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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Kymulga Grist Mill is Talladega County's oldest industrial building.

Returning grist mill to its historic glory

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home assistant editor

Returning Kymulga Grist Mill to its historic glory is the goal of the Childersburg Historic Preservation Commission, and step by step the group is making progress in stabilizing what's certainly Talladega County's oldest industrial building.

Construction of the mill was started in about 1860 by Confederate Army Capt. Forney, who died before the mill was complete. His widow allowed the contractor, G.E. Morris of South Carolina, to complete the mill, and it started operating about 1864.

Morris was building three other mills at the same time, but those mills were burned by Union soldiers during the Civil War.

Forney eventually sold the mill to James Baker, who owned it for many years, according to the mill's website, kymulgagristmill.com.

Baker sold it to a dentist, Dr. Hurd, who sold it to John L Carter in 1949. Carter operated it as an active mill until it was sold in October 1973 to Ed Donahoo.

Wood to build the structure, which is three stories tall on the front and four on the back, was cut from the mountains across the creek, the website says. The covered bridge a few hundred feet upstream from the mill was also built in 1860, providing access to the Georgia Road, a Native American trade route used by frontiersmen and settlers coming into the area.

But time has taken a toll on the 150-year-old mill, as the water of Talladega Creek has eaten away at the building's foundation.

America's longest continuously operating mill of its kind, Kymulga Grist Mill closed in 2012 when officials realized the severity of the foundation's condition and set about to stabilize it.

"We're building a steel platform to hold up the mill," said Gene Piatkowski, a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. "If we keep it from falling in the creek, then we can reopen it and restore it. We're basically building a table of steel with six legs going down to the ground."

Local businesses Reeson Welding and Maintenance, Peoples Sanitation and Conn Equipment have donated untold amounts of labor and support to the project, and structural steel has been fabricated to build the support table.

Most of the work to stabilize the foundation is being done by volunteers who do the work in their spare

See Kymulga, Page 3A



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Kymulga

From Page 2A

time, “so we can’t push too hard,” Piatkowski said. Some emergency repairs were done last month, though, when the rain-swollen creek washed away two external supports, causing the floor of the mill to drop a few inches.

“We had this emergency and they responded quickly to get it done,” Piatkowski said.

Weather and free labor permitting, “Our realistic objective is to hope to get it finished this summer. We appreciate everything they do. They have priorities, but we’re just blessed that we have people in the neighborhood who are willing to donate their time and talent.”

Piatkowski said the mill ran on water power into the 1970s, but something got out of square in the turbine that caused the building to rattle, so electric power has been used to run the mill in recent decades.

“It would be nice to go in there and put it all back together like it originally was,” Piatkowski said.

He said it would be an ongoing project that may take forever to reassemble the system of conveyors that brought corn from storage under what’s now the store up to the husking machine, which would take it off the cob, then up a lift to a cleaning machine that separated the corn from the chaff, sending the corn to the grinders and outputting the meal to hoppers for bagging.

Meanwhile, Piatkowski is putting the final touches on a state tourism brochure about the mill.

“We’ve been doing a few cosmetic things, but it’s all set to go to the printers,” he said.

CHPC got a state grant of about \$1,600 to cover half the cost of printing 15,000 brochures. A fourth of them will be placed in welcome centers around the state, and the remainder will be available for mill guests.

Piatkowski is excited about reopening the mill after the foundation is repaired.

“People want to see the mill,” he said. “There are a lot of historical things. There’s some handwriting on the walls from the original owner who designed the thing.”

He said he’s been told there used to be another corn storage structure on the right side of the mill, equal to the building where the mill store is located on the left. “Trains would stop and unload corn to the mill, and one of the turbines pumped water into a tank to fill up the steam engines’ water tanks. There was a derailment in 1909 or so where a freight car ran into that part of the building and demolished it, and they never rebuilt it.”

CHPC uses the annual Grits Festival and a 5K run to raise money for the ongoing restoration effort, and donations are always welcome. The organization also makes money for continued preservation and operation of the mill park by selling grits, corn meal, souvenirs and T-shirts.

The city of Childersburg bought the mill, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in 2011.

CHPC members say the city has put considerable effort into clearing trees out of the creek to help the flow of the creek, clearing the trails and improving the campgrounds on the site with new plumbing and wiring.

For more information about the mill and park, visit kymulgagrismill.com.

Contact Bill Kimber at bkimber@dailyhome.com

Wide variety of riding options at TOP Trails

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

A site which played a role providing ammunition for America’s World War II effort now provides miles of fun and adventure for people who enjoy riding four-wheelers and motorcycles.

“TOP Trails offers a unique and wide variety of riding conditions for many different kinds of vehicles and riding styles,” said TOP Trails park director Wes Pope.

The Coosa River/Brecon Annex property was deeded to Talladega County in 2003. In 2011, the land was given to the cities of Lincoln and Talladega to build a park. The land was renamed TOP Trails and is governed by the Public Park Authority of the cities of Talladega and Lincoln, formed for that purpose.

“Our board of directors is appointed by the city councils of both cities,” Pope said.

About a 20-minute drive off I-20 between Birmingham and Atlanta, TOP Trails covers 2,800 acres.

“There are 132 bunkers on the land,” Pope said. “Some are used for maintenance, and we have some available for lease on a yearly basis to store tents, four-wheelers, etc. The bunkers can’t be used for



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

TOP Trails provides fun and adventure for people who like riding four-wheelers and motorcycles.

habitation.”

Pope said in 2011, the park had about 50 miles of trails for off-highway vehicles (OHV).

“TOP Trails currently has about 80 to 90 miles of OHV trails for all kinds of riding styles, from beginner to expert,” he said. “We also have 14 miles of single track trails for dirt bikes.”

Archery ranges and primitive camping sites are also available.

The TOP Trails OHV trail systems are designed for ATVs, dirt bikes, dual sports, mountain bikes and ROHVs (side-by-sides and UTV).

“Three-wheeled ATVs are not allowed on the property,” Pope said. “Jeeps,

See **TOP**, Page 4B

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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Work at Veterans Park in Talladega was a long time coming, but it was well worth the wait.

Veterans Park new and improved

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

For many, this year's Independence Day observance in Talladega was also the debut of the newly, thoroughly renovated Veterans Park.

The city's main park and much of the surrounding streets had been closed for the better part of a year while work was ongoing. It was briefly reopened for the 2014

Memorial Day observance, and then closed back down to complete the new lighting and a handful of items on the punch list.

There was a ribbon cutting ceremony after work was complete, but for most people, July 4 was their first taste of the renovations, and the impressions were uniformly positive.

See Park, Page 5A

TOP

From Page 3B

4x4s, rock crawlers and trucks are also not allowed on the trail systems we have now, but we are hoping to design trails for those vehicles in the future."

The off-road trails for bikes and quads offer a challenging ride that winds through thousands of acres on the old Coosa River/Brecon Annex property.

TOP Trails is closed Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and runs normal operating hours the rest of the week and on holidays.

"Gates are open at 6:30 a.m. Thursday and stay open around the clock until 10 p.m. Sunday night," Pope said. "You can ride all night if you want. We are the only ones to offer this that I'm aware of."

Individual admission is \$10. There is a family membership plan to cover year-round admission. The membership is \$150 for the first family member, \$100 for the second and \$75 for each additional family member over age 11. Children under 11 are admitted for free.

Contact Elsie Hodnett at ehodnett@dailyhome.com.

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Park

From Page 4A

Talladega City Council President Donnie Miller pointed out that many citizens had been critical of the money spent on the project and the inconvenience caused by the closings, but all of that had gone by the wayside after the Fourth. He said some people had apologized for early criticism after seeing the finished product.

The work had been a long time coming. Erosion was eating away at the main drainage ditch through the center of the park, and was beginning to take some of the fencing along with it, creating a safety hazard. According to City Manager Brian Muenger, the project also included adding a new prefabricated pedestrian bridge, new culverts, a walking track, additional parking, new landscaping, buried utilities and more efficient LED lighting as well as the drainage improvements.

Several roads had to be relocated, and mounds of dirt up to 15 feet wide had to be dealt with before the park reopened to the public.

Muenger said the renovations had been a topic of discussion since at least 2007. The engineering firm of Neel-Schaffer designed an overall renovation project, which was bid in 2010, but proved far too expensive. The city opted instead to break the project up into phases and handle as much of the work as possible in-house.

The first phase involved the relocation of an 18-inch sewer line. The line also had to be buried below grade so that none of the other projects in the park would interfere with it.

The remaining work was bid out in 2012, with Waites Construction winning the bid for major construction. There were also several other major contributors to the renovation, including Graham Davis, who built new pavilions for the park; Alabama Power, which awarded a \$1,000 "Good Roots" grant for landscaping as

well as volunteer labor; and the energy efficiency company WRATT, which provided the LED lights.

Purchasing director Terry Hanner oversaw the project and Community Appearance Director Mitch Bast, Parks and Recreation Director Stacy Jones and Public Works Director Karen Phillips and their respective employees all contributed to the new park.

In spite of losing 100 construction days to rain and wet weather, the project proceeded largely on time and was completed in less than one year, Muenger said.

Contact Chris Norwood at cnorwood@dailyhome.com.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Erosion was eating away at the main drainage ditch through the center of Veterans Park, which is no longer a problem.

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New things to do in Lincoln

By ELSIE HODNETT
Home staff writer

Local residents have a variety of recreational opportunities, and in Lincoln, two new ones are the BirdieBall golf course and the Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail.

"Our BirdieBall golf course, which opened in April, is being used," Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department Director Roben Duncan said. "And we have some nonprofit organizations interested in hosting tournament fundraisers there."

The BirdieBall golf course, located at Lincoln Park, is the first of its kind in Alabama. BirdieBalls are napkin ring-shaped golf balls made of a super polymer that is highly durable. BirdieBalls travel about 40 yards with a 5-iron, and players can add or take away one or two yards per club.

"The city of Montgomery has contacted us and is thinking of creating a BirdieBall golf course," Duncan said.

Only BirdieBalls may be used at the Lincoln BirdieBall golf course. The course is free to play. An honor box by the entrance allows players to donate to assist with the upkeep of the course, and score cards



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Lincoln

From Page 5A

are available with the course layout on the back.

BirdieBall golfers tee off like in regular golf. The swing and chip is the same stroke pattern, but there is no putting. Golfers chip into a 1-foot radius white circle around the flag.

The BirdieBalls travel far enough to show ball flight, but short enough so they are easily retrievable. They are designed for more hang time, which helps new golfers learn the game or experienced golfers improve their skills.

Lincoln's BirdieBall golf course features sand traps, dog-leg right holes and water hazards. BirdieBalls float so they're easy to retrieve.

The city of Lincoln is the only authorized dealer of BirdieBall equipment in Alabama. BirdieBalls are three for \$10. Strike pads, which simulate taking a divot, are \$25. The velocity tees, which set the BirdieBall in a perfect position for a driver or 3-wood so you can practice drives, are \$15.

All are available for purchase at the Lincoln Park House on Magnolia Street, the Lincoln City Center and the concession stand at Lincoln Park.

Golfers may use their own clubs or clubs are available for rent at the same locations. A standard golfer could probably complete the course in an hour to an hour and a half.

Lincoln Parks and Recreation Athletic Director Wesley Yoder said the course can essentially be played with three clubs — a driver, pitching wedge and 5-iron.

"It hooks and slices like a regular golf ball," he said. "And it's a lot of fun to play."

Duncan said the Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail, which opened in May, has also been very popular.

"The fishing trail is being used on a daily basis, with people fishing or enjoying lunch under the pavilion," she said.

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail is located in old downtown Lincoln along both sides of Blue Eye Creek and is handicapped accessible. The creek is 3 to 6 feet deep in some places and 8 to 10 in others.

"I wanted a place where kids in wheelchairs would have the ability to fish the same way other kids can," former Lincoln Mayor Lew



Brian Schoenhals/The Daily Home

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail is in downtown Lincoln along both sides of Blue Eye Creek. It is handicapped accessible.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The BirdieBall golf course is the first of its kind in Alabama.

Watson said.

Watson proposed the idea 40 years ago, and continued to pursue the goal during his tenure as mayor. Current Mayor Bud Kitchin and the City Council continued the project and saw it through to its opening.

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail has five fishing stations — two concrete and three wooden — on both sides of the creek. The stations are set up to go straight down into the water, without overhangs

that could cause tangled fishing lines.

"We feed the fish there twice a day," Duncan said. "People are catching catfish, bream and crappie, but we haven't seen or heard of anyone catching bass yet. We've even had a few kayakers come through."

A pedestrian bridge crosses Blue Eye Creek. A concrete sidewalk approximately 10 feet wide and 3,500 feet long winds



Brian Schoenhals/The Daily Home

A pedestrian bridge crosses Blue Eye Creek. A concrete sidewalk winds between the creek and an old seed warehouse providing access to fishing stations.

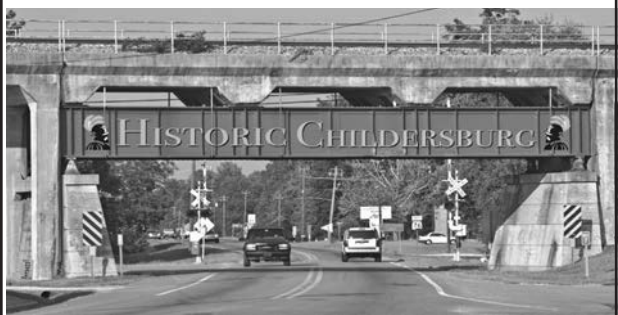
between the creek and an old seed warehouse providing access to the fishing stations. A pavilion with amphitheater seating provides a venue for performances.

"We held the last two Movie in the Park events under the pavilion, and the people loved it," Duncan said. "People have also rented the facility, and we get compliments on it all the time."

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Marksmanship Park place for whole family

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

The Civilian Marksmanship Program's \$20 million marksmanship range in Talladega County is under construction, with an anticipated first event in June 2015.

"The CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park is much more than just a range," said Mark Johnson, deputy chief operating officer for the CMP. "We want to make it where the whole family can come out and enjoy events, whether they are shooting in them or watching."

Chartered by Congress in 1903, the CMP has dedicated itself to training and educating U.S. citizens in the responsible use of firearms and air guns, with a focus on youth.

CMP Business Development Officer Jim Townsend said that in 2012 the CMP acquired approximately 500 acres a few miles south of the Talladega Superspeedway.

"There were several factors that led us to this property," Townsend said.

Townsend said the property is close to the CMP's Anniston location, and there is a large population of shooters within 300 miles of the new range.

"Although there are many shooting ranges in this area, most only offer one discipline of shooting such as shotgun or only have a 25-yard range," he said. "The CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park will be a multi-discipline range encompassing shotgun, rifle and pistol. We will have three different shotgun venues, two rifle venues and multiple pistol



An aerial view of the \$20 million marksmanship range under construction in Talladega County.

venues."

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

The facility will be open for daily use and will provide firearms safety and marksmanship classes for a broad spectrum of participants, with an emphasis on youth. CMP will also host several major regional

and national marksmanship competitions at the new facility annually.

Johnson said the test range was built in June 2012 after the perimeter fencing was completed. Contractors began the earthmoving phase December 2013, during which approximately 600,000 cubic yards of dirt had to be moved around on site, not transported in or out.

As of July, the earthmoving is about 95 percent complete and is expected to be finished this month.

The second phase includes construction of the CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park

Clubhouse, which got under way in June 2014.

When completed, the clubhouse will be 13,000 square feet with two large multi-purpose classrooms, CMP personnel offices and a store with range supplies, CMP memorabilia, clothing, safety equipment, ammunition and more.

A covered presentation area will separate the clubhouse east and west wings, where awards ceremonies will be held overlooking the range. The east and west concourses will feature large sitting and viewing areas with monitors displaying the shooting events in real time.

"You can view the

shooting matches from inside or outside in the clubhouse, which sits 30 feet above the 600-yard range floor," Johnson said. "This lets viewers watch the matches in comfort in real time or relax between matches. It also makes it more feasible for competitors to compete in multiple matches with a place for some down time in comfort. We will also have multiple large leaderboards to show scores as they change."

shooters on the 600-yard, 100-yard and 50-yard pistol ranges will have covered firing positions, with spectator areas behind each firing shed.

"There is no pit duty," he said. "No one goes forward of the firing line, which eliminates people movement and the time it takes, helping matches run much more efficiently and in a much more time-efficient manner."

CMP officials expect substantial completion of

Townsend said all See Range, Page 10A

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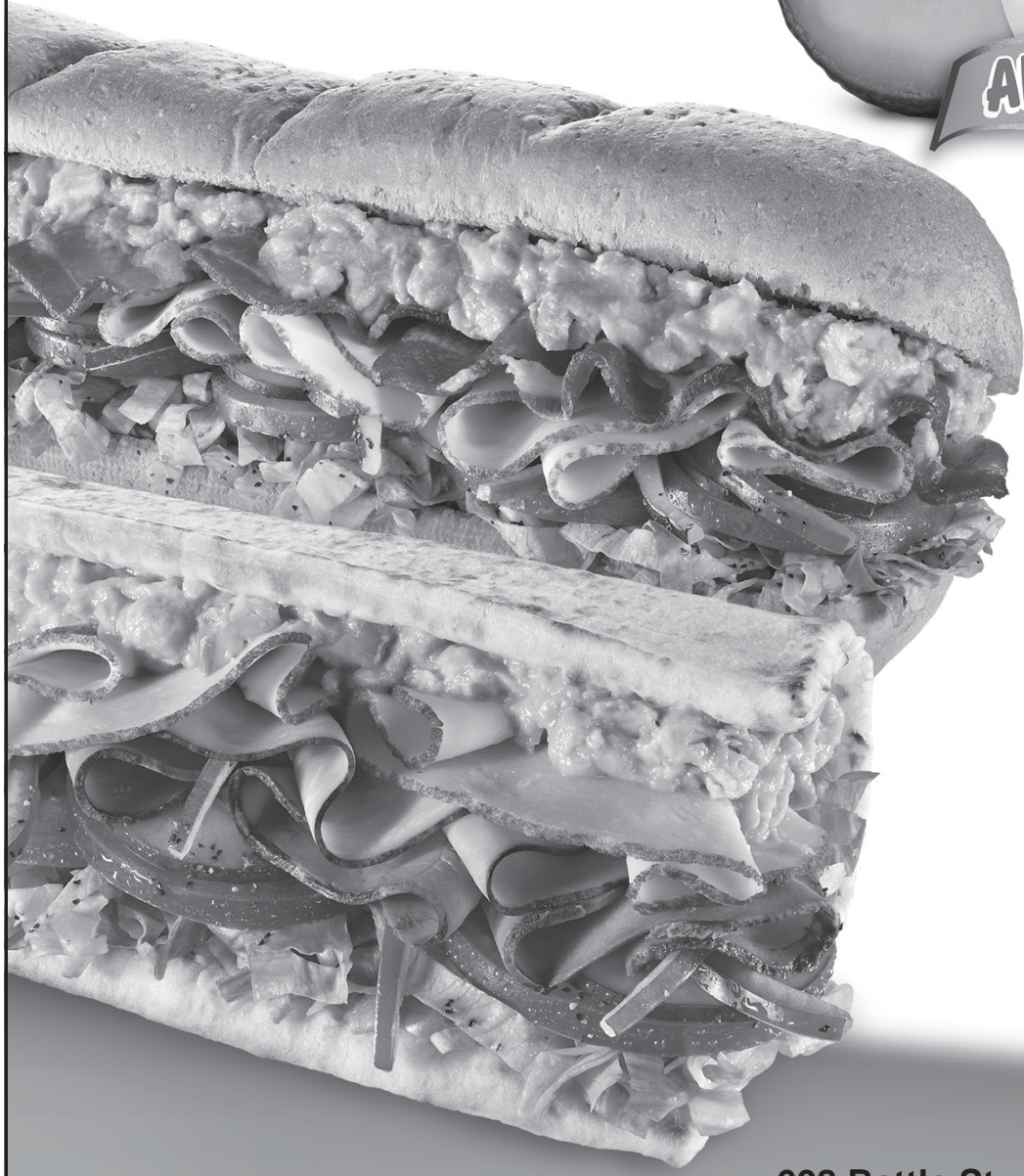
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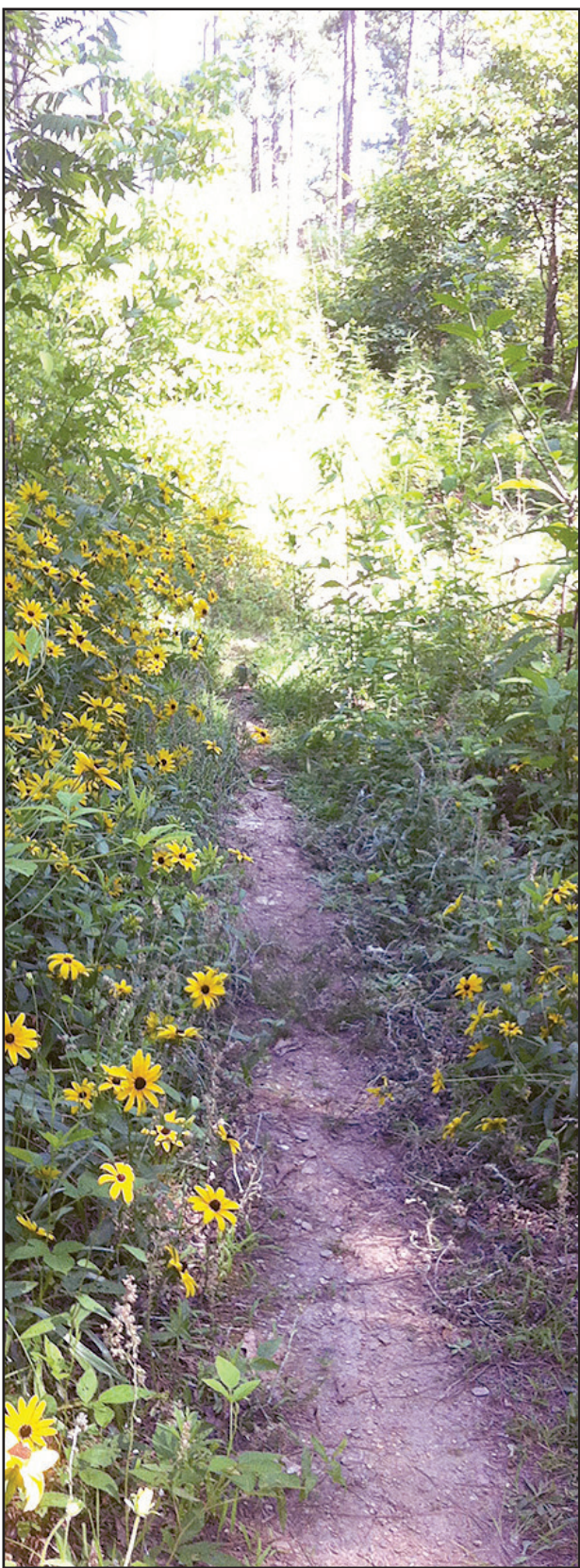


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Sylaward Trail 'a hidden gem' for hiking, biking

By EMILY McLAIN

In the woods around Lake Howard is a natural treasure for Sylacauga residents and visitors from around the southeast alike.

The Sylaward Trail provides nearly 15 miles of finely manicured paths through National Forest Service land. The trail is ideal for mountain biking, hiking or running and offers scenic views of the lake, mountains and a variety of natural flora and fauna.

"I would say it is a hidden gem in the area," said Perry Clerk, a member of Cyclists of Greater Sylacauga, the volunteer group that maintains the trail. "A lot of people aren't aware that the trail is there, and we've tried to promote it. It gets more usage from people that live outside of Sylacauga. We're doing some upgrades now that will hopefully make it more appealing for local residents, as well as out-of-town visitors."

Online rankings list Sylaward Trail as the No. 2 trail in the state, right behind Oak Mountain. Clark estimates that about 1,500 people per year use the trail, which features multiple loops that can be combined for a short or long hike or bike ride.

"We have never tracked the exact number of people that visit, but I would say around 1,500, and that is probably a low estimate, because we hold a couple big events out there every year," Clark said. "Any time you

go, there are always people there from Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Oxford, Anniston, Montgomery, even some from Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia."

Two main mountain biking events are held at Sylaward Trail each year. The Skyway Epic is usually around June and brought about 75 people to Sylacauga this year. It is a 65-mile race that goes through the National Forest to Bull Gap Mountain, then across the Skyway Motorway to Highway 77 and back.

"The race is actually increasing to 100 miles next year," Clark said. "We have people from all over the southeast participate. There were couples here this year from Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee."

Around August, the Battle at Bill's Creek bike race is held. It consists of multiple laps around the Sylaward Trail and is part of the Alabama Mountain Biking series, attracting mostly Alabama natives.

See Trail, Page 10A

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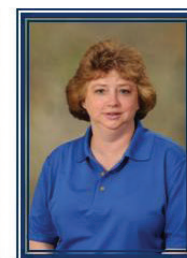
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Online rankings list Sylaward Trail as the No. 2 trail in the state, right behind Oak Mountain. An estimated 1,500 people per year use the trail, which features multiple loops that can be combined for a short or long hike or bike ride.

Trail

From Page 8A

These events, plus money collected in a donation box at the trailhead, are the major fundraisers that support upkeep of the single-track trail. The trail lies partially on property owned by the Sylacauga Utilities Board and on National Forest land, and the Cyclists of Greater Sylacauga, or COGS, provide maintenance.

COGS' 30-plus members usually work on the trail one weekend a month. The group is in

the middle of an improvement project that includes parking upgrades, a changing shack, a bike wash and additions to the picnic area at Lake Howard.

"The parking area was nonexistent before, so we've graded it and put a gravel base down," Clark said. "We've also added a changing shack to change clothes in, and a bike wash area. Those things were done through COGS fundraising. The city is helping us fund the latest

improvements, which will be refurbishing the picnic pavilions and putting in new barbecue grills."

COGS was started by a group of local cycling enthusiasts, and it took off from there. It was this

group's idea to approach the city with the idea for a mountain biking trail, and once the Forest Service was on board, the project was a go, Clark said. Construction began in late 2008, and the trail was open by early 2009.

Range

From Page 7A

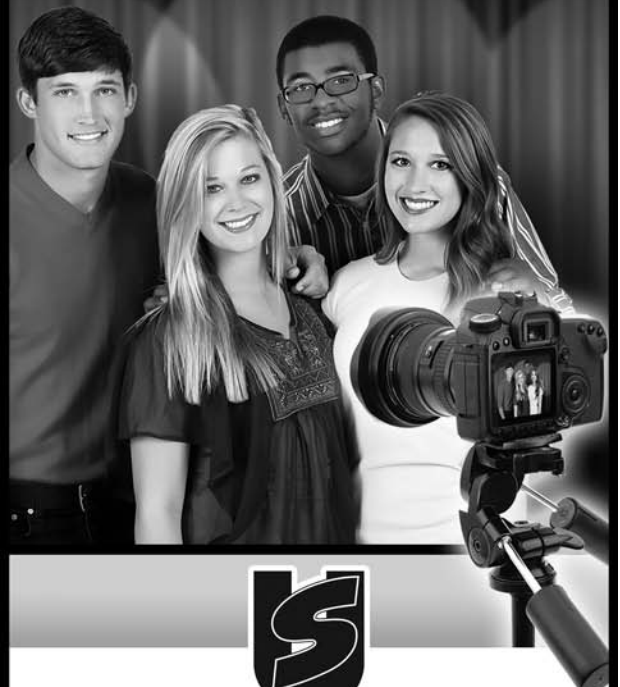
buildings and fixtures to be in place by the end of the year, with January and February 2015 open for installation of equipment and beginning testing. There is a projected soft opening in April or May 2015, with the first event planned for June 2015.

"We are truly excited about developing a new facility where the CMP will geographically expand its mission of teaching respect for firearms, promoting gun safety and marksmanship principles," Johnson said.

Contact Elsie Hodnett at ehodnett@dailyhome.com.

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"The trail was built by Trails Unlimited, which builds trails all over the country," Clark said. "It basically goes around the perimeter of Lake Howard and the watershed, and follows the natural contour of the land to make it easier to ride or hike."

Clark said the selling point of the trail — on which motorized vehicles and horses are not permitted — is the natural scenery surrounding it.

"People travel to Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina to go out into the woods or mountains, but most people don't realize we have some of the prettiest woods and mountains right outside Sylacauga," Clark said.

"It's the National Forest, so as far as wildlife, you've got coyotes, bobcats, foxes, snakes, raccoons, armadillos, hawks, owls eagles, and then the natural vegetation is there too. There's everything from oak leaf hydrangeas to ferns to dogwoods."

A year-round visitor, Clark said observing the changing seasons at Sylaward Trail is quite a sight to see.

"All the natural growth blooms and changes throughout the year," he said. "It's kind of amazing to watch."

For information on Sylaward Trail, contact Sylacauga Parks and Recreation at 256-249-8561.

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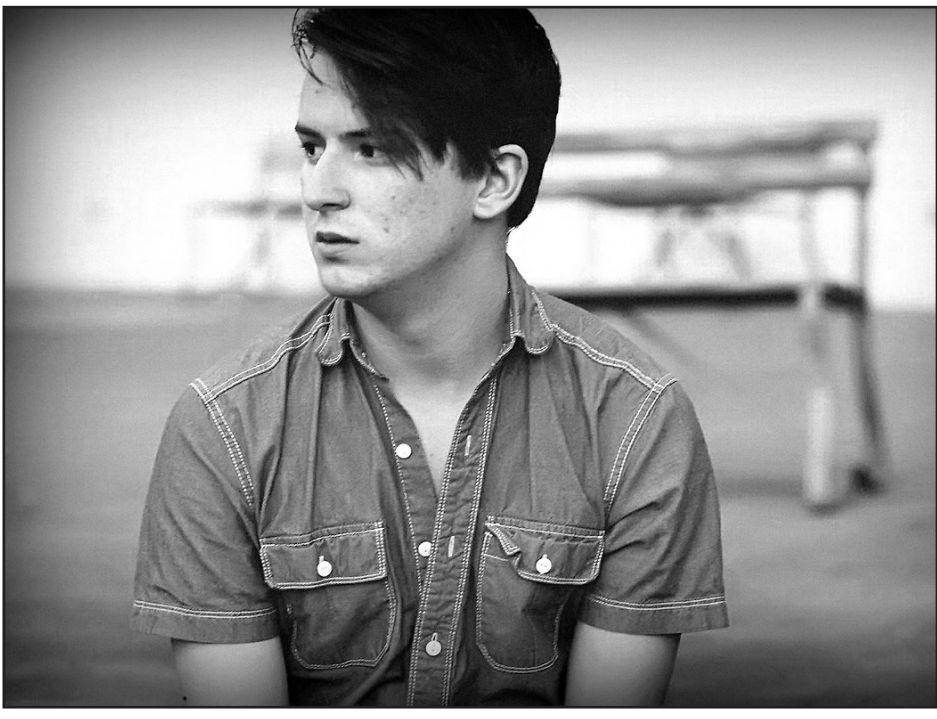


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William Simpkins is enjoying every step on the ladder to success in the music industry.

Music career coming day by day for Simpkins

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home assistant editor

Being a full-time student studying sound and audio engineering at SAE Institute in Nashville keeps William Simpkins focused, and a job at Banana Republic helps keep the bills paid. But it's what Simpkins does when he isn't in school or at his survival job that makes him tick.

"I've grown up in music," he says, explaining that so far his music career has been a series of baby steps taking him ever closer to the big time.

"Things haven't blown up or anything for me yet, but it's cool," he said. "It's a process. I've recorded a few albums up here and have started making some connections."

Simpkins' family name is synonymous with music in his hometown of Sylacauga. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather — David, Buddy and Fess Simpkins — have directed band programs at Sylacauga High School for a half-century or longer. His mother, Catie Simpkins, is a noted singer, and her parents, Mack and Brenda Howell, also have music in their backgrounds.

He adds that his brother, Hayden, "could be the best musician in the family, if he tried. His voice is really good and he picks up on guitar faster than I ever could. He's into golf, though."

Like his brother, Simpkins said he never felt pressured to follow in his family's musical footsteps, however.

"My parents didn't put any expectations on me. They've allowed me to do what I feel like I need to do," said Simpkins, now 21.

If he doesn't follow the family tradition of leading high school bands, he knows his family supports his plan to complete his audio engineering program in December and to eventually attend seminary.

"Both of my parents want what I'm doing to take off for me. They're very supportive," he said.

After graduating from SHS in 2011, Simpkins had a scholarship to attend Gadsden State Community College to play drums in the jazz band, but he decided to take his chances in the Music City instead. After a false start in a house he rented via Craigslist, he decided to move back home.

"I needed to get my life together," he said. "During that time I feel like personally it went from me identifying myself as a musician to ... it became more important to trust God and what his plan was for me rather than try to make up everything for

myself. From there on, I've tried to be obedient to what God wants me to do. Ultimately that led me back up here."

Since returning to Nashville a couple years ago, Simpkins has focused carefully on school and career.

"I strictly am going to school for music," he said. "I got a scholarship, which was weird because I got it by submitting a song I wrote for my own band. We were supposed to submit an audio recording, and I guess I had the best one so I won the scholarship."

As for his life plan, "I'm really focused on just trying to leave a blank check

in front of God. ... A lot of musicians up here get defined as being a musician. I'd like to think that I play in this band and I write these songs because it's my way of expressing who I am as a person. The music is a vehicle in that sense."

Simpkins started playing drums when he was 5 years old.

"I played in church and through high school, and had my own bands here and there through school," he said. "When it came time to graduate, my last high school band, Out of Shame, made an album. It got some attention from up here from Relient K, which was one of my

favorite bands growing up. They're in the Christian market up here. They've won Grammys. Their guitar player somehow heard that album, and I got a notification that he had added me on Facebook. He sent me a message and said he wanted to meet. A few days later, my dad and a friend and I rode up here, and he instantly became one of my best friends up here."

In a city filled with music superstars, Simpkins has crossed paths with a few.

"The first really famous person I met was Keith Urban," he said. "That was not even a week after moving up here after high school. I was working in a warehouse as a day job, and Keith Urban's rehearsal spot was across the street. He came over where we were working and asked if we wanted to listen to him play a few songs. I got to play guitar with him. That was pretty cool."

Simpkins said Reba McEntire was "just like on the TV show," and Vince Gill "is probably the cool-

est celebrity I've met up here."

"You see Taylor Swift around from time to time, but I've never actually met her," he added.

Lately, Simpkins has been writing songs with Charlie Midnight, who has written for acts ranging from Cher to Jamey Johnson, from George Thorogood to the Doobie Brothers, and with Birmingham native Buck Johnson, who's touring with Aerosmith as a key-

See **Simpkins**, Page 2B



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Simpkins

From Page 1B

boardist and backing vocalist.

Johnson and Simpkins have performed together with Birmingham-based Black Jacket Symphony, which re-creates classic albums as live performances.

“A selected album is performed in its entirety, by a group of hand-picked musicians, specifically selected for each album,” according to BJS’s website. “Each musician masters the fine details of the album to ensure it is performed as sonically perfect as it was recorded. The performance is separated into two sets, the first set features the album recreated as a true symphonic piece. The second set, featuring a selection of the album artist’s ‘greatest hits,’ opening the band to a more relaxed atmosphere, where the accompanying lighting and

video effects deliver to the audience a truly epic rock performance.”

Simpkins and Johnson were involved in re-creating the Synchronicity album by Police.

“We played three nights in a row at WorkPlay,” said Simpkins, who played guitar and sang background vocals. “I was actually nervous because it was the first time I played a sold-out show.”

These days he’s also using what he’s learning at school to self-produce and engineer an album for his current band.

“The goal is to get our music heard – to get a record deal,” he said. “It’s hard to get your music to people by yourself. If we could get over the hump of getting a record deal, I think things would take off from there. More than that, I’m more focused on just trying to be a good dude and love everybody first and my music will

maybe help. But of course, the business side is business.

“We’re really close to signing a booking agent. We’re making a new album now and trying to get a deal off of that. Like any other type of business, it’s about trying to find people who want to work with you and catapult the project into the public.”

With band mates Kevin Myers and Evan Moushon, Simpkins’ band, Altitudes, plays alternative pop rock

Simpkins said he has grown up in music, explaining that so far his music career has been a series of baby steps taking him closer to the big time.

music.

“I wouldn’t label it contemporary Christian,” he said. “Our songs deal with breakups and real-life issues. The fact that I’m a Christian comes out in the music. If people listen to the music, and especially people who believe as I do, they will see it come through without forcing it down everyone’s throat.”

With the demands on his time from school and work, Simpkins keeps a busy schedule.

“It’s usually pretty hectic during the week,” he said. “I’m trying to make my grades a priority. Apart from school, normally I’m in the studio every single night, either the one we

book out for school or my studio at home.

“A lot of my friends go bowl a lot and we go listen to music a lot. That’s a given. But being a college student, a lot of those things require money, so there’s a lot of hanging out at friends’ houses. My favorite thing to do that’s cheap, there are a million and a half coffee shops that are fun to hang out at. You run into people you know every single time.

“I’m having a blast. Part of the fun of trying to ‘make it’ is the journey to the top.”

Contact Bill Kimber at bkimber@dailyhome.com.

CEPA’s executive director plans for Smithsonian Exhibit

By JUNE WINTERS

For the past year, Kelly Wilkerson has immersed himself in the planning and scheduling of events for the Pell City Center for Education and the Performing Arts (CEPA), including the much anticipated Smithsonian Exhibit, “The Way We Worked,” which opened at the center yesterday.

This exhibit is featured in five cities in this country each year, and for the first time Pell City is on the list.

Wilkerson says he has already seen many people and activities at the center, but feels he has just “touched the tip of the iceberg.”

Wilkerson is executive director of Pell City Center, and moved here from Wichita, Kan., where he worked in real estate and property management with a law firm. His wife, the former Sheree Smith, is a Pell City native and the couple have two sons and a



Kelly Wilkerson

daughter, ages 6, 9 and 11.

Mrs. Wilkerson works in Birmingham with the Community Foundation, and the children attend Pell City schools.

The Pell City Center serves two areas for Pell City. The gymnasium half is devoted to the city’s education program and the theater is devoted to the arts.

Wilkerson’s main responsibility as executive director of the busy CEPA is to schedule the different

See CEPA, Page 3B

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CEPA

From Page 2B

functions in both the theater and gymnasium and see that these functions go smoothly and take place as planned.

A drama workshop was held in late June and an art workshop in mid-July in the gym. Wilkerson said this summer, there have also been a volleyball camp, wrestling camp, archery camp and a cheerleader camp. Coming up are basketball camps for both boys and girls, a band camp and a cheerleader camp.

"November, December, April and May are booked solid at the gym for annual workshops and training camps for school activities," Wilkerson said. He said CEPA was proud to host Head Start graduation this year.

"We've got band concerts coming up in the gymnasium, and we will host several fund-raising beauty pageants," he said. The theater side of the center is a busy place also, with Pell City High School holding classes in the theater as well as presenting performances there. This year, three performances are planned — "Duck Hunter Shoots Angel," "Smokey Joe's," and another to be announced. It's the first time the group has performed three times in one year.

The school's choral group, "Voices of the South," will perform this year, and Gordon Motes, who plays piano for the famous Gaither Quartet, will be in concert at the center. The show "Magic City Magic Club" will be



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The Pell City Center serves two areas for Pell City. The gymnasium half is devoted to the city's education program and the theater is devoted to the arts.

featured soon, and dance recitals are held in both places.

Wilkerson is especially proud of the new movie facilities that have recently been added to the theater. The screen is 16 feet by 28 feet and, thanks to private donations and help from the Pell City Council, some of the sound and lighting equipment has been upgraded and some has been replaced with new equipment.

"We now have a full theater in function and we've shown two movies, 'Steele Magnolias' and 'Frozen,'" Wilkerson said. Wilkerson sees the movie project as a great

addition to the city, and said surveys are out right now to determine a ticket price that families can afford.

"We're going to keep ticket and refreshment costs as low as possible," Wilkerson said. "Not only will it be a good thing for families, but a good way for companies and organizations to treat employees and their families to a special night out."

He also sees it as a good venue for special family occasions such as birthday celebrations.

"We just want it to be good entertainment for families," Wilkerson said. "CEPA is a wonderful

place, and I know the people of Pell City are proud of it. I want everyone who comes to the center to

have a good time and leave wanting to come back. We still have a lot more potential, and my goal is to have

something for everyone."

Contact June Winters at news@dailyhome.com.

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In the 1990s, civic-minded Talladegans formed Antique Talladega, and one project they tackled was to restore the historic Ritz Theatre, which is now home to a series of professional productions that one could have predicted.

Ritz turns out bigger than planned

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home assistant editor

They wanted to have a few antique auctions and a stage to showcase local talent. What they wound up with is much bigger.

In the 1990s, a handful of civic-minded Talladega residents came together to form Antique Talladega, and one project they decided to tackle was to breathe life back into the old movie house on the Courthouse Square. Now, after raising and spending more than \$1 million to restore the historic Ritz Theatre, the venue is now home to a series of professional productions that no one could have predicted.

See Ritz, Page 8B



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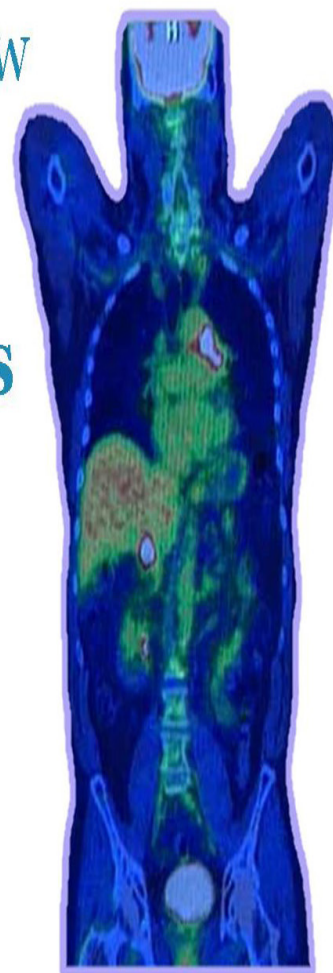


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Ritz

From Page 4B

“Our professional artists series began about 1996 or 97,” said Bill McGehee, founder and still a board member of the organization.

“It’s been maybe 20 years or more since Antique Talladega was founded, and we merged with Talladega First to get nonprofit status. Mike Mitchell was our executive director, and we never envisioned we would have someone like Dihann Carroll working the kinks out of her show here before taking it to New York, or Don McLean or the others we’ve had through the years. That was never envisioned,” McGehee said.

“When we hired George Culver is when that became a reality. George had bigger goals in mind than we had for the theater, so it really has been his baby.”

In addition to artists such as Carroll and McLean and impersonators of Patsy Cline and Elvis Presley, to name a few, McGehee said events marking the 50th anniversary of Civil Rights milestones in Birmingham were milestones for the theater.

“We did a simulcast of ‘Four Little Girls’ with the Kennedy Center in Washington. We were going to do our own version, but we realized it would be better to simulcast the event from Washington. We did ‘Letters from the Birmingham Jail,’ which used local clergymen to play the parts of the clergy Dr. King sent letters to during that period of time. The drama had been

done in Birmingham, and it was very well received here. It was such a strong performance.

“We followed that up with professional artists doing ‘To Kill a Mockingbird,’ and we were recently able to do the ‘The Miracle Worker, the Helen Keller’ story.”

A revue of Muscle Shoals music hit the stage earlier this year, as well.

“These things are really all about Alabama, and very pertinent,” McGehee said.

The Ritz puts on eight or 10 shows a year, and is also available to other groups to put on fundraising shows.

“In the last year, other organizations have raised \$25,000 or \$30,000 at the Ritz,” McGehee said.

“We’re providing professional artists, making it available for local fundraisers, and there are some other things we’ve produced. Plus, we’ve added movie projection, and in the future we hope to start getting some first-run movies that might not show commercially in Talladega or Anniston or even Birmingham,” he said.

“We’ve got to upgrade our film capacity to be able to show any film produced after 2013. They require you to have the sound system — there are a lot of things required. We’re a long way from the optimal theater we could have, but we’ve raised over a million dollars for capital improvements.”

McGehee said more than half the audience members at the Ritz commonly come from outside Talladega, visiting from Birmingham, Montgomery, Anniston

and all points in-between. “Last time they did a cost-benefits analysis, they found we added almost a million dollars to the economy,” he said, pointing out that the visitors’ spending was at restaurants, gas stations, motels and stores all over town.

Built in 1936, the Ritz is considered one of the best surviving examples of the Art Deco mainstreet theatres of the 1930s, according to its website.

“Careful restoration of the landmark’s extraordinary façade, comprised exclusively of opaque structural glass, a common construction material used lavishly during the Deco period in buildings like the Rockefeller Center in New York City, was completed in late 1997 with perfectly matched antique vitrolite glass by renowned St. Louis artisan Timothy J. Dunn.

“The historic Ritz Theatre reopened on Feb. 16, 1998, as the premiere performing arts center of East Central Alabama with a concert by the National Symphony String Quintet.”

As the building was improved and audiences swarmed to see the shows, Antique Talladega spread out by buying the Otts Building on the right of the theater and the Kenwin-Dress for Less building on the left.

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby was able to provide grant money to the city to support preservation in the historic district, which Antique Talladega was able to access by selling those buildings to the city government.

Now, the organization owns the Lee Laundry building and the Ritz

Furniture building. “We will be deeding that to the city as well. We will maintain the front half of the Lee Laundry building, and the city will take the back of it down to increase size of the alley and add some parking where Ritz Furniture used to be. What’s going to happen is, the city will be able to increase the size of the alley so we can bring trucks in and bring theatrical sets that we couldn’t bring in before because they couldn’t offload them.”

McGehee praised the city of Talladega and City Manager Brian Muenger

for working closely with Antique Talladega.

“We got a jewel when we got Brian Muenger. He’s got more facts and figures in his head — he knows what he wants to do and he knows where he wants to go. He has really been wonderful for Talladega. I’ve worked with mayors and city managers and there have been some very good and capable ones. But Brian communicates well, and a lot of the things he’s thought of are things we’ve thought of too. We work hand-in-glove with him, and he’s very pleasant to work with.”

McGehee said Culver

was responsible for bringing those first big shows to Talladega, and he’s got several shows lined up for the coming year that will likely be announced next month.

“George left us and went to the Birmingham Children’s Theater five or six years ago,” McGehee said. “I told him he was leaving his legacy behind, and I think he kind of realized that and saw that he had really been making a difference in Talladega. We were fortunate to get him to come back a few years ago. He’s an asset. He really adds to the fabric of Talladega,” McGehee said.

‘George (Culver) had bigger goals in mind than we had for the theater, so it really has been his baby.’

- Bill McGehee, founder of Antique Talladega

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New services offered at Citizens BMC

By **DARON HARRIS**
Daily Home Correspondent

The field of health care services offered to the greater Talladega county community and east central Alabama has broadened significantly with the launch of Citizens Baptist Medical Center's newly accredited hospice care program along with its soon to be started PET-CT scan program.

Director of Hospice Gregory Lee and Rehab and Home Health Director Jonathon Green at Citizens Baptist recently outlined the many pluses of Citizens' new hospice program.

Lee was brought on-board in October 2013 to spearhead implementing the hospice program and to make sure that everything would be in place for the ultimate licensure and state accreditation necessary to begin serving patients. This process was finalized by June, and the hospice program is now successfully serving patients in the area.

Lee, with over 16 years of experience in hospice care, and Green, with over 15 years of experience in home health, credit this amazingly efficient start up of the program to "the wonderful team in place at Citizens."

Lee and Green agree that without the active support of President Joel Taylor, Zach Abercrombie, CFO, Ann McEntire, Chief Nursing Officer and Doctor Stanley Jett, Medical Director for the hospice program, putting all of this in place could not have happened.

They agree "there is an incredible team in place here at Citizens, and everyone from the top down has been very helpful."

Lee and Green pointed out that the hospice program offered at Citizen distinguishes itself uniquely from that offered through



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega has a new hospice care program, along with a soon to be started PET-CT scan program.

other providers in that most hospice programs and home health agencies are not hospital owned. The fact that Citizens already has a successful home health program in place allows the hospital to more fully serve the set of patients that require flexible treatment, and both programs are easily able to communicate in order to best serve patients.

If a patient enrolled in home health might better be served via hospice or if a hospice patient can no longer continue hospice but still has needs that can be met through home health, having Citizens overseeing both programs results in seamless care for its valued patients. This improved flexibility and Citizens' already well established faith-based atmosphere for serving patients are big pluses for many people in the region and Alabama.

Lee and Green mentioned that state accrediting officers were very impressed with Citizens' state of readiness to implement the hospice program as a full roster

of interested patients was already in place even before the program could begin.

Citizens has contracted Molecular Imaging Technologies to provide PET-CT scanning services through its mobile PET-CT scanning truck, scheduled to arrive at Talladega's Citizens later this month for a long-term period of operation serving patients.

Brett Gilliam is the PET-CT Technologist and Physician Relationship Manager for Molecular Imaging Technologies, and he recently detailed the benefits the availability of these scanning services will bring to local patients.

PET-CT is short for "positron emission tomography-computed tomography," and this revolutionary type of scanning technology is a valuable tool to be used in conjunction with the older technologies of X-ray, CT scans, MRI and ultrasound. PET-CT scans offer a "metabolic" level of scanning whereas the other technologies are better suited for "anatomical" imaging. PET scans

ultimately can help doctors and patients to differentiate between benign or malignant situations, and they can also help them to avoid invasive biopsies.

"For patients with a known cancer, it can assist their doctor greatly in planning treatment and to gauge the 'before' and 'after' effectiveness of treatments," Gilliam said.

He said while it is expected that most likely 100 percent of cases to be served through Citizens' PET-CT program will be oncology based, the scanning technology is also helpful in the area of neurology (memory disorders, Alzheimer's) as well as in cardiac care.

Through the launching of services such as hospice care and on-site PET-CT scans at Citizens, patients now have better options to consider for their health needs and resource planning.

Being able to choose health care options in their immediate area closer to home and to avoid long drives back and forth to

hospitals in Birmingham or other larger cities is a definite plus to patients who are already dealing with enough hardship on their

plates. The time, money and energy saved are of tangible and direct benefit to the health, treatment and recovery of these patients.

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St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital continues to grow

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital in Pell City continues to grow, adding more services while keeping a high level of customer satisfaction.

"St. Vincent's St. Clair has experienced tremendous volume growth in the past two and one-half years," said Evan Ray, president of rural hospitals for St. Vincent's Health System. "In comparing volume levels prior to the opening of the new hospital in December 2011, we have realized a 40 percent increase in inpatient volumes and a greater than 50 percent increase in outpatient volumes."

The \$32 million hospital began seeing patients Dec. 10, 2011, and a flood of people have since sought medical care at the facility.

"The medical staff and associates of St. Vincent's St. Clair have accommodated this increase while maintaining a strict focus on quality of care and patient satisfaction," Ray said. "St. Vincent's St. Clair is routinely ranked above the 90th percentile for patient satisfaction as indicated by our Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services publicly reported patient satisfaction scores."

Recently, St. Vincent's St. Clair was recognized by their parent organization, Ascension Health, for their strong performance in patient satisfaction.

"In both Alabama and the United States, many

small rural hospitals are discontinuing services or even closing their doors," Ray said. "However, due to the tremendous support of St. Vincent's Health System, Ascension Health and the St. Clair County community, we are experiencing just the opposite. We continue to add service lines and physicians to our medical staff."

Services added since the opening of the facility include the Advanced Wound Center, with hyperbaric oxygen therapy; the Vein Center, and a Sleep Disorders Center.

The physical therapy department added occupational and speech therapy to its services last year.

Surgical services now include a full-time general surgeon on call, Scott Smith, M.D.

This coverage benefits both emergency department patients and inpatients.

Smith recently added surgical services to include anti-reflux surgery, laparoscopic colectomy for benign and malignant disease, thyroid surgery, vascular surgery for dialysis, wound debridement and orthopedics procedures such as pins, plates, and arthroscopic knee and shoulder scopes.

St. Vincent's St. Clair recently added pain management services, with Dr. James Beretta as the medical director.

Chronic pain management treatments include activity modifications, physical therapy, trigger point injections, multidisciplinary pain treatment and

pain medication management.

The St. Clair facility offers a growing number of specialties, including cardiology, dermatology, gastroenterology, general surgery, gynecology, nephrology, neurology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopedics, otolaryngology (ENT), pulmonology, sports medicine, urology, and vascular surgery.

The hospital also provides lab testing, diagnostic imaging, physical/occupational therapy and inpatient services for the residents of the new Col. Robert L. Howard State Veterans Home.

"We feel it's an honor and a privilege to serve our veterans by providing quality health care services," Ray said.

St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to increase its staff and bring doctors who are specialists to the patient, instead of the patient having to travel to Birmingham for treatment.

"For the near future, we will continue to grow our reach throughout St. Clair County and the surrounding region by supporting our physicians, Ray said. "From a primary care perspective, we are partnering with local primary care groups to support the recruitment of additional physicians to their practices. From a specialist growth standpoint, we continue to work with specialists throughout Central Alabama to identify those whose practice goals align with both St. Vincent's St.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Officials say the number of patients treated has increased since moving out of the old St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital and into the new, more modern hospital.

Clair and our community."

The new St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital has all private rooms with six intensive care beds and 34 medical/surgical beds, which includes two extended-stay suites for patients and their families.

Officials say the two-story 79,000-square-foot facility is equipped with modern, state-of-the-art equipment for diagnosis and treatment.

The hospital at 7063 Veterans Parkway has fewer inpatient rooms than the hospital it replaced. The new hospital has 40 beds, about half the inpatient beds as the older hospital.

Officials say there is a shift to outpatient treatment versus inpatient care.

"As our community and our hospital services grow, we will inevitably look to our community partners (St. Clair County Commission, St. Clair County Economic Development Council, St. Clair County Healthcare Authority and the City of Pell City) to identify a pathway to expanding our hospital," Ray said.

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CVMC provides exceptional care

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home assistant editor

Health care in South Talladega County continues its positive march to the future, as Coosa Valley Medical Center continues to add equipment and technology, personnel and specialties and programs to boost community wellness.

“Acknowledging that health care is in the midst of sweeping change, I do believe CVMC is well positioned to serve the surrounding communities into the future,” said Chief Executive Officer Glenn C. Sisk. “That commitment begins with the tremendous clinical and individual care our physicians, nurses, technicians, therapists and the balance of our staff provide to our guests every day. “As well, having health-care decision-making at the local level affords our board and leadership team the ability to remain nimble and react to changes in our environment rapidly.”

CVMC now offers PET and CT imaging services, as well as inpatient dialysis.

“CVMC is fortunate to deliver care to residents of five counties. However, our primary service areas rest right here in Talladega County,” Sisk said. “The continued confidence and support residents of this area provide to CVMC have grown even more important given the fragile reimbursement environment Alabama hospitals face. Our communities need to continually be focused on effective economic development opportunities which create beneficial jobs and benefit programs resulting in a healthier economy. As a result, education programs grow, healthcare is strengthened, and local businesses prosper. We have



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Glenn C. Sisk is chief executive officer of Coosa Valley Medical Center in Sylacauga.

the capability of achieving such results and we look forward to continually supporting these efforts.”

The only civilian hospital built in the United States during World War II, Sylacauga Hospital changed its name to Coosa Valley Medical Center in 1980, and from 1995 to 2004 it was owned by Baptist Health System. Today the independent, non-profit hospital employs some 600 people, with medical staff representing more than 20 areas of specialization.

“The bricks and mortar and state-of-the-art equipment were a significant change in our community, and we’re very proud of that,” Sisk said. “While much of our focus over the last several years has been upgrading the condition of our physical plant, the continued progress made by our physicians and clinical team members has been even more encouraging.”

Reaching out to the

community, “We want people to choose CVMC when they have a health need, and we want to meet them at that point of need, but we also want to keep them well,” said Vanessa Green, the hospital’s chief business development officer.

In the past year, CVMC has reacquired management of its onsite fitness and wellness center – Coosa Valley Fitness and Wellness – which reopened after significant upgrades.

“Our gym is exceptionally clean. It’s the only one in the area with a climate-controlled indoor walking track and working racquetball courts, and it’s staffed with full-time attendants,” said Lindsay Johns, community outreach and marketing coordinator. The center has cardio equipment, weight machines and locker rooms with showers, and offers personalized attention along with group exercise classes.

“Be active ... live well” is

the motto of the fitness and wellness center, and membership has increased significantly since the hospital reacquired management and invited the community to “Come grow with us.”

“We want people to think of us when they are not feeling well, but we want to move to being the place people view as a resource to help them live a healthy and fit lifestyle,” said Christy B. Knowles, chief human resources officer.

Green said individualized wellness plans set Coosa Valley Fitness and Wellness apart.

CVMC also partners with local industries to provide health and wellness resources for their employees. The hospital offers a broad range of services including health education classes, health fairs and screenings, training in CPR and other topics, and on-site flu shots. By working closely with leading employers and business groups, more community

members receive greater access to quality care.

In comparisons to national standards of care, CVMC is a leading performer, said Amy Price, chief nursing and operations officer. CVMC is accredited by The Joint Commission, and has historically performed in the top 7 percent nationally. The medical center has outperformed state and national averages in patient satisfaction reported by the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems. The hospital has also been recognized by VHA and the American Heart Association for delivering exceptional patient care, and its intensive care unit received the Beacon Award for Excellence from

the American Association of Critical Care Nurses.

“Our work is focused not on winning awards or being recognized for what we do here; it’s focused on doing what is right by the patient and knowing that ultimately, the outcome will be as it should be, and along with that comes recognition,” Price said.

Sisk looks to a bright future at CVMC. “Given the challenges created by changes in federal health care insurance laws, the CVMC team continues to prepare to assist residents of our region in gaining access to care. We remain steadfast in our commitment to recruit physicians and add beneficial services while exceeding the expectations of our guests.”

*Owner,
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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Craig Bates, coordinator of instruction technology for the Talladega County School System, said it's gratifying to see what Talladega County Schools have done in the past five years.

Technology used to support learning in county schools

By SHANE DUNAWAY
Home staff writer

For more than half a decade, the 1-to-1 student-to-computer technology initiative in Talladega County Schools has leapt into the spotlight of modernized education.

When Fayetteville High School, Lincoln High School and Munford High School implemented the new technology initiative in January, it meant all high schools in the county system had met Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey's goal for the system.

"The technology is used to support student learning," Lacey said. "The computer or the technology does not replace good teaching. If the students are working on a project, they may be using their device to research information on that particular topic. There are multiple ways that the technology is being used to enhance learning."

Craig Bates, former Winterboro High School principal who currently serves as coordinator of instructional technology for the school system, said it's gratifying to see what Talladega County Schools have done in the past five years.

"When Winterboro started 1-to-1 computer-to-student education, it was something unique in the state of Alabama, but as we move forward five years later, it is one of seven in our district and many across the state," Bates said. "We were on the cutting edge in Talladega County then, and will remain so. Being a part of current and newly forming initiatives is exciting."

He said the schools involved with the technology initiative have a cumulative total of more than 2,000 MacBooks, 400 iPads and 800 desktop computers with an additional 1,200 iPads to be distributed at schools within the coming year.

"Our plan is to add four additional schools this year that serve students K-4," Bates said. This will leave us with three middle schools and two elementary schools remaining. I cannot give a specific deadline, but know that we are working as quickly as finances will allow. We are hopeful that the state will begin to support technology initiatives in the future, and this will expedite this process."

Lacey confirmed A.H. Watwood Elementary School would be among the four schools to receive the new technology, with the others schools whose

students may benefit to be determined once the E-Rate funding is approved for the 2014-15 school year.

"It's getting us one step closer to having all 17 schools with a 1-to-1," Lacey said.

Bates highlighted the primary challenge the county faces in bringing all schools into the modern era of learning through the initiative.

"It would be a better situation of we had every student at every school in a 1-to-1 situation," Bates said. "Finances simply will not allow a complete rollout to 7,700 students at one time, but we are making great progress one school at a time. We will achieve our goal of 1-to-1 technology for all 7,700 students."

For the students who already participate in the initiative, Bates explained there are plans in place if a piece of equipment needs to come out of circulation due to maintenance issues or a mishap causing damage to the iPad or MacBook.

"We do have sufficient inventory to provide replacements for students who have a machine out for repair," Bates said. "This year, we are making additional purchases to cover increased enrollment

at some locations and we are able to move inventory between locations."

He discussed how the philosophy and mindset has changed within the classroom setting at schools currently on board with 1-to-1.

"I believe this initiative, along with project-based learning, has moved the instruction in our system from a more traditional 'sit and get' model to one where students collaborate together and with the teacher using technology to create new ideas, new products and new ideas," Bates said. "I feel this fits much better with the state College and Career Ready Standards, which require students to solve problems by applying knowledge and to present using various multi-media tools."

Bates said teachers and students alike have adapted well to the initiative.

"I feel like everyone has responded very positively," Bates said. "While there are always going to be both students and teachers that need a little assistance at times, we provide an extremely robust professional development program for our teachers to help them integrate technology into project work and daily lessons."

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Pell City BOE now meeting in new building

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

The Pell City Board of Education has a new home.

"We are in our new building," said Dr. Michael Barber, superintendent of Pell City schools. "It is a comfortable work environment. It is a very workable building for our needs."

The school system converted the former St. Clair County Department of Human Resources building into its new central office.

The facility was damaged by a fire in 2009, and remained vacant until the board moved into the facility this month. Renovation work continues inside the building.

Gary Mozingo, the facilities supervisor for the school system, said renovation work continues in the training area of the facility.

"That should be completed by the end of August or the beginning of September," he said.

Most of the central office personnel have already moved into their new offices.

"For the most part, about 90 percent of the people are in," Barber said.

He said school system nurses will not move into the building until August, after they return for the upcoming school year.

Barber said the technology and gifted education departments have not moved into the new facility yet either, but will soon.

He said the new facility will allow all central office personnel to work under one roof.

The new board office is adjacent to and south of Interstate 20 on Bunt Drive, just off Dr. John Haynes Drive.

The school board bought the building last year from the St. Clair County Commission for \$125,000. The facility sits on two acres of land.

The building is surrounded by a paved parking lot, providing ample space for employees and visitors to park.

Barber said school board employees appear to like the new central office.

"I've only heard positive feedback from them," he said.

The facility has 32 offices and a six-room training area in the west wing. The



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Central office personnel have a new board building to work in. The board renovated the former St. Clair County Department of Human Resources building and turned it into its new central office.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The Pell City Board of Education meets in its new central office building.

facility also has a 40-foot-wide, 49-foot-long room for board meetings in the middle of the structure.

"You can tell it's going to be a more efficient floor plan for us," Barber said, adding that employees don't have to climb steps to reach their offices anymore.

The Board of Education central office was in the two-story CenturyLink

building, which the city is in the process of buying.

Barber said the new board office is centrally located with easy access, and "the public is finding us."

He said the St. Clair County Commission is removing trees from a lot in front of the new central office, so it is more visi-

ble to the public from Dr. John Haynes Drive.

Barber said he still has a lot of organizing and unpacking to do, but he feels at home in his new office.

"I love it," he said.

Contact David Atchison at datchison@dailyhome.com.

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Several new principals for schools in St. Clair

By GARY HANNER
Home staff writer

As the 2014-15 school year draws nearer, the one area of change students at some schools in St. Clair County will notice is new principals.

Ragland School, Steele Junior High School, Springville High School and Odenville Middle School will all have new principals when school starts in August.

Ragland's new principal, Roy Bliss, was named at the June meeting by the St. Clair County Board of Education. Bliss had been the principal at Iola Roberts Elementary School in Pell City the past five years.

St. Clair Schools Superintendent Jenny Seals said Bliss did very well on his interview.

"He seems to be very innovative and wants to bring new ideas to the school," Seals said. "He wants to give back to the school he graduated from. I'm very excited and I look forward to his leadership there."

Steele Junior High will also be looking for new leadership as Judy Dixon has decided to retire after 25-plus years in education, with the last five years as principal at SJHS.

And after spending the last 15 years as principal at Springville High School, Dr. Robert Harris has retired from education.

Harris spent 37 years as teacher, coach, assistant principal and principal —

all at the three Springville schools.

"It has been a very rewarding experience," Harris said recently. "I graduated from Springville High School in 1972, and to be able to come back and make that full cycle is humbling."

St. Clair County Schools Superintendent Jenny Seals said Harris was a good administrator.

"He had a strong leadership style, and I valued that leadership," Seals said. "I respected him. He had a love for Springville High School and the folks in Springville knew it."

Throughout his long career, Harris has developed friendships with many teachers and thousands of students.

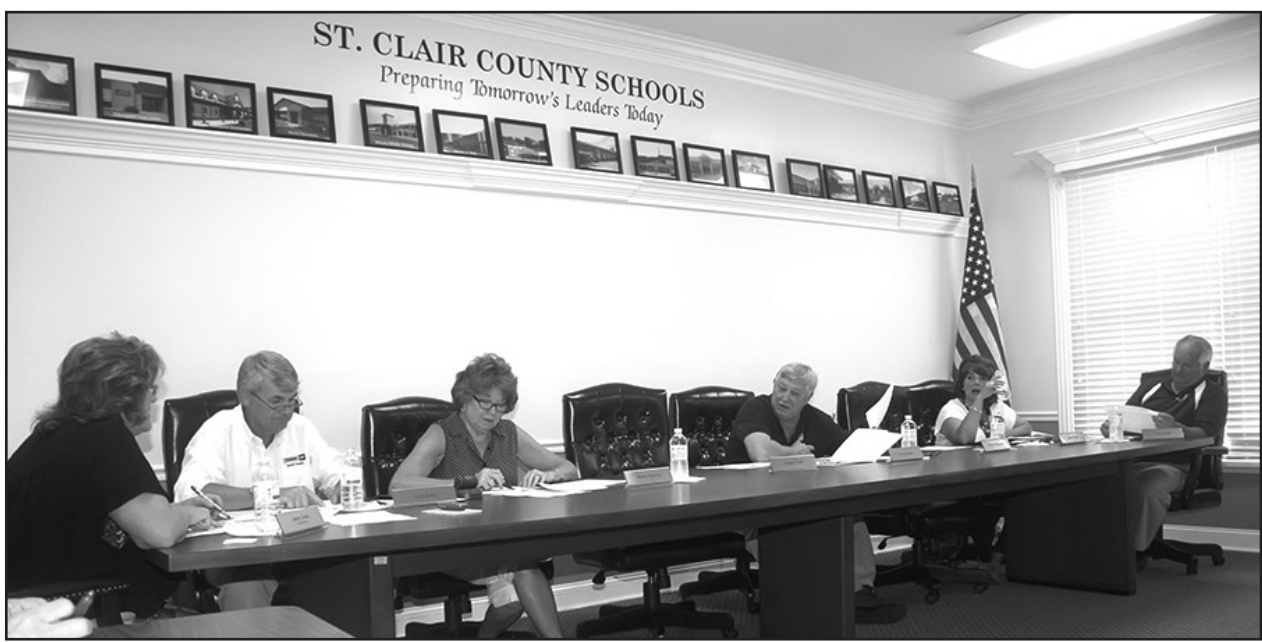
"Many of these people I taught, coached, or worked with have become lifelong friends," Harris said.

When asked what his immediate plans were, Harris said he wants to spend some time on his farm.

Recently, the St. Clair BOE named Lisa Glasgow the new principal at Steele Junior High School.

"I'm very excited about the opportunity," Glasgow said. "I'm anxious to get to know the community of Steele, the faculty and students at the school. I know it's a good school, and I want to keep things going."

Glasgow, a 20-year education veteran, replaces Judy Dixon, who retired at



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Officials and members of the St. Clair County Board of Education, shown at a recent meeting, are from left, Superintendent Jenny Seals, BOE president Scott Suttle, BOE vice-president Marie Manning, John DeGaris, Allison Gray and Terry Green.

the end of the school year.

For the past two years, Glasgow was the assistant principal at Ashville Elementary School.

Glasgow graduated from St. Clair County High School in 1989. She attended Jefferson State Community College and then transferred to the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She has a master's degree in educational leadership.

Her first six years were at Moody Middle School, with the past 14 years at Ashville Elementary School.

Glasgow knows the school she is about to be in charge of is quite different from what she has been accustomed to.

"There were a little over 400 students at AES," Glasgow said. "They had a large faculty. This will be half the student body size, and less faculty. I think the challenge will be that I will have to do a lot more on my own because there is just not that many support positions. I do feel I have had a lot of experience with a lot of different roles and I am ready for that challenge."

When the school year



Lisa Glasgow is the new principal at Steele Junior High School.

ended in May, there were about 8,600 students attending the schools in St. Clair County. Seals knows the enrollment will be up, as it has been the past several years.

"Our enrollment continues to grow," Seals said. "This year, we have AP courses being taught at every high school and Pre-AP courses being taught at every middle school. Our teachers have been trained at every school."

Contact Gary Hanner at ghanner@thesclairtimes.com.

Administrative changes in Talladega County School System

By SHANE DUNAWAY
Home staff writer

Several school administrators within the Talladega County School System will have new home bases and job titles when students return in August.

Munford Elementary School assistant principal Dr. Brooke Morgan transferred up a rung to fill the shoes of retired MES principal Dr. Rebecca Robinson.

Morgan, a Samford University graduate, has worked in the Talladega County School System for 17 years, with stops at Winterboro High School, B.B. Comer Memorial High School and Lincoln Elementary.

"I'm looking forward to continuing the great work we have going at Munford Elementary and working with the teachers and parents to ensure that students perform to the best of their abilities and make sure they have every opportunity to be successful," Morgan said.

Angela Robinson will fill the vacancy as MES assistant principal.

B.B. Comer Memorial Elementary School assistant principal Kristin Harrell transferred to the Central Office to learn from current coordinator of special education programs Gayle Jones, who will retire Nov. 1.

Currently working on her doctorate at Samford University, Harrell said she's excited about the opportunity to step into a role Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey deemed as "big shoes to fill."

"I look forward to the training and the experience I'm going to get from working with Mrs. Jones for the next few months, picking her brain and just knowing the ins and outs of how she runs her department," Harrell said.

Comer Elementary instructional partner Angela Hosey replaces Harrell as assistant principal.

At Munford High, former Talladega County Central High School principal Tim Young replaces previous principal Dr. Anthony Wilkinson, who resigned May 30 to become principal at Benjamin Russell High School in Alexander City.

During Young's service to TCCHS, the school earned recognition from the Alabama State Department of Education as a "bright spot," a school that operates at optimum efficiency despite high levels of poverty.

"I have a high standard of teaching and learning that we will set," Young said. "We will follow the blueprint as outlined by Talladega County Schools' Pillars for Exceptional Instruction, and support the vision that (Superintendent) Dr. (Suzanne) Lacey leads us in teaching and learning. I want to make my best efforts in ensuring this is a safe place conducive to teaching and learning."

Young said he looks forward to the challenges that come with moving to a new school with a new staff, students and parents as he continues to build on the many programs already in place from the 1-to-1 Technology Initiative to the community partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service and Dr. Mark Meade, a professor in JSU's biology department.

"I'm back home and ready to make a positive impact in the community where I grew up," Young said. "We have the environment, the necessary tools and the resources to support 21st Century learning."

Replacing Young at TCCHS will be former Childersburg Middle School assistant principal Quentin

Lee, who served as band director at TCCHS prior to his previous role in the county.

"I want to take everything that he did — take it and run with it even further," Lee said. "One focus that we will definitely have this year is on project-based learning

See County, Page 5C

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NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR TALLADEGA CITY SCHOOLS

This is an architect's composite drawing of Talladega's consolidated elementary school.

Talladega School System faces changes

One of the major challenges is following up on plan to consolidate elementary schools

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home staff writer

The Talladega City School System is facing changes in demographics, funding, curricula and leadership in the coming years, but the board has been preparing plans to meet these challenges for the last few years.

As this goes to press, the board is in the process of selecting a superintendent to replace Douglas Campbell, who is retiring.

One of the major challenges the new superintendent will face will be following up on the plan to consolidate the city's elementary schools.

In addition to Zora Ellis Junior High School and Talladega High School, the city system currently operates four elementary schools: Evelyn D. Houston Elementary School, C.L. Salter Elementary School, R.L. Young Elementary School and Graham Elementary School. At some point, the board's long-range plan is to combine these four schools into one, occupying a single building.

In February 2012, the system adopted a \$30 million project that would also relocate the junior high school and central office and renovate the system's sports facilities, as well.

The board has taken some tentative steps toward this goal by closing Northside-Hal Henderson Elementary

School, the oldest in the system, and moving students and teachers from there into Houston Elementary School. Implementing the rest of the plan will primarily involve figuring out how to finance it.

Assuming the money is in place, the first phase would be constructing a two-story building containing 35 to 40 classrooms, each between 800 and 900 square feet. The new building would be next to Graham Elementary and across the street from Zora Ellis.

Simultaneously, new classrooms would be added to Houston, along with a gym, band room and locker rooms. Once the phase one construction is complete, the system's junior high school would move into the expanded Houston facility.

The Ellis gym and cafeteria would then be demolished. The Pearino Gaither Central Board office would move from a rented house on South Street into the front of the old Zora Ellis building, and the rest of the remaining Ellis structure would be converted into a teacher resource center.

The Ellis band room and Harwell Auditorium would be untouched, according to this plan.

After all this is done, the final phase would include renovations to all of the system's sports facilities and construction of new restrooms, locker rooms and concession areas. The baseball and softball fields would get

a thorough and much-needed overall renovation, and new seating would be added at all facilities.

In addition to being an efficient way to deal with gradually decreasing enrollment, the consolidation plan would also save the system a fortune on maintaining older buildings that are being used less and less, officials project.

Although the broad outlines of this plan were approved by the board nearly two years ago, it still remains only a plan. There will likely be some tweaking before implementation begins.

For instance, during a work session in June 2013, board member James Braswell suggested closing Houston so the early expansion work could begin and distributing the students there between the three remaining elementary schools. If there were crowding issues, he suggested moving sixth graders into Zora Ellis. In addition to moving the ball forward on consolidation, Braswell said the prospect of having a relatively new junior high with brand new band and sports facilities might help stanch the transfers that usually start during the junior high years.

Again, the primary impediment to this plan is a lack of available funding.

Contact Chris Norwood at cnorwood@dailyhome.com.

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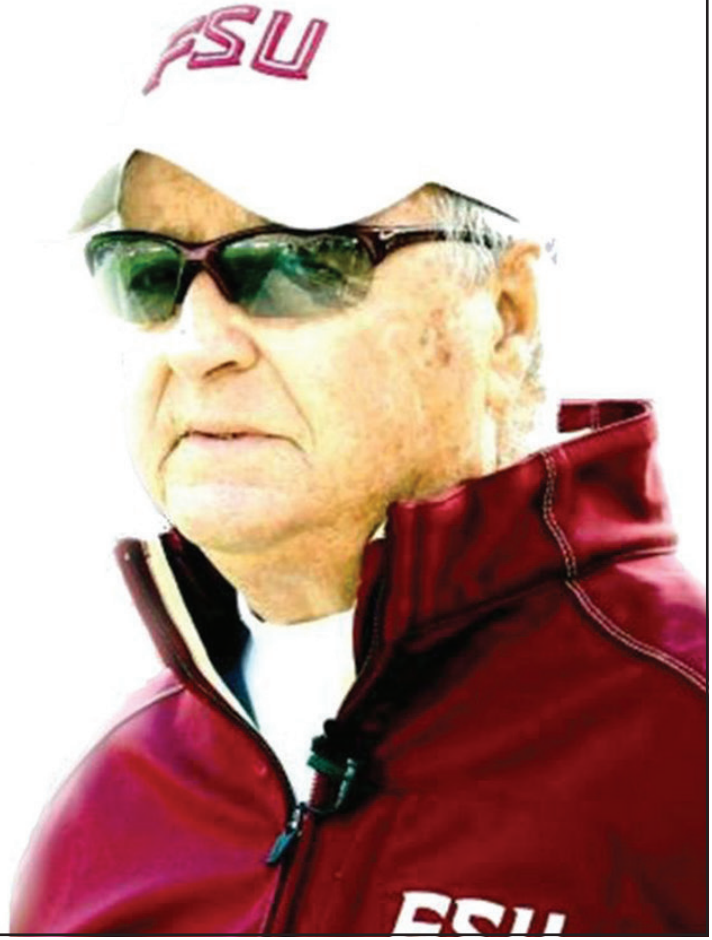
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Construction is under way at Sylacauga High School, and new administration is preparing to take the helm of the 5A school.

New principal, new construction at SHS

By EMILY McLAIN

It may be summer break, but there is a lot of action happening in Sylacauga City Schools — especially at the high school level.

Construction is under way at Sylacauga High, and new administration is preparing to take the helm of the 5A school.

"I'm very excited for the opportunity to be at Sylacauga High School," said new SHS principal Jason Bryant "I was attracted to Sylacauga because of its small-town feel. My background is in high school, and for the last four years, I have been at an eighth-grade school, so this was an opportunity to get back to a high school setting. There are a lot of great things going on in Sylacauga, and a great superintendent."

Superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman said Bryant was the unanimous choice of the interview committee. He noted Bryant's strengths in math and science curriculum planning, assisting at-risk students and community involvement.

Bryant has 15 years of experience in education, most recently serving as principal at South Girard School in Phenix City Schools for four years. Previously, he was assistant principal at Opelika High School from 2003 to 2010. He has also been a science teacher in Opelika city schools and an adjunct instructor at Auburn University. Bryant is pursuing a doctorate in education leadership from Auburn University with an expected completion of fall 2014.

"I'm looking forward to taking Sylacauga High School to that next level," Bryant said. "We're big on the 'good to great,' so we have a good school and we want to make it a great school."

A new assistant principal is joining Bryant at SHS. Joseph Cordi is coming from Shelby County schools, where he has been a graduation coach for at-risk students. Previously, he was assistant principal at Crossroads School, Spain Park High

School and Pinson Valley High School. He taught 10th grade English for six years.

In addition to the new staff, a major renovation project is continuing at SHS. The work is now in Phase II of three phases of construction. A state-of-the-art, 31-classroom addition was completed before last school year, and contractors are working on administration offices, a new main entrance and renovations to several classrooms. This phase costs \$2.5 million.

Internal work for Phase II should be complete for the start of school, Freeman said, while work to the outside will continue through possibly September.

The next and final phase of work will include renovation of the school library and two gymnasiums.

In addition, the school system will begin construction of a central office building in the fall, Freeman said. The building will cost an estimated \$1.9 million and will be adjacent to the current central office. Plans are still in the works, but an initial proposal was for a 15,000-square-foot building with generous storage and meeting spaces for teacher training and public events. All construction should be complete by next summer.

Overall, the system is in good shape for the upcoming school year, Freeman said. The general fund budget has a healthy reserve and the system is taking steps to follow its five-year strategic plan implemented last year.

"This year, we are expanding our AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program to ninth grade, so we will have it from sixth to ninth grade, and we have seen some great results from that program," Freeman said. "We will also begin the Health Science program at the high school and a choral program at the middle and high school. There will be a visual arts program at the elementary schools as well. All of those are things that will be a great benefit to our students."

County

From Page 3C

(PBL). Our superintendent, Dr. Lacey, has really kind of piloted this program in the state as Talladega County Schools are being one of the systems known for their PBL. I would definitely want to ensure that we're doing everything with PBL here at Talladega County Central."

Lee explained he hopes to give the students plenty of experience to prepare them to be college- and career-ready while instilling pride into the students and staff as they continue to grow within their small community.

"TC has always been a jewel in the Howell Cove community, but I want to start sharing that worldwide," Lee said. "I really want to challenge the students to go above and beyond good."

Other fresh faces in new places include:

- Former MHS assistant principal JoAnn Swain will serve as new principal at Genesis Alternative Education Center. Central Office LEA instructional specialist Devonna Strickland steps into Swain's previous role.

- Former Lincoln High School assistant principal Chad Bynum will transfer to CMS to fill the assistant principal vacancy.

- Former Winterboro High School principal Michelle Head will move to Stemley Road Elementary School in the role of principal. Emily Harris, WHS assistant principal, becomes the new WHS principal.

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Municipal Complex gets finishing touches

By **BILL KIMBER**
Home staff writer

Residents of the Marble City likely marveled at the contemporary new Sylacauga Municipal Complex when it was built in 1972, that edifice of beige brick and glass lined with toasty brown wooden paneling.

It replaced a building that was 35 years old at the time. The old City Hall, across Third Street from the Municipal Complex at the corner of Norton Avenue, was built in 1937.

Residents can marvel once again as the city puts the finishing touches on \$2.2 million in repairs, improvements and renovations to the 42-year-old complex that's home to the Mayor's Office, Planning and Code Department, City Clerk, Municipal Court, Police Department and Fire Department.

"The building had some major issues with maintenance problems, so these renovations escalated from those maintenance issues," said Mike Whetstone, project manager for the renovations.

Start with the offices where Police Chief Chris Carden and investigators are headquartered. Those offices are underground beneath the fire department's truck bays. Rainwater seeps in, soaking paneling, drywall and carpet and causing mildew and other moisture-related problems over time, Whetstone said.

The area was intended for storage in the first place, and has never been equipped with restrooms or other plumbing. Air conditioning and heating were seemingly an afterthought.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Sylacauga's Municipal Complex has a fresh, new look.

A structural engineer estimated it would cost \$500,000 to dig up around the building, seal the walls and push the soil back into place.

Meanwhile, the city's old jail was on the same level across a driveway from those offices.

The city stopped using the jail about a decade

ago, and Whetstone said the jail didn't meet current standards for prisoner accommodations so it couldn't be reused as a jail later.

"We've been heating and cooling it and basically using it for nothing," he said. "It's got plenty of plumbing because it used to be the jail."

So the city removed the jail cells and built offices in the space. When police officials move into the new offices, their old offices will be ripped out and the area where they've worked for years will be stripped to the bare concrete walls. A French drain and pump will be installed to remove water that seeps in, and a meeting room will be added in the driest part of the area where police officers can be trained and community meetings can be held.

The remainder of the space will be used for storage, as originally intended, Whetstone said.

"We were able to disassemble the jail and still use the storage area for essentially \$200,000 less" than

digging out and waterproofing, he said.

Visitors to the Municipal Complex will notice a new look in the lobby area, as well, where glass walls on the south and east sides have been replaced.

"We had some structural steel issues in the basement. The steel in the basement was compromised," Whetstone said. After replacing the structural steel, the 1970s glass couldn't be reinstalled because it doesn't meet modern standards for strength.

"We had to really beef up the structural steel in the windows," Whetstone said in reports published earlier. "With all the tornadoes and other weather events Alabama has had recently, the building codes have changed, and you have to have a lot more support in windows, other-

See **Repairs**, Page 8C

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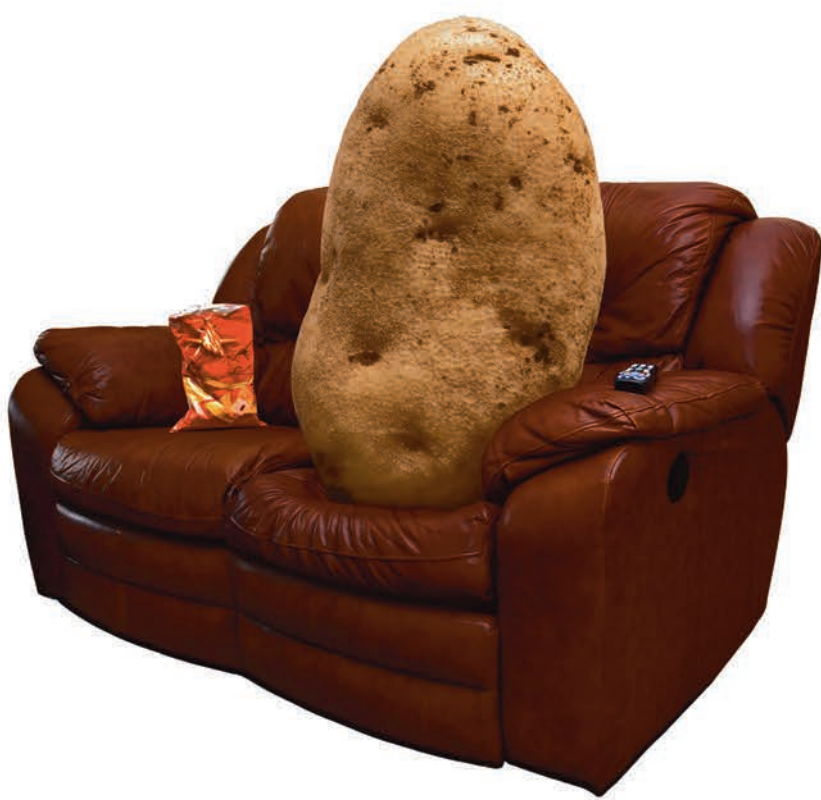
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Pell City new owner of CenturyLink building

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

After a year of negotiations, the city is poised to become the new owner of the CenturyLink building, which will house the city's new public library and other city offices.

John Rea, the city's attorney, said revisions are being added to the purchase contract.

"For the most part (CenturyLink) is receptive to all our changes," Rea said.

CenturyLink will remain in the building, renting space from the city, which will help offset the cost of operation and loan payment for the building.

The Pell City Board of Education recently moved out of the CenturyLink building, providing more space in the building's second story.

Plans are to open the new public library on the first floor, off the main lobby.

The city is buying the 25-year-old building for \$1 million, about half the amount the city considered spending for the facility two years ago.

The city has also set aside money for renovation, a new roof and the installation of new heating and air units for the 53,000-square-foot building.

The building was appraised at \$4.5 million five years ago, according to the Birmingham real estate company which is handling the sale of the building.

The CenturyLink building is at the corner of Bruce Etheredge Drive and U.S. 231.

City Manager Patrick Draper said the city will rename the building.

He said the Pell City Chamber of Commerce could move into the facility with the library.

Draper said the city could also shift civic meetings from the Pell City Civic Center to the CenturyLink building.

"The Civic Center is more of a recreational facility," he said. "The CenturyLink building is more of a meeting



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The CenturyLink building will become the new Pell City Public Library, providing space for future growth.

and conference place, along with the library."

He said moving civic meetings such as the Rotary Club and Pell City Civitans from the civic center would help ease congestion at the civic center.

Draper said it will also help reduce traffic when the city moves forward with the renovation of the civic center.

City officials are also considering the construction of a new municipal pool behind the civic center.

Danny Stewart, director of the Pell City Public Library, said they are excited about the city inching closer to buying the CenturyLink building.

"We are excited to see the plans come to fruition," Stewart said.

See Building, Page 9C

Repairs

From Page 6C

wise a storm could blow them out, so these entrances are going to be a lot safer."

Replacing the curtain walls also offered an opportunity to improve handicapped access to the building's street level.

Tile floor covering in the lobby was removed and the concrete floors were stained and polished for a fresh contemporary look.

In a separate project that was done at the same time, the Municipal Complex was among city buildings to benefit from energy efficiency upgrades to the tune of \$1.2 million.

According to reports published at the start of the

project, the City Council approved an energy efficiency upgrade project from Trane which guarantees more than \$64,000 in savings over 20 years.

The scope of the work included installing HVAC controls in the Municipal Complex as well as three new air handlers, conversion to a variable air volume system, two high-efficiency boilers, two new hot water and chilled water pumps, new mechanical room piping and valves, rooftop package heat pumps for Fire Station No. 1 and a split heat pump system for the Police Annex. Other improvements are a chiller, boiler and pumps at the J. Craig Smith Community Center and upgraded lighting and programma-

ble thermostats throughout designated city buildings. The energy savings are projected to pay for the cost of the new equipment over time.

Other renovation work has included asbestos encasing, roof repairs, and renovations in the Fire Department.

The Municipal Complex improvements are financed through a 15-year general obligation warrant at 2.8 percent interest, and the energy upgrades are a 15-year GO warrant at 3 percent interest.

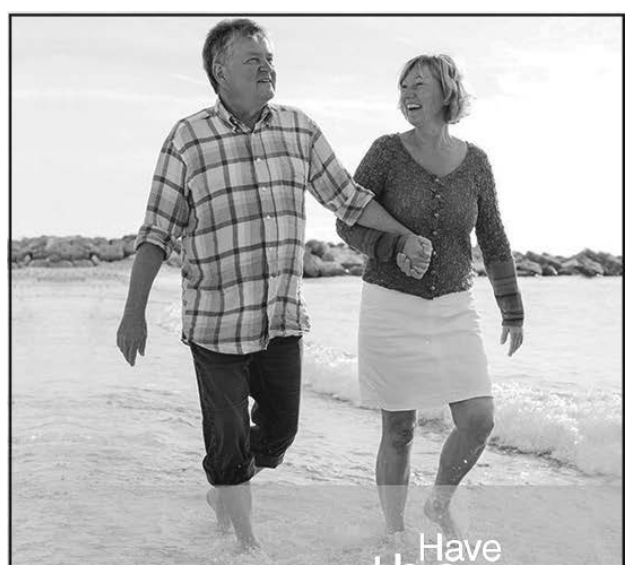
Whetstone said citizen reaction to the renovations has been "fairly positive," but that some people have questioned whether the building repairs were

a more important priority than repairing roads or sidewalks that they can see as they pass through town.

"We've spent roughly \$2.2 million to renovate a building that's 40 years old and has a replacement value of \$18 million," Whetstone said. "We want to make it last another 40 years."

He added, "A lot of the structural work is in places where the public can't see it. But we've fixed what was holding up the building and fixed water issues. It just makes sense to spend a couple of million dollars now" and avoid problems from deferred maintenance later.

Contact Bill Kimber at bkimber@dailyhome.com.



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Who to call when you need information

Building

From Page 8C

Library supporters have wanted a new public library for the past decade, saying the city has outgrown its current library.

The CenturyLink building will provide ample space for a new public library, officials said.

"Once they finalize the contract, it will take us six to eight months before the library actually moves in there," Stewart said.

He said architects will need to develop a floor plan before the library moves into its new home.

Stewart said the building's location near the center of town gives easy public access and is highly visible.

"We are excited about the building and the location," Stewart said. "We think it's a good fit for the library."

Contact David Atchison at datchison@dailyhome.com.

CHILDERSBURG
Mayor: B.J. Meeks
Council: Michele Mizzell, Angesa Twymon, Jimmy Payne, Billy Lester and Ralph Rich
City Clerk: Sandra Donahoo
Council meetings are the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 6 p.m. at City Hall, located at 201 Eighth Ave. SW.
City Hall: 256-378-5521.
Water: 256-378-6063
Police: 256-378-7860
Fire: 256-378-7062
Parks and Recreation: 256-378-6225

LINCOLN
Mayor: Bud Kitchin
Council: Sadie Britt, Billy Pearson, Gwen Barber and Jean Burk, with an open seat where Kurt Kuykendall served until his death July 7
City Clerk: Laura Carmack
Council meetings are the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 5 p.m. at City Hall, located at 150 Magnolia Street.
City Hall: 205-763-7777.
City officials and departments can be reached at the City Hall number.
Parks and Recreation: 205-763-1006

MUNFORD:
Mayor: David Dabbs
Council: Lee Garrison, Kay O'Connor, Tim Lipham, Shane Turner and Wade Champion.
City Clerk: Peggy Bussie
Council meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 116 Lions Road.
Town Hall: 256-358-9050.
Water Department: 256-358-4841
Police Department: 256-358-9050
Fire Department: 256-358-4243

PELL CITY
Mayor: Joe Funderburg
City Manager: Patrick Draper
Council President: James McGowan
Council: Dot Wood, Jay Jenkins, Terry Templin and Sharon Thomas
Council meetings are at 10 a.m. the second Monday of each month and 6 p.m. the fourth Monday of each month. Work sessions are at 5 p.m. the Thursday before each council meeting. Council meetings are held at City Hall, located at 1905 First Ave. N.
City Hall: 205-338-3330 or 205-338-2244.
Water: 205-338-2244
Street: 205-338-4890 or 205-884-8267.
Police: 205-884-3334
Fire: 205-884-6006
Parks and Recreation: 205-338-9713

RIVERSIDE
Mayor: Rusty Jessup
Council: Jimmy Hollander, Frank Riddle, Bill Cantley, Johnny Osborn and Kenny Womack
City Clerk: Candace Smith
Council meetings are at 6 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month and at 8 a.m. the third Tuesday of the month at City Hall. A work session is held at 6 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month at the Riverside Storm Shelter behind City Hall. City Hall is located at 379 Depot Street.
City Hall: 205-338-7692.
Water, Police and Fire can all be reached through the City Hall number.

SYLACAUGA
Mayor: Doug Murphree
Council President: Rocky Lucas
Council: Joe Hogan, Shannon Darby, Tom Roberts and Billy Carden
City Clerk: Patricia Carden
Council meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. and the

third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. at City Hall, located at 301 North Broadway Ave. Work sessions are the Monday before the council meeting at 5:30 p.m.
City Hall: 256-401-2400.
Water: 256-249-8501
Police: 256-245-4334
Fire: 256-249-6204
Parks and Recreation: 256-249-8561

TALLADEGA
Mayor: Larry Barton
City Manager: Brian Muenger
Council President: Donnie Miller
Council: Horace Patterson, Jarvis Elston, Ricky Simpson and Joe Ballow
City Clerk: Elizabeth Cheeks
Council Meetings are the first and third Mondays of the month with an informal pre-council meeting at 5 p.m. and the formal meeting at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, located on South Street.
City Hall and all offices and departments can be reached at 256-362-8775

WALDO
Mayor: Susan Crim
Council members: Larry Hurst, Brenda Crim, Ronald Williams, Randy Roberts and Annie Askew.
Town Clerk: Iris Jemison
Council meetings are the first Monday of the month at 5 p.m. at Waldo Town Hall, located at 39 Sorghum Lane.
Town Hall: 256-362-9313
Water Department can be reached by calling Town Hall.

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• Ashville - Mayor Robert McKay
• Leeds (part in Jefferson and Shelby counties) - Mayor David Miller
• Margaret - Mayor

Isaac Howard
• Moody - Mayor Joe Lee
• Odenville - Mayor Rodney "Buck" Christian
• Pell City - Mayor Joe Funderburg
• Riverside - Mayor Rusty Jessup

ST. CLAIR COUNTY
County Commission chairman: Stan Batemon (Paul Manning will take office in November)
Commission: Jeff Brown, Ken Crowe, Paul Manning and Jimmy Roberts (Tommy Bowers will take office in Paul Manning's place in November)
Kellie Graff - County Administrator
County Commission - 205-594-2100
Sheriff (Pell City) - 205-884-6840
Sheriff (Ashville) - 205-594-2140
St. Clair EMA - 205-884-6800
Probate Office (Pell City) - 205-338-9449
Probate Office (Ashville) - 205-594-2120
Revenue Commissioner (Pell City) - 205-338-9461
Revenue Commissioner (Ashville) - 205-594-2160
Sheriff: Terry Surles
Probate Judge: Mike Bowling
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Circuit Judge: Bill Weathington
District Judge: Robert Minor
District Judge: Alan Furr
Revenue Commissioner: Elizabeth Mealer
County Coroner: Dennis Russell
St. Clair County Emergency Management Agency director: Ellen Tanner

TALLADEGA COUNTY
Commission Chairman: Kelvin Cunningham
Commission: Jackie Swinford, John Luker, Jimmy Roberson and Greg

Atkinson
County Administrator: Wayne Hall
Talladega County Commission: 256-362-1357
Talladega County Emergency Management Agency: 256-761-2125
Talladega County Sheriff's Department: 256-761-2748
Talladega County Jail: 256-249-3812
Voter Registrar's Office - Talladega: 256-761-2131
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Probate Judge: Billy Atkinson
Circuit Clerk: Brian York
District Attorney: Steve Giddens
Circuit Judge: Julian King
Circuit Judge: W.E. "Bo" Hollingsworth
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District Judge: Ryan Rumsey
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Talladega County Emergency Management Agency interim director: Miriam Thornton

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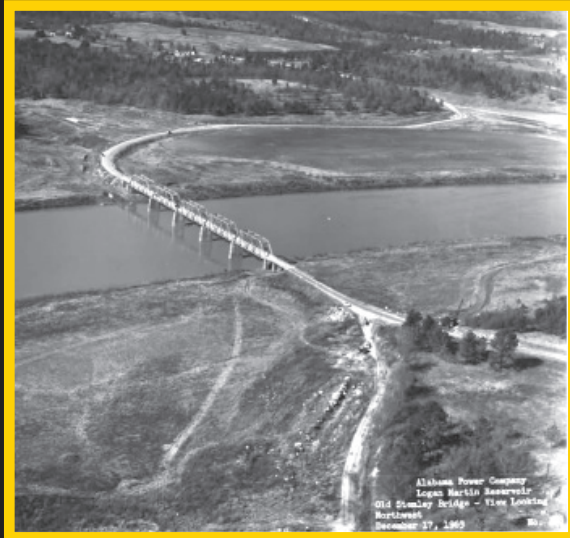
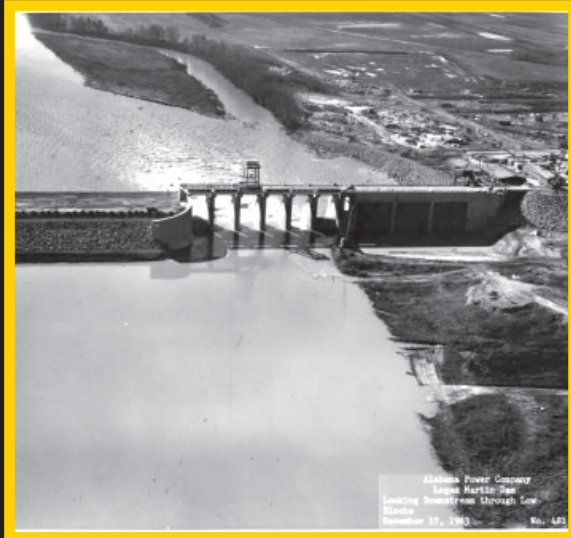
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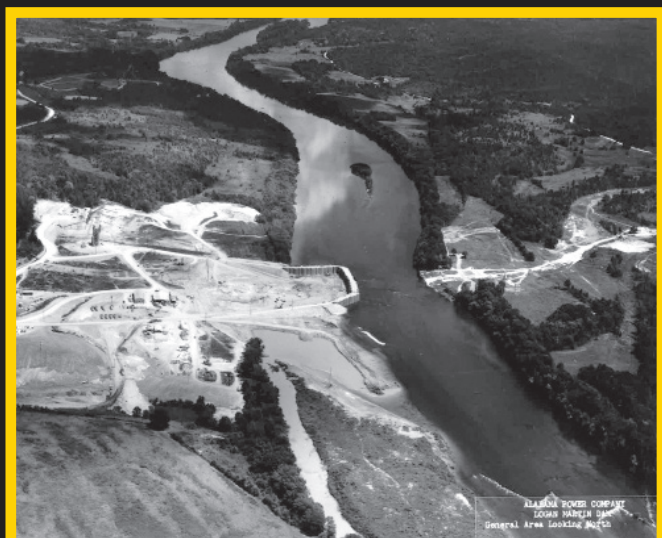
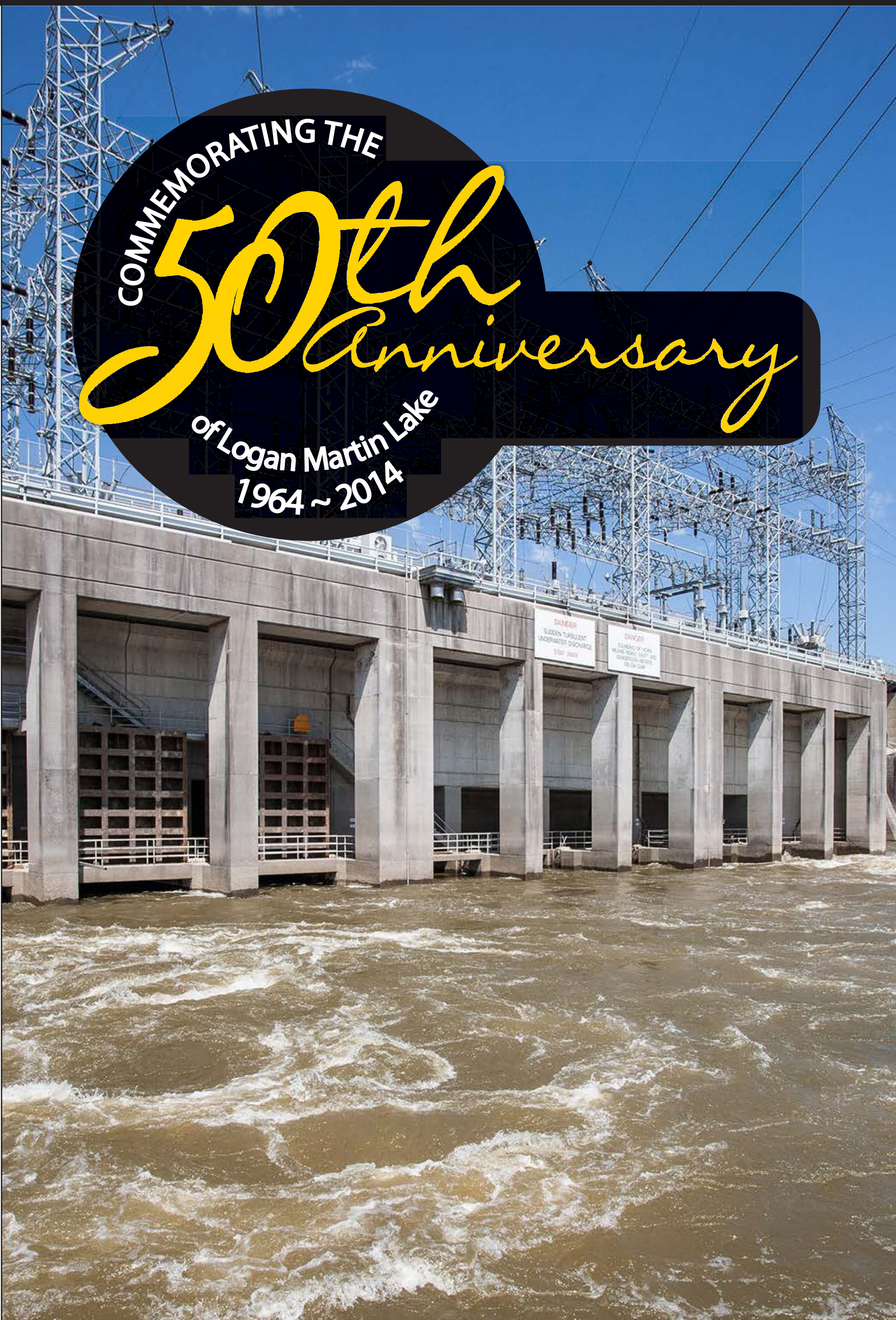


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The work it took to build dam

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

Logan Martin Dam, which was formerly known as Kelly Creek, was completed 50 years ago this summer, the second in a series of dams constructed by Alabama Power along the Coosa River.

Situated in-between Talladega and St. Clair counties, 459 river miles north of Mobile, construction started on Logan-Martin Dam on July 18, 1960.

According to Alabama Power records, the dam was put into service just over four years later, on Aug. 10, 1964.

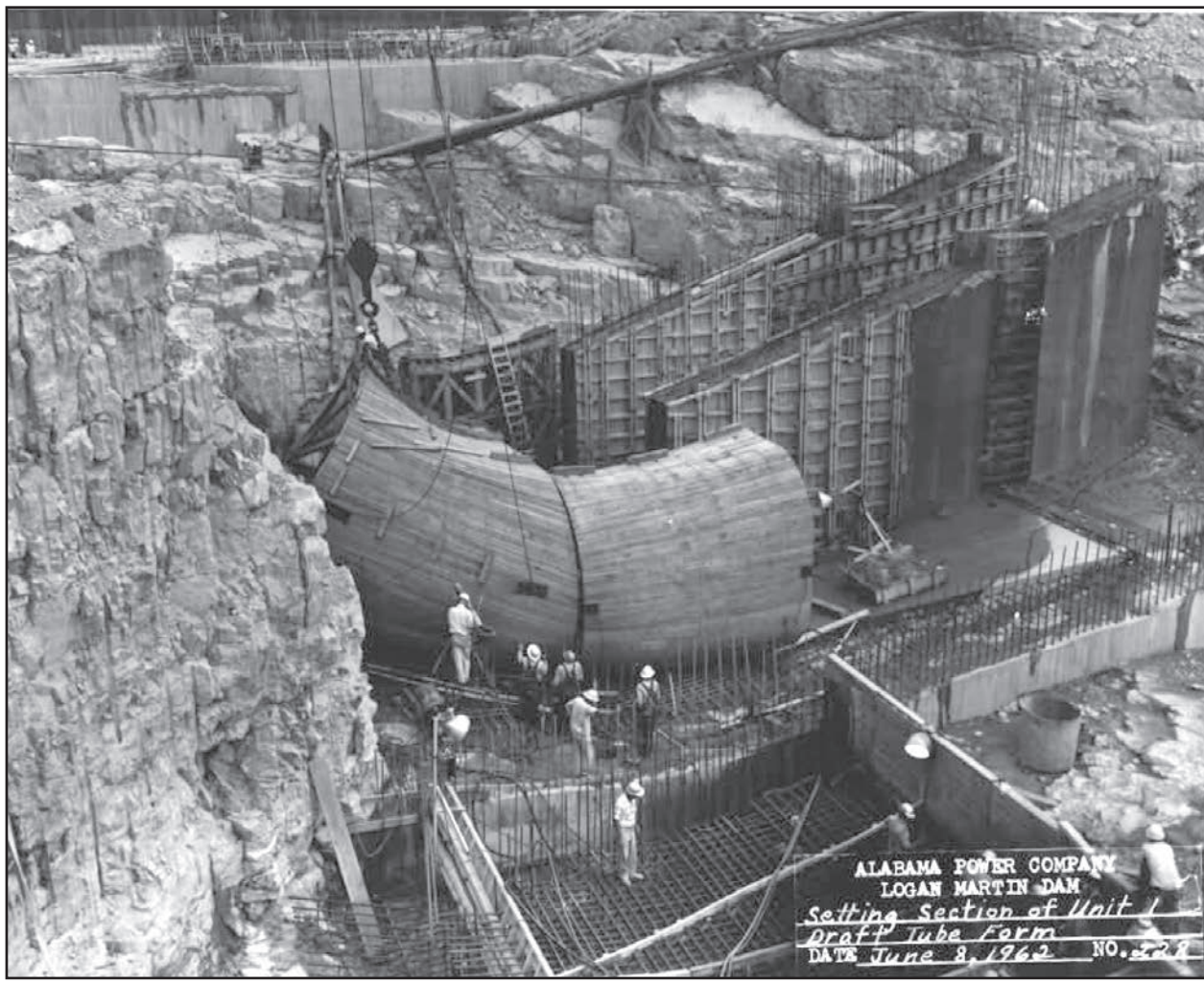
According to the Coosa-Alabama River Improvement Association's website, the total construction cost was \$48 million.

A fact sheet provided by Alabama Power Company describes the dam as a "gravity concrete and earth fill" type, which includes 5,464 feet of earthen dikes and a 612 foot concrete section. The total length of the dam is 6,076 feet, and it stands 97 feet tall at its highest point.

Logan Martin Dam currently includes 1,340,000 cubic yards of earth, including 52,000 cubic yards that were added in 1977 and another 410,000 cubic yards added two years later, in 1979.

The remainder of the dam consists of 180,000 cubic yards of concrete.

There are six spillway



gates, which are 40 feet by 38 feet in size each, all with a capacity of moving 12,253,000 gallons per minute. The controlled spillway is 328 feet long.

The reservoir itself known as Logan Martin Lake sits 465 feet above sea level, and covers an area of 15,263 acres. The water way is 48.5 miles long and is surrounded by 275 miles of shoreline, according to Alabama Power

Company. The maximum water depth at the dam is 69 feet. The watershed draining into the reservoir covers 7,700 square miles.

The powerhouse attached to the dam is 295 feet long by 168.5 feet wide and 65 feet high. There are three propeller-type hydraulic turbines manufactured by Allis Chalmers of St. Charles, Ill., with a discharge of 4,488,000 gallons per

minute per turbine. The horsepower at 56 feet head is listed at 59,000 for each turbine.

The turbines turn at 90 revolutions per minute, and power a water wheel which is 20 feet and 10 inches across. The wheel itself weighs 137,000 pounds.

There are also three alternating current generators, also manufactured

by Allis Chalmers, which are rated at 42,750 kilowatts each, and 13,800 volts. They also turn at 90 revolutions per minute, according to the Alabama Power fact sheet.

According to Coosa-Alabama River statistics, the three generators are capable of producing 128 megawatts total.

These turn a rotor measuring 27 feet and 8 inches that weighs 465,000

pounds. The estimated annual output of the alternating current generators is listed at 400,200,000 kilowatt hours.

The power transformer voltage is listed as 13,800 volts on the low side and 115,000 volts on the high side, and is rated for 155,000 kilovolt-amperes.

The dam has an overall power storage capacity of 41,800,000 kilowatt hours.

Although the dam's original and primary purpose was to produce energy, the story of Logan-Martin Dam and lake "continues today as a story of flood control, recreation and economic opportunity, irrigation and drinking water, and fish and wildlife habitats," according to Alabama Power's website.

The maximum discharge of water is listed at 167,000 cubic feet per second, with a maximum storage capacity of 650,000 acre feet in volume. The normal storage for the reservoir is 273,000 acre feet.

An acre foot is a volume of water one foot deep, 66 feet wide and 660 feet long.

Logan Martin Dam is not regulated by the state of Alabama, but is regulated and inspected by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Hazard potential is listed at high, and there is an emergency action in place.

The last listed inspection date is September, 1996.

Legacy of Logan Martin Dam dates to the 1800s

By BILL KIMBER
Home assistant editor

Though it was built in the era of ladies with big hairdos and cars with big tail fins, the history of the big gray wall that holds back the Coosa River between Talladega and St. Clair counties goes back way further, actually to the days of Queen Victoria and President Ulysses S. Grant.

Built by Alabama Power from 1960 to 1964, what's now known as Logan Martin Dam is part of a much larger system of developments along the Coosa River.

"Since 1870 there has been talk of development of the Coosa River, but except for the major developments of Alabama Power Company — three large dams on the lower reaches of the Coosa River — nothing other than low-head dams and locks, now inoperative, built earlier by the government — has been accom-

plished," then-Alabama Power President Walter Bouldin wrote in a 1958 report, "The Coosa River Developments."

Those low-head locks and dams made the Coosa River navigable by steamboat all the way from Montgomery to Rome, Ga., but due to a lack of commercial use, the Chief of Engineers reported to the Secretary of War that the whole existing project at that time should be scrapped, Bouldin wrote.


Alabama Power's founding in 1906 was a turning point in the development of rivers in Alabama as we know it today.



"In the early part of the 20th century, Alabama Power built a series of dams on the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers," said Bill Tharpe, senior archivist for APC.





"When the Depression hit, most of the construction stopped. After World

See **Legacy**, Page 3D





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Legacy

From Page 2D

War II, we developed a program to develop the upper Coosa River, the Warrior River and the Tallapoosa River," Tharpe said. "J.M. Barry was president of Alabama Power, and this program was developed to build those dams to complete our hydro projects in the state."

Capt. William Patrick Lay, a third-generation riverboat captain, founded Alabama Power in 1906 in Gadsden. While leading the company until 1912, Lay got congressional approval to build a dam on the river, but did not have the financial backing.

President Theodore Roosevelt signed the legislation in 1907 authorizing the first major developments on the Coosa River. The first piece completed was Lock 12, which later was renamed Lay Dam to honor the Alabama Power founder.

APC's second president, James Mitchell, who previously built power systems in Brazil for 16 years, attracted financing from London to build the dams in Alabama.

"In the beginning, the power company built the three lower dams - Lay, Mitchell and Jordan," said Charles Stover, supervisor of reservoir management for the power company. "Lay Dam turns 100 years old this year."

Legislation to complete the development of the Coosa River was signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954.

"Many do not understand that without this legislation, the Coosa River would have remained as always - a wonderful but only partially developed stream," Bouldin wrote in that 1958 report.

Stover said power company officials "went back and looked at the older dams from the power perspective, from Wetumpka all the way to Rome, Ga.

"The company prepared a license for what was then the Federal Power Commission, now the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, for the entire development, which included Logan Martin and Neely Henry and Weiss and Bouldin Dam at Wetumpka," Stover said. "It also raised the level of Jordan, and Lay Dam was extensively rebuilt to bring its level up higher. That was the overall scheme of the development."

Each dam holds water at a prescribed level, and as gravity pulls the water downstream, the dams channel it through turbines to create electricity.

The river is 567 feet above sea level at Mayo's Bar in west Georgia; 564 feet at Weiss Dam in Alabama; 505 feet at Neely Henry Dam; 460 feet at Logan Martin Dam (465 in the summer); 396 feet at Lay Dam; 312 feet at Mitchell Dam; 245 feet at Jordan Dam; and 155 feet at Bouldin Dam.

"In the process of putting the locks in, the (U.S. Army) Corps (of Engineers) had to plan to provide a certain amount of flood control," Stover said. "The Federal Power Commission was interested in getting the full value of the resource, so they weren't interested in a bunch of small dams. They wanted to get the potential of the whole river. The series of pools the whole way up gives maximum power."

The Corps of Engineers was also concerned with the river's navigability, so each of the dams was built with a place where a lock could be built. Stover said 1985 was the last time engineers studied the possibility of adding locks, and at that time Logan Martin Dam's lock plan was relocated because of the porous limestone under the dam.

That limestone is the reason the dam was built where it is. Original plans called for building the dam about a mile downstream, where Kelly Creek flows in.

"After they started drilling and boring, they learned it was better to move upstream," Stover said.

The project was initially called the Kelly Creek Dam. Construction started in July 1960, and during the first month of construction, the dam was named to honor William Logan Martin, an Alabama attorney general, general attorney for Alabama Power Company and brother of Alabama Power's third president, Thomas W. Martin, who served from 1920 to 1949 and for whom Lake Martin on the Tallapoosa River is named.

The dam was put into service on Aug. 10, 1964, with three propeller-driven turbines that create more than 400 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.

Water-covered Memories

The community buried under Logan Martin

By EMILY McLAIN

Under rays of sunshine, below the boats and skiers, buried under 20 feet of water, they remain.

They are memories of the long-gone homes, stores and churches that once made up a small community along Old U.S. Highway 231.

And memories are all that survived.

In the valley between the River Oaks home development and Harmon Island was once the community of Easonville, a quaint township of about 200 people.

According to accounts from former residents, the village consisted of something like three stores, one cotton gin, four dairies, two cemeteries, two churches and a well-reputed school.

The area, a former Native American village, had but one flaw - it was located in the path of what would become Logan Martin Lake.

The place that 40 to 60 families called home was deemed a small sacrifice for



Coosa Valley Baptist Church had to be relocated for the dam construction. Workers managed to load the church onto a series of beams to relocate the building.

the great progress promised by Alabama Power Company's new endeavor in the early 1960s.

One by one, family-owned properties were

taken up by the power company. Some houses were moved up the road, but many were not.

Coosa Valley Baptist Church, along with its

cemetery containing nearly 1,000 graves, was transported to its present location in a grand operation.

See Buried, Page 4D

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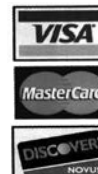
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Buried

From Page 3D

Businesses closed, and affected families moved elsewhere in the area, watching their homes be demolished and their familiar streets flooded.

An article in the June 13, 1963, edition of the St. Clair News-Aegis described the scene as the demolition took place.

"The valley looks skinned, like a giant destroying monster of some kind had flown over the valley," the story reads. "Trees that once shaded the highway and much of the acreage have been cut down. They are lying dead in great heaps all over the countryside waiting for the torch that is to come in a short time."

The spirit of the community, settled in 1821, was likewise stripped, according to Vicki Davis Mize, a Pell Citian who grew up in the heart of Easonville, though residents understood the value of what was to come.

"There were a lot of sad people," Mize recalled. "I remember my mother crying for days when they started tearing houses down. At the same time, there were several farmers who were having a hard time, and I think they were better off financially after the power company bought their places. Other people were like my dad. He had a pasture, and they made it into a subdivision, so after we moved, he still had that and he sold it and made money that way. But it was a definite sadness for everybody."

Mize, who was 16 when the water began to rise, found herself in the middle of the action, as her father, Harvey Davis, was pastor at Coosa Valley Baptist Church and also helped organize the cemetery relocations, and her mother operated their family-owned general store.

The family's home sat atop the hill that is now Harmon Island, with the general store just a stone's throw away.

"I drove out to the island a couple years ago at Christmas, because that is the closest thing left to home," Mize said. "It's like your memories of where you grew up are buried under there. You never thought about this happening, but it brought lots of new people to town. Used to, everybody knew everybody, and now you can visit and not recognize a soul. It changed the whole lifestyle of the people in the area."

Residents of Easonville spent many a sunny day relaxing and socializing at the spring-fed Avondale Lake, which joined with Harmon Lake and Easonville Creek to flow into the Coosa River.

In the 1940s, Avondale Mills bought the roughly 30-acre lake property, for-

merly known as Waites' Lake, as a water source for its Pell City textile plant and to provide recreation for its employees and area residents.

"Avondale was always very community focused, and the lake was a popular place," Mize said. "There were many, many baptisms at Avondale Lake, and people would actually come back to our house across the road to change clothes afterward."

With sonar equipment, you can still see the dam to Avondale Lake, as well as the steps and foundations of some of the demolished homes, according to St. Clair County Commission Chairman Stan Batemon.

Easonville residents also valued education and religion.

For many years, school was held in homes and at Coosa Valley Baptist Church, with the first recorded school building being established in 1879.

One account remembers Easonville School as one of the best schools in the area, noting that students from around the county attended it, and people from other counties came to board in Easonville and attend school.

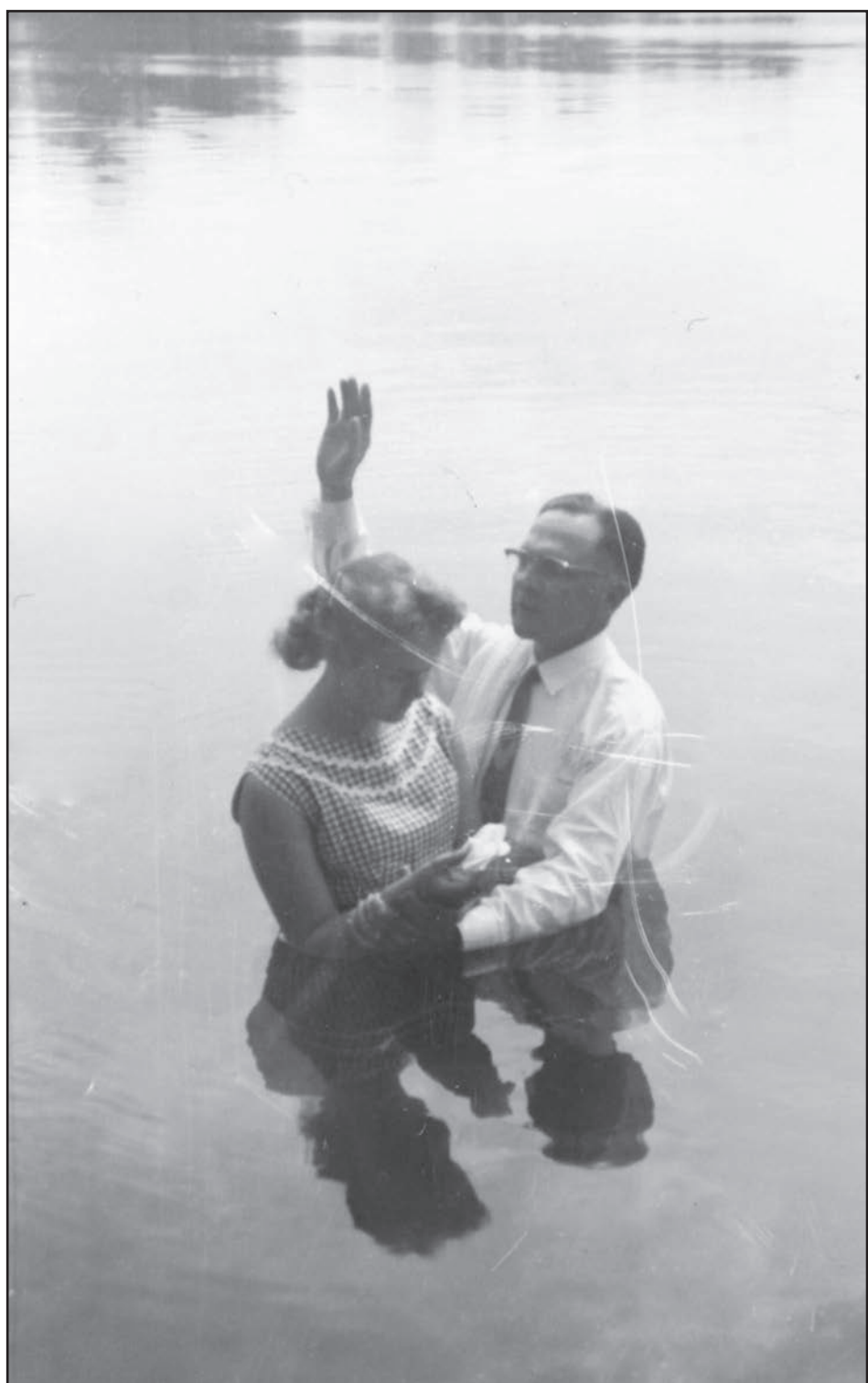
Originally, the community had three churches. These included Mt. Pisgah Baptist, Easonville Methodist and Coosa Valley Baptist. Mt. Pisgah relocated to Cropwell in 1904, according to one recollection. When it came time to send Easonville to its watery grave, the Methodist church joined with Pell City Methodist Church and donated its building to Coosa Valley Baptist.

Church member Gordon Lee, who still lives in the house where he was born five miles south of Easonville, remembers the joining of the church buildings.

"They just moved both the churches to higher ground, and put them on top of a hill," Lee said. The church now sits on U.S. 231 in front of Coosa Valley Elementary School. "They joined them with a breezeway in between the Methodist Church and Coosa Valley, and that's what is still there today."

The Methodist and Baptist churches had the added work of helping Alabama Power relocate some 1,000 graves from what was meant to be their final resting place.

The power company advertised removal of the graves in the St. Clair News-Aegis. An edition printed Oct. 18, 1962, informed relatives of the deceased that "it has become necessary for the graves and the remains of persons buried in such graves to be removed to some other cemetery on or before the 31st day of Dec., 1963."



The waters of the lake were the baptismal place for many a church through the years.

Many of the affected graves, some of which dated back to the 1800s, were unmarked.

Information provided by Alabama Power Company shows that, in total, the company relocated 2,397 graves from eight cemeteries within the entire 17,000-acre lake property. The graves were split

between cemeteries across the area, with at least two traveling as far as Sylacauga Cemetery, though most found their new resting place at New Coosa Valley Cemetery.

Countless other structures, surely too many to be recollected here, were bur-

See Buried, Page 6D

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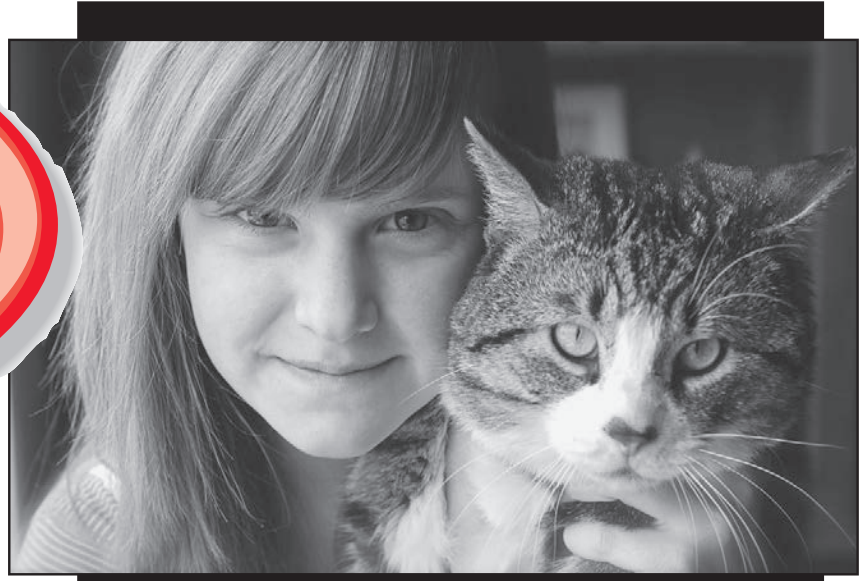
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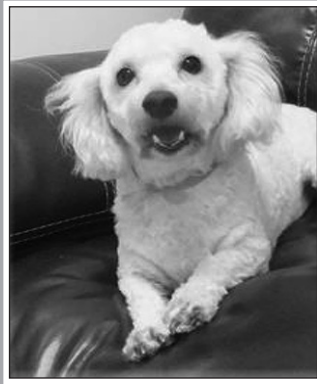
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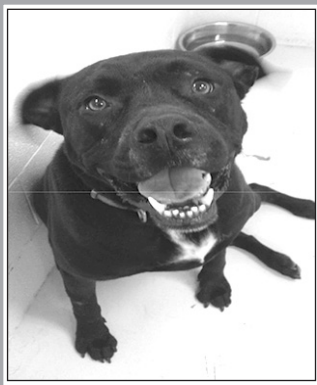
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Buried

From Page 4D

ied under the expanse of Logan Martin Lake, preserving a history that now only reveals itself in brief glimpses. "There are a lot of sites that were absorbed by the lake," Pell City Mayor Joe Funderburg said. "Most of them were torn down or moved, but some things you can still see when the water is low."

During the winter pool, the old Stemley Bridge connecting Talladega and St. Clair counties peeks out from the water about a mile from the present bridge.

"It was a one-lane metal bridge used up until the 60s when the area was flooded," Funderburg said. "Further up the lake from there are remnants of an old wooden railroad trestle. When I was a kid, you could see parts of the trestle no more than 100 yards from the bridge."

On the Talladega side of the lake in that same area was an old quarry, Funderburg said, that he doesn't remember, but his father talked about. It was a sort of cove that was once considered taboo to swim in, though Funderburg said people now swim in the area often.

Throughout the lake are also reminders of the Coosa River's previous use as a steamship trade route. An extensive series of locks allowed passage along shoals and ledges of the river. Batemon lives near what was known as Lock 5 at Eagle Point.

The lock is mostly underwater, but parts of its rocky walls are visible on the Talladega and St. Clair County sides of the lake.

Lock 4 is located in Riverside, Batemon said, and is more visible, especially in the winter pool.

"If you go through Riverside out on Depot Street and you go about a mile or so through town, you'll cross a little small bridge with yellow railings," he said. "Just beyond it to the right is Lock 4 Road or Blake Drive. You can drive out there and actually drive to the St. Clair side of the lock wall. The bigger part of the lock wall is on the Talladega side just above the Honda Plant in Lincoln. You go on up river from Lock 4 and you'll get to Lock 3, which is just below Henry Neely Dam."

Batemon said some areas of the river had rock shoals that rendered them impassable during times of drought. Some of those shoals, he said, were just below Griffitt Bend and near Clear Creek and Rabbit Branch.

One of the most obvious signs of the lake's history is perhaps Old U.S. 231.

Beginning behind Richey's Grocery in Cropwell, the road winds down into the waters of Logan Martin, where you would have found the community of Easonville half a century ago.

While a worthy sacrifice for the tremendous growth and prosperity initiated by the lake, it makes it no less difficult to see your hometown become nothing more than water-covered memories.

"Around the holidays, especially, is a time when you get that longing to go home," Mize said. "But then you remember there is no home place to return to. It's a strange feeling."

Families recall 'before the lake'

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

Jean Lee said her family used to sit in the back yard and just watch the pier.

"The pier did look strange out there with no water around it," said the 75-year-old woman.

She said the pier was built before the water from Logan Martin Lake reached full pool some 50 years ago.

Lee remembers U.S. Army Corps of Engineers workers driving stakes into the ground, marking where the lake water would reach.

"We all said, 'There's no way,'" she said. "Well, it came up right where the Corps of Engineers said it would. We were all very surprised."

Lee was married to the late Walter Lee. The Lee family had a slough built in preparation for the lake.

"That man worked day and night building that slough," she said.

She said it cost the fami-

ly about \$2,000, and it took the man about two months to building the slough.

"I was just a big ditch," Lee said.

Initially the family owned about 25-30 acres of land, but the lake covered much of it.

"This used to be all woods," Lee said, pointing out towards the lake. "There used to be covered in dogwood and redbud trees. They were so pretty down there."

Lee said the family was left with 18 lake home lots. All were sold, except for the place she calls home. She said the lake total changed the surroundings.

Lee said there use to be a dirt road on the 25 acres of land that led down to the original river bed. She said they would drive down to the lake and fish from a flat bottom boat.

"It's nothing like it was," Lee said.

She said her father-in-law, the late Frank Lee, was

a commercial fisherman. "He did that everyday," Lee said. "He did work for a few years with the cotton mill."

But she said he would

make his living fishing from the fast moving Coosa River.

"He peddled the fish

See Families, Page 7D



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Families

From Page 6D

out to friends and neighbors," she said.

She said her father-in-law would catch all kinds of fish, mainly catfish. When the lake appeared, she said, things changed.

"We were all farmers down here," Lee said. "We didn't know what it was all about... We really didn't know what it would mean."

She remembers some people were upset because of losing their land to the lake. The excitement came when people were able to sale some of their land as lakeshore property.

Lee said she came to Pell City when she was only 15 years old.

It was actually the lake that brought her and her family here.

Her father, the late Robert "Bob" Rudichar was a core drilling, who drilled core samples so engineers could determine what kind of rock formation and what kind of foundation was underneath the ground for a possible dam site.

The core samples helped Alabama Power Company (APC) determine where to build their dams along the Coosa River.

"He had three different rigs," Lee said.

She said her father worked for Joy Manufacturing Company, which did contract work for APC.

"I married a local boy, and my dad kept traveling," Lee said.

She said Logan Martin Lake changed the area.

"It (change) was slow getting here," Lee said. "Yes, the lake did shape this area."

Lee said the house next to her was brought all the



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Jean Lee stands in front of her pier, which was built before the water was actually backed up for Lake Logan Martin.

way from Birmingham by truck.

"It got stuck on the 19th Street railroad tracks," she said. "They had to call Atlanta and stopped all the trains."

She said it took the weekend to move the house off the tracks.

"Can you image how much that would have cost today?" Lee said.

Jimmy Mitchell, 71, of Lincoln remembers the preparation that went into developing Logan Martin Lake.

He said large bulldozers would plow down trees and pushed them into a big pile. The piles of timber and brush were burned.

"The lake covered nine acres of our property," said Mitchell, whose family lived near Lock 4.

He said workers used dynamite to blow down a portion of the Lock 4 wall, so boats could travel up and down the new APC reservoir.

He said the steel gates of

the Lock were cut at water level.

Mitchell said his great uncle, Wallace Tuck, was the Lock 4 operator.

He said there is a mile-

long island that is covered with water when the lake reaches full pool, that once had a large building, a club built on it, he said.

"It was nice," Mitchell

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said. "They bulldozed it down and burned it up. I don't know how they got those dozers out on that island."

He said his father once farmed the land on that island. They would bring the farm equipment to the

island by barge.

"They built the club not too long before the lake was built," Mitchell said.

He said his father also had a concession stand along the original river bed

See Families, Page 8D

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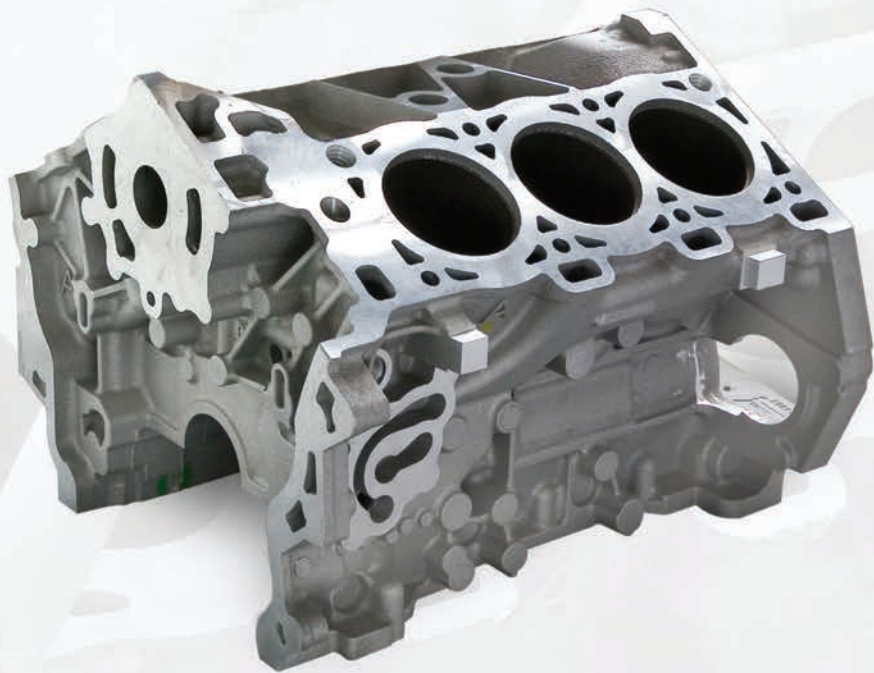
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Logan Martin has far reaching effects

BY SHANE DUNAWAY
Home staff writer

The construction of Logan Martin Dam and Logan Martin Lake has helped to paint a beautiful economic picture for the surrounding communities over the past 50 years.

Longtime chairman of the St. Clair County Commission and retired Alabama Conservation Officer Stan Batemon cites many examples of the benefits created by the manmade landmarks, first focusing on the fishing aspect.

“Logan Martin is the site for three Bassmaster Classics,” Batemon said. “It’s also the site of many Bassmaster qualifying tournaments and hundreds of smaller bass fishing tournaments. Bass fishing

alone is a very important economic factor on the lake.”

While he gave credit to the avid professional fishers who frequent the lake, Batemon noted it doesn’t diminish the value of what the local fishermen bring.

“Many times we forget other parts of fishing would be mostly crappie and catfish fishing,” Batemon said. “Both of those are less competitive than bass fishing because bass fishing has to do with a lot of tournament fishing, but the crappie, catfish and fresh-water bass and salt-water striped bass fisheries that are on the lake create different groups of people who fish it at different times of year and spend their money in different ways.”

Batemon gave a breakdown of how the local fishermen impact the local economy.

“Crappie fishing probably accounts for a major portion of the live bait sales — specifically minnows — on the lake,” Batemon said. “Striped fishing accounts for a large amount of fishermen trying to go after a trophy-sized fish because the Department of Conservation has cross-bred the salt-water striped bass and fresh-water striped bass.

“Logan Martin is one of the lakes where they’ve put a lot of these hybrid bass,” he added. “People who fish for those fish in an entirely different way than bass fishermen do. The fishery out there is very important to the economy because it covers such a diverse area of what fishing is.”

But fishing isn’t the only recreational hobby that occurs on the lake.

“You’ve got people who spent a lot of money on the lake for recreational boating,” Batemon said. “You can even break it down into water skiing, recreational boating for personal watercraft — jetskis — those kind of things, and recreational boating as pontoon boats. That has become a really big element of use of the lake are people casually riding their pontoon boats, others riding their fast speed boats and other pulling skiers.”

Batemon also explained how the high-quality lakefront property values factor into the economic contributions of the lake.

“The best example I can give of that is

See Effects, Page 9D

Families

From Page 7D

where he would sell food. “He had to move it,” Mitchell said.

He said there was mostly farmland around Lock 4, before the lake was built.

Beverly Harmon Templin said her father bought the property now known as Harmon Island from Harvey Davis and Zeek Hayes.

She said initially, he was going to have the family home built on the island, but he got another idea — a mobile home park.

“Daddy was all about making money,” Templin said. “It is a good income from it for his children and grandchildren.”

T.L. Harmon Sr., a businessman, bought the land before the water was backed up for the lake.

“Daddy built the road to the island,” Templin said.

Harmon owned several businesses in the middle of Easonville, which is now under Logan Martin Lake.

He owned the general mercantile store, a cotton

gin and grist mill. The general mercantile store had everything a local resident needed.

“It was the big department store at the time,” Templin said.

She remembers the store selling three pounds of sausage for \$1 and charging 25 cents for a big can of Double Q Salmon. Shoppers could also get three dozen eggs for a buck, too.

“I guess daddy was the first dollar store,” Templin said. “I say my daddy, but my mother (Rosalie Smith Harmon) was the backbone of the business.”

Templin said her family lost a lot to the lake, and he was tied up in court for years over the family’s homestead and business properties.

She said the only house she knew was torn down, and the pecan orchard next to the home was destroyed. The family also had a lake that was covered up by Logan Martin Lake.

Templin said it was a very tough time for her father and her family.

She said her father ended up opening the Harmon Farm Supply store in Pell City after being forced to close his businesses in Easonville.

Templin said she is glad the family still owns Harmon Island and she and her husband, Terry, have their own place on the island as well.

Roger Mathis, 67, of Cropwell, also remembers when the lake was built 50 years ago.

“I was a young sprout,” he said. “I guess I was 17.”

Mathis was born and raised in Mays Bend, a place he used to hunt squirrels and rabbits.

“When the water backed up, we moved,” he said.

Mathis, who is a deacon and trustee for Coosa Valley Baptist Church, remembers when workers moved the cemeteries and churches from Easonville.

The old Coosa Valley Baptist Church and the Easonville Methodist Church now sit side-by-side as one church, Coosa Valley Baptist Church.

The churches now sit in front of Coosa Valley Elementary School along U.S. 231.

He has been a member of Coosa Valley Baptist Church all his life.

Mathis can remember when people were baptized in the Avondale Lake, also known as Waites Lake.

“That is way under the water (Logan Martin Lake) now,” he said.

He said individual graves were removed from three separate cemeteries and relocated to the newer Coosa Valley Baptist Church Cemetery.

He said the graves were relocated from the Easonville Cemetery, Coosa Valley Baptist Church Cemetery and the Cosper Family Cemetery. Those vacant cemeteries plots now are also under Logan Martin Lake.

He said his father watched as the caskets for his brother and sister were dug up and relocated across U.S. 231 in the new Coosa Valley Baptist Church Cemetery.

“It probably took them



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Roger Mathis, 67, of Cropwell, remembers when two churches and three cemeteries in the Easonville area were relocated for Logan Martin Lake.

six months — year to relocate all the graves,” he said. “It took them a while.”



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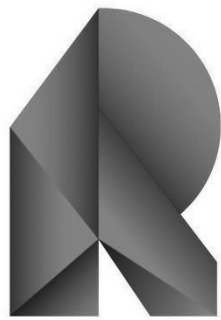
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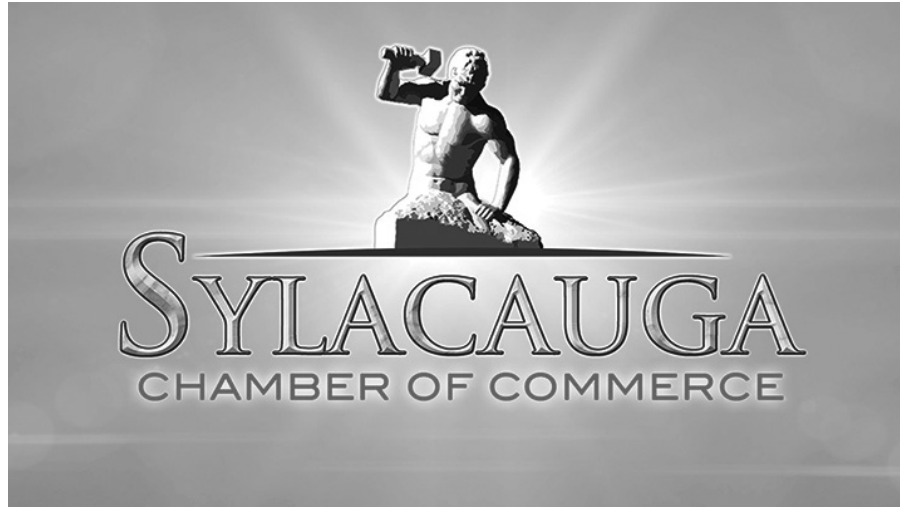
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Effects

From Page 8D

in the recession that we're still climbing out of, the lakefront property has held its overall value better than other property around the county," Batemon said. "It didn't take a dip in value like general off-lake subdivisions. Holding its value helped communities like Riverside, Pell City and Ragland at least maintain their ad-valorem tax base."

While the local government receives the benefits from the stable tax base, residents gain the benefit of hydroelectric power produced by the dam itself.

According to Alabama Power's Brandon Glover, the company generated more than 8 percent of its customer's electricity needs from hydro resources in 2013.

"Hydroelectric generation is great because of its low cost and ability to produce energy quickly, though it is also obviously limited by the amount of water mother nature provides," Glover said.

Batemon noted before the dam, there was a heavy reliance on coal-fired power generation plants to provide electricity in

the region and with the proximity of the lake and dam, the benefits are obvious.

"Us living right here on Logan Martin, we're some of the first people on the power grid," Batemon said. "I'm sure we benefit from that power generation pretty quickly."

Another big part of the economic picture now is the utilization of the lake for a public drinking water source since the construction of Coosa Valley Water.

"Coosa Valley Water Supply District has a permit to pump up to 13 million gallons of water per day out of the river to be processed and used for drinking water," Batemon said. "Having a ready source of water clean enough to process for drinking water is a big economic value."

Batemon added the presence of a large body of water makes it easier for municipalities and governments to obtain discharge permits for treated waste water.

"Pell City has the largest waste water treatment plant in the county," he said. "Their discharge is into Logan Martin

Lake after it has been treated. It's discharged into the middle of the river by a long pipeline. These treatment plants are highly regulated. It's very valuable to have these permits to allow you to discharge into a flowing stream that literally cleans itself."

Though there are some skeptics who don't see the beauty in the lake because of perceived impurities within its depths, Batemon insisted that looks can be deceiving.

"This lake is not a real clear body of water like Lake Martin," Batemon said. "You can go boating on Lake Martin and look in the water. It's like looking into a spring. It's real clear. Some people think, 'Well Logan Martin is a dirty lake.' That's not true scientifically. Logan Martin is a lake with a lot of turbidity. It's not poisonous stuff. It's particles of silt and mud running off from farms mostly. That particle count is actually good for fishery because it filters the sunlight and actually creates a better fishery than a clear body of water. It's a very healthy and beautiful

body of water."

The beauty and visual appeal Batemon described creates an indirect boon for the economy.

"A lot of people who live around the lake or go to the park never actually use the lake itself other than to look at it," Batemon said. "People who picnic at Lakeside Park in Pell City are literally there for the aesthetic value of being able to see the lake. A body of water just attracts humans, and that creates some economic impact with things like picnicking and just wanting to be close to the lake in your outdoor activities. The Fourth of July celebration also draws in a lot of people. It's just neat to have a fireworks display on the lake instead of over the land."

All in all, Logan Martin Dam, the lake and its power and recreations values will retain huge drawing power for the surrounding area.

Contact Shane Dunaway at sdunaway@dailyhome.com

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5938 Ironaton Rd.
Talladega (256) 480-5996

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Lake put Pell City in a great place

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

The creation of Logan Martin Lake 50 years ago has had a far-reaching impact as neighboring cities thrive and grow.

“The lake has increased the style of living and overall quality of life of lake residents through the natural beauty it creates,” Pell City Mayor Joe Funderburg said. “The beautiful terrain and recreational opportunities draw people from other areas, many of whom built fine homes on the lake.”

Bill Gossett, broker, partner and owner of Fields Gossett Realty, recalled what were once large tracts of farmland are now the sites for a variety of lake homes.

“There were several large farm owners for the most part, and perhaps a few smaller ones in that area,” he said. “Creation of the lake gave more area for residential development and changed us to more of a resort area.”

Gossett said residential development began with small lake cabins, and as subdivisions developed, people built more expensive and larger homes.

“It exponentially increased the value of the land by having the lake here,” he said.

Gossett said the lake, as well as the Coosa River Bridge on Interstate 20, also changed the flow of traffic.

“Pell City Steak House was a favorite stopping place for people going through to Florida,” he said. “What is now U.S. 231 was called the ‘Florida Short Route.’ Plus this area has the convenience of close proximity to both

Birmingham and Atlanta.” Erica Grieve, executive director of the Greater Pell City Chamber of Commerce, said the lake’s location offers a quick getaway from busy city life and a beautiful place to retire.

“Logan Martin Lake is a huge asset to Pell City in both recreation and real estate,” she said.

Funderburg said Logan Martin Lake draws a number of events to the area.

“Logan Martin Lake is known for its bass and crappie fishing, for recreation or for sport,” he said. “We have had the National Bassmaster Classic here in the past, and we have the Mark’s Outdoors Bass Tournament here this year, as well as other fishing tournaments. We are very proud to have a lake with a reputation for great fishing.”

Multi-sports events have also come to the lake.

Last year, Metro Bank and Team Magic hosted a Cross Race at Lakeside Park, drawing participants from all over the Southeast. This year, the Greater Pell City Chamber of Commerce and Team Magic are presenting the Toughman Alabama Triathlon, a training ground for Ironman races. The Toughman race will consist of a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike and 13.1-mile run. A 5K will take place in Lakeside Park while the tri-athletes are in the bike portion of the event.

Lakeside Park itself overlooks Logan Martin Lake, with walking tracks where people can enjoy the lake while exercising. The Pell City Garden Club is planning construction of a native plant walking trail near where

the Logan Martin Lake Protection Association is constructing a wetlands boardwalk, both located at Lakeside Park.

The annual Logan Martin LakeFest and Boat Show is another big event which draws people from all over to the lake.

“This is a special year because it’s the 50th anniversary of creation of Logan Martin Lake,” said Eric Housh, one of the organizers for the Logan Martin LakeFest and Boat Show. “We are hosting LakeFest as a birthday celebration for Logan Martin Lake.”

The three-day event is at Lakeside Park May 16-18, featuring live music, a fireworks show, raffles for a fishing boat and motor and a YETI cooler, door prizes donated by vendors, and an in-water boat show with fishing boats from Nitro and Tracker, pontoon boats from Avalon, Bennington and Sun Tracker, and wakeboard and ski boats from Mastercraft and Tahoe.

“I see a lot more things coming to Logan Martin Lake—a lot more activities,” Funderburg said. “We are trying to attract as much as we can. We are very proud to have such a resource as the lake, where we can utilize and make it something everyone here is proud of.”

Funderburg said Pell City is one of the best kept secrets around.

“We need to let the word out where it’s not a secret anymore,” he said. “Logan Martin Lake is one of the things that makes Pell City such a unique place and so much an integral part of people’s lives. A lot of people move out here because of the lake atmosphere and what it offers.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Logan Martin Lake has become a major fishing destination for professional tournaments, weekend visitors and those who live along the shore.

It is an integral part of this community. We maintain a small town atmosphere and we have the beauty of the lake that contributes so much to people wanting to move out here.”

Funderburg said while many people move out to enjoy the lake and what Pell City has to offer, they also give back to the community.

“They contribute through civic organizations and volunteer work,” he said. “Many have also become elected officials and are contributing in that respect to their individual careers as well as this area. We are proud to have these folks here and encourage more and more folks to see what Logan Martin Lake and Pell City have to offer. I see Pell City and St. Clair County continue to move forward in a progressive manner. I’m very proud we are moving in that direction instead of resting on what we’ve had all these years.”

Funderburg said there is no question the lake is an essential part of Pell City.

“It has been and hopefully will continue to be a

big asset to this community for many, many years,” he said. “We feel we have one of the most beautiful lakes anywhere around.”

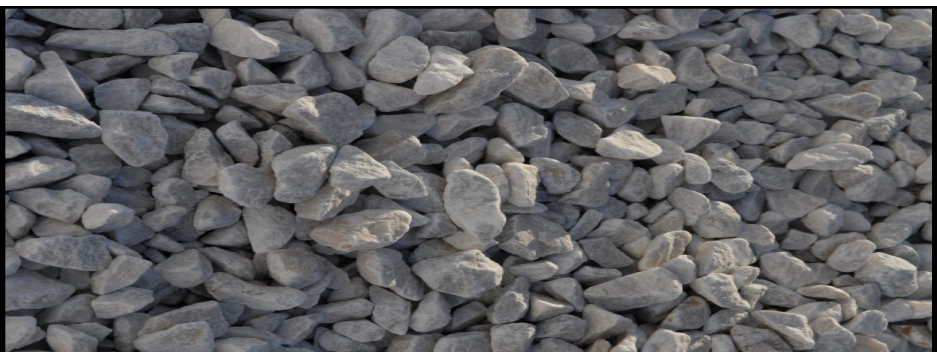
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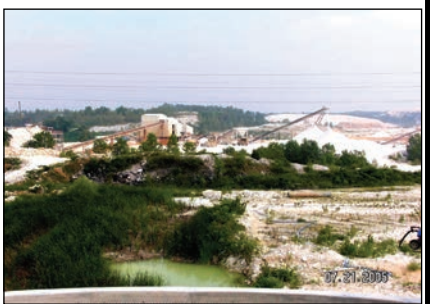
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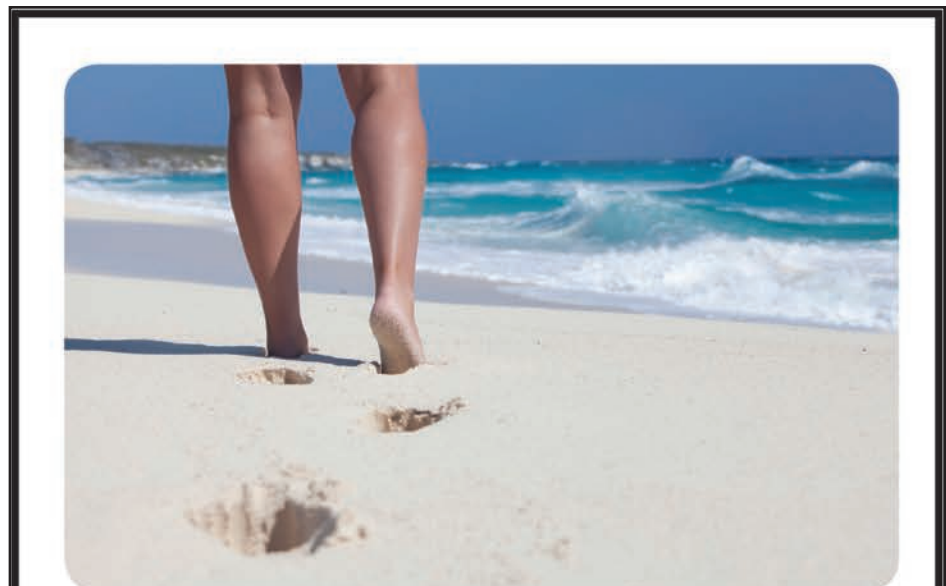


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