



THE GROUNDHOG

“Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain”

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

Mentone Springs Performing Arts Society

Helping Build the Future

BY REBECCA HENDERSON
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

When Lee Farrar Bailey talks about why he moved to Mentone, he doesn’t begin with logistics or strategy. He begins with a story of instinct and faith. He and his wife, Sarah, and their four children were living in San Antonio, when in early 2025, both Lee and Sarah began to feel drawn to the mountain.

“The connection to Mentone originated with my wife due to her exposure to Camp DeSoto in the 80s. And our daughter was a camper there as well,” Bailey says. “We’d enjoyed summer months here throughout the past decade and we connected instantly with the artistic vibe and the spiritually peaceful and gorgeous terrain.”

But the couple didn’t move here to

retire leisurely — quite the opposite. Sarah continues to work as an artist and run her company, Moon Lake Tallow, while Lee set his sights on lighting a fire in anyone who wants to participate in the arts.

“I just got stirred up,” he says. “My gut got stirred up... I wanted to build this up here.”

In Texas, Bailey was running a full studio of more than 60 students while performing and teaching steadily. But in early 2025, something shifted. Within months, he and his family packed up nearly everything they owned.

“We literally put our stuff in storage and loaded up two SUVs and drove here with no residence and no jobs.” What they brought instead was a vision — one that is now taking root across Mentone, Fort Payne, Valley Head, and surrounding communities.



Mentone Springs Youth Choir
PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEE BAILEY

A Full-Circle Beginning

For Bailey, that vision is not new. It traces back to Tupelo High School and to a teacher who shaped the way he sees music, education, and community. Dr. Bruce Lesley, his choral director through junior high and high school, built something Bailey never forgot.

“Tupelo High School... we had 120 in our varsity chorus,” Bailey recalls. “We had over 60 men, and half of them were on the football team. He just knew how to pull people in.”

That model, in which athletics and the arts weren’t in competition (See “Performing Arts Society,” Page 5)

50 States, 50 Pies

Bee on the Brow

Celebrates America250



BY REBECCA HENDERSON
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

On Friday afternoons, something special is happening at Bee on the Brow bed and breakfast. Guests gather, forks in hand, for what has quickly become a beloved ritual: Friday Pie Day. But this is no ordinary dessert service.

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the inn’s owners, Rachel and Pete Sterns, have embarked on an ambitious and heartfelt project: serving one pie for each of the 50 states, one week at a time, for 50 consecutive Fridays.

The year’s lineup of pies follows the order in which the states either ratified the Constitution or when they joined the union. It’s a yearlong culinary journey through American history, geography, and culture.

It is incredible, the couple has learned, what stories can be conveyed through

crust and filling. “Friday means pie day in 2026,” Rachel says. And at Bee on the Brow, that simple phrase has become a mission.

A Sweet Way to Tell America’s Story

The idea began as a conversation late last year. How could they mark the nation’s semiquincentennial in a way that felt meaningful, accessible, and joyful? The answer, it turned out, was pie.

“For 50 weeks, we are baking one pie a week, showcasing the flavors, stories, and traditions of each of the 50 states,” Rachel explains. “All of us are learning new and interesting things as we celebrate America250.”

So far, 18 states have been featured. On Friday, May 1, it’s Louisiana’s time to shine. Each pie is carefully chosen, researched, and sometimes debated. Because here’s the twist: not every state has an official pie. That’s where the homework begins.

A Spreadsheet and a Little Healthy Debate

Behind each Friday’s dessert is a surprising amount of research. The couple built a detailed spreadsheet, pulling from five different sources to determine what pie best represents each state.

“When there’s uniformity, it makes it easy,” Rachel says. Take Mississippi, for example — an easy call. “Mississippi mud pie all across the board, everybody agreed,” Rachel says. But other states? Not so simple. Nevada is still to be determined.



Pete and Rachel Sterns, owners of Bee on the Brow

Alabama sparked five competing ideas (they haven’t made the final call on which pie they’ll serve, so stay tuned).

New Jersey famously led them to something unexpected: a “pie” that’s actually a pizza. “We did a Trenton Tomato Pie,” Rachel says. “Cheese first, then sauce on top.” She added a poached egg, and voila! The results were delicious.

In some cases, they double up, offering both a sweet and savory interpretation. One of the pies most mentioned for Alaska is salmon pie, for example, in addition to the sweet Baked Alaska and others. For some selections, they lean into storytelling, using recipes from well-known chefs, regional traditions, or even the input of their guests themselves.

Seasonal Ingredients

This journey is also about authenticity. Whenever possible, the couple sources ingredients from the state they’re highlighting: Texas pecans for pecan pie; local peaches when in season for Georgia; even frozen pawpaw fruit, tracked down months in advance and transported across state lines for a future pie. Seasonality has become one of the project’s biggest challenges.

“If I’d had this idea two years ago, I would have been really organized,” Rachel says of the seasonality of fillings versus the order in the pie lineup. In truth, she is impressively organized. Though the pies are baked in Mentone, the project stretches far beyond the inn’s kitchen. The couple’s daughter, Abigail,

(See “50 Pies,” Page 3)



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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

FOLLOW US ON 

Mentone Matters Grant Funding is Sometimes Met with Roadblocks

BY MAYOR ROB HAMMOND

While many towns depend on grants to pursue large projects, the process is often time-consuming and marked by challenges. This has certainly been the case with our planned improvements at Moon Lake Campus. The Town of Mentone has been working for more than a year to secure grant funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission to renovate the main building on campus. After receiving the go-ahead to advertise for bids, the challenges hit closer to home.

In February, we posted an ad inviting contractors to bid on the project. This included work beneath the floors and above the ceilings, upgrades to the electrical and plumbing systems, accessibility features, and other improvements. When the submission deadline arrived, the Town Council had zero

bids to consider. Only one contractor expressed interest in the work and decided not to submit a bid. While it's not back to the drawing board, it is a disappointing setback. We are advertising the project again, and the architect is attempting to get it in front of more potential contractors. Hopefully, I will have good news to share with you about the project sometime this summer. On a more positive note, we received a letter last month from Director Kenneth Boswell of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. As I've mentioned in this column before, we have been seeking grant funding to build a new trail and trailhead at Brow Park. An observation deck, new benches, and picnic tables would also be a part of this project. ADECA is recommending this project to the Federal Highway Administration for funding. If approved, this will provide our residents and visitors alike

with another great way to enjoy the natural beauty of Mentone and Look-out Mountain. We continue to reinvest funds raised from the Mentone Fall Festival back into Moon Lake Campus. We are currently upgrading the back rooms of the gym. This includes installing mini-split systems for climate control. The work will create additional space to use for classes and other activities. The City of Henagar, which provides garbage pickup services to our town, is supporting us with a spring cleaning week. They will place a dumpster in front of Town Hall from May 1st through May 8th. No brush, barbed wire, batteries, tires, paint, or household chemicals will be accepted. Henagar will empty the dumpster each day. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this free service for our residents, do some spring cleaning, and help keep Mentone the beautiful town that it is. 🐾

From the Editor Close Encounters with the Circle of Life

BY STEPHEN V. SMITH, EDITOR

The natural world is not something to merely observe. It calls to us for participation, for belonging, for finding ways to interact and engage. This could take the form of hiking, fishing, planting — or perhaps, on some days, snake wrangling. I often enjoy the birds as they flutter just outside the window of my home office in an upstairs room. One recent afternoon, they went from flitter to atwitter as they flew back and forth, chattering loudly. The leader of this cacophony was a gorgeous male Eastern bluebird. Joining him was the occasional finch or two (purple or house, I couldn't tell with the rapid flight). Something was wrong, and I had an idea what it was. I called to Michele as I made my way downstairs and onto the back deck. A mockingbird flew into a nearby tree, an apparent participant in the attack that was underway. Sure enough, there he was. The long back half of a gray rat snake was hanging out of a bluebird box mounted to a deck post. Not the ideal placement for the birthing spot, I know, but we have successfully raised a number of bluebird families in that box.



That streak was changing before our eyes. I quickly grabbed the snake with both hands and began to pull, but his strong body remained firmly inside the box. While I couldn't pull him out, he managed to turn his front half around and poke his head out of the hole. From all indications, he was not happy with me for my rescue efforts. He eventually exited the box and dropped to the deck, coming our way in an effort to spook us. I stepped back. Michele threw her phone to the ground and ran (but not before getting a few good photos). While I managed to knock him off the deck, my actions were sadly too late. Upon opening the box, all we found was an empty nest. Michele had seen the adult bluebirds taking food into the box the previous day, so we know the eggs



had hatched. The poor babies never had a chance to learn to fly. That's how nature works, I suppose. While it's not always pretty, it's certainly fascinating to be a part of the world around us as life (and sometimes death) unfolds. I hope this story encourages you to observe, engage, and participate in the natural wonders we are so blessed to be surrounded by in this region. A few of you may even be inspired to grab hold of a snake. Let me know how it goes! 🐾

Refreshed MERF House Filled with Energy and Love

BY REBECCA HENDERSON
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Laughter, music, and joyful conversation are once again wafting from the windows of the MERF House. With renovations complete, the property has entered a new chapter that honors its nearly 30-year legacy while reimagining how it serves the

community today. Since opening in 1995, the building has brought people together through laughter, learning, and connection. The recent transformation continues that tradition in a fresh setting that emphasizes a light, open, and welcoming interior with a modern feel. A newly renovated kitchen enhances the building's functionality, supporting

gatherings and events with ease, while the spacious layout and ample seating allow for flexible use — whether for meetings, programs, or community celebrations. Already this spring, the impact is clear. MERF Senior Lunches on Wednesdays are back home in the house, creating opportunities for neighbors to gather and share meaningful

time together. Additional office space now supports the daily work behind MERF's programs, and a dedicated Groundhog office provides a place to conduct interviews. Carefully planned and beautifully executed, the renewal reflects both history and the promise of the future. If you haven't visited the house recently, come and take a look! 🐾



MERF's updated kitchen has been ideal for hosting luncheons.



The MERF House porch calls visitors to sit and take in the fresh air.



50 Pies (continued from page 1)

helps research recipes and contributes baking ideas from Michigan. Daughter-in-law Marie handles social media and storytelling, weaving history and cultural context into each post. And Pete? He’s enjoying adding “slicer” and “taster” to his resume.

A Celebration of Connection

At its core, the pie project is about more than food. It’s about reframing the national conversation. “We have more that unites us than divides us,” Rachel says. Through pie, they highlight what’s good: regional traditions, shared history, and the simple joy of gathering around a table. Guests feel it, too. Visitors from across the country (28 states so far) have joined in, often asking eagerly when their home state’s pie will appear. Some social media followers even offer recipes or ingredients.

One guest from Maine offered to grow the blueberries for the Maine pie. “By the time their blueberries were ripe, their pie would have already happened on our calendar, so we said, ‘what you can do is give us a recipe,’” Rachel says.

“Everybody’s got a story,” she emphasizes. “And that’s part of what we’re learning.”

That sense of connection is at the heart of Bee on the Brow itself. The bed and breakfast, now in its fifth year, is known for its sweeping views, thoughtfully designed suites, and warm, communal atmosphere. Each room is named for a variety of honey, a nod to both nature and the couple’s travels, from Alaska to Europe. And their passion for nature is reflected in the inn’s design and decor.

Originally built as a private home, the property was extensively restored by the Sternses, who saw themselves not just as business operators but also as stewards of the building’s past. Their path to inn-keeping was anything but conventional. Pete served in the Air Force and earned an advanced degree in space systems. Rachel has a background in finance. Pete grew up in Wyoming, Rachel in

Florida. After years of moving around the world, they landed in Alabama almost by accident.

“When I retired from the military,” Pete explains, “we were living in Brussels, and then coming back stateside to look for a place. We thought Huntsville, given my space background, would be a likely place where I could find a job and they’d have good schools with good swim programs for our son, who had two years left in high school. So we landed in Huntsville, I found a job, then Andrew graduated, and we thought it was time to find out if we were meant to do a bed and breakfast.”

The couple researched the industry and decided to pursue their dream. A friend told them to visit Mentone, so they booked a stay to explore the area. “I was gobsmacked at the beauty up here. I had no idea Alabama had anything that looked like this,” Pete says, the wonder of it still in his voice.

During their trip “we woke up above the clouds,” Rachel says.

Pete had gone out to enjoy the morning and the views. “A bear cub had been frolicking up the mountain. I was like, OK, God, I think you’re trying to tell us something here.” The couple began their property search. They eventually purchased the house that for years belonged to the late Homer Crow, and they made Mentone their home. Though she grew up elsewhere, Rachel was born in Alabama and is an active member of the Phillip Hamman Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Fort Payne.

Pie as a Unifying Language

Fast forward to 2026, when every Friday, as slices are served, conversations unfold. Some pies surprise, like grape pie made from Concord grapes. Others feel familiar, like peach or pecan. A few, like the labor-intensive Baltimore Bomb with its chopped cookies inside the pie filling, require multiple attempts before winning hearts.

But each one adds to the larger



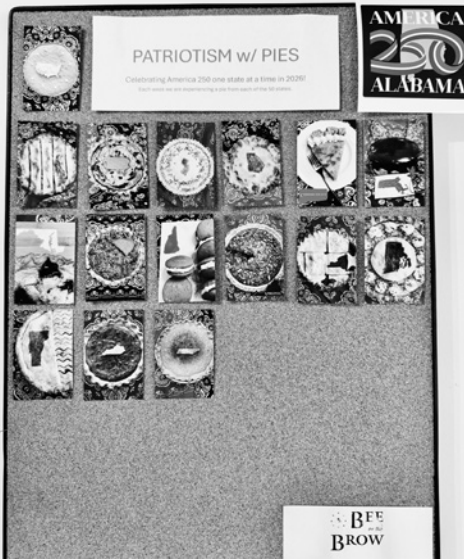
picture. “Fifty states are 50 groups of people that lean into their culture, their geography, their family lineage,” Rachel says. Somehow, through all that diversity, a shared identity emerges.

By year’s end, all 50 states will have had their moment in the spotlight. But the project won’t quite be over. With 52 weeks in the year, the final Fridays will feature “honorable mentions”—pies that didn’t make the official list but deserve recognition.

Because once you start exploring America through pie, it’s hard to stop.

A Slice of Optimism

In a time when national conversations can feel fractured, Bee on the Brow offers something refreshingly simple: a reminder that joy, curiosity, and community still exist in abundance. And the couple’s efforts haven’t gone unnoticed. The inn has been certified as an official America250 Alabama Partner by the Alabama USA Semiquincentennial Commission and the American Village Citizenship Trust, an honor bestowed for “helping to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States’ Declaration of Independence by supporting and promoting a multitude of programs and events that educate, engage, and unite



Alabamians around the nation’s founding principles.” (See america250al.org/partners to learn more.)

Our food reflects our differences and our similarities. That inspiring American concept is celebrated at Bee on the Brow every Friday.

See “The Mountain Kitchen” on Page 15 of this issue to see recipes for three of the pies served at the inn, plus Rachel’s piecrust recipe.

Follow Bee on the Brow’s Facebook page, facebook.com/beeonthebrow, to see what each week’s selection will be. You will learn a lot about the history and culture surrounding the pie. 🍓

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May Is the Bridge to Summer

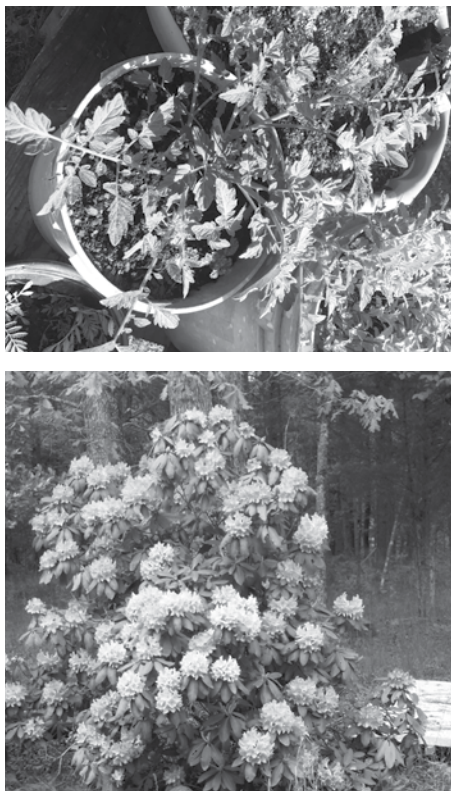
BY DEJOLY LABRIER

As May unfolds, we find ourselves drawn a little closer to nature, taking easy walks through the parks or spending time with our hands in the dirt as we tend our gardens.

The air feels softer, the days stretch longer, and life all around us begins to bloom in stunning, yet imperceptibly steady ways. In this season, we’re encouraged to notice not only the growth happening in our mountain environment, but also the growth within ourselves.

Across cultures and traditions, May has long been associated with renewal, abundance, and the nurturing of new life. It’s a time when what we’ve planted begins to take root, reminding us that growth requires patience, care, and intention. This is a powerful season for mindfulness. Just as a garden doesn’t flourish without attention, neither do the parts of ourselves that long for healing and expression. May offers us opportunities to gently release old habits, outdated beliefs, and ways of being that no longer support who we’re becoming. In their place, we can begin planting new seeds rooted in self-awareness, compassion, and possibility. May is, at its heart, a month of renewal, a gentle invitation to tend to ourselves with the same care we might offer a growing garden.

There is also a natural balance present in this time of year. May serves as a bridge between the freshness of spring and the warmth of summer, holding both the energy of beginnings and the promise of what is to come. It reminds us to find



rhythm in our own lives, balancing work and rest, action and reflection, ambition and contentment.

In this balance, we seek to create harmony not only within ourselves, but in our relationships and the spaces we inhabit. With more awareness, we begin to see how deeply interconnected everything is — our thoughts, our actions, our environment, and one another. Through reflection, presence, and intention, we can nurture emotional and physical healing and step more fully into the lives we are creating.

Perhaps this is also a time to sit quietly with yourself and notice what is ready to grow, and what is ready to be released. Sometimes, simply putting pen to paper can reveal what has been waiting patiently beneath the surface. In the stillness, clarity often finds its way in. 🌱

What Are Telehealth Services?

BY LYNN HIXON

Telehealth includes certain services that you can receive from a healthcare provider outside of an in-person office visit. A telehealth service is a full visit with a provider using telephone or video technology that allows for both audio and video communication. It’s different from a virtual check-in or health portal messages.

Some examples of Medicare-covered telehealth benefits include:

- Lab test or x-ray result consultations
- Post-surgical followup
- Prescription management
- Preventive health screenings

- Urgent care issues like colds or coughs
 - Mental health treatment, including online therapy and counseling
 - Treatment of recurring conditions like migraines or urinary tract infections
 - Treatment of skin conditions
- Individuals can ask their doctors about telehealth options and whether getting care through telehealth would be suitable for their individual circumstances.
- Please contact the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 256-845-8590 and speak to Lynn Hixon in the SHIP program for more information. 📞

May On The Mountain

Join the fun at Henagar Park on Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival, hosted by the Henagar Park Board, will be a finger-lickin’ and guitar-pickin’ good time. Come hear local musical favorites, along with headliners The Malpass Brothers. This modern

traditional country and bluegrass duo from North Carolina is known for preserving the sounds of Merle Haggard, Hank Williams, and the Louvin Brothers. With numerous Grand Ole Opry appearances, they feature rich brother harmonies and classic songwriting. Bring a lawn chair and a friend, and enjoy the day! 🎶



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Performing Arts Society *(continued from page 1)*

but existed side by side, left a lasting impression. “I took that from him,” Bailey says. “And I’m like, man, if he can do it, I can do it.” Now, decades later, Bailey finds himself building something strikingly similar in Northeast Alabama: a program that doesn’t ask students to choose between identities, but instead expands them.

His own career is a story unto itself. Following in his father's footsteps, Bailey performed in his operatic debut at age 7 with the Seattle Opera Company. He's served as featured soloist and in leading roles with professional opera, musical theatre companies, and symphony orchestras around the U.S. and abroad.

In his short time on Lookout Mountain, he's already realizing his mission. While some schools offer band or guitar programs, choir opportunities are limited, and musical theatre can be a rarity.

"In some places... there's nothing musical going on at all," he says. Rather than waiting for ideal conditions, he started where he could, using the Airbnb the family rented as a home base. "I started out of the Airbnb where I would just teach," he says. "I had a handful that I began with, and then that just kind of opened up the door." That handful has grown into nearly 40 students, ranging from children to adults, studying voice, piano, guitar, songwriting, and composition. Bailey now has an office and new studio space in their own wing of the Possum Emporium antiques store.

When Bailey talks about his plans, his tone is infectious and exciting, giving the listener that anticipatory feeling of sitting front row as the lights dim and the curtain is about to go up.

An Arts Society Is Born

What has emerged is not just a studio, but the foundation of the Mentone Springs Performing Arts Society (MSPAS), a growing network of ensembles and programs. Students young and not-as-young now come from across the region. “I want it to be successful for the arts, not just a... select demographic geographically speaking,” Bailey says. Programs already include the Mentone Springs Youth Choir (the name will be expanded in the future to include a larger region), with additional ensembles forming, including a men’s



The Baileys: Daniel, Lee, Caroline, Sarah, Lily, and Gabriel at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio before their move to Lookout Mountain

PHOTO COURTESY OF LEE BAILEY

a cappella group, youth theater productions, youth chamber orchestra, a dance academy, and more. Plans for summer performance camps and expanded instruction are underway. “They’ll get performing arts training, such as acting skills, stage makeup techniques, even stage combat lessons, and then at the end of the week, have a show and invite the community.” The space seats 80 very comfortably. The public can buy tickets to performances, and even purchase season tickets.

A Philosophy of Balance

At the center of Bailey's work is a philosophy shaped both by his own experience and by what he sees in students' busy lives today. "I love sports. I grew up with sports. I played them," he says. "But I had to make a choice eventually." That forced choice is exactly what he hopes to prevent for the next generation. Rather than positioning the arts as a competing priority, Bailey frames them as essential to a well-rounded life. "We don't go home to practice. We go home to play."

His goal is not to overload students, but to integrate creativity into their lives in a way that complements academics, athletics, and work. “There are kids that we serve who are not wired the same way as athletes,” he says. “We need to make sure they have something too.”

“You Are an Artist. Day One.”

That philosophy shows up immediately in his teaching. He often begins

with a simple question: “Raise your hand if you consider yourself a singer... it always amazes me how few hands go up,” he says. His response to the students is direct: “You are an artist. Day one. This is not about being famous. This is about what inspires you.” Students aren’t given a prescribed list of music to learn. Bailey encourages them to think of songs they’ve loved, and he works their personal tastes into the curriculum.

It's an approach rooted in inclusion — removing barriers to participation and replacing them with permission.

That mindset has already begun to resonate. From early lessons in a temporary space to a growing roster of students and ensembles, the response has been immediate. Community members have stepped in with financial support, partnerships, and growing interest. Early support from local donors helped fund scholarships, allowing students who otherwise couldn't afford lessons to participate. MSPAS continues to expand those efforts, working with community partners to ensure access regardless of financial background.

Bailey is working to build out both programming and infrastructure — seeking instruments, equipment, and support to fully realize the vision.

The impact on those watching and listening became clear during the group's first Christmas performance. After just six rehearsals, the choir took the stage and the audience heard children's voices in unison. "People were crying," Bailey

says. "They were just... thrilled." For many in the audience, it had been a long time since they had experienced something like that.

The Next Verse

Bailey is the first to acknowledge the scale of what he's building. "It's a big vision," he says. That vision includes expanded programming, additional performance spaces, and eventually a fully equipped venue capable of hosting concerts, theater, and community events. But at its core, the mission remains grounded in something simpler.

"If we can spread some joy, if we can introduce kids to the arts," he says, "we're building our future."

Upcoming Performances and Programs

The Mentone Springs Youth Choir
will present "Lookout Broadway" with
free concerts:

- Sunday, May 17, at 6 p.m. at First Methodist Church, Fort Payne
- Tuesday, May 19, at 6 p.m. at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church, Mentone

Summer programming is also expanding with a series of full-day musical theatre camps:

- June 15–19 – Musical Theatre Drama Camp (Mentone Springs Performing Arts Studio)
- July 6–10 – Musical Theatre Camp (Mentone Springs Performing Arts Studio)
- July 20–24 – Comprehensive Performing Arts Camp (First Methodist Church, Fort Payne)

All camps will run Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with final confirmations pending.

In addition, MSPAS is currently enrolling students for summer music lessons, offering both private and group instruction in voice, piano, and guitar, with reduced-rate packages available. Lessons will be offered in two locations: the studio at Possum Emporium and a Fort Payne location to be announced. 🐾

To learn more, enroll in lessons, support the program, or contribute equipment or instruments, Bailey can be reached at (210) 551-4817. Read more about Bailey and his career at leefarrarbailey.com.

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Meet Mrs. Lewis: MERF’s Fine Arts Teacher at Valley Head School

BY KATIE HAND

Art is not a regularly offered class throughout DeKalb County — it’s a rarity. For over 30 years, MERF has worked to change that, providing arts education through the support of donations, grants, and community involvement. MERF is proud to have local educator Sherryl Lewis as part of this mission. While she is just completing her first year with MERF, she brings more than 30 years of experience teaching art and music. In a full-circle moment last month, we discovered that I was once one of her clogging students back in the 1990s, a reminder of the lasting impact educators have across generations. At Valley Head School, Lewis introduces students to a wide range of artistic techniques, from drawing and watercolor to clay work and her



specialty, traditional American folk art barn quilts. Beyond her talent, she brings organization, patience, and an ability to keep students engaged and inspired. Her dedication has also helped MERF successfully secure two grants from the Alabama Council on the Arts, an organization committed to strengthening communities through programs like ours. This year’s annual art auction highlighted her work with students in grades K–6, who created their own barn quilts. Through the process, students developed an understanding of symmetry, color, collaboration, and communication, while gaining the confidence to create independently. She is now preparing for the upcoming Tiger Art Gallery, where K-6 students will showcase multiple works of art they’ve created throughout the year and perform music and dance. This event is a celebration of the creativity



Mrs. Sherryl Lewis holds up some of her favorite pieces for the Tiger Art Gallery.

and hard work of VHS students. We invite the community to come out and support the next generation of young artists on May 6 at 6 p.m. in the old gym, directly following the PTO meeting. Refreshments will be provided. We hope to see you there! If you’re interested in supporting MERF’s art program, you can donate art supplies to the school or make a contribution to Mrs. Lewis’s classroom through 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.



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My American Experience

A Patriot’s Untold Story



BY MENTONE RESIDENT THOMAS HAYES

Everyone has a story. Sometimes few people, even those close to you, know the story. That was the case with Andrew Wilfred Abram, Sr. (my Uncle Andy). Born in 1920 in Pittsburgh, he was a humble, working-class man — a union carpenter living the American dream of settling down and having a family and a modest home. Like many people in a skilled trade, his work progressed to various positions in commercial construction projects, such as hospitals, schools, and churches, but he also suffered through economic downturns during a recession. Personal hurdles pervaded his life at home with the suicide of his wife, in addition to his own health issues.

One day, I saw him working on his driveway without his shirt. I noticed a mass of scar tissue in the middle of his back. I learned later that he had fought for his life in successful treatment of stage three melanoma.

But it wasn’t until I attended his funeral that I learned the full untold story of Uncle Andy. An unspoken part of his life unfolded in the memorial photographic display at the service. There he was in his full military dress uniform. He’d served as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army Air Corps during WWII. Other photos showed him in the P-47 Thunderbolt he flew combat missions in while stationed in England. Young, strong, and brave. This was a



part of him I hadn’t known and that he’d chosen to keep close. Andy returned home after his military service and resumed his work as a carpenter and estimator until he retired. He was vastly more than the hardworking tradesman most knew him to be, but according to his only son, he never liked to talk about his military service. This isn’t uncommon among veterans. Their stories of courageous struggle on behalf of their country are often held close and go unshared. You never know what a person’s story might be. Uncle Andy’s is the story of a true American patriot.

The goal of the “My American Experience” essay project is to collect the thoughts of those in our communities about what it means to be an American.

To participate, email your essay to groundhognews@yahoo.com

The Healing Power of the Pen

A Journaling Workshop at Moon Lake Library

BY DEJOLY LABRIER

On May 26, I am offering a guided journaling workshop at the local library, centered around the healing power of the pen. This space was created with intention and care, inspired by my own healing journey that included writing for clarity and release. The workshop is open to anyone who feels the pull to write, whether you are:

- navigating loss or life transitions;
- seeking clarity or emotional release;
- wanting to reconnect with yourself;
- or, simply curious about where writing might lead.

You don’t need to be a writer. You don’t need to have the “right” words. You only need a willingness to begin. Through gentle prompts and guided

reflection, you’ll be invited to explore your thoughts in a safe, supportive space. There is no pressure to share — only an opportunity to listen inward and let the pen lead. Participants are asked to bring a picture of themselves as a child 5 years old or younger, along with pen and paper.

Date/Time: May 26, 2 p.m. Central time
Location: Moon Lake Library
Cost: Free

Because of a limited number of seats, we ask that you preregister by emailing books@moonlakelibrary.org, with the subject line “Journal Workshop.” Sometimes, healing doesn’t arrive all at once. Sometimes, it begins with a single word and the courage to write it down. I hope you’ll join us.



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Rhododendron Garden Club

Get to Know Flowering Native Shrubs

BY MELLANIE TUTTLE

In our last club meeting, Master Gardener Martha Wood presented a program on flowering native shrubs. Mentioning Azaleas, Rhododendron, and Mountain Laurel, she focused on varieties that are not as familiar but can be found in native nurseries. Many of the native shrubs offer year-round interest, providing larval and nectar food in the spring and summer, colorful leaves in the fall, shelter and food in winter.

A symbiotic relationship exists between the host Spicebush shrub (*Lindera benzoin*) and the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio troilus*). Looking like a bright green mini-snake with eyes on its back, the caterpillar makes shelter by folding a leaf over and spinning silk to stitch the leaves together. The Spicebush blooms in early spring before the leaves emerge and turn bright yellow before falling. Female shrubs have bright red berries, providing nutrition for migrating birds. Aptly named, the Spicebush leaves give off a spicy scent when crushed. Unfortunately, a new, non-native fungus is attacking the Spicebush, Sassafras, and other members of the Laurel family.

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and Sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus*), both growing on the banks of the Little River, will tolerate wet feet. The Buttonbush is aptly named, with its 1-inch white globes. Shorebirds love the seeds. The fragrance on almost woody maroon blooms of the Sweetshrub can vary greatly. Prune immediately after flowering to maintain compactness, since it has a tendency to sucker and roam.

The Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) is one of the earliest blooming natives and can easily be seen along I-59, its bright



Red Buckeye



Sweetshrub

red flowers offering pops of color. All parts of the plant are poisonous, so deer and rabbits leave it alone. It can grow up to 20 feet, becoming more of a tree than a shrub.

The New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) is a show-off with clusters of small, fragrant white flowers on a compact frame. The leaves are nitrogen fixing and make an excellent tea. Unfortunately, deer and rabbit connoisseurs find the leaves tasty as well.. Turkey and quail feast on the seeds in fall.

Anyone who has attended the fall flower show has been amazed by the berries of the Beautyberry bush

(*Callicarpa americana*). In late summer, the magenta-purple clusters of berries encircle the stems on a shrub that grows up to 8 feet tall. Birds devour the seeds, and the Beautyberry is a natural mosquito repellent.

Two relatively rare natives are the Dwarf Fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*) and the Alabama Snow Wreath (*Neviusia alabamensis*). Both need full sun for showy white blooms and are deer resistant. The Fothergilla is compact, growing to 3 feet, and its leaves turn bright yellow to red in the fall. The Alabama Snow Wreath is suckering with arching stems and growth from 3 to 6 feet. It blooms on old growth, so prune after blooming to ensure loveliness for the next year.

Last, Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) is noted for its exfoliating bark. This is THE plant to have for a four-season showstopper. Full sun foliage can be yellow, green, or deep purple, changing to red, orange, or yellow in the fall — sometimes all on the same leaf!

Seed clusters provide winter eats, and the bark is stunning. The spirea-like



flowers cluster on arching branches. It's bear time again. Please make the effort not to entice bears. Do not feed them. Bird feeders, pet bowls with left-over food, and grills with those enticing smells are manna for the wild critters. If encountering a bear, do not run. Stand tall and upright. Avoid direct eye contact and make sure the bear has a clear line of escape.

Starting in May, the RGC meetings will return to the MERF house behind the library. The club always meets the second Tuesday of the month (May 12) at 10 a.m. Using flowers from the yard or bouquets from the grocery, Jean Jackson will guide folks in making simple mass table arrangements. Bring some greenery from the yard, scissors for clipping, and join us for some fun! All other supplies will be provided by the club.

Did you know we have a Facebook page? Follow us at www.facebook.com/rhododendrongardenclub.com to receive gardening tips, get updates on our activities and “like” us! 🍷

Mellanie Tuttle is the Secretary of the Rhododendron Garden Club.

JOIN US!

The RGC meets each month on the second Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the MERF House. 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.



We know these roads. We know where to get the best barbecue and who'll fix your tire on a Sunday. We know our neighbors because we're right here beside you. That's why banking with us feels different. It's local, it's friendly, and it comes with a whole lot of heart. After all, we're from here. And we're proud of it.



Friday Night at the Movies: Muscle Shoals

BY ANNE MCLEOD

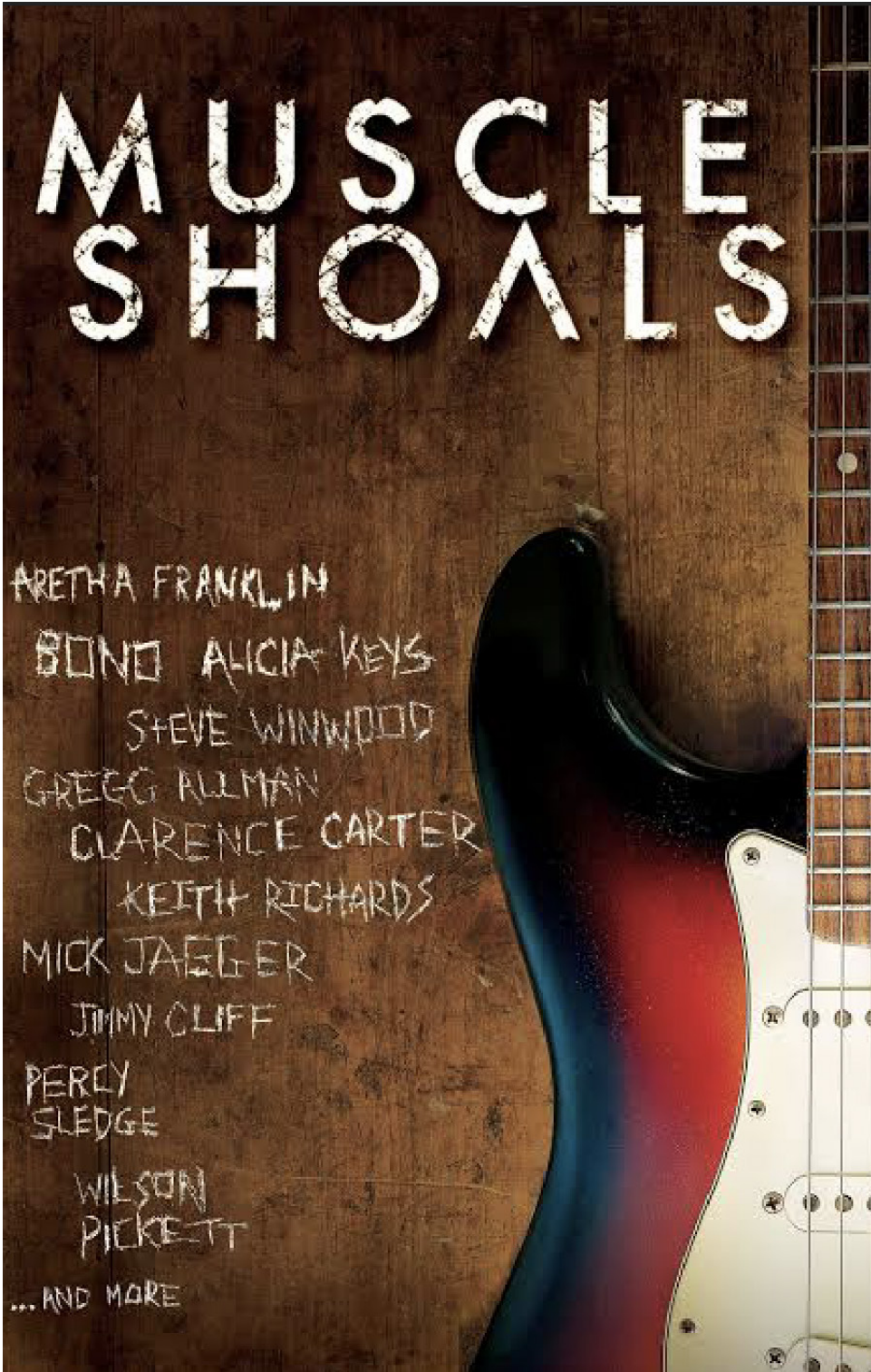
Muscle Shoals, Alabama, a small town in the northwest corner of the state, became the unlikely birthplace of some of the most iconic music of the 1960s and 70s. Thanks to Rick Hall, whose FAME studio recorded artists such as Percy Sledge, Brenda Lee, Roy Orbison, Paul Anka, Jerry Reed, the band Alabama, and many, many more, Muscle Shoals would earn a well-deserved reputation as a place where black and white musicians could collaborate during turbulent times in our nation’s history.

On Friday, May 8, at 6 p.m., Moon Lake Library will show “Muscle Shoals,” the 2013 documentary that traces the journey of Hall and Fame

from its founding in 1959, through its ups and downs and its history-making sessions with bands from the Rolling Stones to Aretha Franklin to the Osmonds to Tim McGraw. The house band of backup musicians became known as the Swampers, duly recognized in Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “Sweet Home Alabama.” They were known for their rich, authentic R&B sound.

Join us for this film celebrating Alabama’s musical heritage and its influence on music across different genres. The program is free and open to the public. Bring your friends and a snack to share as we kick back and rock out with music and stories from some of the best in the business. 🎧

Anne McCleod is the librarian at Moon Lake Library.





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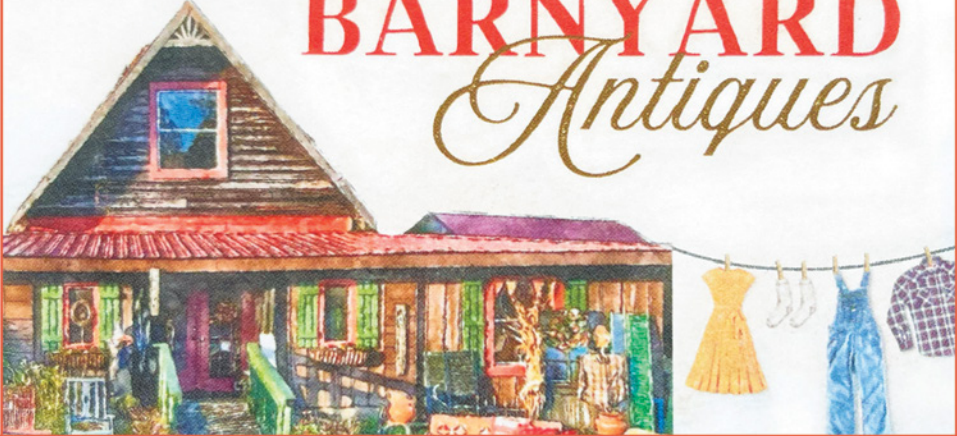


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A Season of Music, Art, and Momentum

BY JULI JORDAN

Music for the People: Summer Music Series

Summer Music Series kicks off Friday, May 15, from 6 to 9 p.m. with Will Dooley & Friends at the Mentone Inn’s Linger Longer Pavilion. Parker Thomas returns for his second year to open for Dooley. Bring your camp chairs and settle in for music under the stars. Grab some loaded nachos and hot dogs from Amy’s Catering, with desserts by Granny D’s. The Summer Music Series is free and open to all, with a complimentary art activity for kids of all ages. Stop by the Little River Art Council tent to check out our new spring t-shirts and pick up a 2026 Events card.

A core value of the Little River Arts Council is creating opportunities for artists at every stage of their careers. At the 2024 Summer Music Series kickoff, Cynthia Stinson noticed a young Parker Thomas playing guitar and introduced him to Will Dooley. Parker joined the band for a few songs that evening, and in the time since has performed at Follow Your Art and Creative Spirit Market. He returns again this year as the opening act for Will Dooley & Friends.



Parker Thomas at the 2024 Summer Music Series kickoff—an early moment in a young musician’s journey.

The Big Art Pop-Up

Big Art Pop-Up returns Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the grounds of the Mentone Inn, behind the Linger Longer Pavilion and St.



Joseph’s Episcopal Church. It’s a perfect morning to explore original work from the talented artists and makers who make this community so special.

Upcoming Concerts

WHERE: Linger Longer Pavilion at the Mentone Inn
WHEN: Saturday, 6 to 9 p.m.
June 6 – The Black Sedan Band
July 11 – Dennis Parker & Friends: James Taylor Tribute
August 15 – NACC Mustang String Band & NACC Theatre

Spotlight: The Future Moon Lake Arts Collective

Progress continues at the site for Moon Lake Arts Collective, with the removal of the trailer that once housed Head Start and most recently the DeSoto Rescue Squad. Construction



drawings are currently being finalized, and LRAC is actively interviewing contractors. Moon Lake Arts Collective (MLAC) is a new public-access art studio and creative hub designed for both residents and visitors. What began as a vision for a community clay studio with guild-style membership has expanded into a multi-use space that includes a flexible classroom and meeting studio, along with the Little River Art Gallery.

Located behind Moon Lake Library and across from the Shigley Amphitheater, MLAC will offer pottery and visual arts classes, open studio time for members, and “Make Your Own” experiences — hands-on art activities that allow visitors to create something meaningful during their time in Mentone. Designed to be welcoming for all skill levels, MLAC will provide opportunities for beginners, experienced artists, families, homeschool students, and visitors to explore creativity in an accessible, supportive environment. Through classes, workshops, and collaborative programming, the studio will serve as a gathering place where art, learning, and community come together.

Fundraising Update

Thanks to the incredible support of our community and funding partners, LRAC has raised over \$220,000

toward the \$400,000 goal for the Moon Lake Arts Collective. This includes a \$100,000 gift from Dr. and Mrs. Charles Sennett, along with grant support from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Lyndhurst Foundation. Additional grant applications are pending, and local fundraising efforts continue, building strong momentum as the project moves closer to construction.

At its heart, Moon Lake Arts Collective reflects a simple belief: Art is for everyone. To learn more, get involved, or support the project, visit littleriverartscouncil.org.

Little River Art Gallery

Thursday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (and by appointment) at Moon Lake Campus

With over 50 member artists, there is always something new to see at Little River Art Gallery inside the historic Moon Lake School. May’s featured artist is deJoly LaBrier. Watch for the social media reveal of two new spring t-shirts, available at the gallery and at monthly concerts.

Make Your Mark on Mentone

May is the final month to view Jackie Cooper Morgan’s (Oxford, Alabama) Make Your Mark on Mentone chalk mural, featuring a whimsical groundhog. Victoria Wheeler of Blooming Potential (Rome, Georgia) will create the summer mural, on view June through August. Make Your Mark is located on the corner of Highway 117 and CR 89 and is made possible by a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Little River Arts Council was founded in 2006. Our mission is to enrich the quality of life for people in Mentone and neighboring communities by raising funds for the arts, sponsoring events, providing educational opportunities, and strengthening cultural resources for the benefit of all businesses and citizens in the Mentone area.

If you would like to support our mission, consider becoming a member and/or volunteering by visiting our website: www.littleriverartscouncil.org.

Juli Jordan is president of the Little River Arts Council.

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Mentone Arts Center

The Texpats to Perform at Arts Center on May 22

BY RANDY GRIDER

We are excited to welcome The Texpats to the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts on Friday, May 22, for what promises to be an amazing night of music and fun. Tickets are \$25 per person for the 7-9 p.m.(Central time) show. Use the ticket link on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/mentoneartscenter.org to purchase online, or call the number at the end of this article.

According to their bio, The Texpats are what happens when three seasoned Texas songwriters – Grace Pettis, Natalie Price, and Rachel Laven – carry their musical roots across state lines and accidentally build a home together in Nashville. Individually, they’ve spent years honing their craft on the road and in the studio. Pettis is a critically acclaimed, award-winning songwriter known for her “little novellas that dig deep” (“Americana Highways”), blending folk, country, and soul with a bold feminist perspective. Price, a Fort Worth native, has emerged as a compelling new voice with her cinematic, emotionally resonant “Ameri-kinda” sound. Laven, raised in the rich tradition of Texas roots music, is revered for her clear, unencumbered songwriting, delivering complex truths with striking simplicity and warmth.

But The Texpats aren’t just a musical collaboration; they’re a story. After a series of life upheavals (divorce, break-ups, and big moves), each artist landed in Nashville at a turning point. Laven, recently established there, opened her home to fellow Texans in transition. Pettis moved to town in 2022 following a divorce and moved in with Laven a few years later; Price arrived soon after, at the end of a long-term relationship. What began as shared living space quickly became something more: a modern-day songwriter haven inspired by the legacy of homes like Guy and Susanna Clark’s, where writers gathered to trade songs, stories, and survival strategies. They called it the “Texpat Haus.”

On any given night, you’d find them on the back porch, passing guitars, harmonizing, writing, laughing, and slowly stitching themselves back together. It didn’t take them long to realize that what was happening in that house was too special to keep to themselves. Now, The Texpats bring that living room intimacy to the stage. Their shows are built around three-part harmonies, shared lead vocals, and a deep respect for each other’s songwriting. They perform originals from all



three catalogs, reimagine each other’s songs, and weave in Texas-themed covers, creating a set that feels like stepping into a circle of friends where everyone is invited.

The connection runs deep. Pettis and Laven met during Pettis’ time with Texas trio Nobody’s Girl and ended up touring through England, the Netherlands, and Ireland together in 2019.

Pettis and Price, longtime best friends and collaborators, have toured extensively together as recently as 2025 and have co-written many songs. All three cut their teeth in the Texas songwriting scene. What unites them now is not just geography, but a shared musical lineage and a commitment to honest, story-driven songwriting.

With nine shows across the Southeast this spring and summer, The Texpats are taking their back porch on the road, offering audiences a rare glimpse into the kind of musical community that shaped them, and the kind of friendship that sustains them.

About Grace Pettis: Alabama and Georgia native Grace Pettis, daughter of award-winning singer-songwriter and Mentone resident Pierce Pettis, moved to Texas at the age of 18. Her musical roots are deep in the Texas Hill Country, where she recorded six studio albums and EPs as both a solo artist and as a member of Austin trio Nobody’s Girl (with BettySoo and Rebecca Loebe). Following the abrupt end of a 14-year relationship, Pettis relocated to Nashville in 2022. She is the winner of many prestigious songwriting contests, grants, and residencies, including NPR’s Mountain Stage NewSong Contest, the Buddy Holly Educational Foundation, the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation of New Mexico, and La Maison de Simon in Normandy, France. Her songs have been recorded by musical legends, including Sara Hickman and Ruthie Foster, with three cowrites on Foster’s Grammy-nominated album, “Healing Time” (2024). Signed to MPress Records, Pettis has released two critically acclaimed albums, “Working Woman” (2021) and “Down to the Letter” (2024). This year finds her writing, touring, and beginning work on a new album.

About Rachel Laven: Rachel Laven is a San Antonio-born songwriter whose clear-eyed, economical writing



The Texpats: Natalie Price, Grace Pettis, and Rachel Laven

style distills complex human experiences into songs that are both deeply personal and widely relatable. Raised in a musical family and shaped by years on the road, Laven has developed a reputation as an observant storyteller with a warm, unflinching voice, drawing on the Texas songwriting tradition of artists like Susan Gibson and Slaid Cleaves. Her latest album, “Love and Luccheses,” showcases her gift for character-driven narratives and emotional precision, while her dynamic guitar work and effortless stage presence have made her a standout among her peers.

A finalist in the 2016 Grassy Hill New Folk Songwriter’s Competition, Laven toured nationally as part of the prestigious New Folk class, joining the ranks of artists like Robert Earl Keen and Anaïs Mitchell. Whether onstage or on record, she delivers her truths with clarity, confidence, and a quiet daring that continues to mark her as one of the most compelling voices of her generation.

About Natalie Price: Fort Worth-born Natalie Price came up in the Austin music scene and is a distinctive voice in Americana and folk-rock (“ameri-kinda,” as she calls it). She blends her Austin influence with a captivating narrative style and soul-stirring melodies. Also a NewSong Songwriting Competition winner (2023), SXSW official artist (2024), and a Buddy Holly Educational Foundation Scholar (2025), Price continues to gain recognition for her emotionally resonant songwriting. With a musical foundation

deeply embedded in the human experience, her music paints vivid tales of love, loss, and life’s trials, echoing the essence of influences like Kathleen Edwards and Johnny Cash. This genuine connection to her art and her audience stems from a willingness to authentically share the emotional depth of her journey. Price’s latest singles span euphoric new love to reflections on friendship and the courage to move forward through challenges. Blending vulnerability with strength, her songs turn personal experiences into universal anthems, solidifying her reputation as a rising fan favorite.

Grab Tickets to The French Family Band

We had a few tickets left at press time to two shows featuring The French Family Band on June 20 and June 21. Don’t delay, because both shows will sell out.

Artist/instructor Bradley Wilson is returning to teach two weekend painting classes this summer.

The first two-day class runs June 13-14, and the other July 18-19. Details, including class descriptions, will be announced in the next issue of The Groundhog as well as on our Facebook page soon.

For more information on these events and classes, please see contact info below. 🐝

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.

Country Line Dancing Classes

Thursday nights
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- ★ \$100 for the month (one class makeup day included)

✓ Instruction from 6-7 PM then break for drink & food

✓ 7:30-8:30 – FREE DANCE
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Valley Head Happenings

Don't Miss the Rails & Roots Festival May 15-17

BY MAYOR KAREN VEST

We want to invite everyone out to the Town of Valley Head Rails & Roots Festival. This is our annual fundraiser festival for the volunteer fire department, as well as our Festival Fund, which allows us to hold numerous community festivals and activities throughout the year.

We will kick off the weekend with an old-fashioned street party featuring local rock band TPS Report. They'll start rocking the block at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 15, with a free concert. Mi Pizza will be on Commerce Street selling fresh pizzas and delicious wings. The Valley Head Volunteer Fire Department will host a cornhole tournament all evening. Signup for the tournament begins at 6 p.m. in front of the VH Masonic Lodge. All proceeds from the cornhole tournament benefit our volunteer fire department.

The festival will continue on Saturday, May 16, at 10 a.m. and run until the last band finishes at approximately 8 p.m. Festival hours on Sunday, May 17, will be noon to 4 p.m. Most music will take place on the big stage on the field across from Valley Head Town Hall. We will also have music in the pavilion next to the VH Masonic Lodge on Commerce Street.

Saturday's Performers

- Mentone Springs Youth Choir on the pavilion stage at 1 p.m.
- Centre's own Double Portion, composed of Seth and Sam Swafford, on the main stage from 2 to 3 p.m.
- Fort Payne-born and Nashville up-and-coming star Carter Pinholster playing his original country-rock songs and ballads on the main stage at 3 p.m.
- Open mic for anyone wishing to showcase their singing talent on the main stage from 4 to 5 p.m.
- Carter Pinholster's second set on the main stage at 5 p.m.
- The band Stranded will take the main stage from 6 to 8 p.m.

Sunday's Performers

- Fort Payne's own Jon Allen Jones on the main stage from 12 to 2 p.m.
- Grammy-nominated and award-winning triple threat writer, artist, and performer Brandon Maddox will hit the main stage at 2 p.m. Brandon has received multiple world-renowned Josie Music Awards, toured with Monster Truck, and has shared the stage with country stars, such as Brett Eldredge and Blake Shelton. Brandon's second single, "Good Side," which reached #58 on the Music Row Chart, was featured in the latest season of top Netflix drama "Virgin River."

We can't wait to hear all these great artists! Bring your lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy this great lineup all weekend long. We will have a hospitality tent set up all weekend with tables and chairs to sit under the shade and rest your feet during the festival. There will be designated handicapped parking, plenty of bathrooms available, and medics on call at all times.

One of the highlights of this year's festival is the variety of children's activities. Jesse Tatum is bringing his horses and ponies for the children to ride, and we will have a child's train ride as well as a blow-up obstacle course and dunk tank. All children's activities are free this year, thanks to the very generous donation by Fritz Structural Steel. We would once again like to thank Stephanie Fritz for always supporting the Town of Valley Head.

Food Trucks and Food Vendors

- Many food trucks will be serving, including:
- From the Ashes barbeque and brisket
 - Jus' Corn from Arab, Alabama
 - Froggie Freeze Shaved Ice
 - Russell Head with his famous peanuts
 - Jacob Joe's Coffee Truck
 - Mi Pizza
 - Mrs. B's Farm & Bake Stand
 - Sweet & Crafts
 - Many of Valley Head High School's clubs and organizations will be selling hot dogs, drinks, baked goods, and other tasty offerings.
 - Volunteer firemen will be selling hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, and drinks all weekend. One hundred percent of the proceeds goes directly to the fire department for much-needed equipment and supplies.

We will also have talented artists and craftspeople showcasing their beautiful items. Woodworking, wreaths and centerpieces, jewelry and crocheted items, handmade baskets, women's boutique clothing, repurposed vintage items, pottery, and much more will fill the square with tempting finds for young and old alike.

Volunteers will be circulating throughout the crowd, selling raffle tickets all weekend. Prizes will be drawn every hour! Tickets are only \$1 each, or you can purchase an arm-length for only \$20.

We will have our beautiful Rails & Roots Festival t-shirts for sale in a variety of sizes. Colors are light blue, heather gray, and dusty peach. You will definitely want one if not two of these shirts. They are a nice polyester/cotton blend and are so comfortable.

Valley Head High School will host the first annual Miss Rails & Roots Pageant, which will begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 16, on our main stage. The entry fee is \$30, and there are

TOWN OF VALLEY HEAD, AL

2026 RAILS & ROOTS FESTIVAL

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Sunday May 17th Noon until 4 pm



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four optional entries at a cost of \$5 per entry or only \$15 for all 4. There are seven categories for entries based on the contestant's age at the time of registration. Please email Cindy Harrison at cpharrison@dekalbk12.org for more information and to register.

We cannot forget our annual pie making contest! There are two categories this year: (1) savory and (2) sweet. There is no fee to enter your creation. Please plan to bring your pies to Town Hall by 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 16. We will award prizes for 1st, 2nd, and

3rd place in each category. The Valley Head volunteer fire department is always looking for new 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 their Town Council meeting on the first Monday of each month beginning at 6 p.m. The public is always welcome to attend. Our next meeting is Monday, May 4. 🐾



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May Community Events

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

May 1 Serious Skills Series: Art of Noticing Nature Journaling Workshop With Laura Grace Clark – This nature journaling workshop is designed for beginners; no art or journaling experience is needed. We'll use simple, step-by-step journaling activities to practice noticing and recording what we see in nature. The focus is on curiosity, not perfection, and participants will leave with easy skills they can use on their own to reflect, notice details, and enjoy time outdoors. Includes some light hiking on uneven ground. 2 to 5 p.m. DeSoto State Park. Fee: \$35 includes all supplies. Teens to adults; preregistration is required for attendance in this class. Preregistration: www.littleriverartscouncil.org/artofnoticing.html

May 1 Kevin Gurley Scholarship Foundation Golf Tournament
This tournament raises money for young folks starting their lives in the trades! We usually pull 20+ teams and pay out multiple flights. Registration at 7 a.m.; play starts at 8 a.m. Little Mole Country Club and Campground.

May 1 Hike with a Naturalist Lower Two Mile Trail – Join the JSU Field School for a guided hike through the Little River National Preserve. As we explore the trails, we'll discuss local plants, animals, and the natural history of the area. This is a challenging half-mile hike. Please bring plenty of water and/or sports drink, snacks, hiking poles/staff (optional), and sturdy shoes (open-toe shoes are not recommended). Meet at the Little River Canyon Center (Alabama Hwy. 35). Please arrive by 10 a.m., and we will caravan to the trail head. Registration appreciated. For details, call the Canyon Center at 256-845-3548 or email FieldSchool@jsu.edu.

May 1 Concert at The Cricket Theatre in Collinsville – Join us for a great night of music with Jeff Tolbert & Primitive Road, along with The Soul Reedemers. Tickets are \$20 by cash or check, \$23 using Paypal. Or you can purchase tickets at www.collinsvillehistoricalassociation.org. All proceeds go toward purchase of new theatre seats. 6 p.m.

May 1 Hitsville USA – The NACC Department of Music presents the music of Motown! 6:30 p.m. Northeast Alabama Community College Campus in Rainsville.

May 1 to 3 Annual Learning Tree Charity Classic Truck Roping – Benefiting children with autism and developmental behavior. Roping times: Friday at 7 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday at 9 a.m. Held at the Northeast Alabama Agri-Business Center in Rainsville.

May 2 Meet a Machine – Join us on May 2 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Fort Payne Airport. Kids will have the chance to get up close with some amazing machines and learn all about how they work. All proceeds go to DeKalb Children's Advocacy Center.

May 2 Dixieland Delight Sale – Join us for our 43rd Annual Dixieland Delight Red, White & Black Production Sale featuring our top Hereford and Angus genetics. Held at the barn on Tennessee River Music Farm. 12 p.m.

May 2 The Essentials – Mater's in Fort Payne starting at 8 p.m.

May 2 & May 16 Yoga On The Brow community/donation classes. Weather permitting at Brow Park in Mentone at 9:30 a.m. Follow Soul Shine Yoga & Wellness on social media for any changes.

May 9 18th Annual Cody Renfroe Rod Run – Come out and have a day with us for the 18th annual Cody Renfroe Rod Run. Crossville City Park. 12 to 4 p.m. There will be lots of food and prizes. No entry fees, so if proud of it bring it!

May 9 Moon Lake Library Book Club – The Book Club meets the second Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. While we occasionally read the same book, more often we talk about what we've read lately or discuss books on a particular theme, genre, or by a single author. We hope you can join in the fun!

May 9 John Conlee at The Pickin Post – Tickets are \$45. Show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets at Black's Tire in Rainsville or Patterson's Pawn in Fort Payne. Call for more information. 256-657-3817 or 256-996-8910.

May 9 "Let's Cook" Event – This will be a time of gathering home chefs to try new recipes and enjoy time around the table. Join us at Gather in downtown Fort Payne with special guest Andrea Oliver! Grab the cookbook, pick a recipe, & come ready to share! 5:30 p.m.

May 14 to 17 U.S. 11 Antique Alley Yard Sale – Follow the scenic U.S. Highway 11 from Meridian, Mississippi, to Bristol, Virginia, for more than 500 miles of yard sales! Explore charming historic communities and downtown districts like the 1889 boom town district of Fort Payne. 888-805-4740 & 877-871-1386; visitlookoutmountain.com.

May 15 Mayor's Cup Golf Tournament – The Fort Payne Chamber of Commerce is excited to host our 19th Annual Mayor's Cup Golf Tournament at Terrapin Hills, and you're invited! Whether you're looking for a fun day out, a chance to network with other local businesses, or some great team building with your crew, this tournament is always a highlight of the year. Gather your team, grab your clubs, and get ready for a day full of friendly competition, provided lunch, beer cart onsite, cash prizes & door prizes, goody bags, and more!

May 15 Summer Music Series – Join us for the 2026 Summer Music Series, a free outdoor concert series at the Mentone Inn's Linger Longer Pavilion – brought to you by the Little River Arts Council! Grab some good eats, bring your favorite drink, and settle in for an unforgettable evening of music with Will Dowley and Parker Thomas under the stars with friends & family. 6 to 9 p.m.

May 16 Berries and Bloom Festival – Join us at Town Creek Field and Farm for our 3rd annual Berries and Blooms Festival! There will be you-pick flowers, strawberries, live music, local vendors, coffee truck, food truck, and more! Be sure to come see us at the farm on Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.! \$5 entry fee per vehicle!

May 16 Big Art Pop-Up Show – This fun event will showcase local artists & makers in a small-festival setting in beautiful Mentone, Alabama. Grab some good eats, and browse through many original works of art on the grounds of the Mentone Inn, 6139 AL-117, Mentone. 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

May 16 Bloom Fest in Mentone – Join us for a beautiful spring day at the Log Cabin Village, filled with shopping, handmade goods, and sweet treats. Spend the day exploring and supporting amazing local shops like: Little River Soap, The Spinning Wheels, The Rustic Boho, Boutique Adhana, The 4 Four Bears, The Ice Cream Shoppe, and more vendors joining us! Whether you're looking for unique finds, gifts, or just a great way to enjoy spring in Mentone, this is the place to be. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

May 16 May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Henagar – Get ready to kick off May with a mountain of fun on Sand Mountain! Hosted by the Henagar Park Board, this finger-lickin' and guitar-pickin' event promises a toe-tappin' good time for all. Bring your lawn chair, bring a friend, and get ready to groove to the sweet sounds of bluegrass beneath the open sky!

May 16 Third Saturday Sunset Cruise-In – An afternoon of family fun activities in the Main Street District of Fort Payne. This public event will include food, live music, motorcycles, antique car show, and much more. 5 to 9 p.m.

May 15 to 17 Rails & Roots Festival – The Town of Valley Head will host a great weekend event for family and friends! Fabulous musical lineup all weekend, plus more offerings listed in this issue of The Groundhog. Held in the downtown square of Valley Head. Friday night at 6 p.m., then Saturday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday 12 to 4 p.m. Call Town Hall for more information 256-635-6814.

May 17 May's Gulf Songwriter Series XIII – Join us Sunday, May 17, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Little River Canyon Center, featuring Kelli Johnson and Reese Burke. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$20 the day of the show. Coolers welcome.

May 22 Fort Payne Main Street Movie Night—"Zootopia 2" – Grab your friends and family for a series of new and classic films all summer long. At the Historic DeKalb Theatre. Concessions available. As always, admission is FREE, but seating is limited. Call or text 256-996-2131 to reserve your seats. Let's fill the theatre and celebrate a hometown legend together! Doors open: 6 p.m.; movie starts: 7 p.m.

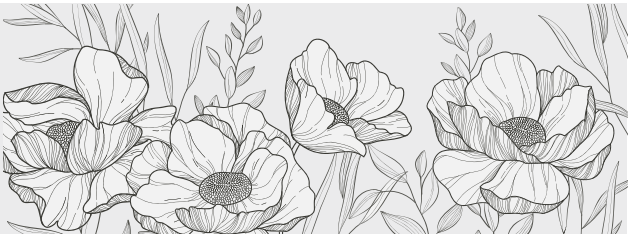
May 23 Strawberry Jam Festival – Come join the fun at Over Easy Acres for our Strawberry Jam Festival! The festival will be packed with fun for everyone – fresh-picked strawberries, homemade treats, local vendors, music, and family-friendly activities you won't want to miss. Mark your calendars and get ready to celebrate strawberry season with us! 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 19 County Road 353, Albertville.

May 23 2026 Miss Potato Pageant – The pageant will be held at Henagar Junior High School on Saturday, May 23. Applications can be picked up at Henagar City Hall. Registration is \$40 with Most Photogenic optional for an additional \$10 fee. Pictures for Most Photogenic must be 5x7 or 8x10 and can be turned in with the application or the day of the pageant. For more information, contact Henagar City Hall at 256-657-6282 and ask for Sherry. Deadline to enter the pageant is May 8.

May 23 Hot Rods in the Valley – 4th Saturday Cruise-In is getting closer. Come help support our small businesses here on the square in Valley Head. 4 to 8 p.m.

May 29 Hop-era: Featuring KB Solomon – Join us at Back Forty Ballroom for a night of live music, local brews, and the deep voice of KB Solomon. 8 to 11 p.m. Good folks, great beer, better music.

May 31 Weaving a Round Market Basket – Join artist Brittney Hughes to discover how to weave a reed basket with wooden handles; learning how to set up & form the basket, stop and start weaving techniques, and how to add a rim and handles. Completed basket measures 12 inches in diameter. Materials will be provided, as well as all tools & supplies. This class is for ages 12 to adult (please no younger children for safety reasons). Wear comfortable, casual clothing (this can get messy), and bring a sack lunch if you wish. This workshop emphasizes the use of hand tools; students should have moderate hand strength. JSU's Little River Canyon Center. \$150 supply fee. Preregistration required by May 24. Space is limited to 5 participants. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Payment required before the day of the class. Preregistration link: Weaving a Round Market Basket <https://shorturl.at/syOqk>



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MAH JONGG Tuesdays and Fridays at noon - beginners welcome.

KNITTING and CROCHET Tuesdays at 2 p.m.

SCRABBLE Wednesdays at noon.

May 2 at 1 p.m. - Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

May 3 at 2 p.m. - Sunday afternoon concert with Alabama Annie and Lon Eldridge. Join us for Americana, blues, and old-time music by two extraordinary musicians.

May 5 at 4 p.m. - Friends of Moon Lake Library Board meeting.

May 8 at 6 p.m. - Friday Night @ the Movies: "Muscle Shoals," a documentary about the legendary music studios in northeast Alabama.

May 9 at 10:30 a.m. - The Moon Lake Library Book Club will discuss books about American places or travel in America, fiction or nonfiction.

May 12 at 6:30 p.m. - Photographer Steve Brandon presents: "Around the World in 40 Minutes: Wildlife Photography From All Seven Continents"

May 16 at 10:30 a.m. - Summer Reading Sign-Up: Kids of all ages stop by to pick up reading logs, bookmarks, etc. Get ready to read!

May 16 at 1 p.m. - Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

May 26 at 2 p.m. - Journaling workshop with deJoly LaBrier

May 30 at 1 p.m. - Mentone Ukes offer free ukulele lessons for all experience levels.

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The “Don’t Tread on Me” Flag: Its History, Symbolism, and Contemporary Significance

BY BARRY MORTON

This is the eighth of 12 articles about the flags on the Legionnaire Park fence.

The “Don’t Tread on Me” flag, also known as the Gadsden flag, is one of the most recognizable symbols from early American history. Its striking design, a coiled rattlesnake on a yellow background with the phrase, “Don’t Tread on Me,” has been used for centuries to represent a spirit of independence and resistance to oppression. The flag was designed in 1775 by American general and politician Christopher Gadsden during the early days of the American Revolution. At that time, the American colonies were organizing their resistance against British rule, and symbols of unity and defiance were needed to inspire the new Continental Army and Navy. The rattlesnake, native to the American colonies, had already become a symbol of American identity and

resistance. Benjamin Franklin famously used the rattlesnake in political cartoons, arguing that it would not attack unless provoked, but would defend itself fiercely. Gadsden’s flag was presented to the commander of the first Continental Navy and soon became an emblem for the marines and other military units.

Design and Symbolism

The flag’s imagery and wording communicate a clear warning: any attempt to oppress or harm the bearer will be met with swift and resolute defense. The rattlesnake, as Franklin noted, is a creature that gives ample warning before striking and only attacks when threatened. The phrase “Don’t Tread on Me” is a direct message of self-determination and liberty, reflecting the colonists’ desire to be free from tyranny.

Modern Use and Controversy

Over time, the Gadsden flag has been adopted by various groups and movements, often as a symbol of libertarian ideals, limited government, and individual rights.



It is commonly displayed at political rallies, protests, and by organizations championing personal freedom. In recent years, the flag’s use has sometimes sparked controversy. While many still view it as a patriotic emblem representing the American spirit, others have associated it with certain political groups or causes, leading to debates about its meaning in modern contexts. The “Don’t Tread on Me” flag

remains a powerful symbol in American culture due to its historical roots. Whether flown as a statement of patriotism or personal conviction, the flag’s legacy endures as a reminder of the importance of vigilance and the defense of freedom. *Contributed by Barry Morton, Mentone American Legion Past Commander with the assistance of MS Co-Pilot.*

Remembering Kaye Kiker *Alabama Artist and Environmental Activist*

BY ANNA MAE HORN

If you ever met Kaye Kiker, her name brings a smile to your heart because she always had a smile for everyone. Kaye’s sweet soul left earthly confines on March 18, 2026. She was a talented stained glass artisan and a dedicated environmental activist. She is survived by husband, Douglas Kiker; her sister, Muriel “Mert” Phillips; several nieces and nephews; her cousin Barbara Scott; other family members; and a host of friends across the Southeast. Kaye and Doug, the Black Hat Poet, retired to Mentone in 2008 to enjoy the eclectic atmosphere of the mountain and to join other artistic friends already in the community. Their love story started when they were young in York, Alabama. Kaye’s grandmother lived near Doug and set her heart on having him as a part of the family. When the granddaughter planned a visit, grandma invited Doug over for supper. On Dec. 23, 1971, Doug and Kaye were wed. They were a typical rural couple working mill jobs. In the 70s, Kaye met a man from Meridian who taught stained glass art classes only 10 miles away. That’s where she discovered her creative outlet. As time passed, she became an active part of increasing

access to the arts in York. She helped start a museum in an old tire recapping building. The tall ceilings made a great transition into two separate floors hosting both an art museum and a library. Kaye later served as director of Coleman Center for the Arts in York from 1997 to 2003. In 2001, she and Doug opened the Opera House Antiques and Gifts and lived in the upstairs portion. This kept them busy until retirement. Doug speaks fondly of his favorite piece of Kaye’s work, “Angel of Color.” This stained glass beauty stood 5 feet tall. Kaye also customized a set of windows measuring 18 inches by 19 feet. Doug said that was a tense and unforgettable drive with those elegant beveled stained glass portions that were assembled at the home. Kaye also created the Shattered Glass Ceiling Award for the Progressive Women of Northeast Alabama to present to Jackson County Circuit Judge Jennifer Holt in 2013. She was proud to repurpose 100-year-old discarded glass from a sewing factory. Kay filled her home with particularly creative pieces of art from many recycled objects, not just stained glass. Kaye was a uniquely inspiring woman. With a kind voice, she spoke her mind and never wavered on her beliefs. At a birthday gathering with her artistic



friends in the late 70s, Kaye learned of a recently opened hazardous waste landfill in their county, Sumter. Employees did not have safety wear. Material melted employees’ shoes while they worked. Kaye and friends organized a citizens’ task force called Alabamians for a Clean Environment. According to JSU archives, she also started the West Alabama Community Action Network. Though the landfill was never closed, larger organizations such as Greenpeace joined the effort, which eventually led to improvements. For operating without a license, the first fine was \$1 million, not very significant to a multi-million dollar company. It’s thought that the land will not be fit to live on for thousands of years. Other judgements and changes followed. Because the landfill was one

of the largest employers in the county and a source of income for local government, the population had mixed feelings about the landfill closing. This made the situation somewhat dangerous. Doug stated their house was shot into multiple times by people trying to deter Kaye from speaking out. She continued to be an outstanding environmental activist. Kaye received numerous awards for her environmental work, including the 1988 Alabama Volunteer of the Year award from Governor Guy Hunt. That same year, Kaye received a medal from President Ronald Reagan. It was the first such award he gave for environmental activism. She called Doug at work and said, “Are you sitting down?” Doug, fearing the worst, said “Just tell me what you need to tell me.” Kaye said “The White House called.” Doug: “What White House?” Kaye: “The one where Reagan lives!” Kaye was also asked to speak to Congress as a witness to better laws for regulation of toxic waste. Doug said their life together was very good overall with many memorable moments. Regardless of the hazards, Kaye was honored to be a caretaker of nature, which she viewed as a divine creation. Her beautiful light shone through her smile as brilliantly as stained glass projects the sunshine. Rest in peace, sweet Kaye.



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The Mountain Kitchen American Pie on the Brow

BY REBECCA HENDERSON,
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Hearing about the pies Bee on the Brow’s Rachel and Pete Sterns have presented to guests in celebration of America250 (see cover story), I wanted ALL the recipes. I asked for some of their favorites. That discussion was long, but we decided to share three deliciously memorable ones Rachel researched and tested. She cleverly used stencils to incorporate the shape of each state in her presentations. Let’s begin with Rachel’s preferred piecrust, which is perfectly flaky and light while remaining a trusty vessel for holding a filling.

RACHEL’S PIECRUST

Makes 1 double crust

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup shortening or butter (Rachel prefers ½ cup each)
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 5 tablespoons cold water
- 1 egg

1. Cut shortening into flour until well incorporated.
2. Combine vinegar, water, and egg, and add to flour mixture until dough comes together.
3. Shape into two discs, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for one hour before rolling. (Can be frozen.)

CONCORD GRAPE PIE (NEW YORK)

Makes 1 (9-inch) pie

I learned something new from



hearing about the discovery of this pie. Concord grapes are “slip-skin” grapes. You can pinch the skin off, and the inside of the pulp pops out.

- 6 cups Concord grapes (2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons instant tapioca
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- 1 recipe Rachel’s Piecrust
- 1 beaten egg (for egg wash, if desired)

1. Wash grapes thoroughly.
2. Pinch grapes over a medium saucepan, removing skins. Keep pulp in saucepan, and place skins in a separate bowl.
3. Place saucepan over medium heat; bring to a boil, and cook about 7 minutes or until the pulp breaks down and seeds float to the surface.
4. Pour the pulp through a sieve, removing seeds. Then add pulp to bowl with grape skins.

5. Stir in tapioca and sugar until well combined. Cover and chill at least an hour, or until the mixture thickens.
 6. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
 7. Line a pie plate with your favorite piecrust, and fill with chilled filling. Top with second crust, and vent with slits or a fork. You can also top with a lattice crust.
 8. Brush top crust with beaten egg for a shiny finish, if desired.
 9. Place a baking sheet on oven rack, and place pie on top.
 10. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes; check crust to be sure it isn’t over-browning. If so, shield with foil. Cook an additional 30 minutes or until crust is light brown in center.
- * Recipe from upstateramblings.com



MAWMAW’S MAYHAW MERINGUE PIE (LOUISIANA)

Makes 1 (9-inch) pie

Guests will swoon over the dreamy clouds of meringue!

- Crust:**
½ recipe Rachel’s Piecrust (freeze the other half for another use)

- Filling:**
½ stick butter
8 oz. mayhaw jelly
3 whole eggs
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon Mexican vanilla extract (such as Molina brand, sold at most large stores)

- Meringue:**
4 large egg whites, at room temperature
½ teaspoon Mexican vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
¼ cup granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Line a pie plate with crust.
3. Cream butter and jelly with an electric mixer until thoroughly combined.
4. Add eggs, flour, buttermilk, and vanilla. Blend well, and pour into piecrust.
5. Bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes or until the custard is set. If pie begins to brown, cover loosely with foil.
6. Remove pie from oven, and cool 30 minutes before topping with meringue.
7. Increase oven temp to 350 degrees.
8. Pour egg whites into a bowl, and whip until glossy and smooth.
9. Add vanilla and cream of tartar to help the egg whites hold their form.
10. Slowly add sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating after each addition, until the sugar is incorporated. Continue beating until stiff peaks form.
11. Spread meringue on top of pie, leaving small peaks as you spread.
12. Place pie on rack 4 inches from top of oven, and bake 10 minutes until golden.

* Recipe from richlandcreekfarm.com. You can also order the mayhaw jelly from their site.

(See “Mountain Kitchen,” Page 16)



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

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

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

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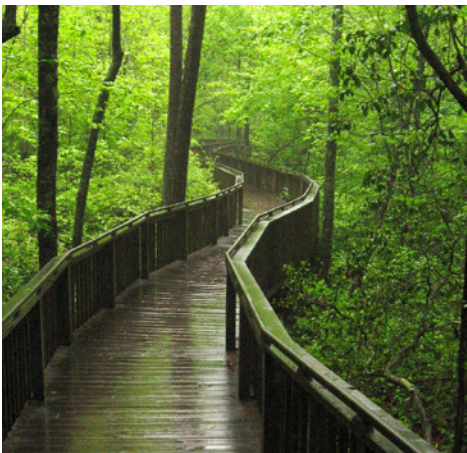
Located next to The Hatter Cafe in Mentone



A Local’s Guide to DeSoto State Park Part 2: The Waterfall Corridor

BY TIM EBERHART

Last month, we explored the river trails of DeSoto State Park. This month, we turn to one of the most accessible and rewarding hiking experiences in the park: The Waterfall Corridor.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TIM EBERHART

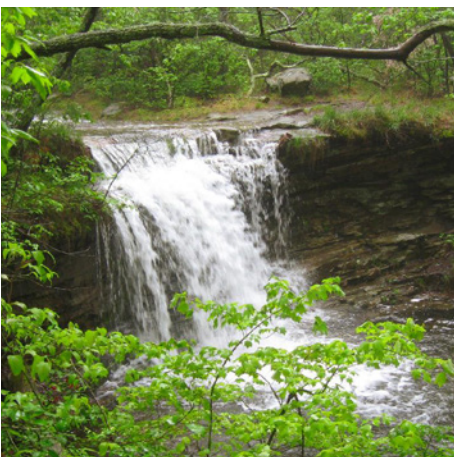
Enjoy easy access to a cascading mountain stream

Named for the superintendent who managed the park for almost three decades, the Talmadge Butler Boardwalk Trail will take you more than 300 yards into a beautiful, relatively flat section of the park. Two large observation decks overlook a picturesque mountain stream, including one that straddles the water at Azalea Cascades.

Large signs at the entrance note that the park is part of the North Alabama Birding Trail. This area is especially well-suited for spotting birds found in southern Appalachian forests. From the boardwalk, hikers can easily continue upstream.

Get to Laurel Falls and Lost Falls on the Blue and Orange Trails

Laurel Creek produces multiple waterfalls within a short stretch,



including Lost Falls, Laurel Falls, and Azalea Cascades. The Blue and Orange trails run parallel to the creek, each offering a slightly different perspective of the same waterway. Hiking out on one trail and returning on the other makes for a natural loop of roughly 3.5 miles. Along the way, hikers pass sandstone formations, a massive tulip poplar tree near the eastern end of the Blue Trail, and a landscape shaped by water and time.

The Orange Trail features large boulders near the country store and terrain that dips into mountain hollows, while the Blue Trail offers closer proximity to the creek in several sections.

You’ll enjoy the near-constant sound of water from both trails.

If you go

Start at the boardwalk and explore both the Blue and Orange trails for a complete waterfall experience. This area provides one of the easiest ways to see multiple waterfalls in a single hike.

Next month, we’ll move away from the water and explore the higher elevations of the park. 🐾

For more trail guides, photos, and maps, visit Tim’s website at southernoutings.com.

Mountain Kitchen *(continued from page 15)*

NATCHITOCHES HAND PIES (LOUISIANA)

Savory pies are always welcome at just about any celebration.

Crust for Meat Pie:

- 1 quart all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon vegetable shortening
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk

Meat Filling:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable shortening
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Salt, pepper, and red pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour

For crust:

1. Combine flour, salt, and baking powder; cut in shortening until crumbly.
2. Mix eggs and milk, and gradually add to dry ingredients.
3. Form dough, and let rest while preparing filling.

For filling:

1. Heat shortening in a large pot.
2. Add minced beef and pork; cook until browned.
3. Stir in vegetables, and season with salt and pepper; cook until tender and slightly caramelized.
4. Drain off excess liquid, and stir in flour. Cool filling to room temperature.

Assembly:

1. Roll dough thin, and cut into circles.
2. Add a spoonful of meat mixture to each round.



3. Fold in half, and seal edges using a fork.

Frying Option:

1. To fry, heat 1-2 inches of vegetable or peanut oil in a deep skillet or Dutch oven to 340-350 degrees.
2. Carefully place the pies into hot oil in batches, ensuring not to overcrowd the pan.
3. Fry 1–2 minutes per side until they turn golden brown.
4. Remove with a slotted spoon; place on a wire rack or paper towels to drain excess oil.

Baking Option:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place pies on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
3. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden.

* Recipe from natchitoches.com/dining/official-meat-pie-recipe/ 🐾

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Sold!

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This charming 1 Bed/1.5 Bath cabin on 1.45 wooded acres, features open living/dining/kitchen with gas log FP, plus 2nd living area and half bath. Upstairs queen BR with full bath. Screened porch with hot tub, fire pit and grill. Laurel Creek amenities: trails and lakes. Turnkey rental near Mentone. \$315,000

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