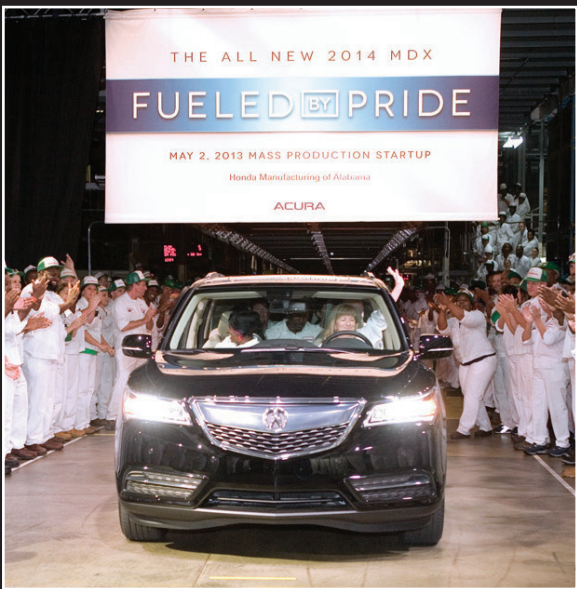


Government & Industry



County's industrial base keeps growing

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home staff writer

Good things are on the horizon in the Coosa Valley as the area's industrial base continues to grow in diverse ways.

As industries in Talladega County continue to build SUVs and minivans, make cabinets, mine calcium carbonate and cast engine blocks, new industries are in the works that will soon be making building materials while still others could be recycling used motor oil and making pellets to fire electric generating plants in Europe.

"We have resources and a good transportation system," said Calvin Miller, executive director of the Talladega County Economic Development Authority.

He cited the area's abundance of trees, calcium carbonate, dual-rail industrial sites, I-20 to the north and U.S. 280 to the south, and a workforce that includes more than a million people within a 50-mile radius.

"Our unemployment rate was 4.4 percent at the beginning of 2007, and during 2008, '09, '10 and '11 it reached more than 14 percent. Now it's back down to 6.7 percent," Miller said. And while national unemployment rates have dropped when unemployed people gave up on searching for work, Miller said Talladega County's work force participation went up as the unemployment rate went down.

"I think a lot of that is due to the automotive industry. Nationwide they're on line to sell 16 million units this year, which is the best since 2007. During the recession a lot of people put off buying a vehicle, but they've got to be replaced after a while."

In the past year, Honda started a \$48 million proj-

ect to add production of direct-injection engines at its assembly plant in Lincoln, which will add 20 more jobs and bring the company's investment in the site to well over \$2 billion.

"When Mercedes came to Alabama, they showed the world that you can make a quality product in Alabama," Miller said. Since that time, Honda built its Lincoln facility, Hyundai has built in Montgomery and Kia built an assembly plant in West Point, Ga., near Valley, Ala.

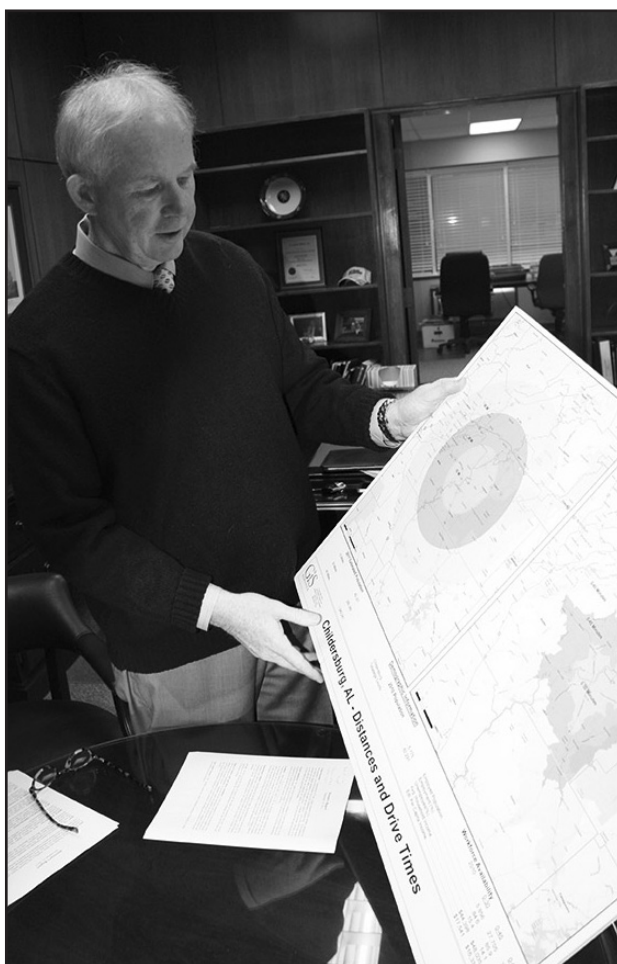
In Talladega, M-Tek moved into a speculative building in 2012 to make automotive interior panels, and now employs more than 120 people with plans to hire even more.

Two industries eyeing the Childersburg area are Keystone Energy Group, which would make pellets to burn in power plants in Europe, and Alabama Green Lubricants, which would recycle used motor oil.

"Keystone is doing wetland studies on the property they've optioned and on the property their rail would have to go across," Miller said. The company is waiting for final decisions on whether European countries will continue to subsidize companies that use wood chips to reduce carbon emissions before starting construction, but Miller is encouraged by the company's commitment to pay for the costly wetland studies.

"Construction would take a year or more once it's started, and would represent an investment of \$90 million to \$100 million," Miller said.

Alabama Green Lubricants is eyeing a 20-acre site in the 2,000-acre Childersburg Industrial Park. If it comes to fruition, that project would represent a \$40 million investment and



Bill Kimber/The Daily Home

Talladega County Economic Development Authority Executive Director Calvin Miller reviews a map showing the proximity of more than 1 million workers within 50 miles of Talladega County.

employ 25 people.

Miller said the Economic Development Authority tries to use grants when possible to help industries locate in the county. Such funding has been used to build roads into the still-developing Childersburg Industrial Park, which also includes 115 acres of "advantage sites," which are flat, cleared sites where some of the preliminary work has been done to prepare for incoming industries.

In Sylacauga, two building material companies are building plants now, planning to start operations this year.

IKO, a Canadian company that makes roofing shingles, expects to employ 75 people when full operations start in June. The company has served as its own general contractor to build the facility, employing about 300 people through the construction process. IKO has started some warehousing and distribution in Talladega County to break into the Southeast home-building market.

Atlas Roofing's Web-Tech division hopes to open its \$16 million plant in October with 38 full-

time employees making a webbing product used in home construction, ramping up to 52 full-time employees later.

Miller said transportation and the availability of calcium carbonate are two reasons those companies located in Sylacauga.

"We have good possibilities for additional companies locating in our area for building materials and other industries that use calcium carbonate as a raw material," he said.

In Talladega, Master Brand Cabinets planned to build an additional facility last year, but instead decided to improve the old Bemis Bag Company plant where they already were operating. That company now employs 220.

The cabinet market depends on the real estate market, and as home sales improve after their long slump, "That's another bright spot," Miller said.

Miller said his agency works with the Alabama Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama among others to market Talladega County to industries around the United States and the world.

Job growth continues in St. Clair

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

New industrial projects and expansions will bring more than 150 new jobs to St. Clair County.

"Job growth continued to occur in 2013 with the addition of new industries like SKF in Moody and Phoenix Energy in Pell City," said Tommy Bowers, chairman of the board for the St. Clair County Economic Development Council. "Also, many of our existing industries have expanded and added more work and jobs to their current facilities."

Bowers said several of the projects announced in 2012 came to fruition last year.

"We expect to continue these openings in the near future in projects like Love's Travel Center and Valero in Moody," he said. "The consistent growth shows that our communities are business friendly and attractive to new industries and retailers. The EDC continues to work to market our community to targeted industry sectors and commercial projects, focusing on creating new jobs, increasing the wealth of the community and improving the quality of life in St. Clair County."

Don Smith, executive director of the St. Clair County Economic Development Council, said the new industrial projects announced in 2013 include:

- SKF USA in Moody with 20 new jobs, \$1 million in new payroll and \$6 million in capital investment.

- Phoenix Energy in Pell City with 13 new jobs, \$400,000 new payroll and \$1 million in capital investment.

- JRBC Packaging Solutions LLC in Pell City with eight new jobs, \$240,000 new payroll and \$500,000 in capital investment.

- IICME in Odenville with 5 jobs, \$180,000 new

payroll and \$250,000 in capital investment.

Smith said 2013 expansions include:

- Eissmann Automotive in Pell City with 35 new jobs, \$1,050,000 in new payroll and \$4,250,000 in capital investment.

- Riverside Refractories in Pell City with one new job, \$31,200 new payroll and \$2,956,000 in capital investment.

- Bag Supply Company Inc. in Leeds with 50 new jobs, \$815,000 new payroll and \$8 million in capital investment.

- Buckner Barrels Sales Corporation completed an expansion that was announced in 2012 that brought an additional 21 jobs, \$706,000 new payroll and \$2.7 million in capital investment.

"St. Clair County is currently at 4.7 percent unemployment, which is the lowest our unemployment rate has been since July 2008," Smith said.

He said it seems as if the past few years in St. Clair County have had different themes.

"One year it was strong growth in the manufacturing sector and the next year was nearly \$100 million in investment in the health care sector," he said. "My prediction is that 2014 will be the 'Year of Retail' in our communities. I believe we will have multiple retail announcements this year because new employers continue to invest in St. Clair County, our residential population continues to grow, we consistently have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the region, and we have good, supportive elected officials throughout our county. The leadership and cooperation throughout St. Clair County makes it not only a place where people want to start their business, but also a place that they want to stay and raise their families. As long as we continue to work together, St. Clair County will continue to grow and attract new businesses."



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Talladega, Alabama

Changing political face in Talladega, St. Clair counties

2014 elections will be the first for new state legislative districts

By **WILL HEATH**
Home staff writer

Rep. Jim McClendon has called the redistricting process “a change in the climate.”

“It’s probably one of the most interesting processes that I’ve been through in the Legislature,” McClendon said.

McClendon, R-Springville, has served in the Alabama House of Representatives since 2002. Following the 2010 Census, he and Sen. Gerald Dial, R-Lineville, spent more than three years as the twin faces of the redistricting process in Alabama, as chairmen of the House and Senate Redistricting committees, respectively. The 2014 elections, which begin with the June 3 primaries, will be the first for the new state legislative districts.

“It was an honor I was selected to be on the committee, and it was an honor to be selected by the committee members to be the chairman,” he said. “It is something that will impact Alabama for a decade, until it’s done again.”

The new districts are the first overseen by the Republican Party since it became the majority in the state, and indicate a changing political face in both Talladega and St. Clair counties. St. Clair, a county with no Democrats in elected office, will be represented by three representatives — District 50 (McClendon), District 36 (Randy Wood, R-Anniston) and District 35 (Mack Butler, R-Rainbow City); and three senators — District 11 (Jerry Fielding, R-Sylacauga), District 17 (Scott Beason, R-Gardendale) and District 10 (Phil Williams, R-Rainbow City).

“It’s actually going to reduce the number of ballot styles for us,” St. Clair Probate Judge Mike Bowling said. “I don’t know how many we’ll have just yet, but it should be fewer than we’ve had in the past.”

That is hardly the case in Talladega

County, now divided into four House districts — 32 (Barbara Boyd, D-Talladega), 33 (Ronald Johnson, R-Sylacauga), 35 (Steve Hurst, R-Munford) and 36 (Wood); as well as four Senate districts — 11 (Fielding), 12 (Del Marsh, R-Anniston), 15 (Slade Blackwell, R-Birmingham) and 17 (Beason).

“Our ballot styles will be increased,” said Judy McSween, chief registrar in Talladega County. “The majority of them are due to the additional positions, as well as the shift in the lines from 10 years ago, that were applicable up until 2002.”

Of note on this year’s ballot will be Senate District 11. Fielding said that the previous district lines lay in Calhoun, Talladega, Elmore and Coosa counties. Now the district is mostly in St. Clair.

Fielding, who served as a Democrat for three years before becoming a Republican in 2013, said he looked forward to meeting the people of the reconfigured district.

“I look forward to it,” he said. “I’ve always enjoyed meeting and greeting, and I look forward to doing that. It will be a challenge, but any time you get into public office — especially with a district that’s about 135-140,000 people — you have to have a lot of people to help you along the way. The main thing is, you’ve got to get out there and let people know how important you think it is for people to consider you for that office.”

He will have stiff competition: McClendon declared that he would run for the seat in District 11 in June, and officially qualified Jan. 15. He maintains that Dial, chairman of the Senate redistricting, was responsible for the new Senate districts, with little input from the House.

“We had a gentleman’s agreement,” McClendon said. “When the House bill comes out of the House, y’all (in the Senate) are not going to mess with it; when the Senate bill comes out of the



Will Heath/The Daily Home

St. Clair County Probate Judge Mike Bowling looks over a map outlining new legislative districts in the county. The new districts for Talladega and St. Clair County will be in effect for the 2014 elections, beginning June 3.

Senate, we’re (in the House) not going to mess with it. The Senate line was done by the senators.

“I met, as did Sen. Dial, with every legislator that wanted to sit down with me. We made dozens, or hundreds, of changes, as the result of that. Folks would come in, and nobody knows a district better than that representative or senator did. I wanted to make them happy, so I could get their vote.”

McClendon noted that the U.S. Department of Justice, which reviewed all the redistricting in Alabama as part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, cleared the new districts in “record time,” and that repeated judicial reviews have also reaffirmed both plans.

Additionally, McClendon said, he and Dial held public meetings “all over the state” to make the process transparent.

“The fact of the matter is, redistricting is the single most politically charged event that occurs in the Legislature, period,” he said. “The fact also is, in order to go forward with the process, it’s got to go through both the House and Senate, which means you’ve got to make a majority happy.”

“It wouldn’t surprise me that some people opposed; in fact, the vote was strictly along party lines, I think. Since it is politically charged, it is an opportunity

to criticize.” Bowling said that some voters will complain on election day about their ballot, but that each should receive a card ahead of time, identifying each voter and their district.

“You’ll always have some of that,” Bowling said. “People think they’re in the wrong district because they’ve always voted in another district, especially with their representative.”

“Most of that will be taken care of at the polls; it’s something we’ll cover in polling school.”

McSween said her office was preparing to send cards to every voter in the county. Additionally, interactive maps are available online for House, Senate, Board of Education and Commission districts.

“We hope we’re going to take every possible way through the media,” she said. “We are going to send every voter in Talladega County a new card that will stipulate the site and the changes.”

“There are always people who show up to the wrong place, but that’s a normal election. We are going to do everything we can; they have a responsibility, same as we do, to school themselves, and hopefully they will do that.”

Contact Will Heath at wheath@thetalladega.com.

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Team effort brings improvements to county

BY SHANE DUNAWAY
Home staff writer

In 2013, Talladega County officials exhibited a team effort to make significant improvements within the county.

County Administrator Wayne Hall attributed a commitment to the primary goal of maintaining a track record of fiscal success as a factor in the county's achievements.

"For the third year in a row, we received very favorable results from the audit by the (Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts) with no findings or comments," Hall said. "Our financial officers and our accounting staff as well as the department heads do their part to ensure we're meeting our financial standards. I don't want to give anybody the impression that I did these things, but I was fortunate to be here with the people who accomplished these things."

Hall noted the importance of finding ways to save money while tightening the belt locally played a pivotal role in how the county conducts business.

"Overall, the county departments operated within their budgets and controlled costs," he said. "We were able to refinance a portion of the county's debt, resulting in a significant savings on interest costs."

The county inherited some additional expenses when the Alabama Regional Communications System dissolved effective Oct. 1.

"The county took responsibility for the operation of the 800 MHz radio system and the components located within Talladega County," Hall said.

In late September, the Talladega County



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The Talladega County Courthouse is the hub where most of the county's business is handled.

Commission approved its budget for fiscal year 2014, anticipating \$33,607,122 and \$33,051,655 in expenses with \$13 million plugged into the General Fund.

Hall said in September the balanced budget included money required for each department to maintain level operations while also accounting for increases made because of a rise in employee medical and retirement expenses absorbed by the county, costs associated with the 2014 election, increased fuel costs, costs associ-

ated with the 800 MHz radio system and funding to replace four deputy cars for the Talladega County Sheriff's Department.

"It's even more important to control costs every year, operate within our budget and look for ways to be more efficient," Hall said. "We expect this level of performance to continue and the commission expects it to continue. Sometimes, it becomes more difficult to maintain a high level of performance than to achieve it. We want to continue to improve on the sustained success we've

had over the years."

One of the county's major projects in recent years has been the expansion of the Talladega County Jail, which took place in 2011.

"We have a much safer jail," Hall said. "We don't have problems with overcrowding that you hear about in other places."

According to Sheriff Jimmy Kilgore, the county currently holds an agreement with the State Department of Corrections to house up to 53 male and 53 female inmates at any given time throughout the

year.

"It's a big boost to the county's general fund that helps pay for the bond payments on our jail expansion," Kilgore said.

According to Kilgore, the DOC agreement generates nearly \$500,000 in funds per year.

The county also made strides in the realm of roadway improvement, securing \$14.5 million in three rounds of funding awarded through the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program for nine projects in the county,

the cities of Talladega and Lincoln.

The most expensive project of the bunch, a \$6.18 million road and bridge to connect Talladega County 47 to Alabama 21, is scheduled to be let for bid in the fall of 2014.

A bridge project on Stemley Road over Choccolocco Creek, valued at more than \$4.5 million, is project scheduled to be let for bid in September 2014. The county provided a local match of a little more than \$903,000 on the project.

A \$3.37 million widening and resurfacing project on Magnolia Avenue between U.S. 78 and Alabama 77 is scheduled to be let for bid in March 2014.

Three of the projects in Talladega focus on replacing substandard bridges at Isbell Circle over Town Creek, Coosa Street over Isbell Branch and West Street over Isbell Branch. The three bridges, scheduled to be let for bid in early 2014, will cost a little more than \$1.05 million, with the city matching more than \$210,000.

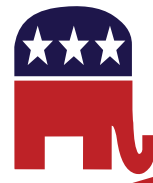
Another trio of county resurfacing projects at Speedway Boulevard, Talladega County 002 and Fay S. Perry Road, cumulatively valued at \$3.15 million, are scheduled to be let for bid in March. The county provided approximately \$750,000 as a local match to secure the projects.

"The ATRIP projects we were fortunate to obtain funding for with the help of our legislative delegation and our commissioners, those projects will be worked on by our county engineer (Tim Markert)," Hall said. "We'd love for these projects to start sooner, but that's something that is not under our control."



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Talladega making progress toward goals

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

The city of Talladega has made significant progress throughout the previous year toward achieving a number of its stated goals, most notably in the arena of capital improvements, according to city manager Brian Muenger.

“Over the course of several years the city has seen remarkable success in its pursuit of state and federal grant funds, with several of these projects being implemented within the last year. The (Alabama Department of Transportation) funded Safe Routes to School project is nearing completion, and has provided substantial pedestrian upgrades to the areas around the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. The City’s (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) Brownfield Assessment program continues to enjoy significant success, with more than 10 properties on Battle Street benefiting from environmental analysis. Several of these Brownfield assessments are being conducted alongside redevelopment efforts for the subject properties, which will lead to the revitalization of these formerly blighted properties.”

grant funded projects are continuing through the design phase at the present time, to include bridge replacements at Isbell Circle, Coosa Street and West Street. These projects were made possible due to the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, under which the city received approximately \$1,000,000 in funding toward replacing these outdated structures. It is expected that these projects will be let for bid and construction initiated during the upcoming year.”

The city is also progressing quickly toward beginning construction on the Frazier Farm Drainage Project, funded by (Alabama Department of Economic and Commercial Affairs) under its Community Development Block Grant program. Project design has been completed and the city is in the process of obtaining the easements necessary to begin work in the area. The grant award, \$360,000, is being matched with city funds to alleviate the consistent flooding of this neighborhood. The project is expected to be completed within the 2014 calendar year,” he continued.

The city was also successful in its application to the Department

of Justice’s Community Oriented Policing (COPS) Grant, which provided more than \$180,000 in funding for the city to hire two school resource officers. The application was developed in partnership with the Talladega Board of Education, which will provide the required matching funds for the grant. It is expected that the SRO’s will be hired and placed into service by the end of the current school year.

“These notable grant activities allow the city to progress toward its goals by leveraging outside funding sources. Without these efforts it would not be fiscally possible for the city to accomplish many of these activities,” Muenger said.

“The progress in the city’s adopted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has also been extensive within the last year. The most visible of these projects is the renovation of Veterans Park, which is currently undergoing construction. Despite consistent weather delays, a substantial amount of the project is already complete. It is expected that the park renovation, which features a restructured drainage channel, pedestrian bridges, culverts, and walking track, will be complete prior to the spring,” he said.

Muenger also pointed out that “several building renovation projects were completed within the last year, with new roofs being installed at the Mabra Center and Heritage Hall. Fire Station 1 also received a much needed overhaul within the last year, as did the restrooms at City Hall. The city also completed an \$850,000 energy retrofit project through a performance contract with Trane. The capital improvements to various city facilities include lighting and HVAC upgrades, the cost of which is paid for in full by the energy savings derived from the improvements. The city also secured a \$270,000 interest free loan from ADECA to assist in these upgrades. Problematic rail crossings on Court Street, East Street, and Stephen J. White Boulevard were also completed in the last year by CSX, addressing a long-term problem on these highly trafficked roads.”

The city’s budget for the current fiscal year was approved at approximately \$14,000,000, an amount that has remained largely unchanged in recent years despite a significant rise in various non-discretionary spending areas. These cost increases have made necessary certain reduc-

tions in discretionary spending, all of which have been made with a minimal impact to the level of service provided by the city.

Citizens can look forward to a number of additional capital improvements in the upcoming year, to include the implementation of a \$2,000,000 paving project. This much needed project will provide benefit to all wards of the city, with the primary focus being to improve thoroughfares with high traffic volume. The city is also nearing completion of its Stormwater Improvement Plan, which will be basis for initiating a 10-year capital plan that will address flooding in central areas of the city.

“Most importantly,” Muenger concluded, “in the upcoming year the city plans to work closely with the Talladega Board of Education to secure the funding necessary to perform long overdue capital improvements to the city’s educational facilities. The City Council has set these improvements as one of its top priorities in recognition of the essential role that the School System holds as it relates to the future growth of our city.”

Murphree pursuing paving, no littering projects for city

By EMILY McLAIN
Home staff writer

After a productive 2013, during which Sylacauga furthered several major projects, such as demolition of more than 40 nuisance structures and the start of a City Hall renovation, Mayor Doug Murphree is looking toward even more improvements during 2014.

“My biggest priority right now is securing grants or looking for ways to get some paving done,” he said. “That’s something that really needs to be done soon on some of our more traveled roads.”

The city applied for \$6.8 million in paving grants through a state program last year, but received no funding. Murphree said he is meeting with state officials this month and seeking other ways to make a costly paving proj-

ect feasible.

“We could spend \$10 million on paving, no problem,” he said. “To get off to a good start, I think we would need at least \$4 million so we could do Fourth Street, Ft. Williams, Main Avenue. Those are some high-traffic roads that are getting to be in rough shape.”

Another priority this year is starting an anti-litter campaign and enforcing the city’s current ordinances to ultimately create a cleaner, nicer city, Murphree said.

Soon, a Sylacauga police officer will be selected to serve as ordinance enforcement officer to travel the city and ensure residents stay within rule on all issues. Murphree also hopes to coordinate with local businesses to help spread the word about the consequences of littering. The city has also consid-

ered enacting a littering ordinance.

“Having a clean city is important because it gives everybody more pride in where they live, and I think if we have pride in our city, it will show when people or industries come here to see if this is where they want to locate or where they want to live,” Murphree said.

An ongoing project to improve the city’s appearance, as well as safety and operations of city employees, is a nearly \$1 million City Hall renovation. Started last May and set to be complete by this summer, the project includes replacement of the window “curtain walls” at either of the main entrances, roof repairs, demolition of the former jail to turn it into administration offices for the police department, renovations to fire department living quar-



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Sylacauga Mayor Doug Murphree says his biggest priority right now is securing grants or looking for ways to get some paving done.

ters, asbestos removal and other tasks.

“I think everything is right on track with that project right now, budget-wise and with the progress,” Murphree said. “It’s fixing a lot of things at once.”

The city’s overall budget is also a point of improvement, at least compared to the 2013 budget, which was approved with nearly a half-million dollar deficit. This year’s budget cut most

appropriations 10 percent and utilizes more than \$700,000 from savings, but projects to end the year in the black. Overall, the budget projects revenues of \$13,220,129 and expenses of \$13,195,265. Contracts and appropriations total about \$2.9 million, and city department expenses are about \$10.1 million.

“We cut some things last year, like promotions, to make up for the deficit, and we ended up in better

shape than we thought,” Murphree said. “If we’re careful this year and stay on the conservative side, I think we’ll end in a pretty good place. Even though we have to use some savings to get through the year, we’re still providing all the same services.”

Outside of City Hall, city leaders are still in talks about two major projects – a retail shopping center

See Sylacauga, Page 7

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Pell Citizens to see 'fruits of labor' in '14 Sylacauga

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

In 2013, Pell City officials were in the planning stage for many new projects.

I know residents haven't seen a lot of fruits of our labor," said city manager Patrick Draper. "In 2014, people are going to start seeing those fruits of our labor."

He said the council is expected to approve a \$5 million bond issue to fund major city projects, which will enhance the quality of life for residents.

The bond money is expected to help reimburse the city for the \$1 million purchase of the former Avondale Mills plant site, which will become green space for the city as a park. Part of the bond money is to be used to construct a municipal pool behind the Civic Center and purchase the CenturyLink building.

"We are on our final leg in negotiations for the CenturyLink building," Draper said.

The facility will house the city's new public library, as well as other city offices.

Draper said CenturyLink is on top of the city's project list.

He said necessary renovations must be completed to the building first so the Parks and Recreation Department can move



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Joe Funderburg has taken the reins of the city as its new mayor. He took office in November 2012.

some of the activities held at the Civic Center to the CenturyLink building.

"That will help ease the congestion at the Civic Center," Draper said.

He said civic organization meetings and banquets could be held at the CenturyLink building, which will help ease traffic congestion at the Civic Center.

Draper said the Civic

Center will serve as a recreation and athletic facility, including making room for residents who will flock to the new municipal swimming pool.

"That's why the CenturyLink building is key in all this," he said.

A portion of the bond money is also being used for various other Park and Recreation Department projects, including ren-

ovations to facilities in the Sports Complex and the docks and bridge at Lakeside Park.

Draper said the city plans to solicit input from the public for the planning of the proposed park on the former Avondale Mills plant site, which is between Comer Avenue and U.S. 78.

City officials are also looking at possibly taking over the Pine Harbor Golf Course, but at the time of this story negotiations with owners were ongoing.

In 2012, the city changed its form of government from a mayor to a council president form of government. The mayor does not carry a vote in council meetings. The change was because of the population growth of the city, which continues to grow.

The city manager runs the day-to-day operations of the city and answers to the mayor and council. Draper is the first city manager to be hired by the city. He was hired in 2012.

Draper said the economy continues to improve, and sales taxes are on track. He said the city continues to monitor sales tax receipts on weekly and monthly bases.

"The city overall is in good financial shape," Draper said. "We have a healthy reserve that we

aren't tapping into."

He said the city continues to move forward with many plans to improve the quality of life for residents.

"We do have some economic development ideas," Draper said.

This past year, the city has moved forward with an almost \$1 million paving project throughout the city, which includes strip-

ping. Mayor Joe Funderburg, who was elected in 2012, was also instrumental in forming the first Hall of Fame wall at City Hall. Inductees were recognized in the first Hall of Fame induction ceremony as well.

The city also held its first Cross Race event, and plans to hold its first triathlon this summer.

Draper said the city is also prepared to adhere to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

The city is also conducting a water and sewer rate study, as well as an in-depth study on the various city jobs, salaries and job descriptions.

Draper said the city and School System are also moving forward with helping establish a school tax district for the Pell City School System.

And another bright spot, Draper said, are new lights on Veterans Parkway.

From Page 6

on U.S. 280 and a multi-use sports complex. Both of these ideas have been in discussions for years, but Murphree feels now is the time to capitalize on opportunities to make them a reality.

"We're moving forward with some discussions about these things," he said. "We have sent a contract proposal to lawyers to review for the shopping center, so we're waiting to hear back from that."

The Birmingham-based Shopping Center Group proposed a retail center last summer for the city's acreage along U.S. 280 next to Walmart. The original proposal was for a roughly 180,000 square foot center including six junior anchor stores, 8,000 square feet for smaller shops, five outparcels, an amphitheater, temporary booths for events, community garden space and 860 parking spaces, and other possible amenities.

This is the third development opportunity the city has been presented.

Talks of a sportsplex for the city are also still in the idea stages. The Parks and Recreation Board proposed a location for the complex on the Bivin-Gaston property, a 170-acre plot at the northeast intersection of U.S. 280 and Alabama 21. That recommendation has been turned over to the Planning Commission, Murphree said, so that group can check if that property would be suitable and be the best location for a sportsplex.

Once a location is chosen, Murphree said the next step would be "figuring out exactly what we want to do with it and figuring up how much that will cost." Then, financing the project would be another step.

Smart spending, grant funding moves town forward

By BILL KIMBER
Home staff writer

Keeping a close eye on spending and saving up enough money to match grants have helped America's oldest city, Childersburg, stay fresh and up-to-date, and in the new year, bringing more

industries and jobs are goals that remain at the forefront for city officials.

"Filling our industrial park with a variety of industries is one of the things I think our City Council is working on very hard," said city clerk Sandra Donahoo.

A fixture at City Hall

since 1972, Donahoo became clerk in 1996. She spoke about the city's progress in the absence of Mayor B.J. Meeks, who was sidelined in January with cancer surgery.

Donahoo said two large industries are doing preliminary work on plans to build in the industrial

park, which could bring scores of jobs to the city, and some smaller businesses have contacted City Hall to inquire about smaller parcels there.

The retail community is diverse and growing, and offers a variety ranging from clothing to gifts, Donahoo said.

"Whenever I go to conferences and they ask us to bring door prizes, I always try to take a basket of local items so people will know what a variety we have in Childersburg. Everybody knows where we are because they pass

See C'burg, Page 8

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C'burg

From Page 7A

through Childersburg on Highway 280, but I want them to know that they can come downtown.”

Making downtown more inviting was the goal of two grants implemented in 2013 that tore down dilapidated commercial buildings and houses and replaced old sidewalks and light fixtures.

“This year we will close out those grants,” Donahoo said. “We’re ready to plant trees and anticipate doing about 50 feet of additional sidewalk extending from Taylor’s Cleaners.”

“We’ve got some tidying up and finishing up to close that grant,” she said.

“When we’re through with this, we hope to maybe do another phase and continue it all the way down (First Street) to the Kiwanis Park playground and do Eighth Street.”

She said no grant application has been filed for such a phase, because the existing grant is still open.

Donahoo recalled that in her four decades at City Hall, grant funding has been used to build the R.S. Limbaugh Community Center, add sewer and water lines and improve sidewalks. One grant in the late 1970s and early ’80s rehabilitated about 40 old houses, some of which didn’t previously have indoor plumbing.

“The grants we’ve done this year have been an improvement to our downtown. I know our downtown merchants appreciate that the city fathers wanted to beautify the city and spend money wisely.

“It makes me proud that we spend money wisely. We’re not in debt, and we haven’t been since I’ve

been here. ... I look for us to continue to get some grants. You have to have matching funds, so we strive to keep enough to do some of those special projects if they get funded.”

With a population that grew to 5,175 in the 2010 Census, the city will at some point need upgrades to water, gas and sewer lines and also increased sewage capacity, Donahoo said.

She pointed out that with a budget of about \$4 million each year, Childersburg offers a number of city services not often found in smaller cities. In addition to police and fire, parks and recreation, streets and sanitation and an active library, city services also include paramedics, hazardous materials response, twice-weekly garbage pickup, recycling, leaf and limb pickup, rubbish pickup, senior citizens nutrition, senior transportation and support for local schools.

The city has also been working to beef up the Childersburg Fire Department. Last year the city received a grant to buy a tanker-pumper truck, and equipment has been ordered to put the truck into full service.

Twelve new firefighters have been hired through a Department of Homeland Security Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant, and a long-term goal is to establish a fire station in the industrial park.

“I love Childersburg,” said Donahoo, a 1965 graduate of Childersburg High School.

After attending business college in Birmingham, she married her husband,



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Grant funding provided a fresh new look in downtown Childersburg in 2013, with the replacement of old sidewalks and light fixtures. Low-growing trees will be added this year to complete the look.

William, in 1967. They lived in Tuscaloosa until he finished college, and they returned to Childersburg.

“It’s a neat town with nice parks” Donahoo said. “There are always kids in the playground at Kiwanis Park. There’s a nice walking track at Grove Park and an indoor track at the recreation center. That gets a lot of use, and so does the exercise room.

“There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer and get involved, too. We have the museum and the grist mill, and the Chamber of Commerce is always having functions. All you’ve got to do is ask.”

She mentioned upcoming events such as the

Historical Commission’s Mardi Gras gala, the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet, the Kymulga Grist Mill Grits Festival and CoosaFest as opportunities for residents to get involved.

For youngsters, the Parks and Recreation Department offers after school and summer programs as well as rec league sports including basketball, football, soccer, baseball and softball, and families can enjoy picnics and fresh air at Sally West Park, Pleasant Valley Park and Pinecrest Park.

“It’s the kind of town where you just feel comfortable,” Donahoo said.

Waldo now has mayor, 5 council members

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

After nearly five years of essentially no municipal governance, the town of Waldo now has a mayor and five member City Council.

Susan Crim holds the mayor’s office, and the council consists of Annie Askew, Ronald Williams, Brenda Crim, Randy Roberts and Larry Hurst.

Getting here was a winding road, however.

Wayne Collier, the town’s second mayor, died in 2003, and Councilwoman Susan Crim was appoint-

ed to succeed him. Crim resigned in 2005. Council president Steve Caldwell served until 2008 after succeeding Crim, but opted not to seek a full term as mayor.

Then council President Henry Howard ran for mayor in 2008 without opposition. Councilman Jack Goodwin was also unopposed, and no one qualified for the other seats.

The governor appointed former Councilman Randy Roberts, who had not sought re-election, to the office of council president, and the remaining seats were rounded out by

Carey Crow, Franklin Allen and Barbara Askew.

Howard announced he was resigning for personal reasons in June 2009. Upon learning of Howard’s resignation, Roberts also resigned, as did Allen. Askew said she would stay to establish a quorum to determine what to do next.

At the July 2009 meeting, Crow nominated Goodwin to be council president, but Crim objected, saying Crow was Goodwin’s sister and her nomination represented a conflict of interest. The remaining council members agreed to take no

action until they got an attorney general’s opinion.

The 2012 election left more questions about the town’s future. Askew, Brenda Crim and Williams qualified for at-large council seats without opposition, but four people qualified for mayor: Susan Crim, Everett Askew, Dee Ford and Dale Shaw. Crim got the most popular votes in the general election, but did not win a majority. Ford and Askew tied for second, forcing a runoff.

In the November runoff, Crim again got the

See Waldo, Page 10

Lincoln plans to complete projects in ‘14

By ELSIE HODNETT
Home staff writer

The city of Lincoln continues to move forward and is expected to complete several city projects this year.

“We anticipate work resuming on the new library project in early February,” Mayor Bud Kitchin said in mid-January. “Barring any weather delays, it should take about eight weeks to finish.”

Kitchin said the interior is almost complete, with carpet installation and painting left to finish.

“For the exterior, there is the parking lot and landscaping to complete,” he said. “Once that is finished, we need to install the fixtures and furnishings and tie in the data and voice for Internet and phones. We will have high-speed Internet available for our patrons.”

Kitchin said the new library will have all new furniture with new computer work stations.

“We will also have two interactive projector systems for enhanced audiovisual capabilities,” he said.

Kitchin said the Lomar Villa Accessibility Project paving was delayed due to rain and cold weather; however, work will resume as soon as weather permits.

“Work on the Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail is progressing,” he said. “The roofing structure for the pavilion has been installed, and Hale Construction was working to finish the boardwalk and remaining two fishing trails.”

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail is a project former Mayor Lew Watson began.

The handicapped-accessible fishing trail in old downtown Lincoln will include a concrete sidewalk approximately 10 feet wide and 3,500 feet long, including five fishing stations approximately 20 feet in width. There are three wooden and two concrete fishing stations.

Kitchin said foundations for four of the five fishing stations have been poured.

He said the pavilion

roof is 30-by-35-feet and the floor area is a concrete pad about 55-by-60 feet with extra seating for enjoying nature. It can also be used as a small entertainment venue.

The plans include an open trellis covered walkway from Crawford Street to the new pavilion and an elevated wooden creek boardwalk approximately 200 feet long, which will run from the bridge across Blue Eye Creek to a new deck built adjacent to the pavilion both on the west side of Blue Eye Creek. Additional parking is planned as well.

“It should be finished mid-February if all goes well,” he said.

Kitchin said the city is working to get traffic signals at the Interstate 20 and Alabama 77 interchange.

“Our engineering firm, Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood Inc., is in the process of finalizing several things,” he said. “They are working on wrapping up the water/sewer relocation, identifying utility owners along the project on Magnolia Street between Alabama 77 and U.S. 78, determining if additional right-of-way is needed and finalizing a cost estimate for the project. We anticipate letting bids late this summer.”

Kitchin said the city is also working to update its Long Range Comprehensive Plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The city partnered with Epiphany Collaboration LLC, an organization of community planners, economic developers and other experts who will provide guidance through these updates.

“I have heard some people say they don’t like the direction Lincoln is going in,” he said. “This is their chance to get involved and provide input on which direction they want the city to take.”

Kitchin said the first phase of the process is an update of the Comprehensive Plan.

See Lincoln, Page 9



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Lincoln

From Page 8

"If you want to participate, please attend the kick-off meeting Feb. 27 at 6:30 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall," he said. "You do not have to be a resident — you just need to have a vested interest in Lincoln."

Kitchin said citizen-based committees will review specific topics affecting municipal growth and development. Topics to be covered include transportation, environment, economic development, healthcare, utilities, historic downtown, recreation/senior activities and tourism. These committees will recommend goals to be set to support and move these issues forward. Once formed, the committees will meet once per month for 4-5 months.

"In 2013, the city experienced many exciting announcements related to economic development, job growth and road projects," he said. "We saw the new city facility projects underway and an emphasis on improving essential city services. Our Parks and Recreation Department initiated new music events, farmer's markets and expanded senior activities. 2014 looks to be another promising year for our community. The Comprehensive Planning Process, 'Many Voices, One Vision,' is kicking off this year and will invite our citizens to help decide how our community will grow in the coming years. I encourage you to get involved."

Contact Elsie Hodnett at ehodnett@dailyhome.com.

Senior center, retail business high on agenda for Oak Grove

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home staff writer

Expanding the Oak Grove's senior center and working to keep the business community vital are high on the agenda for the coming year in Oak Grove.

The town received a grant in late 2013 for \$135,171, and will spend \$30,000 to match it to add a 20X50 addition onto the senior center, providing a permanent location for the center's fitness equipment.

"We're going to get more fitness equipment, and the seniors will be involved in the decisions on the equipment," said Mayor Tony White, who took office last April when former Mayor Charles Merkel resigned to spend more time managing his small business.

"They'll tell us what they would like, and we will see what we can get," White said.

"The senior center is a busy part of Oak Grove, and we're very blessed to have it. A lot of our seniors really enjoy coming over there."

The nutrition program provides hot meals on-site each day, and 20 to 25 meals are delivered to home-bound seniors, White said.

Business development is a concern for the mayor and council, who started the year faced with losing the town's only car dealership. White has been making contacts to find another dealership to move into the town. He's staying optimistic while also inviting retail and convenience stores to locate there. "We'd like to get a dealership that's not



Bill Kimber/The Daily Home

Recruiting new businesses and expanding the senior center are priorities for Oak Grove Mayor Tony White.

already around, so it would benefit Oak Grove and Sylacauga and the whole area," White said.

"Oak Grove is doing OK, but we're not doing great. We're sustaining right now. We were down on revenue last month, but we're not behind the 8-ball," the mayor said.

The Oak Grove Volunteer Fire Department is also a point of pride for the town, serving the largest area of any volunteer department in Talladega County.

"Oak Grove covers 8,000 rooftops," said

White, a professional firefighter in Pell City and Sylacauga and an Oak Grove resident since 1993.

"We have a great chief in Charlie O'Barr, great officers and great staff," White said. "Last year they responded to 625 calls. About 90 percent of our calls are outside the town. We get money from the Volunteer Firefighters Association for the calls outside the town," he said.

Oak Grove's fire coverage area backs up to Sycamore, across U.S. 280 to the back of the Sylacauga Airport, to the

Fayetteville district, and to the Center Hill area of 280 approaching Childersburg.

"We've been really blessed to have a great staff at town hall, people who work really hard for the town of Oak Grove. They make doing my job very easy."

He credited town clerk Wendy Kelly, assistant clerk/receptionist Doris Andrews, special projects coordinator Corene Lackey, summer beautification coordinator Carolyn Zeigler street supervisor Joey Martin and transportation supervisor Pippa

Shafer for taking care of the town's business.

White had been on the Town Council since 2000 — and mayor pro tem for many of those years — before Merkel resigned last year, elevating White to the mayor's office.

"Mayor Merkel did a great job, and made the transition easy for me."

White also credits council members James Armstrong, D.R. Reynolds, Donald Coleman and mayor pro tem David Harris for their dedication and hard work.

"They've been on board to make some cuts necessary to make sure the town is taken care of," White said.

He said upgrading equipment is also a challenge for Oak Grove, which is currently looking for a used tractor and soon will be seeking newer vehicles for the street department.

White married the former Ginger Simmons, a lifetime resident of Oak Grove, in 1985. He has two stepsons, Danny Bassett and Adam Bassett, and three grandchildren.

"I really enjoy being here. The people of Oak Grove are so nice. They will call here with a complaint and never be unpleasant."

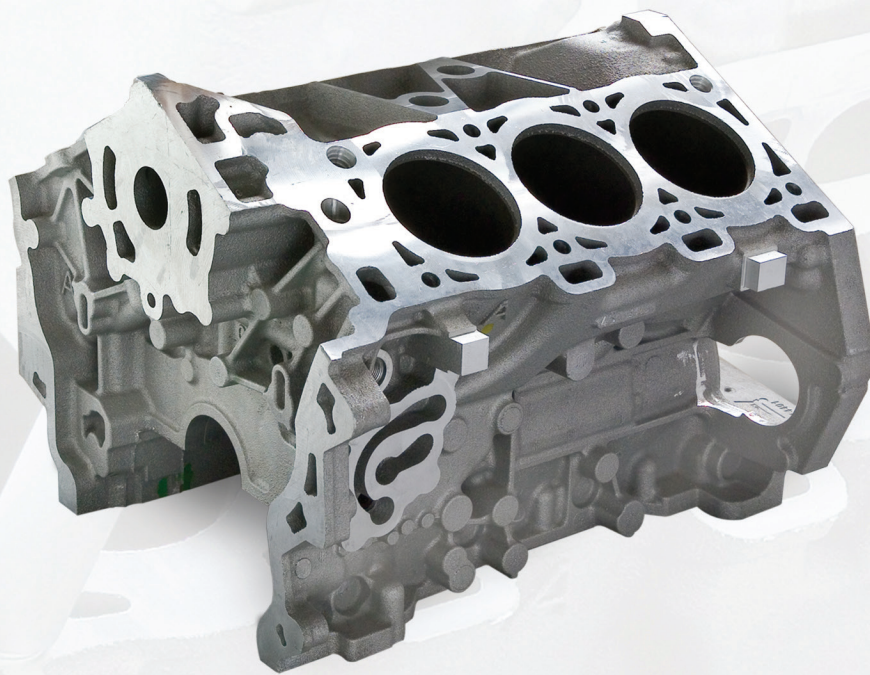
"As long as I ask God for guidance and do my best for the town of Oak Grove, I know I'll never have to worry about the consequences," White said.

Contact Bill Kimber at bkimber@dailyhome.com.



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Water upgrades planned for Riverside

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

The city of Riverside plans to focus on continuing the upgrade of its water distribution system this year.

“Our plans are to replace every water meter with new, technically-upgraded meters which will give us dated readings as well as a more accurate reading,” Mayor Rusty Jessup said in January. “These will be ‘radio-read’ meters, which will significantly reduce our reading errors and, more appreciably, our costs of billing.”

Jessup said the city also plans to upgrade Well #1 and put it online with Well #2, which was overhauled last year.

“The city applied for a low-interest federally-funded loan in the amount of \$1.2 million for water infrastructure upgrades,” he said. “The cost on the two projects is estimated at about \$750,000, and we already have rates in place to pay for it.”

Jessup said as of January, there was not a closing date set for the government loan.

“After the loan closes, it will probably be 90-120 days until the city gets the funding and will begin bidding out the projects,” he said.

Jessup said the city was also in negotiations to purchase the sewer system that serves Riverside; however, the offer expired at the end of 2013 and the city did not respond to it.

“There are very good reasons why the city of Riverside should purchase the sewer system that currently serves a portion of Riverside and get into the sewer business,” he said. “On the other hand, there are just as many very good reasons why the city should not. It is a very difficult that this administration and past administrations have struggled with. There are no easy answers, and it is a huge financial risk but with great financial reward possibilities. “Unfortunately, it seems that our city finances are never quite strong enough to purchase it. But we will continue to explore the possibility this year and

in years to come if we don't purchase it soon.”

Jessup said the industrial access highway project, which began last year, should be completed in 2014.

“This project includes three-laning a portion of U.S. 78 and a nice access from U.S. 78 into our newly-developed area for economic development,” he said.

Jessup said the city's operating budget continues to be a struggle.

“We finished 2013 with a less-than \$40,000 surplus in the general fund and a deficit of about \$12,000 in the water fund,” he said. “But for the third straight year, the city has overall finished in the black.”

Jessup said the operating budgets for this year include \$649,000 in the general fund, \$430,000 in the water fund and \$174,000 in the fire fund. Last year the operating budgets were \$583,000 in the general fund, \$409,000 in the water fund and \$120,000 in the fire fund.

“One of the improvements we are most proud of in 2013 is moving to 24-hour fire coverage,” he said. “We are hopeful that having rescue personnel on duty 24 hours a day will positively affect the insurance rating for our city. If that happens, then most citizens could see a significant drop in their homeowners' insurance premiums. The added plus is that we have already seen better response times, which makes us all feel more secure. The increase in fire dues last year will allow us to permanently have 24-hour coverage,” he said.

Jessup said this is a challenging year because longtime city clerk Rhonda Johnston is retiring May 1.

“For 20 years, Rhonda has been a steady and consistent hand in the growth and prosperity of our city,” he said. “Her knowledge and experience will be sorely missed. We are, however, confident in her replacement Candace Smith. Candace comes with a business degree from Jacksonville State University, which will serve our city greatly.”



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Munford Mayor David Dabbs said 2013 saw growth in the town's youth programs, senior programs, the library and the police force.

Munford's recreational facilities focus of 2013

BY **SHANE DUNAWAY**
Home staff writer

Munford's Town Council pushed forward multiple measures in 2013, the majority aimed at enhancing the town's recreational facilities.

Place 5 Councilman Lee Garrison discussed some of the year's biggest accomplishments and a possible project for 2014.

“The biggest things we had going on in 2013 related mainly to the maintenance and upkeep of our football fields, baseball fields and stuff like that,” Garrison said. “We're going to continue maintaining our fields for our youth activities. We're still kicking around the idea of putting up a new concession stand over at the baseball field, but we haven't decided we're going to do it yet. We're not locked into anything now, but they'd like to have a two-story building. Right now, our concession stand is in a one-story building.”

A series of strong winds swept through the town

March 18, causing damage to the foundation of the press box at Holcombe Field and destroying the second-story addition.

The council authorized \$5,000 for building a new press box on the remaining foundation left following tear-down efforts.

“We still carry the youth games over there at the old football stadium,” Garrison said.

In November, the council spent an additional \$6,500 to repair a leaking concession stand roof at Holcombe Field.

Garrison said the town is also considering street lights.

“We're kicking around that idea to help light up Munford a little better around our roads and stuff like that,” Garrison said. “(Mayor) David (Dabbs) and I were talking about that, trying to get a grant for that.”

The town unveiled its new farmer's market May 18, which ran during the peak growing season until the beginning of October and gave local vendors an opportunity to sell pro-

duce, crafts and other items. The market was made possible through a grant provided by the University of Auburn.

“That went really well,” Garrison said. “I know they moved it around to a couple different spots.”

Munford currently operates without a budget, a concept Garrison said is a standard practice.

“The way our first mayor (Lynn Swinford) explained it to us over here was that it wasn't mandatory for us to maintain a budget,” he said. “We're just working on small measures, so we've never really put one in place. We're on a lot smaller scale than other places. If we need something, we're able to get it. For the most part, things are going pretty good here.”

Though an audit released in June by Joan Sanders of Sanders & Associates P.C. in Anniston showed revenue has declined compared to past years, the town seems unhindered by the lack of a budget and continues to grow.

“When you're deal-

ing with small stuff, you don't spend a whole lot,” Garrison said. “We've bought a few things over the last few years like tractors and stuff like that, but we don't overdo on anything.”

Not having a budget also doesn't deter the Town Council from approving tax abatements to bolster industry as they have recently done with Alabama Specialty Products, allowing the company to reinvest \$4.4 million to make capital improvements and add 25 new jobs.

Dabbs discussed the positive improvements he sees in the town and his goals as the town moves forward in 2014.

“It's hard to say what our biggest accomplishment was this year,” Dabbs said. “It was my first year and the economy was so down, but we were able to grow our youth programs, our senior programs, our library and police force. We've kept all that stuff alive. Our goal for 2014 is to build more revenue and find more revenue so we can do more things.”

Waldo

From Page 8

most votes, 36, with Askew taking 27 and Ford 24.

Crim was sworn in as

mayor in 2013, but the council failed to establish a quorum for its first two meetings. Roberts and Hurst were eventually appointed by the governor

to round out the council.

The full council met for the first time in January. Their primary action at that meeting was to authorize Mayor Crim to seek

funding for road repairs from Talladega County.

Contact Chris Norwood at cnorwood@dailyhome.com.

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Left to right: Lee Barnes, Charcey Glenn, John Patterson

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The Leeds Water Works Board is a proud supporter of Leeds City Schools and helps its customers do the same. The LWWB makes it simple for customers to make tax-deductible donations to LCS right on their water bill each month.

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Hawk manufactures PVC plastic sewer pipe with Integral Bell Gasketed joints and specializes in standard and custom PVC perforated pipe. Hawk produces other PVC extrusions, custom cylinders, core tubes and is the exclusive U.S. Manufacturer of patented molded plastic Ragglesticks. Marketed and sold by RAGGLESTICK Packaging, Ragglesticks are used to create compactness and stability in packaging and storing cylindrical objects such as pipe, tube, rolls, drums and barrels. Ragglesticks was the invention of the founders of Hawk Plastics.



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Legacy Cabinets is in its 20th year of business

Kitchen cabinets company's primary business

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

Legacy Cabinets Inc. provides kitchen cabinets to dealers on the Southeast seaboard and across the United States.

"This is Legacy Cabinets' 20th year in business," said Carl Nicholson, chief financial officer for Legacy Cabinets Inc.

He said the company was founded in 1994 by five or six gentlemen who had all previously worked in the cabinet industry.

"They developed the company, then sold a big portion of ownership in the company in 1999," he said. "The company changed hands again in 2002, then again in 2010."

Nicholson said two of the original founders and owners still work at Legacy Cabinets. Rodney Suggs is CEO/president and also a member of the Board of Directors. Joe Grogan is executive vice president of

purchasing.

"We cut and fabricate all cabinet pieces with the exception of doors, although we do produce a couple styles of doors," he said. "Kitchen cabinets are the majority of our business. We sell between 8,000-12,000 cabinets per week."

Nicholson said there are approximately 18-20 cabinets per kitchen.

"We also sell bathroom vanities, but our primary business is kitchen cabinets," he said. "We do not produce countertops."

Nicholson said Legacy Cabinets has 260 regular employees, and up to 80-90 temps, depending on demand.

"We have cabinets in all price ranges — high, medium and low," he said. "We sell to dealers across the U.S. but the majority of business is on the Southeastern seaboard."

Nicholson said at its peak, Legacy Cabinets produced approximate-



Legacy Cabinets was founded in 1994 by five or six men who had previously worked in the cabinet industry. Two of the original founders and owners still work at Legacy Cabinets.

ly 20,000 per week and employed about 580 employees with no temps.

"There were cutbacks due to the recession, but we survived when many cabinet companies of a similar size went out of business," he said. "We survived because we had a good capital structure, good management team and we were not over-staffed. We were flexible and when we saw the downturn in the economy in mid-2006, we immediately made adjustments to cash flow."

Nicholson said the

company was able to rehire as many employees as it could, and is still in recovery like the rest of the construction industry.

"We noticed a stabilization in 2009-2010," he said. "From where we bottomed out at net sales and from comparing numbers from 2013, we are up about 50 percent in sales. We wanted it to come back and build a foundation. It has been a constant, slow, steady growth and a gradual improvement."

Contact Elsie Hodnett at ehodnett@dailyhome.com.

State Representative District 35

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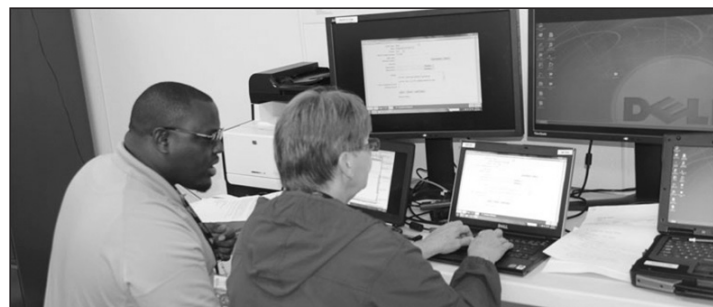


TALLADEGA COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

At Talladega County Emergency Management Agency, our guiding principles are communication, coordination, collaboration and cooperation which all aim at protecting, preparing and serving all of our citizens. We strive every day to ensure that Talladega County's citizens are served in the event of a disaster or an emergency. We are ready to act in a moment's notice, and it is our job to make sure all citizens are protected and prepared when that moment does happen.



Talladega County EMA leads the charge to serve the entire county through emergency management and preparedness planning.



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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Weaver and Sons in Talladega recently acquired a new laser cutting system that will make the parts they fabricate for other industries more precisely and faster, making the company more competitive.

Weaver and Sons can custom manufacture just about any part for any machine or piece of equipment in light to medium industry.

Weaver and Sons part of Talladega since 1949

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home staff writer

Weaver and Sons has been doing business in the Southeast since the end of World War II, and has been a presence in the Brecon community in Talladega since 1949.

Company president Dyron Overton said Weaver and Sons was founded by his father, his father-in-law and his father-in-law's brother shortly after his father-in-law was released from a German prisoner of war camp in 1945. They were

initially based in Bristol, Tenn., and worked in the textile industry, installing air systems all over the Southeast.

After finding a great deal of work in Talladega, the company officially relocated there in 1948, purchasing a building in Brecon that had recently been decommissioned. They moved three blocks away from that location, into the old Palm Beach building, in 1999, and have been there since.

The business gradually evolved into the custom fabrication manufac-

turer that they are today, Overton said.

"We make component parts for other manufacturers," he said. "We do well alongside those industries, and they depend on us for supplies. We're not at the automotive level, but we build machines and equipment for small and medium sized demands. We're not a stamping house, and the things we fabricate here are not all the same. We make whatever our customers are looking for to fit their needs. If you're looking for something like five, 10 or

50 parts per month, you go with someone like us. We laser cut, form and weld all the parts needed here."

The company recently was granted a tax abatement from the city of Talladega to purchase a \$1.8 million laser cutting system.

"It's an upgrade to our current technology," Overton said. The new machines will allow the company to "expand to higher speeds and higher capacity to go after a larger market segment." The

new equipment will help produce three or four new jobs, and a second new machine may be added in the next couple of years.

"It will help with current orders, also," he said. "It will help us compete better."

Plans for the future are, by necessity, just speculation, depending on economic conditions, Overton said.

"You have to look at offsetting disruptions from regulations and taxes," he said. "This is part of our ongoing attempts to

remain competitive with other companies. When we can process orders faster and more economically, we improve our competitiveness on a global basis. That's what allows us to keep jobs here and keep expanding."

They offer complete fabricating services, including a paint shop.

The company currently employs 35 to 37 people, and has employed into the 40s in the past, and hopefully in the future.

Weaver and Sons is located at 1200 Ward Ave. in Talladega.



SYLACAUGA UTILITIES BOARD

The Sylacauga Utilities Board is committed to providing state-of-the-art utility service for our community. SUB serves over 12,000 customers in Sylacauga and the surrounding area. We provide electrical, natural gas, internet, water, and waste water services. If you have questions about services available in your area, please let us know how we can assist you.



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