found his life partner. Bobby Lee married June Hays on June 8, 1948, in Summerville, GA, a true June wedding that started a 67-year partnership.

Bobby Lee began his law practice in 1949 in Summerville, and that practice from its inception represented his values: personal discipline, erudite temperament, duty to others, justice for all people from all walks of life, and (not the least important characteristic) an indomitable fighting spirit. He represented labor unions when it was unpopular, and moonshiners when it might not have been convenient. As his practice grew, word of his abilities spread, and he developed a reputation as a talented and successful trial lawyer.

While Bobby Lee served in the Georgia Legislature and once ran for Congress, his calling truly was in the courtroom. As time went on, he was called there by many, some of whom paid substantial six and seven figure fees for his skilled advocacy. He represented the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, Robert Vesco, C.H. Butcher, Jr., Mike Thevis, Daniel Paradies, and, for decades, was hired for, or consulted on, nearly every high-profile case in Georgia. His practice went on to transcend Georgia. Among the more than 150 acquittals he achieved in murder cases during his career, he won murder trials in Germany and Vietnam, and his career is believed to have inspired the television show *Matlock*. One of his more colorful cases, in Savannah, is chronicled in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*.

Among all of these cases, though, perhaps the one he was most proud of was the Matthews murder case. That case embodied his abiding sense that justice



should never, ever be denied to anyone from any walk of life. Cook spent over \$50,000 of his own money and years of his career to overturn murder convictions wrongfully obtained in Cobb County, GA.

He walked with kings, but never lost the common touch. Though he was friends with and socialized with Justice Douglas, others on the Court, numerous politicians, dignitaries and business leaders, Cook never forgot his roots. On Saturday mornings, he opened his office doors to local residents for whom he offered his counsel, usually at no charge. Cook was also a tireless and gifted teacher and mentored numerous younger lawyers, spoke at uncounted seminars and was generously giving of his time to others working to solve thorny issues encountered

in their own cases. He was a tireless worker and early riser, and often instructed colleagues "Call me tomorrow morning at 7."

Bobby Lee Cook was recognized with lifetime achievement awards by both the National and Georgia Associations of Criminal Defense Lawyers (GACDL), Georgia State University College of Law School's 2017 Ben F. Johnson, Jr. Public Service Award, GreenLaw's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Small Town Lawyer Made Good Award, (presented by the State Bar of Washington), inducted into the American Trial Lawyers Hall of Fame, and many more countless other awards too numerous to list.

Even while these well-deserved honors accumulated, he never lost his razor-sharp wit. His award from GACDL included the honor of having his portrait hung in the Georgia Supreme Court. When presented with this, Cook quipped, "I'd rather be hung in the Supreme Court than by the Supreme Court." Similarly, while he always appreciated the recognition, Cook never rested on his laurels. He practiced law until virtually the time of his death. He was universally recognized as the dean of criminal defense lawyers in Georgia, and his death is mourned across the country.

Bobby Lee was predeceased by his wife, June, his son Bobby Lee Cook, Jr., and his son-in-laws Lewis Branch Sutton Connelly and Roger Wheeler Williams. He is survived by his daughters Kristina Cook Graham and Sara Cook Williams; his grandchildren, Sarah Holston O'Reagan, Jessica Wheat Cook Hale, Christopher Sutton Connelly, Jeffrey Scott Connelly, Sarah Elizabeth Connelly Turner, and Anna Lee Williams Jones; great-grandchildren, Patrick Aidan Fell, Morgan Aeron Cook Hale, Lillian Grace Connelly, Fiona Bess Connelly, Branch Hays Connelly, Thomasin June Connelly, Vivian Hays Jones, and Olive Kristina Connelly Turner.

The family requests that memorial contributions be sent to the Boys and Girls Club of Chattooga County, P.O. Box 636, Summerville, GA 30747, or Georgia State College of Law, Office of Development, P.O. Box 4037, Atlanta, GA 30303.

Moon Lake School Nurse Shares Her Green Thumb

by Kelly Leavitt

Stepping inside the “Plants R Us” greenhouse at Moon Lake Elementary School provides a balm for the senses, with its lush colors, tropical warmth, and earthy fragrance. The greenhouse is currently filled with red, pink, and coral geraniums and begonias, and asparagus and Boston ferns, all thanks to the efforts of Moon Lake School Nurse Cheryl Wilborn.

Before the Covid pandemic, Cheryl, L.A. Smith, and the Rhododendron Garden Club worked with Moon Lake students to grow plants that were sold to raise funds for the school. During the past year, Cheryl has been managing the greenhouse on her own, and the attention she gives the plants is evident. Each plant was started as a cutting from last year’s fundraising plants and has been lovingly tended by Cheryl. “This year, we haven’t spent money on anything other than pots and dirt,” she said.

Cheryl has also been caring for the well-being of Moon Lake students for the last four years. During the past year’s pandemic, she has risen to the challenges required. “We’ve changed a lot of our routines,” she said. “We’ve had to create isolation areas, and mask and social distance. We’ve been very fortunate. We’ve had children who have been quarantined because they’ve been exposed, but we’ve had no positive cases among the students. Dave [the school custodian] plays a big part by keeping the school so clean. It’s amazing how hard he works.”

Cheryl is also a gifted quilter and always has a project at hand. In 2018 and 2019, she worked with students to create striking quilts which were auctioned off at MERF’s annual art auction to raise funds for the arts program provided by MERF to Moon Lake School.

As Cheryl and I visited in the greenhouse, she showed me some cuttings she is rooting of the crepe myrtle and rose bushes that are near the school’s entrance. “I told Mrs. Lance [Moon Lake’s principal] those are hers to plant at her new house,”



A nurse in the nursery: Cheryl Wilborn, R.N., stands amongst the beautiful flowers and plants she has grown in Moon Lake School's greenhouse.

she said. “I think they’ll be especially meaningful to her now that the school’s closing,” said Cheryl. The greenhouse was purchased in 2017 with a grant that Principal Lance received for the school.

The students will soon receive a surprise. The greenhouse plants won’t be sold this year to raise funds for the school. Instead, each student will be given one to take home and personally nurture.

Our community has been fortunate to have a dedicated woman such as Cheryl on the Moon Lake staff. She is one of many who will be deeply missed.

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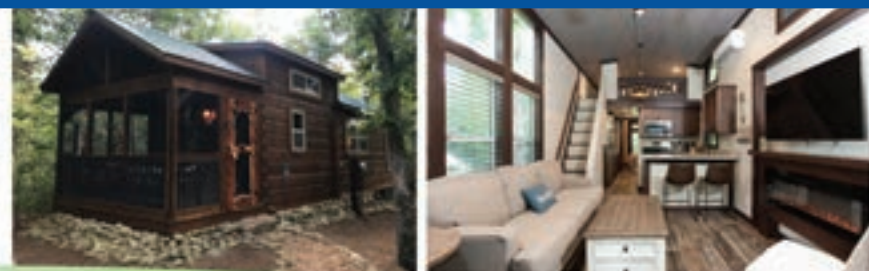


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In 2019, Little River Escape Tiny Home Community was named one of the nation's top 6 tiny home communities by U.S. News & World Report. As a result, our community is now almost fully occupied by folks who have come from 12 different states. Little River Escape has decided to embark on a new journey by creating River Ridge Escape Tiny Home Dealership, where 6-8 tiny homes are available to tour and purchase. RRE is now delivering across the nation, as well as developing other communities to bring more folks to Lookout Mountain.

A new development is coming to Mentone, only 3 miles from town. Mentone Mountain Escape will be a tiny home neighborhood with +/-20, ½-acre wooded lots per house and a common area with a dog park, patio, and firepit area.



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 MOUNTAIN LAUREL INN is nestled in the woods above Little River. Main residence with BR/BA, living, kitchen, utility & sunroom. Guest house with 4BR, each with private entrance & bath, & 2-room studio with kitchenette. Gathering house with LR and kitchenette. Approx. 7-acre property borders DeSoto State Park. \$379,000. MLS #1153859	 IMMACULATE MENTONE HOME. 3BR, 2BA. Open kitchen & dining area with lots of cabinets and granite countertops. LR & Den. Central heat/air, central vacuum, tile & hardwood floors, fireplace. Large bath with tub & separate shower, double sink vanity. Nice patio & back porch, 3-car garage. 3 wooded acres. \$350,900. MLS #1153481	 6 FULLY FURNISHED CABINS LOCATED ON THE BROW IN MENTONE positioned on 7 tracts totaling approx. 22 acres. Each cabin boasts wood exteriors, wood interior walls and floors, vaulted ceilings, gas log fireplaces, full kitchen amenities including granite countertops, impeccable cabin decor AND hot tubs on the back decks with focus on the spectacular VIEWS! Each fully furnished cabin is currently in a rental program with a strong rental history, providing an income-producing opportunity for the new owner. \$1,499,000. MLS #1772318		

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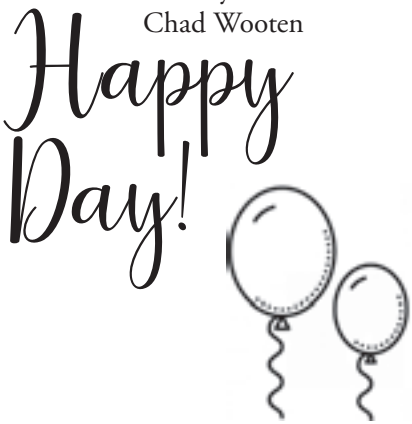
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1 Ally Smith Jonathan Cuzzort Roland Hendon Susanna Munoz	7 Paige Ware Kisha Moore Bella Stokes Easton Ferguson	14 Elizabeth Hodge Hunter Robertson Benton VanPelt Bonnie Ware Mike Neel	21 Mary J. Chambers Paul Peppers Reese McCurdy Sam McCurdy Aimee Grace Smith Wanda Black Ariel Bolton	26 Anna Nelson Sandra Boehringer Beth Hawkins Samantha Blalock Ariah Bickerstaff Jordan Hulgan
2 Jimmie Sue Beason Dewayne Pierce Holley Midgley	8 Whitney Smith Mayson Bailey Rhett Dean Melonee Green Elaine Wilbanks	15 Carter Wright Ronnie Hilliard	22 Kallie Ingram Lue Smith Jon Bain Steve Patton Robert Baker Ethan Blevins Kean Cowart	27 Abby Davis Jamie Darwin Dudley Easler
3 Kama Jade Blalock Dawson Bone Charity Crowe Kaleb Cronnon Laura Hill Michael Smith Jason Smith Matt Sharp	9 Adalynn Phillips Randy Ballinger	16 Avery Chadwick Raymond Coots Jesse Bone Johnny Crider Van Battles Finley Darwin Debra Williamson Koley Thompson	23 Guy "Squeak" Smith Wyatt McGee Lori Blackburn Cutter Battles Kathy Graham Taylor Roe Glen Whited	28 Holly Owen Cindy Bethune Arden Shanklin Kathy Wheat Don Ingram Mamie Jo Miller Sonja Grider
4 Corey Ingram Jeff Bain Lance Woods Clara Lee Becky Stott Durrell Owens Denise Brown	10 David Rape Autumn Hulgan Frances Day JD Clements Spencer Harris	17 Judson Bain Camden Bell Lily Smith Larry Wayne Smith April Howard	24 Eli Day Dylan Lee Jimmy Phillips Lydia Wright Bobbie Zakary Barry Blalock	29 Sara Lee Donna Hilliard Dru Hill Shannon Meadows
5 Ashley Gifford Maci Hammon Eiko Key Beth McKinney Joey Glenn Jeanette Whited	11 Bo Hammond Jay Chadwick Lauren Everett Preston Ledford	18 Sydney Williams Jeremy Henderson Kendall Israel Alexis Nance Sherryl Lewis Ruth Kean	25 Vickie Blackburn Evelyn Graves Skylar Haney Skeeter Hilliard Robert Smith Maliyah Turner Zadie Vest	30 Arnold Clinton Gena Fowler
6 Annabelle Grider Randy Hilliard Inez Guffey Josh Gregory Clint Phillips Sara Boatwright	12 Tonya Shanklin Jeremy Hope Krystal Johnson Tommy Hairiel Emily Allen Jaydon Bain Julie Prestwood Ella Fowler	19 Dean Freeman Olivia Harrison	31 Lyli Wright Marlana Beasley Noah Blalock Lindsey Blalock Chad Wooten	
	13 Josh Pullen Kelsey Wade Gracie Shank Julia Ross Adam Brown	20 Zach Jones Hobson Kirby Koley Thompson Greg Wheat Willa Ingram Joy Ana Conley Tom MacMichael		



Anniversaries

3 Darrin & Amanda Smith Jimmy & Gaynell Worthey	10 Tom & Alice Shanklin	23 Nick & Tina Langston	30 Chris & Melissa Stokes Brian & Melissa Carden
5 Michael & Donna Smith	11 Hobson & Martha Kirby	25 Tommy & Christie Langston Hayden & Allie Williams	
7 Tommy & Ruth Battles	18 Rodney & Christine Ballenger	26 Dudley & Becky Easler	
8 Blake & Brittany Villarreal Garrett & Amanda Collins	19 Tommy & Joan Harrison	27 Shaunathan & Abby Bell Robby & Cat Curtis-Grisham	
	20 Grant & Shelley Meadows		

Waterfall Hikes at DeSoto State Park

Join DeSoto State Park and JSU Field School Staff for a fun day of hiking throughout 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. Come on out and burn those calories while enjoying the Great Outdoors!

The trail will be moderate, rugged terrain over approximately 5 to 6 miles. We will utilize the white, silver, and orange trails and a section of the DST for this hike. Meet at DeSoto State Park's Country Store & Information Center on County Road 89. This event is free and open to everyone. Pre-registration is required as we will keep the group small. Email jwayner@jsu.edu for any details or to pre-register (name, contact number and number of people). We



do ask for masks at the start of the hike and require social distancing on the trail when possible.

Bring plenty of water and/or sports drink, snacks/lunch, hiking poles/staff (optional), sturdy shoes (open toe shoes are not recommended). Please be sure to dress appropriately according to seasonal temperatures/weather. 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).

March 10 & March 19
10 am – 3 pm



DeSoto Falls
February 17, 2021

Photo Credit: Lookout Mountain Photography




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Every Picket Tells a Story!

Our February issue featured the beginning of a series by Jay Robbins which tell the stories of individual pickets on MERF's Pathway to Community. Below are some more selections our

readers have expressed curiosity about. The Pathway to Community is located on AL Highway 117, just to the east of Moon Lake Library. The project was funded by a generous grant from the

Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama. If you are curious about a specific picket's story, please email Jay at jrobbins727@gmail.com and we will feature it in a future issue.

1 Sharon Habin

I painted a caricature that was already outlined. I made it to represent my granddaughter. I painted a boy picket, also, to represent my grandson. They live in Indiana and I usually go and visit four or more times a year... I had to cancel my tickets to visit in March when COVID changed everything. Little did I know when painting the pickets I would not visit them for the rest of the year. I am grateful for Zoom and Google Meet.

2 Destin Padgett

I painted several pickets on my own, from scratch. I want everyone to feel included anywhere and everywhere—and I thought having a variety of faces across the fence would help convey that. Kids can look out and see different skin tones, and the different depictions of folks. Visitors to Mentone can walk around and see people that look like them. No matter where they're from, it's welcoming and interesting—just like Mentone!

3 Carolyn Smith

The bearded man picket is my partner, Russell Pouncey. We live at a property on County Road 103, near Cloudland. Russell bought the property in 2005 and named it Richmond Woods after his father Richmond Pouncey. It was all hardwood forest at that point, no structures. We tent camped on weekends for five years. Our first structures were a privy and an outdoor shower enclosure. In 2010, we completed a one-room cabin with the help and advice of Russ's friend Chuck Henson, using wavy board siding from Daniel Millican. Nathan Owen added a large kitchen and master suite to the house a few years ago. Chuck also advised and assisted in the building of a shop. Nathan built a screened outdoor pavilion for summer use. I planted gardens, including an herb garden. Last summer a bear sat on my rosemary and destroyed it! Last summer we had our first ever large vegetable garden and it was a great success. So, we are looking forward to planting when the weather starts to warm up.

4 Kat Griffith

The project to create personalized pickets was a marvel of community effort and I feel very grateful to have been involved. I had decided to paint pickets for each of my five grandchildren, but ended up painting three pickets: one of two boys in one family, another with two girls in a different family and the last with the only child in a third family. The picket shown represents our grandsons, Wesley 8 and Nathan 5. Wesley is an inquisitive, energetic, smart-as-a-whip little speedster. He is extra proud of a particular trait that he claims for himself: he runs very fast and far for an 8-year-old. He is depicted here with "Mustangs" on his shirt because he runs like a wild mustang. Nathan is the figure below Wesley and has a depiction of his pet, a turtle named Spot Dot on his shirt. Nathan is interested in the behavior of turtles and has helped his Dad create a perfect turtle habitat for their pet box turtle who has lived with them in the back yard over two years. He says they are animals that teach us patience.



1



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5 Sandy Tate

I have always loved horses. They have always been a big part of my life. I wanted to paint something I enjoy.

6 Lynna Meadows Morton

My husband and I read about the pickets being painted at the MERF House. When I called, I was told that they were in the last week of folks coming to paint, and true to our form, we arrived on the last day! We went into the House to select our pre drawn pickets and after looking through what was remaining, I had not found one I thought "spoke" to me. Then, as I turned to look around the room, I saw the little girl with the ladybug on her shirt. She was leaning against a far wall, all by herself and I knew on sight that she was my pick. You see, I lost my dear son, Matthew, Christmas 2019, only four days before his birthday and ten days before Christmas. He was the youngest of my children and a bright and shining star in my life. He was always full of fun and mischief... always had a smile on his face. Here is where the ladybug comes in. When he was in the third grade, he drew an amazing ladybug for an art project. It was big, bold, and colorful. It won the prize at his school and went on to win a prize in the Montgomery art competition! After that he always loved ladybugs, and even had a garden decoration that was one. After he passed, in December there was a single ladybug that stayed in our home here in Mentone for some time. We took a trip to North Carolina a few months later, and there was a single one that stayed on the curtain of our room, undisturbed of course. When we moved back to Mentone in August 2020, I found the garden ladybug in our storage room when I was packing. I have no idea how it got into a box of pictures, but there it was. It now is located happily right outside our front porch here in Mentone. And then, when I saw the little girl picket standing apart from the rest, I knew she had been waiting for me. I am no artist, but every time I go to look at her, she makes me smile. I hope she makes you smile too, for the beautiful boy that watches over her.

7 Jan Wilkinson

The graduate is my youngest granddaughter Claire. She missed our first Wilkinson girls reunion in Mentone because her delayed high school graduation was the same time as our weekend reunion. She also turned 18 that weekend which was the age requirement for our reunion. She missed painting a picket with our group. She has grown up coming to Mentone and loves being here.

8 Carol Maloney

As I was painting my picket I thought about what a tomboy I was growing up, and all the trees I had climbed. We had pear, apricot and apple and I think the apple tree is the only one that I didn't fall out of.

9 Scott Thomas

I wish I had a fantastic backstory about why I painted the little boy in the swing on one of the pickets, but I don't. There was however some thought behind the finished product. Obviously my first thought was a vertical image. It needed to be a fairly simple image with not a lot of detail. The person viewing the image needed to pretty much grasp the concept of the image at first glance.

I mostly paint whimsy but not always. Occasionally I attempt to do a more serious painting. I like to paint abandoned buildings, usually an old home place. To give the person viewing the image something to think about or a way to help their imagination tell part of the story, I will put an old rusty tricycle or a broken-down swing hanging from one of the trees: How many people lived here? What happened to the children? Why did they leave?

This picket had to represent the present. It had to be a happy scene. It had to, of course, be vertical. I thought of a swing hanging from a tree. A happy swing. A swing being enjoyed by a little boy. I kept it simple.

What's your picket's story?!

If you painted a picket for the Pathway to Community and would like to share the story of your picket in a future issue of *The Groundhog*, contact Jay Robbins at jrobbins727@gmail.com.

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WOW: Women Out Walking

WOW: Women Out Walking is a new group formed by Christy Ledford. Fairly new to the area, she posted a question on the Facebook Mentone Neighbor to Neighbor page, asking for ideas of where to go walking.

Many enthusiastic women immediately said they were interested, and they agreed to start walking on MERF's Pathway to Community on AL-Hwy. 117. New friendships have been made, and in the future the group plans to also walk at Camp Comer, Valley Head and Hammondville's walking trails, and the road by DeSoto State Park Lodge.

"I love to walk," Christy said, "but not so much alone. I wanted to see if I could find a walking partner and I got a whole group of ladies! Company and accountability was my goal."



WOW walkers braved some of February's cold and rainy days, and also enjoyed some mild and sunny days.

Everyone is welcome to join Women Out Walking. They usually walk on Mondays and Wednesdays at 10 a.m. on the Pathway to Community.



Christy Ledford

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