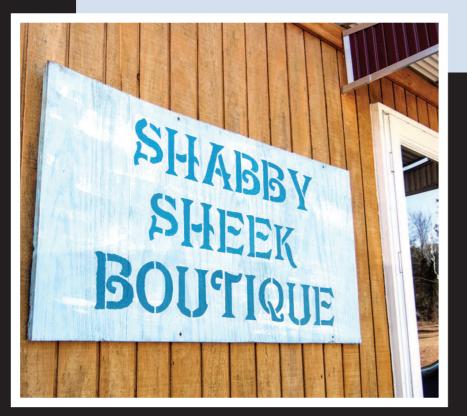




Talladega, Lincoln & Munford CONNERCE



UPDATE February 2015 SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE DAILY HOME







Photos by Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The party was on at Talladega Superspeedway again last year with the Aaron's 499 and the Geico 500. A number of upgrades at the motorsports facility have enhanced the racing experience for NASCAR fans.

Talladega Superspeedway rich with tradition

By Jimmy Creed Special to The Daily Home

The party returned to the infield at the Talladega Superspeedway in 2014.

For many years, the track was legendary -- some might even say infamous -- for the unique, unusual, sometimes unbelievable goings-on in its infield. The word among fans was that if you wanted to see the fastest speeds, the best racing and the wildest times in all of NASCAR, visit the infield at Talladega.

Then track officials decided to change that image, moving away from the raucous and the rip-roaring and towards family and friends. They were so successful at it, however, that in the process they seriously curtailed one of Talladega's most time-honored traditions. In 2014, they swung back the other way and the result was a rousing success. Spurred by a group of current Sprint Cup drivers like Clint Bowyer who had heard the tales about Talladega but had never seen anything like it for themselves, the track unveiled "The Big One On The Bvld" for the Aaron's 499 in May, and the party was on once again. "Basically we had a Mardi Gras-type parade where the drivers were on a float, and we took them down the entire Talladega Boulevard in the infield and they were throwing out different swag to the fans," Director of Public Relations Russell Branham said. "Then at

the end we had live music and different things to ensure that the fans were having a good time, but we wanted to have something the fans could participate in as well. The two things we came up with were a Moon Pie eating contest and barbecue sauce wrestling."

With Bowyer serving as mas-ter of ceremonies, fellow drivers Kevin Harvick, Ricky Stenhouse and Austin Dillon helped count the number of Moon Pies downed by the contestants until a winner was determined, then looked on along with the thousands who gathered as various fans wrestled around in a pit of sauce. And a fun time was had by all. "That night after we did it, all four guys said, 'we had a blast, we can't wait to come back, dial us in for the next one,'" Branham said. "When the race was over with that weekend, we had a lot of positive comments about us doing that, and everybody wanted to know if we were going to do it again, so we did." The Geico 500 in October fell on Halloween weekend, so "Big One on the Blvd" the activities once again consisted of a parade followed by a "Hallo-Dega" costume contest, a Jell-O crawl and a Dega Dance Off. Twenty fans were initially selected for the costume contest, the field was narrowed by the Jell-O crawl and then the drivers determined the winner by judging who displayed the best moves while having things like cherries and syrup poured over them

during the dance off. (All the songs played for the dance off had a food theme.)

In addition to the core group of Bowyer, Harvick, Stenhouse and Dillon drivers Brad Kesolowski, Tony Stewart, Kasey Kahne, Greg Biffle, Kyle Larson and Michael Waltrip also joined in the fun that night, and Branham expects the list to continue to grow as word spreads in the garage that the good times are once again rolling in the Talladega infield.

"What it has done is it has ignited a new tradition here at Talladega, and it's something we're going to continue to do, Branham said. "It's something the drivers enjoy. It's something the fans enjoy. And we're trying to bring back that swagger and that fun part of what Talladega is. In addition to providing the greatest competition on the track, we want to show that we can be the very best off the racetrack, too. That's our calling card. It's a fun place. It's a place where if you're a child, middle-aged or an older person, you can come and have a great time.'

cials created a new area where fans can rent spaces to park their motorhomes and have a direct view of the action on the track right from their home on wheels if they so desire.

But while different sections within this new parking area are still designated Allison, Farmer and Bonnett to honor the legendary Hueytown racers, track officials wanted to do more. So they christened the entire 4,000-foot length of the backstretch as the Alabama Gang Superstretch, and asked media and fans alike to always refer to it as that going forward.

it as that going forward. On April 30, 2014, Donnie Allison, Bobby Allison, Red Farmer, Susan Bonnett and many of their family members attended an unveiling of the big, block letters painted in black-and-white along the outside retaining wall that will forever serve as one more highly visible reminder of their accomplishments at the track. along pit road and the Alabama Gang Superstretch to help fans get even a better view of all the racing action, including a 40-foot by 80-foot one that towered above the Gatorade Victory Lane. The goal, Branham said, is for anyone who buys one of the track's 80,000 tickets to be as comfortable and as entertained as they can possibly be.

"So now you're seating in a nice, comfortable seat and from every seat in the house you can see a video display board," Branham said. "The idea was making sure they are comfortable here just like they are sitting in their living room."

Having all the seating on the front straightaway allowed the track to do a lot more with fan amenities in that area in 2014, and there are plans to do even more in the future.

Alabama Gang Superstretch unveiled

The most significant structural change at the track in 2014 was the removal of the Allison Grandstands from the area outside the backstretch and the dedication of the Alabama Gang Superstretch in their stead.

In place of the grandstands coming off Turn 2, track offi-

All the comforts of home

Another significant structural change that took place in 2014 was the replacement of all the 18-inch metal seats in the frontstretch grandstands with 21- and 22-inch chairback plastic seats. The old metal seats were fixed in place while the new seats fold back to make them more easily accessible to fans.

As part of its upgrading of the overall fan experience, TSS also added a total of six high-definition video display boards placed at various points

'People can go to different exhibit areas, they can go look at different displays, etc., and moving forward what we are going to continue to do is to look at different fan amenities we can line up and down that front straightaway," Branham said. "What we want to do is take care of everything. When they get on the property we want the parking to be the best it can be, we want to get them to their seat easily, we want them to be comfortable in their seat, and we want them to see everything they want to see.

"We've laid the groundwork on a lot of the initiatives we want to build on in the coming years."



NASCAR racing consistently draws thousands of visitors from all the world to Talladega County.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. is a perennial favorite at the Talladega Superspeedway.

Soda shop hopes to preserve Talladega's history

By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

A Talladega business owner is seeking to keep the city's history alive with his new business, a soda shop.

shop. "Talladega is such a historic city, and it is slowly losing some of that history," said Ryan Hall, owner of Pop the Top Soda Shop. "This is my first step to help bring back and restore some of that history."

Pop the Top Soda Shop, 704 East Battle Street, opened April 26, 2014.

"Talladega used to have soda shops on the square," he said. "Although we are not located on the square itself, in the 1980s this location was a yogurt shop."

Hall said Pop the Top Soda Shop offers any ice cream treats in any combinations.

"We come up with new ones constantly, such as our root beer float milkshakes," he said. "And we use only Blue Bell Ice Cream in our floats, malts and milkshakes. We can make any flavor malt. If we don't have a flavor, we will get it by the next week."

Hall said the soda shop typically has 25-30 different flavors of ice cream.

"In the summer we

add to those and have 36 flavors including regular, sugar-free and sherbet," he said. "We are known for our banana splits, which are very large with three scoops of your choice ice cream and toppings."

In addition to the cold treats, the soda shop offers nachos, hotdogs, specialty hotdogs which are quarter-pound 100 percent beef hotdogs, sandwiches including PB&J, grilled cheese, Reuben, tuna melts, chicken salad and different soups of the day. Different varieties of Otis Spunkmeyer large cookies are also available.

"All our drinks except water, tea and energy drinks are in glass bottles," he said. "We have a variety of the Coke products, including the original recipe Coke from the 1960s. We also have a wide variety of nostalgic sodas, such as NuGrape, Stewarts and many others we rotate through."

Hall said business is going well.

"The community has been very receptive," he said.

"And we are looking forward to summer."

Pop the Top Soda Shop is open Monday through Saturday 11 a.m.-9 p.m. and Sunday 1-9 p.m.



Pop the Top Soda Shop is keeping a nostalgic American tradition alive.

Bob Crisp/The Daily Home



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

A new location, more floor space and better parking have proved advantageous for Buddy's BBQ and its customers.

Buddy's BBQ welcomes more space, new location

By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

Customers are enjoying the new Buddy's BBQ location with much more space and better parking and access.

"Four years ago, I realized we needed more space," said Janice Waites, owner of Buddy's BBQ.

After searching hard for the past two years, the barbecue restaurant found a new home in the former OMG Donuts building on the corner of Haynes and North streets.

"We were only closed for two days to move some necessary equipment," Waites said. "We opened in the new location at the end of January."

Waites said the former location on East Battle Street was not large enough to accommodate the number of customers, and parking was a big issue. "Those issues were definitely solved at the new location," she said. "The old location would seat 32 people, while our new place can accommodate 72. It is so much nicer here."

Waites said Buddy's BBQ has the same menu for now, but she plans to expand it in due time.

"We have the original haystacks here—French fries or tater tots topped with cheese, barbecue meat and sauce then more cheese," she said.

Waites said there are daily blue plate specials with freshly-prepared vegetables daily, and customers may also order off the menu.

"We have a very big to-go business here," she said. "We had a large to-go business in our previous location, but it is even more so here."

Waites said while there is a drive-thru for pickup orders, Buddy's BBQ is not a fast-food restaurant.

"We cook to order and are a full-service restaurant," she said. "You can

pull up to the drive-thru window and order, but we take them in the order they are called in."

Waites said most customers are happy to wait

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for the freshly-cooked meals. "We also have a big breakfast crew that comes through," she said. "We have homemade donuts, along with our fresh-made

desserts, and deep-fried Oreos with our own special batter."

Waites said the community has been very supportive, and the feedback has been positive.

"I appreciate each and every person who comes here to eat," she said. "Without them, I would have no reason to be here."

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File photo

The owners of Tyde's Tinting on Fort Lashley Avenue in Talladega offer gift certificates for their window tinting services.

Tyde's Tinting: 15 years of professional experience

By SHANE DUNAWAY Home staff writer

For morning and evening drivers, one of the most frustrating nuisances encountered on the road is driving toward the sun after sunrise or prior to sunset.

Tyde's Tinting on Fort Lashley Avenue offers window tinting services to provide a buffer against those pesky ultraviolet rays.

Open for approximately six months, Tyde's is managed by Tim Harwell, who has more than 15 years of professional experience, but has been tinting since his teens.

"It's what I've been doing all my life," Harwell said. "When I was 16, I tinted my first car by myself. I nailed it. I did it perfect the first time I did it. Ever since then, I've been doing it. I'm 34 vears old, so that's a long time."

For full-service jobs, Harwell charges \$135 for a five-year film, \$145 for a lifetime film and \$165 for all-around tint on SUVs, excluding the windshield on each tint package.

"I do have warranty cards,

and I do stand behind my work," Harwell said. "Anything done to the windshield is always extra because the windshield is difficult."

Tyde's also offers tinting for individual windows, windshields and back glass.

"If you have an SUV and you want to do a two-door matchup, it's \$40," Harwell said. "To do your whole windshield is \$60, and to do a whole back glass is \$60. To do a front strip, it's \$15."

Harwell added the shop sells gift certificates that can be pur-

chased by individuals who may want to get a tint, but don't have the time for it during the week.

"If they buy the gift certificate, I will make a lifetime film for \$130," Harwell said. "If you're working one day, and you can only get a gift certificate that day and bring it that weekend, if you go ahead and pay for it and get the gift certificate, you get it cheaper."

While Harwell admitted the winter months create a lull in business, he said he anticipates an increase in customers in the coming months.

"It's slow season right now, but it's about to pick up because of taxes," Harwell said. "It's usually the busiest time of year during tax season, and that will last all the way up to May. Then summer hits, and it's booming on until winter season."

Tyde's is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

To schedule an appointment or inquire about rates, call 256-242-4537.

Contact Shane Dunaway at sdunaway@dailyhome.com.



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Shabby Sheek Boutique: Local, convenient fashion

By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

A mother-daughter team found its calling opening Shabby Sheek Boutique in Talladega.

"I was originally going to open a bakery because I love to cook," said Gigi Horton, who owns Shabby Sheek Boutique with her daughter, Haley Horton.

However, Haley wanted a change of profession from her job as a speech therapist.

"I always loved clothing and fashion," Haley said. "My passion was to do something like this. It was really a spur-of-the-moment decision-we talked about it one night and did it."

Shabby Sheek Boutique, 66961 Alabama 77, near the "Welcome to Talladega" sign, opened Sept. 13, 2014.

"I had already purchased the storage building that I had planned to turn into a bakery," Gigi said. "We did all the renovations ourselves to turn it from a storage building to an inviting boutique."

Gigi said the duo already have plans to expand the building when the weather permits.

"We will add on and increase the space by about 75 percent," she said.

Haley said Shabby Sheek Boutique offers women's fashions and accessories including pants, leggings, seasonal shoes and boots, a wide variety of tops, necklaces, earrings, rings, scarves, vests, skirts and more. "We get new shipments in several times a week,"

Gigi said. "If you come in here one day then come back a couple weeks later, we will have a whole new inventory.

Both mother and daughter attend shows to keep up with current fashions.

"Just about every customer asks me for advice on outfits, to ensure the clothing matches," Haley said. "Or they will ask me to put an outfit together for them. Long tops, in a tunic style, are the current fashion. And we try to buy 'Made in the USA' products whenever possible.'

Haley said customers can view the latest fashions online at www.shopshabbysheek.com.

"You can shop online, and we also take phone orders with shipping available," she said.

Haley models the new fashions for the website and other social media.

'We plan to hire a model for that in the future," she said.

Both women said the community has been supportive.

Many of the people who come in here tell us that Talladega needed something like this," Haley said. "They are happy they can find the latest trends locally, instead of having to drive to Birmingham or Oxford."

Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.



Photos by Jerry Martin/The Daily Home Gigi Horton, left, and her daughter, Haley Horton, opened the boutique in September 2014.



Shabby Sheek Boutique is open Tuesday through Haley models some of the fashions available at the boutique. The fashions can be viewed online and through social media.



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Civilian Marksmanship Program

Shooting range set to open in May

By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

world-class The multi-million-dollar Civilian Marksmanship Program shooting range in Talladega County is set to open in May.

"People can't wait to get out here and shoot," said Don Heuman, range master and park manager for the Talladega Marksmanship Park.

Heuman said CMP broke ground on the new facility in October 2013, but plans were in the works several years prior to that.

"There were several reasons we chose this location and purchased approximately 500 acres a few miles south of the Talladega Superspeedway," said Mark Johnson, chief operating officer for the CMP.

Johnson said the location is close to CMP's Anniston operation, one of two permanent marksmanship centers. The other is at Camp Perry, Ohio.

"The topography also fit our needs," he said. "And the namesake of the county fit our needs for national advertising. On a personal level, being in Talladega County was quite satisfying because I'm from here.

Heuman said Rabren General Contractors Inc. from Auburn has handled the construction. The earthmoving phase began in December 2013, and construction continued throughout last year.

'This is a monumental undertaking, and the crew has done very well," Heuman said. "Everything should be complete for in-house testing by April 1. We will open May 6, and then hold a grand opening June 5."

Heuman said the new park will hold the first official competition match, the John C. Garand Match, on June 6 to commemorate the 71st anniversary of the D-Day Invasion of Normandy. Participants can register online for the grand opening match beginning April

The world-class facility includes a 13,000-squarefoot clubhouse with two large multi-purpose classrooms, CMP personnel offices, a pro store with range supplies, CMP memorabilia, clothing, safety equipment, ammu-

nition and more.

The park offers multiple opportunities for all three disciplines of shooters — rifle, pistol and shotgun.

The shooters will swipe cards given to them at the clubhouse to enter the different shooting areas in the park," Heuman said.

The park features a 200/300/600-yard range with 50 positions, 100yard rifle range with 50 positions, 50-yard pistol range with 40 positions, 50-foot pistol range with 20 positions, three 50-yard pistol bays, 12 25-yard pistol bays, and a 15-station sporting clays range and trap field with 5-stand overlay.

There is another distinguishing feature to make the new park attractive to shooters.

"There are male and female restrooms at each shooting range," he said. "Most people don't like Port-a-Johns, and we feel this is something our shooters will appreciate."

Heuman said there will be 13 full-time employees at the park.

"We will hire additional staff for events," Johnson said. "We think conservatively we will have 14,000 visitors to the range annually. With that number, we will more than break even with operating costs.'

Heuman said once the work is finished, the range will be paid for and CMP will not owe anything on it.

Both said CMP is invested in the community, and plans to keep its usage fees affordable for those who wish to use the facility. CMP is not seeking to recoup its \$20 million investment, but to break even with operating costs.

"We estimate the economic impact of 14,000 visitors to the park each year at about \$15 million annually," Johnson said. "This will allow us to give back to the community and local areas.⁴

The facility will be open for use Wednesday through Sunday and will provide firearms safety and marksmanship classes for a broad spectrum of participants, with an emphasis on youth. CMP will also host several major regional and national marksmanship competitions at the new facility annually.





For more information, visit www.thecmp.org.

Photos by Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

"People can't wait to get down here and shoot," said Don Heuman, range master for the soon-toopen Talladega Marksmanship Park.



Rabren General Contractors Inc. from Auburn has handled the construction of the marksmanship park. The earthmoving phase began in December 2013, and construction continued throughout last year. The facility is set to open in May.

Crimson Gypsy's Cottage: 'A little bit of everything'

By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

A Talladega couple is carrying on a long-standing tradition more than 60 years in the making.

"Townsend's Lamps & Gifts provided lighting and lamp restoration to this area for many years," said Angie Cooper, owner of The Crimson Gypsy's Cottage, located in the old Townsend's building on W. Coosa Street.

Angie and her husband, Roy, purchased the building last year. After repainting and performing cosmetic and lighting repair, The Crimson Gypsy's Cottage opened September 2014. "We are carrying on the

"We are carrying on the same tradition Townsend's had," she said. "We do lamp repair and restoration and can make anything into a lamp. We have antiques, jewelry, home décor, a bridal registry — it's a very eclectic shop with a little bit of everything."

Angie said the wide variety of merchandise and competitive pricing are a match for today's economy.

"Anyone can walk in off the street and purchase something from our store," she said.

Angie said the couple worked for the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, and were customers of Townsend's.

"I also went to school with Townsend's former owner, Terri Ferguson," she said.

Angie said repurposing items to create lamps is a

passion.

"We take old coffee pots, bottles, vases, jars, fans and make table and floor lamps," she said. "We turned a carousel horse into a lamp and buggy wheels into chandeliers."

Angie said salvage wood pieces turn into sconces, old doors become bed headboards and she incorporates old wrought iron with barn wood to make headboards or benches.

"I also do furniture painting," she said. "I do anything from traditional furniture repainting to whimsical and specialty painting."Angie said message boards are popular.

"I make seasonal wreaths and have done wreaths and door hangers for different collegiate sports and holidays," she said.

The Crimson Gypsy's Cottage carries a variety of miscellaneous Auburn and Alabama football items, jewelry, accessories, purses, pewter items and much more.

"We plan to sell gourmet coffee, soups, jams, dip mixes and mulling spices; however, it won't be served in the store," she said.

Angie said the couple takes special requests.

"The turnaround on repairs is fast," she said. "If we have the part in stock, then sometimes it is done in a day or two — sometimes less. If we have to order the part, it's about the same timeframe from when we actually receive the part."

Ângie said they refurbish old lampshades as well.

"One thing we do is take items from a loved one, such as old keys, buttons, broken jewelry, washers, etc., and make it into a memorial piece," she said.

The Crimson Gypsy's Cottage is open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday and Saturday. It is closed Sunday and Monday.

"We have discount days, too," Angie said. "On Tuesdays, military and veterans receive 10 percent off. On Wednesdays, senior citizens 55-plus receive a 10 percent discount, and on Thursdays first responders receive the same discount. We feel these people should receive thanks for their service to our communities and country."



Photos by Jerry Martin/The Daily Home

Jewelry, college football memorabilia, seasonal merchadise and more are available at the Crimson Gypsy's Cottage.



"We do lamp repair and restoration and can make anything into a lamp," said store owner Angie Cooper.



By ELSIE HODNETT Home staff writer

"We have homemade cakes most Sundays." Veronica said The Spot offers catering GREATER TALLADEGA AREA CHARDER OF COMMERCE Teaming up to Promote Economic Growth Since 1909

She always wanted a restaurant and her husband stumbled on the perfect location.

"My husband, Anthony, was doing the renovation construction for Best Inn in Talladega," said Veronica Emory, owner of The Spot Sports Bar Café & Grill. "He wanted to take his guys out for dinner one Friday night, and there wasn't anywhere to go."

Anthony told Veronica about the building adjacent to Best Inn by McDonalds.

"I always wanted the restaurant, and Anthony wanted a bar," she said. "I came down and liked the location. It's like everything else we do. We married well, and the restaurant and bar fits together just as well."

The Spot Sports Bar Café & Grill opened November 2014.

"I'm very proud of our food," Veronica said. "We have steaks, beef and chicken Phillies, wings with a nice selection of sauces, burgers, appetizers and more. It is good sports bar food for relaxing and watching games."

Veronica said there are four viewing areas — three 60-inch TVs and a 120-inch projector.

"Our Sunday dinner for the afterchurch crowd has been a big success and we are very proud of that," she said.

including the specialty-made cakes.

"We plan to offer a meat-and-three in the spring," she said. "We also plan to add new menu items, such as pasta, and branch out. I really believe I have some of the best cooks in Talladega."

Veronica said they will also host different events every month.

"For example, in February we had events for the Superbowl, Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras," she said. "The events will change each month."

Veronica said the community has been very welcoming.

"We have had good word-of-mouth referrals," she said. "I'm truly grateful for the show of support."

Veronica said The Spot can accommodate close to 100 people plus deck seating.

"We have a nice deck outside which we plan to expand in the spring," she said. "We also have a pool table room with video games and a karaoke machine. We don't have a karaoke night yet, but it's there for anyone to use. We have TouchTunes, which plays music from the 1950s to today. And you can book parties here as well."

The Spot Sports Bar Café & Grill is open 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday and 11 a.m. until Friday and Saturday.



Shane Dunaway/The Daily Home The menu at The Spot includes steaks, Philly sandwiches, wings, burgers and a full selection of appetizers.



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