

# UPDATE 2019

*Updating you on what is going on in  
and around your area in the last year.*

## GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY



## HEALTH & EDUCATION

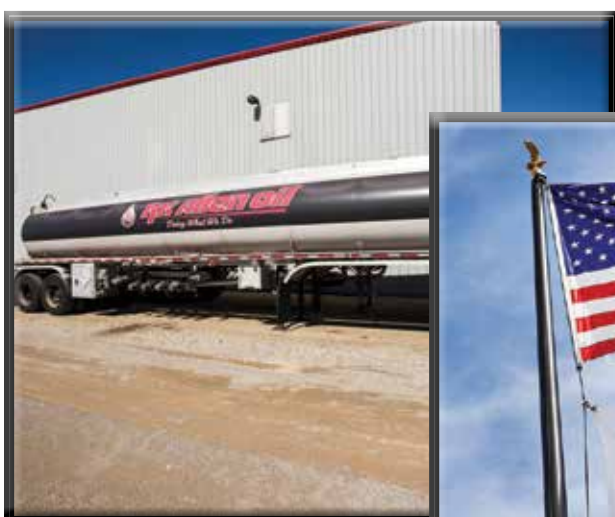
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Talladega, Lincoln, Munford,  
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# COMMERCE







*A  
Salute  
to*

# GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY





# City of Talladega: ‘There is building, growth and renewal’

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**  
Home staff writer

Talladega City Manager Beth Cheeks says she has never seen the city “more energized and alive” during the more than 20 years she’s lived here.

“There is construction down Battle Street, there is construction on the Talladega College campus, there is construction on the Historic Courthouse Square. There is building, there is growth, and there is renewal. The downtown Square has had so much happening lately that events are overlapping and we are looking for more entertainment space and more parking. It can be frustrating, but it is also wonderful.”

Cheeks is optimistic about the city’s immediate future as well. “The city is about to launch into a \$1.2 million paving project, which will bring on more construction, more frustration and more renewal. Currently the city is in the middle of three bridge replacement projects at West St., Coosa St. and Isbell Circle and we are preparing for the paving of the state routes that go through town. It is going to be a busy summer,” she said.

In many ways, 2018 was a year of transitions in Talladega, with new leadership of the city, school board and at crucial private institutions, including Citizens Baptist Medical Center.

Cheeks was appointed permanent city manager in August, after having previously served in an interim capacity. Her appointment came at the end of a contentious period for city government, and after being named interim manager, she said her intention was to “do my very best to always accentuate the positive and fairly deal with the negative.”

Shortly after her appointment as permanent manager, the city was able to reopen the Spring Street Monument, which had been inaccessible to the public for more than a year. The renovation project cost the city about \$200,000, but prior to renovation the structure had been deemed unsafe. After the passage of a state law ostensibly protecting state monuments, the monument would have had to have been renovated rather than altered.

“I am proud of the successes in 2018, in the public sector and in our community. There are new restaurants and businesses, there is renovation of historic buildings, festivals, parades, sports leagues for the kids, a continued increase in attendance and activities at the Ritz Theatre, the Civilian Marksmanship Park (CMP) and TopTrails. Christmas on the Square, despite less than ideal weather in 2018, still brought in visitors, actually had dancing in the streets, and pulled the community together.”

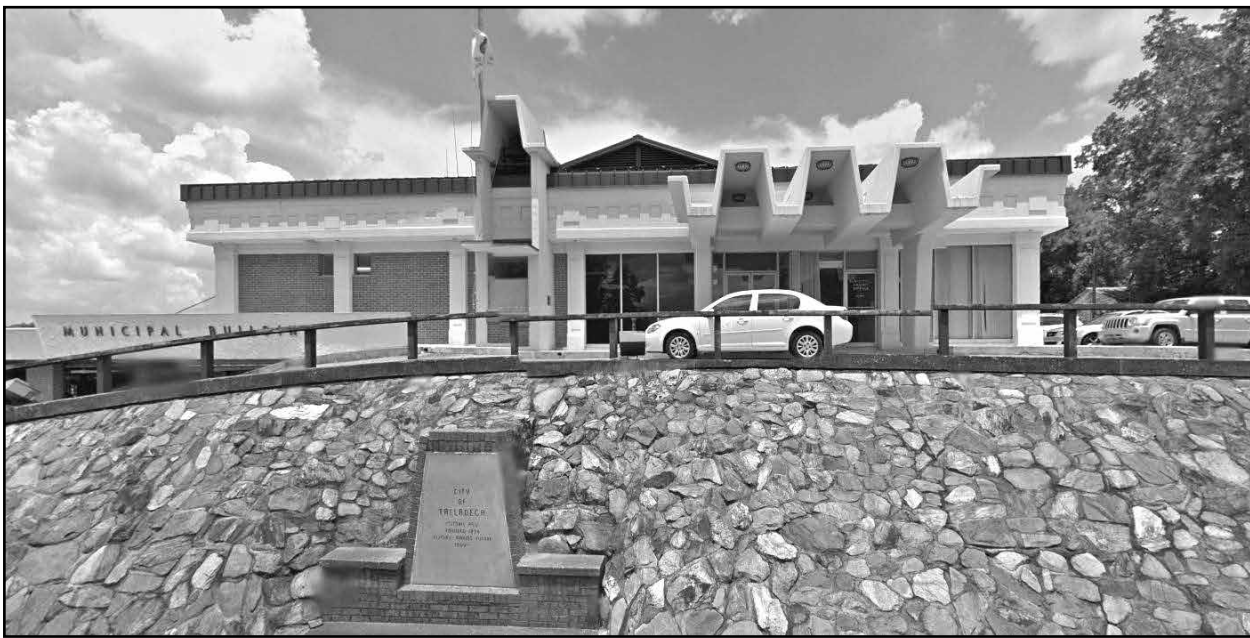
The cold and drizzly weather and the difficulty of rescheduling might have jeopardized the success of Christmas on the Square, but the event remained a big draw for the area and will be back for the fourth time next year. Several events had to be moved indoors, but apparently attendees and vendors alike were happy with the outcome.

“There has been the return of an old industrial friend, Georgia Pacific, providing over 100 jobs,” Cheeks said. “There has been steady employment and investment from long time businesses such as Elbit Systems, Masterbrand and Talladega Pattern & Aluminum, just to name a few.”

Georgia-Pacific, which previously operated a plant in Talladega, had been shuttered for several years. In 2017, the company announced a complete, \$100 million overhaul, resulting in essentially a new 300,000 square foot facility employing more than 120 people. Gov. Kay Ivey sawed a 2x4 in half (rather than cut a ribbon) at the site in November.

“I am (also) proud of our law enforcement officers that, despite attention grabbing headlines, have managed to reduce violent crime in the city of Talladega almost 30 percent over last year,” Cheeks said. “I am proud of our firefighters who battle difficult situations to rescue and keep the citizens safe.

“Talladega is changing at every turn, but there will always be that piece of history grounded in the fundamental essence of community, that continues to make it such a special place to raise children, to grow old, to work, to play and to enjoy life. Progress brings on growing pains and despite the temporary inconveniences, I am looking forward to what 2019 will bring our way.”



**2018 was a year of transition and new leadership for the city of Talladega. It was also a year marked by new and continued successes.**



**Georgia-Pacific’s Talladega lumber plant donated \$10,000 to the city for the popular Christmas on the Square event. From left are Kim Gaddy and Kelsie Gallahar, assistants to the city manager; Katie Kwilos of Georgia-Pacific, City Manager Beth Cheeks and Georgia-Pacific’s John Hornsby, Cheryl Alexander and Ken Haynes.**



**During 2018, Jason Peters was appointed to the TOP Trails board of directors, and Andy McWilliams was appointed to the Talladega Municipal Airport Board. They are shown with Mayor Jerry Cooper, front center, and, from left in back, council members Jarvis Elston, David Street and Dr. Horace Patterson, City Manager Beth Cheeks and councilmembers Gerald Cooper and Ricky Simpson.**



**Despite rainy weather, the third annual Christmas on the Square was deemed a success by Talladega city officials. At left, local children enjoyed the Santa’s Workshop area, while Hilda Fannin enjoys an encounter with The Grinch above. Plans are already underway for the 2019 event.**



# New officials, new projects for Talladega County

**By CHRIS NORWOOD**  
Home staff writer

It was a busy 2018 for Talladega's county government, with several new faces in leadership positions, ongoing projects and new partnerships.

County Commissioners Tony Haynes and Mally Limbaugh were re-elected last year, as was Sheriff Jimmy Kilgore. Probate Judge Billy Atkinson was barred from seeking re-election by state law because of his age; he was succeeded, after a hard-fought contest, by Randy Jinks, the first Republican to be elected to the office in modern history.

Circuit Judges Julian King and Bo Hollingsworth also announced their retirement last year, and were succeeded by Chad Woodruff and Will Hollingsworth (Bo's son), who were both elected without opposition.

County administrator Pat Lyles pointed out that the county had "implemented the use of electronic poll books during elections for all precincts," during the last election cycle, and that other technological updates had also been made over the course of the past year.

"We rolled out a fresh, new county website ([www.talladegacountyal.org](http://www.talladegacountyal.org)) (and we made) major improvements to the public safety radio sys-

tem, resulting in a more economically sustainable system (and) with a large area of interoperability between public safety agencies," Lyle said.

There was plenty of economic good news as well during the past year, she continued.

The county "finished fiscal 2018 with over three months of operating funds available. Because the majority of the county's revenue is collected during just a few months, a stable reserve allows the county maintain steady cash flows without having to borrow operating funds during the months that ad valorem tax revenue is not collected," she explained.

The local economy showed continued signs of improvement, with an overall 3-percent increase in revenue.

Lyle also said the county's bond rating was increased by Moody's from A1 to Aa3 on Jan. 22, 2018.

The commission "approved a \$27,914,400 budget for fiscal 2019 that does not include any reductions in service," she continued. "Note that the general fund budget is \$14 million and the highway department is \$5.2 million, with the remainder earmarked legislation or reserved to repay debt," according to Lyle.

County government also entered into some major partnerships.

The commission

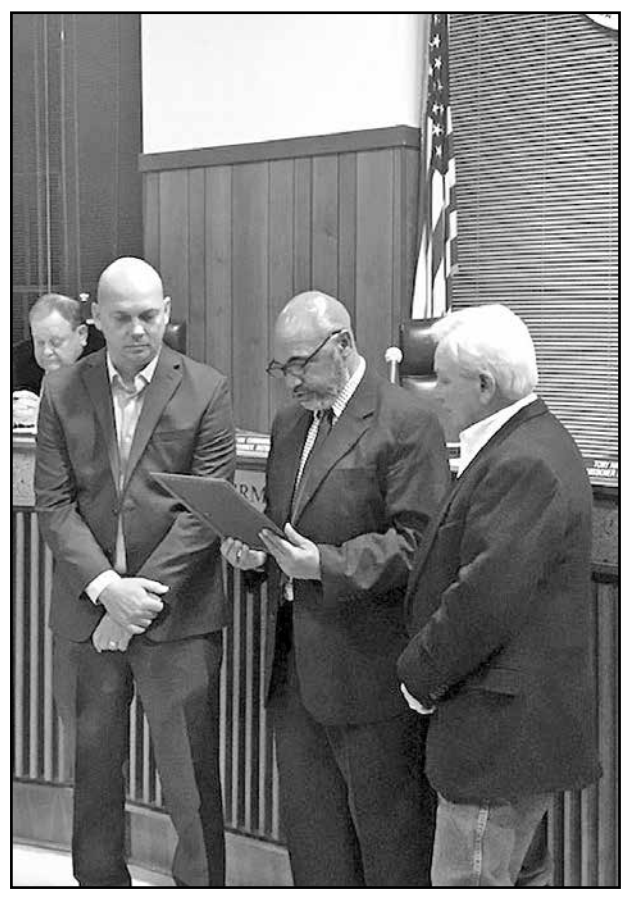


**In late 2018, the Talladega County Commission approved the Lower Bon Air Road-U.S. Highway 280 Industrial Access Project (above), which will involve resurfacing and adding turn and acceleration lanes. At right, commissioners recognize entrepreneur Kevin Smith for his work to renovate properties around the Talladega Court-house Square.**

"partnered with the city of Lincoln for improvements to McCaig Road and the intersection at County Road 207 as part of an economic development project in Lincoln's Industrial Park," she said. The Talladega County Economic Development Authority built a speculative building on the property that has already been occupied (by Lohr Industries), and construc-

tion on a second building is getting under way.

In the coming year, the commission has already voted to go ahead with a partnership that will help train six Talladega County Sheriff's Deputies as school resource officers. In January 2019, the commission voted to approve the training, with the cost being reimbursed by the Talladega County School System.




## We must be doing something right!

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# TALLADEGA COUNTY

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# City of Lincoln thankful for past accomplishments, looks to future

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Special to The Daily Home

Carroll “Lew” Watson, Lincoln’s mayor for more than 30 years, is appreciative for more than only a long tenure: he is glad to have had the opportunity to help create a positive environment for the city’s residents.

The past year, 2018, Watson oversaw many positive developments.

The city purchased land for a boat launch on Choccolocco Creek, which is to be developed as a primitive site this year.

During the year, Lincoln purchased land for a fishing tournament site on Logan Martin Lake. City officials expect it to be a driving force to bring in more business.

The city completed a master plan for a comprehensive park site on Stemley Road that will be built in phases. The site, when completed, will contain soccer fields, a tennis court, a playground, a senior park, walking trails, a recreational building

and more. Lincoln has applied for a grant that is expected to be approved later this year.

The city added bathrooms to the Blue Eye Creek fishing trail and added new water lines to provide improved service to the school. It approved a police officer for security at schools and made plans for upgrades at Moseley Park, which are to include lights and a walking track.

The city made plans for a new community park on Rushing Springs Road and upgraded part of the computer system. It sold the spec building on McCaig Road, and completed the removal of depilated homes in the city under a grant program.

Not one to rest on past accomplishments, Watson and other city leaders are looking to see additional ones in 2019.

There will be more upgrades to Moseley Park, construction of a community park on the Rushing Springs Road, additional improvements to the water system and

lines, and adding a new well.

There will be, later in the year, construction of a fishing tournament site on Logan Martin Lake. Permits are being pro-

cessed now.

Residents will see construction of a new spec building on McCaig Road, more retail and industrial opportunities, and landscaping at some


of the city intersections, along with improvements to Magnolia Street. A new traffic signal is planned for Magnolia Street and Alabama 77 intersection, and new home construc-

tion will be encouraged.

“Providing service is what this job is all about,” said Watson, “and providing a great environment for families. It’s all about service to the public.”



Lincoln city officials participated in a ground-breaking ceremony in late 2018 for a new 100,000-square foot speculative building on McCaig Road, next to the spec building occupied by Lohr North America.




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# 2018 a good year for the city of Riverside

By **DAVID ATCHISON**  
Home staff writer

Mayor Rusty Jessup said the city of Riverside saw significant growth in 2018, and he expects that growth to continue in 2019.

"We are seeing a lot of residential growth," he said. "We are permitting for a lot of new construction, and we look at that to continue in 2019."

Jessup said city officials expect the numbers in 2019 to be even better than last year with more people securing permits for home construction and new residents tapping onto the city's water system.

He said a new phase of construction for the Highlands subdivision, off KOA Road, is moving forward.

"I had lunch today with a builder who is starting a new construction phase in the Highlands," he said.

Jessup said Riverside construction projects are not limited to the High-

lands, but home construction is springing up in other parts of the city.

"The economy is rocking," he said. "We have a lot of investors in Riverside, and they are putting their money to work."

He said Riverside has experienced growth, and he expects to see an increase in population in the 2020 census.

"In the last census in 2010, we had about 2,100 people," Jessup said. "I think we're going be closer to 3,000 in the next 2020 census."

He explained that Riverside is a little different because for many residents, they have secondary homes in Riverside because of the lake.

"We may have 3,000 folks here during the week, but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday we may have 4,000 people here because of the river," Jessup said.

The mayor said he was encouraged to see additional sales tax revenue from the state that is pro-

vided to municipalities for online sales.

"We don't have a big sales tax base here," Jessup said, adding that the additional tax revenue from online sales helps Riverside's coffers. "A lot of people in Riverside shop online."

He said there are just not a lot of businesses in Riverside, but online businesses send the taxes they collect to Montgomery, and Montgomery distributes it to the cities.

"We're happy about that," he said. "It's not like big money."

But the added tax revenue helps.

"We've never had a lot of brick and mortar," Jessup said. "It's the way the world is headed. Thankfully our legislators are cutting deals to collect the sales tax revenue from the big internet outfits."

Jessup said the city does face challenges. Two big challenges are the lack of sewer for commercial development and the increase in traffic, making

U.S. 78 more dangerous to enter and exit.

He pointed to some intersections needing traffic signals because of the increase in traffic, like KOA Road.

"We need a signal light there now," Jessup said. "It's right on a hilltop, so visibility is low. There is a daycare right there on the corner."

He said lights are also needed on the interstate.

"Particularly during the wintertime when it gets dark early," Jessup said. "Eventually it will happen with all the growth. It's not just Riverside, it's Calhoun and Talladega counties."

Jessup said the city's number one goal for 2019 is improving the children's playground, which is in need of a facelift and new equipment.

"That's where our focus is going to be," he said. "We are also going to do some paving projects in 2019."

He commended the Riverside Beautification

Association for their help.


Jessup said there is a plan to make part of the city's 6-acre park into a bird sanctuary. He said there are plans to plant native bushes and shrubs to attract birds.

Other projects they would like to tackle in 2019 include improving

the walking trail inside the park and paving the parking lot at Riverside Landing, the city's marina.

He said the self-serving, credit card only, gas pumps provide non-ethanol gas, which is hard to find.


Both boats and cars can gas up at the marina.




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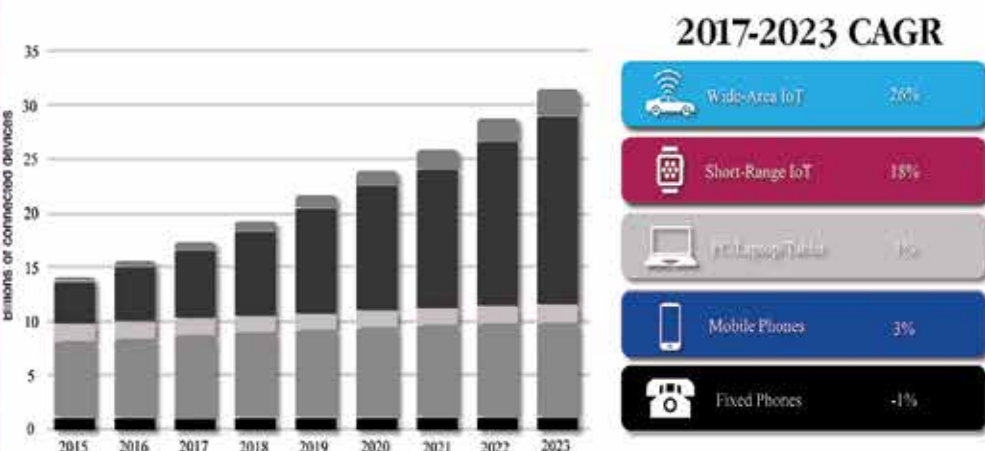
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Source: ONF and Ericsson Mobility Report, November 2017

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# Allied Mineral Products to expand in Pell City

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Special to The Daily Home

Ohio-based Allied Mineral Products Inc., feels “right at home in Alabama,” according to Parker Morris, plant engineer in Pell City, where 40 local employees work. About 20 more are to begin working in Pell City by the end of 2019 because, by then, the Anniston production plant will have relocated to St. Clair County. Company officials are working hard to implement the changes.

“Employees in Anniston and Pell City have worked hard during their transition in becoming part of the Allied family,” said Morris, “and we have all been rewarded with increased sales and the growth of our business overall.”

In addition to the merger of employees, the Pell City plant will expand to include a new 170,000-square-foot facility located across the street from the current one on Truss Ferry Road. Equipment and some of the operations from the Anniston plant will also go to Pell City. Allied will be investing in new equipment for both facilities in Pell City.

“This kind of expansion does not happen in a vacuum, and we have welcomed this as a chance to build productive relationships with community leaders. We have been impressed with the level of support from Pell City and St. Clair County officials,” said Morris.

Local city officials are applauding the company.

“We are keenly aware that Allied Mineral Products could have chosen several other directions for their facility and expansion needs,” Pell City Mayor Bill Pruitt said. “The fact that they chose, not only to maintain the existing facility here, but also to expand, speaks volumes about the Pell City community and the potential it holds.”

Riverside’s mayor said Allied helps his city in several ways.

“A lot of Riverside residents work there and many others go through Riverside to get to Allied,” said Rusty Jessup. “They are good cooperate citizens, good to Riverside and have helped us every time we asked them. They bring commerce and jobs to our area. We were ecstatic when they decided to stay.”

Allied began in 1961 and developed, produced, and sold monolithic products for use mainly in foundries. These products are made of minerals, or a blend of minerals and materials, that hold up under a variety of environmental situations, such as the extreme heat that takes place during manufacturing processes. Some of these products can be described as coatings, mortars, concretes, and other clay products.

In 1976, with the retirement of one of its founders, Allied became an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) company meaning each employee is eligible to become a member of the plan and in doing so, becoming an employee-owner.

During the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Allied, which also has plants in Texas, Washington and Ohio, expanded into the steel market and into the pre-cast shape products industry, the latter of which is the making of molds used to cast refractory shapes. During



the 1970s, the company began selling its products to foundries in Canada, Mexico, and South America. By the 1980s, the company also began selling products in Japan and Europe through licensees. Also, Allied developed its own sales force and expanded its global production companies in Europe, China, South Africa, India, and, in 2018, in Russia.

“It is important to note that our global operations produce and sell for their own region,” Morris said. “and not for import into the U.S. Our product is extremely heavy, so it makes sense to produce in the regions of our customers to reduce freight costs.”

The Pell City plant is convenient for this practice and places the company close to customers in the Southeast. Further, the U.S. operations export products to other countries.

In all, Allied has approximately 1,000 employees throughout the world, about 500 that work in the U.S. In 2019, the local plants will experience many changes.

“Our new plant will allow our Alabama employees the opportunity to become one team in one location, and allow us to more efficiently concentrate our resources to better serve our customers,” Morris said. “The future is bright for Allied and our employees in Alabama.”

**Photos by Tucker Webb/  
The Daily Home**

**The expansion of Allied Mineral Products’ operation in St. Clair County is of particular benefit to the municipalities of Pell City and Riverside. The Ohio-based company has been described locally as “a good corporate citizen,” and plant engineer Parker Morris, above, said company officials appreciate the support it has received from local communities.**





# HMA in Lincoln begins production of new SUV

Staff Report



More than 1,500 Honda Manufacturing of Alabama (HMA) associates began production in December of the 2019 Passport SUV.

Produced exclusively at the HMA facility in Lincoln, the Passport was expected to go on sale early this year. Company officials have said it will play “an important role” in Honda’s award-winning SUV lineup, “providing a unique combination of on-road driving refinement and off-road adventure capability.”

The Passport was revealed in November at the Los Angeles Auto Show and will fit into the manufacturer’s SUV lineup between the compact CR-V and the three-row Pilot.

“We celebrate the dedication of our Honda team in Alabama in delivering this new adventure-ready sport utility vehicle to our customers,” said HMA vice president Mike Oatridge. “I congratulate all of our associates for the commitment to our customers as we begin production of the new Passport, which is Honda’s most rugged light truck with features that deliver more of what today’s adventurous customers want and need.”

The Passport is hitting the market at just the right time, according to Lara Harrington, chief engineer and Passport development leader. “The positive response to Passport really signals Honda is poised to compete in this segment. The Honda Passport is designed to bring a more personal, rugged and off-road SUV to our award-winning light truck lineup, and we are all excited to see where this new product will take us.”

Passport is based on Honda’s Global Light Truck platform and shares much of its underlying structure with the Pilot and Ridgeline, including a highly rigid unibody construction.

Honda’s existing SUV lineup includes the Pilot, CR-V and HR-V and has been recognized as the Best SUV Brand by U.S. News & World Report for

four consecutive years. The Ridgeline, also produced at Lincoln, was selected as the 2017 North American Truck of the Year. The Pilot and the Odyssey minivan are also produced at the local facility.

Also during 2018, Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield joined Honda associates in celebrating the start of operations at the new \$85 million logistics buildings. The expansion added nearly 400,000 square feet to the existing 4.2 million square feet in Lincoln.

“Our new logistics operation represents an \$85 million investment in our operations as well as continued investment in our associates, our products and in customer satisfaction,” Oatridge said. “This new space will help us better streamline our logistics operations, which will result in improved parts delivery, improved quality and improved organization across our production lines.”

The new logistics facilities are part of a multi-phased project dedicated to the enhancement and revitalization of Honda operations in Alabama. Last year, HMA announced an additional \$54.8 million investment to improve weld operations at Line 2. The new expansion, which will add more than 50,000 square feet, is expected to be completed in early 2021.

Employing more than 4,500 associates, HMA has the capacity to produce more than 340,000 vehicles and V6 engines annually. Since the start of production in November of 2001, the facility has built more than 4.7 million vehicles and engines. HMA’s capital investment in Lincoln totals more than \$2.6 billion at the 4.6 million-square-foot facility.

Honda has produced automobiles in America for more than 36 years and currently operates 19 major manufacturing facilities – including HMA – in North America. In 2017, more than 90 percent of all Honda brand vehicles sold in the United States were made in North America using domestic and globally sourced parts.



**SHERIFF**  
**JIMMY KILGORE**  
**SAYS:**  
**LOCK YOUR**  
**CARS!**

**TALLADEGA COUNTY SHERIFF JIMMY KILGORE** would like to remind all residents of Talladega County to lock up your valuables, and do not leave them in plain sight. If you must leave valuables in the car, hide them, or lock them in the trunk if possible. If you are going somewhere such as the gym or the park and know you will not need your purse, hide it before you get there.

Talladega County Sheriff’s Office is tracking a noticeable increase in car break-ins, where criminals walk around neighborhoods and check for unlocked vehicles. Many times victims will not even know they have been robbed until later, because since the doors were unlocked, there is not any noticeable damage to the car.

Sometimes the thief is just taking spare change; however, many times firearms are stolen, and end up in the wrong hands. Remove valuables from your vehicles, and lock your doors! When shopping, park in well-lit areas. **THINK SAFETY!**

**Sheriff Kilgore and the**  
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# New year brings long-awaited first-class entertainment complex to Pell City

By **DAVID ATCHISON**  
Home staff writer

Pell City continues to prosper and grow, and 2019 started out with a bang for the city with the opening of the new state-of-the-art Premiere Cinertainment, which offers

tial development agreement with Premiere Cinemas was signed in 2016, but prior to that, the city had attempted for many years to attract a theater.

“We have formed an excellent partnership with Premiere over the past three years, and their addition to

works for several years coming to fruition.

He said the city is expected to unveil the renovated Civic Center.

“This renovation includes a complete overhaul of the interior of the facility, including the addition of a greatly expanded fitness area, new gymnasium floor, a game room, and other amenities that will bring the community a recreational facility that will serve all segments of the population,” Muenger said. “Outside the building a new tennis facility is being constructed, complete with a new restroom and pro shop building, and two new tennis courts, along with lighting upgrades on all existing courts.”

He said new parking facilities and a consolidated entryway into the civic center and Lakeside Park are also being constructed.

Muenger said the city and county will jointly initiate the demolition of the former hospital building on Dr. John Haynes Drive with the assistance of a \$200,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant. The property is prime commercial real-estate adjacent to Interstate 20.

“At the same time, the city and county have engaged a developer to market the nearly 20-acre property...,” Muenger said. “Clearing this property will not only remove the blighted structure but will clear the way for future redevelopment of an extremely attractive piece of interstate visible property.”

Pell City saw many expansions of existing industries during 2018, including Allied Mineral Products which is currently working on an \$11 million expansion project.

Also Eissmann Group Automotive North America completed a \$14.5 million expansion in 2018, which added an additional 200 jobs to its Pell City operations.

In addition, the St. Clair County Economic Development Council spearheaded efforts to complete a new pad-ready industrial site as part of the Pell City Industry Park, the new Cogswell Industrial Park.

The new 126-acre park offers room for industrial expansion, with 40 acres already developed and ready for the right industry.

Muenger said Pell City has also experienced significant population growth, estimated at a 7.9 percent increase since the 2010.

“During last fiscal year, more than 60 new homes were constructed in the city, and we expect that our residential growth will continue through 2019,” Muenger said. “There are a number of previously dormant subdivisions that are being constructed currently, with several additional developments in the planning state.”

He said the housing market throughout the region has been strong recently and the city is taking proactive steps to attract more residential development by reducing various development fees.

“I see housing capacity as a major issue for the city in the coming years, as our current stock of buildable lots is on track to be depleted within the next one to two years,” Muenger said. “It is essential that we continue to work to ensure that our housing stock is sufficient to meet the future needs of the city.”

He said the city’s recent projects are aimed at improving the quality of life for residents.

idents.

Many of the projects have been desired by residents for many years.

“They are becoming a reality through the strong shared vision of our mayor

and city council,” Muenger said. “Through these efforts, Pell City will continue to be the hub of commerce within our County and beyond.”



**Pell City’s much-anticipated entertainment complex opened to rave reviews.**

bowling, arcade games, a ropes course and movies.

“It is truly a first-class entertainment facility,” said Pell City Manager Brian Muenger.

Local residents who attended the opening of the new Cinertainment facility gave the five-star facility rave reviews.

Muenger said the ini-

the community will attract patrons from throughout a multi-county area to the city,” Muenger said “The city also expects the theater to serve as a catalyst for additional commercial development in the (U.S.) 231 North area.”

Muenger said 2019 is projected to be an exciting one for the city with many projects that have been in the



**Local officials and representatives of Eissmann Group cut the ribbon to signify completion of a \$14.5 million expansion at the company’s Pell City operation.**

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# 2019 looks bring for positive economic growth in Sylacauga

By **DENISE SINCLAIR**  
Home staff writer

The Marble City had positive economic growth in 2018 with a new retail shopping center opening and millions of dollars in road improvements made in the community.

Sylacauga officials see even more positive growth and changes in the downtown area in 2019.

Mayor Jim Heigl said 2018 saw completion of one of the biggest paving projects in the city's history.

The project had a cap of \$4 million set by the council. The last paving project the city had was in 2012 and it was just over \$1 million.

The list includes 20 streets and seven alternates for street paving. Total estimated cost of the 20 streets is \$3,587,848, with a total of \$286,767 for the alternate streets.

This massive paving project was completed in December. The five council members and mayor promised when elected to office in 2016 they would improve the city's streets, Heigl said. "That promise was kept and the project is finished. We intend to do smaller paving projects in the near future," he said.

who may be interested in coming into the city limits at no cost. This is going to continue well into 2019."

In December, the council annexed 15 pieces of property into the city.

Economic development was another positive for Sylacauga in 2018 as Blue Bell Creameries started a \$7.5 million expansion in April. The expansion will add 18 new employees once completed in 2019.

The expansion includes a new two-story facility at the corner of North Avenue and Fourth Street. It will house extra cold storage warehouse and ingredients for ice cream products.

The project also includes an extra working area and a truck maintenance area across the street.

Currently the plant employs more than 240.

A second industry also announced its plant expansion in June. Koch Agronomic Services broke ground on its expansion. The industry produces enhanced efficiency fertilizers for the turf and ornamental, specialty crop and consumer markets.

The industry plans on additional employees once the expansion is completed.

In addition a new fertilizer coating facility opened in the city, also in June.

shopping center. Two other stand-alone businesses are scheduled to open in 2019.

On Ft. Williams Street, Dirt Cheap opened in the newly renovated former Kmart building in the summer of 2018. Dirt Cheap is the largest buyer of insurance claims in the United States, while adding manufacturer and retailer buybacks, closeouts, bankruptcies, overstocks, liquidations, customer returns and out-of-season goods.

These new retail businesses have hired several hundred employees from the area.

Heigl said 2019 will bring improvements to several blocks downtown thanks to grant monies. Bids are scheduled to be open in late January on work set to begin on Third and Fourth Streets.

"We are also working on improving our infrastructure, our city buildings and roofs to several of our buildings that include the library," the mayor said.

Heigl said he expects 2019 to be another great year for the city. "Our council is making wise decisions about Sylacauga," he said. "We are trying to expand housing and population for our community."



The annual Marble Festival once again brought a host of artists and visitors to Sylacauga.



2018 brought several new retailers to the Marble City, including T.J. Maxx, Hobby Lobby and Hibbett Sports.



Work begin in April of 2018 on a \$7.5 million expansion at Blue Bell Creameries.



Mayor Jim Heigl congratulates Dan Cook, project manager with Dunn Construction, upon the completion of Sylacauga's multimillion-dollar paving project.



Employees of Koch Agronomic Services celebrated the Sylacauga plant's expansion with a groundbreaking ceremony in summer of 2018.

The mayor said the city in 2018 and continuing into 2019 will allow those interested into annexing into the city to do so at no cost without charging an application fee.

The property, he said, must be contiguous to the city limits.

"This is an effort by the city administration to grow the city limits of Sylacauga and increase our population in the future especially as the 2020 census nears. The city is already preparing for the census," Heigl said. "We are reaching out with this annexation effort and seeking property owners

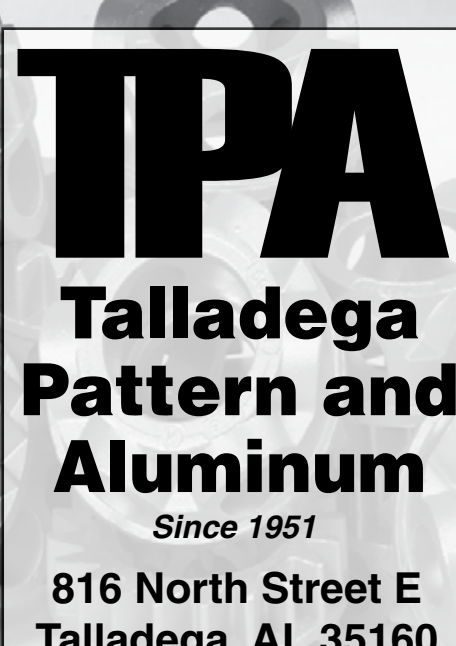
Pursell Agri-Tech launched its new innovative facility with its industrial partner and shareholder Stamicarbon B.V.

The city saw a retail boom especially on U.S. 280 with the opening of the new shopping center, Marble City Square.

Hutton, a Chattanooga, Tennessee, company that developed the 33-acre development.

Opening in 2018 in the shopping center were T.J. Maxx, Hobby Lobby, PetSense, Rack Room Shoes, and Hibbett Sports.

Chick-Fil-A opened in a stand-alone site at the



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# Childersburg officials pleased by progress, encouraged about the future



**By DENISE SINCLAIR**  
**Home staff writer**

Mayor Ken ‘Yank’ Wesson is encouraged for the future of his city and feels like a lot of progress was made in 2018. He expects even more progress to be made in 2019, especially when it comes to the number of services the city provides for its residents.

the mayor said, and residents in a more than two-to-one vote passed alcohol sales for Sunday in a June election.

Wesson and the council worked throughout 2018 in an effort to recruit a grocery store to the city to replace Winn-Dixie.

The city continues to work to bring a new grocer to the old Winn-Dixie

lice academy. “These five officers completed training and are now on the streets of Childersburg protecting our city,” Wesson said.

City employees got raises from the city council in the 2019 budget. Step raises were okayed for police and senior center employees, while city employees who work in departments not specified for step raises



**Members of the Childersburg Fire Department display the Golden Axe Award firefighters received for their support of the Muscular Dystrophy Association.**



**During 2018, work continued on the U.S. Highway 280 bridge replacement project.**

Wesson said the city welcomed six new businesses to town in 2018 and purchased much needed equipment for several departments, while the public overwhelming said ‘yes’ to Sunday alcohol sales.

“We are constantly recruiting new businesses to our town and we work to help them get established here,” he said.

One of the moves made in 2018 should help to attract more restaurants and other businesses to Childersburg. The city held

Building on Highway 280, and recruitment is on-going, the mayor said

“Negotiating property acquisition for a new grocery store has been complicated with three entities involved: the grocery company, the out-of-state property owners and Winn-Dixie, which still has months left on their lease,” he said.

He indicated he is pursuing every possibility to get a grocery store in the Winn-Dixie location. “It is just taking time.”

Two of the six busi-

received pay increases of 2.5 percent.

In the December meeting of the council, it was announced a new automotive supplier will soon be calling Childersburg home.

Material Systems Inc., an automotive supplier from Bessemer, completed the purchase of the former Marathon Building on Hollywood Boulevard and will relocate to the city.

The company will employ 36 people, and many of its current employees will be relocating with the



**Childersburg hosted its first Pumpkin Festival in October, organized by the city’s parks and recreation department. Plans call for the festival to become an annual event.**

a special Sunday alcohol sales referendum. Cities around Childersburg had already passed Sunday alcohol sales in recent years, including Sylacauga, Oak Grove, Harpersville, Lincoln and Pell City.

Wesson said the election was all about helping Childersburg merchants. The city council and mayor had a group of merchants approach them about holding an election for Sunday alcohol sales, saying they were at a disadvantage because cities on both sides of Childersburg had Sunday sales.

The merchants wanted to level the playing field,

nesses that opened in 2018 are Cuppa Grace, formerly Heavenly Grounds, in downtown, while Jack’s Family Restaurant opened on U.S. 280 in 2018.

Wesson said O’Reilly’s Auto Parts is set to open soon in the city.

Also in 2018, the city purchased a new ambulance, thanks to a \$194,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security with a 5-percent local match.

Another ambulance, thanks also to a grant, will be delivered to Childersburg soon.

The police department hired five new officers, and the city sent them to the po-

company to the city. The company hopes to begin operation by the end of March.

Major work continued on the bridge replacement on U.S. 280 over the Norfolk Southern railroad in the city.

The bridge is being replaced at intersection of U.S. 280 and Alabama Highway 76.

A portion of the Childersburg-Fayetteville Highway has been closed in order to raise the elevation of the road to meet the new higher bridge level. That portion will remain closed for about six weeks, Wesson said.



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# State officials name General Fund budget, bipartisan cooperation among achievements during 2018 legislative session

**Staff report**  
**Photos submitted by**  
**Alabama Governor's Office**

Talladega and St. Clair counties will benefit from a number of accomplishments made by the Alabama Legislature during 2018, according to two members of the local legislative delegation.

“The Legislature approved a \$2 billion balanced General Fund budget that includes no new taxes,” said Sen. Jim McClendon of Alabama’s 11th

District, which includes portions of Talladega and St. Clair. The Daily Home invited each local state senator and representative to identify legislative accomplishments they considered to be significant during the past session; only McClendon and Rep. Jim Hill, both Republicans, responded.

• A 2.5-percent pay raise for teachers and education support personnel, at a cost of \$102 million to taxpayers. “This is in addition to a 4-percent pay raise in 2016 for teachers,” McClendon said.

• The state budget includes a \$18.5 million increase for pre-kindergarten programs, which will help fund as many as 120 new pre-k classrooms.

• The Legislature moved to establish the Alabama School for Cyber Technology and Engineering, which will operate as a public magnet school for students in grades 7-12.

• “Public safety is a priority,” McClendon said. “That’s why I supported a \$3 million increase for the Alabama Law Enforcement Association (ALEA) to put

30 additional state troopers on the road.”

• The Department of Corrections was given a \$55 million increase to hire additional mental and medical health staffers.

The budget also included funding for The Arc of St. Clair County, according to Hill, who represents District 50. The Arc advocates and supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“It does such a good work for a segment of the population that doesn’t get the attention it should. I’m

glad to see mental health that the state’s General being funded properly.” Fund budget is one of the

Gov. Kay Ivey agreed past year’s significant ac-

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There is no secret to the success behind Royal Sausage Co. in Pell City, AL. As CEO Curtis Capps says, it comes down to the old adage that the customer is always right.

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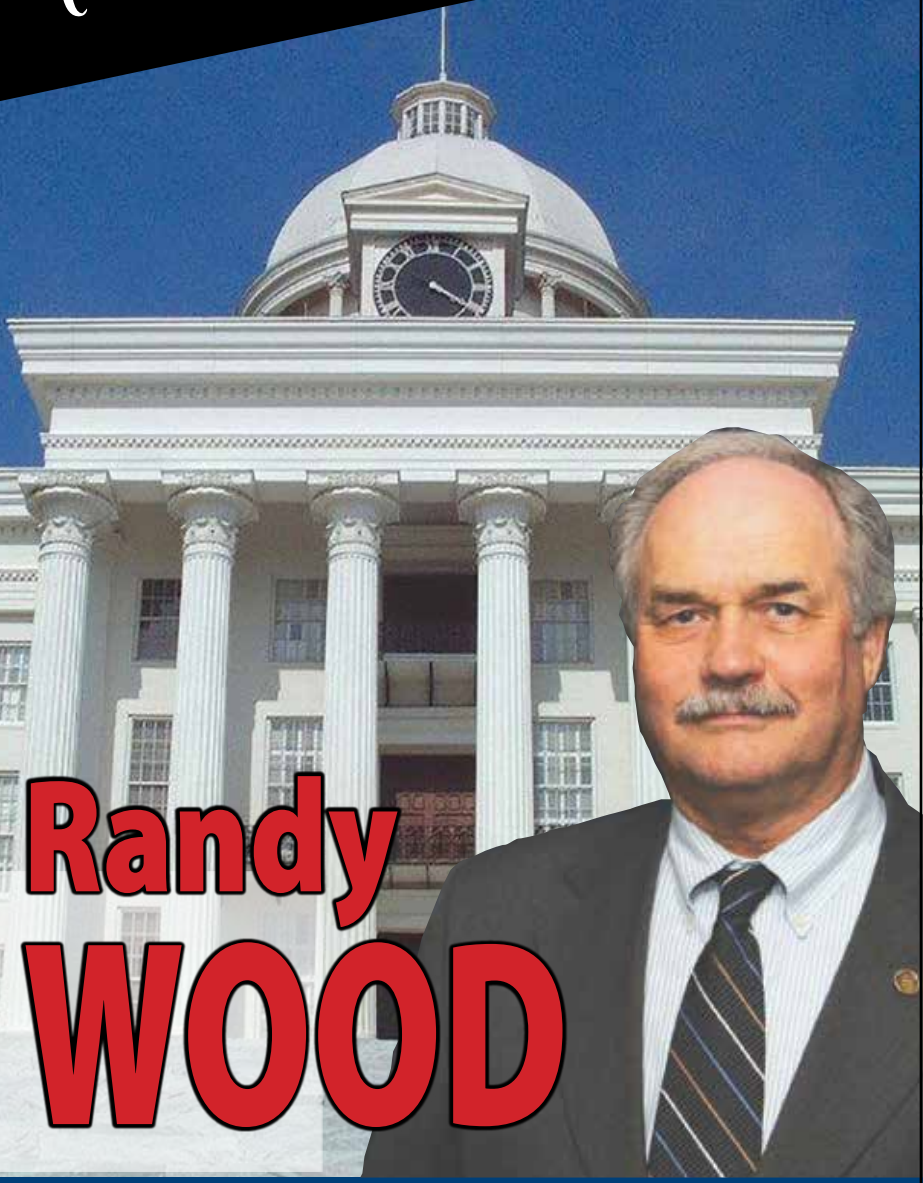
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Sen. Del Marsh looks on as Gov. Kay Ivey signs Senate Bill 76, which raised the minimum income level for state tax exemptions. Marsh, whose district includes Talladega County, sponsored the measure, which he said provides the first state tax cut 2006.

# Thank You



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Above, Rep. Craig Lipscomb is greeted by Gov. Ivey during a reception for new legislators. Lipscomb represents House District 30, which includes portions of St. Clair and Etowah counties. At right, Sen. Jim McClendon participates in a bill-signing ceremony with the governor at the state Capitol.



complishments, citing it as evidence of ongoing economic growth in Alabama. "Our budgets are strong and our financial health is good," she said. "Today, we budget with a more balanced model that has improved the way we fund state government. More Alabamians are working today than ever before, and our economy continues to grow and prosper. We can all be grateful for this progress."

Hill also cited as an accomplishment a \$1 million grant from the Alabama Land Trust for a Forever Wild nature preserve in northeast St. Clair County, near Springville. "I am really happy about that," the representative said. "I'm a fan of Forever Wild, and it's good to set aside real estate for preservation."

Hill was the sponsor of House Bill 66, which was signed by the governor in March and offers cities with populations between 12,000 and 25,000 the option to allow their mayors to continue participating in council votes or to remove the mayor's authority to vote (which had previously been required once a city reached a population of 12,000).

The measure, Hill said, will benefit local municipalities such as Moody and others throughout the state after publication of the 2020 census data.

Gov. Ivey said that another significant accomplishment of the past year has been "establishing a strong bipartisan relationship" within the Alabama Legislature, and she expressed hopes that the Legislature will address infrastructure during the coming session.

"If we want to compete in a 21st century

global economy, we must improve our infrastructure by investing more in our roads, our bridges and our ports. Improving our infrastructure...is an investment in economic development, public safety and local communities. It has been nearly three decades since we last made any changes to our current funding, and the challenge has grown with the passing of time. Now is the time to increase our in-

vestment."

According to Ivey, former Gov. Thomas Kilby called for improved infrastructure when he was inaugurated a century ago in 1919, as did former Gov. Lurleen Wallace upon her inauguration 50 years later in 1969.

"I am very hopeful that 50 or 100 years from now, governors will not have to include requests to improve our infrastructure," Gov. Ivey said.



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# 2018 marked by low unemployment, job development in St. Clair County

By **GARY HANNER**  
Home staff writer

St. Clair County experienced another incredible year filled with expansions and new investment into the community.

St. Clair County Economic Development Council Executive Director Don Smith said retail activity continues to be strong with growing retail sales and new investment in St. Clair County.

“Limited retail vacancy throughout the county has encouraged new construction and the rapid backfilling of shopping centers,” Smith said. “The long-expected closure of K-Mart and Winn-Dixie in Pell City allowed for the announcement of new tenants backfilling their store space within weeks. These new tenants are now generating more retail sales than the former retailers.”

St. Clair County Commission Chairman Paul Manning said they were sad to see the Winn-Dixie and K-Mart close.

“We had been working with the City of Pell City and the shopping center owner on new tenants moving into that center as soon as they announced they were closing their local store,” Manning said. “It is important to be proactive with so much changing in retail these days.”

County officials said Premiere Cinema’s new entertainment center, as well as McSweeney Automotive, recently opened their newest state-of-the-art facilities that are expected to draw visitors from the surrounding counties.

“The future of retail projects look positive as negotiations are currently taking place with additional retailers for the development of a new retail center as well as smaller fast food and retail stores throughout St. Clair County,” Smith said.

## Job creation

Smith said the strength of retail growth in St. Clair County is due to a number of factors but job creation is one of the strongest.

“Since October 2016, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama announced an additional \$150 million expansion to its \$2.6 billion facility adjacent to St. Clair County,” Smith said. “Roughly, 1,200 of the Honda’s 4,500 employees live in St. Clair County.”

Manning is proud of St. Clair County’s two larger employers as they both experienced expansions during 2018.

He said Unipres of Alabama announced a \$40 million expansion in Steele with the addition of 70 new employees to their location in the northern section of the county. This expansion will increase Unipres’ employment level to over 270 employees.

Also, Eissmann Automotive, in Pell City, is close to completing its \$17 million expansion that will add an additional 200 new employees to its current 600-employee payroll.

Smith said since 2016, there have been 14 new or expanding manufacturing companies in St. Clair County. The expansions resulted in 496 new jobs and \$106 million in new capital investment.

## Unemployment remains low

“The unemployment rate continues to remain well below the national and state average,” Smith said. “The December unemployment rate for St. Clair County from 2018, recently released, was 3.2 percent compared to the State of Alabama’s unemployment rate of 3.9 percent.”

Smith noted that St. Clair County has a diverse retail, manufacturing and employer base. Employment and investment has continued to grow in all sectors with the largest growth taking place in the automotive manufacturing and healthcare sector. A recent 2018 survey of existing industries revealed no employers expected to reduce employment in 2019.

“All of these factors have contributed to St. Clair County being ranked seventh in the Government and Economic Development Institute of Auburn University’s 2018 Alabama Economic Vitality Index,” Smith said. “It factors in population growth, unemployment, educational attainment and household income growth throughout all the counties in Alabama.”

Manning said the last few years have been incredible for St. Clair County.

“Because of our current prospect activity level and our community’s focus on workforce readiness, I believe we will continue to see economic growth and prosperity for years to come,” Manning said.

## Finances

Chief Financial Officer Donna Wood said the ending fund balance for the General Fund operating budget grew by one percent for FY2018.

“This is mainly due to ad valorem tax revenue increasing by two percent from the prior year FY2017, and sales tax revenue increasing by six percent from FY2017,” Wood said. “The new Simplified Sellers Use tax (from on-line sales) increased by 43 percent totaling \$350,755 for



**St. Clair County received a \$350,000 Community Development Block Grant during 2018, which commissioners used to help resolve a railroad crossing issue in Brompton. From left are State Sen. Jim McClendon, Governor Kay Ivey, Kenneth Boswell, director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; and county commission chairman Paul Manning.**

FY2018.”

Wood said FY2018 added a new tobacco tax revenue that began July 1, 2018, and for the short period of time, collections brought in \$125,887. Mortgage/deed tax revenue increased 12 percent for FY2018.

“Overall, the General Fund revenues grew one percent,” Wood said. “Capital outlay for FY2018 consisted of a new roof on the Ashville Administrative building totaling \$148,791.”

## Moving forward

Wood said that in FY2019, the General Fund revenues are projected to increase four percent. She said ad valorem and sales tax revenues are projected to increase steadily as FY2018 revenues did.

“The simplified sellers use tax revenue will probably exceed the amount projected of \$347,000,” Wood said. “The local county road fund will continue to provide financial support for the county engineer and road department to update the county’s infrastructure.”

Wood said the county’s latest audits (FY2016 and FY2017) continue to receive unmodified opinions by the Examiners of Publics Accounts which is the best rating a county can receive. FY2018 audit is on track to continue this tradition with the hard work and dedication of the staff.

“In FY2018, the county paid over \$1.7 million toward retiring principal debt,” Wood said. “The RRR Gas Tax Warrants will pay off in November 2019, and the county’s debt for roads will be paid off. The county continues to work toward the goal of ‘pay as you go’, and to be as debt free as possible.”

## Road Department

County Engineer Dan Dahlke said St. Clair County paved and/or did pavement preservation on about 50 miles of roadway in 2018.

“Road repairs will continue throughout the entire county as it is estimated that we have about 130 miles of roadway still in need,” Dahlke said. “Bridges are another area the county puts high priority on as work is being done for a bridge replacement in the Springville area and two bridge rehabilitation projects in the Moody area. The county continues to work with cities and ALDOT to address other traffic concerns around our growing county.”

## Final word

Manning said as good as 2018 was, he expects greater things to take place across the county in 2019.

“All of our county employees have worked very hard to accomplish great things,” Manning said. “We look forward to handling the growth we feel is coming our way in the future.”



**Interest in local government was high in St. Clair County during 2018, as evidenced by voter turnout during the general election in November.**



**Ricky Parker became the newest member of the St. Clair County Commission when he took the oath of office in February. A former Moody city councilman, Parker was appointed to the District 2 seat after former commissioner Ken Crowe was named revenue commissioner.**



## Facts About St. Clair County Alabama

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- One of the fastest growing counties in Alabama
- Close proximity to Birmingham and Atlanta markets
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# Georgia-Pacific lumber production returns to Talladega during 2018

Special to The Daily Home

Georgia-Pacific celebrated the official start of production at its newest lumber facility in Talladega during 2018.

The \$100-million, 300,000-square-foot, technologically advanced plant took nine months to complete. The plant currently employs more than 130 full-time employees and will generate an estimated \$5 million in annual payroll.

To celebrate the start-up, Georgia-Pacific hosted a dedication on the facility's grounds with state and community leaders. Among the guests were the Honorable Governor Kay Ivey, Georgia-Pacific President and CEO Christian Fischer and the city of Talladega Mayor Jerry Cooper.

"This investment in Talladega, and across Alabama, drives home our focus on providing long-term value to our customers, communities, employees and company," said Fischer. "I'm proud of the many talented employees working at this site. We thank Governor Ivey and Mayor Cooper, and all our community friends and neighbors for supporting our operations and celebrating this achievement."

Alabama represents a significant state for Georgia-Pacific's operations. Currently, there are more than 2,300 employees across eight facilities that span all the company's business segments. In the last five years, Georgia-Pacific has invested approximately \$1.2 billion in its operations across the state.

"Georgia-Pacific's new lumber facility in Talladega is the company's eighth location in the state, which further shows that Alabama is a great place to do business," Governor Ivey said. "Our amiable business climate and unparalleled workforce are why notable companies like Georgia-Pacific continue to do business in our great state."

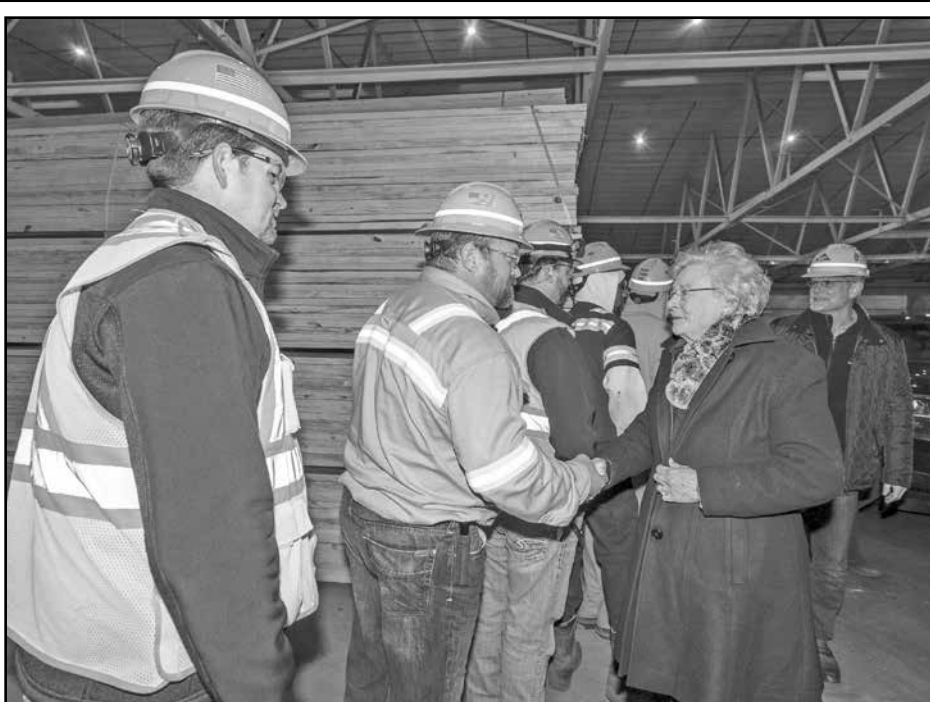
The new facility receives approximately 150 log trucks a day and produces approximately 230 million board feet of lumber a year, with plans to expand production to 300 million board feet per year in the near future. The facility's current plan is to ship out approximately 50 truckloads of lumber each day.

"The availability of talent and natural resources make Talladega an ideal site for this new lumber production facility," said Fritz Mason, vice president and general manager, Georgia-Pacific Lumber. "The city of Talladega, Talladega County and the state of Alabama have been incredibly supportive of this new venture, and we look forward to a long and beneficial relationship."



**Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office**

**Governor Kay Ivey was on hand to give remarks during grand opening ceremonies at Georgia-Pacific's Talladega facility in November. The \$100 million lumber production operation created 130 new jobs and began producing lumber in August. Construction began in January of 2018. Ivey greeted and spoke with city officials and Georgia-Pacific employees during her visit and, below, participated in the lumber cutting ceremony that officially opened the new facility.**



According to the University of Alabama's economic modeling, the construction of the plant had an estimated economic impact of more than \$26 million on the city and county.

"Georgia-Pacific has seven other wood and paper-related operating plants in the state," said Calvin Miller, executive director of the Talladega County Economic Development Authority. "This expansion illustrates their commitment to Talladega, Talladega County and the state of Alabama for many years to come."

The Talladega plant is the first of three new lumber production facilities Georgia-Pacific will be opening in the Southeast by the end of 2019.

"The demand for lumber continues to improve as the housing market recovers," said Mason. "We look forward to starting up our other two mills currently under construction in Warrenton, Georgia, in the spring and in Albany, Georgia, in late 2019."



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# 2018 marks another year of growth for St. Vincent's St. Clair



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
**Lisa Nichols continues to lead St. Vincent's St. Clair as hospital administrator.**

**By DAVID ATCHISON**  
**Home staff writer**

St. Vincent's St. Clair hospital continues to expand its services, offering more medical treatments for local residents.

"We're growing year after year," said Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA, the hospital's administrator for the past three years.

St. Vincent's St. Clair is a \$32 million, two-storied, 79,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility, which opened in 2011. The hospital is located at 7063 Veterans Parkway, Pell City, directly across the street from the Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home.

The facility currently employs more than 300 associates.

Nichols pointed to surgical services as one indicator of the hospital's growth. From July-December of 2018, the hospital saw a 46 percent increase in its surgical volume, compared to the same period in 2017.

She said there is a focus on orthopedics services, with the hospital offering total joint replacement surgeries for knees and hips.

"We will bring the patient in before surgery," Nichols said.

Medical staff will complete an in-depth needs assessment for each patient.

"The patient will meet with a physical therapist and go over what the patient needs to do prior to and after surgery," Nichols said.

She said the physical therapist will also discuss home access with the patient, and a case manager can help determine if the patient will need special equipment.

St. Vincent's St. Clair has a physical therapy department where patients work with a therapist during the recovery period without having to travel to Birmingham.

The hospital has both a physical therapist and an occupational therapist.

"Our ultimate goal is to care for you close to home," Nichols said.

She said a doctor only has to call and let the department know to schedule a patient to complete their physical therapy closer to home.

St. Vincent's St. Clair has also expanded its eye care, dramatically increasing the number of cataract surgeries the hospital performs.

Nichols said in that department St. Vincent's St. Clair has gone from one physician seeing patients twice each month to four cataract surgeons and offering cataract surgery two days a week.



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
**St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to expand its medical services.**



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
**St. Vincent's St. Clair has a physical therapy department, making it more convenient for patients during their rehabilitation period.**

"Patients are thrilled to have this procedure done here and do not have to drive to Birmingham to have it done," she said.

The hospital now has a full-time speech therapist.

"We've always had speech therapy, but we added a full time speech therapist," Nichols said.

The speech therapist works with both adults and children with various speech disorders.

She said the hospital has also expanded its Wound Care Center, which focuses on patients who have hard to heal wounds and who need advance care.

Nichols said they have also expanded their sleep lab from two to four beds, and can complete

sleep studies both at night and during the day.

In all, St Vincent's St. Clair has 21 different specialties.

"I could go on and on," Nichols said.

The hospital offers specialties in cardiology, dermatology, family medicine, gastroenterology, general surgery, hospice and palliative medicine, internal medicine, nephrology, neurology, neurosurgery, OB-GYN, ophthalmology, orthopedics, otolaryngology, pain management, pathology, pediatrics, podiatry, pulmonology, radiology, sleep medicine and advanced wound care.

People can also use St. Vincent's St. Clair service called, "Dial a Nurse," a system-wide

service that can inform patients as to which doctors are affiliated with the hospital and what services are available.

Hospital officials said a doctor is only a phone call away. The number for the "Dial a Nurse" service is 205-386-2382.

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# CVMC adds new healthcare services, stays committed to community

By DENISE SINCLAIR  
Home staff writer

Coosa Valley Medical Center has added new healthcare services while staying committed to the community it serves.

Glenn Sisk, CEO and president of CVMC, said the hospital is here for residents, working to make sure each patient gets the care he or she needs from the emergency room, labor and delivery, cardiac care, and even mental health issues for senior citizens.

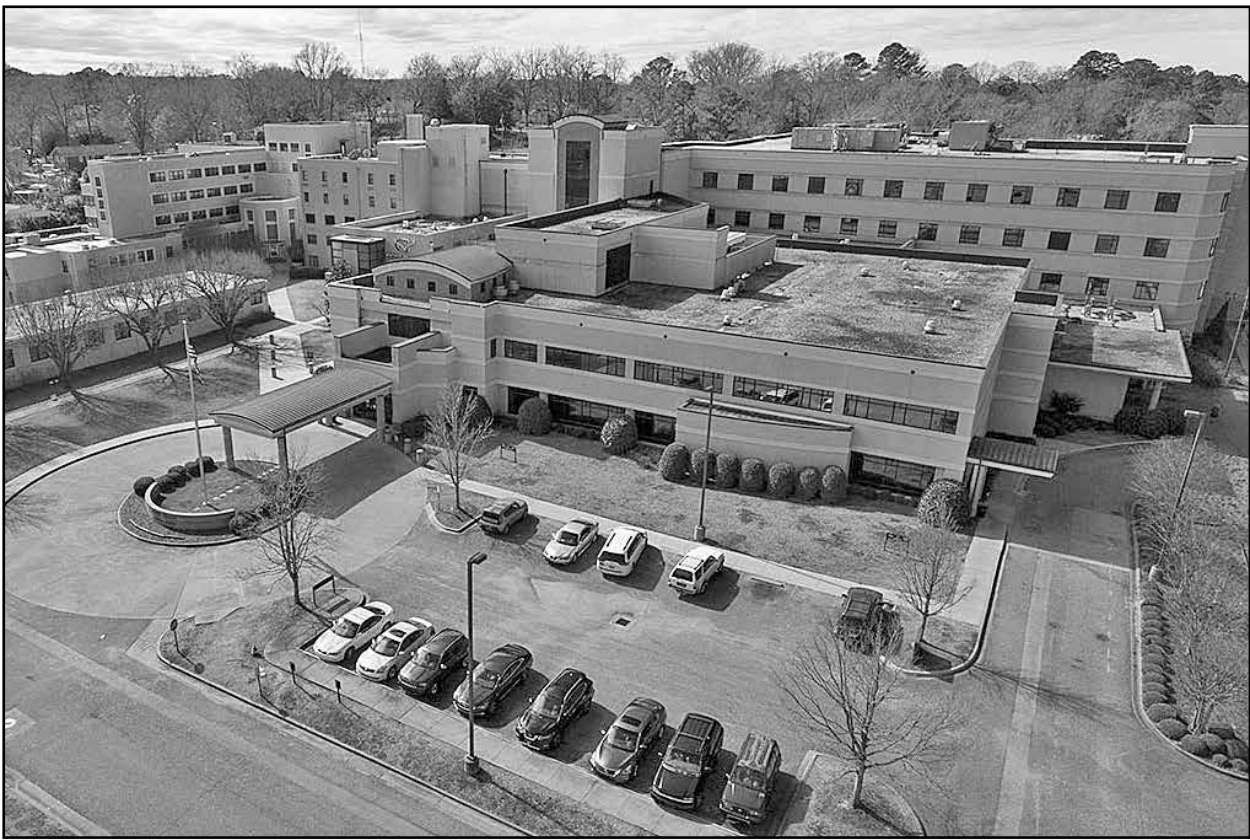
Sisk through his 18-year tenure with the medical center has focused on improving health care for all citizens in an effort to serve them with added services that allows them to remain in their hometown.

“We want people to

sitional unit. Renovations are being made to the nursing home, with eventual construction added to it moving the transitional care unit under the same roof.

- Another new service being added in a few months is a Wound Care program. CVMC is entering into a partnership with Healogics to offer full-time staffing of this program that will be housed in the medical center’s medical arts building. Five new jobs are being added for this program with a doctor and nurse practitioner included.

- Bariatric surgery services is going to be available in the near future at the hospital un-



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

**Besides providing a host of health care services to Sylacauga and neighboring communities, Coosa Valley Medical Center is one of the county’s largest employers, with 650 staff members. Its total economic impact on the area is more than \$129 million.**



File Photo

**Glenn Sisk serves as CVMC’s president and CEO. “We want people to remain in their community for health care and not have to travel out of town,” he said.**

remain in their community for health care and not have to travel out of town,” he said.

In the meantime, Sisk said the hospital is committed to being good stewards. The hospital has put together Plan 2020 representing 75 years of service to the community by CVMC. In order to continue this long-standing tradition of compassionate delivery, three key pillars guide the hospital’s decision making. These pillars are “commitment to our patients and community, strategic growth and partnerships and practice of sound stewardship,” Sisk said.

New services CVMC are providing or will provide in the near future according to Sisk are:

- The Senior Behavioral Unit has been approved by the state to add five beds to the 15 it already provides for seniors 65 and older facing mental health issues. While the unit has in the past had to turn away patients because of lack of vacant bed space, the additional beds are now in use with full-time psychiatric care available. The unit employs 35.

- The hospital sold its skilled nursing facility to Prime Healthcare Corporation/Prime Management in 2018. Prime is now operating the nursing home and transitional care unit. This includes a 50-bed nursing home, along with a 35 bed tran-

der the direction of Dr. Matthew Dimon. It will provide more than just weight-loss surgery. The surgery can drastically improve the health and lifestyles of men and women.

- Meds to Beds is a service the hospital is moving forward with and is scheduled to be available in a few months. This is where a patient is discharged from the hospital and prescriptions are provided as they leave. CVMC is working with local pharmacies on this which provides a convenient service for patients.

While new services are added, the hospital is also doing some upgrades for its Emergency Department, Sisk said.

New monitoring equipment is on the way, the flooring in the ER is being replaced in an effort to not only improve the clinical aspects but providing a more comfortable area for patients.

“The ER is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There will be disruptions, but there is going to be significant upgrades,” Sisk added.

The hospital administrator said several departments have been recognized for their service to patients.

Coosa Valley Labor & Delivery received the Blue Distinction Center for Maternity Care from Blue Cross Blue Shield for overall patient satisfaction and a lower percentage of early elective

deliveries.

Coosa Valley Hospice was awarded a Hospice Honors 2018 Award. The national award was given by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. CMS is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Other recipients of awards included Home Care Agency, this puts the agency in the top 500 agencies of its type according to CMS; ER, a Gold Plus Stroke Award from the American Heart Association for the care of stroke victims when they arrive in the emergency room; and ICU, Beacon Award for Excellence for patient care.

Sisk said CVMC is focused on recruiting new doctors to the community and have three active searches under way in urology, neurology and internal medicine.

The hospital is working with an internal medicine resident at UAB, who will join the staff at CVMC when her training is completed in 2021.

While CVMC continues to be a driving force for health care in the community, it is faced with a disadvantage, as are other hospitals in the state.

Alabama is one of 14 states who did not expand Medicaid coverage to its citizens. Sisk, like other health care officials, is asking the state Legislature and Gov. Kay Ivey to expand Medicaid.

“Alabama hospitals are receiving millions less in Medicaid payments every year compared to other states. The state has one of the most restrictive Medicaid programs in the country. Many uninsured individuals depend on the emergency department for care. This ultimately drives up the cost of healthcare for everyone,” the CEO said.

Sisk said according to the latest information, hospitals provided more than \$500 million in care for which they were not paid.

“Last year, CVMC provided \$18.8 million in uncompensated care,” he said.

Sisk pointed out Medicaid expansion offers Alabama the opportunity to provide basic health insurance to more than 300,000 individuals, most of whom are working.

“It’s a small investment; Alabama will never pay more than 10 cents on the dollar to cover the expanded population. Since 2014, Alabama has declined \$1.7 billion annually in federal funds

designated for the state for Medicaid. This is a lifeline for hospitals like us. This is shortsighted of our government not to expand,” he said.

In looking at the economic impact the hospital has on the community, it is one of the largest employers. It directly employs 650 people, of which 550 are employed by the hospital and a 100 by Prime Management.

CVMC generates a

total labor income of \$44,482,000 and has a total economic impact of \$129,750,000.

The hospital is under the direction of the Sylacauga Health Care Authority. Members of the authority are John Floyd, chairman; Jesse Cleveland, vice chairman; Dr. Bill Mims, secretary/treasurer; Dr. Mamoun Pacha; Dr. Steve Bowen; Dr. Shirley Spears; and Jerry Fielding.

## Restoring Hope and Wellness

A photograph of two women, one younger and one older, embracing each other warmly. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with trees.

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A rectangular logo with the text "Certified by the State of Alabama Department of Mental Health" and a small emblem.

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# Citizens Baptist welcomes new CEO, new CNO and new surgeon

## Staff report

Two Talladega natives have assumed leadership roles at Citizens Baptist Medical Center in recent months.

Frank Thomas was named chief executive officer (CEO) in August of 2018, and Van McGrue was named chief nursing officer (CNO) in January.

Thomas had most recently served as interim CEO and chief operating officer at Shelby Baptist Medical Center. He began his career with the Baptist Health System in 1990 and later joined Siemens in Birmingham, where he served as senior project manager and as site executive. He rejoined Baptist Health System as clinical director of IT before joining Citizens Baptist Medical Center several years later as director of operations/IT and subsequently executive director of support services. He was named associate administrator of Shelby Baptist in 2013.

“Frank’s project management experience and seasoned tenure in the healthcare industry meld to provide tremendous insight in the role of CEO,” said Keith Parrott, chief executive officer of Brookwood Baptist Health. “Frank is revered among his peers, and having previously been a part of the Citizens Baptist Family for a number of years, Frank is welcomed with open arms. I know he will lead by example and help drive forward the quality of care our Talladega community has come to know and expect from Brookwood Baptist Health.”

A nurse executive with more than 25 years’ experience, McGrue has held a number of managerial and director roles in private and public healthcare. She began her career in Talladega in 1992 at the Northeast Alabama Kidney Clinic and previously worked for Citizens Baptist during the late 1990s.

She rejoined the local medical center in 2009 as the infection preventionist before being named director of outcomes. In this role, she was pivotal in improving reimbursement by 6 percent within six months following implementation of the CDI program. She later served as management director of nursing for medical surgical, where she contributed to achieving the highest improvement in Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) at Citizens Baptist for the first six months of 2015.

“Van has proved herself to be a compassionate



Frank Thomas

and dedicated nursing professional with a breadth of experience that allows her to successfully lead others through the actions she demonstrates,” Thomas said. “Her well-rounded portfolio has given her insight and strengthened her business acumen to understand how to deliver quality care in the face of challenges presented in today’s healthcare environment.”

Citizens Baptist also welcomed a new general surgeon in recent months. From emergent trauma to minimally invasive procedures, Dr. Denis Budrevich provides local, general and surgical care. He specializes in surgical consultations, dialysis access, hernia repair, appendectomies, colonoscopy and EGD, as well as colorectal, gallbladder, small bowel, breast and thyroid surgery.



Van McGrue

Dr. Budrevich completed medical school and his first residency in urology at Belarussian State Medical University in Minsk, Belarus. After practicing in the field of urology for eight years, he completed a second residency in general surgery at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in Tulsa.

With roots extending more than 90 years, Brookwood Baptist Health represents the largest healthcare network in central Alabama. The network’s community of care is comprised of five acute care hospitals with more than 1,700 licensed beds: Citizens Baptist Medical Center, Brookwood Baptist Medical Center, Princeton Baptist Medical Center, Shelby Baptist Medical Center and Walker Baptist Medical Center.

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# 2018 brings new superintendent, new successes for Talladega City schools



**C.L. Salter Elementary School was recognized as a Be Healthy School, one of many successes enjoyed by Talladega City Schools during 2018.**

**By CHRIS NORWOOD**  
**Home staff writer**

There have been a lot of new faces in the Talladega City School System this year, starting at the top of the chart.

Superintendent Tony Ball was hired over the summer after Terry Roller took a job with the state. Chief Schools Financial Officer Arthur Watts ended up following Roller, and was replaced by Leslie Bollendorf, formerly the CSFO for the Alabama Institutes for the Deaf and Blind.

Darian Simmons was tapped to head up the Career Tech Center, a new principal was in place at Graham Elementary and there was a new assistant principal at Zora Ellis Junior High School, and a new secretary at the central office, as well as a new system-wide technology coordinator. "All of them bring in a lot of positive experience, from our system and from others," Curriculum Coordinator Pattie Thomas said.

"They're good people who are all replacing good people," Ball said.

Thomas mentioned the career center as a particular point of pride, allowing students to take electives and get post-graduation credit right on campus. It also provides an opportunity to partner with local businesses in mentor relationships, with the city of Talladega and with organizations like Worlds of Work. The career tech students are also given an opportunity to reach out to younger students in the system, either by visiting elementary schools or by hosting eighth graders.

At the other end of the age spectrum, Thomas said the system was also proud to be offering pre-k classes at all four elementary schools, thanks to grant funding from the state.

The system has also partnered with various outside entities for arts education, including the Ritz Theater. Students in the city system are also participating in the state art contest again this year, and in the county-wide spelling bee in Sylacauga.

The Summer Bridge Program, an enrichment and enhancement program for seventh and eighth graders, is back for the third year this summer, and local professionals all came together to welcome students back to school this year with the Walk of Heroes. And of course, the system's technology is constantly being updated and improved, with Smart Panels in the classroom and Chromebooks for the students to take home.

The news on the system's state report card was also good, with improvements almost across the board but much work yet to be done as well.

Students Services Coordinator Gloria Thomas (no relation) said that everyone was currently looking forward to the first year with gyms at each of the system's elementary schools, improved security at the individual school level, and continued success from the "Virtual School." Students can log in at home and work with certified staff, allowing students dealing with an illness or a full-time job to keep up with their studies. It is also helpful to students who are not at their best in a conventional setting.

Students without computer access at home will have access to Chromebooks, she added. And every high school student now has access to an advisor.

Ball also pointed to athletic success as a point of pride for the system.

"We've always had a strong basketball program, and this year Coach (Chucky) Miller had his 750th win.

He's coached at two schools in three different classifications, and he's had success with all of them. Our football team made the playoffs back-to-back for the first time since 1994."



**Submitted Photo**  
**Tony Ball is the new superintendent of Talladega City Schools. During the coming year, he hopes to improve the school system's fiscal responsibility and communication with the community.**

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Pattie Thomas also pointed out numerous other extra-curricular activities at the high school, including a total of five THS students sitting first chair in the County Honor Band.

Ball also has ambitious plans for the coming year, including the creation of a fine arts program for elementary school students, opening more lines of communication with business and community leaders and being more transparent and fiscally responsible.

He added that he hopes to accomplish these things thanks to his executive team, including both Mrs. Thomases.

"I've been really impressed with the work they've done and I'm blessed to have them," he said. "We are also blessed with excellent principals, teachers, support staff, parents and students."

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# Central Alabama Community College earns Leader College status

## Staff report

A member of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) network, Central Alabama Community College has received Leader College recognition for its progress in improving student success.

ATD awarded the status to CACC last month, along with five other colleges in Maryland, Texas, Tennessee, Wisconsin and California.

“I’m very proud to recognize a new group of Achieving the Dream Network colleges that are advancing equity, offering a more impactful student experience and achieving stronger measurable results,” said Dr. Karen A. Stout, president and CEO of Achieving the Dream. “Leader Colleges’ gains in student success and progress toward improving outcomes for all students make them examples for their peers.”

As a Leader College, CACC – which has campuses in Talladega and Childersburg – is eligible for grant-funded learning initiatives and to compete for the ATD’s top national award, the Leah Meyer Austin Award, which comes with a \$25,000 prize. ATD is a network of institutions of higher education, state policy teams and investors supporting economic opportunity and success for 4 million community college students.

During 2018, CACC also received a \$696,894 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, which has been used to fund 25 student scholarships, electronics lab equipment, two Kuka robot trainers, hydraulic and pneumatic Parker trainers, a 3D printer and a new roofing system for the Childersburg campus’ machine shop and CNC department.

“The grant has helped us to expand programs and purchase equipment,” said CACC president Dr. Susan Burrow. “We have strengthened our relationships with local business and industry through the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Other accomplishments at CACC during 2018 include:

- The appointment of Dr. Douglas Flor as the college’s first dean of workforce development.
- Increased enrollment in its nursing program. CACC’s graduating class of May 2018 achieved an 89 percent NCLEX passing rate, and summer LPN graduates achieved 100 percent.
- Economic impact in local communities of \$3.7 million in direct employee spending, \$3 million in college spending and \$24.5 million in student spending.
- CACC’s six-year partnership with E.H. Gentry Technical Facility in Talladega continues to grow. The partnership assists students with sensory and non-sensory disabilities to attend college. Twelve students are participating in the program this semester.

### Submitted photo

**Mathew Beam, a junior at Winterboro High School, is enrolled in CACC’s welding program. He has been nominated and selected as the “Go Build Alabama” Student of the Month for February. Students receiving the recognition are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship to further their education in the construction industry.**



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# 2018 a record-setting year for Talladega College



**Talladega College president Dr. Billy Hawkins has been named to the President Trump's advisory committee on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.**

## Staff report

Talladega College kicked off 2019 by officially opening its new student residence hall, an accomplishment that has been six years in the making.

The long-awaited opening of the new hall represents completion of the first major construction on the school's campus since the 1970s. Comprising 45,000 square feet, the dormitory contains 103 suites that can house 201 students.

Dr. Billy Hawkins, Talladega College's president, said planning for the new building began six years ago and is an example of how much progress has been made at the college in recent years. Construction is still underway on a new student center and gymnasium and on a museum to house the college's prized Hale Woodruff Amistad Murals.

Other significant achievements, accomplishments and happenings at Talladega College during the past year include the following.

At the end of January, the college was named School of the Month for March 2019 by The Tom Joyner Foundation.

In November, the college welcomed Frank Jennuzi, grandson of its seventh president, as speaker during its 151st Founder's Day festivities.

In October, it was announced that the current year's

enrollment at Talladega College is 1,217, an increase of 55.5 percent from the 2017-18 term and an all-time record for the school. The total includes students from 24 countries. Hawkins cited the enrollment as more evidence of progress, saying that only 280 students were enrolled during his first years as the college's administrator.

Talladega College joined the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama in breaking ground on the Open Spaces Sacred Places area on campus, near DeForst Chapel. Funded by a \$10,000 grant from the foundation, the project creates a public space for reflection and thought.

Hawkins was appointed to serve on President Donald Trump's advisory committee on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and White House officials visited Talladega to attend opening convocation ceremonies in September.

In August, Talladega College was named one of the 384 best colleges in the Southeast by Princeton Review's annual college guide, and it began offering its first master's degree program.

The college's softball and baseball teams earned spots in the NAIA national tournaments.

A number of new appointments was made to the college's staff, including Emmanuel Pina, director of alumni affairs; Dr. Doris Clark-Sarr, senior director of development; Sedrick T. Hill Sr., vice president of in-

stitutional advancement; Dr. Vandrea Watts, assistant director of institutional effectiveness and director of the Quality Enhancement Plan; and Mary Sood, public relations director.



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# Providing relief from chronic pain is goal of Pell City practice

By **AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD**  
Special to The Daily Home

The greatest gift Alabama Anesthesiology & Pain Consultants (AAPC) gives its patients is relief. Serving Pell City residents for the past 18 years, the practice's primary goal is "to provide patients relief from their pain through a multidisciplinary approach and rehabilitate the patient to a productive lifestyle."

Practice manager Joel Bloomston, who is also a degreed radiology technician, has been at AAPC since 2013. "I wear a lot of hats," he said. "From accounts receivable and payable to helping with procedures, whatever is needed."

Ensuring patients are properly cared for is the top priority for Bloomston and the staff at AAPC. The clinical staff consultants are Matthew Bennett, M.D.; Shannan Garvey, certified registered nurse anesthesiologist (CRNA); Corey Gilliland, D.O., American Academy of Pain Management; Edina von Rottenthaler, M.D.; Carly Garvey, P.A.; Jessica Marshman, P.A.; and Bloomston.

AAPC is conveniently located in Pell City at 2804 Dr. John Haynes Drive.

Providing relief for patients is its top priority. Assuring this priority is met, Bloomston said the top treatments patients come in for are neck and back pain, migraines, pain-causing blood disorders and various ailments that could cause chronic pain.

Over the course of the staff's years of fulfilling its calling as pain relievers one of their greatest compliments/testimonials occurred just recently.

"Yesterday, a patient hugged one of our doctors because she found out though an MRI that she had a possible life-threatening bone disease that was detected early enough," said Bloomston. "Any time a patient doesn't need medicine any longer, that's a great testament."

AAPC uses an epidural spinal cord stimulator, that sends a message to the brain, significantly reducing pain sensations to the extremities. This procedure in most cases provides relief 80-90 percent of the time, according to Bloomston.

Some of the toughest cases the practice has seen are radio frequency ablations. This treatment burns the nerve, which is the median nerve. "I've seen a patient go from bed ridden to walking and taking their grandkids around," he said.

For potential patients who've considered visiting the qualified staff at AAPC Bloomston says this is what you need to know: "We're here to help patients to get out of this thing of thinking that they can never overcome their pain. AAPC can help you get through the pain."

For instance, if a patient comes in with pain on a scale from 8-10, AAPC's goal is to get their pain level to a 3 or 4 out of 10. "The most important thing to me is that a patient needs a pos-

itive outlook," Bloomston said. "When you have a positive outlook and always put God first, there's always potential for a cure or help."

Another way AAPC is providing that help is through its addiction clinic. Every other Friday from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. the clinic helps people overcome opiate and other drug addictions.

"This is suboxone therapy and medicine management," said Bloomston. "The addiction clinic is very important to us. People come to us after getting in car wrecks or after enduring sport injuries and have been on high regimen of opiates for an extended period of time. We follow all CDC, DEA and Alabama Board of Medical Examiners guidelines and don't put our patients in danger."

Suboxone treats opiate/narcotic addiction and has been extremely successful with positive outcomes.

Seeking to help patients in every way possible, AAPC this month began to help those looking to make a life changing decision of living a healthy lifestyle. On February 8, the practice launched its wellness and weight loss division where patients will receive a nutrition guideline, exercise plan and



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home  
**Alabama Anesthesiology & Pain Consultants is at 2804 Dr. John Haynes Drive in Pell City.**



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home  
**Providing relief for patients dealing with chronic pain is the goal of the practice and its staff.**



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home  
**Members of the friendly staff at Alabama Anesthesiology & Pain.**

B12 injections to increase their energy levels. This program allows patients to make the first step of living their best healthy life as they learn ways to get back on track and take care of their bodies.

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**Eden Elementary**  
**Williams Intermediate**  
**Duran South Junior High**  
**Duran North Junior High**  
**Pell City High**



**Superintendent - Dr. Michael Barber**

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# Sylacauga schools make successful investment in career tech, arts, athletics

By **DENISE SINCLAIR**  
Home staff writer

The 2018 year was a successful one, especially in three areas according to Sylacauga Schools Superintendent Dr. Jon Segars.

Segars is starting his eighth month as Sylacauga's newest superintendent. Prior to being named superintendent, Segars was the system's director of career and technical education and assistant principal at Sylacauga High School.

In looking back, Segars said the system was successful in academics, art and athletics.

"We saw our system get better in 2018 with marked improvement. Sylacauga High School got better across the board," he said.

In January, the state released report cards for each system on testing results in 2018. Those results showed marked improvement at SHS. The school chief said scoring indicators measure academic achievement, academic growth and chronic absenteeism for all Alabama schools.

"In addition to those factors, high schools are also graded on the school's graduation rate and college and career readiness aptitude," Segars said. "While academic achievement is based on the combined student performance in standardized tests, academic growth differs in that this category measures improvement from August benchmark tests to April standardized testing."

Segars said indicators show the system should do better in 2019.

The superintendent pointed out 70 percent of the high school's graduating class went on to college. He said college and career readiness scores have gone up.

He also said the career technical education program is growing each year with 50 classes offered in grades three

through 12. "Not many schools can tout what we have in career tech. We continue to do well in this and we are competing on the state and national levels with our students in FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America). We are going to be strong this year in competitions in the middle and high school levels in the spring. In 2018 we added six new programs in career tech and continue to evolve with the job market providing what the community wants," Segars said.

"The career tech program has classes in medical health science, repairing machines such as computers and we started a certified nursing assistant program. Two registered nurses are teaching our health science programs. Students can have instant jobs when they come out of high school completing these programs," he said.

The second area, Segars said, the school system improved in was the arts. The arts include the system's show choir, band and theater. The system, he said, invested a lot in the area of the arts with seven teachers. These seven teachers are being paid out of the system's pockets.

The investment is paying off, Segars said. "Jack Vest was named Elementary Art Teacher of the Year in the state. We have some powerhouse teachers encouraging students in the arts," the superintendent said.

Students in the arts have opportunities in college for scholarships in band, choir and theater, too, said Segars.

2018 was also a success for athletics. The superintendent said often success in the classroom leads to success in athletics, and vice versa.

"Our Aggie boys basketball team were state champions. Nine

out of 14 varsity teams at the high school made the playoffs. Our athletic director, Coach Matt Griffith, is doing a great job. If the athletes aren't performing in the classroom, then they can't play. Academics, arts, and athletics have all had success in 2018 and should do the same in 2019," Segars added.

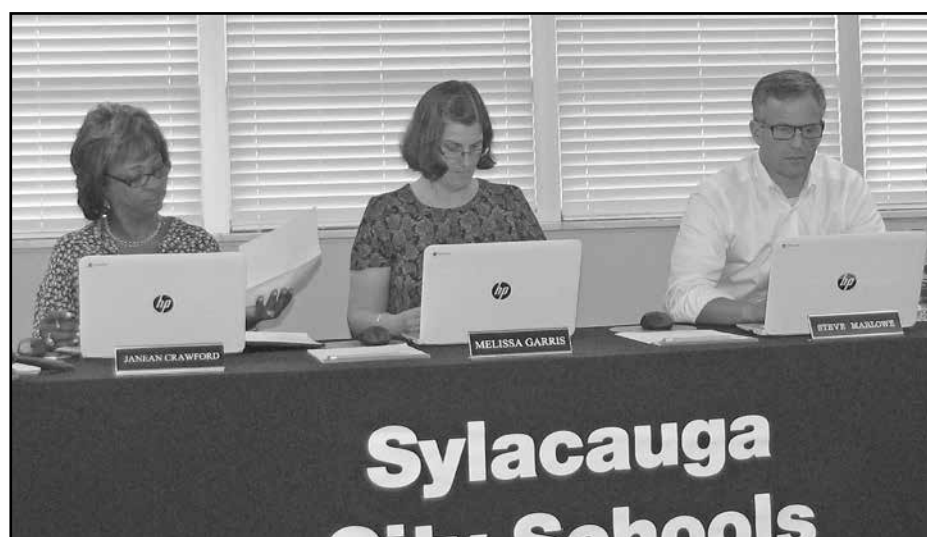
When it comes to 2019, Segars said the focus is back to the basics with work to do in math and reading. Improvement is sought in math in the upper grades and reading in the lower grades.

"The State Department of Education listens to our needs and pushes resources our way to make improvements. We've invested a lot of money in teacher training and it is paying off. We just received word that our high school teacher, Janon Green has been named Mathematics Teacher of the Year for the Southern Region. This award is because of the last 18 months of work she has done at SHS," he said.

On being superintendent for the past seven months, Segars said he is having a ball learning about the system and its successes every day. "I'm going to work to keep getting better one day at a time, while working to make this system even more successful. As far as complaints I don't hear many. Our schools are well funded by help of the community and state. I think we have everything we need in our schools. That's nice. Of course, there are always wants out there."

Segars said after being selected superintendent he would be visiting schools immediately. He said he would immediately get with the principals, walk and talk with them in their schools.

He continues to be in the schools, spending as much time as his schedule will allow there.



File Photo

Members of the Sylacauga Board of Education include, from left, Janean Crawford, president; Melissa Garriss, vice president; and Dr. Steve Marlowe. Not shown are Amy Price and Dr. Rehka Chadawala.

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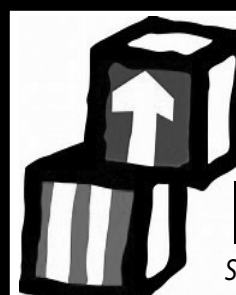
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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Dr. Jon Segars was named superintendent of Sylacauga schools during 2018. He had previously served as the system's director of career and technical education and as assistant principal of Sylacauga High School.



# St. Clair, Pell City, Sylacauga educators achieve national certification

## Staff report

A total of seven local teachers have been designated as National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).

They include:

- Jodi Shaw, Pinecrest Elementary School, Sylacauga.
- Heather Adams, Moody Elementary School, St. Clair County.
- Charles Etheredge, Moody Junior High School, St. Clair County.
- Leslie Hughes and Crystal Mitchell, Walter M. Kennedy Elementary School, Pell City.
- Andrew Jackson and Audrey Wyatt, Eden Elementary School, Pell City.

The local teachers are among 171 who received the certification late last year. National Board Certification is a voluntary teaching credential that goes beyond state licensure. It focuses on advanced standards for all teachers and their classroom accomplishments.

As of January, 2,703 National Board Certified Teachers are on the faculties of Alabama public schools. The total has increased by more than 12 percent since 2010. According to state education officials, schools with National Board Certified Teachers are often characterized by better teacher morale, retention and increased community involvement.

Following is a list of local teachers who have achieved National Board certification, according to the NBCT directory.

### Talladega County Schools

Gale Bickers Allen, Philip Cosper, Martha Drummond Parton, Carol Edwards, Mary Forbus, Rita Harper, Shannon Hill, Alisa Huffaker, Denise Ivey, Anna Jones, Amanda Spurling, Neva Smith, Kim Knight, Elizabeth Payne Peters, Tammy Pennington, Amber Pressley, Amy Smith and Christine Taylor.

### Talladega City Schools

Nina Lackey, Cari Prickett Wilson, Pattie Thomas and Shana Webb.

### Sylacauga City Schools

Patricia Bailey, Debbie Barnett, Ami Brooks, Christie Caine, Tricia Clark, Danny Culp, Lydia Davis, Selena Felkins, Leslie Hagan, Leigh Hall, Tonya Heartsill, Tanya Ingram, Elizabeth Renn, Arista Scott, Carol Sprayberry, Michelle White Kimber and Ruth Wilson Palmer.

### Pell City Schools

Bridget Cain, Elizabeth Cox and Heather Harper.

### St. Clair County Schools

Marsha Boswell, Jenni Carden, Joni Crowe, Amanda Donaho, Angela Dupre, Betty Foster Gunn, Ginger Freeman, Tracy Garcia, Andrea Hastings Schomburg, Leslee Holliday-Stead, Brandy Hyatt, Tara Martin, Mary Morrow, Rebecca Moss, Kelley Peoples, Lisa Vaughn, Terrie Walker Brasher, Sara Wendt, April West and James Wilder.



File Photo

Walter M. Kennedy third-grade teacher Crystal Mitchell, second from left, is one of seven local teachers recently certified by the NBCT. She was named Teacher of the Month for March of 2018 by members of the Pell City Kiwanis Club, which regularly supports local teachers and their classrooms and schools.

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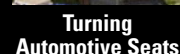
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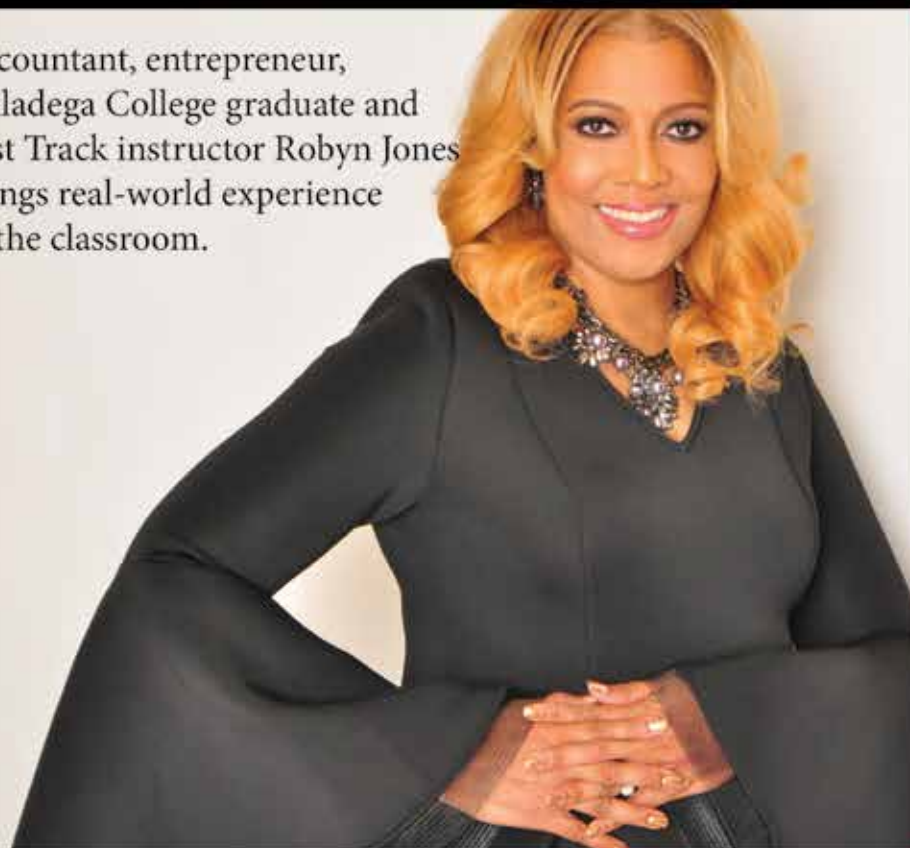
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# State BOE member Bell elected to NASBE board of directors



Photo Submitted/ Alabama Governor's Office  
State board of education member Stephanie Bell, whose district includes Talladega County, has been reelected to the NASBE board of directors. She has served on the Alabama school board since 1994.

## Staff report

Talladega County's representative on the Alabama Board of Education has been named to the board of directors of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Stephanie Bell is one of five new members elected to the panel in November. She represents state board of education District 3, which includes Talladega, and was reelected to a two-year term as regional officer for NASBE's Southern Region. "I am honored to serve on the NASBE board of directors at a time of transition when states are working to return control of education to the state and local level," Bell said. "As the only organization established to provide support and networking opportunities for state school board members, NASBE brings leaders together to discuss solutions to common problems, including teacher preparation and shortages, student achievement, school

safety and many other significant education issues. My hope is that we will all continue to benefit as a result of our desire to support and strengthen communications among state board members across the United States." According to Kristen Amundson, NASBE president, NASBE board members will "lead our organization in its important work of empowering state boards to fully embrace their role as citizen leaders while continuing to offer combined decades of expertise to meet ongoing needs and ensuring sustainability." The NASBE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization aimed at providing state school board members with a voice in national policymaking and facilitating the exchange of innovative ideas. Bell is the longest currently-serving member of the Alabama Board of Education, having first been elected in 1994, and has twice served as its vice president. She has participated in numerous regional and national confer-

ences, represented Alabama at the National Council of State Legislators' Conference on Teen Health and Pregnancy Prevention, was appointed to the Alabama Teacher Preparation Advisory Council and served on the national accreditation team for teacher education programs.

Dr. Jon Segars, Superintendent

**BOARD MEMBERS**

- Dr. Steven Marlowe •Amy Price •Melissa Garris
- Janean Crawford •Dr. Rekha Chadalawada

Sylacauga City School System is governed by a five-member Board of Education whose members are appointed by the City Council of Sylacauga for staggered five-year terms. This group formulates the policies that govern the entire system.

The Sylacauga Board of Education holds monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Meeting dates are subject to change and will be posted on the website and at each school building.

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# County schools focus on STEAM to prepare students for tomorrow’s careers

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**  
Home staff writer

The Talladega County School system has a great deal to be proud of from the past year, and is looking forward to continued progress in the year to come, according to Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey.

“Talladega County Schools current focus on science, technology, and engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM) illustrates the district’s focus on ensuring students are college and career ready,” Lacey said. “Each of the 17 schools are currently working toward Advanced STEM Certification. Through this process, our hope is that we are preparing students for careers of tomorrow by exposing them to inquiry-based learning environments that encourages innovative and creative solutions to ‘real world’ issues.”

She added “The STEAM movement aligns perfectly with the district’s work for the past eleven years with project-based learning, a teaching method where students gain knowledge and skills by investigating, researching and responding to a ‘driving question.’ What makes project-based learning such a fluid strategy is that it encompasses four areas (the 4 Cs) that are critical for preparing students for a high-tech workforce: communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. In recent months, a fifth C, computational thinking, has been included.”

The district has gotten some outside help along the way as well.

According to Lacey, “Along with two other school districts across the nation, Talladega County Schools received a \$1 million grant from the National Science Foundation to study ‘computational thinking.’



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

**Talladega education officials are focusing on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) programs to help prepare students for solving “real-world issues.”**



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

**Stemley Road Elementary School proudly displays a banner designating it as one of Alabama’s Bicentennial Schools. See Page 3B for more information about Talladega County schools that have been selected to help the state celebrate its 200th anniversary this year.**



File photo


**Dr. Suzanne Lacey has served as superintendent of Talladega County Schools since 2008. She had previously served as a teacher, school administrator, director of personnel and deputy superintendent.**

Through this collaboration, we are currently developing a K-12 Computational Thinking Pathway to ensure that students are engaged in these critical competencies throughout their education. Some of these key competencies include algorithmic thinking, collecting/analyzing data, and building models and simulations. The goal is for students to engage in computational thinking strategies across all content areas, not just science, math, and computer science. The pathway will guide teachers in facilitating experiences to help students solve tomorrow’s problems. Once the pathways are complete, the Digital Learning Specialist and a lead teacher from each school will train teachers on the competencies, key vocabulary, and resources needed to embed computational thinking with the state standards. Teachers will be provided ongoing training as well as opportunities

to collaborate with other educators to create engaging lessons and assessment methods to determine student proficiency of the competencies,” she said.

Collaboration is a key, not just at the district level, but nationally as well, Lacey pointed out.


“Trough our work with Digital Promise on the Computational Thinking Pathways, we were also selected to participate in a Middle School Science Collaborative with five other districts in the nation. The other districts include Broward County Public Schools (FL), Compton Unified District (CA), Vancouver Public Schools (WA), and Iowa City School District (IA). Our task is to design professional learning experiences to prepare middle school science teachers on incorporating computational thinking with the Next Generation Science Standards. This collaborative will go even more in depth by providing teachers the opportunity to earn microcredentials in the area of computational thinking and to work with others in their content area to design rigorous, real world learning opportunities.”



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# Local schools will help Alabama celebrate its bicentennial this year

Staff report

Six local schools have been designed as official Alabama Bicentennial Schools by Gov. Kay Ivey.

The governor made the designations in August of 2018 to encourage participation in the celebration of the state's 200th anniversary this year. A total of 200 schools were selected through the Alabama Bicentennial Schools Initiative.

In Talladega County, designated schools are Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, B.B. Comer Memorial High School, Munford Elementary School, Pinecrest Elementary School and Stemley Road Elementary School. Springville Elementary School represents St. Clair County on the list.

Four local schools received honorable mentions for the selection. They are Margaret Elementary School in St. Clair County and Childersburg High School, Lincoln Elementary School and Sycamore Elementary School in Talladega County.

The bicentennial schools initiative was launched in December 2017, and all K-12 schools in the state were invited in early 2018 to submit a proposal outlining their outreach and improvement projects to connect their classrooms to local communities. More than 400 proposals were received, and 200 schools were selected as official bicentennial schools, receiving \$2,000 grants to support their projects. The 56 honorable mention schools received \$500 grants.

Schools were selected through a review process involving committees of local educators, community leaders and private citizens.

"It makes me so proud to see such a strong showing of schools participating in the program," Gov. Ivey said. "It is an honor to recognize these outstanding schools and their projects as we head into Alabama's bicentennial year. The celebration is about bringing communities together and getting all of our citizens involved. The schools being honored are a great representation of that goal."



Submitted photo

Pinecrest Elementary School in Sylacauga is among the local schools designated as an Alabama Bicentennial School. From left are fourth-grade teachers Tammy Gill, Amanda Bolton, Jennifer Migliori and Tracy Green.

Steve Murray, co-chairman of the Bicentennial Commission's Education Committee, said one of the main objectives of the celebration is to "get Alabamians thinking about what makes our state special and what they want it to be. The terrific projects developed by (the bicentennial schools) will create opportunities for students to learn about the importance of commu-

nity and to discover the ability they have to shape the future of their corner of the state."

The Alabama Bicentennial Schools Initiative is presented in partnership by Alabama 200, the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the Alabama Department of Education.

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# Talladega Healthcare gets new administrator

Staff report

Sam Kinnas has been named administrator of Talladega Healthcare & Rehab.

A native of Perry, Georgia, Kinnas came to Talladega as an administrator-in-training and has served during the past three years as floor administrator and assistant administrator. He became facility administrator last October.

“Sam is an advocate who cares a great deal about our residents, our families and our employees,” said owner Chris Schmidt. “He is committed to increasing community involvement to insure the facility plays its role in contributing to the community’s success.”

Bobby Stephenson, director of business development, described Kinnas as “an asset to our company (who) has quickly learned to appreciate the special attributes of the Talladega community. He enjoys the small-town atmosphere and getting to know his neighbors here.”

A certified nursing assistant and licensed nursing home administrator, Kinnas holds a bachelor of science degree in health-care management from UAB and a master of business administration degree from Faulkner University.

“I became attached to Talladega Healthcare almost immediately and knew I wanted to be a part




**Submitted photo**  
**Sam Kinnas has been named new administrator of Talladega Healthcare & Rehab. The facility is at 616 Chaffee Street.**

of something so vital to the community,” he said. “I have felt welcomed here and hope that I am able to make a positive impact in all areas of my work.”

Kinnas succeeds Mary Tuberville, who served as administrator for 10 years. She assumed responsibilities as corporate administrator in October.


Talladega Healthcare


and Rehab is a 234-bed rehabilitation and long-term care facility at 616 Chaffee Street. It strives to offer personalized rehab with a physician-led approach. Physicians are on staff seven days a week, with weekly psychiatrist, psychologist, GI and wound care rounding and an on-staff orthopedic surgeon.




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# 2018 proves to be year of stellar accomplishments at AIDB

By JIMMY CREED  
Special to The Daily Home

One of John Mascia's favorite quotes by Helen Keller is "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

So it comes as no surprise that the president of Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) referenced history's most famous champion for the deaf, blind and multi-disabled to help describe the many exciting developments that took place at AIDB last year.

The opening of a new \$2 million Alabama Power Foundation Nursing Clinic, the nearing completion of the Joe Tom Armbruster Agricultural Center, expanded partnerships at all levels, increased enrollment and an exciting sporting collaboration between Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) students and Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD) students on the Silent Warrior football team are some of the milestones that highlighted a year of great progress at the institution.

"It was a very strong year in every measurable area—funding, numbers served, and most important, outcomes," Mascia said. "Enrollment is steadily increasing, and that is because we are continuing to partner with others to learn what our students and clients need and to collaborate with others to meet those needs."

## Cutting-edge medical facility

The dedication of the 5,000-square foot Alabama Power Foundation Nursing Clinic took place in August 2018 and the state-of-the art facility was fully functional in September.

Thanks to donations from generous benefactors such as the Alabama Power Foundation, the BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama's The Caring Foundation, Protective Life Foundation, Parker Griffith Family Foundation, Hill Crest Foundation, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, East Alabama Medical Center and former AIDB President Dr. Jack Hawkins and the Daniel Foundation, AIDB students now have a cheerful, comfortable place to go when they are sick.

The "mini hospital" includes three hospital bedrooms, a nursing station, waiting area and administrative space.

"For our kids, being able to have good health and to get the best possible health care here means they spend more hours in the classroom and in their dormitories learning because our kids learn 24/7 and not just during classroom hours," Mascia said. "The Nursing Clinic exemplifies where we want AIDB to be in 2019 and that's cutting edge and accessible."

While health-care services will be provided in the new building which is already a point of pride for AIDB students and staff, dental, vision and audiology services

continue to be provided in the historic Dowling Building, built in 1938 in response to a critical medical need that was identified at that time.

Mascia said that as he passed both buildings recently he was struck by how they exemplify what AIDB stands for as an institution.

"One is a beautiful, modern-looking building and right next to it we have a beautiful older building," Mascia said. "It truly exemplifies our culture and the environment we have here and that is a blend of history, the present and certainly the future. We never forget our past, but we are not afraid to try new things and be modern as well."

"The Nursing Clinic is a great example of how when many entities come together and do their part, great things can happen."

## Joe Tom Armbruster Agricultural Center

Excitement among staff and students for this 30-plus acre facility located behind the Helen Keller School continues to build and the grand opening is expected to take place in April.

When it is up and running, the JTAAC will include classroom facilities, areas for gardening, orchards, pastures and other enclosures for farm animals and a pond. When it is up and running, it will also be a living testament to Armbruster, a Talladega farmer who wanted to pass on his love of the land to future generations.

"We're all really excited about this new building, but what has also been such a joy to watch is the excitement of our staff and students as this program develops right along with the structure of the building," Mascia said. "Our staff, Rachel Chastain and others, haven't waited for the building to be finished to develop this program. And when you see our children counting eggs or working with chickens or goats and the learning they are doing through this hands-on experience, it really makes it exciting."

Mascia said AIDB will always be indebted to Armbruster for bestowing the endowment that made such a wonderful learning space possible.

"We continue to be

inspired by Joe Tom Armbruster, the farmer who instilled in so many people how important his chosen career of farming is," Mascia said. "The building and the work being done by our wonderful instructors is allowing Joe Tom's legacy to continue to inspire kids today. This goes right along with our philosophy of carrying the past into the future."

## ASB students play football

For the first time in AIDB history, three ASB students played football on the ASB Silent Warriors football team and their impact was far reaching.

Senior Geordan Carter, junior Tanner Woods and seventh-grader Damon Winfrey were welcomed by coach Paul Kulick and his players and by season's end they had jelled into a team that went 5-4 and won the 16th Mason-Dixon championship in ASD history.

Along the way they helped bring together the students, parents, alumni and supporters of both schools in a way that has perhaps never been seen before.

"It provided opportunities for involvement for other students and their parents, not just the football players," Mascia said. "Now on Friday night you had the ASB band playing and the ASB cheerleaders cheering along with the ASD cheerleaders, and you had parents of students at both schools there enjoying the accomplishments of their children. That is very important."

Not far into the season, Wood, from Birmingham, had become the team's starting quarterback, and Carter played nose guard on defense and along the offensive line. Winfrey was a reserve running back and played on special teams.

"The fact that our ASD quarterback last year was an ASB student shows that with the right training, the right accommodations and the right attitude, anything is possible. We are so proud of our ASB players and proud of our ASD players and coaches for working together with them to find solutions to their challenges. They are all prime examples of a lim-



File photo

Dr. John Mascia, AIDB's president, left, accepts the National Association of Secretaries of State Gold Medallion from Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill. The award was presented for "outstanding service within the state."

itless attitude."

Mascia believes the students working and playing together taught them valuable life lessons far and above wins and losses on the field.

"It is important that we instill in our children that they can compete in

the larger world," Mascia said. "Learning how to win is important. Losing is also a part of life and learning how to lose is an important lesson as well. We must train our children to compete in the larger world and sporting endeavors such as this

help us do that."

## Strengthening many partnerships

When Talladega College needed space because of increasing enrollment, AIDB offered

See AIDB Page 6B

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# AIDB from page 5B



File photo

**2018 was "a very strong year in every measurable area," AIDB's president said. "The stronger AIDB is, the more people we serve and the better we serve them."**

extra room it had at the E.H. Gentry Technical Facility because it was the neighborly thing to do. But as Talladega College students and EHG students began interacting, an unexpected bond began to form.

The students began developing what might be life-long relationships with each other and this is helping to bridge the gap between people with disabilities and those who might have never interacted before with those with disabilities.

"This has really turned into much more of a lasting experience for both our E.H. Gentry students and the Talladega College students than we could have ever imagined," Mascia said.

A similar arrangement with The Presbyterian Home that provides AIDB additional safe, accessible housing has allowed the two organizations to share resources and support each

other in new and exciting ways as well.

AIDB has also continued to see its relationships with First Bank and other local businesses grow as well as those at the state and national levels such as the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., the world's only university designed to be barrier-free for deaf and hard of hearing students, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, and the American Printing House for the Blind.

"Our theme this year truly has been collaborative partnerships and how together we can do so much," Mascia said.

## Increasing enrollment

At a time when many schools for the deaf and blind across the country are seeing their numbers

shrink, AIDB has experienced substantial growth. AIDB's 2018 enrollment was 24,932, while its 2019 enrollment has grown to 26,254—a 9 percent increase.

Mascia cites an overall willingness to adapt and collaborate to provide services wherever they may be needed as the catalyst for this growth.

"What aids us in this growth is that we work with other entities," Mascia said. "For example, a child can either be in public school or here in our residential setting, whatever is best for them. It is never a situation where it is us or them. We want to work on behalf of the student or adult who needs services, and we are happy to collaborate."

In addition to its Talladega campuses, AIDB has long provided services through eight regional centers across the state, and the AIDB Outreach Program was specifically designed to assist parents and teachers by serving sensory impaired children in public schools statewide.

"Our enrollment is increasing because we are looking for ways to work with others so they can help us grow, and we can also help them grow," Mascia said.

## Other items of note

• In September, ASB alumnus Jonathan Sherbert was named AIDB's Chief Financial Officer, becoming the first person who is blind to serve in that position. Sherbert brought 18 years of experience in finance to

the job and since 2012 had served as director of purchasing, accounting manager and director finance and accounting at AIDB.

Mascia called Sherbert a role model for past and future graduates of AIDB's programs.

"Because Jonathan is one of our own, he has a unique understanding of how the budget correlates to the services," Mascia said. "It's not just dollars and cents to him, and that's very, very important."

• The Alabama Industries for the Blind opened a new base supply store at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Georgia, orders placed through its website grew and overall sales and employment of blind individuals increased.

"State agencies have increased their purchasing of our products by 19.5 percent, and we appreciate that support," Mascia said. "It means the world to us."

• At the start of the new school year, ASB welcomed a new principal, Trevor Kribbs, who previously served as principal at Ranburne Elementary School, Ranburne High School and Berry High School.

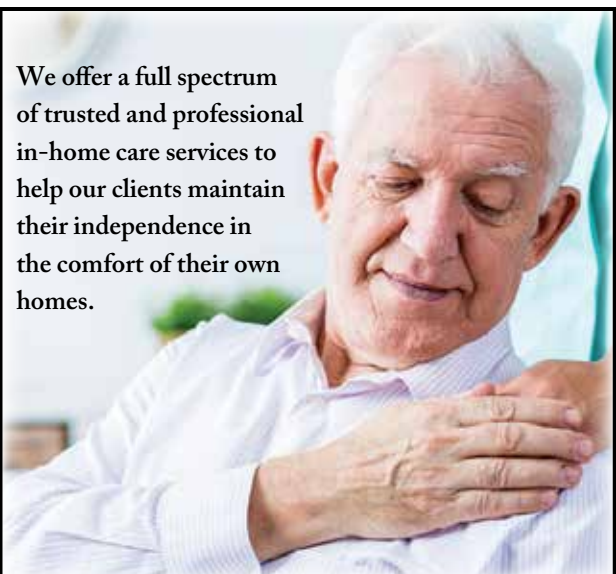
• Mascia was proud to note that eight of 12 ASB graduates from May 2018 are enrolled in college.

Mascia applauded the work of the AIDB Board of Trustees and the AIDB Foundation and its board of directors, the support they provide and their development of relationships, both public and private, that make such great progress

possible.

"Because of their efforts and those of countless others, the state of AIDB is strong, and we don't take that for granted," Mascia said. "We continue to work

every single day, not just to keep it strong, but on making it stronger. Because the stronger AIDB is, the more people we serve and the better we serve them."



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# Life-saving medication to be available in state's high schools

## Staff report

The state department of education has entered into a partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health aimed at saving lives in Alabama high schools.

state health officials said. Alabama is one of only a few states to have developed a training program that allows the medication to be administered by individuals other than school nurses and other health care providers.

hope is that none of our students will be in a situation where they need an injection to prevent them from a possibly fatal opioid overdose. However, we know that the opioid crisis is nothing unique to Alabama. This is an issue of national con-

and other non-hospital organizations.

"The medicine is a safe drug – it doesn't hurt you if you're not taking anything," Ventress said. "If you have no opioids in your system, the medicine will do nothing. But if the recipient overdoses

automated and gives verbal instruction of where and when to apply the necessary dosage. Anyone who receives this

medication must go immediately to the emergency room to get a medical evaluation."



**Dr. Eric Mackey serves as Alabama's superintendent of education. He described the partnership between state schools and the Alabama Department of Public Health as an initiative to help keep students safe.**

departments announced that the opioid-reversing medication Naloxone will soon be available at public high schools throughout the state (including local high schools) and can be administered by school officials.

Naloxone is designed to rapidly reverse the effects of a prescription painkiller overdose and is applied through an auto-injector that is easy to use for those who have had appropriate training,

Mackey, Alabama's superintendent of education, training school staff members to administer Naloxone has the potential to save lives.

"Our primary responsibilities are to keep our students safe and ensure they receive the best possible education to prepare them for life after high school," he said. "This important development speaks to that first responsibility of student safety. Of course, the

cern. It is fortunate that Alabama has taken such a lead in keeping our students safe."

Naloxone is not a new medication, said Jennifer Ventress, nurse administrator for the Alabama Department of Education. It has been administered in emergency rooms for many years, and because it has no negative effect on individuals who are not using an opioid, its use has made its way into schools

on opioids, it could save their life."

Applications of Naloxone are provided at no cost to schools through the Alabama Department of Public Health.

"This program is focused on training principals, coaches...anyone the school deems appropriate to give this drug in the absence of a nurse," Ventress said. "It is in an auto-injector, so you can't go wrong with the dosage. The machine is

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# St. Clair schools begin 2019 with new leadership

**By GARY HANNER**  
**Home staff writer**

It was a year of transition for St. Clair County Schools in 2018.

Mike Howard was elected as the new superintendent of the St. Clair School System, taking over for Jenny Seals, who did not seek re-election.

There were two new school board members elected. Mike Hobbs was elected, taking over for John DeGaris, who did not seek re-election. Nickie VanPelt took over for Angie Cobb, who also did not seek re-election.

As the school system moves forward into 2019, Howard shared his vision, purpose and direction as superintendent during a January work session.

"I am a very organized, structured and disciplined person," he said. "I believe in doing things by the book, along with communication and openness. I believe in giving you all of the information up front. I have high standards and expectations, especially from myself."

Howard said there are three primary goals:

- Provide the best for St. Clair County students;
- Make the school system the best in all areas;
- Make the school system efficient.

Howard presented a vision for coordinators and directors. He said they will

"We have to make sure we are using every dollar appropriately," he said. "Last year, we had 7,330 hours of overtime. On a \$20 average, that cost our school system \$146,000. I have looked at the numbers with our Chief Schools Financial Officer Laura Nance, and we are already over 4,400 hours of overtime right now since July 1."

Howard said they have to look at ways of also reducing comp time.

"Last year, we had 4,081 hours of comp time that resulted in 510 days," Howard said. "Right now, we are already at almost 2,100 hours of comp time since July 1. These are things we have to reduce as we move forward. What I'm asking as we move forward is for everyone to use their comp time by the end of the school year. We must have a balance of zero. Anything moving forward, we must use our comp time by the next pay period. If someone works two hours over on comp time this week, then they need to use those two hours of comp time next week. That way, we are not building up weeks and weeks and weeks and then taking a whole month off from school. Can we eliminate it? No, but we can reduce it."

## Vision for Central Office

Howard said they will



File Photo

**Mike Hobbs and Nickie VanPelt were elected to the St. Clair Board of Education during 2018. Their oath of office was administered by Judge Mike Bowling.**

website. It's just not user-friendly right now."

A new logo/slogan has been designed for the school system.

## Vision for money management

One way of looking at saving money is developing a school calendar that the Jefferson County schools have already started. Howard said he would also talk to neighboring school systems to see what they would be doing.

end of August. I'm just throwing out stuff that we have to sit down and consider. I've spoken with friends in other counties, and they are about to go in this same direction. We are really going to be fighting an uphill battle."

## Top heavy? No

Howard said despite people believing the St. Clair County School System is top heavy, he said the answer is no. He provided the following statistics at his first meeting as superintendent.

- The Shelby County School System has 67 coordinators/directors for 22,000 students, a ratio of .3 percent per student.
- The Jefferson County School System has 93 coordinators/directors for 36,000 students, a ratio of .3 percent per student.
- The Pell City School System has 12 coordinators/directors for 4,000 students, a ratio of .3 percent per student.
- The St. Clair County School System has 14 coordinators/directors for 9,400 students, a ratio of .1 percent per student.

Board member Marie Manning said communities throughout the county do not believe that the county school system is not top heavy.

"You ask anyone in this county and they will definitely say there are too many people at the Central Office," Manning said. "That's what they all say."

Howard said the statistics he provided proves they are not top heavy, but he too has heard the talk out in the communities.

"We just have to be more efficient, and that is one thing we are working on," he said.



File Photo

**Mike Howard takes the oath of office as the new superintendent of St. Clair County Schools. He succeeds longtime superintendent Jenny Seals, who did not seek re-election.**

have two coordinators, one for elementary (K-5) and one for secondary (6-12).

"Coordinators will have emphasis on curriculum, recruiting & retaining, report cards, school visitations and board meeting presentations," Howard said. "We have to let people know that St. Clair County is a great place to live and work."

Howard said directors will place emphasis on efficiency, making school visits and making board meeting presentations.

"All coordinators and directors will have a district they are responsible for," he said. "They will visit each school in that district and sit down with administrators to see if there are any concerns that need to be brought to my attention. Are there any concerns that need to be brought to the Maintenance Department, Transportation Department, Technology Department, and so on. I then want to bring those concerns to a meeting the next week to find out what our strengths are, our weaknesses are, where our areas of concerns are. I want to be very proactive in a lot of the things we do instead of reactive."

## Reducing overtime and comp time

Howard said a portion of the duties of a director will be to reduce overtime and comp time.

be looking at rearranging staff between the Central Office, located in Ashville, and the Annex, which is located in Odenville.

"I need to find out who I need around me every single day," Howard said. "This will be under evaluation during the current semester we are in. Currently, we have staff at four locations. That is very difficult. We really need to consider combining and getting into one location again. If we want to be efficient, we need to be in one location."

Howard also said as the school system continues to grow, they need to look at having a larger area for BOE meetings.

"My vision for this room we are in right now is for it to become a professional development room," he said. "In a perfect world, and we were able to get into a larger place, this building right here could become our Virtual Academy. Again, that's just food for thought. I'm not asking for that right now and realize it is something we cannot even achieve right now."

## A new look

Howard is looking into designing a new website for the school system.

"The website we currently have does not have the functions that we need," he said. "It's very difficult to navigate our

Howard said Jefferson County students will be staying home longer in the summer and their teachers are being paid more.

"We're really going to be fighting a battle," he said.

"I will say this," Howard continued. "For every day we don't attend school, we save over \$7,000 in operational cost," Howard said. "If you add 30 minutes of instructional time per day to the current school day, you can cut 12 days of school. Students would still get the same amount of hours, but saving almost \$100,000. Students would not report back to school until the

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File Photo

**Cynthia McCarty, a member of the Alabama Board of Education, visits with kindergarten students at Moody Elementary School. McCarty's district includes St. Clair County, and she toured schools in Odenville, Springville and Moody in December.**

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# Career training expands, prospers in Pell City schools

By DAVID ATCHISON  
Home staff writer

Dr. Michael Barber said Pell City Schools had many noteworthy achievements this past year, but continues to strive to become even better moving into 2019.

The school system received a "B" on its annual state report card, improving its numerical score from 81 last year to 86 for the 2017-2018 academic year, only four points shy of the "A" mark.

"We are proud of the individual school efforts in making this increase," Barber said. "We also know there is more work ahead."

Barber said schools can improve in all areas, but school officials will focus on attendance, which does affect the annual report card grades.

"We need to do a better job of communicating with parents of the importance of attendance," Barber said.

He said school officials will address the importance of students being in school at individual parent meetings.

Pell City's eight schools either maintained or improved scores on their individual school report cards.

Barber said the school system is also moving in a positive direction with technology.

"The goal of achieving a one-to-one ratio with technology within each classroom should also be

a reality by the end of this academic year," he said. "Yearly commitments in purchasing and proper training in the use of technology have made this a reality."

The school system also increased the Pre-K classrooms at Eden Elementary School and Coosa Valley Elementary School.

"We have doubled the number of Pre-K classrooms within our school system this year," Barber said. "Providing early learning settings for the children of our system has made a tremendous impact on the level of readiness in which students enter kindergarten."

He said Pre-K classes are not restricted to the just the school district for Coosa Valley and Eden Elementary Schools but is open to all students in the Pell City school district.

The demand for Pre-K classes is high and families must draw for a place in one of the four classrooms.

"I am hopeful that one day we want have to have a drawing," Barber said.

The Pell City School System continues to partner with local businesses, companies and industries, helping students find their career path. While some students intern with businesses and companies before they head to college, other students are learning trades, so they can go right into the job market after graduating from high school.

"The expansion of our

Career-Tech offerings, such as the Ironworkers Institute, is very important," Barber said. "Our system and students have continued to prosper through strong business partnerships. The result of such partnerships provides increased opportunities for our students."

He said technical programs, available to Pell City High School students, help keep students in school and provides a clear pathway to employment with good paying jobs after a student graduates. Students earn national job certifications while also attending school.

Students also earn money while receiving valuable hands-on work experience.

"Students received \$180,000 in salaries last year, while getting valuable experience through apprenticeship and mentoring programs," Barber said. "Students are receiving real world experience. We want to keep these programs growing."

Barber said students are also encouraged to hold and help with various fundraisers, also donating their time to community non-profit organizations.

"We want our students to be good citizens," Barber said.

While students are gaining many opportunities through the local school system, teachers are also becoming better teachers through professional development opportunities.

It was recently announced that four teachers have become National Board Certified Teachers, doubling the number of Board Certified Teachers within the school system.

Barber said the national certification is a "big deal," and teachers who become National Board Certified Teachers earn \$5,000 more each year.

In addition, last year the Pell City Schools Educational Foundation Program, Inc. awarded 93 grants valued at \$20,963 to system teachers, enhancing teaching in classrooms throughout the school system.

The Pell City commu-



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
Students learn welding at the newly formed Ironworkers Institute, which was built on Garrison Steel Erectors' property in the Pell City Industrial Park.



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
The newly formed Ironworkers Institute Board recently met for the first time at Garrison Steel.

nity, as well as teachers and students, came together to hold the 2018 Fall Frenzy, which raised \$36,136 for school system clubs and organizations.

Local attorneys Bill Pruitt and Randall Richardson have spearheaded the efforts for the annual fundraiser, and in the past five years, the event has raised more than \$175,000.

"It's been a great benefit to our school system," said board member Jeff Jones at a recent board meeting.



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The faculty provides the security and encouragement for students

to have confidence in exploring new knowledge. New interests are fostered through community partnerships that provide training in the arts and field trips that promote and support this development.

The beautiful, newly-renovated building, made available by a generous partnership with First Presbyterian Church in Talladega, has been created with the needs and expectations of today's modern students in mind. Dynamic classrooms provide students with the settings to work in collaborative groups and at individual work stations capable of accommodating their learning styles.

The Ascension Leadership Academy name change and the new location for the school are intended to foster and expand the structure and purpose of the fully accredited educational program established at Hope Academy. All aspects of the educational program that led to AdvancED accreditation have been maintained. The name change and new location of the school are designed as extensions



Elementary students in the newly renovated Ascension Leadership Academy building in downtown Talladega.

of the school's initial policies and procedures. The name change from Hope Academy to Ascension took place in phases between 2016 and 2018, but the administrative management and governance by the Board of Trustees did not change.

Having the educational programs in one building provides structure and security for the students. At the same time as the move and name change, the logo was updated to represent what the school believes to be the foundations of life-long success:

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The faculty of Ascension Leadership Academy consists of men and women who are recognized as outstanding educators. They all teach in their certified fields of study, most hold advanced degrees, and they sponsor clubs, and serve as academic advisors to our students. Together with the Administration and Support Staff, they are dedicated to providing an excellent education to their students.

**For more information about Ascension Leadership Academy visit [www.phfc.org/ascension-leadership-academy](http://www.phfc.org/ascension-leadership-academy) or call 256-362-4314.**

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& NEIGHBORS**





# Cullimore enjoys the roots he’s planted in Talladega



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Jon Cullimore serves as manager of marketing and member services for Coosa Valley Electric Cooperative in Talladega. “We all work as a team to take on tasks that fit our strengths here at CVEC,” he said.

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

Although he is not native to Talladega – or even the state – Jon Cullimore has planted deep roots in the Talladega Community.

“Talladega has been a good place for me and my family,” said Cullimore, the manager of marketing and member services for Coosa Valley Electric Cooperative. “It’s become my home.”

Cullimore, who is originally from Columbia, Missouri, received his bachelor’s degree in mass communication, with a focus area in magazine journalism from the University of South Florida in Tampa. “My goal back then was to write for National Geographic,” he said.

While in Florida, he served as editor for a magazine about water skiing. “It was a fun job,” He also served four years in the Army. “I spent the majority of my time in Germany.”

Cullimore said it was a “turn of events” that led him to move to Alabama in 1997.

“I first served as a night reporter for The Daily Home for a short period of time,” and he also worked for a local trucking magazine in Oxford. “It was great because I got to learn the ins and outs of transportation, which has helped with my position here at CVEC.”

He returned to The Daily Home as managing editor before joining CVEC in 2001.

“I had met Barbara Edmiston at a media day. She told me about the position, and I knew it was something I would be interested in.”

Cullimore said his job entails many duties, including handling CVEC’s

website, social media pages and speaking directly with consumers regarding customer service questions. “We all work as a team to take on tasks that fit our strengths here at CVEC.”

According to Cullimore, CVEC serves approximately 17,000 consumers and has provided electricity to customers in its six county region for decades.

“Our customer base includes consumers in Talladega, St. Clair, Clay, Shelby, Calhoun and Etowah counties,” he said. “What people often don’t understand is that CVEC is a not-for-profit business. Our only reason for existence is to serve our members. There are many services we provide beyond just electricity.”

Cullimore said that CVEC holds an annual meeting in September for its members.

“This past year we had about 3,500 people who attended. We serve food and have carnival-style rides and games for the kids. It’s an opportunity for us to get to know our consumers and understand their needs.”

The company has additionally partnered with

the Talladega County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) to develop industrial parks, build speculative buildings and recruit industry to the area. The buildings are financed by federal loans, PowerSouth, TCE-DA and CVEC.

Multiple businesses are inside the CVEC Industrial Park, including Kasai Industries, Scot Industries, Allen Architectural Metals, NewSouth Express, Buffalo Rock and StyleCrest.

In the future, CVEC, has plans for a \$1.5 million upgrade in security for the facility. “We really want to beef up security, especially with our industrial park.”

Cullimore said that philanthropy work is important to him and the staff of CVEC, and he serves on the board of directors of Top Trails in Talladega.

“Visiting off-road parks is one of my hobbies. My family and I love them. Top Trails has been great for the community. You can find visitors from all across the southeast on any typical weekend.”

He has also served as committee chairman for the ARC of North Talladega County.


dega County.




“Sunshine Saturday and the ARC of North Talladega County is something that is very important to myself and

CVEC. It’s something we are always involved with. We are here to help serve the community.”

Cullimore has been married to his wife Pau-

la since 2008. They have four children, Patrick, Hannah, Mason and Hillary, and a granddaughter, Harper.





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# Munford mayor considers public service an honor

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Special to The Daily Home

Still relatively new to her job, Munford mayor Jo Ann Fambrough was voted into office in November 2016. She brought her background in management and manufacturing with her to help lead the city. Fambrough worked for 25 years for Midline Industries in Talladega and Pell City, and she also has international experience. She worked for the company in Mexico from 1998 to 2004.

Fambrough identified the following positive developments that took place in Munford last year in the areas of education, city improvements, and health.

- Munford Public Library's award of a \$25,000 grant in 2018 will allow an expansion to the building, which will add more space for books and library-related materials.

- The city paid for a new roof on the gym at the Munford Community Center.

The new Head Start building is now on city property, and the city leased the property for 15 years.

- Munford City purchased a new shed to house its trucks.

- The Old Munford High School's football bleachers on the visitor's side, which were dangerous, were removed, which will make those who practice there safer.

- The city purchased a new police car and hired an additional policeman.

She also listed the following items that are in the works for 2019.

- Workers began the new addition to the library, which should be completed by the end of the year.

- City officials are implementing the standards



File Photo

**Munford's elected officials include, from left, council members Lee Garrison, Tim Lipham and Phillip McWilliams, Mayor JoAnn Fambrough and council members Wade Champion and Shane Turner.**

of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The improvements are to take place on the upper field of the baseball complex on Carter Street.

- A new playground is planned at a location to be identified.

- The Veterans Memorial, located off Campbell Road, will expand to in-

clude a flag pole, a memorial honoring all current and former veterans who fought in any branch of service and in any war. Also, a plaque will recognize the last Civil War soldier killed east of the Mississippi River. The soldier was killed in the Battle of Munford.

- The walking track

behind the Munford Community Center is to receive better lighting.

- The mayor is to help form a zoning committee to improve business and residential zoning regulations in Munford.

Fambrough, a Munford native, is happy that the Alabama Department of Transportation is plan-

ning an exit off I-20 into Munford. She hopes the exit will improve business opportunities in the city.

The mayor said she treasures the citizens of Munford. "I consider it both an honor and a privilege to serve the people of our wonderful community."

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# McClendon Bridals: Continuing a family tradition on Broadway in the Marble City's historic downtown



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

McClendon Bridals has an extensive and constantly evolving inventory of wedding gowns in a wide variety of sizes and styles by such designers as Monique Lhullier, Rivini, Hayley Paige, Amsale, Austin Scarlett, Pronovias, Justin Alexander, Rosa Clara, Martina Liana and Anne Barge, allowing a bride to secure the dress of her dreams without having to wait weeks or months for it to arrive.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

McClendon Bridals is at 118 North Broadway Avenue in downtown Sylacauga, a location that is rich in local history and has special significance for owner Kim Windsor. The shop is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Appointments are preferred.

By DINSE SINCLAIR  
Home staff writer

A new bridal shop has opened on North Broadway Avenue in Sylacauga, one that is steeped in history, from its owner to the building it occupies. Kim Duck Windsor has revitalized the downtown building that once belonged to her father, the late J.M. (Joe) Duck, who for decades operated J.M. Duck Jewelers in the location. Windsor describes her shop's Broadway address and the name behind her business as a treasure. Her father's middle name was McClendon. That's the name she chose for her bridal shop, McClendon Bridals. Windsor said her father had a vision for a thriving business in downtown Sylacauga, and so does she. For more than 50 years, he made

that vision a reality and became a leader among jewelers across the region. She remembers her father being passionate about quality and, most of all, people. "He always made time for someone's story, and when that story included asking a question about forever, it was his chance to become a part of it by helping them select the symbol of eternity to be worn and passed down through the generations." The bridal shop owner is hoping to pass down her business to the next generation – her daughter, Ginger Nix, and her granddaughters. The shop is located in her father's jewelry store and the old Whitley Barber Shop. With the help of artist/architect Jean Peters, Windsor brought the two shops to life again, creating a welcom-

ing experience and dream space for brides-to-be searching for that special wedding dress. "The building we call home has been making brides happy for decades. There's been a Duck on Broadway since the

1950s, when my grandfather owned Duck's Happy House, where Miss Kitty's Restaurant was years ago. I want to extend the Duck legacy on Broadway like my grandfather and father," she said. She believes her father would be proud of what she has done to the building and opening a new business. Windsor retired after more than

40 years with Motion Industries. Her husband, Ken, is also retired. She has always envisioned a bridal shop, where women in the area and beyond could have something nice and beautiful. "I decided to do this with my daddy's old store. He sold wedding rings in this very building, and now it has come full circle with me selling wedding dresses," Wind-

sor said. The shop features designer wedding dresses off the rack from designers in Chicago, Tampa, Atlanta and Boston. She and Nix went on buying trips to these locations where she had made contact with buyers. "We have a variety of sizes from 2 to 28. A bride can select a great designer gown at a great price in a luxurious atmosphere," Windsor said,

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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

In addition to wedding gowns, the Sylacauga boutique offers an extensive collection of accessories, including veils, belts, headpieces and jewelry. Also available is a selection of special occasion attire for such bridal events as showers, parties and dinners.

adding that she didn't want the look of the shop to scare anyone away. "I want them to feel welcome. Everyone will be treated the same. This is a truly unique experience for today's bride."

One visitor to the shop recently told her, "I feel like I'm in Beverly Hills." The shop is elegant, glamorous and inviting with large dressing rooms (in which brides can see themselves in the dresses from all angles as they look into huge mirrors), an area for family members to wait as the brides try on dresses and an area devoted to accessories and jewelry.

Using her passion and experience to help brides make their special days perfect, Windsor decorated her shop, removed the lowered ceiling so that it now showcases the original tin ceiling, painted white. She wanted it to be white, bright and clear with different mixes of shades of white. Contractor for the revitalization of the shop was Don Hardy.

One unique aspect of the shop is that each quarter, Windsor plans to display a wedding photo and article featuring a Sylacauga bride of the Greatest Generation. This quarter, the bride is

Peters. Windsor's father was himself a member of the Greatest Generation, as a World War II naval aviator and was well known in his community. He loved to sit on a bench outside his jewelry store and talk to people walking down the sidewalk. She has kept that bench in front of her shop. "I couldn't remove it. It was his bench," she said.

Duck died in November of 2011, at the age of 90. Her mother, the former Betty Craddock, also died that year.

Windsor opened her shop on February 1. So far, she has sold three dresses. Her calendar is

filled with weekend appointments with brides coming from such distances as Montgomery, Dadeville and Clay County. She hopes news of her shop extends to Talladega, Pell City, Anniston, Shelby County and beyond. It is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Appointments are preferred. McClendon Bridals can be found on Facebook and Instagram, and has its own website, [mcclendonbridals.com](http://mcclendonbridals.com). The phone number is 256-369-1446.

Windsor looks forward to becoming a part of the retail community,

and she hopes the shop will be good for Sylacauga by attracting new customers to downtown.

When not at her shop, Windsor spends time with her husband and family, which includes

son Wes Watkins and wife Amy and granddaughters Marlee and Maggie, and daughter Ginger and husband Jeff and grandson Judah and granddaughter Josie.

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Wed. Night Service: 6:00 p.m.

**Plainview Baptist Church**  
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Talladega

**Ironaton Baptist Church**  
5938 Ironaton Road  
Talladega  
Pastor: Gary Plummer  
(256) 591-8696

**Corinth Baptist Church**  
16415 Ala. Hwy. 21 • Sylacauga  
Pastor Anthony Dykes  
Sunday School 8:00 am  
Worship Service 9:00 am  
Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm  
Phone (256) 872-2356

**First Baptist Church**  
200 8th Ave. SW, Childersburg  
(256) 378-6058  
Sunday Services 10:30 am  
Wednesday Services 6:00 pm  
[www.firstbaptistchildersburg.org](http://www.firstbaptistchildersburg.org)

**Bemiston Baptist Church**  
300 James Street • Talladega  
(256) 362-2859  
Sunday School 9:45 am  
Worship 11:00 am  
Evening Worship 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Service 6:00 pm

**Concord United Methodist Church**  
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Talladega  
Pastor - Michael Gatch  
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**Hepzibah Baptist Church**  
5329 Renfroe Road  
Talladega  
256-268-2200  
Pastor Justin Milliken

**Cragdale Baptist Church**  
2149 Berney Station Rd.  
Talladega  
Sunday School - 10 a.m.  
Morning Worship - 11 a.m.  
Evening Worship - 6 p.m.  
Wednesday Night - 6 p.m.

**Bemiston United Methodist Church**  
300 Wells Ave.  
Talladega  
(256) 521-1230  
Pastor Glen Horn  
Sunday Morning  
Worship - 11:00 a.m.

**Sylacauga First Assembly Of God**  
560 Gantts Junction Rd.  
Sylacauga (256) 249-2461  
Pastor Brian Jones  
[sfa@sfachurch.com](mailto:sfa@sfachurch.com)  
[www.sfachurch.com](http://www.sfachurch.com)

**Mt. Ida Baptist Church**  
Berney Station Rd.  
Talladega

**Mt. Zion Freewill Baptist Church**  
Martin St. N., Pell City  
(205) 338-3708  
Sunday School 9:45 am  
Sunday Worship 10:45 am  
Wed. Service 7:00 pm  
Gospel Blue Grass-  
Every Sunday 5:00 pm  
Sunday Night 6:00 pm  
Pastor- Michael Barber  
Associate Pastor-  
Travis Webster

**Eden Westside Baptist Church**  
223 Wolf Creek Rd. N., Pell City  
(205) 338-7711  
[www.edenwestside.org](http://www.edenwestside.org)  
PASTOR: JACKY CONNELL  
Sunday Services  
8:10 am & 11:00 am  
Life Discovery 9:35 am  
Sun. Night Worship 6:00 pm  
Wed. Night Bible Study 6:30 pm  
"River Campus"  
1441 W. Riverview Rd  
Trussville, AL 35173  
Sunday Worship 11:00 am  
Life Discovery 9:35 am  
Wed. Bible Study 6:30 pm

**New Maryland Missionary Baptist Church**  
405 New Maryland Rd.  
Alpine, AL  
(256) 268-9304  
Sunday School  
9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship  
11 a.m.  
Wednesday Bible Study  
7 p.m.  
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Pastor  
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Dr. Bill Pruitt

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Pastor Anthony Cook

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(256) 362-3971  
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday Celebration  
10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday Celebration  
6:00 p.m.  
Pastor Tommy Strickland  
[www.ridgeviewbc.net](http://www.ridgeviewbc.net)

**Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church**  
4609 Martin St. S.  
Cropwell (205) 525-5161  
Father William Lucas  
Daily Mass:  
Mon., Tues., Thurs. & Fri. 9 a.m.  
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Saturday Mass: 6 p.m.  
Sunday Masses:  
8:30 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

**Central Baptist Church**  
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126 Spring St. N., Talladega  
(256) 362-4836  
Brother Trull Hill  
Sunday School - 9:45-10:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Worship - 5:00 p.m.  
Wednesday AWANA - 6:00 p.m.  
Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.  
Youth Meeting - 6:00 p.m.  
Adult Choir Practice - 7:15 p.m.

**Harvest Center Church of God**  
3207 - 8th Ave. N.  
Pell City  
(205) 338-2853  
Pastor, Paul Lett  
Sunday Service  
8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.  
Sunday School  
9:45 a.m.  
Sunday Service  
6:00 p.m.  
Celebrate Recovery  
Tuesday 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday Youth  
6:45 p.m.  
Wednesday Service  
7:00 p.m.  
[www.harvestcenterchurch.com](http://www.harvestcenterchurch.com)

**Christ Deliverance Christian Center**  
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256-362-1975  
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10:45 a.m.  
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Young Adult Classes  
Timothy Embry,  
Pastor

**Kingston Baptist Church**  
333 Reynolds Mill Rd.  
Alpine, AL 35014  
(256) 362-0435  
SERVICE TIMES  
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
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FACEBOOK:  
Kingston Baptist Church  
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Talladega  
(256) 362-7390  
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Worship Service 10:15 a.m.  
Sunday Night Service  
6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday Night Service  
6:30 p.m.  
[www.southsidedtalladega.org](http://www.southsidedtalladega.org)

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Pell City  
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Wide Open  
Contemporary Worship  
10:30 am  
Sunday School  
9:15 am  
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Senior Pastor  
Rev. Belinda Rives,  
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Sunday Morning Worship at 11:00 am  
Sunday Evening Service at 5:00 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study at 7:00 pm

**-PSALM 122:1**  
I was glad when they  
said unto me,  
'Let us go into the  
house of the Lord.'  
  
Cindy Pennington

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# Providing hope ‘where it’s so desperately needed’



**Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home**

**Ann's New Life Center for Women is at 3340 Martin Street South, Suite 1, in Cropwell. It is open Tuesdays and Thursdays. A second location is at 4607 Roosevelt Drive in Leeds.**

**By BUDDY ROBERTS**  
**Special Projects Editor**

Gabrielle Martin has served as executive director of Ann's New Life Center for Women, and it's a responsibility she doesn't take lightly.

women who are pregnant or may be pregnant, whether it's listening to them, giving them advice or providing whatever help they need." The

selves, they can't provide for their children or themselves, and they get negatives thrown at them every way they turn.

"When they come here, we don't judge. They get a different perspective than what the rest of the world gives them.



**Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home**

**Gabrielle Martin has served as executive director since August of 2018. "So far, the community has blown me away by how it has supported the center. Many of our clients don't have jobs, they live with family or friends and life is a struggle for them. Our donors and community partners allow us to assist them to better their lives and the lives of their children."**



**Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home**

**The center's boutique offers child care supplies, new and gently used clothing and other necessary items available to clients, who may purchase them with "baby bucks" that are earned by attending parenting and child care classes.**

"For me, it's a full-time ministry," she said. "I have to have God with me for every decision. We want to make sure we're honoring the godly example of Christ, and I pray for our clients as much as I pray for my own family."

As the executive director, Martin finds herself wearing many figurative hats.

"I can put on as many as seven or eight hats in a day," she said. "Everything from paperwork to meeting with churches and pastors to answering phone calls to helping volunteers with classes to taking out the trash."

She went on to explain the role of the center, identify its needs and explain how the community can help meet them.

**About the center:** The nonprofit faith-based center opened in 2012 to assist women who are pregnant or may be pregnant. Its current address is 2440 Martin Street South, Suite 1, in Cropwell. It is open Tuesdays and Thursdays to serve clients from Pell City, Talladega, Lincoln, Moody, Ashville, Springville and Vincent. Its Leeds location is at 4607 Roosevelt Drive, primarily serving Birmingham area clients.

"We are here to show the love of Christ to

center offers pregnancy tests, ultrasounds (at the Cropwell location only), parenting and child care classes, a prayer room and a boutique from which clients can purchase diapers, baby food, books, clothes and healthcare supplies with "baby bucks" they earn by attending classes.

**By the numbers:** The center saw a total of 137 new clients during 2018, an increase from 91 during 2017. "Lately about 75 percent of our new clients coming in pregnant are teens between grades 9 and 12. I would really like to see us be able to partner with the school system on some programs about healthy choices and healthy boundaries for middle school and high school students. Our goal would be to reach them before the need our center."

**Why do clients come to the center?**

"Granted, they may come in because they have physical needs — they can't buy diapers, formula or clothes — but they also come because they need an emotional outlet. So, so often we see mothers who are just beaten up emotionally. Everyone in their life is telling them they'll never make anything of them-

It's like lifting a weight for them. When we have helped them set goals and set healthy boundaries for themselves, it can be a life-changer."

**Is the center pro-life or pro-choice?**

"We want to support, empower and educate the people who walk through these doors. Education is huge, and knowledge is power. We want them to be educated to make the best decision possible for themselves and their unborn babies. If they choose to get an abortion, we will be here for them afterward with open arms and no judgment."

**The center's greatest need:** "Donations. As a nonprofit, all of our

funding comes from donations. You can visit our website to make donations online, you can mail a donation or you can bring one by the center. We also have need for new car seats, baby clothes and diapers. We always have a need for diapers."

**Another way to support the center:** "Besides monetary donations, our biggest need is volunteers. We're pretty short staffed right now, but the volunteers we have now are amazing. Most have been here for several years, and they are so full of love for our mission. But we can always use more, and there's always something for them to do, from helping at the reception desk to cleaning to organizing to serving as a client advocate. We even have volunteers who just wash baby clothes for us."

For information about making donations or volunteering, visit [www.annsnewlifecenter.com](http://www.annsnewlifecenter.com), call 205-338-4560 or email [annsnewlifecenter@gmail.com](mailto:annsnewlifecenter@gmail.com)

**The center's primary goal:** "At the end of the day, we want to give hope where it's so desperately needed."

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# Seeking equality in healthcare, jobs and education

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**  
Special Projects Editor

As a licensed professional counselor, Nieshia Brown believes that her career training is an asset to her new role as chair of the St. Clair County Democratic Executive Committee.

"I have the privilege of hearing people's greatest concerns, insecurities and deeply held beliefs," the Moody resident said. "This gets to the core of how they perceive their world and how they believe they fit into it. This can be especially important in understanding the motivations for political affiliations and potential candidate endorsement."

Brown was elected to the committee late last summer. A native of Dothan, she relocated to central Alabama to attend college at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she earned an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and psychology. She holds graduate degrees in counseling and clinical mental health from Jacksonville State University.

With the 2018 general election almost three months past and the 2020 presidential race on the horizon, she discussed with The Daily Home issues that are of concern to local Democrats, the role of the executive committee and what the party learned from last November's election results.

**What is the purpose of the Democratic Executive Committee?**

**utive Committee?**

"Our role is to raise awareness of the Democratic agenda throughout the county, recruit candidates to run for local offices and serve as a bridge between the party and the community."

**How did you become involved with politics?**

"I had volunteered with a few campaigns in small ways, but I was really energized when Barack Obama ran for president. I saw him when he came to the Boutwell Auditorium in Birmingham. His ideas and what he was trying to do to make things better for all Americans resonated with so many people, including me."

Brown also served as communications director and campaign manager for Dr. Adia Winfrey, who sought the Democratic nomination for Alabama's Third Congressional District in the 2018 primary election.

**What issues are Democratic voters most concerned about?**

"Access to affordable healthcare, equitable access to quality education and job opportunities with adequate living wages."

**What could members of both parties do to improve partisanship and reduce polarization?**

"Have discussions both publicly and privately about areas of concern with the potential for true understanding and compromise. There's too much 'Us vs. Them.' I

have found that many Republicans are concerned about the same things as me. They are often stuck at what I believe are wedge issues that cause a certain intolerance or inflexibility in shared ideals as well. By wedge issues, I mean abortion."

**What do you believe is the biggest misconception about Democrats?**

"That we all support the practice of abortion. I have read statements accusing Democrats of supporting full-term abortions or advanced pregnancy abortions. Many Democrats that I know and support believe, in contrast, that a decision to have a safe abortion should be a decision made between a woman and her physician."

**What did Democrats**

**learn from the Republican sweep of Alabama state offices in the recent general election?**

"We got some information about the work that still needs to be done. What we have to determine moving forward is how we can use that information to make change. How do we reach voters who for whatever reason are unwilling to consider Democratic candidates?"

**Are you encouraged by the growing field of Democratic presidential candidates for 2020?**

"I believe this is an encouraging point. Many of the candidates who have made the announcement have many years of experience at the federal level of government and could potentially yield a very qualified candidate."



**Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home**  
**Nieshia Brown chairs St. Clair County's Democratic Executive Committee.**



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# Sports broadcasters work to build school-community partnerships

By GARY HANNER  
Home staff writer

It's called Dawg Talk and it has been a slow evolution that has taken those involved into a two-year journey that has been worth all the hard work – and the wait.

In 2016, Mickey Farmer (Etowah High School graduate) and Nick Wilson (2014 Ashville High graduate and 2018 Auburn grad) were working on developing a media studio within Ashville High School to give them space and the equipment to cover and promote Ashville sports.

“We were focused on highlight videos, web design, graphic design, and archival film,” Wilson said. “Our priorities were social media and promoting our kids, making Ashville sports somewhat of a leader in digital sports media...not broadcasting.”

Farmer and Wilson were working with the Ashville Spirit Club to raise money needed to achieve their goal, which was \$15,000.



**Submitted Photo**  
**Brandon Farmer, left, and Mickey Farmer participate in a broadcast of Dawg Talk. New episodes are online at [www.ashvilleathletics.com](http://www.ashvilleathletics.com). The broadcast is part of the Ashville Athletics organization's effort to use its website and social media platforms to promote Ashville sports across the region.**

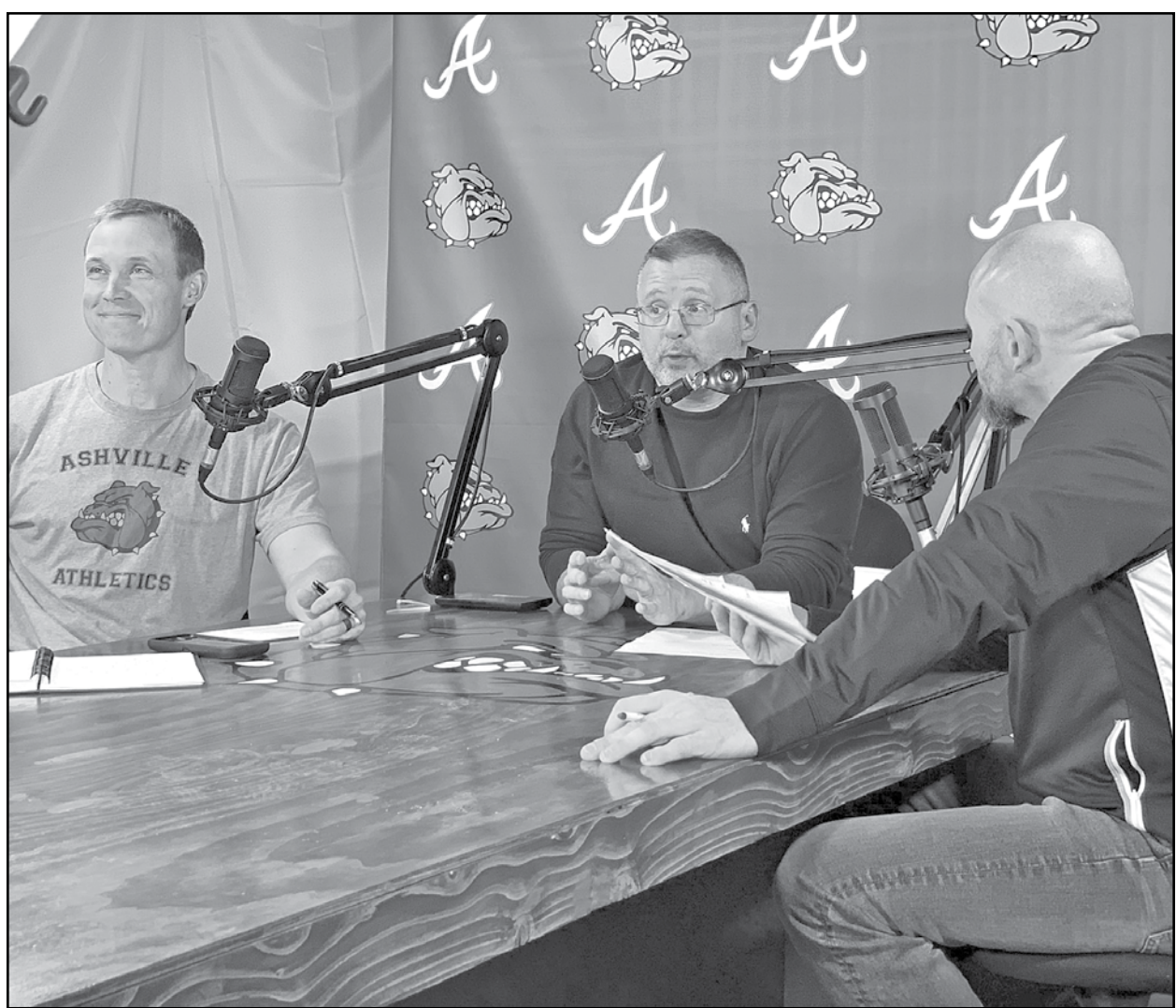
“Then, almost simultaneously, Farmer and I brought up the idea of broadcasting, almost as a funny ‘what-if’ moment,” Wilson said. “We talked about how great it would be to promote our kids and school live on a stream or broadcast, but we never took the idea seriously. We hadn’t even gotten to where we were even halfway done with fundraising for the studio. But, we thought about it more and more as I later found out. I mentioned it again to Farmer, and we became even more encouraged.”

In 2017, Hobart McLendon, (1984 Ashville High graduate) a member of the Ashville Spirit Club, talked to Wilson about having a sports talk show, similar to SportsCenter on ESPN programming. Wilson thought it was a great idea, but never thought they could do it.

“My expertise was in post-production work, meaning that I knew how to film something, then edit it on a computer, not broadcast something live over the internet,” Wilson said. “I was out of my league on that topic, but McLendon kept it up. Finally, after thinking about how we could raise the money, we decided to seek sponsors. Thank goodness for the awesome businesses and people in Ashville, because we received so much support from our commercial partners in the area.”

For the next several months, Farmer and McLendon finessed the show’s format, and Wilson researched the best way to stream and how they could do it with the highest production value possible at the cheapest cost to them.

Then it came time to name the show. “Dog Bites”, “Light it Up!”, and “Time Out” were all considered, but, for the sake of keeping it simple, they chose “Dawg Talk”.



**Submitted Photo**  
**Shaun Carter, right, Ashville High School's assistant wrestling coach, is interviewed by Jay Stewart, left, and Kevin Moore on the Dawg Talk sports program. The broadcast is produced by the staff of Ashville Athletics, which works under the direction of the Ashville Spirit Club. The spirit club works with other local organizations to improve various aspects of community life.**

With a name and a budget, they set off to find two people that could lead their little ragtag broadcast team on the screen. Kevin Moore (1988 graduate of Ashville High) came to mind immediately. He was well-versed in the art of broadcasting, albeit without a camera, but still, he knew how to handle himself on a broadcast of some kind.

Next, they needed someone that could ask the good questions and create an interesting conversation to engage viewers. The first person that came to mind was Jay Stewart, pastor of FBC Ashville.

“Stewart knew sports and public speaking, which made him a natural fit for the job,” Wilson said.

With the format set, the hosts in place, now it was time to buy the equipment and begin testing. After solving some technical difficulties and some other things,

they finally decided on Dec. 8, 2018 as the air date.

“Working long nights after school, basketball games, and wrestling matches, we finally began testing the equipment and seeing how hard it would really be to make this work,” Wilson said. “Test after test, something wouldn’t work the way that we needed it to. This camera’s battery was dead, this microphone couldn’t be mounted, or a particular light would not come on. It was always something. Farmer was thrust in front of the camera, reading plain information out so we could test cameras and sound, but, surprisingly, people found it interesting.”

Friday, Dec. 7, came. Farmer and Wilson got to the school six hours before going live to make sure that the set and equipment was ready. Finally, the time had come, after almost two years, to do what they never thought they could do.

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Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

From left, Brandon Farmer, Mickey Farmer, Jay Stewart, Kevin Moore, Nick Wilson and Nickie VanPelt were all involved in the development of Dawg Talk.

"Sure, we thought it would come about eventually, maybe in 2020, but not now," Wilson said. "The set was finished thanks to Pam Farmer and Nickie VanPelt. After some careful planning, we thought it would be better to tape the show and then stream live the next day, just in case we ran into some of kind of problem. I'm glad we did this because there were problems, there always are in these situations."

Dawg Talk went live after Ashville hosted the Good Hope Raiders in a basketball game.

"Moore and Stewart killed it," Wilson said. "Coach Brandon Farmer (2002 Ashville High graduate) and Coach Tyler Cole were awesome guests, and we had several wonderful people behind the scenes making sure everything went as smoothly as possible."

VanPelt said she was so very excited about Dawg Talk.

"To see this come to fruition through various partnerships within the schools and community is a huge step forward," she said. "We are giving our kids a glimpse into broadcasting, marketing, and the importance of public speaking. It is a win-win for our schools and county. I cannot think of a better way to showcase many of our positives that we have in our schools, community and county. The media center is something technology wise that we can continue to build on and hopefully expand on."

Wilson said they hope Dawg Talk can continue to promote Ashville sports and students for the foreseeable future.

"We aren't where we want to be with it; there's always room for improvement, but it's still nice to see the support from the community," Wilson said. "Watching it go live on Saturday morning and seeing the reaction from the town and our friends was so fulfilling. We hope that we can keep improving and broadcasting so that our program and Ashville athletics becomes the best in the state. Our goal is to unify our community and make our kids the envy of everyone else. Promoting our sports programs and school is so important, so why not do it in style."



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# Helping students make healthier food choices



**Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home**  
**Cori Harris is a nutritionist with the St. Clair County Extension Office. “I love that I get to work with kids and then I get to come back to an office where the people there are such a family to me,” she said.**

**By BUDDY ROBERTS**  
**Special Projects Editor**

Cori Harris knows not everyone gets to work at their dream job, which is why she’s thankful that she does.  
Harris joined the staff of the St. Clair County

Extension Office as a nutritionist in 2017, helping extend its outreach into local schools and encouraging students to improve their eating habits.  
“It was my dream job

in middle school to be a nutritionist,” she said. “I was small, and I saw a nutritionist because my parents were worried that I wasn’t growing as I should. I thought the nutritionist had the coolest job ever.”  
Harris enjoys work-

ing with youngsters, and she worked in the nutrition department of Children’s of Alabama before coming to the extension service. A native of Trussville who graduated from Crossroads Christian School in Moody and Samford University, she described the primary program she presents to students and identified the one word she doesn’t allow them to say about food.  
**Body Quest:** Harris conducts the program – which promotes healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle – for third grade students in schools with participation in free and reduced lunch programs of 50 percent or more. “We do vegetable tastings, iPad lessons and they get healthy recipes to take home to their parents.”  
**How students react to the vegetable tastings:** “Well, kids would prefer to eat things like chips and cakes and cookies, so they’re a little hesitant at first when I bring in the fresh spinach, broccoli and cauliflower. Some of them have never heard of cauliflower, and some don’t know what spinach is. They call it ‘leaves.’ But once they’re aware of the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, they get a whole lot more excited about it, and most will start to like them by the end of the year.”

**Does the program come with some challenges?** “Sometimes, like when someone asks what’s the difference between whole fat, 2 percent, 1 percent and skim milk. That can be a little difficult to explain to third graders. But the important thing is that they’re asking about it, and they’ll go home and tell their parents about it. Another tough question is when they ask if there are healthy foods at McDonald’s. My answer is ‘no, not really,’ other than the apple slices, which is a good way to bring up how whole fruits are better than juices, and the whole question is an opportunity to start a discussion about making better choices.”  
**Her favorite fruit and vegetable:** “Peaches

are my favorite fruit. As for veggies, they’re not my favorite thing, so I can totally relate to the kids about that.”  
**What she won’t permit students to say:** “Our bad word in Body Quest is ‘Ewwwww!’ And they can’t tell me a vegetable is gross or disgusting if they’ve never tried it.”  
**The best part of her job:** “When they come up and tell me, ‘I had extra veggies at dinner last night.’ Or when fourth graders that I worked with the year before come up and tell me about what they’re eating that’s healthy. They’re excited to tell me about it, and I feel like I’ve accomplished something, that I’ve made a difference in these kids’ lives.”



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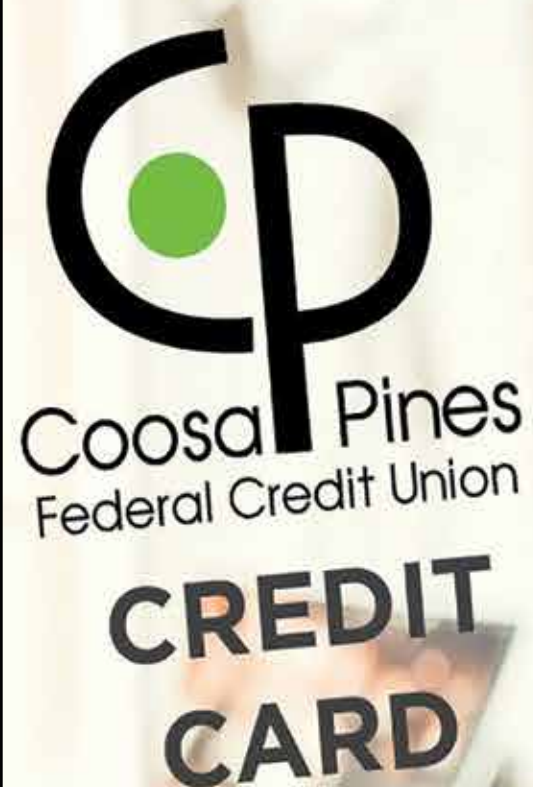
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# Local Matters host on the phone with Oprah

By BUDDY ROBERTS  
Special Projects Editor

As the host of WEAC's weekly program Local Matters, Dottie Rimpsey is often recognized by viewers, sometimes in places where they don't expect to see her.

"I was shopping at the Center of Hope Thrift Store – I love to thrift shop – not long ago, and someone came up to me and said, 'Aren't you that girl on Local Matters? What are you doing here?'" she recalled. "I said, 'I'm shopping here just like you!' Sometimes you don't realize the impact of what you do, but it's always nice when you find out like that."

Local Matters airs at 9:30 p.m. Thursdays on WEAC 24, broadcast to Talladega, St. Clair and seven other counties in central and east Alabama. Created as a forum to discuss issues affecting local communities, the show is in its fourth year, and Rimpsey (who also teaches communications at Talladega College and Jacksonville State University) sees it as part of a journey that began for her at a different time in a different part of the country.

She recently shared her story with The Daily Home.

**From Alabama to New England and back:** Rimpsey's family moved from Anniston to Chicago when she was 9 months old, and she finished high school in

Hartford, Connecticut, before returning south to attend Jacksonville State University. "I came down every summer to visit my dad, which is how I knew of JSU, so it wasn't like the South was totally foreign to me, but I didn't want to go to college right off. I wanted to be a flight attendant, but my father stressed that education is the key to upward mobility, and it was at Jacksonville State that I got the real Southern experience."

**At JSU:** "I had a great experience there." She was a member of the Student Government Association executive committee, a Gamecock hostess, a member of the basketball team's dance line and served as a dorm liaison for the campus police. She returned to Connecticut for two years, but upon resuming her studies at Jacksonville State, she was one of the first graduates to receive a communications degree from the college.

**Back to Connecticut:** Rimpsey was working in corporate event planning when she read a newspaper ad seeking candidates for a paid broadcasting internship at WSFB, Hartford's CBS affiliate. "I had been out of school for four years at that time, and I was competing against students from UConn, Harvard and Yale, but I actually got the position. This was in the pre-cell phone

days, early 1990s, and Gayle King was there as the news anchor."

King, now co-anchor of CBS This Morning, is the longtime best friend of Oprah Winfrey. "Oprah would call every day, two or three times a day, looking for Gayle. It would be routine for me to answer the phone and it would be Oprah: 'Hey, Dottie. Where's Gayle?' We didn't think anything of it."

While at WFSB, Rimpsey had opportunity to interview such well-known figures as the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Lou

Rawls, participate in coverage of a town hall event about race relations and work on projects with King and Maury Povich.

**Back in Alabama:** She returned south and to the corporate and nonprofit sector after a few years but never forgot that "one of the things I always wanted to do was have my own talk show." It was from a conversation with Mickey Shadix, WEAC's general manager, that Local Matters developed.

"We were talking about a program for the station that would spot-

light issues of concern and really embrace everyday, average citizens in the spirit of diversity and inclusion. But we didn't know what we were going to name it. There was a coffee mug on the table with 'Local Matters' on it – that was the station's motto. Mickey said, 'Why don't we call it Local Matters?' I said, 'That's it!' We didn't know how it would be received, but the public has really embraced it."

**The goal of Local Matters:** "To empower, inspire and motivate people to talk about issues

that matter to them, and I'm proud that we've had people from all walks of life on the show. It was also created to challenge people to be more open in the way they talk about issues, whether they're of local or national concern."

**The journey so far:** "I'm glad I get to do what I love. It's amazing how God will move you to where you're supposed to be, and I believe I'm where I'm supposed to be right now."



Photo Submitted

**Host Dottie Rimpsey on the set of Local Matters with gastroenterologist Dr. Mohamadali Eloubeidi. The issues-driven talk show can be seen on WEAC 24 in Talladega, St. Clair and seven other counties in central and east Alabama.**

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# St. Clair educator receives Be the Change Award



File photo

Kevin Hathcock of St. Clair County Schools is a recipient of the Rhonda L. Cotton Be the Change Award. At right is former superintendent Jenny Seals.

By SHERRY KUGHN  
Special to The Daily Home

Kevin Hathcock's responsibilities as student services coordinator with St. Clair County Schools are many.

He is a court liaison for students and serves on the St. Clair County DHR Multi-Needs and Quality Assurance committees to assist with meeting student needs. He is the Attendance Officer for grades K-12, and he coordinates cheerleader tryouts, which are coming up soon.

Recently, members of the Alabama Association of Prevention, Attendance, and Support Services (AAPASS) awarded Hathcock the "Rhonda L. Cotton: Be the Change Award" for his dedication to "doing the right thing for children and families."

The AAPASS operates under the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, which formed in 1969. Members work to provide professional development for school administrators and to meet the needs for schools and students. About 3,500 members take part in programs designed to improve public education.

The late Rhonda Cotton, for whom the award was named, worked in the Baldwin County School System helping students and administrators in countless ways. She was deemed an ambassador for Alabama's schools.

Hathcock, who does not know who nominated him, fulfilled the criteria of being a candidate who is "ingrained in family and community, who believes that the quality of living can and should be improved for everyone," according to a press release.

Hathcock began teaching first grade at Odenville Elementary School 25 years ago. Five years later, he became assistant principal of the school. For the past 15 years, he has worked in his current job. His path as an educator began at Jacksonville State University where he enrolled to become a radiologist. However, he quickly realized the field was not for him, and he followed a friend's suggestion to visit a school system. He changed his major to education.

"I observed a classroom and fell in love with

education," he said.

One example of his work is that he implemented a county-wide cheerleader tryout for the entire school system to allow all cheerleaders to be judged fairly and equally through the use of a uniform judging standard with the same set of judges judging all cheerleaders in one day. After conducting research to find the best practices, he worked with the schools to move the tryouts away from each individual school and to hire judges from outside each district. The postings of the results, which are done the evening of the tryouts, are uploaded to the school system's website.

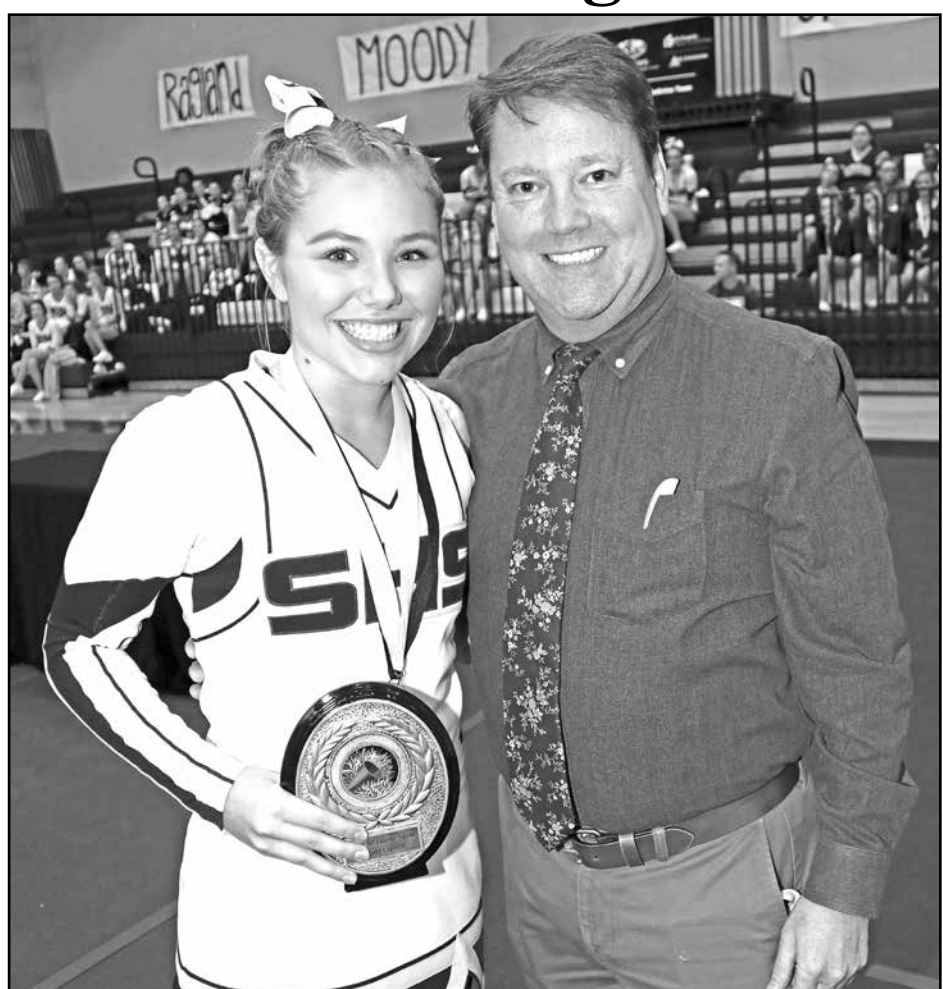
"I hated seeing the girls find out if they made it or not in front of their peers," Hathcock said. "Now they can find out the results in their homes."

Another example of his work is that he serves

as the board of education liaison for the St. Clair County juvenile court system. In this role, he provides educational documentation and answers questions about the court system on behalf of the students. In addition, as an attendance officer, he works with the St. Clair County Juvenile Probation Office to stress the importance of school attendance with students and parents.

In addition to his job, Hathcock volunteers time at his grandson's daycare and also volunteers as a Miss Alabama/Miss America Field Director and co-director of the Miss Alabama's Outstanding Teen Competition, where he has helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for participants to pursue their college education. Some of the most rewarding memories that he has found throughout the years are when former students approach him and thank him.

"That makes all I do worth it," he said.



File photo

Hathcock with Katie Cone of Springville High School, who was named captain of the 2018 St. Clair All-County Varsity cheerleading team. He has organized the annual county cheerleading competition for a number of years.

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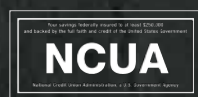
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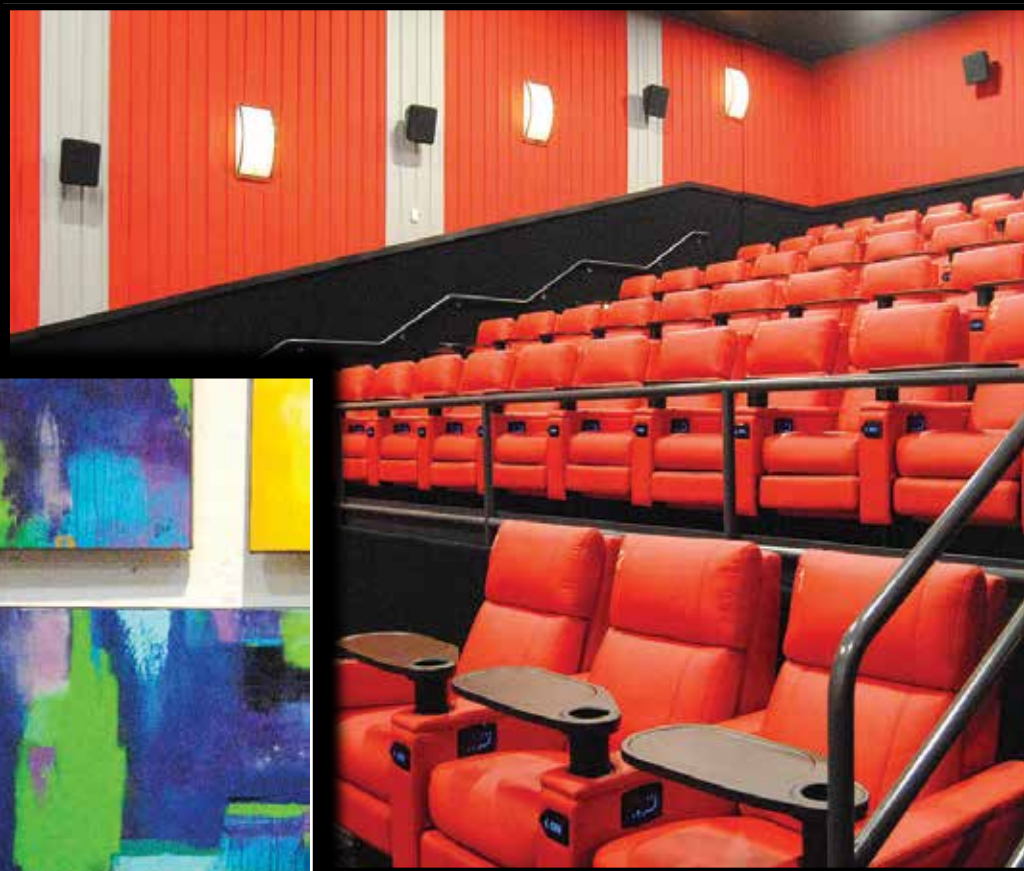


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*Gateway to Logan Martin Lake*



# Pell City Chamber of Commerce plans big events for 2019



The chamber of commerce’s office is inside the Pell City Municipal Complex.



**New Pell City Chamber of Commerce officers are, from left, president Chris Christian, president-elect Greg Weber, vice president Kelly Furgerson and treasurer Ashley St. John.**

By **DAVID ATCHISON**  
Home staff writer

While some organizations may struggle to find new members, there were fresh faces at the recent Pell City Chamber of Commerce’s Annual Stakeholders Meeting.

“That’s a good way of putting it. ‘Fresh faces,” said chamber president Chris Christian.

The local chamber continues its work to drive up membership numbers, and it is apparently doing a good job in that area.

“That’s a challenge everywhere,” Christian said. “It’s hard to get people to sign on, but we have a lot of professionals here who want to help make the chamber and community better.”

He said when new professionals move into the area, they seek out the chamber.

“We have fresh faces wanting to see positive things in the city,” Christian said. “We’ve done so many good things in the past two years.”

The chamber recently released its three-year strategic plan. Included as one of its goals is increasing its membership during the next three years.

“We want to grow our membership by 25 percent in the next three years,” Christian said.

The strategic plan provides a roadmap for the chamber.

Christian said the plan is especially helpful for new members or officers who are elected to a chamber office.

“They won’t have to ask, ‘What are we supposed to do?’” he said. “With this plan, everybody knows what is going on. This gives everyone a clear road map.”

The St. Clair County Economic Development Council partnered with the chamber to help develop the strategic plan, which included input from community leaders and chamber members.

“We discussed the good and the bad and things we could improve on,” Christian said.

The list of ideas was reviewed by a committee, which focused and narrowed the list, so a three-

year plan could be developed.

The plan outlines goals the chamber wants to achieve during the next three years.

The strategic plan outlines improvements in the areas of communications, marketing and promotion, leadership, membership, tourism and education, and the chamber is already improving in many of those areas, according to its president.

Christian said the chamber’s monthly After Hours meet-and-greet is booked all the way to August or September. After Hours is held in local businesses that are members of the Chamber, and the event provides an avenue for people to get to know others in the community while having fun.

“Now we have people calling us wanting to hold an After Hours at their business,” Christian said.

He said the chamber is also gearing up to start a Chamber Ambassador Program at Pell City High School.

The chamber has planned one big event each quarter, and it recently held its annual stakeholders meeting at Louie’s Grill in Cropwell. It was

the big event for the first quarter. Next up is the annual Block Party, which is slated for June 1. The event will again be held on a Saturday.

“That seemed to work really well last year, transitioning from Friday to Saturday,” Christian said.

The following quarter, in September, the chamber will hold its Citizen, Business and Industry of the Year luncheon, and during the final quarter, December, the chamber will hold the annual Christmas Parade.

The chamber office is in the Pell City Municipal Complex, 1000 Bruce Etheredge Parkway, Suite 105. The telephone number is 205-338-3377.

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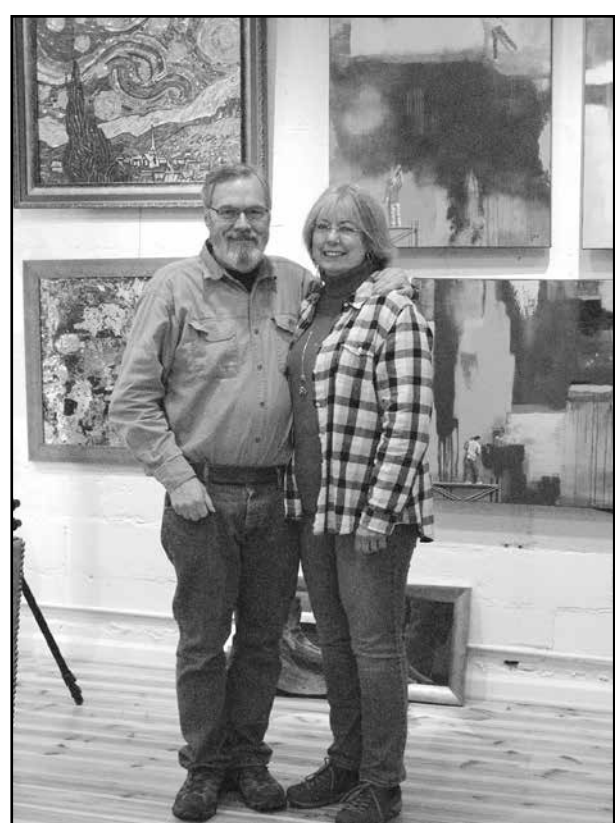
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# Creative collaborations at the Gallery of Eden

By AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD  
Special to The Daily Home



**Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard**  
**Wally Bromberg and Nettie Bean are the owners of Gallery of Eden in Pell City.**

When you turn off Exit 156 on I-20, take a right and cruise down Cogswell Avenue, you're greeted with vivacious energy, creative expression and electric movement at the Gallery of Eden.

Opened in November of 2018 by the creative couple of Wally Bromberg and Nettie Bean, the gallery has gifted the Pell City area with the opportunity to enjoy eclectic examples of creativity.

Developing this niche is a natural fit for this photographer and artist duo. "I never thought I'd be a gallerist," Bromberg said. He smiled adding, "That's the official term."



**Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard**  
**"There's a tremendous amount of talent in this area," Bromberg said. "We want to offer good quality art to the community."**

At 68 Cogswell Avenue, Gallery of Eden is home to 20 artists. "We love art and the art community," Bromberg said. "Gallery of Eden offers good quality art to our community. There's a tremendous amount of talent in this area. We know we are blessed."

Open from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays the gallery is a place where people can see and buy beautiful works of art. "Buying the product of local artists means so much to them because a significant amount of their income is their art," said Bromberg.

Incorporating other artistic elements to the gallery, Tuesday nights are about the performing arts, with several musicians gathering for a jam session. In March, Bean plans to offer Introduction to Art classes for up to 12 students. She is also available for private lessons.

When asked from where she draws her inspiration, Bean said, "Light and shapes intrigue me. And atmospheric conditions — the more you see, the more you see." Regarding Bean's work, Bromberg says, "Nettie has an amazing eye and sense of composition."

Eager to offer art of all kinds and all budgets to local collectors, Gallery of Eden price points range from \$5 to \$2,500.

"You may be looking for a painting for your wall that goes along with decorator colors or thinking this would look good in my living room," Bromberg said. "It's about having an emotional connection with a painting. For instance, one of

Nettie's paintings brings up fond memories where a friend of ours visited creeks with his dad. Art is entirely subjective."

Grateful for the support both community members and other art galleries are giving them, Bromberg and Bean believe Gallery of Eden is about building a firm foundation, which enables them to take risks.

Diversity is displayed throughout the gallery, whether you're searching for works from wood carver Dan Bussey (who creates one-of-a-kind staffs and walking sticks) or Steve and Sally Smith (who create mosaics, or as Steve likes to say, "wine chimes,"), Gallery of Eden is making a statement — each artist's work has a distinct style.

"Larry Allen does amazing work with symmetry," Bromberg stated. "While local artist Lynda Bassett, who is originally from New Zealand and once created pastry masterpieces, has translated her talent in cake decorating over to clay. Her work is so diverse."

Canne Holladay, who studied art at Auburn University and worked at high-end studios, has come back home to Pell City and is showing her work at Gallery of Eden. Works by other artists, such as Sylvia McDonald, Troy Crisswell, Malory Gilbreath, Art Bacon, Diane Ellis, Christ Cotter, Penny Arnold and Kimberly Fox, can be viewed and purchased at Gallery of Eden.

Fusing their love of art and for one another to-



**Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard**  
**The work of 20 local artists is on display in the gallery.**

gether is what moved Bromberg and Bean to develop Gallery of Eden, a space that began in their hearts and minds, then became a reality. "We need art in all forms," Bromberg stated. "It's an incredibly powerful thing."

For more information, visit Gallery of Eden's Facebook page or call 205-370-8702.



**Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard**  
**"Buying the products of local artists helps their families and our communities," Bromberg said.**



**Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard**  
**"We need art in all forms," Bromberg said. "It's an incredibly powerful thing."**

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# ‘We are so blessed to have this in Pell City’ New entertainment center opens to rave reviews

By **AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD**  
Special to The Daily Home

The first of its kind in Pell City, Premiere Cinemas offer moviegoers, bowlers and gaming enthusiasts a unique entertainment experience. Ann Ray, director of amusement for Premiere Cinemas, rate office is loving it,” she said. “They’re very happy with this facility.” Seeing the success of Pell City Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub is expected to prompt overseers in Premiere Cinemas Tex-

Pell City Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub ushered in 2019 by opening its doors on January 18. Assigned seating for the movies can be purchased online at [www.pccmovies.com](http://www.pccmovies.com), at a kiosk or any counter at Pell City Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub.

of 800 people, who can look forward to delectable edibles being served to the theater doors, party rooms and bowling lanes. Residents are thrilled to have such an establishment in Pell City. One community member wrote on her Facebook page, “Guys,

exclaimed, “Totally impressed! First class, top notch facility!” Hosting charitable



Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard  
The long-awaited entertainment complex opened in January, featuring seven first-run movie screens.

feels honored Pell City has been chosen for the company’s pilot program. “So far our corpo-

as based corporate office to construct others across the country. Having broken ground in 2016, the

The entertainment center employs approximately 70 employees, providing 7 screens in theaters that seat a total


this place is so nice! You have to check it out. Amazing! We are so blessed to have this in Pell City.” Another


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events, field trips, birthday parties and more, Premiere Cinemas is also home to an arcade, ropes course and bowling alley.

People from Calhoun County to Tuscaloosa and places in between are making the trip because the price is right. "A 10-person party is \$150," said Ray. Serving up a full menu and bar options means people can truly enjoy dinner and a movie all in one place. With prices ranging from \$6.99-\$15.99 for Previews (appetizers) to Main Features (entrees), Premiere Cinemas Pizza Pub & Grill is priced right for any budget.

Whether it's pizza (by the slice or made to order), fried pickles or Philly cheesesteak, dinner is on and served in your theater. While you're on the way to your seat, don't forget to grab some popcorn and an Icee or other beverage at the self serve counters.

Open 11 a.m.-11 p.m. seven days a week, Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub at 1200 Vaughan Lane invites community members to enjoy time with family and friends over their favorite beverage and a round of Ice Man, one of the most popular games in the arcade.

"We use two gallons of water a day on Ice Man," said Bobby Ray,

ation is the creation of a patio area to enhance Pell City's entertainment experience.

Whether you're craving Dippin' Dots, a tub of buttery movie theatre popcorn or must see the latest blockbuster, it's all in your backyard now with the opening of Premiere Lux, Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub.

For more information, visit Pell City Premiere LUX Cinertainment and Pizza Pub on Facebook or call 205-814-7500.

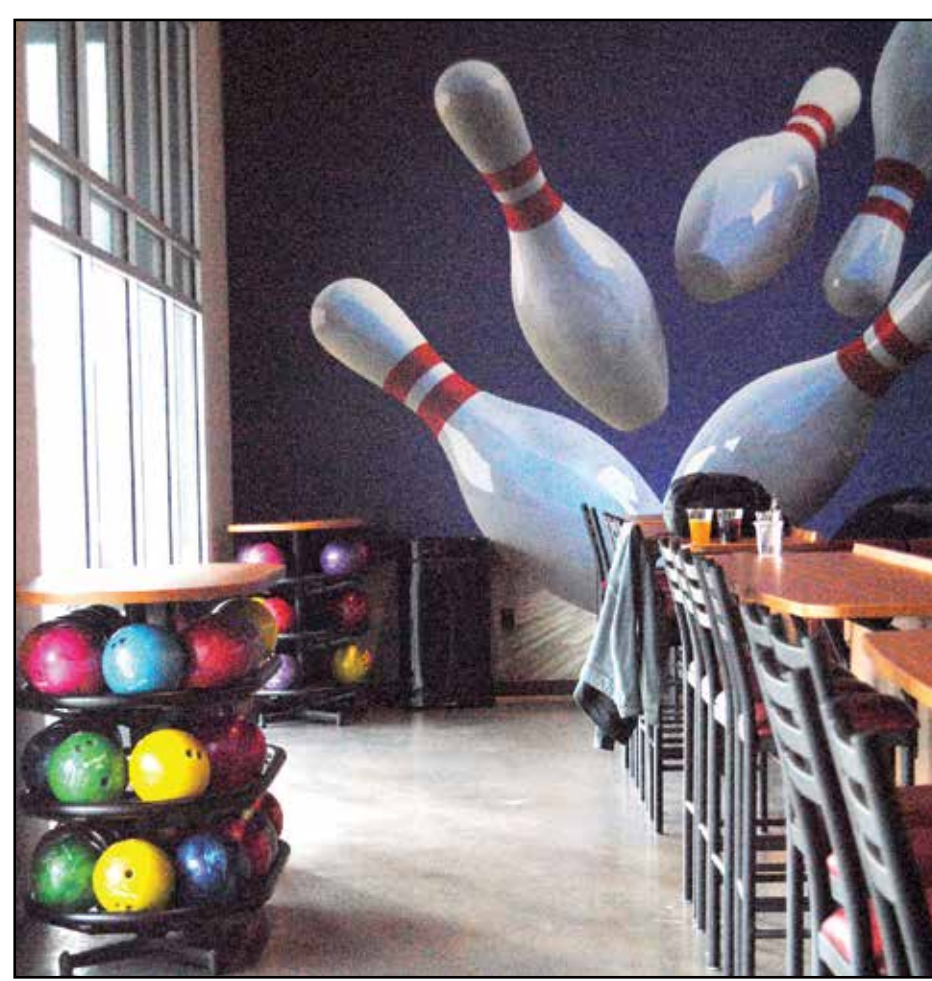


Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard  
Movies, bowling lanes and arcade games are now under one roof in Pell City.



Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard  
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Ann's husband who runs the Sky Rail ropes course. "The Jurassic Park game is also very popular."

Sky Rail is typically open Fridays-Sundays from 4 p.m.-10 p.m., and Ray says the course always uses the principle "safety first." Sky Rail is for those at least 48" tall and who weigh less than 300 pounds. Thirty minutes on the ropes course is \$5 for 12 and younger and \$8 for those 13 and older.

Also available for those yearning for a fun night out is the Premiere Cinemas Rewards Card and Premiere Cinertainment Enter Card that can be loaded with money and used to purchase anything in the building.

Doing their part to be a good corporate citizen, Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub is creating a Mentor Program. "The local police and fire departments are teaming up with children in the area to create a fun social league," Ray said.

Already striving to improve upon the good thing going at Premiere Lux Cine, Bowl & Pizza Pub, under consider-

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# Celebrating good times in Cropwell



Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard

Celebrations is “a place for all occasions,” including weddings, receptions, anniversary and birthday parties, showers and other special events.

By AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD  
Special to The Daily Home

Guests entering Celebrations at 3005 Martin Street South in Cropwell are welcomed by a sign that reads, “Gather here with grateful hearts.” That’s exactly how brides and grooms, birthday boys and girls and other distinguished honorees feel when they host their events there.

iff’s Department featuring various local community celebrities. On March 17, Celebrations will host a fashion show fundraiser for Trevor Moore to help fight colon cancer. Dyer wants everyone to know that all proceeds will go directly to help Moore conquer cancer. Celebrations is an award-winning venue, re-



Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard

Inflatables are always a popular option for children’s parties hosted at Celebrations.

Owner Debra Dyer opened the events center in 2001 and hosts events from church functions to weddings to class reunions and everything in between. With a comfortable capacity of 500, Celebrations is home to several popular community events such as the recent Dancing with Our Stars gala organized by the Pell City Line Dancers, a fundraiser supporting the St. Clair County Sher-

ceiving such accolades as Small Business of the Year from the Pell City Chamber of Commerce and the Appreciation Award from the Pell City Civitans “in honor and deep appreciation for distinguished and unselfish service.” Housing a dance studio upstairs, the room also serves as a dressing area for brides. On the opposite side of where weddings/receptions are typ-



Photo by Amanda E.H. Pritchard

Elegant lighting and decor provide the perfect ambiance for special occasions at Celebrations.



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ically hosted is the area for children's birthday parties.

That side of the building is also used by ACE, "the best in cheer, tumbling and stunting, perfect for individuals and squads." Also using the space are Extreme Dance Company as well as the Japan International Karate Center.

Dyer believes in offering a fair price for such special occasions.

"It's \$600 for the 'big' room for a four-hour event. This price includes tables and chairs," said Dyer. "For five hour weddings, the room is \$750. All day is \$1,200 and for two days is \$1,500. Children's birthday parties start at \$150 for one inflatable for two hours."

For the second year in a row, Celebrations welcomes fans and wrestlers to Venom Championship Wrestling presented by Breakout. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and bell time is at 7:30 p.m. Front row tickets are \$12 and \$10 for general admission.

Excited by what they

saw, a potential new client was overheard saying, "I like the lighting. It really creates ambiance."

For many, Celebrations has become a family affair. "Some families have their bridal shower, wedding, anniversary parties, baby showers and then years later have their own grandchildren's parties here," said Dyer.

Speaking of family affairs, Dyer intends

to make Celebrations a family business, as she hopes to pass it down to her three-and-a-half-year-old grandson Jax. As she looked on while Jax plays with a new friend on one of the Celebrations' bounce houses, she said, "This will all be his one day."

For more information, call 205-884-8632, email [aplace4all@aol.com](mailto:aplace4all@aol.com) or visit Celebrations' Facebook page.

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# Goodgame Company strives to be a good neighbor, community partner

By **SHERRY KUGHN**  
Special to The Daily Home

Jason Goodgame, vice president of Goodgame Company, Inc., located in Pell City, helps oversee his family's business that has a reputation for being a good neighbor to the community and state.

A recent accolade is proof of his service. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey appointed Jason to represent the Associated Builders and Contractors

(ABC) of Alabama on the Alabama Craft Training Board. He also sits on the ABC executive board. He and the Craft Training board members work to provide funding for workforce development for the construction industry.

Goodgame is a family-owned, general contracting company, known for its design-build service. Typically, projects are



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Goodgame Company was established in St. Clair County in 1955.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Vice president Jason Goodgame is a member of the executive board of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Alabama.

for commercial and industrial customers.

Established in 1955, it offers quality construction, plant maintenance and fabrication services. In addition, Goodgame offers the ability to provide field welding, steel fabrication services (with special pride in keeping steel on hand to support construction needs and to service the general public). Also, they provide plant maintenance services for companies such as National Ce-

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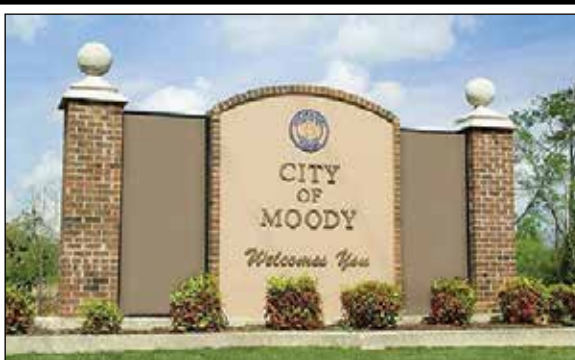
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**Bob Crisp/  
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*Joe Lee*  
Mayor of Moody



0002672771

ment and Honda Manufacturing of Alabama and warehousing facilities and construction management to local municipalities.

"For more than half a century, we have set the standard in design-build construction," Jason said, "by combining design skills with the construction planning and managing abilities of an experienced construction company."

The company is licensed to work in surrounding states but focuses its efforts within a 60-mile radius of Pell City. This past year, Jason traveled to Germany with a group from St. Clair County in order to visit German auto suppliers with local ties.

For the community, Jason serves as president of Pell City Schools' Educational Foundation and president of the St. Clair County Cattlemen's Association. Through the education foundation, teachers can apply for educational grants for classroom needs. The cattlemen's group works to promote education to local farmers and also to work with the state association for lobbying purposes.

Goodgame has an average of 85 employees, mostly from St. Clair County and from other Northeast Alabama areas.

"We have a lot of long-term employees who make this company what it is," said Jason. "We have a large group of twenty-year employees and a small group of thirty-year employees. These people are the key to our success."



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# Jefferson State contributes to local economic development

## Staff Report

The Pell City campus of Jefferson State Community College continued to be a boost to the economic development of St. Clair County and neighboring communities at the start of 2019.

With approximately 860 for-credit students, the St. Clair-Pell City Campus is Jefferson State's fastest growing campus and has served more than 7000 students since opening in 2006.

Following are several significant developments that took place at the Pell City campus during the past year.

•For every dollar spent on Jefferson State, the community received \$13.10 in economic benefit.

•Through a partnership with the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, St. Clair County Head Start, and the First Methodist Church of Pell City, ten single-moms completed training at Jefferson State to begin work as welders in 2018. This partnership eliminated the barriers of tuition, childcare, books, and transportation. The single-moms also learned job readiness skills, computer training, and math and other essential skills.

•Jefferson State opened a new Nursing and Allied Health Wing at the St. Clair-Pell City Campus. The expansion includes two simulation labs, 8 simulation manikins, one fundamental instruction lab, two classrooms, 6 offices and a conference/debriefing room.

•Keith Brown was selected as president of Jefferson State in 2018. Brown has served Jefferson State for nearly 20 years, most recently in the role of interim president. His tenure at the college has been marked by his commitment to expanding and maintaining partnerships with community leaders, business and industry, education institutions and elected officials.

•For the third time in four years, Jefferson State was named one of the best colleges to work for in the United States by The Chronicle of Higher Education. Jefferson State is one of only 15 community colleges recognized in the U.S. for this honor and the only college or university recognized in Alabama.

•For the second consecutive year, the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Chapter earned "Most Distinguished Chapter in Alabama" during the state-wide convention. The chapter ranked first out of 33 in the state.

•The Pell City Center for Education and Performing Arts (CEPA)

and Jefferson State's St. Clair-Pell City Campus partner to produce community theatre programs for all ages. Several theatrical productions are performed throughout the year and dual enrollment Theatre Appreciation classes are provided to local high schools. The program is supported by Jefferson State, the Alabama Council on the Arts, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, the Pell City School System, and the Rotary Club of Pell City.

•The Jefferson State Women's Golf Team had a tremendous season in 2018 by finishing first in the Snead State Fall Invitational at Lake Guntersville in October and by placing second in the tournament in Hanceville, Alabama in September.

Jefferson State is one of Alabama's leading two-year colleges and provides excellence in education and workforce training while making them accessible and affordable for everyone. Since 1965, Jefferson State has offered affordable tuition, small classes with personal attention and flexible scheduling.

About 60 percent of students transfer to a four-year university and about 20 percent are enrolled in health programs. With more than 250 nursing graduates each year, Jefferson State is the leading producer of nursing graduates with associate degrees in the state.

Over the next 10 years, seven out of 10 jobs will require up to an associate degree. Jefferson State offers more than 120 transfer programs, 33 career programs and several certificate programs to help fill this demand, from culinary arts and computer information systems to veterinary nursing and manufacturing technology. The college also delivers non-credit workforce training in career programs that can be completed in as little as six weeks. These "fast-track" programs prepare students for immediate employment in a very short time.

Jefferson State is a leader in dual enrollment programs with many area high schools. More than 1,800 high school students are earning college credit while still in high school with Jefferson State. Many students are completing a semester or more of college and saving their families thousands of dollars in tuition and housing costs.

Jefferson State was the first community college to receive regional accreditation by SACSCOC in December 1968 and was the first to develop an accredited nursing program in Alabama.



Submitted photo

The new Nursing and Allied Health Wing opened during the past year at the St. Clair-Pell City campus of Jefferson State Community College.

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*A Salute to*  
Sylacauga, Oak Grove  
& Childersburg  
**COMMERCE**





# The Italian Cafe brings a taste of Italy to Childersburg



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Crystell Bruce and owner Pat Carta invite diners to join them for authentic Italian cuisine at The Italian Cafe on 1st Street SW in Childersburg.

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

For The Italian Cafe owner Pat Carta, his restaurant is all about authenticity.

"I've been in the restaurant business for more than 45 years," Carta said. This is my third store I've owned and I've really enjoyed it so far."

Carta was born in Sicily, Italy and said he was raised in the Newark, New Jersey area.

"All of our food is made from recipes that have been passed down to me from my family. It's all authentic and fresh."

The restaurant opened in 2014, and has developed a quiet, but loyal following.

"We opened up quietly with no major announcements," Carta said. "We have relied heavily on word-of-mouth. You can't make it in this business if you don't have that."

Carta added he didn't even have an official grand opening or

ribbon cutting.

"The response has been great, despite little advertisement on my part," he said. I can't complain though. I'm happy with how it's going."

Upon entrance, customers immediately feel like they are in a small cafe in Italy.

"I always like to have music playing, and I've decorated the place with items I've collected from antique stores," Carta said.

Like its name, the restaurant focuses on signature Italian dishes such as lasagna, spaghetti, calzones, ziti -- and much more.

"Our lasagna is our number one seller. We have pizza too, of course," Carta said. "Customers really love our homemade sauce. We also make our own dough and purchase produce and seafood locally."

Other menu items include a variety of salads, sandwiches and pasta.

The Italian Cafe also serves a variety of



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

From left, Bruce and Carta with Maria Segreti and Jessica Wall at The Italian Cafe.

Italian desserts including tiramisu, cannolis and cinnamon knots.

When asked what was his favorite dish on the menu, Carta replied, "I really love our stromboli and Philly steak sandwiches, but everything is great."

Carta added he is open to catering and large carry-out orders.

"We have taken several orders for the industrial facilities in the area, and are open

to taking carry-out orders, as long as we have enough notice."

Carta noted his staff is small, but makes a great team.

"It's hard to run a successful restaurant but the staff I have now has done well."

"We are different from all the big chain restaurants," Carta said. "I take pride in using as little ingredients as possible. Everything is fresh

without preservatives. Sometimes less is more, especially when it comes to flavor."

Carta also expressed his love for the community and city of Childersburg.

"I love it here," he said. "It's so different from home. I love the rural atmosphere, being from the city, it's a nice change. Everyone has been welcoming."

Carta added he looks forward to grow-


ing his customer base.

"I hope people will see this and decide to give us a try. We look forward to serving new customers."

The Italian Cafe is at 918 1st Street Southwest in Childersburg.

Hours of operation are from 11 a.m. until 8 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays.

For more information, call 256-346-3511.



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# Heritage South Credit Union offers multiple financial services

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

Heritage South Credit Union in Sylacauga takes pride in offering various financial services to its members.

“We are here to serve our members and the community,” marketing director Kevin Whitman said. “We offer multiple loan and account services, and are even here if someone is just needing financial guidance.”

The credit union was chartered in 1937 and has since grown to multiple locations.

“We have more than 10,000 members and \$101 million in assets,” Whitman said. “We were first known as the Avondale Employees Credit Union. We started out by providing services to the Avondale Mill employees and their families.”

According to its website, after “a couple of name changes,” the business “continues to have a strong presence in Sylacauga, Childersburg and Moody as a fixture in the community and as a stable and secure financial institution.”

“I think what sets



**Heritage South Credit Union’s goal is “to be the premier financial institution in the markets in which we operate.”**

us apart is that we truly know our customers by name and are familiar with their specific financial services and needs. Not every bank or credit union can say that. We have top-notch customer service here.”

Heritage South officials said the union strives “to be the premier financial institution in the markets in which we operate.”

“There are often misconceptions about us,” Whitman said.

“We offer more than people realize including mortgage loans, auto loans, recreational loans, personal and business loans.”

Whitman added Heritage South also provides members with account choices to suit their financial needs.

“Members can open their own checking, savings, business and/or investment accounts,” he said. “We even have a Kids’ Club account, which

rewards students for good grades.”

Whitman said Heritage South has planted deep roots in Sylacauga and the communities it serves.

“We are members of all the Chamber’s in communities we provide services to. We try to be involved and support as many local events that we can. Community outreach is important to us.”

Heritage South Credit Union has branches in Sylacauga,

Childersburg, Moody and Alexander City.

The credit union serves Talladega, St. Clair, Clay, Calhoun, Jefferson, Shelby, Tallapoosa, Lee, Coosa, Elmore, Chilton, Chambers, Randolph and Cleburne counties.

“If you live, work, worship, or attend school in any of those counties, you are eligible for a membership with Heritage South Credit Union,” Whitman said.

Heritage South

Credit Union lobby hours are 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays-Wednesdays and 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays. Drive-thru hours are 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mondays-Wednesdays and 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays.

The main office is at 60 Gene Stewart Boulevard in Sylacauga. For more information, call 256-245-4776 or visit [www.myhscu.com](http://www.myhscu.com).



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5:00-5:45 p.m. Children’s Choir Practice  
5:30-6:15 p.m. Preschool Choir Practice  
6:00-7:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting & Bible Study  
The Echange Student Meeting/Bible Study  
6:15-7:00 p.m. Mission Friends GAs and RAs  
7:00-8:15 p.m. Adult Choir Practice



# Fresh Off The Boat: Great seafood at reasonable prices



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Fresh Off The Boat is a purveyor of fresh Gulf seafood on Highway 280 in Oak Grove.

By Sherry Kughn  
Special to  
The Daily Home

Anthony Latino, a native of the New Orleans area, drove each summer to Sylacauga for several years for two reasons: to bring fresh seafood from his market in Louisiana and to take back with him peaches to sell at his produce stand.

As he visited with locals who appreciated the seafood he brought with him, he “fell in love with the area and the people,” he said. “I saw a demand for seafood, and I closed my business in Louisiana and moved here a month ago.”

Actually, Latino worked for several months on opening his new company, Fresh Off The Boat, which is located at 37720 U.S. 280 in Oak Grove, near



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The seafood market is open daily from 8 a.m.-6 p.m.




**Tucker Webb/The Daily Home**  
**Fresh Off The Boat offers a wide variety of fresh and frozen seafood options -- including lobster tails -- at reasonable prices. New items are available weekly.**


the Alabama Power Co. office and Mama Ree’s Restaurant. He sells 30 varieties of seafood, and is letting customers know that he is taking orders now for fresh crawfish and blue crabs.

Latino is excited about his new business and sees the potential

for much more. He hopes to establish a distribution center for seafood in Sylacauga and to create seafood markets in Birmingham, Atlanta, Huntsville, and other cities. Thus far, he has hired four new employees, and he hopes to have several more by May, when seafood season



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Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Above: Kevin Pitts displays some fresh Royal Red shrimp for customer Phillip Alverson. Right: Two varieties of shrimp on the scale. Below: Alaska snow crab legs and stone crab claws.



will be in full swing.

"The welcome and response I have had has been humbling to my core," Latino said. "On a daily basis, folks thank me for being in Sylacauga and for bringing them something good to eat for their families and for their cookouts."

Latino said customers also comment on his reasonable prices, and they enjoy posting, on his Facebook page, pictures and comments about the food they have prepared.

"This is all any new business owner could hope for," he said.

Latino has been in the seafood business for 25 years, and his new endeavor has him thinking about more ideas. Perhaps there will be a seafood restaurant in his future.

Not only has he established a base of customers for his seafood, some of which drive from a distance; but he is also selling to a few restaurants.

"Sylacauga is a good central location," he said.

For more information about Fresh Off The Boat and its latest fresh offerings, visit @freshseafoodsylacauga on Facebook or call 833-347-4280.



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# Sylacauga Chamber: It's all about partnerships

By **DENISE SINCLAIR**  
Home staff writer

Partnerships continue to play a big role in the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce's success and future.

Laura Strickland, executive director of the chamber, is even more excited about partnerships especially centered around workforce development.

"Workforce development is going to bridge gaps with business, industry, schools and information sharing," Strickland said.

An Educator Workforce Academy has started in Sylacauga with city schools and teachers working with business and industry for hands-on skill sets.

"This is exciting to work with industries such as Koch, IKO, Agronomics, Heritage Freight and Nemak coordinating with East Alabama Works and the Regional Work Force Council," Strickland said.

This effort is focusing on all facets of industry, construction, healthcare, and other career pathways for students and others seeking employment.

Strickland said working with career tech programs in schools and workforce development is a tremendous opportunity for the chamber.

In the meantime, the chamber is also trying to bring opportunities to town for small businesses. The chamber is sponsoring quarterly small business workshops through JSU. These include budgeting, customer service and more.

"There will be a different topic each quarter. We want feedback from membership on their areas of need, what tools can we bring to the business man or woman," Strickland said. "We want our businesses to take part in the professional development we have to offer."

These are just some of the partnerships the chamber is pursuing for the benefit of its membership. This all fits into the mission of the chamber.

The mission of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce is to provide leadership and promote the economic advancement, business climate and quality of life of the city of Sylacauga and its citizens.

The chamber connects its member partners with the resources to contribute to their success in the community. The chamber is also the primary source for local professional networking. This is achieved through individual referrals.

The chamber works to connect, promote, inform, advocate and develop its membership and community.

Another partnership the chamber is involved with is leadership skills classes with AIDT. There will be three levels of leadership training with the series available later this year. There is no charge for this and Strickland said the chamber was glad to take advantage of this.

Other programs the chamber offers include Leadership Sylacauga. This is a nine-month program that focuses on aspects of the community with a look at schools,



The chamber offices are on Fort Williams Street.

Tucker Webb/The Daily Home



Denise Sinclair/The Daily Home

**Laura Strickland, left, serves as executive director of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce, and Jennie Williams is administrative assistant. They are pictured in the newly renovated chamber offices.**

healthcare, government, nonprofits and more. Those taking the program come from diverse backgrounds and they learn what makes Sylacauga work every day. It gives participants full of understanding of Sylacauga.

Strickland said each leadership class has an option to do a class project. This year's class came up with something different centered around the state's bicentennial. The program is called Sylacauga Serves 200 for 200. "The class is encouraging citizens in the community to do 200 acts of service. A data base will be established and individuals can access it to see what opportunities of service are available," she said.

The chamber has reintroduced morning coffees called Chamber Connections. These are held the second Thursday of each month.

The chamber has just completed its first renovation since 1993. "We needed up to date facilities since we are the face of the community in so many ways. The chamber often is the first

impression people see when visiting Sylacauga," Strickland said.

New flooring, new lighting and interior painting has given the facility a whole new look.

Strickland said the chamber is working on rebuilding its membership list with a goal to continue to grow.

Two other areas the chamber is going to strengthen is tourism and quality of life.

"The chamber is the tourism arm for the community. We have so many strengths in our

town such as Lake Howard, Sylaward Trail, Pinhoti Trail and our Marble Festival. Then there is Lay Lake and Pursell Farms. All of these are resources we can be proud of," Strickland said.

Working for a stronger quality of life can be another way that helps the city to grow. Quality of life events include the annual Christmas Parade, Kids Fishing Derby (April 13 at Lake Howard), fireworks for a summer celebration and community Christmas tree lighting.

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# Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce looks to have great year

By **DENISE SINCLAIR**  
Home staff writer

Tom Roberts gets excited and can talk for hours about the future of the Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Roberts is the president and CEO of the chamber, working tirelessly to promote Childersburg and surrounding areas.

"Childersburg is growing by leaps and bounds. We have more than seven ribbon cuttings and grand openings planned in the months ahead," he said.

In addition to these activities, there are four events on the horizon for the chamber.

The first major event of the year is the annual chamber banquet on Thursday, March 7 at 6 p.m. in Margie Sanford Hall on the Childersburg campus of Central Alabama Community College.

"We'll have live musical entertainment from the Teresa Yager Band. There will be state of the city updates from Childersburg Mayor Ken Wesson and Oak Grove Mayor Tony White, as well as community awards for local business, industry and more. And we will also have a momentous an-

nouncement to go along with our 2019 Childersburg Hall of Fame induction," Roberts said.

He added that the food will be delicious, catered by CVMC's Hickory Street Café.

Tickets are available at the chamber office or from chamber board members.

The community awards are for nonprofit, established business, new business, new industry, citizen of the year, city employee of the year and the Hall of Fame selection.

The next big event in Childersburg is Coosa Fest 479, set for Saturday, April 13, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in downtown.

"We will have live entertainment throughout the day from the stage. This entertainment includes Dodson Parkway, Randy Jacobs, and others," the chamber president said.

He expects more than 100 vendors and exhibitors, with more details coming. Vendor applications are available on the chamber Facebook page or at the office.

The Kymulga Grits Festival is Saturday, April 27, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Kymulga Grist Mill Park. There is a great lineup of mu-



**File Photo**  
**Tom Roberts is executive director of the Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is at work organizing such events as Coosa Fest 479, which celebrates Childersburg's 479th year.**

sic, food (including the famous grits & shrimp) and loads of family fun activities.

The chamber has a retail promotion ongoing called Childersburg Tax Refund Season Shopping Spree until

Thursday, April 11 at 2 p.m. Consumers spending money at any local business can turn in receipts (or copies) to the chamber office.

"We'll reward eight lucky shoppers with \$50 gift cards. We want

to encourage people to shop at home whenever possible, in support of local businesses, new and old, as well as providing important sales tax revenues for local governments," Roberts said.

The Farmers Market continues to be open on good weather Mondays during the winter months from noon to 3 p.m. Roberts pointed out there are all sorts of greens for consumers, and strawberries will be coming soon, with more items to follow.

Roberts said downtown Childersburg is growing, and empty buildings are going to be filled. "There is a lot more downtown now than people realize. We have things other towns our size don't have. The more we have, the more will stop and shop."

When it comes to membership, the president said the chamber is doing well.

Helping Roberts at the chamber is his administrative assistant, Althea Hamilton. "She is a blessing from heaven," he said.

In the year ahead, Roberts said the chamber is collecting memorabilia for a museum downtown. Anyone interested in this may contact him at the chamber.

The chamber office is at 805 3rd Street SW. The phone number is 256-378-5482, and its email address is greater-coosavalleychamber@gmail.com.

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# Sharing the magic of photography in Sylacauga

By DENISE SINCLAIR  
Home staff writer

Don Smith has always had a love of taking pictures. So he started his own business, Home of Photography, to do just that in 1974.

The Marble City native remembered a Brownie Hawkeye camera his mother had. One day he took that camera and went outside to make a photo.

“From that day forward it was kind of magic to me, even though I was just a kid,” he said.

His business is more than just a photography business. Through the years Home of Photography has offered a variety of services. These services are:

- Photography — sports, weddings, family and children, private events, schools, commercial pageants and more;
- Custom framing and mat cutting;
- Pre-made frames for 5x7s up to 30x40s;
- Copy restoration of old photos;
- Scan and copy negatives;
- Convert old



Don Smith has operated Home of Photography in Sylacauga since 1974.

Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

home movies (reels) and VHS to DVD;

- Sublimation printing (mousepads, jewelry boxes, t-shirts, coffee mugs;
- Oil portraits.

A self-taught photographer, Smith remembers working with Terry Mitchell at

Grant City in the camera department. The two went into business together as Smith & Mitchell.

They used their parents’ homes as studios and had a dark room in Mitchell’s basement.

A graduate of B.B. Comer Memorial

School, Smith went to the University of Montevallo where he received a degree in business, management and finance.

After graduating from college Smith returned home to live with his parents. He stayed in the picture

business, while his friend, he said, “got a real job.”

Smith worked at Avondale Mills and continued his photography business. As his business grew he bought a house on Brown Avenue. From there he purchased the

house where Home of Photography is located now at 206 West 8th Street in 1980.

Even though he is self-taught, Smith decided to go to school to learn more about being a working professional in the photography business. He went to



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the Winona School of Photography in Indiana, which is known for teaching professional photographers, he said.

When it comes to photography, Smith said he loves the challenge of creating something someone will love whether it is a wedding, a child's portrait or a sports competition.

"I really love photographing children and restoring old photographs," he said. "I also like creating pretty frames for photos."

Smith said photography has been a good business to fit his personality. "I love working with people. Today I don't photograph as much. I do a few weddings, and I'm doing more families and children, dance companies, private and school events. I enjoy custom framing. I think one of the most rewarding things my business does is restoring old photographs, bringing them back for families to enjoy," he said.

The business owner has worked with numerous individuals that have also gone on to become well-known photographers such as Jeff Etheridge, who works for Auburn University and Dennis Dean. Others who worked with Smith include Chris Hartsfield, Frank Unger and Nell Nix. "These are just some of the people who helped my company become a success, and have brought me new ideas," he said.

Smith said his business has made a good living for him. "I never felt like I worked a day in my life and I have enjoyed every single person who worked in this studio," he said.

Smith likes to do new things that people may be interested in. He is trying his hand at sports- and military-themed shadow boxes.

When he isn't working or spending time with his family, Smith volunteers at the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum and Arts Center, where he is on the board of directors. He has been a member of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce and served on the board. He was an active member of the Lions Club for years.

Smith has three children and with his wife, Mae, three step-children. He is also a grandfather and loves spending time with his grandchildren.

Home of Photography is open Tuesdays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon. For more information, call 256-245-3244 or visit [www.homeofphotography.com](http://www.homeofphotography.com) and Home of Photography's Facebook page.

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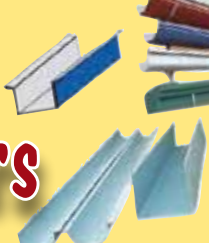
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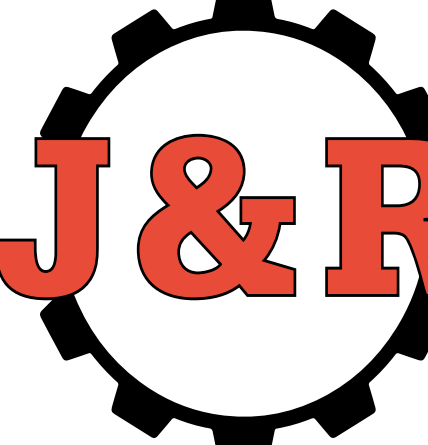


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# Marble City hardware store enjoys decades-long history of serving customers

By **DENISE SINCLAIR**  
Home staff writer

Vansandt Hardware in Sylacauga has a long history in the area of providing everything from plumbing to lumber to knowledge to its customers.

Craig Vansandt, one of the two owners of the store, said knowing their customers is what is important to them and that keeps customers coming back to Vansandt. The other owner is Todd Blankenship. The two grew up together. Craig is a year older than Todd. Both are graduates of Sylacauga High School.

The original owners of the hardware store are Tommy Vansandt and Grover Blankenship. Their two sons became the owners in 2018 when their fathers retired.

The store was opened in August 1974 in a small block building on Alabama 21, just inside the Coosa County line across from the old Dark's Dairy.

Craig remembered an item from that block store where you



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Vansandt Hardware has been a family-owned business for more than 40 years.

could buy a toilet for \$29.95. That toilet today costs more than a \$140, he said.

The owners moved to the current location on 40631 U.S. 280 in 1982.

Craig and Todd have had the store for a year. Craig said he had on the job training at

the store and had never worked anywhere else.

The two new owners are proud of what their dads have done with the store. Craig said while growing up not only did his dad have the store, but they raised chickens and had an electrical services business.

"My dad worked hard all his life," Craig said.

One of the biggest things Craig thinks Vansandt Hardware sells is knowledge and service. "We're selling our customers what they need and serving them like they're family," he said.

Craig said another key part of the business they run is knowing the people they service. "We're giving people what they want. I like to say our hardware store is like a hair place for women. Our customers keep coming back, they sit around talking with

us and we help them find what they need," he said. "We're a family owned, family run business."

Vansandt Hardware works to provide the personal touch with its customers. "You can go to a big box store and can't get anyone to help you. I know it

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Tucker Webb/The Daily Home  
**Craig Vansandt and Todd Blankenship are the owners of Vansandt Hardware on U.S. Highway 280 in Sylacauga. "Our customers keep coming back," Vansandt said. "They sit around talking with us, and we help them find what they need."**

has happened to me. We do what we can to help our customers," Craig said.

He said customers have called at night or on weekends needing something in an emer-

gency. "They get hold of us and we go to the store and get what they need," he said.

Vansandt Hardware employs six staff members, besides the two owners.

The store is open Mondays through Fridays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to noon. The phone number is 256-249-8375.



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*2 Kings 20:1-11 King James Version*

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# *A Salute to* Talladega, Lincoln & Munford **COMMERCE**





# Stanford Automotive returns to Talladega



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The new Bill Stanford Automotive offers a wide variety of late-model pre-owned vehicles. The dealership is open at 411 East Street North in Talladega.

## Longtime auto retailer opens pre-owned late-model dealership

By JIMMY CREED  
Special to The Daily Home

Bill Stanford just missed being in the car business.

After almost two years of retirement, Stanford returned to the life he loves in January when he opened Bill Stanford Automotive at 411 East Street North in Talladega. And with his return, shoppers in Talladega and beyond looking for late-model used cars once again have the opportunity to “Get a ‘Bill Deal,’” as his long-time sales slogan urges.

After spending time traveling with his wife, Lynne, and mowing plenty of grass, Stanford said many things about his profession of more than 45 years started calling him back, and he had to listen.

“Most of all, I missed seeing all the people we have worked with for so many years here in Talladega,” he said.

Car shoppers in the area have known and trusted him since 1999, when he first put his name on the building of Bill Stanford Automotive on Highway 21 in Talladega, a new car dealership featuring all the automotive brands Chrysler had to offer and most GM brands as well. In his new venture, Stanford said shoppers will find a good inventory of late-model Cadillacs, GMCs, Hyundais, Kias, Nissans, Toyotas and more.

“We have something for everybody,” Stanford said. “We are keeping a good assortment of automobiles to meet the needs of many different types of customers, from the first-time buyer to the luxury car buyer.”

Stanford is also proud to offer multiple types of financing to help shoppers on many different rungs of the financial ladder.

“We have bank financing, we are affiliated with several of the local credit unions, and for those who may have had some financial difficulties in the past, we have second-chance financing as well,” Stanford said. “We can work with anybody that comes through the door.”

Stanford is glad to be back in business, and it seems Talladega shoppers are glad he is back as well.

“This location here on East North Street has as much traffic as anywhere in Talladega,” he said. “Things have been going really well. We are really pleased with the response we have had in the early going.”

Stanford has also found that, for some people, laboring at a job they love can be as rewarding as any retirement hobby or adventure.

“A man needs a reason to get up and getting going every day,” Stanford said. “I’ve found that selling cars is mine.”



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

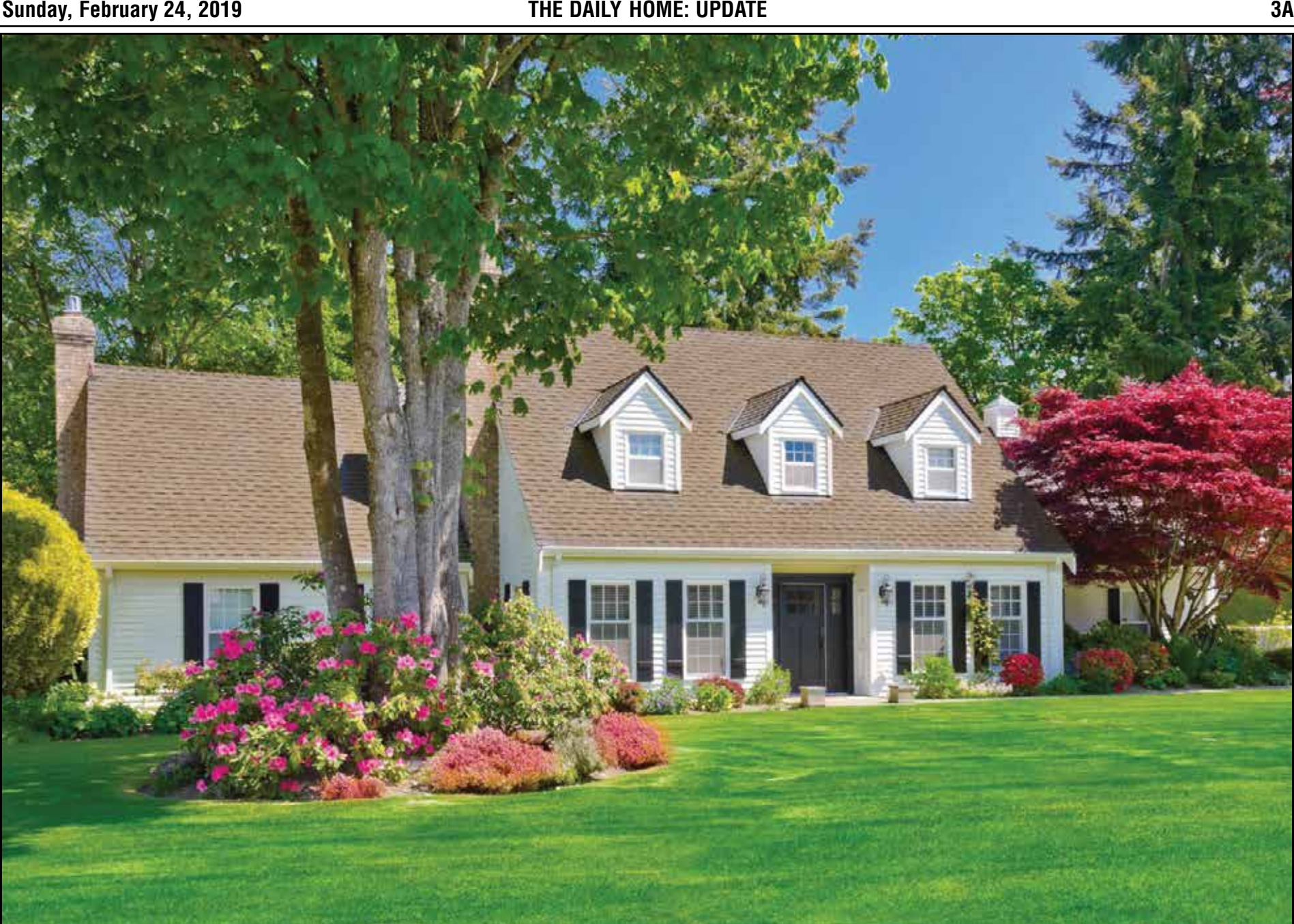
Talladega shoppers can once again “Get a ‘Bill Deal’” from Bill Stanford Automotive.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

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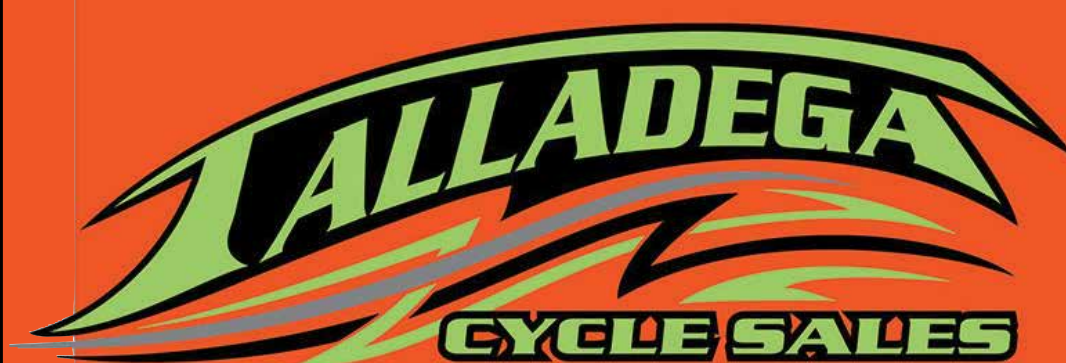
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# Michael’s Men’s Wear:

## A fixture in Talladega for half a century



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

For Jessica Turley, Michael Ghee and John Ghee, men’s wear has been all in the family for 50 years.

By JIMMY CREED  
Special to The Daily Home

For 50 years Michael’s Men’s Wear has been a fixture on the corner on the square in Talladega thanks to the dedication of three generations of the Ghee family, reasonable prices, great customer service and countless loyal customers.

“This is all I have ever done,” Michael Ghee said. “I have worked here since my father, John, opened the doors in March of 1969.”

John Ghee, now 91, is retired but still works some at the store and “still worries about it a lot,” Michael said. And since 2001, Michael’s daughter, Jessica Turley, has been part of the team as well, taking measurements, lending suggestions and making friends.

“It is amazing, but we have some people who began trading with us in 1969 that still trade with us to this day,” Jessica said. “We have been blessed with a lot of very loyal customers over the years.”

While much of that customer base comes from Talladega and surrounding areas, it has grown over the years to include many from across the state and the nation. They regularly ship orders to customers from Huntsville to Mobile, New York to California and many other points in between.

They recently received an order from a minister in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who wanted a special suit to wear on the day he preached on his 90th birthday, and Michael was proud to provide it.

“It’s all about customer relations and building friendships,” he said. “You have to make them want to trade with you and to keep coming back.”

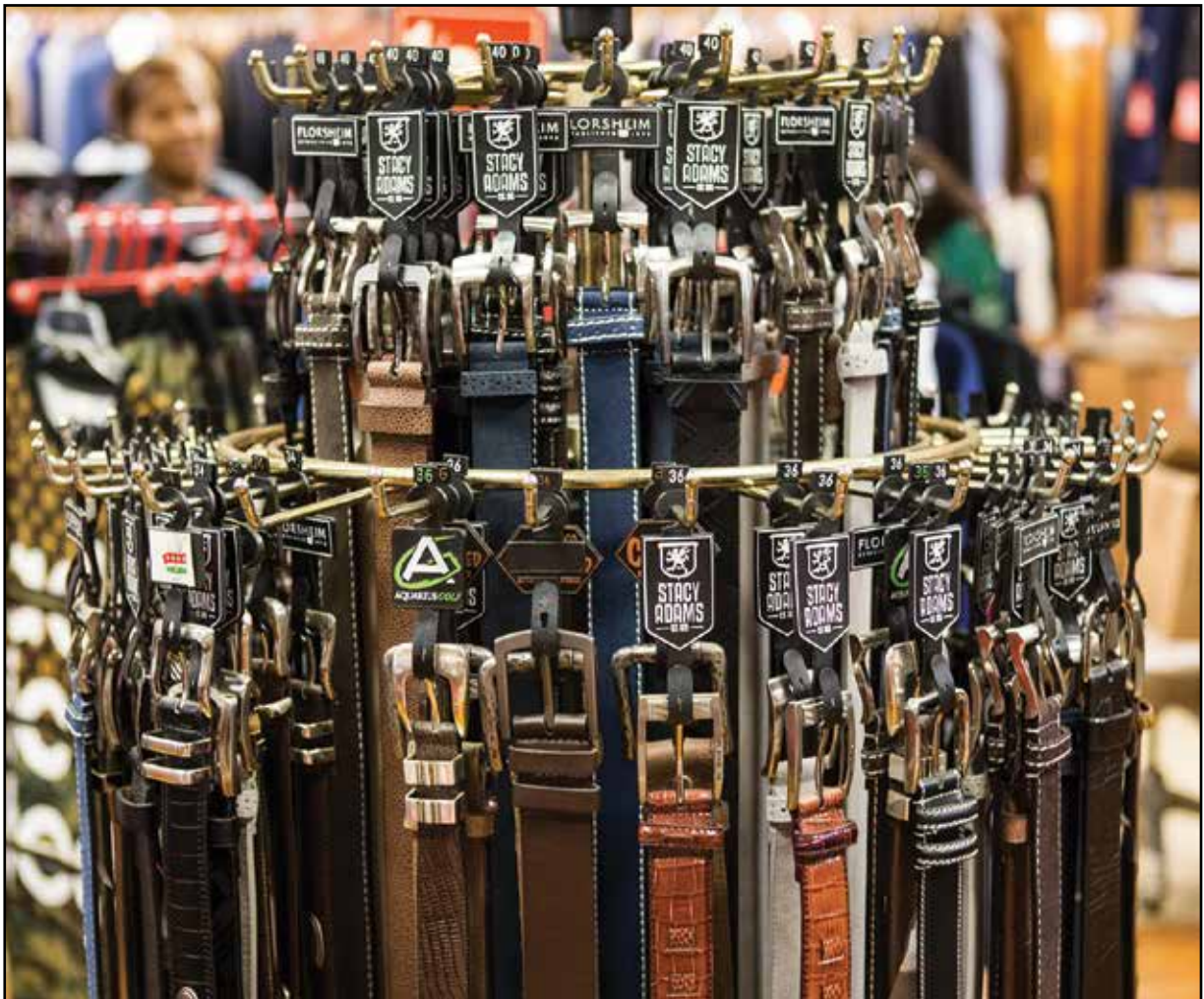
While Michael’s is what Jessica calls “a one-stop shop” for all types of men’s items, it is the almost 1,300 suits that regularly hang on its racks that is the greatest drawing card.

A full selection of suits for all sizes in many distinctive colors has made Michael’s the go-to spot for generations of shoppers looking for just the right outfit for many of life’s special occasions. These days they also specialize in providing suits for large groups such as wedding parties, fraternity functions and even for companies that often need their employees to be dressed in similar fashion.

And they do it all with free alterations, a friendly smile, and always with a “thank you for your business” when a sale is made.

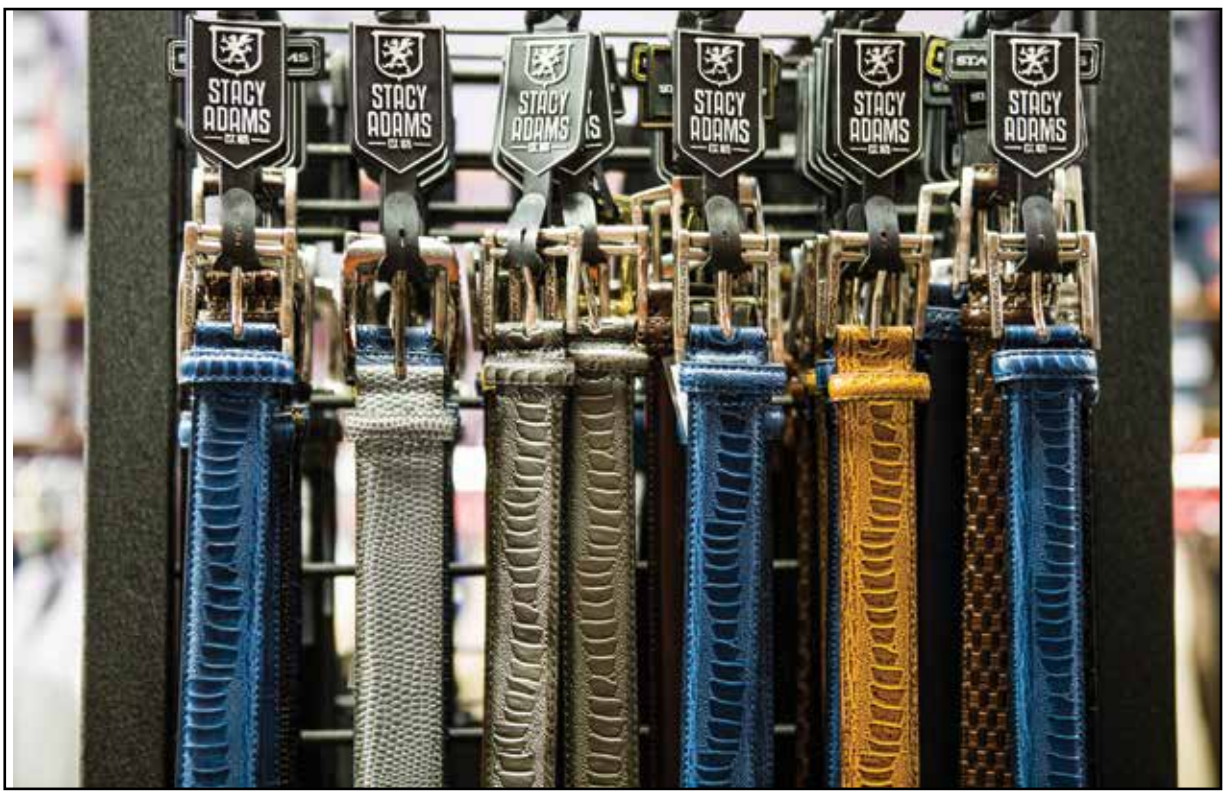
“When a customer comes into your store, you have done him no favors by waiting on him,” Michael said. “He has done you the favor by coming to your store to shop and by trading with you. Here at Michael’s Men’s Wear, we never forget that.”

Michael’s Mens Wear is open 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

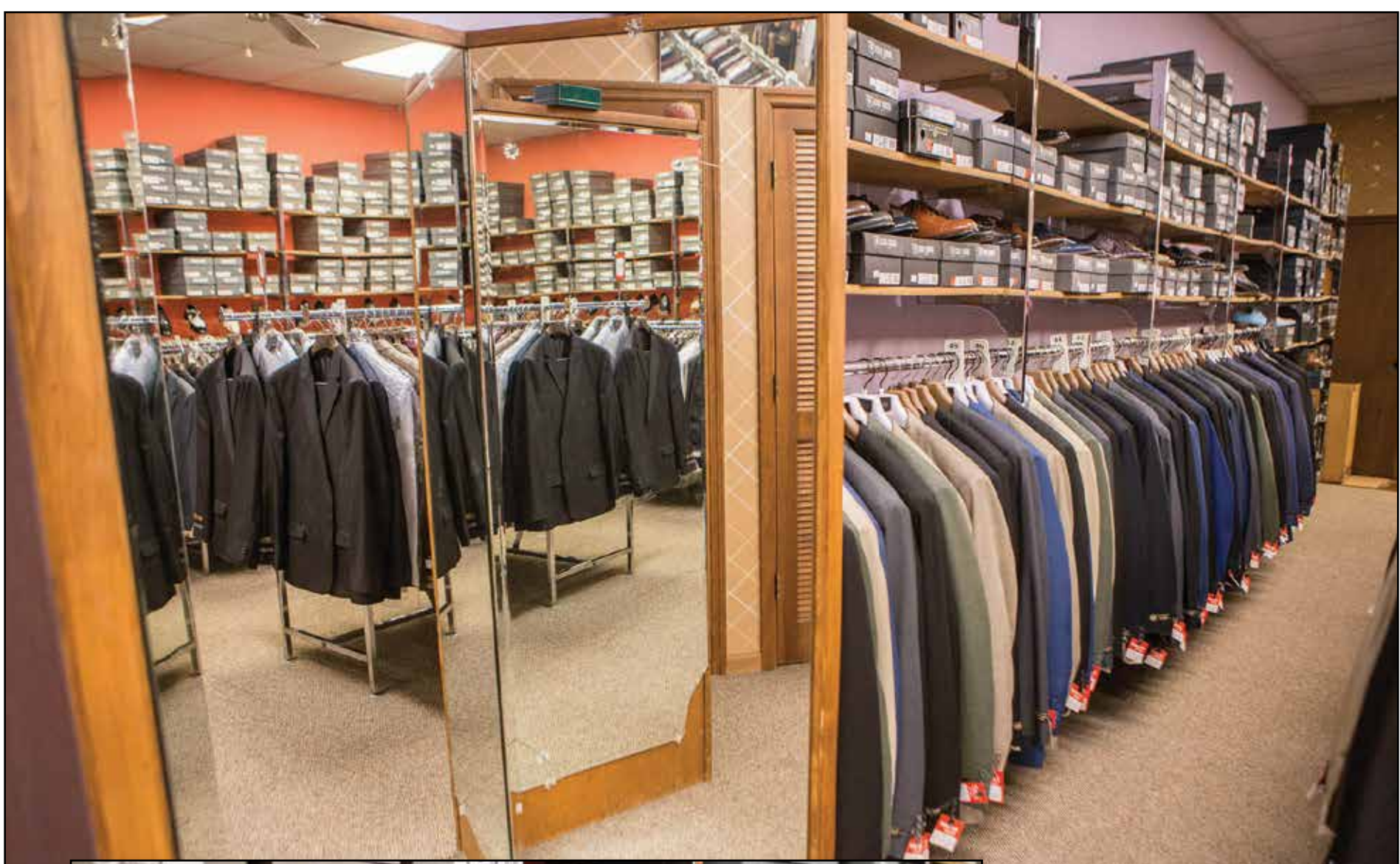


Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Besides suits and casual wear, Michael’s offers a full compliment of accessories, including belts and ties in a variety of styles and colors.







**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
More than 1,200 suits in all sizes, styles and colors are on the racks at Michael's, along with shoes to match. The Talladega store prides itself on being a one-stop shop for men's clothing items.

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# R.K. Allen Oil Company has served Talladega for more than 50 years



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

**With warehouses in central Alabama and Florida, R.K. Allen Oil Co. Inc. is the premier distributor of motor fuels and lubricants for the states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Mississippi.**

**By LACI BRASWELL**  
**Home staff writer**

Ken Allen Sr. has spent most of his life working in a family-owned and operated business.

“My brother Harmon and I helped my father, O.C. Allen, run a service station in Sylacauga back in the 1950s,” the owner of R.K. Allen Oil Company said. “It was something I grew up around, and I knew I wanted to do it myself one day.”

Allen said that he branched out in the 1960s to form his own company.

R.K. Allen Oil Company Inc. began as a Texaco branded jobber in Talladega, with Allen serving as both the owner and sole employee.

“My wife also did a lot to help me get started he said, especially with the books. My children Ken Jr., Keith, and Jan have also been deeply involved and have helped make the company what it is today. We started out small but have grown into so much more.”

During the 1960s and 1970s, service stations, farm deliveries and package lubricants were the primary focus of the company.

In the 1980s, A.O.C. Foodmart Inc. was formed. Additionally, the wholesale division expanded to include bulk oil and the company’s first salesperson

In the 1990s, Xpress Lubes and Burger King locations were added to the company. Following, in 2000, the wholesale division added filtration and dehydration of lubricants.

“Currently, we have over 20 locations in Alabama & Florida, and it continues to grow,” Allen said. “Currently, the combined fuel volume of our sites exceeds 23,000,000 gallons annually.”

The company now employs close to 200 workers across the state and gulf coast.

“We deliver lubricants and fuel all across the south-east, from Tennessee to the panhandle,” Allen said.

Although its headquarters is in Talladega, R.K. Allen Oil also has warehouse facilities in Opelika and Pensacola, Florida.

The company also has sales representatives in Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

According to its website, R.K. Allen Oil is the “number one supplier of fuels and lubricants for the area’s largest industries including: agriculture, automotive, timber, mining/quarries, steel, construction and commercial.”

Allen said, “We take pride in our highly qualified sales team and we are able to provide our customers with the products and care they need to grow their business.”

The company sells a variety of products in hydraulic oils, conventional and synthetic motor oils, gear oils, greasers, coolants and much more.

R.K. Allen Oil also offers multiple services to its



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

**Allen Oil supplies fuels for such industries as agriculture, automotive, timber, mining/quarries, steel, construction and commercial. “With our highly qualified sales team, we are able to provide our customers with the products and care they need to grow their business,” owner Ken Allen Sr. said.**



**See R.K. Allen Oil page 2B**



# R.K. Allen Oil

from page 1B

consumers, including product recommendations, maintenance recommendations, product cross reference, oil analysis, oil filtration, oil dehydration and lube surveys.

Allen noted that he has also been involved in multiple community projects over years.

“I was a member of the Talladega Chamber of Commerce when the the Texaco Walk-of-Fame was built. It was something I was heavily involved with, and I’m proud of what it’s become.”

Allen added his company also sells fuel and other products to the Talladega Superspeedway and airport.

“Having a family owned business has been a good thing for us,” Allen said. “We enjoy it.”

R.K. Allen Oil headquarters is at 36002 Alabama Highway 21 in Talladega.

“We will continue to strive to be diversified and carry a complete line of petroleum supplies for our customers for generations to come,” Allen said.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

“We take pride in our excellent service and reliability,” said owner Ken Allen Sr. The Talladega-based R.K. Allen Oil Company is a family-operated business. “They have helped make the company what it is today,” Allen says of his family.



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# Talladega's First Bank of Alabama plans new branch location

By B. Scott McClendon  
Consolidated Publishing

First Bank of Alabama will soon open an Oxford branch outside Quintard Mall, according to the company's president.

"This is going to be a lot of fun for us," company president Chad Jones said Thursday. "We'll be growing our footprint into our fourth county. We're just bringing our people, products and services of community banking into the Oxford area."

The 171-year-old company will renovate the former McAlister's building near the Quintard Mall, he said, contracting with local vendors and craftsmen for the work. The company hopes to finish renovations by the end of July and hold a grand opening Aug. 1.

The company had \$526 million in assets as of Sept. 30, 2018, a jump from \$405 million over the same date the previous year, according to data from the FDIC. The bank also jumped from \$325 million to \$436 million in deposits in the past fiscal year. Total employees rose from 49 to 80 in the same time frame, according to the FDIC data.

Jones said the company decided to open an Oxford site because it has "a lot" of clients in the Oxford-Calhoun County market. However, the closest branch to that area is in Munford.

"What we found was that our opportunity to encompass their deposit accounts was not being fulfilled," he said. "We had a lot of loans coming from the Oxford market, so looking at that, it made sense."

The Oxford branch will be the Talladega-based company's eighth location and will have all the amenities of a contemporary bank, with two drive-thru lanes and an ATM.

Noting the presence of what he called "big boy" banks in Oxford, such as Regions, Wells Fargo and BBVA, Jones said his bank will complement the smaller banks in the area, which he contrasted with the larger institutions. Community banks work together and complement the communities they're in, according to Jones.

"Our entry into the Oxford market is not to take away any of the community bank market share," he said. "We feel as though we can come in and complement the community banking sector because we're all friends."

Jones said he believes First Bank of Alabama will have success in the Oxford area because that branch will be run by bankers who "have roots" in Calhoun County.

"When you bank with a community bank, you're not banking with numbers," he said, "you're banking with people."



File photos  
First Bank of Alabama plans to renovate the former McAlister's building in Oxford, above, which will become the Talladega-based bank's eighth location. Its headquarters location, below, is at 120 North Street East in Talladega.



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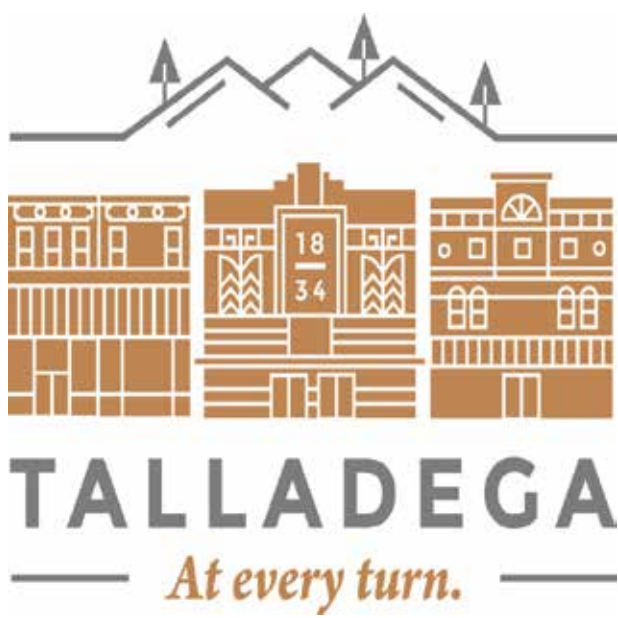
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# Talladega commerce officials expect good things in 2019



By **CHRIS NORWOOD**  
Home staff writer

It has been an eventful year in Talladega, businesswise, and the prospects for the year to come are just as bright, according to Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jason Daves.

“Looking back, of course, the big development was the announcement that Georgia-Pacific was reopening, but there are a lot of other things, too,” Daves said. “Talladega College has started working on three new buildings (one of which is already complete), you’ve got the (Talladega Superspeedway) infield projects going on, and you’ve got all the work (Talladega native and entrepreneur) Kevin Smith is doing with his buildings around the square. It was a really good year for growth in the region.”

One of the key factors in this year and next year’s business growth will be collaboration and partnership, Daves said. “That’s going to be an area of focus for the chamber, too, building more partnerships between businesses. We’ve already seen what GP is willing to do in the community, and we’re seeing collaborations between Alabama Institutes for the Deaf and Blind and First Bank of Alabama. Back in March, First Bank hired a deaf student for the purpose of communicating, signing with deaf customers, while at the same time helping deaf students get into the work force. I expect we’ll see more like that. And AIDB is also partnering with the Presbyterian Home and Talladega College on some upcoming projects. AIDB and Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center helped house college students while the new dorm was being built, which is not really a business partnership but is an example of people helping each other out. We saw a lot of unity in the region, which isn’t always something we’ve seen in the past.”

Businesses such as Brandon Tate State Farm in Lincoln are also working in partnership with AIDB, he added.

Another focus will be tourism, including the TOP Trails Off Road Vehicle park in Talladega, the Civilian Marksmanship Program and, of course, the track.

“TOP Trails really blew the roof off last year, and that will only get bigger,” Daves said. “(Park manager) Wes Pope and that board have really done an outstanding job. Now you’re starting to see more RVs at area motels, and the CMP draws from a similar market. The track has always had a huge economic impact, and I’m only expecting that to increase. Ticket sales will be up substantially, I bet, and I think some of that will be from people that may not have been to a race in five or 10 years that want to see the changes.”

April in Talladega will continue to draw out of town visitors, and the Ritz, which has undergone major renovations over the last several years, will also continue to be a draw. “I really do believe that’s one of the best kept secrets in Alabama,” Daves said.

Honda is in the midst of a major expansion that started last year and should be complete in 2021, and the Talladega County Industrial Development Authority has already found an occupant for one spec building in Lincoln and is building another.

“That shows real foresight and vision on behalf of both the EDA and the cities,” Daves said. “If you build it, they will come.”



File photo  
**Jason Daves serves as executive director of the Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce.**



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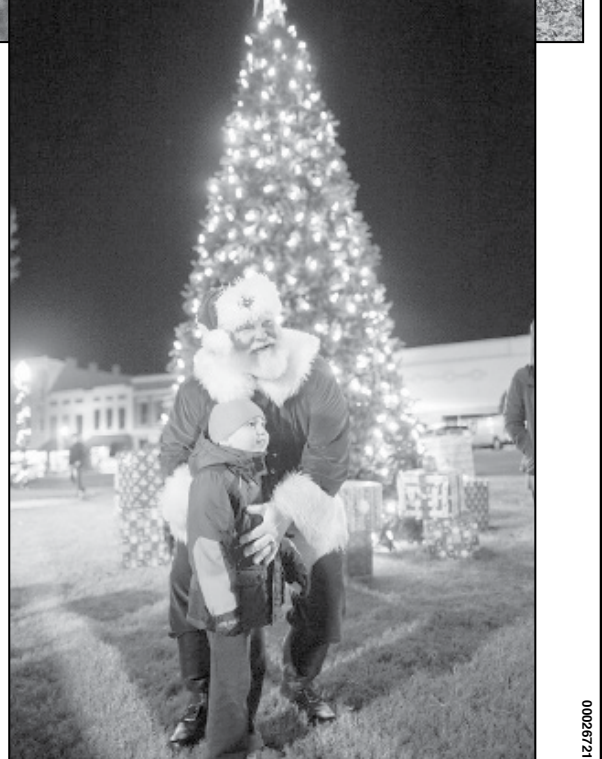
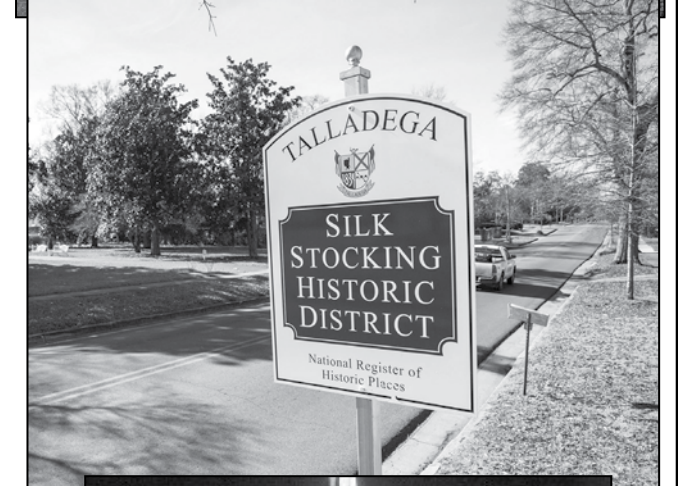
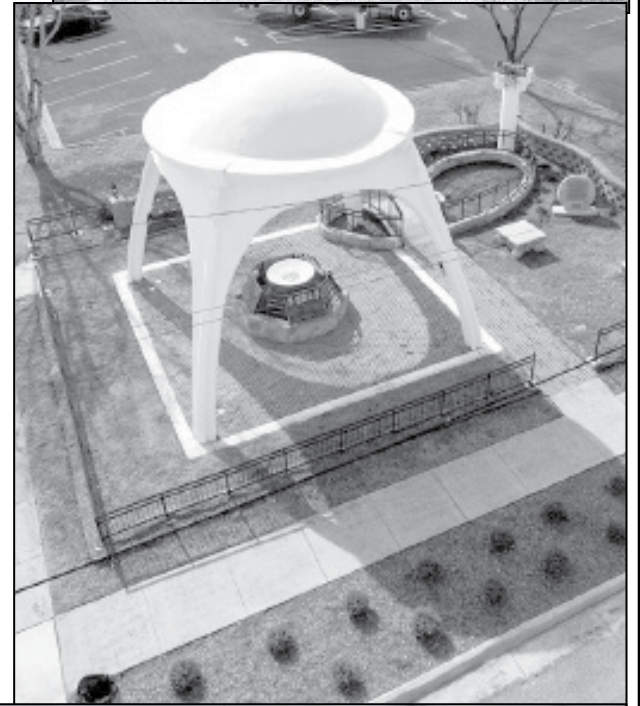
## Highlights for 2018:

- Georgia Pacific has begun production providing over one hundred new jobs.
- Revitalization of the Downtown Courthouse Square has started with new businesses and renovation of several historic buildings. Plus, the start of a state funded revamping of the sidewalks on the Square to make the district ADA compliant and even more pedestrian friendly.
- The third annual Christmas on the Square celebration brought in visitors and gave our citizens a local destination filled with FREE children’s activities. The Courthouse Square was a dazzling show place decorated for the season.
- There is new construction and improvements, private and public, happening throughout the City. Talladega is growing and prospering.
- There is always something to do here in Talladega, from concerts and festivals, to movies in the park, pickleball, swimming, dominoes, card games and archery at the Recreation Centers, programs at the public library, youth sports leagues. Talladega is simply a fun place to be.

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# Talladega entrepreneur seeks to train career-minded workers for success



**Bob Crisp/The Daily Home**  
Entrepreneur Brian Smith is president and CEO of MedFirst Consulting.

## Staff report

MedFirst Consulting is expanding its support force by reaching out to candidates in Talladega and St. Clair Counties.

Brian Smith, the consulting company's president and CEO is recruiting as many as 200 "career-minded, motivated individuals" for a week-long free training seminar in Electronic Health Record (EHR) Support.

"You are a great candidate for this training if you are 18 years of age or older, you live within an hour's drive from Birmingham, you are interested in entering the healthcare IT (HIT) industry and you want to earn up to \$150,000 a year as a healthcare IT consultant," Smith said.

To be considered for the training, fill out the online questionnaire at [www.medfirstconsulting.com](http://www.medfirstconsulting.com). Birmingham-based MedFirst Consulting will provide candidates with more details after receiving their questionnaires.

"MedFirst Consulting's mission is to be the premier provider of qualified consultants for HIT projects of all sizes across the United States by focusing on client satisfaction, being committed to excellence and doing their part so HIT projects can be completed on-time and on-budget," said Smith.

A native of Talladega, he has also been developing a job training and skill development agency aimed at helping individuals connect their professional abilities to viable job opportunities. "Learning can take place anytime, anywhere, and when people

take the time to invest in themselves and others, the world becomes a better place," he said.

In 2018, Smith's team helped more than 2,500 people move forward in their careers, and it hopes to help even more during 2019.

Individuals who are interested in entering the HIT industry, receive training and skills in other growing industries, save money on vacations and work trips through a travel agency with access to significant discounts, resources that will help young adults learn how to be successful and create their own opportunities or guidance on starting their own businesses or growing their current businesses are encouraged to visit [www.meetbriansmith.com](http://www.meetbriansmith.com) for more information. Links to Smith's social media accounts, which provide updates and announcements, can be found on the website.

As a seasoned entrepreneur, Smith said his mission is "to continually grow his businesses into something greater" than himself and use his story to inspire others "to work hard and remain resilient in the face of adversity."

Smith's website describes him as a "self-directed learner who started with little, but through resourcefulness and big-picture thinking now owns multiple million-dollar companies. He always puts the needs of his customers first, and as president and CEO of MedFirst Consulting, he deploys thousands of IT healthcare consultants to assist hospital organizations with EHR implementations across the country."

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### Chamber Corporate Partners



For more information, visit our website [www.talladegachamber.com](http://www.talladegachamber.com)

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# Talladega County EDA expects 2019 to be another good economic year



Sydney A. Foster/Alabama Governor's Office

Gov. Kay Ivey was on hand for the grand opening of Georgia-Pacific's Talladega operation last year. The \$107 million lumber production facility created more than 100 jobs, providing a significant boost to the local economy.

By CHRIS NORWOOD  
Home staff writer

"It was a good year," Talladega County Economic Development Authority Executive Director Calvin Miller said of 2018.

"Lohr purchased the 100,000-square foot speculative building near the interstate in Lincoln, and they will have 150 employees when that is fully occupied. They manufacture car haulers."

Georgia-Pacific returned to Talladega last year, investing \$107 million to completely overhaul the facility and employing more than 110 people, Miller added.

Alabama Special Projects in Munford invested \$2 million in new equipment and created 11 new jobs. Honda will be completing a \$94 million expansion project in June, mostly improving logistics, although there is no official word on if this will create any additional jobs. Honda also debuted the new Passport this year, the first vehicle to be both designed and completely manufactured in Alabama.

Talladega Pattern and Aluminum recently announced a \$3.5 million purchase of new equipment that will create four to eight new jobs, and Fleetwood Metals in Sylacauga recently occupied a speculative building there, adding 70 more jobs.

"Nemak has an ongoing \$3 million capital investment through 2019 that will add 44 new jobs, making batteries for BMW electric cars," Miller said.

And it should be an eventful 2019 as well. "We are currently working on another 100,000-square foot spec building in Lincoln, adjacent to Lohr, and we are planning a 60,000-square foot spec building in Sylacauga, near the airport." Those projects are being done with financing from the Coosa Valley Electrical Cooperative.

And, although it was delayed after the announcement some time ago, Blue Bell Creameries is planning to go forward with a \$7.5 million project in March that will result in 18 new jobs.



File photo

Calvin Miller is executive director of the Talladega County Economic Development Authority.



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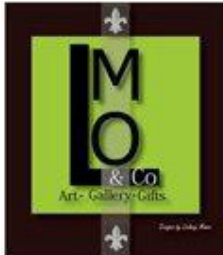

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