JULY 2025

Published by

MERF
Rural Education · Community Development

P. O. Box 107
Mentone, AL 35984

FREE



THE GROUNDHOG

"Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain"

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

Town Launches Mentone Americana Nights

Shigley Amphitheater on Moon Lake Campus will host free concert series

BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Something new is happening on the mountain this summer. Mentone Americana Nights is a free concert series bringing live music to the Shigley Amphitheater on Moon Lake Campus. On the fourth Saturday of each month from June through September, these family-friendly evenings will be all about good music, good food, and a good reason to come together.

The idea is simple: offer people a chance to hear great music in a laid-back setting. In addition to enjoying great musical talent, guests are encouraged to explore the artisan shops and galleries on the Moon Lake Campus and grab a bite at Moon Lake Kitchen, which serves up Cajun and Creole favorites — along with burgers and wings to enjoy while listening to the music.

Locals and visitors alike are invited to spend the evening enjoying what makes Mentone special.

"Mentone has always been a place where creativity and community go hand in hand," says Mayor Rob Hammond. "Americana Nights is more than a concert series — it's an invitation to gather, celebrate local talent, and enjoy the magic of summer on the mountain. We're proud to welcome everyone to this new tradition."



Adamson Avenue, featured artist for the Saturday, June 28th concert

As of press time, the June 28th show was set to feature Judy-Nicole Kirby, Average Joe, and Adamson Avenue.

Kirby is a Fort Payne-based singer-songwriter with a voice that draws you in and lyrics that make you want to stay. Her pop-folk style blends heartfelt melodies with a touch of soul, and whether she's playing for a crowd or a handful of folks, she makes it feel personal. She is also a visual artist and helps support other local creatives through her work with Boom Town Makers Market.

Average Joe is composed of Phillip Dooley (Geraldine), Russell Godwin (Grove Oak), and Dennis George (Fyffe). This trio has deep roots in local music scenes. Their setlist spans from the 1960s to today — rock, country, pop, and bluegrass — all arranged with acoustic instruments and three-part harmonies. Dennis brings a full toolkit, playing everything from mandolin and dobro to harmonica and violin, with harmony vocals shaped by years of shape-note singing.

Adamson Avenue is based in Carrollton, Georgia. The group delivers a mix of folk-country and Americana, led by singer-songwriter Jason Kesler.



Jess Goggans, featured artist for the Saturday, July 26th, concert

With Chris Sundling on upright bass, Seth Murphy playing pedal steel guitar, Trey Young on guitar, and Greg Frazier on drums, their sound is honest and melodic, often centered around songs about life, faith, and the moments in between. They've built a loyal following for their heartfelt shows and authentic style.

Sponsors for the first show included Town of Mentone, Moon Lake Kitchen, First State Bank, Delightful Retreats, Mentone Market, Tri State Environmental Services, and Lookout Media Group.

(See "Americana Nights," Page 13)

A Life Rooted in Mentone

Rob Hammond's Journey from Camper to Town Leader

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

In the town of Mentone, Alabama, Rob Hammond is more than just a public official. He's a steward of the town's past, present, and future. And his story begins, fittingly, at a summer camp.

In the summer of 1961, an 11-year-old Hammond traveled to Mentone for the first time from his home in LaGrange, Georgia. His destination was a summer camp founded two years earlier by Coach Malcolm Laney, a former head football coach at Woodlawn High School in Birmingham and assistant football coach at the University of Alabama.

That summer marked the beginning of a lifelong connection to Mentone. "I remember coming up Lookout Mountain and thinking, 'Whoa, this is a pretty big hill here,'" says Hammond. Struck by the natural beauty of the area, Hammond relished the Sunday hikes to the brow for picnic suppers and to watch the sunsets — a very different spectacle than anything he had seen back home.

It was the camaraderie with boys from Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, and other areas that really impacted Hammond. "I was introduced to new activities and experiences, and came home with much more self-confidence," he says. "I developed friendships with boys and counselors from many different places, and many of these friendships are lifelong."



Hammond looks over files of several infrastructure projects he has been involved with as mayor of Mentone.

Hammond would attend Camp Laney for five summers as a camper. He returned as a junior counselor at age 16, and then as a counselor.

Hammond graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1971 and then set his sights on a law degree from Cumberland School of Law at Birmingham's Samford University.

It was during this phase of his career that Hammond heard news that would change the trajectory of his life. A friend told him that Coach Laney was considering selling the summer camp that had been such an important part of Hammond's upbringing. He called and set up a meeting with his former camp director.

"When the opportunity came up, it was really a pretty easy decision for me to leave law school and pursue a career in camping," says Hammond. The call of the mountain was strong, and Hammond could envision himself as director of the camp.

With help from his mother with the down payment and owner financing from Coach Laney, Hammond acted quickly and bought the camp in 1974. He was only 23 years old.

"It was a lot different from being a camper or a counselor," he admits. "You have the physical plant you're responsible for, the parents to deal with, the sick kids ... all the problems. That was a lot of management for a young fellow."

But help was on its way — lifelong help. San Neel, the daughter of a family that attended the same church Hammond's family attended back in Georgia, was looking for an internship for her Master's degree at the University of Georgia. Hammond was looking for someone to work in the camp kitchen. It was a perfect match — so much so that she became San Hammond, marrying into the business and becoming a key part of the operation, running the kitchen and office and helping with groundskeeping.

His work developing young people at camp translated well to education. After purchasing the camp, Hammond taught for five years at Darlington Lower School in Rome, Georgia, during the camp off-season.

(See "Mayor Hammond," Page 18)

Big Changes at the Old Course

Little Mole Country Club Opens Under New Ownership

REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The familiar green expanse of our longtime community course is being transformed under new leadership. Now rebranded as Little Mole Country Club, the course is entering a new era with a focus on family fun and plenty of activities for tourists.

New owners Robert Johnson, his wife Annette, and son-in-law and daughter Eddie and Ashley Manning took over the course on May 29. They're making it a family affair with lots of plans for the future. Also pitching in were the Johnsons' other son-in-law and daughter, Scott and Brittney Pepper, who updated the facility's social media, as well as many friends and family who helped in the relaunch. Robert's name is familiar around here, as he also owns Robert Johnson Roofing and Construction in Valley Head.

Robert has been playing for the past four years and is passionate about the game, though he didn't see that coming.

(See "Big Changes," Page 5)

The Groundhog

Published monthly by MERF

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

MERF BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Kathryn Norris – President
Tom MacMichael – Vice President
Adelaide Shamburger Drennen – Treasurer
Craig Sheldon
Emily West
Joel Leonard
Karen Vest
Mary Ann Robbins
Donna Arnett
Katie Hand – Executive Director

GROUNDHOG STAFF
Stephen V. Smith, Editor
Rebecca Henderson, Associate Editor
Michele Smith, Design

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Rebecca Henderson, Rob Hammond, deJoly LaBrier, Lynn Hixon, Katie Hand, Melanie Tuttle, Anne McLeod, Juli Jordan, Barry Morton, Hank Allen

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

Contact The Groundhog
GroundhogNews@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 107
Mentone, AL 35984
256-979-4962
merfhouse.com

For advertising:
Email GroundhogAds@yahoo.com

The opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed by the various authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints or policies of MERF.

Groundhog woodcut courtesy of Meg Justice/Bee Spring Studio

FOLLOW US ON

CHEROKEE TRADITIONS

The Cherokee word for home is

ꮒꮻᎾᏒ

pronounced OWENVSV (oh - way - nuh - suh)

Their understanding of home and land was deeply spiritual, communal, and rooted in a reciprocal relationship with nature. For the Cherokee, home and land were not commodities but sources of life, identity, and spiritual grounding. This understanding shaped every aspect of their culture — from governance to farming, storytelling, and ceremonies. As we enter the month of our Nation's independence, I invite us to reflect upon our own meaning and understanding of home. For me, home is not just a place, but an experience, one of love, land, community, and belonging. I hope we hold gratitude and reverence for the land we get to live upon and the nation that we represent.

—Caroline Moore

Cloudland Framing

Here to help preserve your memories so that they last a lifetime and beyond!

Moon Lake Village
5866 East River Road
256-634-0406 • CloudlandFraming@gmail.com

Mentone Matters

Coming Soon, Weather Permitting

BY MAYOR ROB HAMMOND



As I work on my column for the July issue of The Groundhog, the forecast shows a stretch of several dry days. We haven't seen that in a while. I can't remember a year when we've seen this much rain and stormy weather in the span of a few spring and summer weeks.

The break in the weather is welcome news for hundreds of campers — not to mention counselors and directors — in and around Mentone. The wet weather has also impacted construction projects, putting crews behind and pushing start dates for projects impacting Mentone.

The most obvious one is our sidewalk project. The company that will construct the final phase of our sidewalks is trying to finish their work in Fort Payne. If the weather holds, we should see them in Mentone around or shortly after the Fourth of July holiday. When complete, our residents and visitors alike will be able to walk from Moon Lake Library to the Mentone Market on new sidewalks, which connect with the existing sidewalks to take you to the intersection of Highway 117 and County Road 89. I've written before about the many benefits of a walkable town, and I'm looking forward to celebrating the completion of this final phase for our citizens.

The company tapped to install the new HVAC system at the Moon Lake gym is also behind schedule. We have placed two large fans in the building to help those attending basketball training classes there, but it's still a hot place in the summer. The new HVAC system will open the gym to many types of events year-round, making the building an even greater asset to Mentone. The improvements were made possible by the town council's decision to reinvest the money earned by the Fall Festival back into the property that hosts the event.



Duska and Scott Fields of Fields Land Management recently visited Mentone's Brow Park. Later this year their company will clear the heavy underbrush from below the park to prepare for future development of a new trail system.

The owners of Fields Land Management recently visited Brow Park to assess the work they will do to clear the slope beneath the overlook. This will prepare the park for the addition of hiking trails for our citizens to enjoy and that will attract visitors who come to Lookout Mountain for hiking and other outdoor activities.

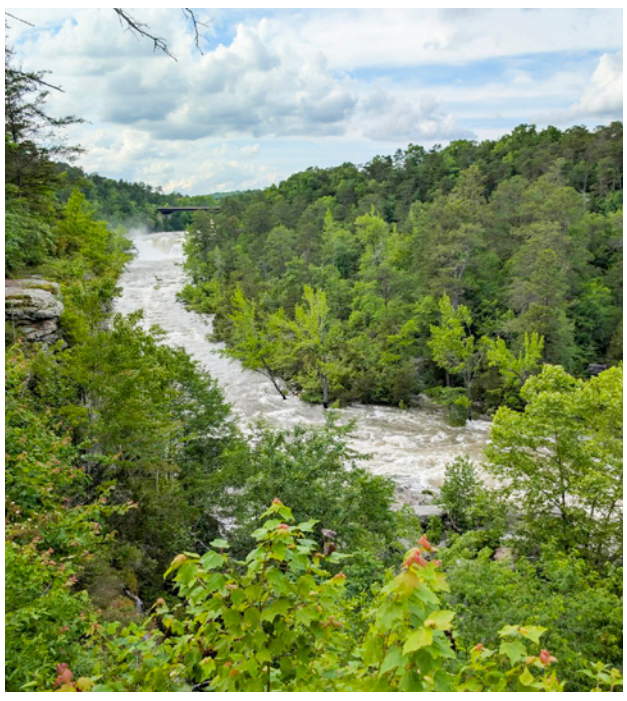
We also had a visit in June from Alan Williamson. He is the architect who will oversee the improvements to the original Moon Lake school building. He has experience working with grant projects like the Appalachian Regional Commission program that is funding part of these upgrades. A Fort Payne native, Williamson worked with the City of Fort Payne to transform the old Forrest Avenue Elementary School property into a new city hall and meeting space. He was also the architect on our own Moon Lake Library. We are looking forward to working with him to bring the campus up to standards and to ensure it can continue serving our community for decades to come.

Speaking of the school property, please come out and support our first Mentone Americana Nights at the Shigley Amphitheater. This is part of our focus on creating more activities on the property. Tour the shops and galleries, eat at Moon Lake Kitchen, and enjoy some great free music outdoors. There is no charge for admission, and we appreciate the businesses who have donated to make this event possible. We plan to run the series each fourth Saturday through September. See the cover story of this issue for more information.

From the Editor

The River Flows Like a Song

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR



Little River was flowing strong with the recent summer rains. (Photo by Matt Genereux)

It was the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who is credited with saying, "You cannot step into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and you are not the same man." Indeed, unlike a lake or pond (or mud puddle, a favorite of my grandson), a river is always moving, changing, exerting its force, and responding to the obstacles it encounters.

Indeed, that's the one constant of a river, the fact that it is always changing. And as a force of nature with a life and spirit of its own, it touches something deep inside of us, resonating with the core of who we are and inspiring creativity on many levels.

Encounter Little River up close and you'll understand this truth. Photographers like Beth Maynor Young have been drawn to its beauty and, in Young's case, moved to wield the power of photography to promote conservation efforts. Young boys who would grow up to form the most successful country music group of all time swam in the waters of Little River, which inspired several Alabama songs. Likewise for Pierce Pettis, one of my favorite artists, who sings about "swimming with the snakes" in those waters "so cold it makes you ache."

Painters have captured Little River on canvas. Botanists and other scientists have been awed to discover the incredible biodiversity of plant and animal life supported by Little River and the canyon it passes through.

DeSoto Falls and Little River Falls are some of the most photographed waterfalls in the Southeast. Years ago, I met a photographer from Louisiana who saw these marvels of nature with fresh eyes, helping me gain a greater appreciation of what I admittedly took for granted, having seen them my whole life.

Speaking of fresh eyes, Japanese native and New Jersey-based guitarist and composer Hiroya Tsukamoto named an album after Little River Canyon, and plans to release a new song this year that he composed while sitting at an overlook marveling at the river below.

A river will transport you if you let it. It will inspire you. It will change you. It will put you in touch with something deep within, connecting the created with the Creator.

I'm thankful for our river, and hope to spend more time with its ever-changing waters this year.

Why Early Summer Brings More Bear Sightings

If you think bears have been in the news more than usual lately, you're right. Early summer usually brings a bumper crop of news stories about bears appearing in places they're not typically seen, from backyards and suburban streets to residential communities. Here's why.

There are more people in bear country

Today, most Americans live in, recreate in or travel to places bears call home. In fact, the Census Bureau reports that only one in ten Americans have never left the state they were born in. The pandemic accelerated a trend that was already underway: people moving out of cities and into more suburban and rural landscapes in search of a better quality of life.

Part of that quality of life is often living closer to nature. Spending time outdoors and in our parks and forests has never been more popular. In 2021, more than 164 million people (54% of Americans age six and over) participated in some sort of outdoor recreation, the highest number on record. According to the 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report from the Outdoor Foundation, more than 58 million people went hiking, 46 million camped and more than 10 million people backpacked. Most of those people were recreating in the bear's backyard.

There are More Bears in Bear Country

Black bears once roamed America's forests from coast to coast. European settlement pushed black bears out of much of their historic home range. But black bears are remarkably intelligent, resourceful and adaptable, and populations survived in remote pockets of wilderness.

Today, thanks to new attitudes and decades of enlightened conservation, habitat preservation and management efforts, black bears have made a dramatic comeback and are returning to places where they haven't been seen in decades. There are once again established bear populations in at least 40 states and frequent sightings in several more.

Bears Have Become Social Media Stars

Even a decade ago bears could wander mostly unnoticed; today bears that trudge through neighborhoods trying to get from here to there wind up on YouTube with their own Facebook pages and Instagram accounts.

Almost everyone has a cell phone with a great camera, and nearly 40% of people have smart home security systems and doorbells linked to cameras that record everyone and everything walking by 24/7. Online shopping has created a porch-pirate epidemic and more people are working from home, so someone is always watching. Social media channels give people an easy way to share videos, photos and "there's a bear in my backyard!"

Bears Can't Get Away from it All

Bears must find ways to adapt to more people in their backyard. If a bear denned up in the woods last winter and woke up next to a housing development this spring, people notice when it lumbers off through the neighborhood in search of quieter quarters. Or worst case scenario, doesn't lumber off, because it discovers that people aren't all bad; they seem to have brought an endless and dependable food supply with them.

Where are the bears going?

Most bears spotted in unlikely or unusual places in early summer fall into three categories:

Juvenile male bears that denned up with their moms last winter and got



booted out this spring. No matter how big and furry they look, these bears are about 18 months old and are just trying to figure out how to live on their own. Juvenile males need to disperse and find a place to call home where they can find food, shelter and eventually a mate. Juvenile female bears, however, are often allowed to move in next door to their moms, so most wandering bears are males.

These young bears are often lonely and lack the fully developed survival skills of an adult bear. They are also hungry and inquisitive and will check out anything that seems as if it might be a source of food. Like human teenagers, they are at a very impressionable stage of life. If they quickly discover that human places should be avoided, they will be forced to learn to support themselves as wild bears. If they find the backyard pickings are easy, they start down a road that is often a dead end for them.

Adult male bears are roaming far and wide in search of a mate. Both male and female bears may mate several times in early summer; in fact, it's not unusual for cubs from a single litter to each have a different father. But female bears rarely leave their home ranges; for the good of the gene pool, they let the males come find them. So adult male bears may travel long distances through various females' home ranges.

New moms have lots of mouths to feed. Mother bears may have between one and six cubs depending on her for their survival. Natural spring and early summer food sources such as grasses and developing plants are just not as calorie-dense and nutritious as the nuts and fruits that ripen later in the year. So mother bears often need to travel further from their dens looking for food. Cubs take after their parents in several ways: they are super-smart, learn quickly and are very adaptable. So, if mom teaches them to raid the garbage or bat down bird feeders or sends them in through the pet doors to see what is in the kitchen, a whole new generation of bears learns that communities are a great place to find lots of food.

What you can do

Be extra-vigilant during this extra-critical time. Follow the At-Home BearWise Basics and use the BearWise At-Home Checklist make sure there's nothing around your property or home that will attract bears.

Don't approach bears. Don't feed bears. Don't call all your neighbors to come watch. If the bear is headed to a safe space (for bears), just leave it alone. If you're worried it's at risk because it's wandering through a densely populated area, call your state wildlife agency. And then make sure you and your neighbors have no unsecured food sources, pet food, birdseed or other attractants that would tempt it to hang around.

Thanks for living BearWise and keeping bears wild and people safe.

—Courtesy of BearWise®
www.BearWise.org

SOUTHERN PROPERTIES Agency, Inc.

256-845-6000

southernpropertiesagency.com • 311 Gault Ave. N., Fort Payne



MENTONE BROW VIEWS at its finest! 2 BD, 2 BA wood floors and ceilings and full of Mentone character! $439,000. #21843628



BEAUTIFULLY REMODELED, meticulously upgraded both inside and out! This exceptional property features new roof, gutters, and elegant hardwood floors. $460,000 #21884091



NEWLY REMODELED MOUNTAIN RETREAT close to all of the "Happenings" in the Mentone, DeSoto State Park & Little River Canyon areas! $424,500. #21858260



A RARE FIND IN DOWNTOWN MENTONE! Beautiful 15 acre home within walking distance to town. Wooded w/4 BD, large shop, office and plenty of room to roam. $725,000 #21869544



JUST RENOVATED 3 BR, 1.5 BA is waiting for its new owner! New flooring, paint, and central H&A. All situated on a beautiful level yard with large shade trees! 417 Railroad Ave. in Valley Head. Priced at $205,000. MLS#21886201



CONSTRUCTED IN 1955 BY MENTONE'S 9TH MAYOR. The original front windows are from the Lahusage Hotel. 3BR/2BA, sunroom and luxurious ensuite. 1.9 acres. $559,000. #21873380



LITTLE RIVER VENUE is ready for your viewing! This previous restaurant with kitchen equipment, seating, and grills. Located on DeSoto Parkway. $449,900 MLS# 21870315



COZY & CHARMING FARMHOUSE IN MENTONE! 4 BD home w/ beautiful pine floors, a rock fireplace, full basement and nice screened-in porch! $315,000 #21870687



EXTRAORDINARY GRAIN BIN HOME with Stunning Rustic Interior, nestled on 50 acres. Features spacious living areas, and luxurious master and guest suites. $1,100,000 MLS# 21884163



UNDER CONSTRUCTION! Discover Rustic Charm and Modern Comfort. Sits on a vast 3.1-acre lot. Contract early to customize finishing touches. $389,900 MLS# 21881974



BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THIS ADORABLE COTTAGE with 2 acres in Mentone with many fruit trees and flowers. $174,900. #21876060



WHITETAIL ON THE PARKWAY! 3 bedroom, 2 bath cabin centrally located to downtown Mentone, DeSoto Falls, and DeSoto State Park. $349,900 MLS# 21882524

LOTS & LAND

150 FEET OF LAKE FRONTAGE for $45,000! You will love this little community close to Little River Canyon National Preserve & Little River Falls. Secluded yet only a short drive to town! #21847406

THE HITCHING POST LOT– Remember the iconic "Hitching Post" located in Mentone? Locals were devasted when it was lost to fire prior to grand reopening in 2023. The owner has decided to sell the grounds in order to allow someone to bring a vision of what they may desire to that main street corner lot. Commercial septic installed in 2022. MLS #21871776

WATERFRONT BUILDING LOT in West Fork Subdivision, Mentone! 3.30 +/- acre lot (#54) offering approx. 167' on Little River. You may want both... Cabin in the woods and a screen room down by the waterfront. You choose. Act now to make your dream a reality. 2 lots available priced at $95,000 each #21869486 #21869487

GREAT BUILDING LOT WITH VIEWS! Featuring 3 acres of wooded land in Mentone. AMAZING VIEWS! YES, VIEWS! $89,900 #21848438

3 PARCELS TOTALING 5.4 +/- ACRES with 522 feet of road frontage. Property is 452 feet deep. Mostly level and wooded. Parcels will not be sold separately. Call for an appointment today. Utilities at the road. $89,900 mls # 21886114

BEAUTIFUL BROW PROPERTY located in Lake of the Brow. Just minutes from Little River Canyon. Enjoy beautiful views of Shinbone Valley below. $79,900 #1792283

Patriotism Has Run Deep Throughout My Life

BY DEJOLY LABRIER



The cadence of the Marine platoon rang out in the summer sun. Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, home to hundreds of soldiers and their families, came alive with the 4th of July ceremonies about to unfold. The bleachers were filled with excited kids who were mostly interested in the fireworks that would end the evening event. Some of the women, including my mother, had umbrellas to hide from the blaring sun and heat.

The non-coms performed their march formations with perfect precision, uniforms pressed and swords bright and shining. Applause erupted from the audience. The "big Brass" gave speeches. The band stood at attention, then stood at ease as they played the National Anthem, then John Philip Sousa, culminating with the Marine Corps Hymn.

As darkness fell on the parade grounds, there was heightened excitement. This was what we were waiting for, and it was magnificent! It was moving, to say the least.

I was 5 when I first experienced this huge dose of patriotism — an age when so many things are impressed upon our minds that don't have words. I've carried that silent patriotism with me throughout my life. I still get goose bumps any time I see a flag flying on a pole or hear stories of great patriots who gave their all. I reflect on the fact that my father entered the Marine Corps at the young age of 16.

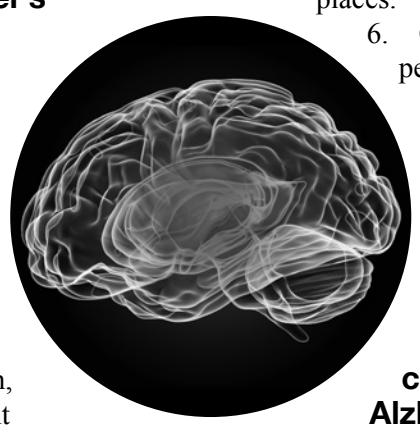
I fly a United States flag at my home, and I hope that you have similar feelings about our great country as I do. This year is especially significant, with an increased fervor because we're on the cusp of the anniversary of our nation. In 2026, we will celebrate 250 years as a nation! Just a baby compared to many nations.

So I say, let the celebration begin!

Alzheimer's Awareness

BY LYNN HIXON

Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior.



Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life. One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting recently learned information, forgetting important dates or events and asking the same questions over and over.
2. Difficulty completing familiar tasks. Some people living with changes in their memory due to Alzheimer's or other dementia may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers.
3. Confusion with time or place. People living with Alzheimer's or other dementia can lose track of dates, seasons, and the passage of time.
4. New problems with words in speaking or writing. A person may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation or repeat themselves.
5. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps. A person living with Alzheimer's or other dementia may put things in unusual places.
6. Changes in mood and personality. Individuals living with Alzheimer's or dementia may become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful, or anxious.

Why get checked for Alzheimer's Disease?

Getting checked by your doctor can help determine what's causing symptoms. If Alzheimer's is the cause, an early diagnosis allows you:

Access to treatment options: An early Alzheimer's diagnosis provides you with a better chance of benefiting from treatment.

A chance to prioritize your health: Some lifestyle changes, such as controlling blood pressure, stopping smoking, participating in exercise, and staying mentally and socially active, may help preserve cognitive function.

Courtesy of the DeKalb County Council on Aging.

Now open!
Triple G Tradin' Post



Largest Antique Store in Mentone!
FARMHOUSE, LOG CABIN, & WESTERN DECOR
1 mile off Hwy. 117, behind Mentone Market
215 County Road 649 • Mentone
256-634-8800
Hours:
Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
& Sun. 11 a.m.–5 p.m.



Visit Mentone Market
SALADS, SANDWICHES & PIZZA
PREPARED FOODS • LOCAL ART & GIFTS • CRAFT BEER • WINE
5872 AL HIGHWAY 117
PH. 256-634-4686

DIXIE SALVAGE
DISCOUNT BUILDING SUPPLIES
est. 1996
3630 GAULT AVE. N • FORT PAYNE, AL
256.845.5475
MONDAY - FRIDAY: 7:30 - 5:00
SATURDAY 7:30 - 12:00



DAVE'S ANTIQUES
37669 US-11 • Hammondville, AL
Phone: 256-674-3882
Just 4 miles from Mentone!
Back yard is now open with rust & dust treasures and other unique finds.



NAIL WORX
256-996-0351
• Clearing
• Driveways
• Mulch
• Gravel
• Yard Work
• Flower Beds
Paul Nail • Mentone, AL

Moon Lake Kitchen
www.moonlakekitchen.com
(678) 850-8327
Lunch and Dinner
Located directly behind the Mentone Library.

Walt Pullen: Kindness You Could Count On

On June 6, Mentone said goodbye to someone who had been part of the town's fabric for a long while. Thomas Walter "Walt" Pullen, 76, passed away at his home. Born here in 1948 to Bill and Grace Pullen, Walt was the kind of person who made Mentone feel like home to a lot of folks.

Walt was a familiar face to many. He was a breakfast regular at the market for years. He was also a staunch supporter of MERF.

Former MERF Executive Director Sarah Wilcox shared:

"Walt was a dedicated and active MERF board member from its early days until late 2023. He contributed his time, skills, and knowledge to maintain the grounds, house, and assist with festival and auction setups. Many board meetings ended with Walt sharing rich stories of Mentone's history and its people…" Sarah said. "He always had a smile, wore his beloved overalls, and was ready for a MERF lunch. My favorite memory is the day he stopped mowing MERF's lawn to come tell me about his new girlfriend, Gelane, who soon became his wife."

Walt is survived by his wife Gelane, his children and stepchildren, a number of grandkids and great-grandkids, siblings, and extended family. And while he lost loved ones over the years, he carried their memory with quiet strength.



Walt Pullen in 2016, enjoying breakfast at the Mentone Market.

Mentone won't be quite the same without Walt, but the people who knew him — who sat and talked with him, laughed with him, or simply waved across a parking lot — will remember.

His family has asked that those wishing to honor him consider donating to Bankhead Cemetery (P.O. Box 193, Mentone, AL 35984).

Big Changes *(continued from page 1)*



"My son-in-law talked me into coming out here," Robert says. "I had no intention of playing golf. I brought fishing poles to keep myself entertained. I caught up to them around the 17th hole and they put a driver in my hand. I swung at the ball eight times before I hit it. When I finally hit it, it went a mile, and I said, 'Let me do that again.' The rest is history. I got the bug and fell in love with this game."

The family is eager to share their enthusiasm. The club is inviting golfers and guests alike to celebrate its relaunch on Saturday, July 26, with a day packed full of golf, prizes, and Southern-style hospitality. The event will center around a four-man scramble golf tournament, but the new owners have pulled together a range of festivities beyond the fairways — raffles, door prizes, and skill-based challenges such as Longest Drive and Closest to the Pin, with cash payouts for top shots.

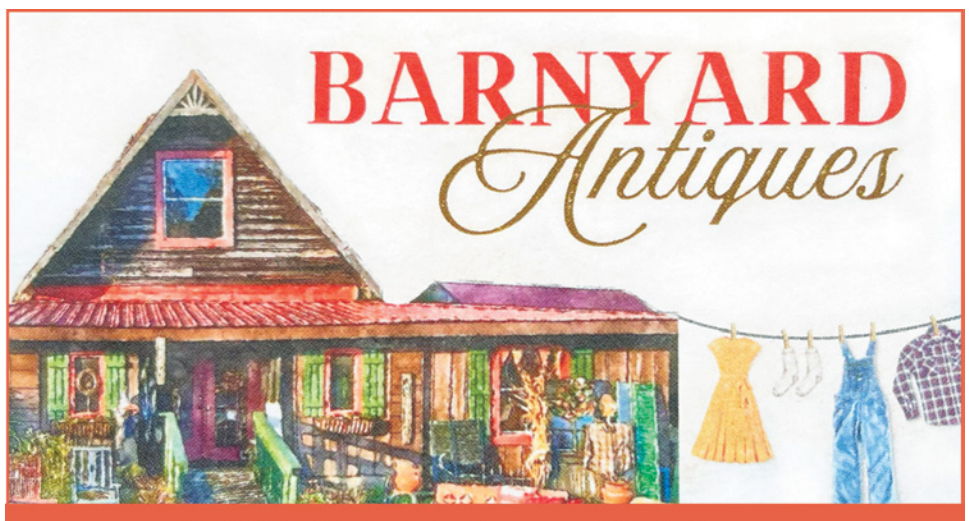
Food is also part of the fun. Lunch is included with tournament entry and features crowd-pleasing options, such as pulled pork or chicken quarters, with classic sides — baked beans, coleslaw, and potato salad, plus dessert and drinks. For those not swinging clubs but still wanting to get in on the celebration, lunch-only tickets are available for $12.

Beyond the grand opening festivities, Little Mole Country Club aims to offer a well-rounded experience for all who visit. The club features an 18-hole course, clubhouse, driving range, putting green, fishing pond, an onsite campground featuring 26 campsites that accommodate RVs, and four spots for motor coaches.

And get ready for Friday Night Lights — yes, that's right — night golf! This fun event will feature glow-in-the-dark golf balls, lighted flagsticks and cart paths, and glow necklaces for the players. Future goals include a putt-putt course and a splashpad.

The course has drawn golfers to the peaceful surroundings for years, and now the community and visitors can enjoy a full recreational retreat for the whole family.

For more information, camping details, and tournament registration, visit www.lilmolerun.com. Email the facility at littlemolecc@gmail.com.



4616 DeSoto Parkway • Fort Payne
HOURS: Wed-Sat 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sun 1-5 p.m.



Advertise in The Groundhog
email: groundhogads@yahoo.com

HWK CONSTRUCTION



- Timber Frame Construction
- Homes
- Pergolas
- Barns

HWK Construction Model Showcase

Join us at **Elevation Bistro** (5951 AL-117, Mentone) on **July 23 from 4-7 p.m.** to enjoy wine and cheese as you "tour" 7 scale models of our designs.

Contractors and general public are welcome. Frame design and construction available for purchase.

Harry Krippes
423-304-7870
Licensed & Insured

Long-Awaited Renovations Begin at the MERF House

BY KATIE HAND

This spring, as I watched my son play barefoot in puddles, hike muddy trails with wide eyes, and laugh with friends as they played in the rain (an ungodly amount this year and surely record-breaking), I was reminded of just how deeply rooted wonder and resilience are in this place. We've watched a tree fall during a storm, discovered a snapping turtle wandering through our yard, and even spotted a bear crossing the rocks outside our kitchen window — clearly not in search of water!

These moments, wild and real, have grounded me as a parent. They remind me that raising my son here allows him to grow in safety, freedom, and awe. His curiosity is shaped not by screens or schedules, but by nature — muddy, unpredictable, and full of life. This area, more than any parenting book or plan, allows me to be and grow into the kind of mom I always hoped I could be. And it lets him be a child, in the most natural, unfiltered state.

That's why I'm so thrilled to share that something else close to my heart is getting the chance to grow again: the MERF House is being updated at last! After years of dreaming, planning, and hoping, MERF is proud to announce that renovations are officially underway on this cherished space.

Thanks to a generous $1,000 grant from the Poarch Creek Indians, along with support from the Alabama Historical Commission and private donations from both near and far, MERF is finally able to begin much-needed updates. Without this collective support, we simply couldn't have started this undertaking, and we are so grateful.

Since opening in 1995, the MERF House has served as a vital hub for Mentone and Valley Head. It has always been a space of laughter, learning, and connection. Now it's time to give that same care back to the house itself.

"This generous grant from the Poarch Creek Indians will help us preserve and enhance a space that means so much to our community," said Kathryn Norris, board chair of MERF. "We're incredibly grateful for their investment in the future of the MERF House."

Local firm LeonardDesign is already gearing up. Carpets will be pulled, tools will be humming, and soon this well-loved space will begin to transform. The MERF House is set to become, once again, a centripetal force in our community: a place that brings people together and lifts them up. And most dear to my heart, it will remain a space where families, parents, and children come together in joy and community. In bringing new life to the MERF House, we honor the past, serve the present, and invest in the future of our community.

Katie Hand is executive director of MERF. For more information, visit MERFhouse.org, email merf.mentone@gmail.com, or call 256-979-4962.

Valley Head Students Receive Scholarships and Awards

MERF is proud to announce the winners of the 2025 Carter Holland Scholarship and Mountain Spirit Awards. The Carter Holland Educational Fund, established by Carter's family and friends after his passing, is a way to continue his legacy by recognizing extraordinary examples of kindness and leadership. The fund not only provides money for scholarships for graduating seniors, but it also enables the school and MERF to acknowledge and reward younger students who display a giving spirit and strong commitment to their community, among other qualities.



The Carter Holland Scholarship winners are:

- Nathaniel Maier
- Makayla Gilbert
- Sadie Young
- Eli Day
- Lila McElhaney

Mountain Spirit Award winners are:

- Johnny Mann
- Braxtin Meadows
- Kylah Ogle

Congratulations to you all!

Join the MERF Team as a Bookkeeper



Are you a detail-oriented individual with a passion for numbers and community service? MERF (Mentone Educational Resources Foundation) is seeking a dedicated bookkeeper to assist our local nonprofit organization for approximately two hours per week. Your expertise will help us maintain accurate financial records and ensure the smooth operation of our programs. This is a wonderful opportunity to contribute to a meaningful local cause in the Mentone area while utilizing your accounting skills.

Requirements:

- Experience with Quickbooks and/or Quickbooks for Nonprofits preferred
- Strong organizational and time management skills
- Commitment to integrity and confidentiality

Please call MERF at 245-979-4962 or email your interest to merf.mentone@gmail.com





Rediscovering Nature's Grace

Mentone's Moore reflects on lessons from her hiking accident

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

Caroline Moore doesn't remember the fall.

She woke up in the woods, alone and dazed. Somehow, she knew she had to get home. What she didn't know — couldn't know in those first disoriented moments — was just how serious her injuries were. She walked for more than an hour through familiar forest, past quiet rock faces and trees she'd hiked by dozens of times before, until the roofline of her home came into view. Only then did her body release its truth: she was hurt, and badly.

"I reached up and touched my lip," she says. "And I looked down and thought, that's so weird … there's blood on my hands."

It was February 19, 2025. And it would become a date she would revisit again and again.

The Comfort – and Dangers – of the Woods

Moore is not a casual hiker. She is, by her own words, someone who lives outside. "Being outside is a very nourishing, restorative, soul-reconnecting experience," she says. "It grounds me and helps me feel grateful for being alive."

A teacher, owner of a shop at Moon Lake Campus, and a lifelong lover of the outdoors, Caroline has always turned to nature for grounding. Raised in Birmingham, she grew up hiking the trails at Red Mountain Park and waterfall-hopping on weekends. Her deep relationship with the outdoors followed her to Mentone, where her roots run deep; her great-great-grandfather founded the Lookout Mountain Camp for Boys almost 100 years ago.

In addition to working at Camp DeSoto during the summer, Moore is MERF's art instructor at Valley Head School. After long days teaching, she often heads straight to the woods. "I wear my hiking boots to work," she says, "and go straight from the classroom to the trails."

It was on such a hike earlier this year that Moore's life took a turn. She was exploring the wooded cliffs near her home, hiking a route she'd taken more than 20 times.

"I think because I was so familiar with these woods and because I had been hiking so much in them, I almost got numb to the danger and the risk," she says.

It had rained the day before, and the rocks were slick. Moore was headed to a set of secluded caves — a beautiful spot she had visited many times before — when she slipped between two rocks. Her face struck the stone, and she was knocked unconscious. She doesn't remember the impact.

Upon waking up some time later, she remained calm. Perhaps it was shock. Or perhaps, as she describes it, something larger.

"I just had a deep sense of peace about it," she says. "Like something bigger than me carried me back. I felt protected."

Numb and in shock, Moore hiked more than an hour back to her home. The image reflected back to her in the mirror was startling. "I was like, 'I need stitches. This is really dangerous,'" she recalls.

She called her mother, Deedee Morrison, who was more than an hour away, then lay down, put a wet washcloth on her face, and waited.



Mentone's Caroline Moore has not let her accident keep her from enjoying the wonders of nature. (Photo by Deedee Morrison)

Once at the hospital, Moore received ten stitches: three in her lip, five in her eyebrow, and two under her eye. She began what would become an extended recovery from a serious concussion.

"The concussion really humbled me," she says. "I couldn't remember names, couldn't remember appointments. It was scary to not know if I would come back to feeling like myself."

Falling Forward

Moore knows she was lucky. She could have lost an eye. She could have broken bones or teeth. She could have died.

Instead, she found something unexpected in the aftermath: grace.

"I don't think it's really the fall that matters," she says. "It's the response. And mine showed me the beauty of being alive, of being supported, of not being alone."

Her face healed faster than expected. And her spirit was nourished through the support and kindness shown to her by the community.

Weeks after the accident, Moore returned to the trail where it happened. She felt the anxiety. Then she breathed through it.

"It's like falling off a horse," she says. "You have to get back up. I'm not going to let fear rule my life."

(See "Moore," Page 14)

BARGAIN DEPOT
Online Returns & More
YOU WILL SAVE MONEY!!
4306 Williams Ave. NE
Fort Payne, AL 35967
Just South of Fort Payne High School - 256-273-6877

Heather Nicely
REALTOR
256.276.8422
I love matching people to the property of their dreams!
CENTURY 21 BELLORA
256.999.0318 | 706.657.3000

U-PICK & POP-UP MARKETS
SATURDAY
JULY 12 & 26, 2025
9 AM - 1 PM
CENTRAL
BLUEBERRY FALLS FARM
UNIQUE STAYS · U-PICK
331 ROAD 944 • MENTONE, AL • 910-214-5779
U-PICK BLUEBERRIES - LIVE MUSIC - VENDORS
BLUEBERRY FALLS FARM | 331 ROAD 944, MENTONE, AL 35984 | 910-214-5779

Rhododendron Garden Club

RGC's Annual Clean-Up and the Buzz About Bees





BY MELLANIE TUTTLE

In June, the RGC had its annual clean-up around the Moon Lake Campus. Trees and shrubs were pruned; weeds were pulled; limbs were loaded onto the berm. Whoo hoo and thanks to all who were able to help. Vacationers and those claiming old bones were excused from duty. No animals were harmed in the process.



And Now a Word About Bees

Solitary bees are amazing. Most native bees in the U.S. are solitary. No hives. No honey. No drones or worker bees to help. They make up 98% of the native bee species and have a pollination success rate of 95%. The non-native honeybee success rate is 5%. Solitary bees are the James Brown and Rodney Dangerfield of the bee world!

Carpenter bees, mason bees, leaf cutter bees, and sweat bees vary in size, color, shape, behavior, and nesting site preference, but their commonality is solitary living. The mason bee (Osmia) female prefers nesting in naturally occurring tubular cavities. After mating, she will begin collecting pollen and nectar to build a mass. Once the mass is large enough, she then backs into the tube, laying an egg on top of the mass. She creates a wall of mud to enclose the egg and repeats the process until the tube is filled. She plugs the entrance and may build another nest. The egg hatches, consumes its pollen mass, and during the larval stage spins a cocoon around itself for the pupal stage. The adult matures in the fall or winter and hibernates in the cocoon until emerging in the spring. Front eggs hatch as males, the back ones are female. Only female bees have a scopa, which is used to transport pollen. Males never transport pollen and do not have stingers — their only role is to mate. The Osmia scopa, located under her abdomen (not on the hind legs like most bees) allows for almost 100 percent pollination. Farmers love the mason bee.

If your rose bush leaves have semi-circular cuts, the leaf-cutter bee (Megachile rotundata) is the culprit. Be ecstatic! There's minimal damage to the plant, and wonderful pollinators are nearby. Instead of mud, leaf-cutter bees use those pieces of leaves to line their nests and make the walls between the eggs.

Ground nesting bees: do not confuse the solitary gentle bees with the yellowjacket, an aggressive social wasp. Don't pour gasoline, water, or pesticide down the bee hole, please! Solitary bees rarely sting. It may seem like a swarm of metallic bees or honeybee look-alikes emerging from the ground in spring, but it's actually because ground bees nest in large aggregates. Multiple nesting holes are closely located but each nesting site is made by a solitary bee. It's like a bee townhome community. Some species will use the same mud tunnels year after year. Plasterer bees (Colletidae) smooth their nest walls into a cellophane-like lining. Miners bees (Andrenidae) love to excavate and pollinate blueberries. Sweat bees (Halictidae) are attracted to perspiration. Don't panic. Most stinging occurs when swatting at a female. The dissolved electrolytes on the skin is the big attraction, so let them lick your skin.

Of the 4,000 native bees in the United States, the bumblebee (Bombus hymorum) is the only social bee. The female builds a nest, creates a caste system, and produces a wax-like honey substance. But no one is harvesting bumblebee honey, and unlike the structured hexagonal honeybee hive, bumblebee nests are messy and seldom seen. Imagine a small-ish-sized football lined with grassy fibers containing waxy pots that look like caramel popcorn. Depending on the species, some build underground in abandoned rodent holes, or on the surface of the grounds in mossy vegetation or even in tree hollows or bird boxes. Wildflowers, tomatoes, peppers, and cranberries benefit from "buzz pollination" where the bumblebee jaw grasps a flower and then vibrates its wings to dislodge the pollen.

A fun project to do with the grands this summer is to make a Bee Hotel. One YouTube site gave directions for drilling 5-6 inch holes into a log using ¼- and ⅜-inch drill bits. Be sure to sand around the holes so no splinters are left to damage fragile wings. This could be an alternate wood option for those pesky carpenter bees. A viewer was concerned about being able to clean the tubes after the bees emerged. A can or wooden structure filled with paper straws will solve that problem. The Ritz-Carlton of Bee Hotels is stacked pallets, openings stuffed with leaves, pine cones, sticks, tubes, and bricks. Whatever the size or style, hotels should have full morning sun and be placed 100-200 yards from the pollen source and 50 yards from a mud source.

For ground nesting bees, don't spray the yard with pesticides. Leave some areas unmulched so tunneling is easy. Allow the fall leaves to stay for site protection over the winter.

The July 8 RGC meeting will be held in the library at 10 a.m. Pat Parmelee, RGC member and Master Gardener, will present a program on Shade Gardens. Ah, lovely shade in the heat of summer.

Mellanie Tuttle is a member of the Rhododendron Garden Club.

Join us!

The RGC meets each month on the second Tuesday. We are currently meeting in the Moon Lake Library and gather at 10 a.m. Please join us for connection and conviviality. RGC is a member of the National Garden Club, Deep South, Garden Club of AL, District ll, and NE AL Federation of Garden Clubs.

GREAT SOUTHEAST Pollinator Census

The Alabama Master Gardeners and Garden Clubs are participating in this year's University of Georgia Extension's Great Southeast Pollinator Census. If you're interested in joining the count this year:

1. Sign up for the newsletter.
2. Prepare for the count days on August 22 and 23 by downloading the printable counting sheet and checking out the Insect Counting and Identification Guide.
3. Join the Southeast Pollinator Census Facebook page and follow them on Instagram @SoutheastPollinators
4. View the Pollinator Census - How-To and History: http://youtu.be/LNgrSzuGRQc
5. For info on Alabama contact bethany@auburn.edu.
6. Upload your counts to this website. gsepc.org. The portal to upload counts will open early on August 22nd.



Your local Realtor

SHERRY SCHOENHEIT

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE CONSULTATION

256-212-0252

- Over 25 years experience
- Seller's Representative Specialist
- Accredited Buyer's Representative
- Licensed in Alabama & Florida

AL ALABAMA LIVING REAL ESTATE CO.

The PACKAGE Store

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE APPROVED SHIPPER · FedEx Authorized ShipCenter · UPS · DHL

Fort Payne
601 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne, AL 35967
Phone: 256-845-7225
Fax: 256-845-7796

Rainsville
122 Main Street East
Rainsville, AL 35986
Phone: 256-638-7225
Fax: 256-638-7225

packagestore601@gmail.com
Hours: Monday - Friday: 9am-5pm | Saturday: 9am-1pm

Copies	Shipping Supplies	Notary
Business Cards	Stamps & Postage	Faxing
Photos	Shipping Experts	Passport Photo
Banners	International Shipping	Shredding
Large Format	Next Day Delivery	Lamination
Binding	Postal Services	Mailbox Rental

"Quality & Service You Can Build With !"

BUILDERS SUPPLY CO, INC.

ANDERSEN WINDOWS & DOORS

Fort Payne
611 Godfrey Ave. S.
Ph: (256) 845-1451
Fax: (256) 845-5692

Scottsboro
615 East Willow St.
Ph: (256) 259-2211
Fax: (256) 259-0159

Sylvania
22916 Sylvania Ave. S.
Ph: (256) 638-2244
Fax: (256) 638-9706

More Than Books at Moon Lake Library

BY ANNE MCLEOD

Pop into the library on any given day, and you're likely to find a quiet or even a not-so-quiet hub of activity. While its book collection is growing every month with the purchase of current bestsellers and patron requests, the library offers a number of other services and resources to local families and visitors alike.

For instance:

Copy services: Save a trip off the mountain. Let the library print or copy documents for you. Black and white copies are just a quarter each; color is fifty cents.

Tax preparation: For the third year in a row, Moon Lake Library hosted free tax prep during tax season. Dottye Pierce provides this valuable service through RSVP, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

Movie nights: Enjoy movies with friends and family usually once a month at the library. The Friends of Moon Lake Library provides a film license that allows us to show popular movies. We've shown first-run films such as "Barbie" and "Wicked" as soon as they were available. We've also shown seasonal classics and shivered through an Alfred Hitchcock mini-film series.

Children's programs: Lynn Vanderhoff provides sessions for kids ages 3-6 each Thursday at 3 p.m. during the Summer Reading Program. Older children are welcome to help with crafts, games, and story time.

Meeting space: Need a room for a program or meeting? Check with the library. We've had groups use the main library for large gatherings or classes or the Hazel Huntsinger Community Room for smaller meetings. There is a small charge if the activity is for profit.

Ukulele lessons: The Mentone Ukes, the library's house band, practice at 1 p.m. every other Saturday. Beginners are always welcome!

Adult programming: The library's featured speakers present a variety of programs on topics as wide-ranging as the Antarctic, falconry, and arthritis pain. We also occasionally host authors who share the backstory of their books and their paths to publication.

Free wifi: Thanks to our membership in the Alabama Supercomputer Consortium, the library has a strong wifi network both inside and outside. Join Moon Lake Guest network and you will be online quickly, even out in the parking lot.

Canning kit: Want to try your hand at hot water bath canning but don't have the equipment? Check out the canning kit and you'll be on your way.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: Friends of Moon Lake Library fund enrollment in Dolly Parton's remarkable literacy program that provides free books monthly to children ages 0-5 in the 35984 zip code. Sign up online or stop by the library to register.

Interest groups: Want to up your game at Scrabble or Mah Jongg? Need an early morning yoga class? Do you knit or crochet or want to learn? Look for the monthly list of activities or sign up for the library's email newsletter to get the latest updates on what happens when.

Anne McLeod is the librarian at Moon Lake Library.

JULY 2025
AT MOON LAKE LIBRARY

Weekly Meet-Ups:
YOGA – Mondays & Wednesdays at 7:30 a.m.; free, donations accepted.

MAH JONGG – Tuesdays at noon. Beginners welcome.

KNITTING and CROCHET – Tuesdays at 2 p.m.

SCRABBLE – Wednesdays at noon.

LITTLE LIBRARY LEARNERS – (For kids ages 3-6, older helpers welcome) Thursdays at 3 p.m. in July except for July 3.

July 1-5 – LIBRARY CLOSED FOR CARPET INSTALLATION.

July 1 at 3 p.m. - Municipal library board meeting; 4 p.m. Friends of Moon Lake Library Board meeting. Location to be announced.

July 11 at 6 p.m. – Family Game Night! Bring a snack to share if you can, and we'll enjoy board games and cards at the library.

July 12 at 10:30 a.m. – The Moon Lake Library Book Club will read and share a childhood favorite OR Newbery Medal winner.

July 16 at 2 p.m. – Come to the library for an informative talk about our neighbors, the American black bears.

July 19 at 10:30 a.m. – Summer Reading Program Activities for all ages! Follow us on Facebook or subscribe to our email newsletter for details to come! The theme this year: Color Our World.

July 19 at 1 p.m. – Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

July 20 at 2 p.m. – Special showing of Neal Wooten's new video, "Granny Dollar, Daughter of the Cherokee." Questions and answers to follow.

July 25 at 6 p.m. – Movie Night "Enchanted" (PG, 2007). Disney spoofs Disney in this delightful family musical starring Amy Adams, a Disney princess who ends up in real-life Manhattan.

Moon Lake Library
4607 Hwy 117 • Mentone AL • 256-634-2127
Tues-Fri 12 - 4:30 p.m. • Sat 10 a.m. -1 p.m.
moonlakelibrary.org
books@moonlakelibrary.org

Public Libraries Provide Services for Blind and Disabled Patrons

If you or someone you know is blind, losing their vision, or unable to read print books due to physical disabilities, public libraries can help. The Alabama Public Library Service offers reading materials to the blind and physically disabled through the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled. This regional library clearing house is in the basement of the APLS building in Montgomery. Each day, the staff mails out around 350 books or digital readers to thousands of patrons around the state.

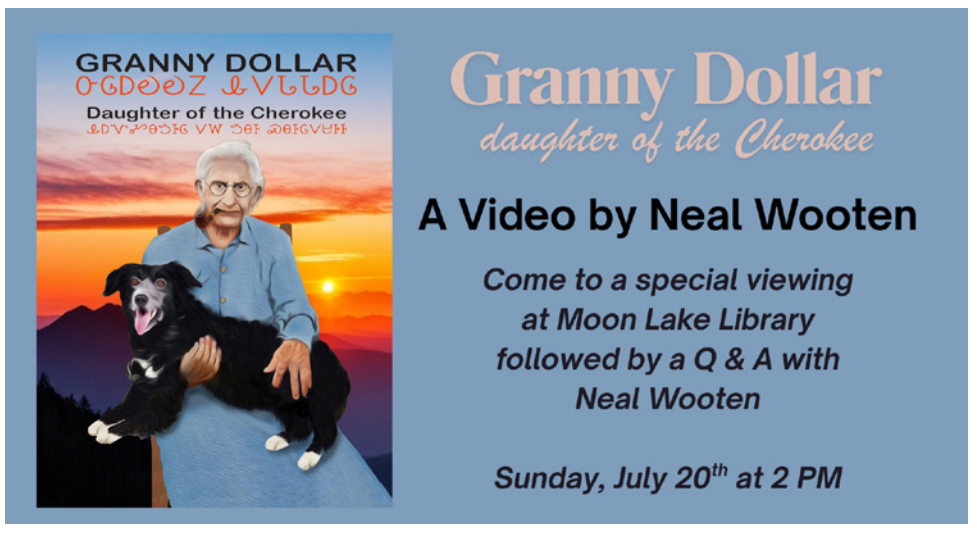
Reading materials come in a variety of formats, including braille and different types of audiobooks. In 2013, an app called "BARD: Braille and Audio Reading Download" was released through the Library of Congress. BARD allows access to well over 100,000 books in various formats. The Regional Library circulates books and magazines in braille or audio formats that are instantly downloadable to a personal device or delivered by mail.

Who is eligible for services through the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled?

1. An individual who is blind or has a visual impairment that makes them unable to comfortably read print books.
2. An individual who has a perceptual or reading disability.
3. An individual who has a physical disability that makes it hard to hold or manipulate a book or to focus or move the eyes as needed to read a print book. This might be due to a stroke or other physical problems.

We know that there are many patrons around the state who could benefit from these services. Contact Moon Lake Library for more information and an application to establish eligibility for these free services.







Introducing Moon Lake Arts Collective

You can be part of making this public access art studio a reality

BY JULI JORDAN

Mentone's arts scene is growing roots — and those roots just got a $20,000 boost! Thanks to a Creative Places Arts Facilities* seed grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the Little River Arts Council is excited to launch the Moon Lake Arts Collective, a new public-access pottery and art studio coming to Moon Lake Campus. This project is about nurturing art from the ground up in the heart of Mentone.

Located on the site of the former greenhouse behind Moon Lake School, the studio will be a place where creativity meets community. This multi-use art space will feature a dedicated ceramics studio and a flexible classroom for a variety of workshops — painting, fused glass, woodworking, and more. The collective will offer pottery memberships, Make-Your-Own pottery activities, and classes led by local and visiting artists.

A guild-style membership model will offer access based on tier, including a volunteer-supported level to help those on tight budgets take part. To fulfill the LRAC motto, "We believe art is for everyone," class scholarships for participants with financial need will be available — ensuring cost is never a barrier to creativity.

The flexible classroom will provide much-needed dedicated art space for use by area organizations, including LRAC, Mentone Arts & Cultural Center, Northeast Alabama Community College, and others.

While the ASCA grant helped us get started, we're working to raise an additional $55,000+ to fully bring the studio to life. If this is something you'd like to help make happen, we'd love to talk with you. Donors will be permanently recognized on the interior Donor Wall, while those giving $2,500 or more will be honored



on an exterior metal oak tree, with donor names cut into leaves carrying forward the oak symbolism from the historic Moon Lake School.

More information can be found on our website littleriverartscouncil.org under Moon Lake Arts Collective. Want to talk? Email Juli & Deedee at info@littleriverartscouncil.org.

**The Creative Places Arts Facilities program strengthens Alabama's creative economy by providing grants for the construction, renovation, restoration, or enhancement of arts facilities across the state. Public funding, through special appropriation from the Alabama State Legislature, makes these grants possible and is essential for fostering arts, culture, and community growth.*

First Friday – July 4 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Moon Lake Campus

Celebrate summer (and a little red, white, and blue) with family-friendly fun! This month's art activity is clay star bowls, and we'll have cool treats like s'mores and watermelon/lime licuado to keep things festive. Local galleries and shops will have extended hours, and we'll be joined by a great lineup of pop-up artists, including: EclectArt Studios, Pamela Atkins, Irene Millsap, and Absolutely Creations. Come show your stars and stripes and support local art!

Music for the People – July 12, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Mentone Inn

Mentone's Summer Music Series rolls on with a favorite from Fort Payne — The Locals, a rock-and-roll cover band guaranteed to get your feet moving. And while you're there, grab a plate of BBQ from St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain. Proceeds support their community outreach programs. Bring your blanket or camp chairs and enjoy music under the stars on the grounds of the Mentone Inn behind the Linger Longer Pavilion.

Make Your Mark on Mentone

This summer's newest chalk mural has us ready to climb a tree and break into a happy dance! The latest Make Your Mark on Mentone mural celebrates the creativity of Valley Head School, with a whimsical design led by art teacher Caroline Moore and inspired by her talented students.

"It is such a blessing to be able to work for MERF, teaching kids the joy and wonder of art and celebrating their creative expression," said Moore. "This mural is about encouraging kids to be outside, experience nature, and enjoy education."

Next up in August: Blair and May Newman, a mother-daughter team creating their first chalk mural together. The Make Your Mark on Mentone mural display is on the grounds of the Mentone Inn. Every two months, a different artist creates a new mural with a Lookout Mountain theme.

Featured Artist: Lisa Sulkosky

This month we shine a light on Lisa Sulkosky, a self-taught artist who has been painting for over 35 years. Working primarily in watercolor and acrylic, Lisa's art reflects a deep love for nature and small-town life. Now happily retired in Mentone, she recently opened Sunflower Studio, a cozy space where visitors can enjoy and purchase her original artwork. Be sure to stop by and say hello! And come see her collection at Little River Art Gallery on the Moon Lake Campus. Open Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Juli Jordan is president of the Little River Arts Council.



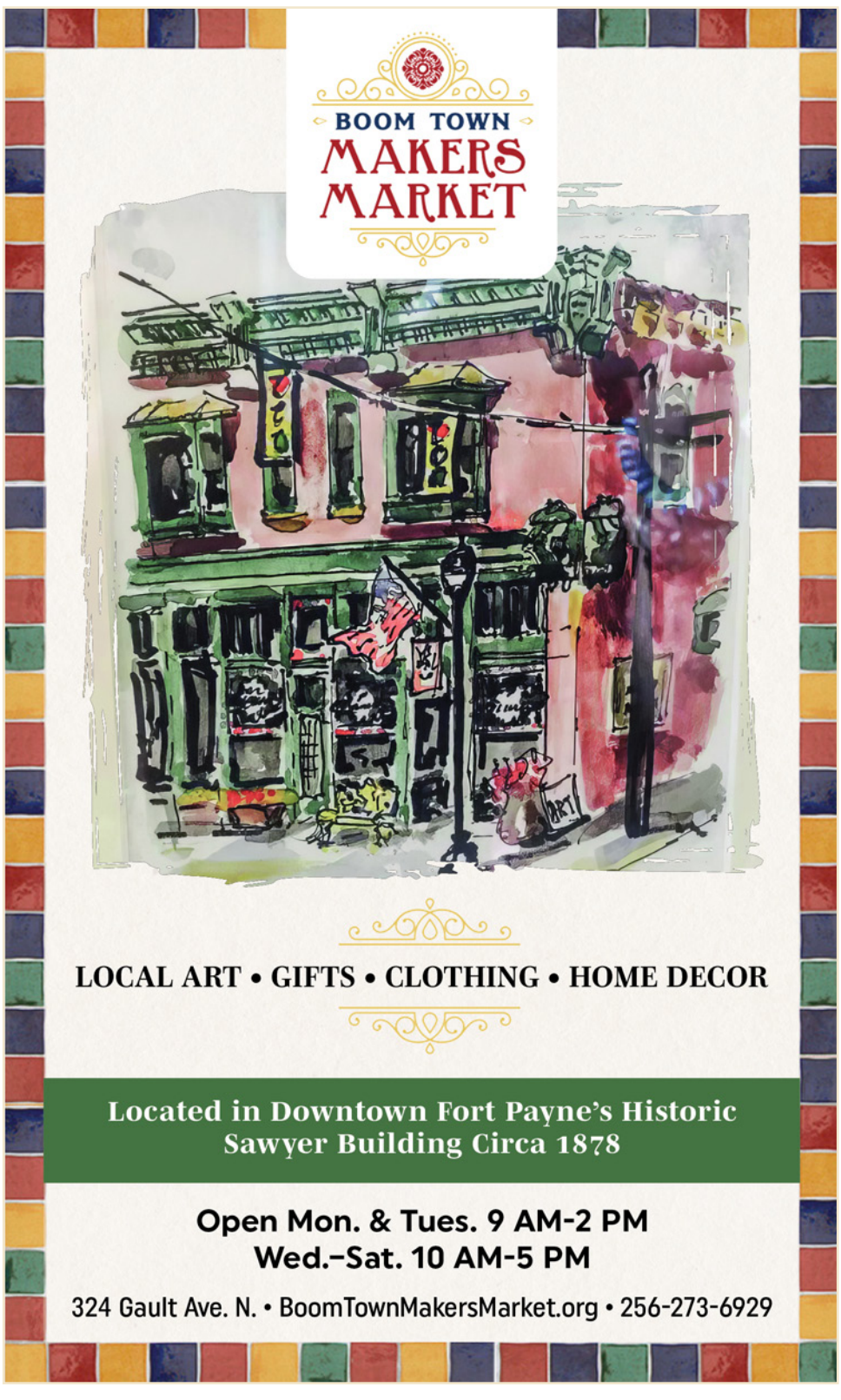
The Locals will be in concert Saturday, July 12 behind Mentone Inn.



The latest "Make Your Mark on Mentone" chalk mural by Caroline Moore.



Lisa Sulkosky is our Little River Art Gallery featured artist.







Mentone Arts Center

The Mentone Arts Center's Gallery Is a Must-See

BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Whether you're looking for works of art from creators across the region or directions to area attractions, your first stop should be the Mentone Arts Center.

Step into the heart of Mentone's creative spirit, where the region's rich artistic heritage comes to life. Explore the vibrant gallery and gift shop, full of one-of-a-kind art. Browse for inspiration, a unique gift, or a special piece for your home. The arts center is your destination for authentic mountain-made beauty.

Opened in 2020, the Mentone Arts Center is a 501(c)(3) corporation established to operate and maintain the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts. The center was named in honor of the late Atlanta aerial photographer Charles O. "Chuck" Sennett, the son of the center's two earliest supporters, Dr. Charles O. "Soc" and Barbara Sennett.

Beyond its collection of art for sale, the center hosts workshops and events throughout the year. Many of the displays are on wheels, allowing them to be rolled back to open the floor for seating for attendees to enjoy live music on the Ray and Sandra Padgett stage.

"We exist to 'promote, propagate, and protect our community's artistic roots for current and future generations,'" says Randy Grider, the art center's executive director. Toward that end, the center also collaborates with other local non-profit organizations, including the Little River Arts Council and the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation.

The arts center has become a cultural hub for Mentone and Lookout Mountain. Come see what's new. Your next favorite art piece, instruction, or musical performance is waiting for you!

Hours of Operation:
Monday: 10am - 4pm
Thursday: 10am - 4pm
Friday: 10am - 4pm
Saturday: 10am - 4pm
Sunday: 10am - 4pm

Location:
5951 Alabama Hwy 117, Mentone, AL

Contact:
Email mentoneartscenter@gmail.com or phone 256-674-3366.



Ginger Lawry's equine-themed art adds a dynamic pop of color to any wall.



Allen McElhaney's handcrafted teak chair is one of the stunning pieces of furniture showcased in the gallery.



Don David is one of the artists whose works hang in the gallery. This piece just makes you feel like you're home.



David Patterson's wood salt and pepper shakers and wine stoppers make unique gifts for the kitchen.



The pottery around the gallery reflects the natural beauty of Lookout Mountain.



Meg Tannehill Justice's hand-carved, hand-printed linocuts are made from oil-based ink on archival paper.

ALLIANCE FOR DADE
Business • Tourism • Community

50 curated artists from the tri-state area present their original artwork – paintings, sculpture, pottery, jewelry, ceramics, gourds, fabric art and more!

Look Who's Coming

with additional support from:
DADE COUNTY Georgia
epb
TVN
CLOUDLAND VILLAS

TWO MOUNTAINS FINE ART SHOW
TRENTON, GA SM

August 9, 2025
10:00AM-4:00PM



Free Admission
Air-Conditioned Comfort
Free Parking

DADE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL EVENT CENTER
300 Tradition Lane - Trenton, GA

www.VisitDadeGA.com

Brown's Cleaning & Laundry
FULL LAUNDRY SERVICE
"Continuous service by the same family since 1933"
Suede, Leather & Fur Cleaning | Fire Restoration & Odor Removal
Wedding Gown Preservation | Feather Pillow Cleaning & Re-ticking
Bedding & Household Items
817 Gault Ave. N., Fort Payne, AL 35967 • 256-845-3241
Open Monday through Friday • 7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

live music EVERY WEEKEND!
BACK FORTY BALLROOM
Vintage 1889 • Fort Payne
For event schedule or more information visit
BackFortyBallroom.com

Vintage 1889
VINTAGE 1889 RESTAURANT
Open Monday-Saturday for Lunch
and Thursday-Saturday for Dinner

BIG MILL CO.
ARTISANS AND ANTIQUES
BIG MILL ANTIQUES
Open Monday-Saturday
10 a.m.–5 p.m.

8TH STREET NORTHEAST IN HISTORIC DOWNTOWN FORT PAYNE, ALABAMA • 256-845-3380



New Legionnaire Park a Tribute to Community and Service

BY BARRY MORTON

American Legion Post 215 now boasts a beautifully enhanced space known as Legionnaire Park, a project brought to life through a combination of grant funding and donations, local craftsmanship, and volunteer hours.

Last fall, the post received a $6,000 grant from the Alabama Mountains, Rivers & Valleys Resource Conservation and Development Council (AMRVCD) for a privacy fence. After surveying the property to determine boundaries for the new fence, we discovered the post owns more property than previously thought.

Paul J. Vishaway, a retired Seabee with a builder certification, and I created a plan for the new park. Paul J. not only did some of the work himself but he also oversaw the project. We received a generous cash donation from the DeKalb Master Gardeners to help with the effort. The budget for the grant money was: $2,000 for the survey; $1,800 for the bricklayer; $2,200 at Lowes for Adirondack chairs, propane fire pit and heaters, and wiring that included dimmable string lights. With donated labor and donations applied to materials, we built a swing and replaced some 77-year-old plumbing. We also put in a woodburning fire pit for the retirement ceremony of American Flags.

As a non-profit, 501c19 organization, we were able to obtain further donations to enhance the space:

- Lowes: Donated wood for the privacy fence and provided the labor to install it.
- Builders Supply: Donated concrete blocks to rebuild a wall.
- Dixie Salvage: Contributed two picnic tables and, previously, a propane grill.
- Mentone Public Works Director Paul Nail: Delivered and graded several truckloads of dirt and seeded the area with grass.

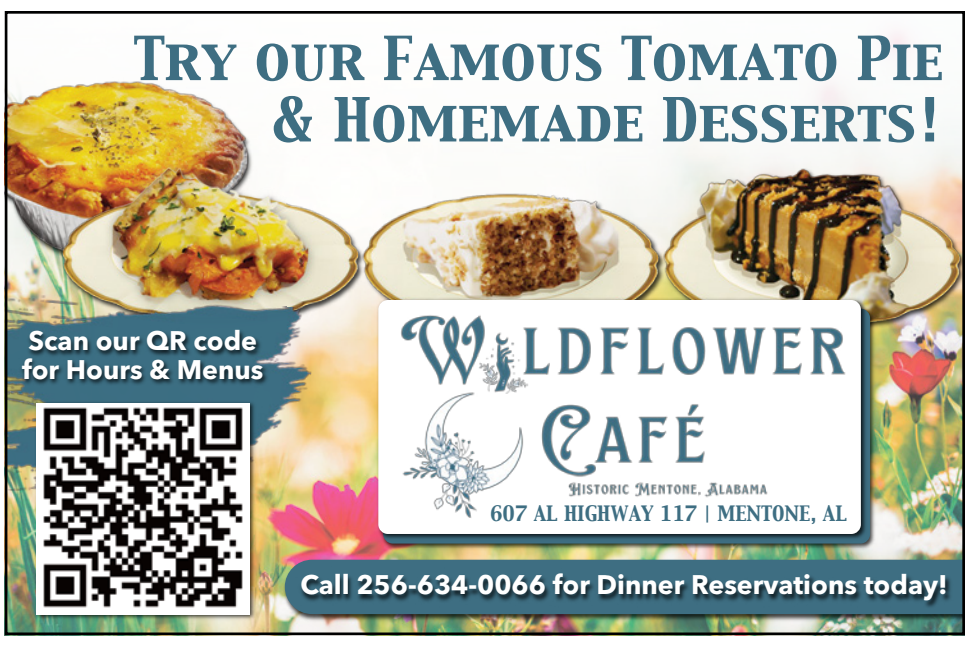
The park has nine military flags on the privacy fence with the dates of their establishment on a wooden plaque beneath each. In future Groundhog issues, I will write about how the military flags were designed. Next month will be the U.S. Army, followed by, in order of their founding, the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Space Force, U.S. Seabees, Don't Tread on Me, U.S. Merchant Marines and finally the United States of America flag.

For more information and photos of how our new outdoor addition came together, please check out "Mentone American Legion Post 215" on Facebook.



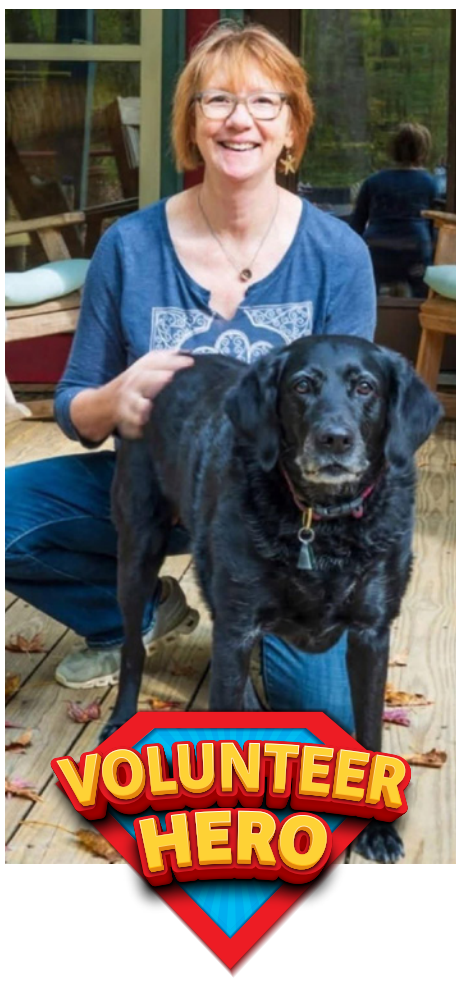
Follow The Groundhog on Facebook







Groundhog Volunteer Hero: Juli Jordan



Our spotlight of gratitude shines this month on the dedicated, hardworking Little River Arts Council President Juli Jordan. And she's the Groundhog Hero for another reason, but we'll get to that later.

Juli grew up in Gadsden, Alabama. One evening, she was in town staying at her family cabin when she heard music coming from the Linger Longer Pavilion.

"I heard a band playing and followed it to the Mentone Inn and LRAC's free summer concert. I couldn't believe it! I always loved the tour of homes and made a point to be here, not just for the tour but for the art auction. When I officially moved to Mentone in 2020, Kelly Leavitt invited me to join LRAC. I liked what they were up to and spent the first year digging into their history. I think it's important to learn about the beginnings of an organization and the people that shaped it along the way."

Juli's been president of LRAC since 2022. The best part of being involved in the organization, she says, is the people. "We have the most supportive, kind, and creative board members. The Little River Art Gallery has really made our connections stronger and created an opportunity to get to know our wonderful volunteers and artists. LRAC was my way into this precious community. And for that I am so grateful."

Speaking of groundhogs, the town has a new mascot — the animated and adorable Lookout the Groundhog. Who's the hero who relishes putting on that costume and engaging with anyone who crosses her path? One Juli Jordan, that's who!

"Being Lookout the Groundhog is the most fun," she says. "I never really grew up, so it's a perfect pastime for a goofball like me."

Thanks, Juli, for all you do to enrich the lives of so many!

Is there a volunteer you'd like to recognize? Email your nomination to groundhognews@yahoo.com.

Americana Nights *(continued from page 1)*

Plans are also underway to feature rock and roll acts, along with some downhome bluegrass, as part of the series.

Stay connected with The Groundhog on Facebook and at readthegroundhog.com for announcements about upcoming acts. Businesses wishing to help bring more live music to the community by helping sponsor Americana Nights can email Mentone Town Hall at mentone5al@yahoo.com.

Mark your calendar for the next Mentone Americana Music Nights! You don't want to miss this evening of fun music with heart and soul.

NOTE: Featured artists for the Saturday, July 26, concert include:

Jess Goggans Band

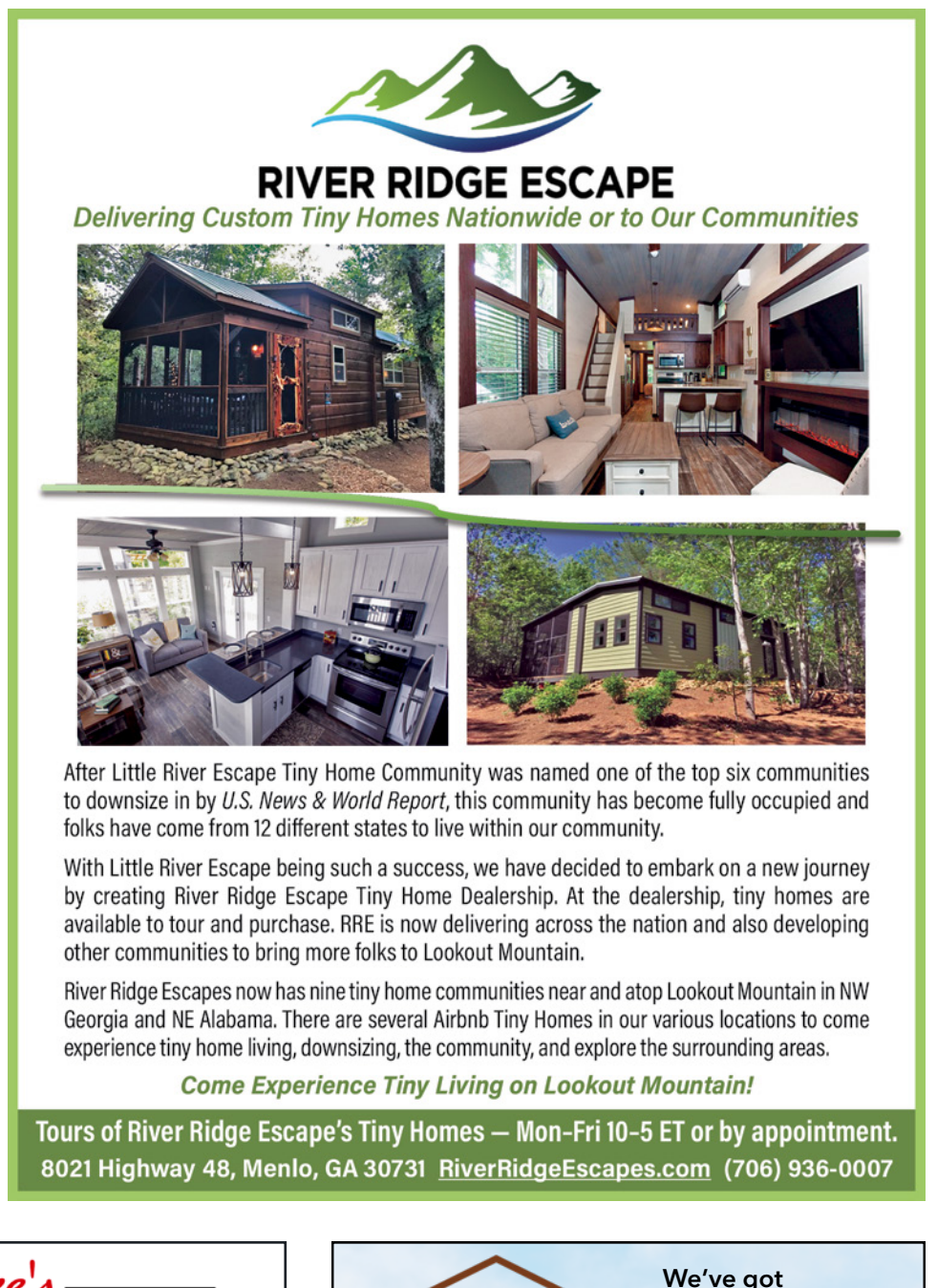
The music of Janis Joplin, The Grateful Dead, and others defined an era. Jess Goggans will bring those sounds to life in Mentone for a fabulous Woodstock evening. Homegrown and raised in the Northeast corner of Alabama, Jess is a singer/songwriter who puts her entire soul into her music and every ounce of her heart into every single performance. Recognized for her sultry Southern Grit, soulful melodies, and high-energy stage presence, it is said that you can literally feel her voice moving through you. She is accompanied by some of the finest musicians in the Southeast.

Dad Company

Playing everything from '60s classic rock to country, Dad Company is a family-friendly band of five friends from Fort Payne who enjoy making music together. Formed in 2020, Dad Company invites you to make some new friends and to sing along. You'll find out that they're more than just a funny name.













Moore (continued from page 7)

Lessons in Safety

Moore still hikes daily. With reverence. With mindfulness. With gratitude. But her mindset has shifted.

"It was a near-death experience, so it changed my life on a fundamental level," she says. "I would hate for my experience to be something that keeps people away from nature, because that's not the point. Nature is a beautiful thing. It is a gift to humans, and especially now in the tech age, I think finding moments of silence and stillness and just like being present with the beauty of the natural world is something that we need to encourage."

Moore offers some practical safety tips for hikers of all experience levels:

Tell someone where you're going, especially if hiking alone.

- Use technology wisely. Smartwatches with fall detection, or location-sharing apps like Life360, can be lifesavers.
- Wear proper footwear. Hiking boots with good grip matter, especially on wet or difficult trails.
- Pace yourself. Don't rush. "Now I hike with a lot more mindfulness and presence," she says.
- Avoid unfamiliar trails alone. Explore new places with a friend.
- Bring water and snacks. It's hard to be mindful on an empty stomach.

It's not about hiking in fear. It's about preparing with intention and walking with awareness.

"Nature isn't here to harm us," Moore says. "But if you don't respect it, you increase your risk. If you do the preparation, you can just relax and enjoy the beauty."

Mindful Steps

Since the accident, Moore's hikes have become even more meditative.

She slows down, tunes into her senses, and lets go of distractions. "It's about listening to the birds, feeling the sun on your skin or the ground beneath your feet and just truly slowing down, like even your gait,"



Caroline Moore didn't realize the severity of her injuries until she hiked an hour back to home. She fortunately has no visible scarring from the accident.

Moore says. "Instead of walking really quickly, consciously slow it down and look around you. I can honestly say, from doing that, my relationship with nature has become even more intimate because I am asking myself to be more present with the beauty that's here."

"Before, my hikes were like stolen time," she adds. "Thirty minutes here or there, squeezed between responsibilities. Now I give myself more space, more grace. It's a different world out there. And it deserves our attention."

And if Moore has one wish for those who hear her story, it's this: Go outside. Be with nature. Just do it safely.

"I still love going outside and experiencing nature," Moore says. "I don't think nature should be viewed with an abject sense of fear. It just needs to be respected and seen with reverence, as a force that is so much bigger than us."

AMERICAN LEGION POST 215 MENTONE, AL
2ND Annual MENTONE CAR Show
OCT. 11, 2025
10AM- 2PM
MOON LAKE VILLAGE 5866 E. RIVER RD, MENTONE, AL 35984
CALLING ALL CAR ENTHUSIASTS!
A spectacular display of vintage wheels and custom rides, with their own story and history.
Trophies for: Participants Choice, Peoples Choice and Best in Show
CAR REGISTRATION
CAR ENTRY DONATION $20
VENDOR REGISTRATION
FOOD: RIB SHAK
MORE INFO:
Post Commander: 334-379-0638
Aux. Unit President: 256-516-2652
Email questions to:
commanderpost215mentone@gmail.com

Mountain Homes For Sale!
16677 Scenic HWY 89, Mentone
16689 Scenic HWY 89, Mentone
196 Elm Street, Cloudland, GA
Specializing in Mountain & Lakefront Properties
HARDY REALTY & DEVELOPMENT CO.
BECKY WOODARD REALTOR®
becky@hardyrealty.com
706-291-4321 | 706-506-0777

Join us!
BREAKFAST/LUNCH
THURSDAY–MONDAY • 8 a.m.–2 p.m.
DINNER
FRIDAY & SATURDAY NIGHTS • 5-8 p.m.
The Hatter Cafe & Country Inn
4277 AL Hwy 117
Mentone, Alabama
For Reservations: 256-634-2018
Check out The Rabbit Hole
Our Bakery & Gift Store has something special for everyone!
A great variety of freshly baked goods including breads, desserts, cookies, scones, and bundt cakes
256-634-2018!
The Rabbit Hole
Charming Gifts, Curiosities, and Delights
Bakery & Gift Shop Hours:
Friday, Saturday, Sunday • 8 a.m.–2 p.m.

LAW OFFICES OF THOMAS J. SKINNER, IV, LLC
- Estate Planning, Wills, Trusts, & Probate Matters
- Business Law
- Real Estate Law
- Real Estate Tax Sales and Redemptions
- General Civil Litigation
Thomas J. Skinner, IV
ATTORNEY AT LAW
256-674-1111
Open most Wednesdays from 9am to 4pm, or by appointment.
No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.
Valley Head 166 Commerce Avenue | 256-674-1111
lawtjs.com

July Community Events

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

July 3 Fort Payne Fireworks Show – The Fort Payne Fireworks show will be viewable from the Fort Payne Sports Complex and Fort Payne High School. This will just be a fireworks show. No other activities taking place. Show should start around 8:45 p.m.

July 4 Sand Mountain Potato Festival – Sand Mountain is well known for its rich diversity of agricultural products, including potatoes. Celebrate our heritage with live music, arts and crafts, entertainment, games and fireworks at Henagar Park. Event begins at 10 a.m. and culminates with a beautiful fireworks display. 256-657-6282.

July 4 Congo Night Swim – Come out for an epic evening of swimming, music, and fun. Congo Falls will be lit up with lights for a safe, fun environment. There will be a splash deck for extra fun and enjoyment. Reservations are required. Limit 40 people per Night Swim. Private groups of 20 or more have the option to request specific dates to reserve a Night Swim. 7 to 10 p.m. at Congo Falls Park, 4220 CR 275, Fort Payne. 256-996-0562.

July 4 - 5 Independence Day at DeSoto State Park – This annual event is fun for both children and adults! Celebrate Independence Day and enjoy good ol' fashioned fun at DeSoto State Park. Participate in the flag making contest and eat ice cream at the annual ice cream social. Free to everyone; Great for all ages!

–Independence Day Flag-Making Contest Make your own homemade flag to be judged in this fun contest. All ages are welcome to participate. Materials and flag-making rules will be available at the campground pavilion in the Improved Campground starting Thursday, July 3, if needed. (Flags are made on white foam boards; participants use natural materials.) Flags can be turned in any day that week but MUST be turned in no later than 9 a.m. on Friday, July 4, to be judged. (Turn in flags at DeSoto's Nature Center.) Winners will be announced on DeSoto's Facebook page on Saturday, July 5 (winners will be contacted). Open to everyone. Free to participate and open to all ages!

–Splish & Splash Pool Party Join the fun at our 12th Annual Splish & Splash Pool Party! Cool off in our Olympic-size pool, eat ice cream and enter for door prizes! $1 per person admission fee. Friday, July 4, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Subject to cancellation if inclement weather.

–Ice Cream Social starts at 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 5, at the Campground Pavilion in DeSoto's Improved Campground. Sit around and relax, eat ice cream and meet your fellow guests at DeSoto State Park. Flag-Making Contest winners will be announced at the Ice Cream Social. You are welcome to bring your own favorite homemade ice cream recipe or other desserts to share with your fellow guests. Bring your own comfortable camp chair as seating is limited. Free to participate and open to everyone! Campground gate will be open for you. Subject to cancellation if inclement weather. Program Host: DeSoto State Park. Contact Email: Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov.

July 5 Yoga on the Brow – Hosted by Soul Shine Yoga & Wellness Studio. Join in on a relaxing outdoor class under a pavilion in Mentone's Brow Park off of Cool Street. Class is for all levels. Just bring a mat and enjoy a morning flow to awaken the senses and energize the body. Donation/tips appreciated. 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

July 5 Congo Rappel Adventure – Come experience the thrill of rappelling down the sheer sandstone gems in Congo Nature Preserve. No previous experience necessary. Each trip includes all the gear, plus basic instruction and the time of your life as you experience the beautiful view of Congo Falls rappelling down a cliff with instruction. Most experiences include two trips down the mountain per person. Meet at True Adventure Sports at 2 p.m.

July 9 Canyon Kids: Insect Investigators – For kids ages 3 to 8. Little River Canyon Center from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.

July 11 Talent Show DeKalb County residents! – Sonrise Retreat is hosting a community talent show for those in our area to show off their hidden or not-so-hidden talents! There will be age groups for this friendly competition and prizes for the winners in each category. Age groups: 12 and under (child), 13-18 (teen), and 19 and up (adult). If you're interested, please use the link to register for your spot and show off what makes you shine! https://forms.office.com/r/se4wwrBGwn. Thank you for your participation! 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at SonRise Retreat, 8727 AL HWY 117 in Valley Head.

July 12 Pop-Up Market at Blueberry Falls Farm – We will be hosting a Pop-Up Market at Blueberry Falls Farm, 331 Road 944 in Mentone. This will be a casual atmosphere with live music, art and of course...BLUEBERRIES! 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you are interested in being a vendor at our pop-up markets, please send us a message through Facebook or email: emmyeholbert96@gmail.com

July 12 Barn Quilt Creations – Hosted by DeSoto State Park & Little River Arts Council. The Serious Skills series is a variety of classes and workshops that provide opportunities to discover a hidden talent or learn a new skill for personal enrichment. Classes are open to local residents, overnight guests and park visitors. Barn quilts serve as a blend of art, history, and community spirit! Join artist Bailey Mitchell for a fun and creative barn quilt workshop, where you'll learn the art of painting stunning quilt patterns on 24x24 wooden panels. Take home a beautiful, one-of-a-kind barn quilt to display on your home, barn, or garden shed! Participants have two designs to pick from that are pre-drafted, with the option of drawing their own simple design during class. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. DeSoto State Park. (Location disclosed at pre-registration.) Fee: $55 includes all supplies. Class space is limited; pre-registration is required. Ages 13 to adult. Pre-registration: https://www.littleriverartscouncil.org/barnquilts.html

July 12 Scuba Diving Experience – Little River Canyon Area. 2 to 4 hours. Enjoy a Scuba Diving Experience in one of our beautiful rivers or creeks. We always choose the cleaner or clearer pools of the day that often have up to a 25-foot visibility. This experience will start with important safety instruction and tips for underwater operations, followed by gear and area awareness. From there we will work to get comfortable with breathing compressed air above water before you try it underwater. You may also have a short time of snorkeling to understand the area and continue learning to breathe from a mouthpiece. Then we will begin to discover the underworld and the many fish our rivers and creeks have to offer for a full experience. Most Scuba Experiences include a bit of snorkeling, then two trips underwater. Meet at True Adventure Sports, 13102 Alabama Hwy 176. 3 p.m. $125/person. For more info, call 256-997-9577.

July 12 Summer Music Series – Summer nights + live music = perfection! Join us for the 2025 Summer Music Series, a FREE outdoor concert series at the Mentone Inn's Linger Longer Pavilion — brought to you by the Little River Arts Council! Grab some good eats, bring your favorite drink, a camp chair or blanket and settle in for an unforgettable evening of music with The Locals under the stars with friends and family. 6 to 9 p.m.

July 19 Yoga on the Brow – Hosted by Soul Shine Yoga & Wellness Studio. Join in on a relaxing outdoor class under a pavilion in Mentone's Brow Park off of Cool Street. Class is for all levels; just bring a mat and enjoy a morning flow to awaken the senses and energize the body. Donation/tips appreciated. 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

July 19 Cow Paper Piecing Quilt Block – Create Your Own Adorable Cow Quilt Block! Love farm animals and quilting? This charming paper-pieced cow pattern is perfect for pillows, wall hangings, and more! Please bring a variety of fabrics to complete your cow pillow. The cost is $50, and the class will be held at The Locale, located at 996 Main St. in Fyffe. 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. For more information or to sign up, please call 256-630-1916.

July 19 Third Saturday Sunset Cruise-In – will be an afternoon of family fun activities in the Main Street District of Fort Payne. This public event will include food, live music, motorcycles, antique car show, and much more. 5 to 9 p.m.

July 19 The Malpass Brothers at The Pickin Post – Come enjoy an evening with The Malpass Brothers. Tickets are $35 each and can be purchased at Black's Tire in Rainsville and Patterson's Music in Fort Payne. 256-657-3817 or 256-845-4115 for more information. 893 Old Hwy 35 E, Fort Payne. 7 to 9 p.m.

July 19 Boom Town Opry – ALL ABOARD! The Boom Town Opry will be pulling into the station for our 2025 season. Doors open at 5 p.m. and the show is at 6 p.m. See y'all there! Fort Payne Opera House. For a suggested donation of $10, you can come and go throughout the performance. All proceeds benefit the restoration of the historic 1889 Opera House, so please give more if you can!

July 20 May's Gulf Songwriter Circle – Join us at Little River Canyon Center for a songwriter circle featuring Dusty Smith, Reno Roberts, Ryan Keef and Ace Chatman. Tickets $25 in advance, $30 the day of the show. Coolers welcome. This is a rain or shine event. 3 to 5 p.m.

July 26 Daybreak Flatwater Paddle Trip – DeSoto State Park staff offers this relaxing guided morning paddle trip on scenic Little River. Enjoy the peace and quiet of nature as we paddle upstream on the Coke bottle clear waters of the West Fork of Little River. Learn about this outstanding water source with its clear water, plant and animal life, and about the history of the area around DeSoto Falls. What to know: This trip is approximately 4 miles round-trip on flatwater, under your own power, and spans a 3 to 3.5-hour period. Includes kayak, paddle & personal flotation device. Participants must be able to paddle upstream and back (no current) Weight limits: 300 pounds for singles & 450 for tandems. Ages 8 to adult. What to bring: Appropriate clothing for weather, bug spray, snacks, and drinking water. 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. DeSoto Falls Picnic Area-Miller's Bend Paddle Shack (about 7 miles from main park area of DeSoto State Park). Fee: $30 for single kayak rental (tandem kayaks are available on a limited basis for $50; email to check availability). Pre-registration: https://reserve.alapark.com/register/DSP-Daybreak-Paddle

July 26 Pop-Up Market at Blueberry Falls Farm – We will be hosting a Pop-Up Market at Blueberry Falls Farm, 331 Road 944 in Mentone. This will be a casual atmosphere with live music, art and of course...BLUEBERRIES! 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you are interested in being a vendor at our pop-up markets, please send us a message through Facebook or email: emmyeholbert96@gmail.com

July 26 Serious Skills Series: Quilt the Forest Workshop – The Serious Skills series is a variety of classes and workshops that provide opportunities to discover a hidden talent or learn a new skill for personal enrichment. Classes are open to local residents, overnight guests, and park visitors. Join fabric artist and nature enthusiast Michelle Reynolds for a creative quilting workshop inspired by the beauty of the forest. In this hands-on class, you'll design and hand-sew small blocks onto a canvas square using colorful felts, embroidery threads, and other materials. Reflect on your favorite nature scenes as you create a unique vignette, cutting out symbols, layering colors, and stitching them together to tell your story. Discover inspiration in nature, learn the art of storytelling through color, pattern, and texture, and explore applique techniques. This workshop offers a chance to connect with fellow participants while experimenting with techniques that resonate with you. All fabric and supplies will be provided; no previous experience required. 1 to 4 p.m. DeSoto State Park. Benefield Interpretive Center next to the Country Store on County Road 89. $55 includes all supplies. Class space is limited to 12; pre-registration is required for attendance in this class. Pre-registration here: https://www.littleriverartscouncil.org/quilttheforest2.html

July 26 Summer Market (Town of Geraldine) – Come join the Town of Geraldine at their Summer Market. There will be fresh produce, local craft vendors, fresh cut flower bouquets, live music, food trucks, and more. Geraldine Town Park, 4 to 8 p.m. 256-659-2122.

Quality Jewelry
AFFORDABLE PRICES
Engagement Rings, Wedding Sets,
Diamond Pendants & Earrings, Fashion Rings

WE BUY GOLD!
WE BUY DIAMONDS!
PLUS EXPERT JEWELRY REPAIR
SOUTHERN GOLD & SILVER
1706 Glenn Blvd SW, Fort Payne
(256) 997-7591

THE FOOD PANTRY

at St. Joseph's on-the-Mountain Episcopal Church



Open every Wednesday to Mentone/Valley Head/ Hammondville residents from 9-11 a.m.

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

Connections Through Music: the Six Degrees of Col. Bruce Hampton

BY HANK ALLEN

Throughout my life, I've found that music can be one of the best ways to connect with people. You can nearly always find a song or album to bond over, and that doesn't always mean a multi-platinum seller. It can be an artist way out on the fringes.

I told fellow Mentone Ukes member Hank Van Apeldoorn that I read a book about someone who called himself Col. Bruce Hampton and played most of his life in Atlanta. He was very influential in the jam band scene and had a knack for finding amazing musicians but he wasn't well-known to the public. I mentioned this to Hank because I knew he had lived in Atlanta and was aware of semi-obscure artists like Hampton. He was not only aware of him but knew him and the members The Hampton Grease Band through his connection with WRAS, Georgia State's FM radio station. Hank also lived in the same neighborhood as one of the band members, the great guitarist Glenn Phillips. Phillips still plays live. I've met him, and he is an all-around great guy.

Another connection to Hampton is with Ukes member Romey Atchley, who is a follower of the Grateful Dead. Her husband David writes for the music site GratefulWeb. Romey mentioned that David was going to interview bassist extraordinaire Oteil Burbridge for an article. Oteil has played with the Allman Brothers Band and Dead & Company, but his first big break was playing with Hampton band The Aquarium Rescue Unit. Oteil still talks about Hampton being a mentor in music and life who made him laugh about how crazy the world is. Duane Allman got Hampton his first record deal. Without that, Burbridge would have never met Hampton or played with the Allman Brothers.



Despite never having a hit record and being virtually unknown to those outside the music scene, Hampton collaborated with some of the biggest names in music. On May 1, 2017, at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, members of the Allman Brothers Band, the Rolling Stones, R.E.M., Phish, Widespread Panic, Blues Traveler, Todd Snider, 88-year-old jazz pianist Johnny Knapp who played with Billie Holiday, and 14-year-old guitar prodigy Brandon Niederauer all gathered to perform and celebrate the life of Hampton on the day after his 70th birthday. The various famous and not-so-famous artists all played sets, and the encore was Hampton performing the Bobby "Blue" Bland song "Turn on Your Love Light," the first song he ever sang in public.

During a solo by Niederauer, Hampton collapsed onstage. The band, thinking it was one of the theatrical stunts he was known for, kept playing for several minutes before EMTs went onstage and tried to revive him. An hour later he was gone. Col. Bruce Hampton died doing the one thing he loved most and connected artists and fans together one last time.

MENTONE UKES

Come and see what a Mentone Ukes session is all about. You just never know what connections from the past you might bring to the group that will strengthen us as a whole. If you are a beginner to the ukulele or just haven't played for a while, we hope you will join us for a session on **July 19 at 1 p.m.** at the Moon Lake Library. A beginner's lesson is offered at the same time as our regular session, and loaner ukes are available. For more information, visit us on Facebook, MentoneUkes, or on the web, **www.MentoneUkes.com**.



Subscribe to The Groundhog

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

❍ New Subscription $35

❍ Renewal $35

Make check payable to:
The Groundhog
P.O. Box 387
Mentone, AL 35984

Wilson FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY

Our staff members will take care of your loved one every step of the way.



Call today to discuss your family's needs.

(256) 845-9150

3801 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne, AL 35967

www.wilsonfhinc.com

Mike Leath, Caleb Roberts, Amy Justice & Ronnie Highfield

The **CLEAR** *Choice*
for all your window and door needs!

Our first priority is to always provide you with the highest quality products and unparalleled service. Whether you are in need of a beautiful, custom front door or replacements for your doors or windows, we will provide you with our best work for your specific project needs!

WINDOW VISIONS

Our Service Area
Mentone

JELD-WEN WINDOWS & DOORS

Call today! 256-845-3893

WE SELL ENERGY STAR



162 45th Street NE • Fort Payne, Alabama 35967

THE GROOVY GOAT
MENTONE ALABAMA
BE HAPPY · STAY GROOVY

Gift & Wine Shop
Log Cabin Village • Downtown Mentone
Find us on Facebook
@thegroovygoatmentone

Menlo Restaurant
American Family Style

Friday Night Special $9.99
Hamburger Steak w/ 2 sides, Texas Toast & Drink

Saturday Night Special $18.99
Ribeye Steak w/ 2 Sides, Texas Toast & Drink

Choose from these sides:
tossed salad • slaw • baked potato • baked sweet potato • okra
tater tots • french fries • onion rings • pintos • corn nuggets
onion strings with jalapeno buttons • fried or grilled squash

Featuring delicious homemade desserts including pecan pie, chocolate chess pie, and the Menlo Brownie.

"Best Burgers Around"
Monday through Saturday 7am – 8pm EST
7807 Hwy. 48, Menlo, GA 30731
706/862-2281

Dine-in & Carry-out

The Mountain Kitchen

Go-To Recipes for Summertime

BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Of all my vices, bread is not one of them. And unless a kind friend makes a homemade loaf, I almost never eat bread. My dad was completely indiscriminate when it came to bread. He'd walk through the kitchen, grab a single slice of whatever bread was there, fold it in half and announce, "I'm just having an air sandwich."

We recently decided to have scrambled eggs for dinner, and I wanted a yummy accompaniment sturdy enough to slather on my favorite apricot jam. I had dried cherries and pecans, so I packed plenty of those into the whole wheat batter. The result was delicious — not too sweet or dense and only 2 tablespoons of oil and no butter needed unless you also slather that on before digging in.

WHOLE WHEAT LOAF WITH CHERRIES AND PECANS

(This recipe is based on one I had saved from an American Heart Association clipping. I changed the fruit and nuts and added cinnamon to my liking.)

1½ cups dried cherries
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 cup boiling water
2 cups whole wheat flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¾ cup finely chopped toasted pecans
⅔ cup brown sugar
1 large egg, beaten

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a loaf pan with baking spray.
2. Combine cherries, oil, and baking soda in a large bowl. Pour boiling water over mixture, and stir. Let stand until cool.
3. Stir remaining ingredients into fruit just until combined.
4. Transfer batter into loaf pan (it will be thick).
5. Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into loaf comes out with moist crumbs.
6. Cool 20 minutes before removing from pan. Cool completely before slicing.

Elegance With Ease

Mentone resident John Carr shares a wonderfully satisfying recipe that can flex to use dried herbs or fresh ones you've just brought in from the garden. Add basil or thyme if you prefer those. Or if you don't have any herbs, simply substitute herbed goat cheese for plain. John is famous for his pecan pies, and perhaps I can pry that recipe out of him later this year!

CHICKEN STUFFED WITH HERBS AND GOAT CHEESE

3 oz. goat cheese
1 tablespoon milk
1 clove garlic
1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley
Pinch of crumbled dried oregano
Pinch of dried chile flakes
1 tablespoon chopped kalamata olives
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
Toothpicks
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup white wine

1. Smash goat cheese and milk together with a spoon until smooth.
2. Stir in garlic and next four ingredients, then season to taste with salt and pepper.
3. On thickest side of each chicken breast, cut a deep 3-inch-long pocket, and stuff with goat cheese mixture. Gently push back together, and secure with a toothpick.
4. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
5. Add chicken, and cook 5 to 6 minutes on each side or until outside is browned and inside is cooked through (165 degrees F). Time will vary depending on thickness of chicken and your stove's heat. Remove chicken, leaving drippings in skillet. Season chicken to taste with salt and pepper.
6. Add wine to skillet, scraping browned bits from bottom of pan and cooking until reduced to a glossy syrup. Drizzle over chicken, and serve.

I Scream, You Scream

No summer menu is complete without ice cream. And when Cloudland resident Jimmy Cash rolls in with a homemade batch, folks gather around to find out what he has created. He makes all kinds of varieties, and they're fabulous.

JIMMY CASH'S HOMEMADE BLUEBERRY-ALMOND ICE CREAM

2 cups fresh blueberries
1 ¼ cups granulated sugar
2 cups cold heavy cream
2 cups cold whole milk
1 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
¼ cup sliced almonds
(optional ¼ cup semisweet chocolate chips)

1. In a wide skillet, combine blueberries and sugar. Heat over medium heat, simmering until blueberries begin to burst, approximately 5 minutes. Mash the berries with a potato masher. Continue to cook until mixture thickens to the consistency of sauce, 5-10 minutes. Allow to cool for 20 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, combine the heavy cream and whole milk. Stir in cooled blueberry sauce and the vanilla or almond flavoring.
3. Refrigerate for 1 hour or more. Process ice cream in your churn according to manufacturer's instructions. Stir in almonds and, if desired, chocolate chips once the ice cream has finished churning.
4. Transfer to a freezer-safe container, and freeze until solid.



Whole Wheat Loaf with Cherries and Pecans is substantial with a cup of tea or as a side dish with eggs.

Step into THE KITCHEN

Do you have a recipe to share, either because it has dear memories associated with it or it's just plain yummy? Email it to **Groundhognews@yahoo.com.** We will try to include it.

NOW OPEN!

Enjoy the convenience of the First Fidelity Bank's ATM across from the Mentone Market.

Services Offered:

• Withdraw cash

• Deposit cash or checks

Drive through and walk up are available!



FFB First Fidelity Bank
The finest traditions of community banking

22 Douglas St., Mentone, AL — *Across the street from the Mentone Market*! The **First Fidelity Bank – Main Branch** is located at **1400 Gault Avenue North, Fort Payne, AL**

Member FDIC
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Mayor Hammond *(continued from page 1)*

A Call to Serve

Hammond's first step into public service came when Mentone's Sam Cash asked him to serve on the North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District board. He was later encouraged to run for a seat on town council. He was elected in 1984, and served as a councilman until an unexpected need arose.

"Mayor Sam Barrett got sick and couldn't continue serving," Hammond recalls. The other council members asked him to step into the role, appointing him to fulfill the unexpired term. He ran for mayor during the next cycle and was elected, serving in the seat until 1992.

One of the biggest challenges Mentone faced under Hammond's watch was the town's aging water system. "One 4th of July, the town was completely out of water," he says. "A main line burst and drained the town's water tank dry." He worked with the National Guard to deliver drinkable water to the town in trucks and tankers as the line was repaired and the tank slowly refilled.

"That was a long Fourth of July weekend," he recalls.

It was also during this period that Hammond helped rally the community against a proposed landfill near the East Fork of Little River, knowing it could have a detrimental impact on the water quality. "The topic of the first Town Hall meeting was 'does Little River need protecting,'" Hammond recalls. "Out of that and subsequent meetings, the Friends of Little River was formed." Under the leadership of Des Disney and many others, the river was eventually designated an Outstanding National Water Resource, the highest level of federal protection.

Back in the Saddle

When his first full term came to an end, Hammond decided not to run for reelection. His children were older and involved in more activities, and he was traveling a good bit promoting the camp and hiring staff.

A decade and a half later, Hammond found himself in a new phase of life, one that allowed more time for him to give back to his community. He ran for and was elected mayor in 2004, a seat he has held since.



Camp Laney brought Rob and San Hammond together, and has been central to their lives their entire marriage.

This second era of public service has seen significant transformations for Mentone. One accomplishment Hammond is most proud of is the replacement of a dangerous bridge on Highway 117. The process took 15 years to complete, and he still remembers the turning point that brought progress. "We took a school bus and a semi-truck, and put them on the bridge side by side to show how tight it was," he recalls. "That was our campaign poster."

With the help of Rep. Nathaniel Ledbetter and Sen. Steve Livingston, Mentone was able to establish a Community Development District, allowing alcohol sales in a portion of town. "That created more opportunities for local businesses," Hammond says. "It really helps restaurants and convenience stores stay profitable."

Walkability has been a priority for Hammond. Through a combination of grants and town resources, new sidewalks invite local residents and visitors alike to stroll through town and visit shops. When the next phase of the project is complete this summer, a sidewalk and two crosswalks will connect the town from Moon Lake Library to the intersection of Highway 117 and Scenic Drive/County Road 89.

Public service has improved as well. The town has partnered with the summer camps to purchase new police vehicles. A surplus program supplements those efforts, keeping reliable vehicles on the road. Mentone joined the state retirement system, which helps attract and retain quality staff. "We've got a great team at Town Hall," Hammond says.

Preserving Mentone's Character

Perhaps Hammond's most emotionally resonant work has centered around the former Moon Lake Elementary School. As a resident, business owner, and mayor, he knew how important the school was to the community. After its closure in 2021 due to declining enrollment, the county board of education deeded the property to the Town of Mentone, and Hammond has worked with partners and agencies to repurpose the site as an arts and retail hub for the community. It now hosts Northeast Alabama Community College classes, a large public art installation, shops, galleries, a restaurant, and an amphitheater.

Along with the school property came the Moon Lake Library, which has since become a municipal library and a key asset of the town. Operations are overseen by a municipal board as well as the Friends of Moon Lake Library community group.

The introduction of high-speed broadband internet powered by FTC's fiber has been a major upgrade for the town. "Everyone's excited about fiber," Hammond says. "This level of broadband allows more residents to work remotely, and helps businesses do more for their customers and operations. We appreciate FTC for their work to expand service throughout our area."

A Town Built on Community

For Hammond, the heart of Mentone isn't its attractions or amenities — it's the people.

"I can't imagine another community out there with a greater sense of volunteerism and community service," Hammond says. "Many new people have moved into our town over the past decade, and they have joined our long-time residents in serving the community." These groups include many active organizations, including the St. Joseph's food bank, MERF, Friends of the Library, Little River Arts Council, Rhododendron Garden Club, Mentone Arts Center, North Lookout Mountain (Mentone) Volunteer Fire Department, and DeSoto Rescue Squad. "These groups give our town its character and keep it thriving."

Hammond's name will be on the ballot for another term as mayor. "I'm running for one more term because we have some projects I would like to see finished," he says. "I want to see the school property renovation completed, along with our sidewalk project. And I want to work toward more grants to improve our Brow Park."

Indeed, that would be a full-circle moment for Hammond, whose love for Mentone began 64 years ago, walking to the brow and watching the sunset with Coach Laney and fellow campers from across the state. Those moments not only changed the trajectory of his life, but would have a major impact on the Town of Mentone as well.

