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THE GROUNDHOG

"Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain"

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

Welcome to the Mentone Fall Festival!

Big event set for Saturday, October 18th

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

mentone Fall Festival

After months of preparation, the biggest day in Mentone is almost here. The Mentone Fall Festival is set for Saturday, October 18, and will be a day filled with activities from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., offering something for all ages. Hosted by the Town of Mentone on the grounds of the historic Moon Lake Campus, the festival will feature around 80 art vendors, food trucks, and children's art activities — including an art show by local 4th-6th graders. The shops, galleries, and restaurant inside the former schoolhouse will be open to welcome visitors, shoppers, and diners.

The Shigley Amphitheater will come alive with music, with headliners Three On A String along with singer-songwriter Pierce Pettis and local favorite Average Joe. The front of the campus will feature acoustic music by talented local artists.

And don't miss events throughout town. The Moon Lake Trading Co. will host vendors, music and great food. The Log Cabin Village shops will be open with live music, and vendors will provide fresh produce, meats, baked goods, and more at the farmer's market. Local restaurants will make sure no one leaves hungry.

Leading into the festival, a kickoff concert featuring Will Dooley and Friends will be held on Friday evening from 6-9 p.m. at the Linger Longer Pavilion behind Mentone Inn. Grab a hearty chili supper served by our local Scouts. All proceeds support their community projects and activities.

"This is a great event, involving people throughout our town," says Mentone Mayor Rob Hammond. "Beyond our incredible volunteers, businesses have made this event possible with their sponsorship, as they welcome friends and visitors with their arts, crafts, food, and gifts. It's a true community event."

The Mentone Fall Festival is a great way to celebrate cooler temperatures and fall foliage, and it's also a chance to begin your holiday gift shopping by finding unique items you can buy directly from the more than 80 artists set up at the event.

Proceeds from the festival are reinvested into maintenance and renovation of the Moon Lake Campus property, supporting its tenants and cultural programming.

See Pages 6 and 7 for full information about the festival. Check it out and make plans to join us!

See Pages 6 and 7 for Maps, Vendor Lists and More Mentone Fall Festival Information!

Hobson and Martha Kirby's Ties to Home Run Deep

BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Martha and Hobson Kirby at their Mentone home.

October in Mentone is postcard season. The leaves turn, the mountain air sharpens, and visitors and photographers alike pause to snap photos of the little red boathouse on Little River just above Desoto Falls — one of Alabama's most recognizable landmarks. For Hobson and Martha Kirby and family, however, the boathouse is a personal story.

Hobson's father, carpenter and rock mason Paul Kirby, built the original structure in the mid-1950s. "He never was a big-time carpenter. He did remodeling jobs and add-ons, and he helped build some homes," Hobson remembers. Paul had worked on a house in the area, and the property owners wanted a boathouse, so he agreed to build the little structure on the edge of the water. Young Hobson tagged along, more interested in fishing than carpentry. "I went with him. I guess I was in the way more than I helped," he laughed. "Daddy and his brother had a little boat down at the old covered bridge site, with a 5- or 6-horse motor in it. And we would go in it down to where he was building the boathouse. But I'd go in, work with him a little, and then fish — that was my main purpose."

Painted red by Paul Kirby from the very beginning, the structure quickly became a landmark. "I don't remember it ever being another color," Hobson said. Today, nearly 70 years later, the boathouse remains one of the most photographed spots in Alabama, especially in autumn when its reflection is doubled by nature's own fiery palette. Hobson still drives by and takes a look at the boathouse from time to time. His father passed away in 1986 at age 77.

For the Kirbys, the boathouse is simply one thread in a much larger tapestry of family roots, work, and devotion to community.

Hobson was born to Paul and Bertha in 1944, not far from the old covered bridge site, in the Ruby O'Rear house (one of the pioneers of Mentone). "It was a lot different than it is now," he remembered. "A lot slower pace…none of the roads were paved — just 117 and 89 down to the falls. And 117 wasn't very busy then. We used to ride bicycles up and down the road and didn't worry about the traffic. Those were the days." After attending Moon Lake School through the 6th grade, he went on to Valley Head School, which he remembers was a "scary, big school for a little old mountain boy." His father and aunts and uncles also attended Moon Lake.

Continuing a Legacy of Work and Family

After graduation, Hobson worked in Huntsville for a year. The Kirbys (who by the way met on a fortuitous blind date) married in March 1966, and Hobson was drafted two months later. "We got lucky there, because I went to Fort Benning for basic training and stayed there my whole two years, and Martha came down after she graduated from Fort Payne High School." After his stint in the service, he and Martha returned to Huntsville, then eventually back to Mentone. Hobson founded Kirby Construction in 1969, and with a dump truck, backhoe, and bulldozer, he spent decades building driveways, home sites, ponds, and septic systems across the region. "I worked for myself my whole life," he said proudly. "It was hard work, but I really enjoyed it," he added.

"He's retired three or four times. He just can't quit," Martha said. Even in retirement, her husband has kept busy. These days, he works a couple days a week, delivering vehicles for dealerships in Fort Payne, never one to sit idle.

Martha, meanwhile, pursued her own career with the U.S. Postal Service while supporting the family's side ventures: a hosiery mill in Fort

(See "Kirbys," Page 14)

Ready for Adventure?

Go on a Mentone Excursion

BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Thanks to cousins Casey Harp and Kyleigh Thomas, visitors have plenty of new ways to immerse themselves in the exciting natural beauty of Lookout Mountain. Their company, Mentone Excursions, launched last May, offers guided outdoor experiences on family-owned land and surrounding areas. From tubing on the East Fork of Little River to hunting for arrowheads that date back thousands of years, they specialize in providing interesting adventures.

For Harp, Mentone Excursions is the result of a significant career shift. After nearly three decades in the plumbing trade, including 10 years with the Jefferson County Board of Education, he reached a turning point.

"I told my wife, you know what? I've got to come up with something that I would love to do and get paid for it — and be able to just share what I know how to do in the woods," he said.

(See "Excursions," Page 14)



The Groundhog

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

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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*!

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Groundhog woodcut courtesy of Meg Justice/Bee Spring Studio

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This year's Scarecrow Competition celebrates the theme "The Spirit of Mentone," inviting you to create a scarecrow that reflects the charm and character of our mountain town. From woodland creatures and mountain musicians to outdoor adventures, local art, or community traditions, let your imagination bring Mentone's magic to life!

The contest is open to everyone—individuals, families, businesses, community groups, schools, and churches. Scarecrows will be displayed on the Fall Festival grounds, adding festive fun and showcasing the creativity of our town. Prizes will be awarded in categories such as Most Creative, Best Use of Recycled Materials, and People's Choice.

Entries should be delivered to Moon Lake Campus on Friday, October 17, between 1–5 p.m. There is no entry fee, and sign-up forms are available online. Scan the QR code above to sign up.

Mentone Matters

It's Festival Time!



BY MAYOR ROB HAMMOND

Cooler temperatures, college football, and hints of color in the trees all mark the beginning of the fall season. And that means it's time for our biggest event of the year — the Mentone Fall Festival.

We look forward to welcoming thousands of visitors to our town on Saturday, October 18, for a day of arts, live music, food, crafts, kids' activities, and more. Check out the special section of this issue of The Groundhog for all the details.

On behalf of the Town of Mentone, I want to offer a sincere "thank you" to everyone who makes this event possible. From the generous business sponsors to the numerous volunteers, the spirit of giving among our neighbors and friends helps us host a fabulous event for everyone to enjoy.

Beyond a fun day, festivalgoers enjoy shopping directly with artists and makers. Those vendors have an opportunity to share their work with a large audience. Everyone enjoys live music at our amphitheater. And the shops, galleries, and restaurant at Moon Lake Campus welcome their largest crowd of the year.

Proceeds from the festival are reinvested into Moon Lake Campus, further improving the property to support the arts and economic development in our town.

Regarding future improvements to the property, we met recently with architect Alan Williamson and an electrical engineer as they put the bid packages together for the major renovation project at Moon Lake Campus. The Town of Mentone received a $300,000 matching grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, administered through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Development. This will allow us to upgrade critical infrastructure in the main campus building. The building will become handicap-accessible, thanks to a ramp in the front. The bathrooms will be upgraded. Drop ceilings will be removed, and the ceilings will be returned to their original height. Period light fixtures will be installed, and floors will be returned to the original wood.

I've included photos of two significant projects underway in Mentone. One shows work by contractors for the Fort Payne Water system to install an expanded water line. This project will deliver a greater volume of water to the two water tanks on County Road 89 North, improving water pressure, aiding with growth, and supporting fire protection in the Mentone area. The other shows progress on the final phase of our sidewalk expansion project. When completed, we will have sidewalks extending from the Moon Lake Campus area to the intersection of Alabama Highway 117 and Scenic Road/County Road 89.



The expanded sidewalk will connect Moon Lake Campus and Moon Lake Library to the intersection of Alabama Highway 117 and County Road 89.



Contractors for the Fort Payne Water system are expanding water lines from the top of the mountain to the water tanks on County Road 89 North.

From the Editor

If You Love Live Music, Come See Me on Oct. 18

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

Do you love music? I sure do. It's a central part of my life, offering entertainment, encouragement and inspiration, and a sense of community that connects me with family and friends.

There's something even more special about live music presented outdoors. The new Mentone Americana Nights series has brought new opportunities for fun and fellowship to the Moon Lake Campus over the past few months. The Summer Music Series, sponsored by the Little River Arts Council, continued its long-running tradition of presenting live music at the Linger Longer Pavilion behind the Mentone Inn. And now there's one more chance this year to hear live music under the open skies in Mentone.

The Mentone Fall Festival is the biggest community event of the year. You can read all about the vendors and activities in this issue of The Groundhog, but I want to focus on the music for a moment. Headlining the Shigley Amphitheater will be Alabama legends Three On A String. The first time I heard these guys was at a chamber of commerce event many years ago. They are excellent musicians, but they are also hilarious. These true entertainers put on such a great show.

Beyond their music, I have long been drawn to the historical preservation work of Bobby Horton, who plays banjo, trumpet, guitar, fiddle, and about anything else you can think of. While touring with Three On A String, Bobby has pursued his passion for documenting America's music recording industry all the way back to its formation during the Civil War. His work captured the attention of documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, and Bobby has subsequently contributed countless recordings for these films.

The Mentone Fall Festival will mark the first Mentone appearance by Three On A String (according to everyone's memory, anyway). Another rarity will take place that afternoon when Pierce Pettis takes the stage. The noted singer/songwriter makes his home in Mentone, but his touring schedule usually takes him from New England to the West Coast and all parts in between.

I don't recall when I discovered Pierce's music, but it was his 2001 release on Compass Records, "State of Grace," that really drew me into his work. Having grown up in Fort Payne like Pierce, I connected deeply to the themes he presented on this record. "I think and act, And I talk this way, For I was raised, In a state of grace."

Average Joe also returns to the Shigley Amphitheater stage after an appearance at Mentone Americana Nights earlier this year. They were a crowd favorite, with their wide range of classics and standards performed on acoustic instruments. These three fellas each have rich musical backgrounds, and their performance will complement the show nicely.

Of course, you don't want to miss the great local talent on display at the front of Moon Lake Campus throughout the day. Local favorites Judy-Nicole Kirby, Lisa Crow, Mountain Hippie, and The Vegetaters have a strong local following, and for good reason.

So I ask you again … do you love music? If so, I'll look for you at the Mentone Fall Festival on Saturday, Oct. 18, on the beautiful and historic Moon Lake Campus!

Valley Head Happenings

Trunk or Treat, Hot Rods, and a Spooky Movie

BY MAYOR KAREN VEST

The Town of Valley Head will host our annual Trunk or Treat on Saturday, Oct. 25, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Children and their families can safely walk around the town square to get goodies from multiple local businesses, churches, and civic organizations. Come all decked out in your favorite Halloween costumes and join this free family event.

Our monthly Hot Rods in the Valley will also take place on that Saturday (October 25). Cars begin arriving about 3 p.m. and park all around the square to show off each of their unique details. Some of the car owners will also be handing out treats for the children. The Beasleys are kind enough to hold a collection drive of supplies and/or donations for the DeKalb County Animal Shelter during the Hot Rod event each month. Please stop by their tent and drop off blankets, old towels, dog and/or cat food, and any monetary donations you want to give. Our local restaurants, The Tiger's Inn and The Side Street Deli, will also be open and serving delicious specials all evening long.



To round out the events on the 25th, our next Family Movie Night will be held that evening on the field in front of Valley Head Town Hall. We will feature the classic #1 Halloween family movie, Hocus Pocus. This classic 1993 film features Bette Midler, along with many other great actors, and is perfect for our town Halloween event. For future movie nights, let us know what films you would like to see on the big screen! Please call Town Hall at 256-645-6814 and let Lora or myself know what suggestions you have.

We continue to work with the mapping department in DeKalb County, as well as Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) and our town attorney Jay Skinner, to update our zoning map for the Town of Valley Head. We hope to clarify several pressing zoning issues we are currently facing as well as plan for our future growth.

Our November council meeting will be held at The Side Street Deli at 74 Winston Street. They are gracious enough to host our meeting since we anticipate a larger than normal crowd for our swearing-in ceremony for myself as mayor and our town council for the next four years, consisting of: Easton Bailey, John Chambers, Nathan Owen, Lyndall Elkins, and Scott Pepper. Please join us for our regular meeting plus this ceremony and a reception following the meeting.

The Valley Head Volunteer Fire Department continues to grow. We are very fortunate to have young men willing to contribute to the safety of our community. With an average of 12-15 calls per month, we are always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer fireman, please call Town Hall at 256-635-6814, and we will give you Chief Dustin Burt's contact information.

Valley Head holds its Town Council meeting on the first Monday of each month beginning at 6 p.m. The public is always welcome to attend.

The U.S. Navy Flag Explained

BY BARRY MORTON

This is the second in a series of articles about flag history.

The flag of the United States Navy, often a source of confusion for the general public, is a powerful symbol of the nation's maritime power and heritage. Unlike the more commonly recognized flags of the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force, the Navy's official flag is not the one most people associate with naval vessels. This article explores the history, design, and significance of the U.S. Navy flag and other important flags used by the service.

A Brief History

The U.S. Navy did not have an official flag for many years. Early naval vessels flew the national ensign (the Stars and Stripes) to identify their nationality. However, as the service grew and its missions expanded, there was a need for a unique flag to represent the Navy itself. The current official flag of the U.S. Navy was formally adopted on April 24, 1959. Its design reflected the Navy's history and mission.

The official U.S. Navy flag is a distinctive and symbolic design. It consists of a dark blue field with the seal of the Department of the Navy in the center.

The seal is a prominent feature of the flag. It depicts an eagle with its wings spread, perched on an anchor, with a Constitution-class frigate sailing on the sea below.

This seal was originally adopted in 1957. The eagle represents the United States, signifying the Navy's role in protecting the nation's interests. The anchor is a traditional symbol of naval service, representing stability and steadfastness. The ship represents the seagoing nature of the Navy and its history. The Constitution-class frigate is a nod to early American naval power. Below the seal, a ribbon bears the Latin motto, NON SIBI SED PATRIAE, which translates to "Not for Self but for Country." The flag is used at official ceremonies, parades, and in the offices of high-ranking naval officials. It is a symbol of the Navy as a whole, representing its command structure and authority.

The Navy Jack: A Source of Confusion

One of the most common sources of confusion about Navy flags is the Navy Jack. Many people mistakenly believe the Navy Jack is the official flag of the service.

• The original Navy Jack, used from 1775 to 1975, was a striped flag with a rattlesnake and the motto "DON'T TREAD ON ME." This flag, known as the Gadsden flag, was originally used by Continental Navy ships and was a symbol of American defiance.

• The Union Jack: For many years, U.S. naval vessels flew the "Union Jack," a flag consisting of a blue field with white stars, representing the union of the states.

• The Return of the First Navy Jack: Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England directed that all U.S. naval vessels would fly the First Navy Jack, with the rattlesnake and "DON'T TREAD ON ME" motto, "for the duration of the Global War on Terrorism." This move was intended to be a symbol of historical resolve and the Navy's fighting spirit.

Other Important Navy Flags

In addition to the official flag and the Navy Jack, the U.S. Navy uses a variety of other flags and pennants for different purposes.

• The National Ensign (Stars and Stripes): The most important flag flown by all U.S. naval vessels is the national ensign. When a ship is in port, the ensign is hoisted at the stern. At sea, it is flown from the gaff. This flag signifies the ship's nationality and is a symbol of American sovereignty.

• Rank Flags: Admirals and other flag officers have their own personal flags to denote their presence and rank. For example, a four-star admiral's flag is blue with four white stars.

• Commissioning pennant: When a ship is in commission, it flies a long, narrow pennant called a commissioning pennant, a symbol of the ship's active status and authority.



The flags of the U.S. Navy are more than just pieces of cloth. They are deeply symbolic representations of the service's history, values, and mission. From the official flag with its powerful seal and motto to the defiant First Navy Jack and the ever-present national ensign, each flag tells a part of the story of the United States Navy and the men and women who serve within its ranks. Understanding these flags is key to appreciating the rich traditions and enduring legacy of America's naval power.

Barry Morton generated this article with the use of AI. Barry is past commander of American Legion Post 215.



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Mentone Trunk or Treat 2025

BY HAYLEY CROFT

Everyone is invited to join in the fun at this year's Trunk or Treat on Friday, Oct. 31, from 5:30–7:30 p.m. at Mentone Community Church (90 Summerville Rd.).

This annual event has become a beloved Mentone tradition, bringing neighbors together for an evening of family-friendly fun. Families enjoy going from trunk to trunk, collecting candy and prizes before enjoying a free meal of burgers, hotdogs, and chips, along with hot chocolate or coffee.

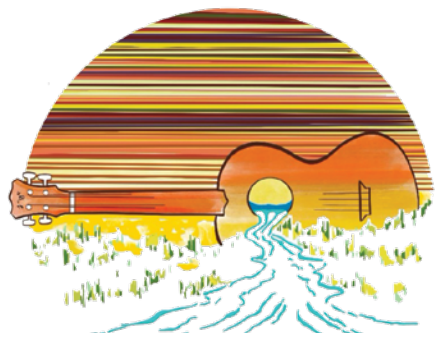
The event is made possible through the partnership of Mentone Community Church, St. Joseph's Episcopal Church, and Moon Lake Baptist Church. Volunteers from these churches have worked together for several years to create this special gathering for the community.

Bring your family, invite your friends, and join us for an evening of fellowship, food, and fun!



Groundhogs Just Seem to Make Life Better

BY HANK ALLEN



When most people think of groundhogs, they think of Punxsutawney Phil in Gobbler's Knob, Pennsylvania, who is supposed to be able to do long-term weather forecasts. Impressive as that is, you can use your imagination and find even more interesting talents among groundhogs. They tend to bring people together in admiration of the adorable critter.

The Groundhog has a lifesize, friendly mascot named Lookout you'll meet at community events and around town, and the Mentone Ukes now have an amazing logo created by group co-founder Jerry Megli that you see everywhere, from our website, Facebook group, and even here in the paper. These days, branding is important for any kind of public-facing organization. I thought maybe our ukulele group needed its own branch of the groundhog family. Buc-ee's has their beaver, and Mentone celebrates the mighty groundhog, and in some cases several groundhogs.

I'm in no way an artist but being able to generate images by just writing a description into a prompt for an AI generative art app was becoming a thing at the time. The first ones I tried weren't very good and the results were usually too weird or just not right. But I found one called DALLE (not to be confused with Buc-ee's) that is amazing. You could generate an image for any theme that you need, such as holidays, festivals, or sessions focused on musical genres. The thing that really made them was having the groundhogs play ukulele and have their mouths wide open like they were singing. We were now able to get incredible promo art.

Now I have never seen a groundhog in the wild singing and playing a ukulele, but I figure that is just as likely as having one do an accurate weather forecast.

The Mentone Ukes will hold practice sessions at the Moon Lake Library on Oct. 11 and 25 at 1 p.m. A free introduction to the ukulele is offered, and loaner ukuleles are available. Newcomers and beginners of all ages are welcome to attend! For more information, you can find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and on our website, www.mentoneukes.com. Strum and be happy!



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Spookapalooza Returns to DeSoto State Park

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

Halloween meets the great outdoors when Spookapalooza Weekend returns to DeSoto State Park in Fort Payne, October 24–26, 2025. This free, family-friendly tradition blends fall festivities with the natural beauty of Lookout Mountain, offering something for all ages.

The fun begins with the Spooktacular Campsite Contest, where campers transform their sites into haunted wonderlands. Visitors can stroll through the campground and admire the creativity, from spooky skeletons to glowing jack-o-lanterns. Prizes are awarded for first, second, and third place, as well as "most creative."

Another highlight is the Pumpkin Carving Contest, open to all ages. Carved creations must be dropped off at DeSoto's Country Store by noon on Saturday, October 25, and winners will be announced later in the day.

Children (and the young at heart) will love Trick-or-Treating in the Campground, where candy stations are set up throughout the campground. Costumes are encouraged, and families should note that campground gates open to the public at 3:00 p.m., with no entry permitted before then or after 5:30 p.m. Trick-or-treating hours are 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., with sections of the campground closed to vehicle traffic to ensure safety for all.

Beyond contests and candy, Spookapalooza offers a full lineup of seasonal fun, from games to crafts and more. The event's playful spirit makes it a fall favorite for local families and visitors alike.

Attendees should be mindful of the park's natural resources: no glitter, confetti, or paint may be used in decorations, and nothing should be placed on trees, trails, or neighboring campsites. These guidelines ensure that the magic of Halloween leaves no trace behind, keeping DeSoto's forests and trails pristine for all to enjoy.

For more information on Spookapalooza, visit alapark.com.





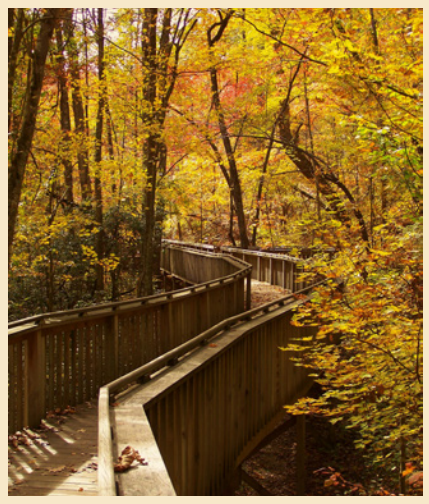


While You're Here — Explore DeSoto's Trails

Spookapalooza may be the headline attraction, but DeSoto State Park also offers over 40 miles of scenic hiking and biking trails. From the family-friendly Laurel Falls Trail to the rugged Never-Never Land Loop, there's something for every level of adventurer.

Don't miss the Talmadge Butler Boardwalk, an accessible path leading to the Azalea Cascade, one of the park's most photographed spots. Mountain bikers can test their skills on the CCC Quarry Trail and other single-track routes.

This is the **Year of Alabama Trails**, so take a break from the jack-o-lanterns and costumes this fall to enjoy the crisp air, fall foliage, and cascading waterfalls that make DeSoto's trails an unforgettable experience.



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mentone Fall Festival

OCT 18 • 9-4

at Moon Lake Campus

Live Music

SHIGLEY AMPHITHEATER



10-11 a.m. — Average Joe



11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. — Three On A String



2-3 p.m. — Pierce Pettis

MUSIC IN FRONT OF MOON LAKE CAMPUS



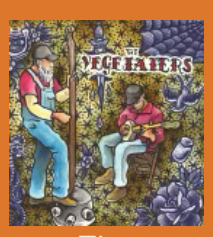
Judy-Nicole Kirby



Lisa Crow



Mountain Hippie



The Vegetaters

Friday Night Kickoff Concert

WILL DOOLEY & COMPANY

Friday, October 17 • 6-9 p.m.
Linger Longer Pavilion at the Mentone Inn

Concert is FREE and Open to Everyone!

Enjoy a homemade chili supper served by our local Scouts and support a great cause!

Food Vendors

- DeSoto Rescue Squad
- Freudian Slip Coffee
- Funkee Franks
- Lemon Shakers
- McIllwain Kettle Corn
- Rib Shak
- Stix
- Sure Enough Sweets
- Tacos Town
- Wildflower Fudge

Children's Activities

(Held in the gym)

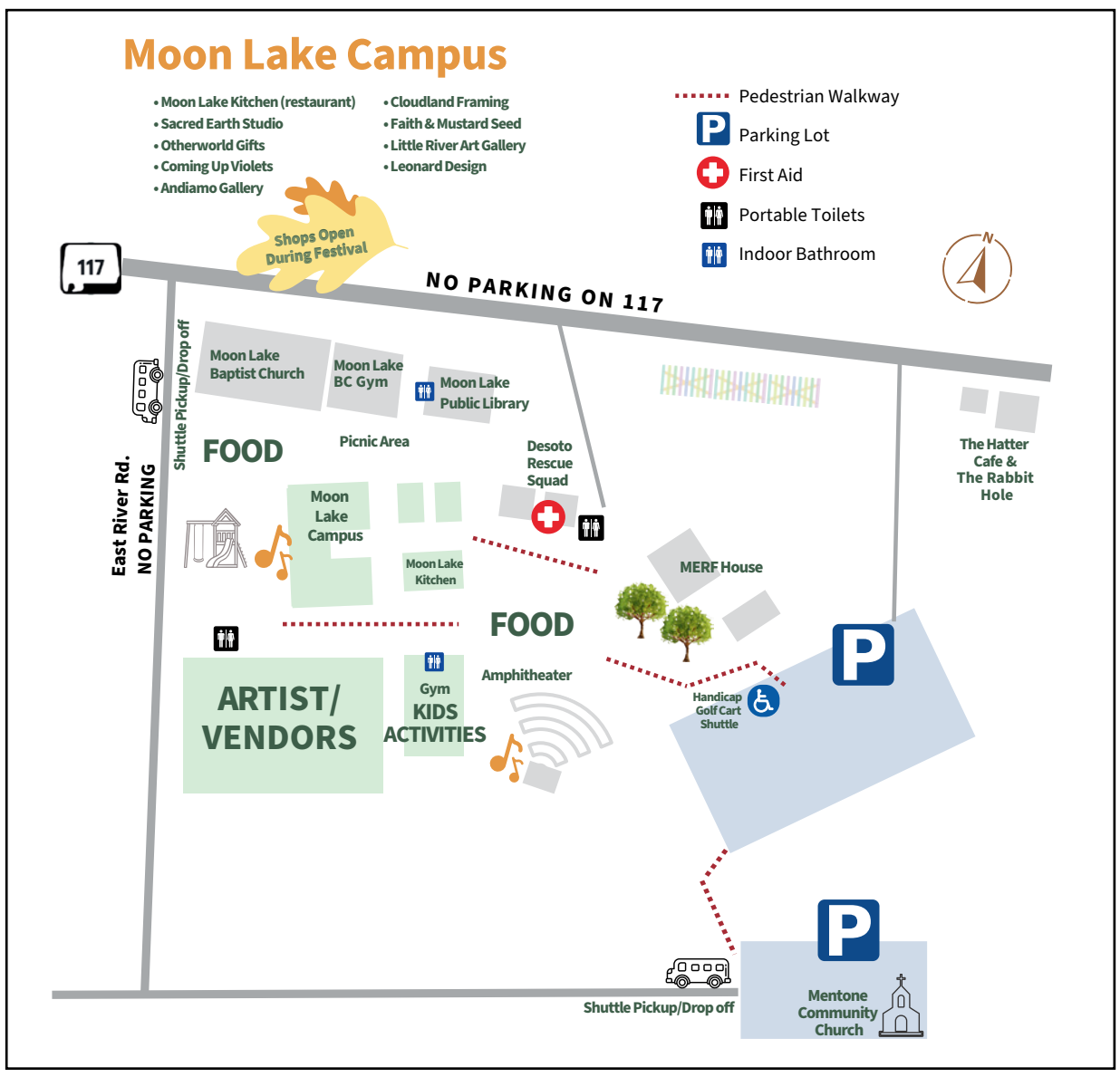
- 4th–6th Grade Art Show
- Arts & Crafts Stations
- Face Painting

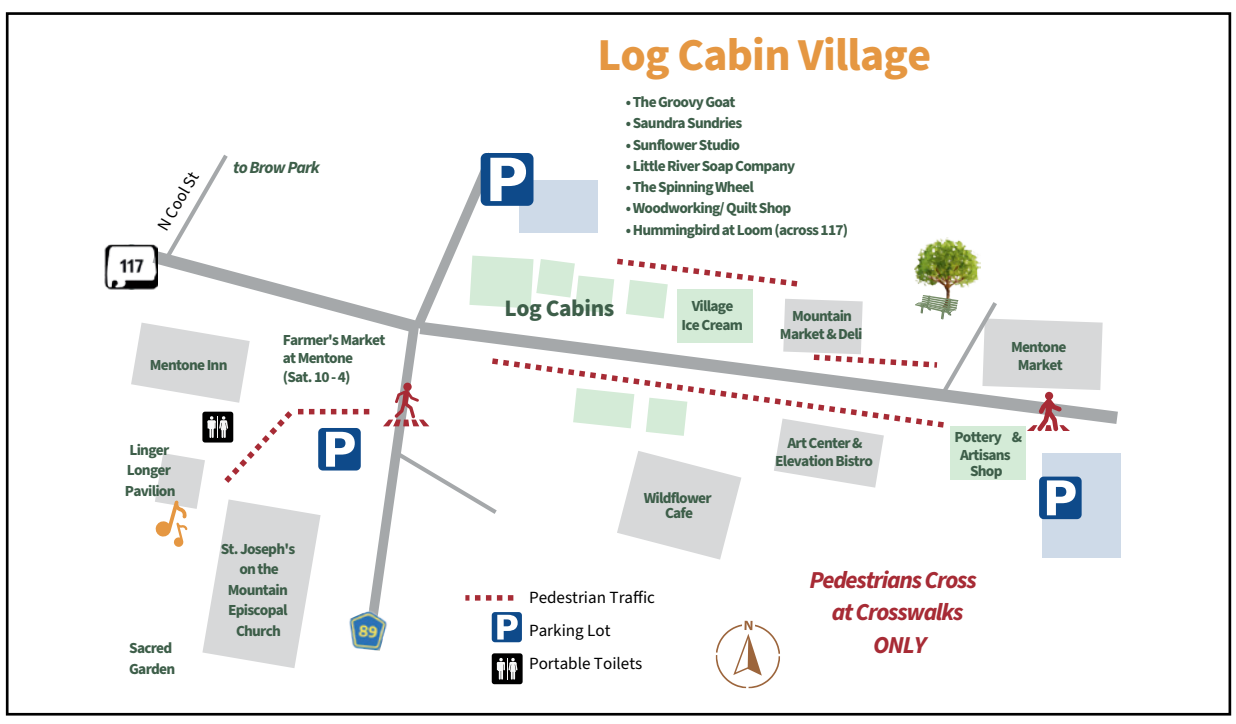
FARMERS MARKET AT MENTONE
Next to Mentone Inn
10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Art Vendors

- Altered Miracles
- Artjewelz
- Blackbird Wireworks
- Blooming Potential
- Blue Dragon Glass
- Bow Ties by Emily
- Carla Johnson's Art
- Carpe Diem
- Chelley King Art
- Cherry Blossom Pottery
- Clark Craftworks
- Cloudland Clay Company
- Colors of Creation
- Cub Scout Pack 4178
- Cultivate Soap and Skincare
- Deborah Payne
- Designs By Kimberly
- Doug & Betty Perkins—Made in Mentone
- Eastaboga Bee Company
- Echoes of Silverware
- EclectArt Studios
- Ella's Fudge
- Erika Prater Ceramics
- Everyday Treasures
- Filthy Rags
- Fixtures of Faith
- Fractured Hue Studios
- Funky MAE
- Gayla Allison
- Gentlemen Jigs
- Green Rhino Studio
- Heartstrings & Stitches
- Homestead Heirlooms
- Klézi Artz
- K.M. Original Creations
- L & K Authentic CreAtions
- Lake Martin Pecans
- Lavender Mountain Soap & Candle
- Lever's 2000 Handcrafted Gifts
- Liza LaRue Designs
- Lolly Suds & Such
- Lookout Mountain Goat Ranch Originals
- Mike's Unique Silverware
- Mixing Dixie
- Mountain Makes
- My Pour Life
- Nancy M. Elliott Studios
- Newell Arts
- Ninnie's Handmade Wreaths
- Pam's Craftings
- Papa's Yard Art
- Read Artwork
- Rezin Kreation
- Richard Brown Photography
- Rosie's Herb and Rose Farm
- Ross Bryant Pottery
- Sarah Mills Bailey Fine Art
- Shannon MacMichael Pottery
- Sharon Lewis Fine Art
- Simple Creations
- Slightly Different Jewelry
- Smokehouse Foods LLC
- Sunny Field Furniture-Sunny Field Home
- Sweet Tea Pottery
- The Fat Fox
- The Hooking Hen
- The Knotty Kayes
- The Mason Jar-Canning & Home
- The Mentone Bee Company
- The Mushroom Preserve
- The Old Place
- The Vintage Sunflower
- Tim Tingle As The Wood Turns
- Timber Craft
- Trinkety Treasures
- Walden Ridge Publishing
- Zen Art Glass







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MERF in Motion: Fall Updates, Field Trips, and a New Face in Fine Arts

BY KATIE HAND

Things have been full steam ahead at MERF! From planning fall programming and writing grants to coordinating Senior Lunches and overseeing the restoration of the MERF House, we've been busy behind the scenes. We're so grateful to all the helping hands who keep this mission running strong.

A special thank-you goes out to the volunteers at The Groundhog — your dedication to sharing our community's stories is a gift. And to our wonderful board of directors, thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. Planning and coordinating aren't easy tasks, but with a strong team, it really does feel like a well-oiled machine.

This season, we were thrilled to award funding to three amazing teachers at Valley Head School, helping make upcoming experiential learning opportunities a reality. MERF presented checks to support fall field trips, including a visit to the pumpkin patch for younger students, travel for two students to attend the FAA Convention in Indianapolis, and a trip to Space Camp. We're proud to help bring these experiences to life, because it's a big world out there, and our students deserve the chance to explore it. These kinds of opportunities inspire creativity, build confidence, and help kids dream big.

We're also delighted to welcome Sherryl Lewis of Henagar as the new art teacher at Valley Head School. Sherryl brings years of experience working with children of all ages and has a heart for helping students grow through creative learning in the world of music and art. She's already working alongside teachers to help build a strong, supportive culture at the school. With grandchildren at VHS, Sherryl is especially excited to be part of this chapter in their lives.

Her vision is to create a fun, welcoming space where students not only make art but also take ownership of their learning and feel empowered through creativity. From hands-on projects to daily classroom rhythms, she's eager to help students make lasting memories and develop confidence through the arts.

At MERF, we're proud to continue our mission of supporting students in fine arts education. Whether it's through a sticky art project, musical exploration, or an off-campus experience, we're committed to giving students the chance to discover the joy and growth that creative learning can bring.

Please consider supporting our students by volunteering or donating. You can learn more about what we do — and how you can help — by visiting merfhouse.org.

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

KB Solomon Brings Paul Robeson Tribute to Mentone

This November, audiences will have the rare opportunity to experience "Speak of Me As I Am," a powerful one-man musical tribute to the legendary Paul Robeson, performed by acclaimed basso profundo singer KB Solomon.

Two performances are planned:

- Friday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m. (with a "Meet the Artist" reception to follow)
- Sunday, Nov. 9, at 3 p.m. (also with a post-show reception)

Both shows will be held at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church. Proceeds will benefit the mission and ministries of the church, as well as cover the cost of the show.

About the Show

"Speak of Me As I Am" is Solomon's heartfelt homage to Paul Robeson — an athlete, scholar, actor, singer, and civil rights activist whose deep voice and fearless advocacy made him a global icon. The production combines song and storytelling, highlighting the music Robeson made famous, including traditional spirituals such as "Go Down Moses," and "Deep River," as well as anthems like "The House I Live In," and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

About KB Solomon

KB Solomon has built a career as one of the most prominent basso profundo singers of his generation. Over the past 20 years, he has performed principal roles with leading opera companies worldwide. His classical training spans five American universities, as well as the Opera Musical Theater Institute, where he studied under greats such as Jerome Hines and Franco Corelli. Solomon's talents have garnered numerous awards, including the Richard Tucker Career Grant, the Sullivan Musical Foundation Award, and honors from the Metropolitan Opera National Auditions. He has been praised for bringing to life the rich sound, spirit, and power of Robeson's music in a way that few others have matched.

Ticket Information

Tickets are $25 and can be purchased beginning October 10:

- By scanning the QR code on the show posters displayed around Mentone and Fort Payne
- By scanning the QR posted on the St. Joseph's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/stjom
- By purchasing tickets at the Mentone Market (cash or check only, please)
- By calling the church office and arranging purchase at the church: 256-634-4476.

Seating is limited (approximately 100 seats per show). Audiences are encouraged to secure their seats early for this unforgettable celebration of music, history, and the enduring legacy of Paul Robeson.





First Friday, Festivals, and Fall Fun at Moon Lake Campus

BY JULI JORDAN

FIRST FRIDAY
Oct. 3 at Moon Lake Campus • 4 to 6 p.m. (new fall hours)

Shopping is more fun after hours! If you haven't explored Moon Lake Campus yet, this is the perfect opportunity. The evening has an open-house feel, with shops offering seasonal finds. Coming Up Violets has hand-painted Halloween magnets with witty sayings, while Faith & Mustard Seed is featuring new socks and other fresh arrivals. Stroll through these shops, plus Cloudland Framing, Otherworld Gifts, The Gallery by Andiamo, Moon Lake Kitchen (serving up delicious eats and specialty cocktails), and the Little River Art Gallery. Just next door, the Moon Lake Public Library will be shaking up gourmet mocktails. Pop-Up Artists: Sarah Mills-Bailey, Absolutely Creations, The Vintage Sunflower, EclectArts Studio, and Blooming Potentials.

Little River Art Gallery: Fall Featured Artist – Erika Prater

Erika Prater creates wheel-thrown pottery that is both functional and decorative. Her work speaks to seasoned collectors and anyone who appreciates the beauty of handmade craft.



Beautiful pottery by LRAC's featured artist Erika Prater.

Make Your Mark on Mentone

Chalk Mural October–November: Lisa Sulkosky will step out of her comfort zone at Sunflower Studios in Log Cabin Village, trading in watercolor paper for a chalkboard. Her mural will highlight the small treasures that surround us — if we take the time to look closely. Lisa says, "Creating the mural is the least I can do for Mentone; it feeds my soul." Next up: Brande Arno! The Make Your Mark on Mentone mural project is located on the grounds of the Mentone Inn, at the corner of Alabama Hwy 117 & County Road 89, right at the flashing light. This project is made possible by a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Kids' Corner & Student Art Show at Mentone Fall Festival Oct 18

LRAC is proud to sponsor this year's Kids' Corner at the Mentone Fall Festival, featuring a variety of hands-on art activities for children. In the Moon Lake Gym, festivalgoers can also enjoy the 4th–6th Grade Valley Head and Homeschool Student Art Show, highlighting the creativity and talent of our local young artists.

Monster Mash Members Social! October 30 • 5–7 p.m. at Moon Lake Campus

You're invited to a spooktacular evening with a new twist on LRAC's Annual Members Social! Costumes encouraged: spooky, silly, or inspired by the masters — anything from ghouls to Gauguin. Prizes will be awarded for the best dressed, so let your imagination run wild. Expect good food, good friends, and good ghouls as we celebrate art, community, and connection.



This gathering is the perfect time to hear LRAC updates, renew or start your membership, and connect with fellow art lovers. Memberships make events and projects like the Summer Concert Series, Creative Spirit Market, art classes, scholarships, and mural projects possible — providing both matching funds for grants and strong community support for the arts. Open to the public. Come join the fun!

9th Annual Creative Spirit Market November 9–10 at DeSoto State Park

(across from the Country Store)

Hosted by DeSoto State Park and LRAC, and supported by the Alabama State Council on the Arts, this open-air showcase brings together the best of regional creativity. Explore artist demonstrations, fine and folk art, premium handcrafted goods, and live acoustic music. Families can also enjoy the free interactive art area, where market-goers of all ages can create their own art to take home.

Moon Lake Arts Collective Update

There's a lot of buzz about the Arts Collective! With $60,250 in grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the Lyndhurst Foundation, and Alabama Arts Tag, along with $45,075 in individual donations, the vision is becoming a reality. Mentone's first public-access pottery studio will also feature a flexible space for a variety of art classes. Visitors can enjoy "Make Your Own" workshops and leave with a one-of-a-kind Mentone memory, while local artists will benefit from pottery guild memberships, giving them a creative home without the heavy cost of equipment. The collective will be a vibrant hub for creativity, learning, and connection, bringing together artists, residents, and visitors alike.

Want to make your mark on Mentone in a big way? Visit the Moon Lake Arts Collective tab at www.littleriverartscouncil.org to learn more and become a recognized contributor to this inspiring project.

Juli Jordan is president of the Little River Arts Council.







Rhododendron Garden Club

Phase 1 of Garden Project Set for Fall Festival Debut

BY MELLANIE TUTTLE

Usually, my Groundhog article is a recap of the previous month's program. However, roses will be the topic for a future issue, because this person forgot about the deadline and needs more time to get that one all together. President Rhea Pirch made a great presentation, but I forgot to ask for her notes. According to some scientific research, forgetfulness can be a sign of higher intelligence. The brain's ability to selectively forget irrelevant information allows it to focus on what's truly important for making better decisions and adapting to new situations. That sounds like a pretty good excuse to me!

What several folks in the Rhododendron Garden Club have been focused on is transforming the space between the Shigley Amphitheater and Moon Lake Gym into a wildflower/shade/native garden. Mostly, it's been an effort to control invasive plants and weeds, but no more! We have a plan.

By the time the Fall Festival takes place, Phase 1 will be completed. The plan is to build a wattle fence; power wash and level the gazebo; power wash the back of the gym and paint an eye-catching mural on the wall; and finally, add rain barrels. During the festival, please visit the garden, see the progress, and take a photo with Beatrix the Butterfly (Latin for "blessed one"). We may have a kaleidoscope, which is the name for a group of butterflies. Papilio is Latin for butterfly, so a kaleidoscope of Papilio.

According to Fernhill Garden Center, "Wattle fencing has been around for centuries. It's done by weaving thin branches through poles to make panels, and it goes right back to Neolithic times, so it's a well-tried technique! Use a low wattle fence to define the edge of a bed and make a good wind barrier to protect young seedlings. It can be used to keep out critters or keep pigs, goats, or even cows penned in. Our wattle fence will be located in front of a berm. The berm was an easy way to recycle the sticks, weeds, and leaves but wound up looking unkempt, so this wattle will hide that and add beauty. Willow sails used in building will often take root, and then the wattle will become a living fence. No willow wattle — too much growing already.

A wildflower, pollinator garden was started and maintained by founding members of the RGC. Bill Berry, principal of Moon Lake, supported the garden, and after the school closed, he asked the club to return the garden to its former glory. The shade, invasive plants, and weeds prevented the return to a wildflower, pollinator, or native garden, so we adapted. Like a family, the garden has matriarchs, stately and stoic; some babies, new and needing attention; but, unfortunately, many cousins, those annoying ones that just keep coming back!

Phases 2 and 3 will incorporate an arbor to invite folks into the space, and the area below the path will be planted with natives only. Markers will be placed with common and botanical names to add an educational benefit. A boardwalk from the amphitheater entrance to the gazebo will replace the sawdust-covered walkway currently being used. Paths to meander through the space and boardwalks along the creek will be added.

Maintenance of the area must be addressed. These bodies aren't getting any younger!

Remember to come by the fairgrounds and visit the Flower Show, Night at the Movies. A special "Oscar" will go to the Design or Botanical Arts voted Best in Show by the public. That's you! Make your choice known.



Our next meeting will be on October 14 at the Library at 10 a.m. The topic will be Garden Photos by RGC's own Lesa Cummings, photographer extraordinaire!

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 II, and NE AL Federation of Garden Clubs.

Where Bats Go When Winter Comes

BY LYNNA MEADOWS MORTON

At our home here in Mentone, for the past three years, we have hosted a small brown bat we have affectionately named Betty Bat. Why Betty, a girl's name? She lives alone and takes care of herself all summer and winter long! The thinking is if it were a boy bat, it would have a companion!

Betty Bat stays all summer in the same spot, a small crevice on our back covered porch. She sleeps all day and flies out each evening to hunt and gather, returning before dawn. She stays until the weather gets colder and then she is gone for the winter. When the weather warms in the spring, she returns. So we wondered where Betty Bat goes in winter.

As the days shorten and the temperatures drop, bats in colder climates face a challenge: their primary food source, insects, disappears. To survive, bats have two main strategies: hibernation or migration.

Here atop Lookout Mountain, we have what is known as "cave bats" like the big brown bat and the little brown bat. This breed chooses to hibernate. This is a state of deep sleep or torpor, which allows them to conserve energy by dramatically slowing their metabolism. During torpor, a bat's heart rate can drop from over 200 beats per minute to as low as 10, and its body temperature can fall to just a few degrees above freezing. Where do they hibernate? Caves and mines, rock crevices and man-made structures such as attics, walls, barns, and abandoned buildings. They can squeeze through incredibly small openings, as little as three-eighths of an inch, to find a suitable roost.

So, even though we do not know where Betty Bat goes, it is somewhere warm where she sleeps through the cold winters here in Mentone and returns to us each spring! Thank you, Betty Bat, for being a part of our family!



Betty Bat at her summer home here in Mentone





Meet the Moon Lake Library Municipal Board

BY JAY ROBBINS

In summer 2022, the Mentone Town Council approved the formation of the Moon Lake Community Library (a.k.a., Mentone Public Library) and appointed a board of five trustees. Later that same year, the Alabama Public Library Service in Montgomery approved the library's application for state aid, making Mentone the smallest town in the state with a public library! Let's meet the current members of the Moon Lake Library Municipal Board.

Hayley Croft moved back home to Dekalb County in 2020 after living away for 10 years. She is the director of Grace and Truth Scholé, a homeschool co-op in Mentone, as well as the youth and children's education director at Mentone Community Church, where her husband, Heath Croft, is the pastor. Books and libraries have always been an important part of Hayley's life. She has been a member of the library's municipal board for almost two years and loves having an opportunity to help build a book-loving community. Her favorite genre is literary fiction, and her most recommended "heart books" are Peace Like a River by Leif Enger, The Lord of the Rings Trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien, anything by Wendell Berry, and Island of the World by Michael O'Brien.

Patricia (Pat) Parmelee was a part-time resident of Mentone for 10 years before moving here permanently in 2020. After working for four decades as an academic psychologist specializing in late-life mental health, she is now retired and enjoying travel, gardening, and volunteer work. Pat learned to read at 3 and has been an avid reader ever since. She joined the Friends of Moon Lake Library Board in 2021, becoming its treasurer in 2022. In 2024, she was offered a joint appointment to the municipal board, where she also serves as treasurer. Pat's favorite genres are classics and science fiction, though she loves a good mystery as well. Recommended books are Mary Doria Russell's The Sparrow, Ernest Gaines's A Lesson Before Dying, and anything Faulker ever wrote.

For many years **Jay Robbins** taught English as a Second Language at The University of Alabama. There he met his wife, Mary Ann, who worked in the UA library system. They agree that moving to Mentone from Tuscaloosa six years ago was one of the best decisions they ever made. Jay has been on the library's municipal board since its inception, and has served as chair since the passing of Holley Midgley last year. He is a big supporter of public libraries in all that they do. The enjoyment he gets from books is the only thing he still has in common with his 12-year-old self.



Standing (left to right): Mary Shurett, Hayley Croft, and Pat Parmelee. Seated: Susan Van Apeldoorn and Jay Robbins

Mary Shurett, a native of Fort Payne and a full-time resident of Mentone for the past 10 years, is married to Ben Shurett. They are parents to two sons, Brad (Kimberly) Shurett and Will (Katie) Shurett, and grandparents to Jay (13) and Drew (9). Mary received her B.S. and M.A. degrees from The University of Alabama, where she majored in elementary education with a concentration in social studies and reading education. She taught 3rd through 6th grades over her 34-year career, as well as English Language Learners and Gifted American History. At UA, she taught senior-level methods courses and supervised student teachers. Mary serves in several volunteer capacities as a member of St. Joseph's Episcopal Church. She loves to read, needlepoint, cook, and cheer for the Crimson Tide.

Susan Van Apeldoorn fell in love with books when she started reading at 2 years old. Valley Head didn't have a public library, so she grew up eagerly waiting for the next volume of Reader's Digest Condensed Books to arrive. She now belongs to five libraries online, which keeps her supplied with books to read on her iPad. She is a dedicated advocate for reading and happy to be on the library board, where she can help others have access to books. In her spare time, Susan rides her horses and serves in several volunteer capacities at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church.

Library to Host Blues Legend Alabama Annie

BY ANNE MCLEOD

Moon Lake Library will host Alabama Annie on Sunday, Oct. 12, at 2 p.m. Annie has been playing her original tunes and traditional blues on piano and guitar for more than 35 years at festivals, clubs, and private venues, working with the legendary Johnny Shines, Gadsden's own Jerry Boogie McCain, and others, as well as visiting dignitaries such as John Brim, Pinetop Perkins, and John Lee Hooker.

Drawing from her roots in North Alabama and the Old Home Place beside Historic U.S. Highway 11, the old railroad line between Chattanooga and Birmingham and beautiful Lookout Mountain, she has spent a lot of time playing the blues and spinning her tales in Memphis on historic Beale Street, and for the last few years in Santa Cruz, California, as well as the Bay Area with her son Chas and his band, the Nagging Doubts, there in the stomping ground of the Legendary Pinetop Perkins, John Lee Hooker, Robert Lowrey, and Virgil Thrasher. Her stories and songs tell you a tale



of trains and hobos, ghosts beside the river, and star-crossed lovers wandering in the moonlight.

Come and join this member of the Alabama Blues Hall of Fame for an afternoon at the Moon Lake Library. For more info, you can visit her YouTube channel at: http://www.youtube.com/@AlabamaAnnie or you can email her at missg0144@gmail.com.

Anne McLeod is the librarian at Moon Lake Library.





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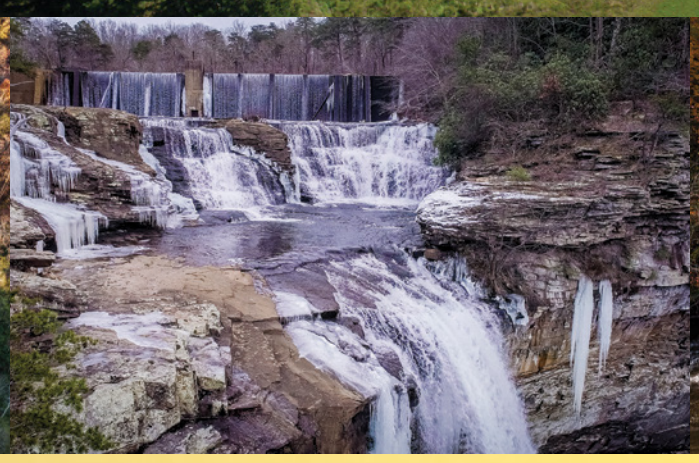
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Mentone Arts Center

Lee Farrar Bailey to Perform, Floral Art Class, and Our Anniversary Celebration

BY RANDY GRIDER

Fall is officially here, and so is the excitement for upcoming events at the arts center. We kick off things with a great concert featuring opera singer Lee Farrar Bailey. He will perform on the Padgett Stage inside the arts center on Sunday, Oct. 12, from 4-6 p.m. Tickets are $25 per person. Reserve your seat at https://square.link/u/0Wh885hz, in person at the arts center, or by phone at the number at the end of this article.

Lee Farrar Bailey has performed his entire life, making his operatic debut at age 7 with the Seattle Opera Company. Since then, he has built a career as a featured soloist and in leading roles with professional opera, musical theatre companies, and numerous symphony orchestras, including: the New Orleans Opera Association; The Louisiana Philharmonic; The San Antonio Symphony; Alamo City Opera; The Mississippi Symphony; Summer Lyric Theatre; and the Jefferson Performing Arts Society in New Orleans, San Antonio, Houston, Los Angeles, and at Carnegie Hall in New York City, to name just a few. Lee has performed leading roles in "La Bohème," "Oklahoma," "Into the Woods," "Grease," "Man of La Mancha," "Camelot," "Oliver," "Will Rogers Follies," "Chicago," and "Rib-as-Dominicci" in addition to hundreds of other works. Lee also trained with Metropolitan Opera principal coach Joshua Greene as Wagnerian Heldentenor, following in the footsteps of his late father and world-renowned dramatic tenor Dennis Bailey.

Lee is a recording artist with five albums and one on the way, plus he continues to tour concert halls and performing arts centers in support of those works. He is also a published composer and original singer-songwriter and enjoys performing those works in various venues and churches. Lee now resides in Mentone with his artist wife, Sarah Mills-Bailey and their daughter. In Mentone, Lee is running his performing arts instructional studio, Lookout Broadway, and is developing a full professional repertory theatre company and a musical theatre summer camp workshop.



Lee Farrar Bailey

Acrylic Painting Class

We also welcome artist/instructor Lucy Thomas to Mentone for a two-day acrylic painting class November 8 and 9. Tuition is $195, and the class is limited to 10. A supply list will be emailed to registered students. At press time, only one spot remained available.

In the "My Five Favorite Flowers: Florals and Negative Space" acrylic painting class, Thomas will show students how she paints florals in a loose, expressive style. Students will paint some specific flowers that she likes and also work from small fresh flower arrangements. "We can also use our imaginations to add any finishing touches. I primarily use a technique called negative space painting. So, I'll show you how to do this as we paint our florals," Thomas said. This is not a class on realistic painting and drawing ability/experience is not necessary.



Floral painting by Lucy Thomas

About Lucy: Lucy started painting at 47 after a discouraging medical diagnosis. Before long, art became her full-time job. Since then, her work has been in galleries across the Southeast. She teaches at the Huntsville Museum of Art, Revelry Fine Arts in Nashville, and online through her website. She lives in the Nashville area with her husband, Garner, dogs and cats, and a tortoise named Steve.

Save the Date

The arts center will be celebrating its fifth anniversary of operation in the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts building on Wednesday, Nov. 19, starting at 5:30 p.m. We will be joined by the staff of Elevation Bistro as they also mark their fifth anniversary. Look for more information in the November issue of The Groundhog.

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

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Kirbys *(continued from page 1)*

Payne, a furniture store in Georgia, and even ownership of the Mentone Market for one year when it was the Mentone Superette. Together, they raised two children — Tammy and Preston — and later welcomed three grandchildren. Through it all, Martha has remained an active presence in town life, watching their children and later their grandchildren walk the same halls at Moon Lake School that shaped generations of Kirbys.

"Proud of This Town"

If Hobson's work shaped the landscape, his leadership has helped shape the town itself. He has served on the Mentone Town Council for more than 30 years. "The main reason I wanted to stay was to see the school done," he said, referring to the renovation and rebirth of Moon Lake Campus.

His service extended further when he helped organize Mentone's first volunteer fire department in the late 1970s. What began as a handful of neighbors and a donated brush truck grew into the modern, well-equipped department that protects Mentone today. Hobson not only volunteered as a fireman but later chaired the board of directors. "Everybody just worked together," he explained. "We've always been proud of this town."

As they approach 60 years of marriage, Hobson and Martha remain quick to credit one another. "We've had our ups and downs," Martha said, "but we've never really had any serious arguments." Hobson smiled and offered his secret: "I just say, 'Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am.'"

More Than a Landmark

While the red boathouse continues to draw travelers each autumn, for the Kirbys it remains simply a reminder of Hobson's father's handiwork and a memory of trailing along and enjoying being a country boy. Their real legacy is the mark they have left on Mentone itself: in the roads and home sites Hobson built, the fire department he helped create, the council he serves, and the family he and Martha raised with love.

"We're just country folks," Hobson said simply. "Everybody's always just worked together to have what we have."



This red boathouse is one of the most photographed scenes in the state park.

Excursions *(continued from page 1)*



A group of young excavators enjoying an afternoon outing.

That realization, coupled with a lifelong love of the outdoors, led him to begin a transition from a very full job in the plumbing trade to the challenge of creating a brand-new business. He still works as a plumber while his fledgling company grows. But taking folks out and teaching them new pastimes and educating them about nature is where his heart lies.

"I think it's important to spend time with people and try to bring out the best in them," he said. "This gives me an opportunity to put myself in front of people. I don't get to do that a whole lot in the plumbing world."

Much of what makes Mentone Excursions possible is access to a large piece of family property — roughly 500 acres once used as a coal mine and now permanently protected through the Alabama-Georgia Land Trust. The land includes frontage on the East Fork of Little River, making it ideal for tubing, kayaking, fishing, and hiking. It also contains archaeological treasures. "There are enough arrowheads over there to last a bunch of people a lifetime," Harp noted.

Variety Is the Name of the Game

Harp and crew will do their best to accommodate any outdoor experiences their clients desire. Some of the regular adventures include:

- Tubing trips down the river, with routes ranging from calm floats to fast-moving water, depending on conditions.
- Fly-fishing excursions for redeye bass, brim, and rock bass.
- Arrowhead hunts across the property, giving participants the thrill of discovery as well as hands-on history.
- Guided hikes tailored to the interests and abilities of each group, from short walks to full-day treks.

And if guests are beginners in any endeavor — for example, fishing — the staff takes as much time to educate them as is needed. "If somebody's new at it, absolutely — we'll take the time and work with them until they get it," Harp said.

Every trip is guided, whether for couples, families, or larger groups. Bookings are handled online through the company's website, and Harp says most customers so far have discovered them through simple online searches, such as "things to do in Mentone."

Year-Round Activities

While the warm-weather months bring tubing, fishing, and hiking, Harp and Thomas are working on new ideas to attract visitors during the winter. One plan is to create an indoor arrowhead-sifting experience, allowing guests to search screened soil known to contain artifacts — great for school groups, birthday parties, and "curious explorers of all ages."

The cousins are also preparing to reintroduce horses to nearby Whippoorwill Farm, which once operated as a horse facility. Fences are being restored so the land can host horseback rides and horsemanship instruction, drawing on Thomas' equine background. "In the future, there will still be people wanting to do the horseback riding — even in January," Harp said.

Beyond offering outdoor recreation, Harp sees the business as a way to encourage and connect with people. "Encouraging people is really important," he said, adding that he's seen guests expand their worlds and shift their perspective on life just by getting outside and off the beaten path. "People don't realize what one little thing will do for somebody," he reflected.

He also has his eye on the long term. "I'm hoping this is something I can do for the rest of my life. That's the goal," he said. "Once the name's out, I think we're going to be very busy and need some help."

Harp's lifelong passion for the land translates to once-in-lifetime memories for his guests. And it's a perfect fit for folks who come to enjoy the mountain.

Find out what's happening with Mentone Excursions by visiting their website: mentoneexcursions.com, and following them on Facebook and Instagram.



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

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

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One Couple's Journey to Living Lightly on the Land

BY RUSSELL POUNCEY

This is the fifth in a series of articles on regenerative agriculture, featuring local residents involved in the movement.

My father was a child of the Great Depression. He learned early on that you had to make do with what you had, to fix what was broken, and to make what you needed but couldn't afford to buy. He was by nature and his service a member of the Greatest Generation. I am his son. My partner Carolyn Smith's parents were the same. Her father was a Marine artillery officer on Guadalcanal, my father a B-17 gunner. We both grew up with their belief that if you wanted or needed something done, you did it yourself. So, when I suggested to her that we leave our city life in Atlanta and head out to live in the country, she was interested.

We wanted to be far from the noise of highways and airports, from sirens and alarms. Far from the perpetual twilight of the city night. We wanted the peace and tranquility of nature. We wanted to see the Milky Way on a clear winter night, to hear the spring peepers, to smell the aroma of leaves decomposing on the forest floor. We wanted to live within this with as little impact as possible.

After three or four years of saving and searching, we found our place on Lookout Mountain: 40 acres of trees and sandstone boulders. We arrived at the Fort Payne office of our closing attorney on a Friday afternoon with our car packed with camping equipment and a few hand tools. Using a hand saw and pruning shears, we cleared traces of a 50 year-old logging road. Our intention was to reach a place on the property suitable for a small house and garden.

Neither of us wanted to go deep into debt, because retirement was just a few years away. Our building plans were put on hold for five years while the property was paid off. Meanwhile, we continued working and living in Atlanta. We came up just about every Friday night after work to enjoy camping here, immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of the natural world.



Russell and Carolyn's garden in the woods.

When the land was paid off, we started applying our income to building materials. The first building was a small metal shed for storing tools. The second was an outhouse that we prefabbed in the front yard in Atlanta. Our Brookhaven neighbors were amused, "What are you all doing over here?" Laughter when we said, "Building an outhouse." The third building was a shower house with a propane water heater. We were approaching a state of glamping.

The cabin took several years to complete, usually working by ourselves on weekends when it wasn't raining. We had decided, for environmental reasons, to see how much salvage we could use for the 16- x 24-foot one-room cabin. Many of the materials were found, donated, salvaged, or purchased at the Atlanta Habitat for Humanity ReStore. Others were purchased from nearby sawmills, salvage stores, or building supply companies.

Our first electric power was a 45-watt solar panel, three car batteries, and a 300-watt inverter. This was enough to run an LED lamp and a tiny refrigerator — a definite step up from a propane lantern and ice chest. Carolyn had an unused cast iron wood stove at her Atlanta house that she donated to the cause. It did an outstanding job of heating that one-room house. Camping was over.

Our original plan was to have commercial water and electricity supplied to us through underground conduits. We didn't want to slash a 30-foot-wide gash through our beautiful forest. Unfortunately, the presence of many sandstone boulders presented an unreasonable cost barrier for underground utilities so we turned to solar power and well water.

We cut only those trees necessary to wedge in the footprint of our small cabin. The same philosophy applied to all of our projects. Clear only what you absolutely need. When it was time to install a larger solar array, it was difficult to acknowledge that quite a few healthy trees had to be removed. Realizing that the now cleared space would make a wonderful vegetable garden was a healing balm on that wound.

We realized from the beginning that the soil needed some amending to grow anything. We started learning all we could about sustainable agriculture, composting, mulching, hugelkultur, permaculture, and organic farming. Our first garden bed was a kind of inverted hugelkultur mound. We dug a 2-foot deep, 3-foot-wide trench, 20 feet long. Then we built a kind of wood and earthen lasagna: a layer of dead wood in the bottom of the trench, followed by a layer of the soil we had removed, carefully filling the voids. Then another layer of wood followed by a layer of soil — layer by layer in this manner until the trench was refilled, leaving us with a raised bed.

This method is very good for holding moisture, but the downside is that in the short term, there is a nitrogen deficiency. To compensate, we added a few ounces of 33-0-0 to each layer. In addition, we now compost all of our kitchen vegetable scraps directly into the beds, just digging a little trench and burying it. As time goes on and the wood rots, nitrogen is slowly returned. Today, we have eight such beds and several smaller ones, each covered with a mulch layer of wood chips or leaves. Over the years, as the wood has rotted, the beds have sunk. Just this year, we topped them up with new soil. We're constantly making new soil: piling up leaves, grass clippings, sandy soil, and so forth in the woods. We always have it on hand.

To attract the pollinators, Carolyn has planted an assortment of brightly colored flowers throughout the garden. We have also transplanted Hoary Mountain Mint into the garden. This native "weed" attracts an extraordinary variety of pollinators, especially predatory wasps.

That's our life! We're retired now and enjoying what we've built so far. Yes, we have more projects planned! And of course there's maintenance. But when we look around, there's mainly a huge sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Especially knowing that we have been gentle on our land.

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LOTS & LAND

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

BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME on this stunning 2-acre lot located in the Mentone's Laurawood Subdivision.Enjoy incredible bluff views and the peaceful mountain atmosphere that makes Mentone so special. 1,100-gallon septic system already installed. $125,000 MLS #21895268

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



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



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 $199,000. MLS#21886201



CHARMING 592 SQ FT TINY HOME featuring a loft, 1 BR with a built-in closet & bonus storage space. Enclosed back porch. Unwind in the hot tub or around the firepit. $189,900 MLS#21895632



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BLUEBIRDS NEST – Tucked away in Laurel Creek Lakes, this charming cabin sits on a wooded corner lot with a peaceful lake in the backyard. Enjoy the screened front porch, open living/kitchen/dining with a cozy gas log fireplace. $360,000 MLS#21895665



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



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

Unexpected Honoring

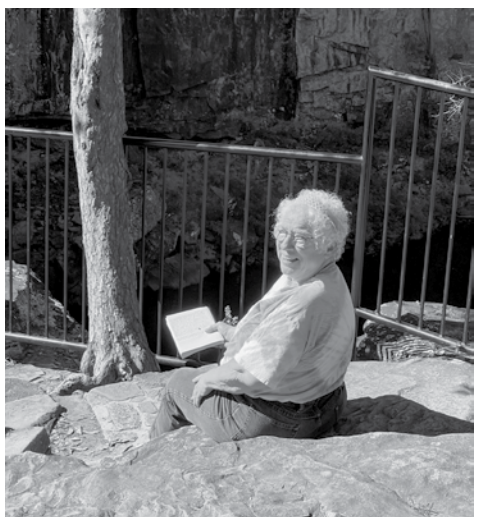
BY DEJOLY LABRIER

Here's a Webster's definition of honor: to regard or treat (someone) with admiration and respect; to give special recognition to. Last year on the weekend of my birthday, October 20, I was so honored by a complete stranger.

I had taken a small group of women with me to DeSoto Falls after our reset retreat had ended. We were sitting around one of the picnic tables after enjoying the energizing water, and a woman began walking toward us from the parking lot, holding her phone as if she were on a mission. She came directly to me and gently asked, "Are you the tiara lady?" I had forgotten that my article in The Groundhog that month was about my tiaras and how I use them as a symbol of honoring myself. All of the retreat participants and I were wearing tiaras.

I replied shyly, "Well, yes I am." She wanted a picture with me because she was so inspired by my article. (She was visiting from Birmingham.) Now, mind you, I've written four books and spoken at conferences and universities all over the country for 20 years. Yet, I never had this kind of amazing experience. We took pictures and she went back to her van, which looked as though they'd been camping at the park. Within a few minutes, she returned carrying a pen and the newspaper open to my article. This time she wanted an autograph. She said it was for her granddaughter, who was going through a rough time. This loving grandmother thought my article would inspire her and raise her spirits. Of course, I signed it gratefully.

This perfect stranger had no idea how significant her request was to me. She was doing it for her granddaughter. (I hope she sees this article.) But the blessing and honor was for me. I walked a little taller and smiled broadly, as a queen would do. Later that day, we were eating my birthday lunch at the Wildflower Café, and another woman visiting from out of town asked me for a photo when she told me she was celebrating her birthday too. (I don't know who she is, so I can't include her photo here.) I reached



into my bag and took out one of my extra tiaras and gave it to her.

"Look, Honey!" she yelled to her husband excitedly, "she gave me a tiara!" I told her to wear it in honor of herself every day, not just on her birthday. Her smile was gorgeous. I think it's important to honor ourselves, no matter how small the accomplishment. Sometimes getting out of bed to face the hardships of our days is something to honor. The little things are vitally important.

I honor myself with my tiaras. What do you do to honor yourself? I hope you will make this the most beautiful day of your life.

Creativity Workshop — Free and Open to Everyone

BY RUTH FERRAZ

If you've ever thought art wasn't possible for you because it's too difficult or you worried about cost, this workshop is for you. I believe creativity should be accessible to all, which is why I'm offering a free Creativity Workshop.

I was 30 years old before I learned to draw realistically, thanks to Dr. Betty Edwards's book, Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain. Her methods showed me that with practice, anyone can learn to draw — not just those "born" with talent. I also draw inspiration from the ideas of Dr. Norberto Keppe, who believed art's true role is to bring out the good, the beautiful, and the pure. These perspectives guide me as both an artist and a teacher.

In my first Mentone workshop (March 2025), people who thought they could never draw discovered they could. For me, it was powerful to see. Teaching reminds me that we all grow by learning together. Alongside Edwards's techniques, I'll include simple Brain Gym exercises by Dr. Paul Dennison to connect the hemispheres of the brain, body, and mind.

This workshop welcomes beginners, artists, and professionals from any field. Creativity supports problem-solving, focus, and joy in everyday life — not just in art. Together, we'll practice "seeing like an artist" and noticing details with patience and curiosity.

You can appreciate my art by visiting my website: RuthFerrazArt.blogspot.com and see not just my last 11 Oil on Canvas for my Art Exhibition in Boom Town Makers Market last July, but many other canvases I have painted during my lifetime.

When & Where

Tuesdays in November, 2–4 p.m.

Mentone address to be provided to those who register.

Not local? I plan to offer a one-week winter intensive workshop in Mentone — come learn and enjoy Lookout Mountain.

Register (limited seats; pre-registration required)

Call or text 912-436-6569 or email ruthfbyrnes@gmail.com to join the list.

I'm honored to learn alongside you. Let's get creative!

Protect Yourself From Marketing Violations

BY LYNN HIXON

During Open Enrollment, October 15 thru December 7, health insurance companies try to reach people in various ways, like television commercials, radio ads, events, mailings, phone calls, and texts. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has rules for marketing Medicare Advantage plans and Part D plans. These rules protect Medicare beneficiaries from aggressive or misleading marketing.

Here are a few things to watch for:

- People who ask for your Medicare number, Social Security number, or bank information, especially before you decide to enroll. Someone can use this information to enroll you in a plan without your permission.
- People who say they represent Medicare. Plans are never allowed to suggest they represent or are endorsed by Medicare or any other government agency. They cannot use the Medicare name or logo on their marketing materials. Be aware of people who send you unsolicited text messages or phone calls. Plans must provide you with the option to opt out of communications about Medicare products. It must be done annually and in writing.
- People who pressure you with time limits to enroll in their plan. You can use the entire Open Enrollment Period to make your decisions. You will not receive extra benefits for signing up early for a plan, and you will not lose your Medicare coverage if you don't pick a plan.
- Especially watch out for people who offer you gifts to enroll in their plan. Gifts must be given to everyone at an event regardless of their enrollment choice, and cannot be worth more than $15.

You should report potential Marketing violations to your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) or State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). Please call Lynn Hixon at the DeKalb County Council on Aging, 256-845-8590, to make an appointment for Open Enrollment or report marketing violations. Also, remember DiAnne Callahan is ready to assist you with the Senior Rx program and reduce the high costs of prescription medications.

FREE WORKSHOP ON CREATIVITY

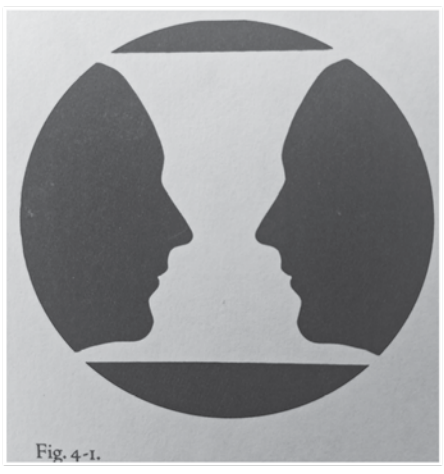
Tuesdays in November from 2 to 4pm.

Based on the book: DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN by Betty Edwards.

With the Artist and Teacher:

RUTH FERRAZ

Call or text for registration and address. (912)436-6569.
Seats are limited.





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October Community Events

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

October 2 Fore the Kids Golf Tournament – Enjoy a great day of golf while helping the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) continue their mission to provide hope and healing for abused and at-risk children. All golfers will receive lunch, snacks, water, and a CAC goody bag! Little Mole Country Club, Mentone. Lunch at 11 a.m. with shotgun start at noon.

October 2 Pumpkin Flower Arrangement Class – Hosted by Town Creek Field and Farm! Seasonal refreshments provided. Meal and Market, downtown Fort Payne. 6 p.m. Reserve your spot by messaging @towncreekfieldandfarm.

October 3 Fort Payne Fire & Rescue Golf Tournament – Charity golf benefiting St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and MDA. Terrapin Hills Country Club. Registration at 8 a.m.; Shotgun start at 9 a.m. Over $1,000 in prizes! Team (4-Man): $400; Hole Sponsorship: $200 (Company Name & Logo); Corporate Sponsorship: $500 (Team + Sponsorship + Banner + Social Media recognition)

October 3 Hike with a Naturalist: YCC Loop Trail – Guided 3.75-mile hike at Little River National Preserve. Wear proper hiking shoes and bring water/snacks.

October 3 Silent Spookies – See the classics Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror and Edison's Frankenstein. Only $5 per person (includes both films). Refreshments available for purchase. Fort Payne Opera House, 510 Gault Ave N. Doors open 5:30 p.m.; Films start around 6 p.m.

October 3-4 Vintage Fall Days – Shop fall décor, produce, and sweet treats! 6778 Hwy. 137, Valley Head.

October 4 Yoga on the Brow – Yoga on the Brow is 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.

October 4 Artisan Pumpkin Decorating – Fall is calling… and we're answering with a little pumpkin magic! Join us at Andiamo Lodge for a hands-on creative experience with the uber-talented Janet Rooney. You'll spend the day designing two beautiful pumpkins — in different sizes — that are anything but ordinary. Janet will guide you through the process, providing all the supplies and inspiration you need to create your very own little works of art. And because no Andiamo experience is complete without deliciousness… you'll also enjoy a gourmet Andiamo lunch after the class. Includes: Two pumpkins, all supplies, expert instruction, and an Andiamo gourmet lunch. Spots are limited — grab your seat, grab your bestie, and get ready to create something beautiful!

October 4 Practical Magic (Film Screening) – Classic 1998 film starring Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman. Fort Payne Opera House, 510 Gault Ave N. Two showings — 2 p.m. & 6 p.m. Doors open one hour before showtimes. Free admission plus one free popcorn & drink per attendee.

October 9 The SAM Foundation Charity Golf Tournament – Fundraiser supporting suicide prevention training in DeKalb County. Terrapin Hills Country Club. Starts at 10 a.m.

October 10–11 Ghost Walk – Moonlit stroll through Downtown Fort Payne with local history and mysteries. Hosted by Dr. Bloodsworth and Wysteria Gravely. Tickets required. About 1 mile walk with hills. Walk begins at the Opera House, Fort Payne. While this is a "casual" excursion, local topography may affect accessibility. Please provide your own mobility aids as needed. Tickets can be purchased HERE: https://www.eventbrite.com/o/landmarks-of-dekalb-county-49043174813 Refreshments by donation.

October 11 Girls' Night at the Farm – Fall edition! Live music, professional photography, pumpkin painting/flower arrangements, campfire, and s'mores at Town Creek Field & Farm. 5:30–8 p.m. For info: 256-717-8441.

October 11 Demo & Dine with Cheryl Slocum – Food & Wine's Senior Food Editor shares family food traditions, stories, and a live demonstration (including angel food cake). Cocktails, tea, and bites included. $100 per guest; limited seats available. Andiamo Lodge, Mentone. Andiamolodge.com.

October 11 Halloween Trivia Night – Halloween-themed trivia night! Entry fee: $10 per person. Teams: 2–5 people. Prizes for top 3 teams + trophy for best costume. 6–10 p.m. Finger foods & drinks provided. Richard C. Hunt Reception Hall, 510 Gault Ave N, Fort Payne. Tickets: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/halloween-trivia-night-tickets-1633053971389

October 11–12 Christmas at Eddie's – Over 150 themed Christmas trees, ornaments, and décor ideas. 9112 Alabama Hwy 40, Henagar. 256-657-3841.

October 12 Fall Pop-Up Market – Vendors, pumpkins, flowers, live music, coffee, and crafts. 1–5 p.m. Town Creek Field & Farm. 256-717-8441.

October 17 Hernando's Adventure Storytime Hike – Interactive hike with story reading for kids. Azalea Cascade Interpretive Trail, DeSoto State Park. 4 p.m. $2 per person. Trail is approx. .7 mile long on slightly rocky terrain (not suitable for strollers) Bring snacks/drinks/daypack if you wish. Pre-registration required.

October 17 Campfire Talk: History of Moonshine – DeSoto State Park. Learn about Appalachian moonshining history. Campground gates will open 30 minutes before program. Free and open to everyone; no pre-registration required. For details about the talk, email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov. Free popcorn. DeSoto State Park. 7 p.m.

October 17–18 Ghost Walk (Encore event)

October 18 Mentone Fall Festival – Arts, crafts, food, entertainment, and community celebration. Moon Lake Campus, Mentone. 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

October 18 Yoga on the Brow – Yoga on the Brow is 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.

October 18 3rd Annual Faith Festival – Faith-based music, speakers, vendors, food, and fellowship. Rotary Pavilion, downtown Fort Payne. Contact for vendor applications and payment is Dawn Holloway. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. https://www.facebook.com/events/2727194337469127

October 18 Hike with a Naturalist: Beaver Pond Trail – Easy 1.5-mile hike through native plants and bird habitats. Meet at Little River Canyon Center, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. Free; registration appreciated. The hike will give us a great opportunity to see some native plants and a plethora of birds. Please wear footwear suitable for hiking. Bring water, sun protection and possibly a snack. Weather: As with all outdoor events, if it's raining/stormy or very poor trail conditions, we may have to cancel. If the weather is questionable, please check with the Canyon Center. https://jsuweb.wufoo.com/forms/zhqhi5f0xyl6nd/

October 18 Serious Skills Series: Dutch Oven Campfire Cooking Demo – Learn the art of Dutch oven meals. DeSoto State Park Campfire Ring. 4–6 p.m. Free event. Learn how to clean & care for your cookware, AND cook (& eat!) dinner & dessert at the same time! This is a demonstration, so you can swing by anytime, & the best time is when food is just coming off the fire! Seating is limited, so bring your own comfortable camp chair if you wish. Gate will open to the public. No pre-registration required. For any details about the demo, email Brittney.Hughes@dcnr.alabama.gov.

October 18 Third Saturday Sunset Cruise-In – Family event with food, music, motorcycles, and antique cars. Main Street District, Fort Payne. 5–9 p.m.

October 21–25 DeKalb County VFW Agricultural Fair – Midway rides, food, entertainment, livestock, and exhibits. VFW Fairgrounds, Fort Payne. Gates open at 5 p.m. 256-845-4752

October 24–25 – Ghost Walk (Encore event)

October 25 The Great Pumpkin Run (12th Annual 5K & Fun Run) – Benefits DeKalb County CAC. Pre-registration: $30; Race Day: $35 (closes 7:45 a.m.). Overall male and female win cash prizes. Fun Run for ages 9 & under at 9 a.m. Moriroku Technology North America in Rainsville.

October 25 Halloween in Henagar – Trunk-or-Treat and citywide Halloween activities. Henagar Park.

October 25 May's Gulf Music Fest – At Canyon Center Amphitheater. Featuring Will Kimbrough & Tom Petty Tribute. Doors open at 4 p.m., music at 5 p.m. Tickets: $25 advance / $30 day of show. Rain or shine event. Coolers and leashed pets welcome.

October 26 Dinner Experience with Sonoko Sakai – Soba, Sonoko & A Seriously Special Night: You know we love bringing creative, one-of-a-kind dining experiences to Andiamo Lodge — and this one's extra special. The amazing Sonoko Sakai — cookbook author, teacher, and soba noodle queen — is joining us for a night that's part feast, part demo, and 100% unforgettable. Andiamo Lodge. Andiamolodge.com.

October 27 High Cotton Bull Sale – 12th Annual Angus & Hereford Bull and Female Sale. Tennessee River Music, 4518 CR-255, Fort Payne.

October 31 Halloween at the Opera House – Trick-or-treating and spooky fun. Fort Payne Opera House. 5–8 p.m.

October 31 Halloween Block Party – Join us at the VFW Fairgrounds in Fort Payne for another fun year of trick-or-treating. Inside the VFW Fairgrounds, we encourage you to go on in and walk around. Try and form lines in front of the businesses rather than a single line all around. It is free to participate, both businesses and trick-or-treaters. If you are a business interested in participating please email info@fortpaynechamber.com. 4-6 p.m.

OCTOBER 2025
AT MOON LAKE LIBRARY

MAH JONGG Tuesdays and Fridays at noon - beginners welcome.
KNITTING and CROCHET Tuesdays at 2 p.m.
SCRABBLE Wednesdays at noon.

Oct. at 2 3 p.m. - Poetry Club with Dekie Hicks

Oct. 3 at 4 p.m. - Join us for First Friday at Moon Lake Campus. The library will serve mocktails with a literary twist. Donations accepted.

Oct. 7 at 3 p.m. - Municipal Library Board meeting; 4 p.m. Friends of Moon Lake Library Board meeting.

Oct. 10 at 6 p.m. - Family Game Night returns! Come play with us. We enjoy board games, and participants are invited to bring snacks to share.

Oct. 11 at 10:30 a.m. - The Moon Lake Library Book Club: This month we're reading and sharing spooky books.

Oct. 11 at 1 p.m. - Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

Oct. 12 at 2 p.m. - Singer-songwriter Alabama Annie will perform at the library. The program is free and open to the public.

Oct. 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Big Book Sale at the library

Oct. 18 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Children's crafts at the library with Ms. Lynn

Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. - Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

Oct. 27 at 6:30 p.m. - Author talk by E.J. Wade and Karen Spears Zacharias, authors of "The Devil's Pulpit & Other Mostly True Scottish Misadventures"

Oct. 31 at 6 p.m. - Friday Night @ the Movies: "Little Shop of Horrors" (Rated PG-13, 1986)

Moon Lake Library
4607 Hwy 117 • Mentone AL • 256-634-2127
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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.

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The Mountain Kitchen

It's Game Day!



BY REBECCA HENDERSON, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

When I worked at the newspaper in Little Rock in the late 80s and early 90s, a bunch of us got together to go to the Razorbacks games that were played just down the street from my house, at War Memorial Stadium. It was so easy to get into the stadium and file out after the games. So simple back then! But before the games, we gathered for some great food — nothing too elaborate, just dishes that folks in their early 20s could manage. Football season, though now more about Alabama and Tennessee for me (I could never get out a good "Wooo Pig Sooie") will always remind me of those younger days.

HEARTIER DEVILED EGGS

(Makes 48)

When I go to the trouble to make deviled eggs, I make a lot, because they get gone.

2 dozen hard-cooked eggs, peeled and cut lengthwise into halves
Mayonnaise to desired consistency
(I like my eggs a little drier, so I use 6 tablespoons for this recipe)
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1½ teaspoons white vinegar
¼ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
¾ cup finely chopped or shredded smoked pork butt
Paprika

1. Remove yolks from eggs, and place into a large bowl. Set aside egg white halves.
2. Using a fork, mash egg yolks and mayonnaise until blended and there are no dry chunks of egg yolk.
3. In a small bowl, combine mustard and remaining ingredients except paprika, and add to yolk mixture.
4. Spoon yolk mixture into egg white halves, filling full. Sprinkle with paprika. Keep refrigerated.

IRRESISTIBLE DILLY SHRIMP DIP

(Makes enough for 15…unless I'm there)

1½ pounds steamed shrimp, shells, veins, and tails removed
2 ribs celery, finely chopped
1 tablespoon minced green onion
1 teaspoon dried dill weed or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 teaspoon horseradish
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons sour cream
Hot sauce to taste

1. Roughly chop shrimp, and place in a food processor.
2. Add remaining ingredients, and pulse just until combined and shrimp is still in small pieces (don't puree).
3. Serve dip with celery ribs, carrot sticks, and crackers

AIR FRIED GARLIC CHICKEN WINGS

(Makes enough for 4)

I just got an air fryer, so I'm a novice. But these are so easy and you can switch up the seasonings to your liking. These have a lot of flavor, so I didn't add any extra salt.

2 pounds chicken wings, just the drumettes and flats (not wing tips)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon onion powder
2 teaspoons garlic powder
2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon black pepper
Buffalo sauce for drizzling
Ranch dressing for dipping

1. Preheat the air fryer to 380 degrees. Spray basket with cooking spray.
2. Pat wings dry with paper towels, then place in a large bowl.
3. Add oil to wings, and toss to coat.
4. Combine onion powder and next 3 ingredients.
5. Add to wings, and toss to coat.
6. Spread wings out in fryer basket so they don't touch (you may have to do them in batches if your fryer is smaller).
7. Cook 10 minutes, then turn the temperature up to 400 degrees, and cook another 5-10 minutes or until crispy.
8. Arrange wings on a platter, and drizzle with buffalo sauce.

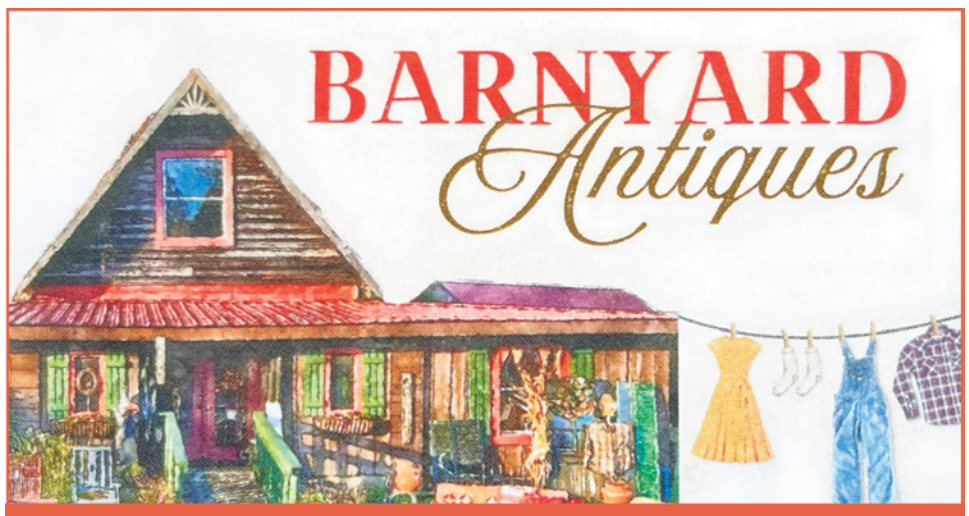


BBQ PIZZAS WORTH CHEERING FOR

(Makes 5-7 servings)

1 package small readymade pizza crusts (I used Mama Mary's 3-pack of 7-inch pizza crusts)
3 tablespoons olive oil
½ red onion, sliced thin
½ cup smoky barbecue sauce (your favorite brand, or homemade)
1 cup shredded barbecued chicken or pork
¼ cup pineapple chunks, drained, patted dry, and chopped into small pieces
Pickled banana pepper rings, drained and chopped
2 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Brush edges of pizza crusts with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil.
3. Heat remaining olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Saute red onion slices in oil until softened.
4. Spoon barbecue sauce over pizza crusts, then top with chicken, onions, pineapple, pepper rings, and cheese..
5. Bake at 400 degrees directly on oven rack until cheese is melted and bubbly and crust is crisp.



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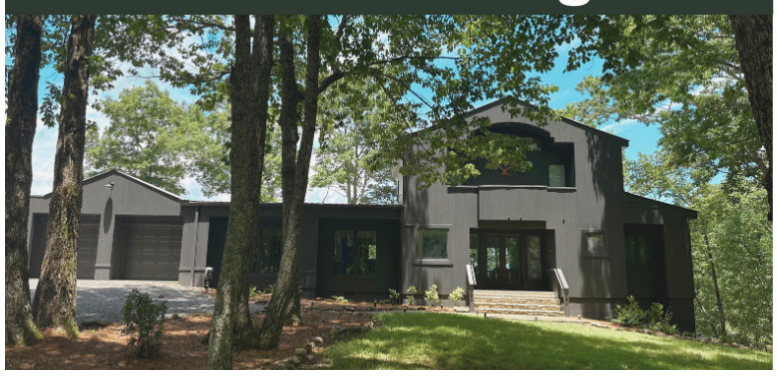

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Black Bear Ridge







May's Gulf Music Fest to feature Will Kimbrough

Event set for October 25 at JSU Little River Canyon Center

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

The May's Gulf Music Fest returns to the JSU Little River Canyon Center on Saturday, October 25, with renowned recording and touring artist Will Kimbrough as the headliner. Doors open at 5 p.m. and music begins at 6 p.m. with a Tom Petty tribute presented by The Collective Review.

Born in Mobile, Alabama, and steeped in the Gulf Coast and New Orleans rhythms, Will Kimbrough has grown into one of the most respected voices in Americana music. He began his music career in college-era bands like Will & the Bushmen, which landed its share of local buzz in the 1980s. He then co-founded the roots-rock outfit The Bis-Quits, which was signed to John Prine's Oh Boy Records.

It was not just as a frontman that Kimbrough made his mark. As a multi-instrumentalist, producer, and songwriter, his fingerprints are all over the Americana and roots world. He has produced or co-produced for artists such as Todd Snider, Adrienne Young, Rodney Crowell, and Steve Poltz, and his songs have been recorded by names ranging from Jimmy Buffett to Little Feat and Jack Ingram. In fact, his collaborations with Jimmy Buffett extend deep: he's contributed to multiple Buffett studio albums and co-written songs like "Bubbles Up," which drew mention from Paul McCartney.

Critics and peers have lauded Kimbrough's gifts. In 2004, the Americana Music Association named Kimbrough their Instrumentalist of the Year, breaking ground in a category dominated for years by legends like Jerry Douglas. He remains an endlessly adventurous artist with a discography spanning several solo releases, including his most recent album "For The Life of Me," plus projects with ensembles like DADDY and Willie Sugarcapps.

Woody's food truck will be on hand to satisfy your appetite as you relax and take in the tunes. Visit canyoncenter.org or call 256-845-7213 for more details and to purchase tickets. You can also buy tickets by scanning the QR code on the ad on Page 4, or in the Canyon Center gift shop.. Tickets



are $25 in advance and $30 the day of the show. The proceeds from the show will benefit environmental education programs. The performance will be rain or shine. Coolers, lawn chairs, and leashed pets are welcome.

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For Sale


Elkmont Retreat – Newly renovated 2BR/2.5BA cabin in Mentone's Northbend subdivision. Set on 1.85 private wooded acres with a fire pit, swing, and w[illegible]-weather stream. Features a m[illegible] primary suite, open living/kitchen, and an upstairs bedroom with loft for office, game room, or extra sleeping space. Sold furnished with a proven rental history—2023–24 GRI over $55K! Perfect as a personal getaway, investment property, or both!
Sold!


Mildred's Meadows – Mentone's premier 20-acre farm with two homes, two ponds, an old store, greenhouse, hoop house, and three chicken houses (no livestock). The main 3BR/2BA mid-[illegible] farmhouse charms with pine walls/floors and big front and back porches. A 3BR/2.5BA guest house overlooks a stocked pond. Rolling pastures, fruit orchard, and a well/irrigation system support livestock and farm-fresh vegetable supply that can feed a village.
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