

# UPDATE 2020

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

## GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY



## HEALTH & EDUCATION

## FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS



*A Salute to*  
Pell City, Riverside, St. Clair County,  
Talladega, Lincoln, Munford,  
Sylacauga, Oak Grove & Childersburg  
**COMMERCE**







*A  
Salute  
to*



# GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY





By CHRIS NORWOOD  
Home staff writer

The new toll bridge will be built by Tim James, using absolutely no taxpayer funds. The project will also include



Photo by Bob Crisp

Capital improvement funds from the county's 2-cent sales and use tax are still somewhat up in the air. The act creating this tax and detailing the legislative approval process was not updated during the last redistricting process. A new process based on Talladega's current legislative delegation is pending before the state supreme court.

*Elect* **BUDDY L.**

# MILAM

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DISTRICT 5  
TALLADEGA COUNTY**



**Involvement/Community Leadership**

**PLATFORMS**

- Bring more jobs to Talladega County
- Four-lane project from Sylacauga to Winterboro
- Clean-up the former Avondale Mills property
- ✓ Elected/Served as Board Member, Talladega Co. Board of Education
- ✓ Elected/Served as Board Member, Coosa Pines Federal Credit Union
- ✓ Coached Sylacauga Youth Baseball for 25 years
- ✓ Retired from Kimberly Clark-Bowater Mills (42 years)
- ✓ Wife retired from Avondale Mills (28 years)
- ✓ Three children and four grandchildren

*"If I have missed you during the course of this campaign, let me take this opportunity to ask for your vote for Talladega County Commissioner District 5. Thank you!"*

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# Past year is a record-breaking time for St. Clair County

Special to  
The Daily Home

The St. Clair County Commission will look back at 2019 as one of the greatest years in the county’s history.

St. Clair County Economic Development Council (EDC) Executive Director Don Smith said St. Clair County experienced a record-breaking year in capital investment from new and expanding manufacturers.

“Companies announced over \$350 million in investment in our communities and the creation of over 200 high-paying jobs,” Smith said. “The largest investment was by National Cement for the modernization and expansion of its facility in Ragland. This \$250-plus million announcement was the largest investment by a manufacturer in our county’s history.”

Smith noted that the investment was not just in one area.

“We had announcements in five of our 10 communities, but those investments and jobs will benefit all the communities in our county,” Smith said.

Besides National Cement, WKW Erbsloeh North America, Benjamin Moore, Ford Meter Box, TCI of Alabama and J.M. Exotic Foods also expanded their operations in St. Clair County. Riverside

also added its second manufacturer with the announcement of Charity Steele.

“Last year also involved completing expansions and new facilities like Allied Minerals in Pell City and Unipres in Steele,” Smith said. “These projects and others lead to the historically low unemployment rate of 2.2 percent in October and November.”

Smith also noted that the EDC hired Blair Goodgame to focus on outdoor tourism in St. Clair County.

“The process of hiring a branding company began in 2019 and will be completed the first half of 2020,” Smith said. “These efforts will help unify the county and its outdoor assets.”

**Finances**

Chief Financial Officer Donna Wood said the ending balance for the county’s General Fund operating budget grew by 27 percent for fiscal year 2019.

“This is mainly due to a strong economy that our nation is currently experiencing,” Wood said. “The state is also implementing a new manual that will continue to increase ad valorem revenue.”

Wood said ad valorem tax revenue increased 4 percent from FY2018, and sales tax revenue increased by 7 percent from the previous year.



One of St. Clair County's two courthouses is on Cogswell Avenue in Pell City.

Photo by Bob Crisp

Wood added that the new simplified sellers use tax (from on-line sales) increased by 1.14 percent totaling \$751,117 for FY2019.

FY2018 added a new tobacco tax revenue that began July 1, 2018, and for the short period of time, collections brought in \$125,887; however, the 2019 annual collection totaled \$339,564.

Mortgage/deed tax revenue increased 1 percent for FY2019. Overall, the General Fund revenues grew 10 percent. “Expenditures were one percent less compared to the prior year, so maintaining expenditures at a

conservative level contributed to a stronger fund balance,” Wood said. “Capital outlay for FY2019 mainly consisted of vehicles for rural transportation, county engineering department and law enforcement and construction equipment for road work.”

Wood added that in FY2020, the estimated General Fund revenues are projected to increase overall by 7 percent, and expenditures are projected to increase by 3 percent. Ad valorem revenue is projected to increase by 7 percent due to the new state manual implementation while sales tax revenue is projected to increase

by 5 percent. The simplified sellers use tax is estimated to increase 6 percent.

In FY2020, the new state gas and diesel tax will provide 6 cents revenue (estimated to be over \$700,000) to provide money for additional road work.

The new revenue will increase by 2 cents over the next two years until a total of 10 cents is capped. The local county road fund will also continue to provide financial support for the county engineer and road department to update the county’s infrastructure. Expenditure increases include healthcare, cost-of-living adjustments

and routine maintenance costs.

Wood said the county’s latest audit in FY2018 received an unmodified opinion by the Examiners of Public Accounts, which is the best rating a county can receive.

“Our office continues its dedication and hard work as we prepare for the 2019 audit,” Wood said. “Audits can be found on the county’s website at [www.stclairco.com](http://www.stclairco.com) under county commission and select audit.”

Wood added that in FY2019, the county paid \$1,795,000.00 toward retiring principal debt.

“The RRR Gas Tax

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Warrants paid off in full Nov. 1, 2019, so the county owes no debt on roads and bridges,” Wood said. “The county continues to work toward the goal of ‘pay as you go’ and to be as debt-free as possible.”

**Road Department**  
County Engineer Dan Dahlke said that more than 36 miles of roads in St. Clair County were paved and/or received pavement preservation work last year.

“We will continue to work on needed road repairs around the county,” Dahlke said.

Dahlke also said the county assisted with ATRIP II grants and will assist with local funds needed for projects that were awarded to the City of Springville and the City of Odenville. “The grant in Springville will address the four-way stop at the intersection of Alabama 174, US 11, and Murphrees Valley Road, (St. Clair 9),” Dahlke said. “The grant in Odenville will address needed turn lanes on US 411 between Council Drive and Burgess Drive.”

St. Clair County Commission Chairman Paul Manning said the road department is very active in getting more done to improve roadways throughout the county.

“We stay in touch with the county engineer on a daily basis,” Manning said. “Dan (Dahlke) and his department do a good job in reaching goals.”

Other projects the road department is involved in for the year 2020 include:

- The county continues to work with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and the City of Moody on intersection improvement projects at the intersection of US 411 and Sanie Road, and at the intersection of US 411 and Park Avenue (St. Clair 10).

- Bridge replacement project in the Springville area.

- Bridge deck rehabilitation projects on two bridges in the Moody area.

- The county is working with the City of Moody and ALDOT to update the interchange at Interstate 20 and Kelly Creek Road.

- The county is working on a road that will provide an alternate railroad crossing that will provide better access for the Trails End community.

- The county is working with the City of Moody and a local developer on a road that will provide an alternate route for citizens that have to use the Dragline Rail Road crossing.

- The county is working with Pell City and ALDOT on the relocation of a portion of Hazelwood Drive that will provide better access to St. Vincent’s St. Clair Hospital and Jefferson State Community College.

- The county was also awarded Highway Safety Improvement Funds



Ashville, one St. Clair’s two county seats, is home to its other courthouse, at 100 Sixth Avenue.

File photo

through ALDOT that will put new guardrail systems on three bridges.

- 2020 will be the first year of receiving around \$750,000 from the statewide gas tax or the rebuild funds which Governor Ivey and the state legislature passed in 2019. These funds will go toward the resurfacing of Gallant Road.

- Litter is an area that the county commission, Sheriff Billy Murray, and District Attorney Lyle Harmon have worked together on and have purchased two new trucks that will be used by the sheriff’s office for litter crews to go around the county and address the growing litter problem.

“I am very appreciative of our sheriff and our district attorney,” Manning said. “We have spent many

hours discussing how we can get a handle on the litter problem, and we have seen some positive improvements just in the past few months.”

**Final word**  
Manning said there have been so many great things that have happened for the citizens of St. Clair County.

“There have been many years where we have seen progress and growth, but I feel 2019 may have been the best year to date,” Manning said. “It is an honor to be chairman of this county commission and be able to work alongside so many elected officials.”

Manning said when commissioners look at the finances and discuss the growth that has taken place, they see how the services have increased in the past year or two.

“We have a county

commission that is interested and aggressive toward having a sound government,” Manning said. “They are not for revenue increases but rather getting the job done and making it safe for each and every person who lives, works and travels through our great county. We want a better life for all.”

Manning said he is

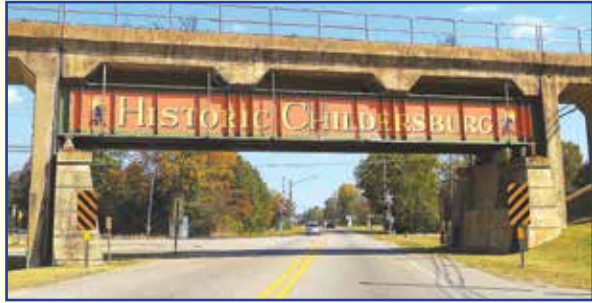
very excited about all that took place in 2019, and believes 2020 can and will be just as good and better.

“There has been no increase in borrowing money,” he said, “and we have not borrowed any money in the past six-to-seven years. I think the future looks great for St. Clair County, and I want to be part of that future.

There have been more rooftops built in St. Clair County during the past couple of years than in the past 15-to-20 years. I believe 2020 is going to be great because we have come so far. I believe it will be amazing what we see happening in St. Clair County in the next few months.”



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**Brandon Robinson, Council Member / Ward A**  
**Bill Moody, Council Member / Ward B**  
**Angesa Twymon, Council Member**  
**Mayor Pro Tempore / Ward C**  
**T. Glenn Stubblefield, Council Member / Ward D**  
**Michael McLain, Council Member / Ward E**

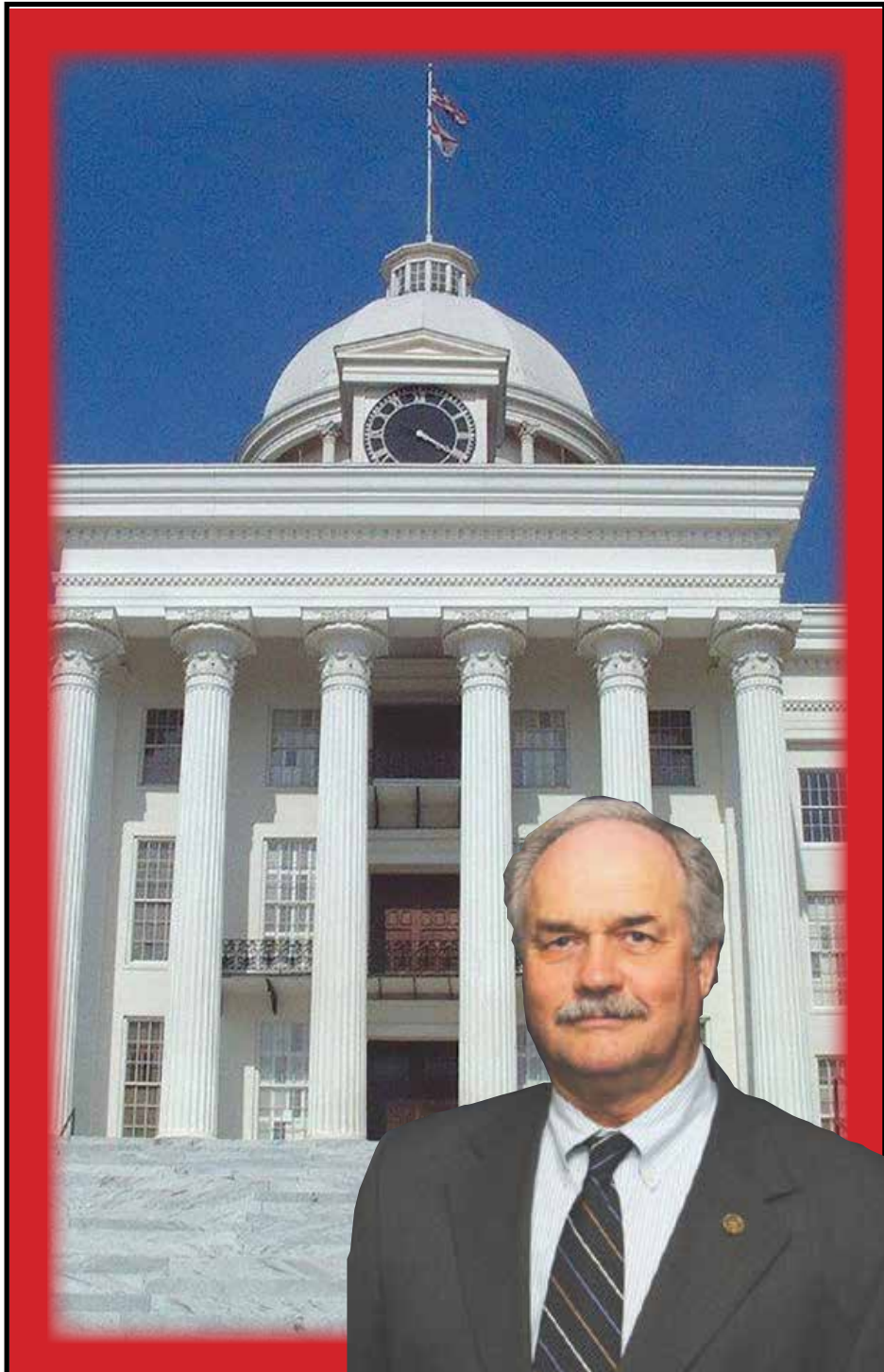


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# 2019: A year of new growth and development in Pell City



The opening of the Premiere Cinema entertainment complex is one of the highlights of the past year, according to city officials.



Photos by Tucker Webb



Improvements were made to the Pell City Civic Center during 2019.  
Photo by Bob Crisp



The city's newly renovated tennis complex is "a hub of activity."  
Photo by Bob Crisp

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

2019 saw a great amount of activity within Pell City, including both municipal projects and business development.

The year started off with the opening of the Premiere Cinema development, which City Manager Brian Muenger calls "a banner day" for the community.

"There had been efforts to bring a new theater to the community for more than a decade prior," he said, "so seeing that completed is definitely one of the highlights of the year."

Muenger said that the community had consistently called for more entertainment opportunities in the city, and he said he feels like Primere has exceeded expectations.

"The quality of the facility is first-class, and it has certainly proven to be a draw for patrons from St. Clair County and beyond. Surrounding restaurants have seen double-digit increases in their sales in the time the theater has been open, furthering the economic impact of this project."

Muenger also points out continued retail interest in the Highway 231 South area during 2019. There was construction for multiple medical facilities and a new retail strip center. Ace Hardware also opened on Highway 231 South early in 2019.

"As residential growth in and around the city continues, much of which is on the south end of the city, I anticipate further commercial development in the area," he said.

During the 2019 calendar year, the city issued 100 permits for new residential construction.

"Residential growth is taking place at its highest level in more than a decade," Muenger said.

He points out that new home construction has increased in each of the last four years, but 2019 had the highest amount of development since the economic downturn in 2008.

Muenger said that at the current pace of development, the existing supply of lots within residential subdivisions will be largely exhausted within 12 to 18 months. He said that a supply issue will likely be avoided due to multiple other developments that are currently in the planning and engineering stages.

"The city is attracting interest from regional and national homebuilding firms in recent years, and that has increased with the strength of the economy."

With respect to city projects, Muenger points to the opening of the renovated civic center and tennis complex in late July as a highlight of the year. The tennis portion of the project included a new tennis support building, complete with a viewing deck, the addition of new courts, and the installation of new lights on all existing courts. An expanded parking lot and consolidated entrance were constructed to support the new and existing facilities, both of which Muenger said were sorely needed.

The civic center itself received multiple improvements, with the construction of a new fitness and wellness space, new basketball court, new locker rooms and restrooms and a game room. "The new facilities have been hugely popular, with active membership

totaling over 1,000 at this time," Muenger said. "In addition to our annual members, the center has issued over 500 daily passes per month on average since it opened."

Muenger said the space has always been a hub of activity within the community, and he said he is pleased to see how much the utilization has grown after the renovation. He describes providing high-quality recreational opportunities as a core function of local government, and adds that this facility will serve the city well for decades to come.

During the past year, the city, in partnership with St. Clair County, took a major step towards another long-term goal with the demolition of the former county hospital. After being vacant for many years, the hospital building had become a source of blight, and in order to effectively redevelop the property the building had to be removed.

Muenger said that with the assistance of a \$200,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, a contract was awarded to abate the hazardous materials and asbestos within the building, and to demolish it fully. The removal of the building clears the way for the redevelopment of the 20-acre parcel, which Muenger said is ideal for commercial development due to its proximity to I-20.

Throughout this period of intense activity, the city has continued to improve its financial position, utilizing its excess revenues to fund capital expenditures without issuing additional debt, according to the city manager.

"In fact, the city's long-term debt

obligations have decreased by more than 11 percent over the previous three audit periods (FY14-15 to FY17-18)," he said.

He adds that the city council has adopted policies that prioritize fiscal responsibility and operational sustainability, and the effect of these policies is clear.

The economic prosperity of the city is essential to the operation of the municipal government, but also to the Pell City Board of Education. During the previous fiscal year, more than \$4.7 million in sales taxes were provided to the school board, the highest amount it has ever contributed.




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# New city administration signals changes on the horizon for Talladega

By CHRIS NORWOOD  
Home staff writer

The city of Talladega witnessed a sea of change in local government last year, electing a new mayor and four of five new councilmen.

Ward 1 Councilman Dr. Horace Patterson is the only incumbent returning to office this year. The new council

Courthouse Square area.”

Further progress was made toward making Talladega an area Christmas destination as well, she added. “The fourth annual Christmas on the Square event was a huge success, from the tree lighting ceremony to the wonderful weather that lured the largest event attendance to date, to the free Broadway production

and databases. All of which is a reflection of the commitment of the elected officials and city staff to the health and safety of our citizens.”

At the time this article was prepared, the major projects the city will undertake during 2020 have yet to be determined. The elections last year placed a strong emphasis on paving



Talladega City Hall is at 203 South Street W.

Photo by Bob Crisp

members are Vickie Robinson Hall in Ward 2, current Council President Joe Power in Ward 3 and Betty Spratlin and Trae Williams in Wards 4 and 5, respectively.

Timothy Ragland was elected the city’s first African-American mayor and the city’s youngest mayor in a generation. Beth Cheeks continued as city manager.

“In November 2019, the city made history with its first African-American mayor,” Cheeks said. “And with four new council members, I look forward to working with them on an influx of new ideas and new perspectives.”

Even with the significant election results, “the city was able to see the completion of several projects in 2019,” according to Cheeks.

“The bridge replacements were completed on Coosa Street, West Street and Isbell Circle. The (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance project for the pedestrian areas of the Historic Courthouse Square District were completed with the addition of a ramp and new sidewalk on Battle Street,” among others.

The previous council had identified the construction of a splash pad as a major – but also contentious – issue prior to last year’s election, but the new administration has definitely put this project aside.

Both residents of Talladega and those just passing through are about to witness major changes in two of the city’s largest thoroughfares and how they are labelled and maintained.

“The city will soon have control of East Battle Street, the roads around the Courthouse Square and East Street, as the state routes are moved to Haynes Street and the 275 Bypass becomes Highway 21,” Cheeks said. “This will move the truck routes out of the downtown area, giving these areas a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and enhance the small town community vibe that Talladega is known for in the

of “It’s a Wonderful Life” at the Ritz Theatre and the twirling skaters on the ice rink. Due to the generosity of local business donations, funding from the city and the hard work of the city employees and volunteers, no citizen or visitor is denied access to the event because of an inability to pay. Keeping this event free of charge to all who visit and live here speaks to the spirit of this community.”

According to Cheeks, “The city’s first responders have up-to-date equipment to perform their jobs well for the entire community. A new fire truck has arrived and the police department, through partnerships with surrounding municipalities, has access to state-of-the-art technology, forensic labs

and infrastructure, and Patterson, in particular, has cited plans to make Talladega a major tourist destination a top priority. In recent weeks, the city’s lack of public transportation programs, particularly for visually impaired and elderly citizens, has become a major topic of discussion as well.

“In 2020, we are (also) looking forward to the continued revitalization of the downtown area,” Cheeks said. “Several initiatives are planned in the upcoming year to instill continued pride in our neighborhoods with Keep Talladega Clean and beautification projects. I am proud to be this city’s manager. I am proud to live here and to have raised my family here.”



Workers installed a new sidewalk and ramp on Battle Street during 2019.

Photo by Bob Crisp



The completed project has benefited pedestrians in downtown district.

Photo by Bob Crisp



The bridge on Coosa Street was replaced during 2019.

Photo by Bob Crisp

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# Honda of Alabama continues to boost local, state economies



The locally-produced Honda Odyssey was named Best Minivan for Families in 2019.

Photo by Bob Crisp

By JIMMY CREED  
Special to The Daily Home

As Honda of America Mfg. Inc. celebrated its 40th anniversary of making products in the United States in 2019, Honda Manufacturing of Alabama (HMA) in Lincoln produced even more tangible proof locally of why the company is so successful nationally.

Of particular note were the findings of an economic study released in August 2019 which showed HMA contributed more than \$12 billion to the state’s economy in 2018 and was responsible for 45,647 jobs across Alabama.

The study, conducted for the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) by the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) at the University of Alabama, concluded that Honda and its tier-1 suppliers were directly responsible for 5.4 percent of the state’s \$221.1 billion gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018. One of the most common indicators used to track the health of an economy, the GDP represents the total dollar value of all goods and services produced over a specific period of time.

The survey results and the rosy picture they paint are a reflection of the efforts of many hard-working Alabamians, according to HMA Senior Vice President Mike Oatridge.

“There’s no doubt that the statistics that were shared are very significant, but without the people here in the state, we would not have the success we have today,” Oatridge said. “The vehicles represent not only the hard work that goes on in Lincoln, Alabama, but many, many factories throughout the state, whether it’s steel from Mobile or seats from Boaz or Oxford.

“We are grateful for the support that Honda has experienced with our communities, our local and state leaders and our supplier partners. We are pleased that the success of our operations has had such a positive impact on the people — and the economy — of the state of Alabama.”

The study also pointed out that in 2018 HMA:

- Had a total payroll of \$590.5 million or an average of \$79,202 per employee, which is 75 percent more than the average earnings for an Alabama worker.
- Paid \$202.9 million in taxes, with \$113.4 million coming in state taxes and \$89.6 million in local taxes.
- Accounted for more than \$3.45 billion in non-payroll expenditures in Alabama.

• The company’s Lincoln facility accounted for a total of 19,223 direct and indirect jobs while HMA suppliers were conservatively estimated

to have employed 7,322 workers and were responsible for 26,451 direct and indirect jobs.

• In addition, HMA’s tier-1 suppliers had a \$3.5 billion economic impact statewide, accounted for \$865.9 million in earnings and generated \$82.2 million in state and local taxes.

• In Talladega County, HMA and its key tier-1 suppliers were responsible for 3,069 jobs, \$205.5 million in total earnings and \$3.9 million in local sales tax. In St. Clair County the totals were 2,069 total jobs, \$145.4 million in total earnings and \$2.8 million in taxes.

“This study demonstrates the magnitude of Honda’s Alabama operation and how important it is to the state’s economy,” EDPA Executive Vice President Steve Sewell said. “At the same time it underscores the fact that Alabama has provided the skilled work force and positive business climate that a world-class company like Honda needs to be successful in a highly competitive global business.”

The unveiling of the CBER report and its confirmation of the company as one of the state’s economic juggernauts was just one item on a long list of HMA’s recent accomplishments to be celebrated. Included among those were another milestone for vehicle and engine production, numerous prestigious national awards for safety and reliability and a continued impact on communities through generous donations of money and time to various charitable and non-profit organizations.

HMA reached the 5 million mark for vehicle and engine production since the \$2.6 billion plant opened and began operating in 2001. The Lincoln facility, which is now Honda’s largest light-truck production facility in the world, is the sole global production source for the Pilot SUV, the Odyssey minivan, the Passport SUV and the Ridgeline pickup and the V-6 engines that power them.

The Honda Alabama-made Passport earned a Top Safety Pick award for vehicles built after June 2019 from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). It is now the eighth vehicle Honda makes to receive the Top Safety award or higher from the IIHS.

The Odyssey won the U.S. News Cars Award as the Best Minivan for families for the ninth straight year.

The Odyssey and Ridgeline received Editors’ Choice Awards from Car and Driver magazine for Best Trucks, SUVs and Vans.

The four light-truck models manufactured in Lincoln were listed in the Cars.com 2019 American-Made Index Top 10, which has been issued

annually since 2006. The Odyssey was ranked No. 2, the Ridgeline No. 3, the Passport No. 4 and the Pilot No. 7. If you include the Acura RDX and MDX models, Honda took six of the 10 spots in the Cars.com ranking.

Finally, every Honda model evaluated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s New Car Assessment Program achieved the top 5-star rating for overall vehicle score.

Since 2001, HMA has donated more than \$12 million to charitable, civic and non-profit organizations in communities all across Alabama. Likewise, Honda associates have totalled more than 175,000 hours as volunteers supporting various organizations and causes throughout the state.

In 2019, HMA associates cleaned shelves and organized books at Talladega College and help freshen up the campus, and painted and freshened up at the YWCA and the McWane Science Center in Birmingham as part of the fourth annual Team Honda Week of Service. They also helped stuff Easter baskets at the Lovelady Center in Birmingham and filled more than 300 boxes with toys, school supplies and toiletries to support Operation Christmas Child.

Also, some HMA associates joined those from Honda production and research and development facilities in Georgia, Indiana and Ohio on Capitol Hill in September to support the Here For America Drive-In. The event focused the spotlight on international automakers, their ever-growing impact on the U.S. economy and the benefits they provide local communities. Stressing the theme “We Are American Made,” the associates who participated were able to talk first-hand about Honda’s role in the U.S. auto industry and the impact the almost 46,000 jobs it has created in Alabama has on the state.

Honda of America Mfg., Inc., actually celebrated two milestones

in company history in 2019. It marked 60 years since it first began delivering motorcycles to America Honda Motor Co. Inc. dealers — in the back of Chevrolet pickups no less. It also marked 40 years since it started manufacturing products in America.

Honda was the first Japanese automaker to produce products in America, beginning with motorcycles in 1979 followed by the start of automobile production in Marysville, Ohio, on Nov. 1, 1982.


After setting a facility record in 2018 with 356,569 vehicles built, the total output for 2019 was estimated at 351,708. That broke down to 146,352 Pilot SUVs, 125,497 Odyssey minivans, 50,674 Passport SUVs and 29,185 Ridgeline pickups. Overall, HMA continues to produce more than 340,000 vehicles on

average each year.

It is all a result of HMA associates striving for one main goal, Oatridge said.

“Our achievements

have been made possible through the commitment and dedication of our associates to build only the best for our Honda customers.”



## Greetings from Sylacauga Mayor Jim Heigl

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# National Cement makes ‘monumental’ industrial investment in Ragland

By SAM PRICKETT  
Special to The Daily Home

Ground broke on January 30 for a multimillion-dollar expansion of the National Cement of Alabama plant in Ragland.

The \$250 million project saves the 132 jobs that are already at the 112-year-old facility, said National Cement of Alabama President Spencer Weitman.

“This is going to be good for the company, and it is going to be good for families who have three, four, five generations of family members working there,” Weitman said.

The expansion was approved by the company last October. In December, the St. Clair County Commission and the Ragland City Council both voted to approve tax abatements for National Cement. Those tax abatements will last longer than most — 20 years — but St. Clair County Economic Development Council Director Don Smith said such a move is “monumental” to the county’s economy.

National Cement is Ragland’s largest employer.

“There are families and friends who rely on the livelihood of National Cement,” Smith said. “We had too much that could be lost.”

Smith added that the project is the largest single largest economic development investment



Ragland’s largest employer, National Cement of Alabama, has made the largest single economic development investment St. Clair County has seen in at least two decades.

Submitted photo

in the county since the Economic Development Council was formed 20 years ago.

The project will involve the installation of a state-of-the-art kiln used in the cement manufacturing process, which Weitman said would allow the plant to remain open for at least another 50 years. “It will ensure that our employees and our Ragland facility can continue to be competitive for years

to come by upgrading our plant with the latest technology and support,” he said. “We have enjoyed a long, successful partnership with the Ragland community and look forward to continuing that for many years to come.”

Construction on the project is expected to be complete by 2022; it will not interrupt the facility’s current, day-to-day operations. The plant currently ships

manufactured cement products to customers across the Southeast, including companies in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi and Florida.

The Ragland expansion has drawn praise by both state and local officials. Ragland Mayor Richard Bunt said he was “thrilled” by the project. “National Cement has always been a fantastic corporate citizen

that is a great community partner,” he said.

Alabama Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield said that the “massive re-investment” into the Ragland plant “will increase its vitality well into the future and will also allow us to strengthen our longstanding partnership with a high-caliber company that has a major presence in our state.”

Gov. Kay Ivey also weighed in, praising thr

company’s investment. “My administration is committed to helping rural communities across Alabama thrive by helping great companies such as National Cement invest and grow in our state,” the governor said.

“I welcome the company’s decision to make a significant new investment in its St. Clair County operations because it will serve to deepen its roots in Ragland for many years to come.”

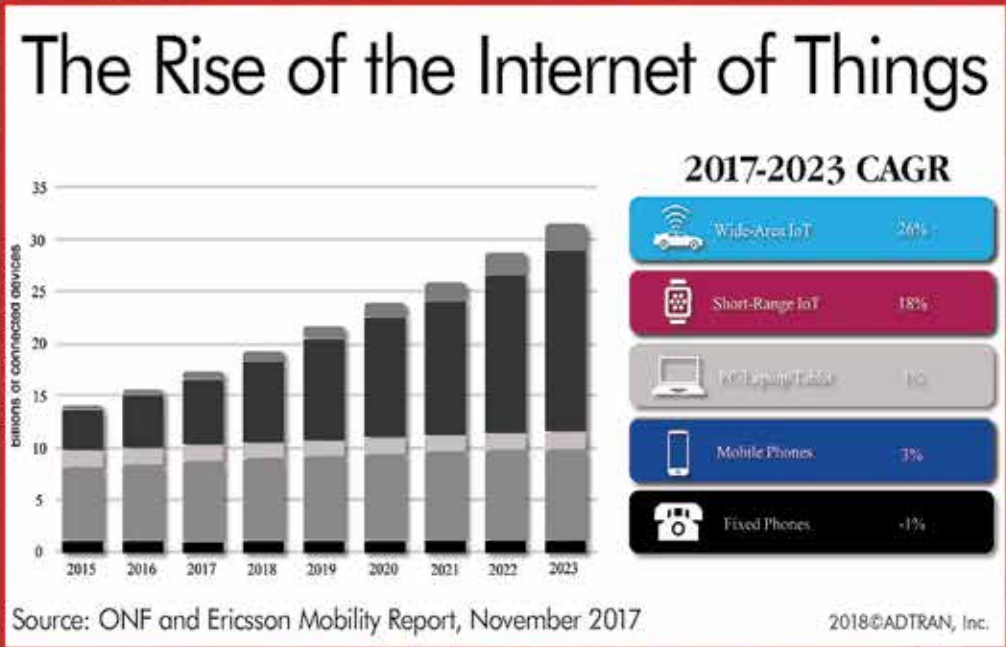
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# Sylacauga streets to be brighter and safer during 2020

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

The Marble City accomplished many capital improvement projects and explored opportunities for economic growth during 2019.

“I think 2019 went really well for us as a city,” Sylacauga Mayor Jim Heigl said. “The council was able to approve many projects and make changes that we believe we benefit the city.”

One of the projects the city worked on is completing portions of its ongoing streetscape project.

“We completed work for the first phase,” Heigl said. “This included improvements to the North Broadway block between 3rd and 4th streets.”

The block includes city hall and B.B. Comer Memorial Library. The improvements include new sidewalks, pavers, planters and LED lighting.

“The LED lighting is a little more expensive, but it will actually save us money in the long run,” Heigl said, adding that the new lighting will also help ensure its citizens feel safe at night.

Sylacauga received a \$217,000 grant in 2015 through the Federal Highway Administration Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) for the street improvements.

The city was required to match 20 percent and is now moving to work on streetscape improvements for the North Broadway block between 5th and 6th streets.

“This will continue with the same design,” Heigl said. “We want all of the sidewalks and lights to look the same downtown.”

The rest of the streetscape projects will be funded with 2018 and 2019 TAP grants, with the city committing a \$160,000 match for each.

“We’re trying to bring an upscale look to downtown for the retailers and shoppers,” the mayor said. “It means better parking with handicapped accessibility and more. Downtown is the heart of our city. We want to do what we can for merchants and shoppers.”

The city’s airport also received much needed upgrades to its runway and lighting to start the new year.

The airport was awarded \$1,948,542 in grant funding in the summer of 2019 from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for lighting and runway improvements.

The funds were specifically used for runway overlay paving of new asphalt to help strengthen and rehabilitate it and to replace its taxi lighting system with a new LED system.

“This was something our runway really needed,” Heigl said. “It is about a mile and a half in length. Economically, the airport is very important to us.”

Barge Design Solutions Inc. served as the engineering firm for the airport’s improvement project.

In addition to the \$1.9 million FAA grant, funds for the project included \$105,000 from the city, with some other

funding from the Airport Authority.

Heigl stressed the city’s continued priority of beautification projects.

“We want to do all that to help make our city look inviting and attractive,” he said.

In the winter of 2019, the Marble City was awarded a \$250,000 Community Enhancement Fund Demolition and Clearance Grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA).

On November 20, Sylacauga was one of 58 communities in the state to receive a Community Development Block Grant from ADECA. The communities receiving those grants will be able to work on projects such as providing water, improving roads and sewage systems, constructing public community buildings and removing blight.

“We believe that 30 to 33 structures will be able to be demolished,” Heigl said.

“No official time line has been set yet, but the city is working with Jason Hardin with the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission to make sure we contact all of the property owners and follow the guidelines set by the state as we move forward with the project. We want to make sure we are following the necessary steps.”

The city agreed to contribute 20 percent in matching funds for the demolition project.

The Marble City continued to grow economically in 2019, with the addition of several new businesses including AJ International Cuisine, Sylacauga Nails, the Craft Studio and more.

“It is our hope that we continue to grow the Highway 280 corridor and our downtown area,” Heigl said.

Earlier this year, it was

announced that a future retail and residential development project is in the works off of U.S. Highway 280 in Sylacauga.

Although nothing has been approved by the city, the potential shopping center, Shoppes of Sylacauga, would be developed on approximately 51 acres across from Starbucks and Chick-fil-A, adjacent to Zaxby’s and Home Depot.

1768 Development, of Birmingham, is serving as the project’s developer. Harbert Retail, a licensing broker, also out of Birmingham, is representing 1768.

The site is set to be comprised of commercial and residential outparcels along with shopping space, according to Casey Howard, vice president and broker for Harbert Retail.

According to a conceptual drawing, the site will include an anchor store, nine lots for businesses and residential space.

According to Laura Strickland, executive director of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce, the chamber hosted 10 ribbon cuttings in 2019 and has a total of 300 members and growing.

The chamber also announced the launch of four new e-newsletters to better promote its outreach for its members and the Sylacauga region.

Sylacauga’s city council meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. Work sessions are held prior at 5 p.m. Council members are Ashton Fowler, District 1; Tiffany Nix, District 2; Donnie Blackmon, District 3; Lee Perryman, District 4; and Dallas Davenport, District 5.

City hall is at 301 N. Broadway Avenue, and the municipal website is [www.cityofsylacauga.net](http://www.cityofsylacauga.net).



Sylacauga Municipal Complex is at 301 N. Broadway Avenue.

Photo by Bob Crisp



City officials expect the Marble City Square area to be the site of future development.

Photo by Bob Crisp



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# Goodgame Company:

## More than six decades of building relationships

By NICK PATTERSON  
Special to The Daily Home

With 65 years of operations in Pell City, it's not surprising that the family-owned construction firm Goodgame Company Inc. is all about building relationships and community.

In its advertisements and on its website, Goodgame wears its philosophy on its sleeve: *Relationships are not the only thing we build, but they are the most important.*

"I would say we're a big part of the community here locally," said Jason Goodgame, vice president of the company. "We try to be a part of a lot of things with the local school system. We try to do a lot with the local government. We tend to try to be as civic-minded as we can be. We're also a partner with a lot of the businesses here in town. If there's something we can help or do, we'll be happy to."

Goodgame Company's client list includes landmark businesses in Pell City and surrounding areas: Allied Mineral Products, New Flyer, a company building modern buses in Anniston; Benjamin Moore, Fontaine Fifth Wheel, Honda, WKW Erbsloeh, MGA Research Corporation, Piggly Wiggly, Town & Country Ford, St. Vincent's St. Clair and the Pell City Municipal Complex, among many others.

Goodgame Company was founded by Jason's uncle, Hughel, who began the firm to repair lawn mowers in 1955. About five years later, Jason's father, W. A. "Adrick" Goodgame, joined his brother in the company, and things began to shift to general construction, welding and other services locally. Adrick Goodgame bought the company in 1965.

By the 1980s, Goodgame was heavily involved with big steel mills. That was when mills were huge operations that ran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. "We were always working for them. We made some products that they used every day," Jason Goodgame said. But when steel production shifted to mini-mills that made steel on demand, the company's business turned more to heavy construction.

Then came another shift. In the late 1990s, Honda arrived. "In the late 90s when Honda decided to come to Alabama, we rode right into the automotive business," Goodgame said. "We're very fortunate. We've had some really good relationships built. Honda Manufacturing of Alabama is one of our number-one customers. They've been very loyal to us since the day that they arrived in Alabama. And some of our bigger projects that we've done there, people can't see them because they're inside the plant. But it's really made our company grow and they've been instrumental in helping us

grow over time."

He said that having a client like Honda helped make Goodgame a better company. "I will tell you that the project that put us on the map for the automotive sector was that Honda let us do a facility on site there that was almost 800 thousand square feet. It was a large project for us, and they trusted us to handle that. That was a spot for us to grow.

"Honda gives you opportunity and tries to help you to grow. When they showed up here, we had like a 3- or 4-page safety plan. Now we're 300 or 400 pages and a super-safe company. That's really because industry like that pushes you to be better."

Goodgame has become a source of a wide range of services for its clients, he said. Allied Mineral Products is a good example.

"They bought a company here called Riverside Refractories that had been in business as long as we have been in business, and they've been a customer of ours for 50 years. And so when they came in, the new ownership said, 'We want to update the facility here.' We began to go together and so we started on the layout and the preliminary, which would be site selection. We helped them to make sure they had a good piece of property that they could develop the way that they wanted to. We helped them with design and we helped them with some layout, interior layout, equipment and storage - how storage would be done inside the facilities. And we became a contractor then, and quoted them a price.

"After we get done with the building, then we turn over and help them start setting the equipment. So we install a lot of the new equipment, we install process as well as dust collection and all the other stuff that's required to make their product. And then we're there with them through start-up, which means making sure they're running the product the way they want to, and if we need to make any changes, we can do that. So that is a typical good project for us where we start from inception to completion."

Goodgame's versatility comes from the top, he said. "My dad's never been afraid to change.

He's always been willing to change and adjust, and that's really what our company, is about: fitting the needs of our customers. So if we need to make a change or adjust, we'll be happy to do that, and it seems like it's always been a good fit for us to maintain those relationships."

About 100 people work at Goodgame Company, and many of them are like family, according to Jason.

"I've been here for 20 years, but our shop supervisor has been here 38 years," he said. "I think he would probably tell you that in my high school days, I was not here working -- it was more him babysitting me. It's a family here. No question. We know their kids. We're part of their families, and if they need support we're here to help them. Mom and Dad always made it imperative that we maintain that family relationship."

Company employees volunteer throughout the community, and the company supports everything from high school sports to the Pell City Chamber of Commerce, from the local animal shelter to the St. Clair County Economic Development Council.

And on the strictly business side, Goodgame likes working with local subcontractors. "We do the best we can to create jobs and create possibilities for other people," Jasons said.

While Goodgame works in several surrounding states, particularly building supermarkets and working on projects for the Army Corps of Engineers, it's always been important to keep the company close to home.

"Our homes are all here. Our kids are in school here. Mine and my sister's kids are here and are part of Pell City, and we grew up in Pell City and part of the school system, so it's our home. I would say most of our employees, probably 75 percent are Pell City."

Keeping things close to home has always worked for Goodgame, both the family and the company, he said.

"We're just a good local company that tries hard. We try to build relationships and that's important because you need people to be a part of your business and help you be successful."



Goodgame Company Inc. was founded in 1955.

Photo by Bob Crisp



From left, Jason Goodgame, Adrick and Connie Goodgame and Janna Goodgame Masters own and operate the Pell City construction firm.

Submitted photo

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## MAYOR RUSTY JESSUP

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# City of Lincoln focuses on more growth and services



Lincoln officials express optimism about future growth in the city.  
Photo by Bob Crisp

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

The City of Lincoln has big plans for the coming year, but the groundwork was set in 2019.

“After several years of planning, a number of projects will begin construction this year. These projects will tend to shape the direction of our community – in effect a blueprint for the future,” Mayor Lew Watson said.

One project has already been completed: the new paint and symbol on the water tank near I-20. Watson said this symbolizes the coming construction this year of the Alabama Bass Park on Logan Martin Lake.

“This will be a 38-acre site devoted to providing a public fishing area, piers and boat launch on the lake. The focus of the site is not only public access but to attract tournament fishing with our city the destination.”

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, along with bass tournament organizations and local individuals, assisted in the design of the site. The location is just west of Honda Drive and north of the railroad, according to Watson.

The mayor said that with a \$350,000 recreation grant the city received in November, the first phase of a new city park will take place on Stemley Road, across the street from the new Dollar General Store. Watson said a master plan of the site has been prepared. This will be helpful in steering the development, since the total site area is 190 acres, according to state records.

“Due to that size, the park will be constructed in phases,” Watson said, adding that he hopes this will provide recreation activities “closer to more of our residents and more recreational opportunities. The side of Lincoln the park will be placed on currently does not feature a park.”

Watson said beginning around eight years ago, applications were made for state money to improve Magnolia Street between Alabama Highway 77 and U.S. Highway 78. “Finally plans were approved, bids were taken and contracts awarded.”

The contractor has begun stockpiling materials for the project on the old football field site. Watson explains that this project will widen the road, provide a double left turn lane on to U.S. 78 and importantly add a traffic signal at the intersection of Magnolia Street and Alabama 77.

“This will provide a much-needed improvement, not only physically but visually,” Watson said about the project.

He also mentions Lincoln’s continuing progress on upgrading the water meters for city customers.

“Within the next six months, every water customer in the city will have a new water meter,”

he said, “This is not just a device that measures water consumption but a meter that will provide you with your daily water usage and will alert you to possible leaks, thus no big water bill surprises at the end of the month.”

He said that this is all done through a mobile phone app, adding that instructions will be mailed about how to obtain the app for residents’ smartphones later this year.

“We will become the first city in Alabama to become totally cellular for our utility,” he adds about the upgrade program.

In regard to industry, Watson said that in 2019 the Lohr plant on McCaig Road began production of car haulers. Following the sale of the building Lohr occupies, a second spec building was constructed. Watson said that while some work remains, the building is being shown to potential buyers.

Jobs creation was and is the driving factor in attracting industry, but there is a secondary benefit, according to the mayor. He said that new industry to that area of Lincoln creates the opportunity to have McCaig Road upgraded and paved. “While the first part of the paving is set from Lohr to Stemley Road, plans are for a second phase, that being from Lohr to Alabama 77.”

Watson said that portion of paving will include a change in the connection to Highway 77.

“It will move the present connection of McCaig to Highway 77 to

match with the entrance to McDonalds and TA,” he said, adding that such a connection will hopefully allow a traffic signal to be placed there as part of the project.

“We have Coosa Valley Electric and Talladega County Economic Development Authority and our local Industrial Board to thank for this boost to our city,” he said.

On the retail side, a site is presently underway for the new Piggly Wiggly. The store will be about three times larger than the current store, according to Watson.

In addition to the Piggly Wiggly, Watson said other sites are being prepared for future business locations.

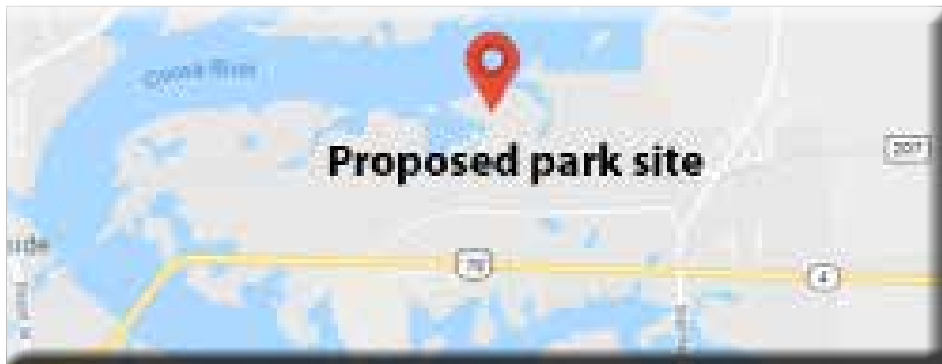
“We have been working with Ace Hardware for a site and incentives for Roses to locate in the closed Fred’s building,” he said.

Watson said that a site has been purchased for a modern car wash facility, with construction expected to begin early in 2020.

In the Old Town area, Watson said Lincoln has a brand new opening, Blue Eye Café. “It is worth a trip to see how this old building has been transformed into a state-of-the-art café.”

On the topic of new restaurants, Watson said the Fish Market on Highway 77 has expanded to a full service restaurant. He also highlights that Lincoln has a new Mexican restaurant in Mangos next to the Piggly Wiggly on Magnolia Street.

The mayor is hopeful



The maps above and below designate the site of the future 38-acre Alabama Bass Park on Logan Martin Lake.



about the expansion of quality internet access in Lincoln

“We have many choices for television now, what we have not had was an internet provider with good speeds,” he said. “That appears to be changing now that Hargray has purchased USA Cable.”

Despite the improved service, Watson said he feels it is also important to expand to unserved areas. To help with this issue he said the city has met with representatives of Hargray to help identify and expand into those areas.

In closing, Watson said that growth and service have been the focus of Lincoln.


“Over the years, the city has expanded the water and sewer to provide a foundation for encouraging development of housing, commercial and industry,” he said. “With success in attracting industry and more residents, the retail sector is beginning to show signs of improving.”

He adds that he feels a good census count will assist in attracting more retail development.

Watson said that the

growth of residential housing in Lincoln has been significant, and that in the last census period 85 percent of the growth of Talladega County was the city.

“While we don’t necessarily expect that to be the result of the census to be taken this year, we do expect that our portion will be significant. We are excited about the activities developing in our city, new growth, park activities, industry and continued service to the area.”









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# Childersburg looks to carry momentum of progress into 2020

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

The City of Childersburg worked on multiple projects and welcomed new economic opportunities during 2019.

“I believe we had a tremendously successful year as a city,” Mayor Ken Wesson said. “I’m proud of everything that we were able to accomplish, and hope we can continue our progress in 2020.”

One of the ongoing projects the mayor said he is most proud of is the recent real estate agreement with the Talladega Economic Development Authority (EDA) regarding the Childersburg Industrial Park.

Last year, the EDA agreed to spend \$350,000 for making improvements on approximately 115 acres of property at the industrial park, including land clearing, road improvements and site testing.

“We are very excited for all the improvements to the park,” Wesson said. “We hope this will help make the park more attractive to potential tenants.”

Current tenants include Cooper Steel Inc., Hawk Plastics Corp. and Blair Block LLC. The site was also recently recertified as an Advantage Site for the next four years, according to Childersburg officials.

The city also received much-needed funds to upgrade its sewer system.

In 2019, Childersburg was awarded \$450,000 to rehabilitate its sewer collection system and replace a sewer lift station in the area near the Limbaugh Community Center.

“This is something our residents have wanted for a long time,” Wesson said.

Last year, Childersburg was one of 58 communities to receive a grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

The competitive grants are awarded annually in several categories, including county, large city, small city and community enhancement.

The funds allow the awarded communities to provide water, improve roads and sewage systems, construct public community buildings and remove blight.

“The sewer system was installed in the late 1930s,” Wesson said. “A larger pipe and new pumping station will also be installed.”

According to the mayor, the project will affect more than 200 residents who live off U.S. Highway 78, in close proximity to the city’s community center.

“We are very thankful to receive the grant so that we can help these folks have a better quality of life,” Wesson said. “It’s something that has had continuous maintenance issues.”

The city’s water board is expected to contribute

\$47,250 matching funds for the project. A timeline for completion has not been set by the city.

Wesson noted there are multiple projects he hopes to accomplish in 2020, including an upgrade to the Limbaugh Community Center.

Last year, the city entered into an agreement with Jay Jenkins to provide professional architectural services for the remodeling and additions.

“The improvements will include ADA compliant upgrades and additions,” Wesson said.

The mayor noted one addition is set to be a multi-purpose room, as a place to host meetings and events. “We also hope to have the lobby refurbished and make upgrades to our parking lot.” A timeline and estimated cost has not yet been announced. “It is something that we as a council and city are very committed to making a reality during our term.”

During the past year, Childersburg welcomed the addition of multiple new businesses including a new salon (The Glam Factory), a bakery, (Mimi’s Sweets & Treats) and more.

“We are very proud of them and their impact on Childersburg,” Wesson said. “Several businesses also relocated here from the Birmingham area, which we were very excited about. We hope to continue our progress with economic growth



Childersburg City Hall is at 101 8th Avenue SW.

Photo by Bob Crisp



Childersburg Industrial Park was the site of several improvements during 2019.

Photo by Bob Crisp

to provide our residents with the best opportunities possible. There is still a lot I and the rest of the council hope to accomplish.”

The Childersburg City Council meets the first

and third Tuesday of each month.

City Hall is at 101 8th Ave SW.

Council members are Brandon Robinson, Ward A; Bill Moody, Ward B; Angie Twymon, Ward

C; T. Glenn Stubblefield, Ward D; and Michael McLain, Ward E.

The municipal website is [www.childersburg.org](http://www.childersburg.org)

Georgia-Pacific



**Georgia-Pacific celebrated the official start of production at its newest lumber facility in Talladega, Alabama. The \$150 million, 300,000 square foot, technologically advanced plant took nine months to complete. The plant currently employs more than 170 full-time employees and will generate an estimated \$6 million in annual payroll.**

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# Superior Machine and Pattern: Four decades of quality



Superior Machine and Pattern was founded in 1980 and relocated from Oxford to Talladega in 1987.

Photo by Bob Crisp

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Talladega industry Superior Machine and Pattern has marked 40 years of making an impact in local communities and beyond, but achieving 40 years in business was observed last month by just another day at work for the company.

“I had not given it much thought that it has been 40 years until it was brought to my attention,” said founder Larry Dalton. “The company started back on January 14, 1980, with just one employee and myself in Anniston.

We outgrew the space by 1985 and moved to Oxford. In 1987, we moved to Talladega, and in 2016 we built a new building. It’s crazy how things just started to take off before we knew it.”

The business is still owned and operated by the Dalton family. Pat Dalton said that in starting the business, her husband saw an opportunity and took it. “He had been working in the field since he was a teen, so he had long ago been about production, machines and welding.”

A quality product continues to be

paramount, Larry said, and it always has been.

“When it comes to the next man or business, I have never worried about the competition. I have always been a strong believer that when we try to do our best, it will turn out well.”

Superior Machine and Pattern provides a wide range of services, including machining and fabrication for aluminum, steel, brass, bar stock and brass castings. It houses computer numerical control equipment, supply machine components and assemblies, welding and other features such

as warehousing and inventory control.

“We do business all over the country, import machinery and a lot of robotic welding. It’s very popular,” said Larry, who has now turned operation of the business over to the next generation, although he remains involved in the company in an advisory standpoint.

“My son, Chris Dalton, is vice president of the company, and he runs everything now. He has been with the company from the very beginning, but once he graduated from college, he was able to take over. It feels

good to see my son and daughter-in-law, Laura, take over the business. They are doing a good job.”

The business is “very family-oriented,” according to Pat, who also remains involved with the company. “We now have about 35 to 40 employees and on their birthdays, Laura, who handles community relations, makes or brings them a cake. Around Christmas, we always do a big lunch and give away gifts to let them know we appreciate them.”

“We have some people that have been here for

20 to 25 years,” Larry said.” The longest-serving person would be my son, but he started out with me.”

Reflecting back on the company’s history while contemplating future expansion, Larry Dalton believes that the best part of what he has created is to know he built it and because of his company certain things can happen and function.

“The trains in Atlanta for the Marta system, the very tracks they run on I helped build. It is things like that that really make me feel good.”

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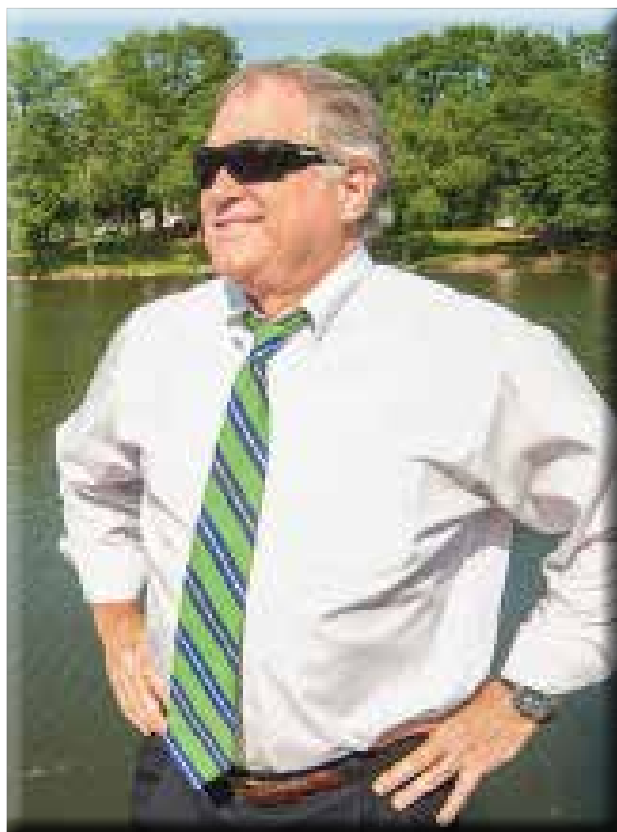
**TALLADEGA COUNTY**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



# New industry set to open this summer in Riverside



**City officials expect 2020 to be a year of development and improvement in Riverside.**  
Photo by Tucker Webb



**Mayor Rusty Jessup sees a bright future for the city.**  
Photo by Buddy Roberts



**The Riverside Beautification Organization works hard to kep the city looking attractive.**  
Photo by Tucker Webb

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

The city of Riverside may be small, but Mayor Rusty Jessup expects big things for the new year.

In 2019, Jessup said the city worked to enhance the city park which is located next to city hall. A big recipient of these improvements was the city’s walking trail, which Jessup said now offers almost a mile’s worth of trails through the city park. A bird and wildlife sanctuary has been added to the park, which Jessup said is slowly becoming home to a wide variety of local animal and plant life.

Jessup said that while those upgrades are great improvements, the city wants to continue to work on further expanding the park.

“We hope future expansion will bring upgrades to the city playground with infrastructure for water and electricity in the park,” he said.

He also gave special mention to Riverside Landing, which features a deep water boat launch so that it can be used for winter recreation and fishing tournaments. “Riverside Landing continues to be a great public service for boat launches and gasoline.” According to the

mayor, there are also plans to further improve the boat launch in 2020, specifically wanting to improve the usability of the site. “Money has already been appropriated to pave the entrance and parking lot in 2020, which will make it much more user friendly.”

A big win for

Riverside in 2019 was recruiting Charity Steel to a location on Vannick Road. The metal alloy service company announced last March it would be bringing 35 jobs to the city. It will be the second company to open a facility on Vannick Road, following Harris Rebar. Vannick Road is

an industrial access road the city built thanks to a \$1.2 million industrial access grant to help attract industry to Riverside.

Jessup said the city is fortunate to have Charity Steel join the community.

“The \$1.2 million industrial access grant came in very handy in recruiting Charity Steel,” he said, “We recruited them with help from the St. Clair County Economic Development Council.”

Jessup also said that

there are more industrial plots along Vannick Road, so he hopes that development along the access road continues to grow. As for Charity Steel, Jessup said the company is likely to be in operation by summer, after construction on the facility wraps up in the spring.



The mayor also hopes to see more development at the interchange between U.S. Highway 78 and Interstate 20.

“The traffic count

continues to increase along our Hwy 78/I-20 corridor,” he said, adding that the traffic will be a draw for more development. Jessup feels the interchange presents a special opportunity for Riverside.

“Our I-20 exchange is one of the very few left on I-20 that has not been developed yet. At least not to its full potential.”

Jessup said that he, for one, would like to see that change.



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# Governor visits local school to celebrate state bicentennial



Gov. Kay Ivey spoke to students and faculty at Springville Elementary, recognizing the St. Clair County school as an Alabama Bicentennial School of Excellence.

Hal Yeager/Governor's Office

## Staff report

Springville Elementary School in St. Clair County enjoyed hosting Gov. Kay Ivey, who visited the school last year to recognize it as one of 21 schools across the state selected as an Alabama Bicentennial School of Excellence.

The school received a \$5,000 Governor's Award grant to support its continued commitment to student-led community engagement.

Launched by the governor in December 2017, the Alabama Bicentennial Schools Initiative encouraged public, private and home-schooled students and teachers to participate in the celebration of Alabama's 200th anniversary of statehood.

Official Alabama Bicentennial Schools were selected and awarded grants to support the implementation of their projects. Springville Elementary's project was the old Springville rock school.

SES counselor Tami Spires said the rock school is a local

landmark, once providing classroom space for elementary and high school students.

Constructed in 1921, the building sat empty and unrepaired. Along with its significance as being a historic educational facility, Spires said the old rock school may be the largest surviving chert rock structure in St. Clair County.

"Throughout its history, Springville has taken great pride in its schools," Spires said. "The town that once boasted its own college cherishes history and education, like the old rock school, crafted from stones that were unearthed by local citizens.

"This sense of community is our sole purpose for renovating the rock school. A restored rock school means that its impact will not be merely reduced to history -- students attending Springville Elementary School will have their own experiences regarding the refurbished school in present time," Spires said

Springville Elementary students, along with the Springville Preservation Society, completely refurbished a classroom in the old school.

"We also renovated the cloak room, foyer and grand staircase," Spires said. "We were also able to replace the exterior doors and sidelights."

Spires said Springville Elementary will use the \$5,000 to continue working on the rock school.

"We want to restore it back to its former glory and utilize it, not only for nostalgic reasons, but for active ones," she said. "Our community suffered a great loss with the shutting down of this school.

"It is time to not only mend that loss, but to make up for it. A renewed rock school means a closer community, one that comes together to look back upon its rich history while also enabling it to continue to change lives right now, and for years to come."

Said SES Assistant Principal Chris Hill, "I feel like we have brought the history of Springville



Superintendent Mike Howard greets Gov. Ivey.

Hal Yeager/Governor's Office

alive for our students."

SES Principal Greg Moore said this has been a wonderful learning experience for the school, students and community.

St. Clair Schools Superintendent Mike Howard said he was

proud of the efforts the administration, staff and students at Springville Elementary put in to win this award.

"Through their hard work, they were selected by Gov. Ivey to be recognized as a

Bicentennial School of Excellence," Howard said. "We have the greatest staff and students in our county, and this recognition is proof of that."



Springville Elementary School students enjoyed the special occasion to celebrate the state bicentennial and local history.

Hal Yeager/Governor's Office



Marie Manning, vice president of the St. Clair County Board of Education, welcomes Gov. Ivey to Springville.

Hal Yeager/Governor's Office



# St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to grow at start of 2020



St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to experience growth in inpatient volume and surgical services.  
Photo by BOB CRISP

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

St. Vincent's St. Clair hospital has enjoyed a year of continued growth.

Administrator Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA said the hospital has continued the growth that originally started in 2018. Specifically, she said, inpatient volume, Emergency Department volume and surgical services volume have all continued to see growth.

The administrator said she has been pleased to notice a trend of patients taking greater stock in going to St. Clair for more medical services.

"Our doctors are telling me that their patients are asking, 'Can't that be done at St. Clair?'" Nichols said. "We are excited that more of our community members are choosing us for their health care needs, where we can provide them with quality care close to home."

The hospital growth in surgical services started in 2018, which saw an increase of 46 percent. Nichols said that growth continued into 2019, with the hospital experiencing a further 12 percent increase over 2018.

The hospital is particularly seeing an increase in the number of general surgeries. There has also been a noticeable increase in cataract surgeries and pain procedures, Nichols said.

Along with this growth, a major project the hospital was proud to take on was updating lab equipment for the facility as well as providing backup equipment.

"The backup equipment has allowed us to reduce the amount of down time during routine maintenance, which provides the doctors lab test results quicker," she said.

Other equipment added this year includes

new ultrasound equipment, which, according to Nichols, is state of the art and provides the latest and greatest technology to the hospital's ultrasound technicians.

The hospital provides a wide variety of specialties and departments for the public. The services it provides include cardiology, dermatology, gastroenterology, general surgery, internal

medicine, neurology, OB/GYN, ophthalmology, orthopedics, otolaryngology, pain management, pathology, pediatrics, podiatry, pulmonology, radiology, sleep medicine, rehab services that include physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy and advanced wound care.

When asked about which departments she felt had performed exceptionally well in

2019, she said that she couldn't say one had done better than another. She instead said that all of St. Clair's departments had performed exceptionally well all year long.

"I would have to brag about all of our departments. They have all done a fantastic job, and I'm happy to say that they all exceeded their patient satisfaction goals for the year."

Nichols also made a point to highlight the hospital's Ascension online care program. This program allows for virtual visits with a physician. The

administrator said she has used the service herself and was very satisfied with it.

"I have personally used this service and found it to be user-friendly, quick and it kept me out of a waiting room full of sick people," she said.

When asked what she was looking forward to in 2020, Nichols said she hopes St. Vincent St. Clair will continue to grow and add even more specialists to the community.

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# Citizens Baptist: 50 years of caring for Talladega



**Citizens Baptist has received Lower Member Cost Share Hospital designation by Blue Cross and Blue Shield, which will allow patients insured by BCBS medical plans to realize the highest benefit levels when receiving care at the Talladega medical center.**

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega is a medical institution that believes strongly in the wellness of its patients, being integral to the community and providing compassionate and high quality employees.

“The heart of Citizens Baptist is our nurses, physicians and staff,” said CEO Frank Thomas. “Together we are ready to care for and treat patients locally where it matters most. We take pride in providing access to quality health care and are committed to delivering care to our community.”

Thomas has been CEO for a short period of time, but he is highly dedicated to his position and role in the hospital. “My role as CEO is to make sure the hospital runs effectively and meets regulation of all local, state, and federal requirements. The constant changes in healthcare keep me on my toes, but I enjoy the challenge of identifying needs and developing solutions.”

This year, the hospital celebrates 50 years of providing high quality care to the Talladega community this year. “In celebration of achieving 50 years, on March 12 we will host a reception to mark this important milestone, and we invite the community to join.”

It is Citizens Baptist Medical Center’s constant dedication, daily and over the years, that makes it a backbone of the community. CBMC believes in supporting the community as a patient care provider and a catalyst for economic development.

The direction the

hospital is headed in is the result of being devoted to the needs of patients and employees. “We boast more than 250 employees and nearly 300 additional indirect jobs. With more than 7,900 inpatient days, over 23,000 emergency room visits and uncompensated care provided in excess of 4.4 million, we are a community built on care,” Thomas said.

It has been said that hard work pays off, and CBMC has received recognition from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama in October 2019. BCBS designated CBMC as a Lower Member Cost Share Hospital. To be classified as such is praise for the hospital, but it also benefits patients by the reduction of copays and deductibles up to 50 percent, said Thomas.

Asked if CBMC offers any new services this year, hementioned the new program Silver Sneakers.

“Silver Sneakers is the nation’s leading community fitness program for older adults. With this collaboration, Citizens Baptist can offer older adults a way to increase their levels of physical activity while motivating them to remain active.”

With its commitment to provide high quality care, having physicians that possess the same values is important. With such a goal to maintain, Thomas said the hospital will continue to seek opportunities to bring more healthcare professionals to the area.

The latest addition to the network is a family medicine physician, Dr. Bridget Gibson at Brookwood Baptist Health Primary Care on North Street in Talladega.

Apart from the

daily operations of the hospital, CBMC makes it a priority to give back with the events and programs it sponsors yearly: Talladega county and city school systems’ football programs, Christmas on the Square and a host of others that influence the lives of many.

“We believe in sponsoring events that engage the very people we serve, as well as events that reiterate that we are more than just the local hospital,” Thomas said.


With a 50-year foundation, CBMC finds it important to maintain the infrastructure and continue to improve the quality of care it provides. Installation of a state-of-the-art telemetry system is underway throughout the hospital, which will provide advanced patient monitoring.

“Citizens Baptist Medical Center has historically ranked among the highest in quality across Tenet Health. We are top tier, and with such results we challenge our team to aim for excellence because our patients deserve nothing less.”

The teamwork and dedication it takes to keep everything running effectively and everyone happy can be challenging, but Thomas believes it’s worth it.


“Our expectations for the success of the hospital for the new year and years to come is to continue to provide high quality care in a compassionate manner. Our quality and patient satisfaction scores are high, and this speaks to the commitment of our staff, but we plan to build on our accomplishments and get even better.”





## Pell City Board of Education

**Coosa Valley Elementary**  
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**Walter M. Kennedy Elementary**  
**Eden Elementary**  
**Williams Intermediate**  
**Duran South Junior High**  
**Duran North Junior High**  
**Pell City High**



***Superintendent - Dr. James Martin***  
***Assistant Superintendent - Dr. Leah Stover***

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**District Two - Mr. Cecil Fomby - Vice Chairman**  
**District Three - Mrs. Laurie Henderson - Board Member**  
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# Talladega County Schools focus on academic programs



After much anticipation, a new K-12 facility comprised of Winterboro High and Sycamore Elementary schools opened in January.

Photo by BOB CRISP



Talladega County students are benefiting from the school system’s focus on science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics.

Photo by BOB CRISP

By CHRIS NORWOOD  
Home staff writer

The Talladega County school system has spent the past year focusing its instructional efforts on five major overlapping areas, according to Deputy Superintendent Vicky Ozment: STEAM, project-based learning, career-tech, reading and math.

“Talladega County Schools’ current focus on science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) illustrates the district’s commitment to ensuring students are college and career ready,” she explained.

“Nine of our schools have received Cognia STEM Certification: Childersburg Middle School, Winterboro High School, Munford High School, Munford Middle School, Lincoln Elementary, Fayetteville High School, Lincoln High School and Charles R. Drew Middle School. The eight remaining schools are currently working toward Cognia STEM Certification. Through this process, our hope is that we are preparing students for careers of tomorrow by exposing them to inquiry-based learning environments that encourage innovative and creative solutions to ‘real world’ issues.”

The STEAM program and the project-based learning program go together hand-in-hand in many ways, she added. “The STEM movement aligns perfectly with the district’s work for the past 11 years with project-based learning, a teaching method where students gain knowledge and skills by investigating, researching and responding to an authentic

‘driving question.’ PBL encompasses five areas (the 5 C’s) that are critical for preparing students for a high-tech workforce: communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and computational thinking.”

What makes project-based learning “such a fluid strategy is that it exists in its purest form in our career technical education courses,” Ozment added. “Today’s economy demands a better-educated workforce than ever before, and the jobs in the new economy require more complex knowledge and skills than the jobs of the past.”

In late fall, Talladega County administrators and teacher leaders toured local industries to discuss what skills are needed to develop a strong workforce for the community.

“Our career and technical programs offer various pathways for students to explore, such as health science, information technologies, AP computer science, forensics law and public safety, agriscience, family and consumer science, fashion, multimedia, finance and accounting, engineering, Project Lead the Way and Microsoft Lead Academies,” Ozment said.

“Students are able to collaborate with local industries through the various pathways. One notable way is the Tiny House Project. Students from Lincoln High, Munford High, and Talladega Central High School have worked diligently to create a tiny house from the floor to the ceiling through hands-on learning with framing, carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, HVAC and roofing. The Tiny House may sound small, but it is

the ultimate marriage of project-based learning with life skills needed for the workforce and beyond.”

The system also emphasizes traditional academic subjects, including reading and math.

“Developing proficient readers is a priority for our district,” Ozment said. “In June, kindergarten and first grade teachers honed their reading methodologies during retooling training. To reinforce fundamental reading strategies, second-through-fifth grade teachers have received retooling throughout the school year. The intensive reading focus will ensure student growth in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, oral language development, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing.

“As a result of the training, instructional rounds in all elementary classrooms are ongoing and provide formative feedback to teachers and leaders ensuring the use of optimal reading strategies for student growth. Summer reading camps are being formed in various school communities to help students in need of extra reading help. Information about summer reading camps will be given to parents in the months to come.”

Ozment added that in December, “the Alabama Department of Education adopted the new math course of study featuring a heavy emphasis on real-world, relevant problems for our students. Talladega County School’s strong partnership with AMSTI will continue to ensure teachers and students receive the support needed for math achievement and growth.”



Students from Talladega County high schools have received hands-on training to build a “tiny house” in career tech classes.

Photo by BOB CRISP

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# The new year brings a new location for Pell City Internal & Family Medicine



PCIFM's new office is at 41 Eminence Way, Suite A, in Pell City.

Photo by BOB CRISP

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Pell City Family and Internal Medicine is starting the year in a new location.

“The practice was established in 2012, and we were located in St. Vincent’s St. Clair hospital since. To have our own practice is something we have always worked on,” said Dr. Rick Jotani, a family physician and one of the practice’s founding partners.

Now located at 411 Eminence Way, Suite A, Pell City Internal and Family Medicine takes pride in providing the availability of a hospital while offering a quality of care catered to the

desires and needs of each patient in a comfortable setting.

Aside from the purpose of branching out, there is hope that the new location will be more convenient for patients, said Jotani. “This new change in location will hopefully be beneficial for patients to receive better care.”

The practice provides an array of healthcare services for patients, such as primary and specialist care, acute and chronic medicine, family wellness care, women’s health, sports medicine, outpatient care, onsite diagnostics, onsite physical therapy from ATI and more to come.

“We provide health care solutions from the stage of pediatric to

geriatric,” Jotani said.

Aesthetics are also offered at the new facility. This service is offered by Jotani, and it focuses on the cosmetic spectrum of health and confidence without the use of plastic surgery. Jotani provides botox, fillers and more, depending on the patient and what is best for them.

There are currently two other physicians on staff: Dr. Barry Collins who practices internal medicine, and Dr. Ilinca Prisacaru, who practices family medicine. Within the next year, plans call for adding more physicians.

According to Jotani, the practice aspires to expand the services it currently offers, as

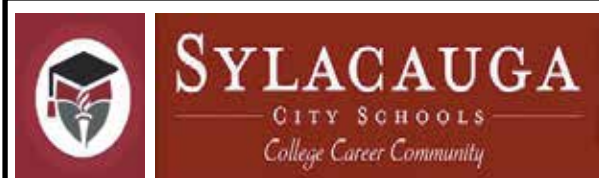
well as to continue to grow with the city and surrounding areas. Office hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and 8 a.m.-noon Fridays. The extended-hour clinic is open from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays.

Jotani, Collins, Prsiacaru and the staff firmly believe that a patient’s needs are important and should be treated as more than just an ailment.

As a unit that cares about the community and their patients, the physicians advise that people be sure to understand the source of the information they receive or find about their medical conditions,

to understand that accurate information is important to one’s health and life. If something is not understood or is not clear, it is always good to ask questions.  
“We are blessed

enough to be busy, but the constant goal is to continue to provide high quality care for our patients which is most important.”



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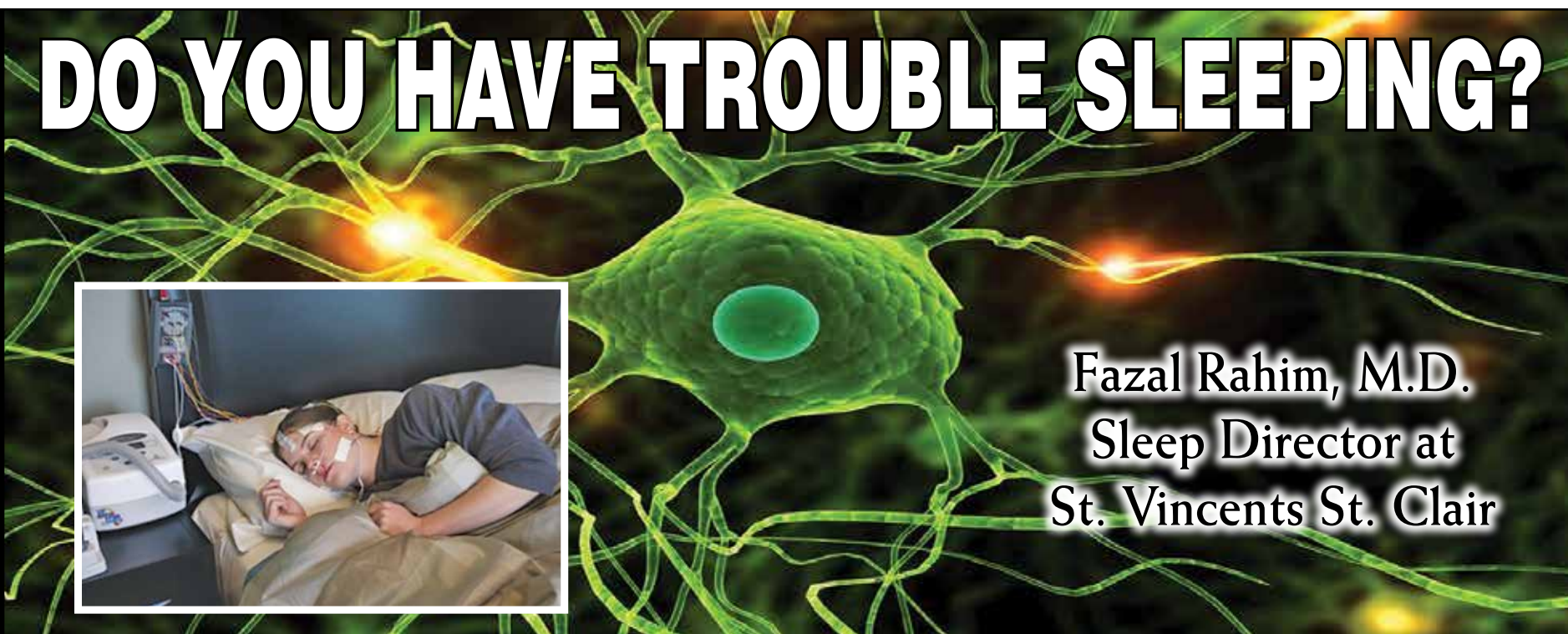


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# As 2020 begins, St. Clair County Schools are dedicated to preparing students for the future



St. Clair County Schools have plans to focus on implementing STEM education initiatives for the benefit of local students.

File photo

By SAM PRICKETT  
Special to The Daily Home

Mike Howard was sworn in as superintendent of the St. Clair County School System in December 2018 — just over a year ago. But he says he’s “very proud” of what he’s

been able to accomplish in that short time, citing advances in the school system’s infrastructure, STEM programs, and attendance policy — as well as the rapid expansion of the school system’s new Virtual Preparatory Academy.

Last year saw the

school system work toward improving many of its facilities, Howard says, and 2020 will see those efforts continue. “We want to make sure that we’re providing the best buildings we possibly can,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of money at all, and we’re going to try

to do a tax referendum yet again to see if we can build some new schools. But with funds that we got from the state department of education, we were able to repair some roofs.” A loan from the state also allowed the SCCSS to update several of its football complexes, which Howard says “were pretty outdated.”

The school system also was able to purchase several new school buses — which, very importantly, include air conditioners, Howard says. “We’re almost at a 100% air conditioner-to-bus ratio,” he says. “That helps with some of our longer routes.”

In October 2019, Howard was part of a delegation of state senators and educators that traveled to South Korea to tour the country’s public schools and universities. He was particularly intrigued by those schools’ approaches to science, technology, engineering and mathematics — commonly abbreviated as STEM — and hopes to implement some of the things he learned in St. Clair County schools.

“One of the things I looked for on that trip abroad was how Korea was implementing their STEM curriculum — and how quickly they do so. My big take-away from that was, they are doing

STEM education as early as pre-K.”

On that front, Howard

says the school system will start using the new, state-mandated computer

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science curriculum and will begin focusing on foregrounding coding classes. “We’re trying to be at the forefront of that and trying to start tackling our coding program now,” Howard says. “What we’re looking at this year is to really push STEM education, pre-K through 12th grade, with each grade level being more and more advanced. By the time students get to their senior year of high school, they’ll be ready to enter the job market or to get into a major university.”

The SCCSS is also “a little over halfway through” with another major tech initiative, Howard says: “putting laptops in the hands of every student in our school system.”

Last year, the St. Clair County Board of Education approved the purchase of 3,000 new laptops — first to be distributed to high-schoolers, then middle-schoolers

“I believe that’s going to pay huge dividends moving forward,” he says. “That technology initiative is going to be crucial moving forward for our school system.”

Robotics classes will be a part of this focus, he says — which will help students find jobs at, for instance, the nearby Honda manufacturing facility in Lincoln.

“We’re going to start placing more of a focus on our college and career readiness, looking at other systems and how they’re

handling dual enrollment or career tech education courses,” Howard says. “We want to continue to enhance our curriculum to where we’re more rigorous, preparing students for the next step of their educational process after us.”

Howard also points to the school system’s new Virtual Preparatory Academy, a nontraditional school that launched in August 2018 and experienced dramatic growth last year. The VPA, which bills itself as “the school where everyone fits in,” is an accredited alternative to other schools, offering a mix of at-home, virtual education and in-person teaching.

“It allows students



“We want to continue preparing students for the next step of their educational process,” said Superintendent Mike Howard.

File photo



Superintendent Howard says he is proud of the school system’s accomplishments since he took office slightly more than a year ago.

File photo

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# Pell City Schools:

## ‘A place where we have a lot of opportunities’

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

Superintendent Dr. James Martin said Pell City Schools has had a year full of achievements and successes from students, teachers and faculty.

Modestly, Martin said he doesn’t believe he has had much to do with it.

“I don’t want to take credit for most of it,” he said.

Much of it happened before he was hired in August of 2019, Martin explained, adding that he thinks the Pell City school system has always been a place with a lot to offer.

“It’s a place where we have a lot of opportunities,” he said. “Those opportunities would not exist without people working hard, and the previous administration.”

Despite feeling he may have little to do with them, Martin is quick to brag on the achievements from each individual school.

Marathon in Birmingham. Williams Intermediate School also had several big events this year, according to Martin. The school received multiple competitive grants, including 16 teachers receiving Pell City Educational Foundation Grants. They also had several students win awards at the 2019 Beta Club Convention. The students won first place in Marketing and Design and Creative Writing. They also received third place in: Performing Arts for fifth grade, Science for sixth grade, Living Literature for fifth grade, Robotics for fifth grade, Painting and Fiber Arts for fourth through sixth grades and Technology for elementary.

Martin’s list showed that Williams also took part in charity work, as the elementary schools did. The Beta Club at Williams raised \$5,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and the SGA donated \$1,200 for Cystic Fibrosis during



Dr. James Martin is the new superintendent of Pell City Schools.

Photo by BOB CRISP

The high school has received several grants as well as many other awards and accomplishments, including being named the Fox 6 Band of the week, JROTC being named Northern Regional Champions at its drill competition, placing eighth in Girls Cross Country state competition,

on system-wide. This includes increasing the emphasis on STEM fields in all grades and increasing the number of teachers who hold a National Board Certification. He also wants the expansion of career tech classes to feature career academies to better prepare students for the future.

make a clear capital improvement plan for all facilities.

Whether it be in 2019 or 2020 Martin said that none of this could happen without the members of the board of education.

“The opportunities exist because we have an outstanding school board that is committed to

excellence,” he said.

He also said that he wants to engage more with the community in the coming year.

“We need to share our story more,” he said. “A lot of the time we do some really good things and we don’t give ourselves enough credit.”



Students at Williams Intermediate School have participated in a number of efforts benefiting good causes in the Pell City community.

Photo by BOB CRISP



Pell City High School has been home to a host of significant accomplishments during the past year, according to Superintendent Martin.

Photo by BOB CRISP

Those accomplishments include things like Coosa Valley Elementary School receiving 92/A on the state report card; Walter M. Kennedy receiving an 87 on the report card; six Eden Elementary teachers receiving National Board Certification; and numerous grants received by the city’s elementary schools.

Martin also mentioned the several charity events that took place at elementary schools in 2019. Coosa Valley students in conjunction with the Junior Beta Club raised \$1,500 for the Pell City Animal Shelter, provided 24 boxes of toiletry items for the YWCA women’s shelter, and provided boxes of stuffing for families in need for Thanksgiving. Eden also took collections for the Veterans Home, and Iola Roberts students took part in the Mercedes

the 2019-20 school year adding to the \$1,000 they raised for Muscular Dystrophy during the 2018-19 school year.

Martin also lists events at Duran South and North Junior High Schools, such as several Beta Club service projects at Duran South, and Duran North’s basketball team going 17-1.

Martin also mentioned several successes with Pell City High School’s Fine Art programs, which held several shows throughout the school year. On top of these performances, 25 theatre students competed in the Walter Trumbauer Theatre Festival, and 17 of them moved on to participate at the state level in that competition. The trio of students — Macy Kreitlein, Zoe Kay and Avereed Adkins — placed third in the overall state competition for their category.

and the softball team placing sixth in the state 6A tournament.

Looking forward to 2020, Martin looks to several initiatives the board will be taking

Martin also said he is focused on consolidation of the system’s middle grades, a goal that was the topic of a special work session in December 2019. He also looks to





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# First class of respiratory therapy students graduates at Jeff State



Jefferson State Community College's first class of respiratory therapy students graduated during 2019.

Submitted photo

## Staff Report

The first graduates of Jefferson State Community College's respiratory therapy program were recognized during 2019.

"We are so excited for these respiratory therapy students and their job opportunities," said David Bobo, Jefferson State's director of community relations. "These graduates have chosen an in-demand career, and many of them have already accepted job offers."

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employment of respiratory therapists is projected to grow 21 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations. Growth in the middle-aged and

elderly population will lead to an increased incidence of such respiratory conditions as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pneumonia. The median annual wage for respiratory therapists was \$60,280 in May 2018.

"The respiratory therapy program is an excellent example of Jefferson State meeting the demands of our community," said Bobo. "Several hospitals came to us and expressed their need for respiratory therapists, and here we are, celebrating both the graduation of these students and the filling of in-demand positions in healthcare."

The associate in applied science degree in respiratory therapy is a 76-semester-credit-hour program that consists

of general education classes, respiratory therapy classes and clinical activities.

Respiratory therapists are responsible for assessments, treatments, diagnostic testing and having critical thinking skills, while multi-tasking, for all patients in a healthcare or homecare settings, especially patients with cardiopulmonary diseases.

At the start of the 2019-20 year, Jefferson State's enrollment was 13,799. It served 8,704 degree-seeking students, 1,482 non-degree-seeking students and 2,204 dual enrollment students from more than 100 Alabama high schools – including those in Talladega and St. Clair counties – for the 2019 fall semester.

Initiatives and accomplishments at Jefferson State's St. Clair County campus in Pell City during the past year include:

- Adding cross country and e-sports to the athletics department.
- Four straight years of 100 percent passing rate on the NCLEX nursing exam.
- Renewal of the Bridges to Baccalaureate research grant from the National Institutes of Health for another five years.
- Adding three new full-time instructors to meet the growing demand for classes.
- Partnering with other organizations including the Easter Seals of Birmingham to start the first and only charitable health clinic in St. Clair County.

- Continuing partnerships with area manufacturing companies.
- Continuing to expand dual enrollment offerings to all St. Clair County and Pell City high schools.
- Participating in the Clean Home Alabama initiative.



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# Staff and students are ‘heart and soul’ of AIDB programs



**Gov. Kay Ivey attended bacculaureate services at AIDB last May.**  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor’s Office

By JIMMY CREED  
Special to The Daily Home

The past year brought great change to the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) with plenty of new places and new faces to show for it.

“I think we will look back and realize that we are living at a time in AIDB history when our institute is growing and thriving at a record-setting pace,” President Dr. John Mascia said. “Our programs are expanding and, most importantly, our student outcomes are improving. It is a good problem to have when it is difficult to pick your favorite accomplishment, and that is certainly the case for me at this time.”

AIDB served more than 26,000 clients with disabilities statewide in 2019, and Mascia says its

“enrollment trend remains positive.” It also remains the third largest employer in Talladega County with 1,243 employees, 991 of which work on a campus inside the city limits.

## PAYING RESPECTS TO FARMERS

Perhaps the most tangible example of AIDB’s continuing progress was the Joe Tom Armbruster facility, located behind the Helen Keller School on West McMillan Street. The facility, complete with a beautiful barn and lots of classroom space and room for agriscience projects, will be the home to multiple gardens, orchards, pastures, ponds, livestock chickens and more.

Called “a treasured investment” at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open it last September, the facility was the lifelong

dream of the late Joe Tom Armbruster, an avid local farmer and AIDB patron. An anonymous \$1 million donation in his honor made the facility possible.

“The agricultural industry in Alabama generates a yearly economic impact of \$70.4 billion and produces 580,295 jobs in the state,” Masica said. “We take great pride in the diversity of our people and in the diversity of our programs. Those with sensory loss need hands-on training, and agriscience allows our students to experience something new and challenging.”

## A TRUE ROLE MODEL

The Alabama School for the Deaf welcomed the first deaf principal in its 162-year history with the arrival of 42-year-old Paul Saunders for the 2019-20 school year.

A Pittsburgh native, Saunders succeeded Paul Millard, who served in many capacities at ASD over several decades, including the last 10 as ASD principal.

“As a deaf person, I am excited to be part of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind family and what it stands for -- a model of excellence in providing what is best for our students here at ASD,” he said.

## MORE NEW FACES

The E.H. Gentry (EHG) Facility also welcomed a new leader as AIDB veteran Jessica Edmiston became its director. Edmiston has previously served as director of the AIDB Birmingham Regional Center and as assistant director of development.

Also, Angela Harris Haynes is the new human resources director, and Jacque Cordle became AIDB’s new advancement officer for Marketing and Community Relations. Cordle succeeded Lynne Hanner who retired June 31 after 38 years of service to AIDB and the Talladega community.

## PARTNERSHIPS ALL AROUND

Through a subscription purchased by EHG, the city of Talladega is now the nation’s first community to be completely covered by Aira (pronounced “Eye Ra”) services for people who blind and visually impaired. Aira uses the internet to connect users to a trained professional

agent who provides real-time helpful information based on images provided through the user’s mobile phone or glasses.

Also, EHG has partnered with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to develop the nation’s



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**AIDB continues to strive for improved outcomes for its students.**  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office



**A total of nine students graduated from the Alabama School for the Blind during 2019.**  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office

first program for individuals who are on the autism spectrum and also have hearing loss.

**BREAKING GROUND WITH GALLAUDET**

AIDB and Gallaudet University, the worldwide leader in deaf education, announced a partnership in early childhood deaf education that will address a lack of focus on accessible language.

The new program, which will be housed on AIDB's campus, will serve early interventionists and educators who are responsible for exposing deaf children to language. According to Gallaudet, educators from nine states across the Southeast will benefit from AIDB's partnership with the university's renowned

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center.

The partnership, "establishes a first-of-its kind network of resources and tools for professionals and parents of deaf and hard of hearing children from birth through age 3."

**PLENTY OF BUSINESS AT AIB**

The Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB) was the proud recipient of two new military contracts through the Defense Logistics Agency which will total more than \$1.2 million in total sales. The contracts are for more than 88,000 items in addition to AIB's exciting contracts with the U.S. military.

Also, AIB's State Use Law sales have risen by more than 9 percent for a total of more than \$1.7

million.

**ACADEMICS ABOUND**

AIDB's educational programs continue to make unprecedented advancements in the arena of powering limitless futures for its students and educating the leaders of tomorrow.

The Class of 2020 at the Alabama School for the Blind will experience almost unprecedented success with all seven of its seniors planning to pursue post-graduation educational plans. Six of the seven have been accepted into two- or four- year colleges and the seventh will enroll in the college preparatory program at EHG.

The ASD Middle School Math and Robotics teams have proven very successful locally and will soon travel



**The governor accepts a presentation from a member of ASD's class of 2019.**  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office



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Alabama School for the Deaf salutatorian Zachery Beaver with Gov. Ivey  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office



Graduates and their family members were all smiles during AIDB's 2019 baccalaureate service.  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office



"Our programs are expanding, and our student outcomes are improving," AIDB president Dr. John Mascia said.  
Sydney A. Foster/Governor's Office

to major tournaments in New York and Texas. Also, VEX Robotics will partner with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) Regional STEM Center at AIDB to host the Second Annual NTID Regional Stem Center (NRSC) Vex Robotics Tournament at ASD, which will bring more than 100 participants to Talladega Feb. 27-March 1.

**IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WAY**

Two major capital improvement projects will go out for bid this month, including the razing of Rogers Hall on the Helen Keller School campus.

It will be replaced by a new state-of-the-art classroom space containing an art instruction curriculum room and media room as well as office and administrative space totaling almost 10,000 square feet under roof.

Graves Hall on the ASD campus will undergo a complete renovation that will encompass 31,000 square feet under roof. The cost for the renovation of the dormitory and classroom areas, which will

include new energy efficient windows, new roofing and insulation, a high efficiency heating and air system, new lighting, bathrooms and shower rooms, a complete fire protection system and all new furnishings, is estimated at \$2.5 million.

"We want to say a special 'thank you' to Gov. Kay Ivey and her administration, the entire state legislature and

Congressman Richard Shelby," Mascia said. "We are truly appreciative of, and thankful, for the tremendous support we receive from all of them.

"We also very thankful for our staff and students. They are the heart and soul of our program, and they are our success story. We are deaf, blind and limitless in every sense of the word."

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# Current school year is already a successful time in Sylacauga



Sylacauga High School is the recipient of a 2019 Certificate of Building a Culture for School Safety, presented by the attorney general.

Photo by BOB CRISP

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

The 2019-20 academic year has been a successful one for Sylacauga City Schools, and things are on the right track for improvement, according to Superintendent Dr. Jon Segars.

Prior to being named superintendent in 2018, Segars was the system’s director of career and technical education and assistant principal at Sylacauga High School.

In looking back, he said the system has been successful in several areas including academics, career tech, athletics, overall safety and more. “We are on the right path.”

In 2019, Sylacauga City Schools earned an 87/B on its report card released by the Alabama State Department of Education. The five-point gain from 2018 is attributed to the academic growth at all schools and the graduation rate.

Segars said, “We are excited about the jump in report card scores for

education courses in grades 3 - 12, and students in the middle and high school grades have nearly 50 different course offerings from which to choose. In partnership with several colleges, students in grades 10 - 12 also are afforded dual enrollment opportunities in career pathways and in core academic courses.

“Being able to offer college courses on campus has been a game-changer for us,” Segars said.

In addition to improving its state report card score, the system also saw its share of county and state wide accomplishments.

Last month, Josh Holcomb, an eighth-grader at Nichols-Lawson Middle School, was named the 2020 Talladega County Spelling Bee champion.

Spellers competed for 26 rounds. The Talladega County, Talladega City and Sylacauga City school systems were represented. Holcomb correctly spelled 27 words during the bee. The

science teacher, Nichols-Lawson Middle; and Lisa McGrady, health teacher at Sylacauga High; were named this year’s recipients.

“These are the best of the best,” Segars said.

In addition to academic achievements, the system excelled in athletics, according to the superintendent. “Nine of our teams made the postseason,” he said, adding that he is proud of the student athletes, coaches and staff for their hard work and dedication.

Segars added the system’s fine arts programs continue to excel.

“We are fortunate to have an amazing band, choir and overall an excellent fine art program,” he said. “This summer, the show choir will attend a camp in Decatur, Illinois. This will be their first time, and we are excited for this opportunity for them.”

The superintendent also takes pride in the system’s approach to safety and security.

Pinecrest Elementary



Members of Sylacauga High School's class of 2019 celebrate graduation with a selfie.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

In March of 2019, Nichols-Lawson Middle School received the Safe Schools Initiative Award of Excellence for the second year in a row.

“We have School Resource Officers in all of our schools,” Segars said. “Their presence has really made a difference. They have become more than just officers to our students, they are mentors to them as well.”

The superintendent also takes pride in the system’s relationship with the Sylacauga community.

Vaden Toyota of Sylacauga presented a check for \$1,225 to the Sylacauga City Schools Foundation on Wednesday. The dealership has been donating \$25 per car sold, either new or used, to the Foundation since Aug. 1, 2018. The contributions have been directed solely to the advancement of the system’s Math Initiative, impacting all students in Sylacauga City Schools. To date, the dealership has donated more than \$25,000 to the Foundation and the Math Initiative.

The Sylacauga City Schools Foundation presented its 57th chair, honoring the Sylacauga High School Class of 1962. The foundation was established in 1988 by then-Superintendent Dr. Joe Morton and is dedicated to the support of Sylacauga schools in their quest for excellence.

Each year, the Foundation awards thousands of dollars in classroom grants to support learning and purchase new technology learning tools such as iPads and Google Chromebooks.

Since its inception, the Foundation has raised more than \$1.2 million in donations and awarded more than 1,000 grants, affecting a total of 355,680 students.

Sylacauga Board of Education members are Dr. Rekha Chadalawada, Janean Crawford, Melissa Garris, Dr. Steven Marlowe and Amy Price.



Sylacauga’s teachers of the year are, from left, Lisa McGrady, Angela Formby and Kate Barton, with Dr. Jennifer Rosato, executive director of teaching and learning. Not shown is Ashley Spencer.

Submitted photo

our schools and the five point increase to an 87 overall for the district. While a B is good, our goal is an A, and the key is constant support of our main effort: the classroom teacher. I am encouraged by the move and congratulate all our employees and this great community for taking this system to a new level of excellence.”

More than 96 percent of students across the district surpassed the standards for growth on standardized tests, and the graduation rate exceeded 95 percent.

Other categories evaluated on the report card were academic achievement measured by test scores, college and career readiness, and chronic absenteeism..

The district provides career and technical

student was asked to spell “solitaire” correctly to be named champion. The Nichols-Lawson eighth-grader will advance to the Alabama Spelling Bee on March 21 at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Josh’s sister, Caitlyn, a fifth-grader attending Pinecrest Elementary, finished second.

“They are such a dynamic duo, and we are really proud of them both for their hard work,” Segars said.

The Sylacauga Board of Education also recognized its Teachers of the Year, during its last month.

Angela Formby, library media specialist at Indian Valley Elementary; Kate Barton, instructional support teacher, Pinecrest Elementary; Ashley Spencer, sixth-grade

and Sylacauga High are recipients of the Attorney General’s 2019 Certificate of Building a Culture for School Safety.

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# Talladega College seeks to surpass 2019’s goals and accomplishments



Talladega College’s new 103-suite resident hall opened in early 2019.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

By VALLEAN JACKON  
Special to The Daily Home

Talladega College has started 2020 continuing its trend of campus renovations, academic expansion, increased student enrollment and the goal to continuously evolve as an institution to mold future generations.

At the end of January, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for two new buildings on the

campus: the Dr. William R. Harvey Museum of Art and a 47,000-square-foot student center. Both facilities have received high recognition for their purposes of preserving history and providing new facilities for students and staff.

The Dr. William R. Harvey Museum of Art houses six revised Hale Woodruff murals, including his famous Amistad Murals. The

student center has a 2000-seat arena, banquet hall, restaurant, convocation center, computer lab, health care clinic, VIP suite, concession stand, coffee lounge and convenience store.

Dr. Billy Hawkins, Talladega College’s president since 2008, believes that the success of the college comes from making sure the students are heard.

He takes great pride in making sure the institution continues to expand and evolve.

Hawkins describes himself as a perfectionist because he believes perfection brings success. His constant goal year after year is to expand into new majors, curriculums and increase enrollment. To stay true to his beliefs, Hawkins is recruiting students to increase

enrollment and have monthly meetings with the student government to hear students out on what they believe is going right, what needs to be corrected, and what can be done to further improve.

Other significant achievements, accomplishments and aspirations at Talladega College during this past year include the following:

At the start of 2019, a new 103-suite residence hall opened. It can accommodate up to 201 students. In addition, Hawkins was ranked first among the top 10 dominant HBCU leaders of 2020 by HBCU campaign fund.

Last October, recording artist and actor Max Schneider included Talladega College’s marching band in a music video. Within the

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The completion of the college's new student residence building was a much-anticipated accomplishment at the campus during the past year. Steady increases in enrollment created the need for more dormitory space.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

same month, presidents of HBCUs met at the college to see the new progress of the campus, where they also enjoyed a performance by the band.

In November, Talladega College, along with other colleges and universities in the state, participated in free college application week.

Academically, the

college has successfully earned accreditation for another 10 years and is now able to offer for the first time an accredited online master of science degree in computer information systems graduate program.

In the aspect of enrollment, the college had another spike for the 2019-2020 year. The college now

has approximately 1,230 students, with the goal to continue to increase. Princeton Review lists Talladega College as one of the best colleges in the Southeast, and it was voted one of the best valued colleges in America by Kiplinger, said Hawkins.

Away from the campus, but still much related to education, in December,

23 students visited Tokyo, Japan to experience and learn the culture of the country. Also in the same month, Hawkins served as the grand marshal for the Talladega Christmas parade.

According to Hawkins, the amount of success the college has had this past year is too much to name, but it was definitely a busy

year.

For the remainder of 2020, the goal is to surpass last year's successes and continue to help students prosper and go on to graduate school, said Hawkins.

With a background of education, compassion and leadership, Hawkins has garnered a considerable number of

awards and recognition for his commitment and dedication but remains humble and determined to excel further. Though he has his own success, his main focus is the institution, its success in producing future leaders and making sure students graduate proud to call Talladega their college.



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# CVMC: 75 years of providing health care to east-central Alabama



Coosa Valley Medical Center celebrates a significant anniversary in 2020.

File photo

By DENISE SINCLAIR  
Special to The Daily Home

Coosa Valley Medical Center (CVMC) celebrates 75 years of providing health care to Sylacauga and neighboring communities in 2020.

The medical center will continue to focus on the needs of the community and provide those health care needs, said Glenn Sisk, CVMC’s president and CEO. “It is a privilege to be here in Sylacauga for 75 years.”

Sisk said the hospital faces challenges now and in the future, as all health care providers do. “But CVMC’s future is bright,” he said

Vanessa Green, chief business development officer, said the hospital is working on a number of events which will be celebrated the entire year. “It will be a celebration of how this hospital takes care of patients, from 1945 when the hospital opened until 2020.”

She said the year-long celebration will look back at how the hospital was the only such facility, other than military hospitals, to open during World War II.

One major success the hospital will see this year in helping the facility financially is the change in Medicare and Medicaid payments from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMM),

Starting in the fiscal 2020 year, the medical center will be reimbursed more on every dollar from CMM.

That reimbursement goes from 68 cents on a dollar to 81 cents, Sisk said. This change will bring rural hospitals closer to the level at which urban hospitals are reimbursed.

Sisk credits Dr. Seema Verma, administrator of CMM, and the Trump administration made these changes possible.

“Our representatives and senators in Washington were also helpful. This change will provide us with the ability to reinvest in CVMC, in our facilities, equipment and team members. Fifty to fifty-one percent of our patients are Medicare or Medicaid recipients,” he said.

In looking back at 2019, Sisk and Green both agreed there are

many positives, from recruitment of new physicians to new services.

Three new physicians have located in Sylacauga, including the area’s first female OB/GYN, Dr. Emily McInnis, who returns to her hometown to join Dr. Jonathan Rehber’s practice. Her mother, Tracey Allen works in the pharmacy department at the medical center.

Dr. Jonathan Overcash comes to the medical center in general surgery with Dr. Juan Campos and Dr. Mathew Dimon’s surgical practice.

Joining Craddock Clinic in internal medicine is Dr. Nazia Mohamed.

Dr. Hilary Ragsdale will become part of the medical staff at CVMC in 2021. She is completing her residency at UAB. Her father is a long-time physician in Birmingham. She will be a hospital internist at the medical center, providing both inpatient and outpatient care working with the patient’s primary physician.

Opening at CVMC during the past year were a wound care center and an in-hospital apothecary.

The wound care center, directed by Dr. Regina Phillips and nurse practitioner Quincy Leach, is in the Medical Arts Building.

Sisk said CVMC gives patients a local option when they need wound care. “We have a large percentage of diabetics in our area that have to travel elsewhere for this care. Now they can get that care here at home,” he said.

The Coosa Valley Apothecary opened in January of this year, but was in the planning stages in 2019. The pharmacy provides ‘meds to beds’ with bedside prescription delivery as patients leave the hospital to go home.

The pharmacy is also open to the general public Mondays through Fridays. It is located in CVMC’s main lobby.

The hospital’s Senior Behavioral Unit was granted a state certificate of need to increase its occupancy from 15 beds to 20. Because of its continuous 85 percent occupancy rate, the unit received the bed change.

Green said Dr. Mathew Dimon, who

specializes in general surgery has trained to provide bariatric surgery in Sylacauga. “The journey to having this program started six months ago. The program kicks off in approximately 30 days, and the surgery can be provided here,” she said.

“We are working on details to bring pain management care back to CVMC in 60 days or so,” the CEO said. Also this year, the hospital is recruiting a urologist to replace the retiring Dr. Mamoun Pacha. Sisk said Pacha has been serving Sylacauga as a urologist for over 30 years.

“He is slowing his practice down in preparation for retirement. It will be a difficult search to replace him. There are only so many doctors in this specialty. We want to make sure we get a well-trained individual that is a fit for our community,” said Sisk.

The hospital will continue to work with the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine in Dothan to have third- and fourth-year medical students train at CVMC. “The college trains primary care physicians to serve in small communities. We have two students now rotating with various physicians here,” he said.

The CEO said CVMC wants to be the health care destination for the area.

Other plans for 2020 include building a stronger hospital foundation that will help CVMC grow even more, allowing for financial resources to be folded back into the medical center.

Green said growth is coming to Childersburg

with the expansion of Dr. Anthony Nix’s practice this year. A nurse practitioner is joining him.

Another program, the CVMC Auxiliary, gives back to the hospital annually to the tune of \$50,000. “This volunteer program is very meaningful to us. These volunteers are usually the first people one sees when coming into the hospital lobby. They get you to where you need to be,” Green said.

She encourages anyone interested to call the hospital about volunteering for the auxiliary.

Sisk stressed the importance of the awards the hospital has received recently. These include: BCBS Distinction Center for Maternity Care; Home Health 5-Star Rating/Recognized as a Top Elite Homecare; Hospice Honors Awards Recipient (Patient Satisfaction Award); Gold Plus Stroke Award/ Emergency Department (2013-2019); and Beacon Award for Excellence/ ICU.

The hospital employs more than 550 team members. It generates a total labor income of \$44,482,000. Its total economic impact is \$129,750,000, Sisk said, based on the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The hospital has at least 20 areas of medical specialization including cardiology; ear, nose and throat; emergency medicine; family practice; gastroenterology; internal medicine; OB/GYN; oncology; ophthalmology; orthopedics; pediatrics; psychiatry; pulmonary care; radiology; and urology.

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## A black and white photograph of a single-story brick building with a gabled roof. The building features a central entrance with a small portico supported by columns. Above the entrance, the text "TALLADEGA CITY" is visible, followed by "BOARD OF EDUCATION", "PECKINS-LATHROP", and "ADMINISTRATION BUILDING". The building has several windows with dark shutters. The foreground is a grassy area, and there are trees in the background.



File photo



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# National grant to fund local school’s education-health initiative



Sycamore Elementary School, now in its new building, is home to a 2019 Grant in Place Fellow of the Rural Schools Collaborative.

Staff report

A local educator has received one of eight national grants, which will fund an initiative to connect education and mental health.

In December, Sycamore Elementary School counselor Lane Sanders was named a Grant in Place Fellow by the Rural Schools Collaborative. She is one of eight educators from across the country to receive the designation.

Fellows receive \$2,000 grants to support their place-based project, a professional development presentation and an honorarium. Sanders said her presentation, “The Portrait of Mental



Lane Sanders

Health,” explores the connection between mental health and the arts.

“Research shows that exposure to the arts

helps those who are faced with mental health problems,” Sanders said. “It allows them to express themselves freely and even has been shown to help decrease disciplinary issues.”

Beginning this year, the funds will be used to establish a partnership between Sycamore students and staff at Talladega College to offer arts education to the entire student body at the Talladega County school.

“Our school doesn’t currently have any type of art or music program,” Sanders said shortly after receiving the grant. “We are excited to be able to give them this opportunity.”

The counselor added the art classes

will involve all types of mediums and will be scheduled twice a month.

“Our hope as a school is that, with the implementation of an arts curriculum, there will be a positive impact in the lives of the students and foster a warm, compassionate and enjoyable school culture,” Sanders said.

She has served as school counselor at Sycamore Elementary for five years.

Prior to becoming a counselor, she taught math for 11 years at Sylacauga High School.

The Rural Schools Collaborative was launched in 2015 with the goal of building sustainable rural communities through a keen focus on place, teachers and philanthropy. The nonprofit organization’s national headquarters are in Monmouth, Illinois, courtesy of Monmouth College and the Galesburg Community Foundation.

Alabama is home to one of its eight regional hubs, at the University of West Alabama. The hubs comprise and help define a flexible and cost-effective infrastructure for the organization, and the relationship between the hubs and RSC are mutually beneficial, according to RSC officers. Other hubs are in California, the

Northern Rockies, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri and New England.

Sycamore Elementary

School is the only school in Alabama to receive one of the 2019-20 Grants in Place.

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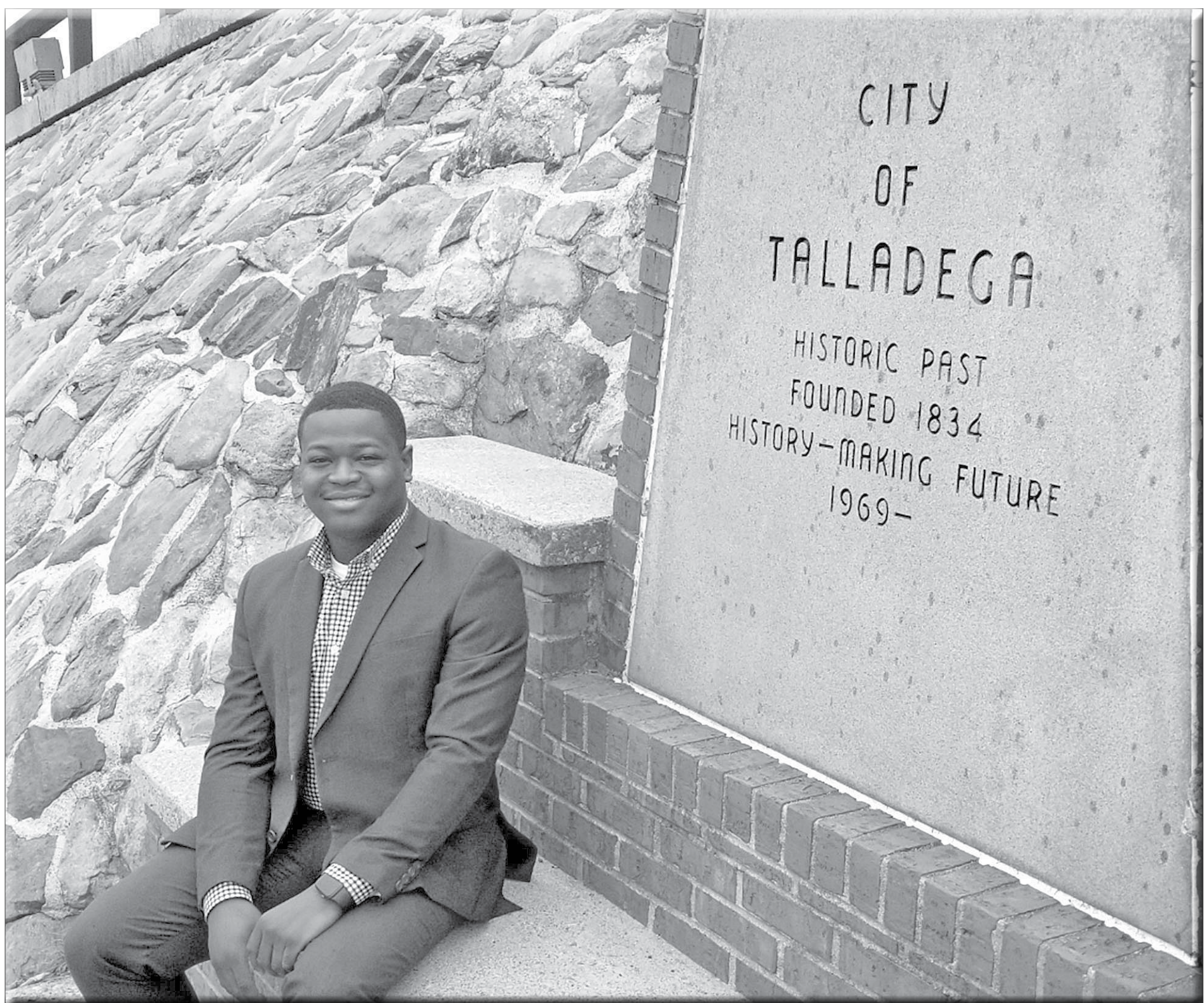


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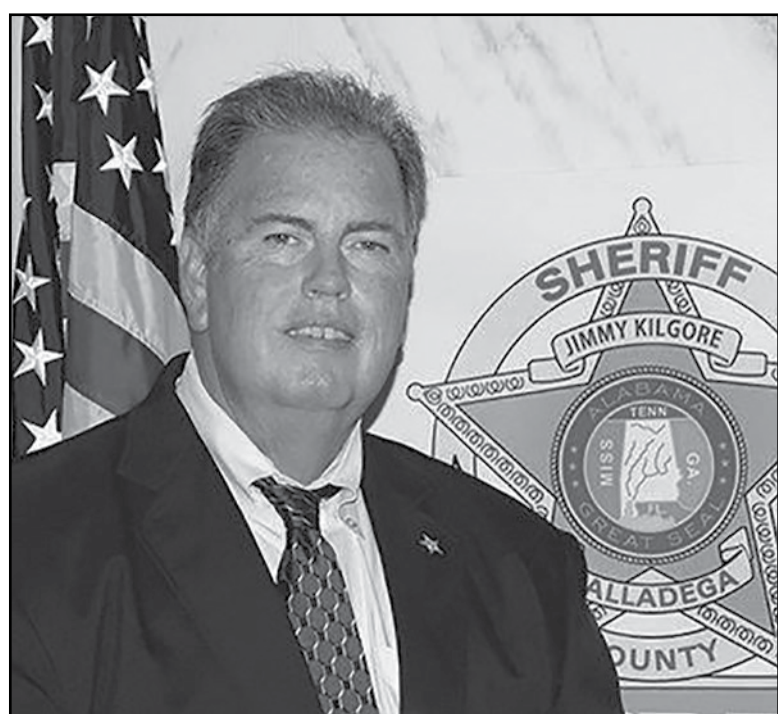


# Talladega's new mayor: 'We have work to do'



The historical significance of Timothy Ragland's election as mayor of Talladega isn't lost on the young official, who is seeking to promote unity and progress in the city he grew up in. "If we can continue to come together, we can achieve anything," he said.

Photo by KELLI TIPTON



## SHERIFF JIMMY KILGORE SAYS: **Do Not Be A VICTIM OF SCAMMERS!**

**TALLADEGA COUNTY SHERIFF JIMMY KILGORE** would like to remind all residents of Talladega County that it is not policy to call or contact citizens to tell them there is a warrant for their arrest. More importantly, deputies will not ask for money, or demand that a resident send money to take care of any situation. A simple phone call to one of the offices can verify if there is a warrant for their arrest.

In recent months, there has been a rash of fraudulent telephone-oriented schemes. The most recent scam is that the caller is from the court system and the victim did not appear for jury duty. The caller then instructs the victim to drive immediately and purchase a prepaid debit/credit card for an amount that differs each time, and read the card information off to them over the telephone. Once the caller has that information, and transfers the money from the card, it is almost impossible to trace, much less retrieve the funds. The people perpetrating these crimes are primarily out-of-state and outside the United States. When Investigators start tracing phone calls, those numbers are no longer in service, or the callback goes into a constant loop. It is almost impossible to apprehend or prosecute these predators.

The callers also use an app to make the number they are calling from appear to be one of the Sheriff's Office telephone numbers. They then use a common name such as Sgt. Smith or Deputy Jones to identify themselves and they have even stated they are with agencies, that although sometimes are fictitious, sound intimidating.

Sheriff Kilgore also warns citizens not to give out social security numbers or bank account numbers over the telephone. As tax season is here, remember the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) typically contacts taxpayers via good old-fashioned mail through the United States Postal Service. "Your bank will know your account numbers. All you should ever have to relay to the caller is some security information, such as a mother's maiden name, or the answer to some other pre-selected security question," advises Sheriff Kilgore.

Often the targeted victims are elderly or people who have never had any interaction with law enforcement. Citizens who have received similar calls or been victimized by scammers are encouraged to contact the **Sheriff's Office at 256-761-2141 or 256-245-5121.**





By KELLI TIPTON  
Special to The Daily Home

When Talladega Mayor Timothy Ragland was sworn into office last November, he made history as the city’s first African-American mayor and, at 29 years old, the youngest mayor to be elected in more than a century.

But while he was “prepared and looking forward” to serving as the city’s mayor, the intensive national media coverage that followed his victory at the polls took him by surprise. He was featured as “breaking news” on network television and affiliate stations.

“In my very first interview, I was shaking. I don’t know if the interviewer could tell it, but, yeah, it was very nerve-wracking. I had to make sure I said the right thing. And then when I looked at the interview later, I thought I looked stupid,” Ragland said with a laugh.

Headlines in magazines published from Texas to New York and countless online news sites mentioned his

skin color before his age, and he wasn’t offended by that.

“I’m always aware that I’m a black man. I’m constantly reminded in good ways and, at other times, not so good ways. I wasn’t offended by the headlines because I think about my grandparents and my great-grandparents who told me they never thought they would in their lifetime see the day that a black person would be the mayor of Talladega, let alone, their grandson.”

And after 100 days in office, he is more relaxed in front of the media, but he is most comfortable behind the desk in his office at city hall, answering calls from officials and residents of the town he was born, raised and educated in.

“I grew up in the Knoxville community, right off the street where I still live, and spent many days riding my bike around the neighborhood and playing outside with my friends and cousins. We played ball, and some video games, but we played outside a lot.

“I remember Mrs. Golden and Mrs. Green. We called them ‘the candy ladies.’ They had fruity candies and icees, which was basically frozen Kool-Aid in a little cup, for the kids to stay cool in the summertime while playing outside,” he said.

“I attended Houston Elementary School, and I remember my second grade teacher, Debbie Houston. She was the one who sparked my interest in politics. She said to me, ‘You could be president one day,’ and I thought I could.

“And that’s not necessarily something that I want to do now, but it made me think about politics, and I started reading about presidents and their lives and the routes that they took to get to the presidency, and I learned that presidents or people in politics can help people out a lot. So that kind of started me on that path,” he said.

And there were other Talladega City educators who encouraged him in high school.

“Mr. Ryan Dawson,

who’s still at the high school, told me after I gave a speech in class, ‘You’re going to be a lawyer or a politician.’

“And my English teacher, Mr. Monte Abner, who now has a doctorate and is principal at McAdory Middle School, was a great influence on me and a lot of other kids, whether they were in his class or not. There were a lot of talks about college and life, and he coordinated after-school programs and summer camps. He took us on trips and made us memorize poetry that I can still recite to this day,” he said with a smile.

Ragland joined the Army in his junior year of high school to pay for his college education. He completed basic training during his senior year of high school and then advanced military training, before working in Lincoln for Honda Manufacturing suppliers.

He enrolled in Marion Military Institute in 2012 and graduated with an associate’s degree. He transferred to Auburn University at Montgomery where he

earned a bachelor of science degree in political science and government.

He is a third year law student at Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, but he is taking a break to concentrate on his mayoral duties.

Ragland’s political experience includes working with the Alabama Democratic Party in various capacities and on several Democratic campaigns, including the gubernatorial campaign for Walt Maddox, who currently serves as mayor of Tuscaloosa, and Hilary Clinton’s presidential campaign. He also worked to help elect Democratic Sen. Doug Jones in 2017.

Ragland said he first considered staging his own campaign for public office in 2015.

“And then I thought, nobody’s gonna vote for me because I’m 25 years old. But while I was in those positions, I learned how to run a campaign, because in each one, I had more responsibility than the last. It kind of reassured me that I

could do this,” he said.

Ragland’s first 100 days in office have been filled with speaking engagements, phone calls from constituents, meetings with city council members and leaders in business, industry and education.

He feels his age is now an advantage to him. “I’m not super young, but I’m not considered old either, so I can see both sides of issues. One day I will be in my 50s, 60s and 70s, and I think about how to move the city in a direction that will enable it to offer services to those age groups.

“But I’m also young enough to know what people my age and younger relate to and the things that they need to stay in the city, to work and live and enjoy it,” he said. “And we have work to do. There’s no doubt about that, but I think if we can continue to come together, we can achieve anything.”

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# Kicker's first field goal at Pell City is 'one for the books'



Harper Bell, the Pell City High School football team's first female place kicker, practices prior to the start of the 2019 football season. She's currently enjoying her senior season on the varsity soccer team.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Harper Bell is the first female kicker for Pell City High School's football

team, and the remarkable achievement all began with a goal to be more outgoing.

"I said to myself that for my senior year,

I wanted to be more outgoing and take risks, and anything I set my mind to I try to achieve it," she said.

Harper is definitely

an achiever. She has managed to maintain her grades while also earning PCHS' most valuable player award in soccer and making local football

history. With graduation approaching in May, she is ranked 9th in a class of 267 seniors, with a 4.35 grade point average.

Her accomplishments

in soccer led to her joining the Panthers football team.

"Coaches had been trying to get me to try out for football since my sophomore year because

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**Harper Bell's first field goal of the 2019 football season put her in the history books at Pell City High School.**

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

of watching me play soccer, but it is something I never took seriously," Harper said. "I took it more as a joke and brushed it off."

Her parents, Katrina and Randy Bell, were just as flattered as Harper, but they initially had the same view their daughter did. Eventually, Harper decided to pursue the opportunity, but it was not until the day her dad was taking her to football tryouts that it all became a reality.

"I think my dad was happier than I was for me to try out because watching football together is something that we do," she said. But, as she felt that making the football team might just involve wearing a uniform and watching the other players, her expectations weren't high.

"When it came to my first game, I honestly thought I was just going to sit on the bench, but I was prepared either way. The minute Coach (Robert) Lee pointed to put me in to kick a field goal, I had a lot of emotions going on and just kept telling myself not to miss. Everything in between and some after is a blur."

The kick was successful, and the crowd went crazy. "I heard the crowd and for the first time saw the support I had behind me," said Harper. Her efforts on the field

have inspired many in the school and community. "I am genuinely excited and proud of Harper, but that day she made that field goal, it was a moment for the books," said Ganae Gaines, PCHS assistant principal and Harper's former AP biology teacher.

Harper remains humble and still seems in awe of her accomplishment and being seen as a role model. "I never thought I would have an impact on other generations or give some people the courage to try something new."

She describes herself as hardworking and driven, believing that if she sets her mind to something it can be achieved. She only wishes she had tried out for football sooner. "It is something I would definitely be interested in doing again if I had the chance."

Being part of the football team, traditionally a male-oriented environment, was a "great experience," she said. "One would think there might be a tad of tension with a female joining the team, but it was completely

the opposite. Though I was the only female on the team of sixty males, they all supported me and welcomed me as part of the team. I had doubts at first of coming in as the only girl and disturbing bonds that have been formed for years, but they were all accepting. They helped me get through the season and I thank them so much for doing so."

As much as she loves sports, Harper is more so focused on her education.

Upon graduation, she plans to attend the University of Alabama at Birmingham to study biomedical science.

"I made the choice of UAB based on my major and my choice not to play sports currently. If the time presents itself, then possibly, but I'm more focused on my prerequisites for medical school."

She aspires to be a radiologist and is determined to achieve the title of doctor to go in front of her name

one day.

From being her teacher to being her assistant principal, Gaines says she has enjoyed seeing Harper evolve each year into the leader and the dedicated and ambitious young woman she is today. "She's a great athlete, but she loves her academics. If she has the time for it, I believe she will pursue sports, but initially her education and future career are most important to her."

Harper is currently

playing her senior year of soccer at PCHS, and she hopes her history-making turn as a football player will serve as a legacy others will benefit from.

"My advice to pass to athletes and students is to step outside of your comfort zone, manage your time wisely," she said. "If you're juggling grades and sports, be just as committed to your education as you are to sports."



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# Local counselors work in tandem to help others make good life decisions

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Ivy McDaniel understands that in life we all fall short at some point, but that does not have to keep us from fulfilling our purpose.

Helping others come to that realization is why the Pell City resident founded We Win Recovery in partnership with TeeJay Wilson, owner of Fresh Start Recovery Ministries in Lincoln.

McDaniel’s endeavors garnered her a nomination for the Pell City Chamber of Commerce’s Citizen of the Year award.

We Win Recovery is a nonprofit therapeutic education development center for individuals and families that have been affected by substance abuse and criminal justice issues. Its mission is to remove the stigma associated with such issues so that those who are suffering will find the help they need.

The organization also provides resources and re-entry services for those who are coming out of long-term incarceration, hosts weekly Alcoholic Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings and collaborates with the Wellhouse to provide educational classes to the survivors of human trafficking.

The motivation behind We Win Recovery, McDaniel said, was to create an environment that says “no matter the situation, we can overcome it and together we win. A criminal justice major at Jacksonville State University, she is a proponent of recovery and rehabilitation. “I have always been the rehabilitation type. I believe anybody can be rehabilitated to some extent and believe it should always be an option.”

We Win Recovery started as a drug awareness and prevention program with the goal of removing stigmas and stereotypes. Since it launched in August of 2017, its services and programs have greatly expanded.

“All under one umbrella we have AAA and NA meetings, human trafficking survivor classes, relapse prevention, anger management, a re-entry out of prison program, drug awareness and prevention, mentors and more,” said Wilson.

We Win Recovery also hosts Fourth of July and Iron Bowl parties every year for recovering individuals to attend. “We chose those two days because numbers over the years have proven in Alabama that individuals tend to relapse more on those days than the rest of the year. The parties help to create an environment where fun can be had, but the temptation is

eliminated,” said Wilson.

He is the owner of Fresh Start Recovery Ministries in Lincoln, a year-long treatment program for men. “I call it spiritual boot camp. Our purpose is to help build you up. It is easy to stay sober in a controlled environment, but the hard part is staying sober when you are not in one and that is what we aim to work towards.”

McDaniel is a counselor at Fresh Start Recovery and they are both basketball coaches at Talladega College.

Both believe that success is not defined by what you have gone through, but how you got through it. Individually, they have had their share of battles, but not only have they overcome them, but they are working to help others see the light that they see.

“Life for me growing up, I never really fit in. I got addicted to drugs early and dropped out of school in the eleventh grade,” said Wilson. “I am happy I do not look like what I have been through. If only I had a dollar for every time someone says I do not look over twenty five and I am forty two currently.”

“For me, I grew up very poor and endured being bullied because of it,” McDaniel recalls. “My advice for family members with loved ones needing or going through any kind of recovery would be to get some treatment for themselves. As that support person, they have become wrapped up in that addiction. You can lose yourself in the process. Everyone involved, even kids, get affected in some way. The most rewarding aspect of what we do is watching children be able to go home and seeing the individuals succeed after knowing what they have been through.”

According to Wilson, the first step in winning the battle is “admitting you need help. Help is not defined as something is wrong with you. That is the negative stigma that has been generated based on assumptions. Help is getting assistance, support to make something more bearable and/or bring



Ivy McDaniel, co-founder of We Win Recovery, was nominated for Pell City’s Citizen of the Year Award.

Submitted photo

about change.”

Counseling, McDaniel said, can be very successful in helping to resolve certain issues, but many are often reluctant because its purpose is misunderstood. “In seeking counseling, the purpose is to help you figure it out and letting you know who is your help. Counseling is not me telling you how to live your life, but helping you to put the ball in your court to take the lead.”

There is nothing wrong, Wilson said, with counseling if that is the route a person chooses to take. “To have good mental health is important. It is too often that individuals go through things and just brush them off or avoid them. If you do not go back to the root of the problem, you will always have a problem.”

McDaniel agrees that avoiding issues only make them worse.

“To ignore things or just harbor them only helps to fuel fires that are not needed. If those flames start to escalate, the extinguisher can become excessive alcohol consumption, drug use, prostitution, developing a criminal record or worse. All of which only produces smoke that clouds your judgment. It may take time, but deciding to make better decisions is always the right choice.”



Teejay Wilson is the owner of Fresh Start Recovery Ministries in Lincoln.

Submitted photo

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# CMP Marksmanship Park may be Talladega’s best-kept secret



Business Development Manager Greg Raines describes the CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park as a shooting sports facility in a country club/golf course-style setting.

By BUDDY ROBERTS  
Special Projects Editor

Greg Raines and Joey

Hardy love where they work, and they’re happy to explain why. Raines serves as

business development manager at the CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park, and Hardy serves as

park manager. They invite residents of Talladega and St. Clair counties who haven’t already done so to visit the park to see why it’s “the most advanced public marksmanship facility” in the country. “I really love this place and what it offers,” Hardy said. “It’s not hard for us to make people happy when they come here.” Under the oversight of the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP), the local park opened in 2015 and since hosted firearms sports enthusiasts from around the country and world. “We have seen people from as many as 25 different countries and

more than 40 states,” Hardy said. “Most of our visitors drive more than 100 miles to get here. That information tells us

that we’re a destination spot for people who enjoy shooting sports as a recreational activity.” He and Raines went

Photos by BUDDY ROBERTS



Park Manager Joey Hardy and Raines display a World War II-era rifle that has been refurbished and made available for sale to the public at the CMP park’s pro shop. For information about qualifications for purchasing refurbished firearms, call the park at 256-474-4408.



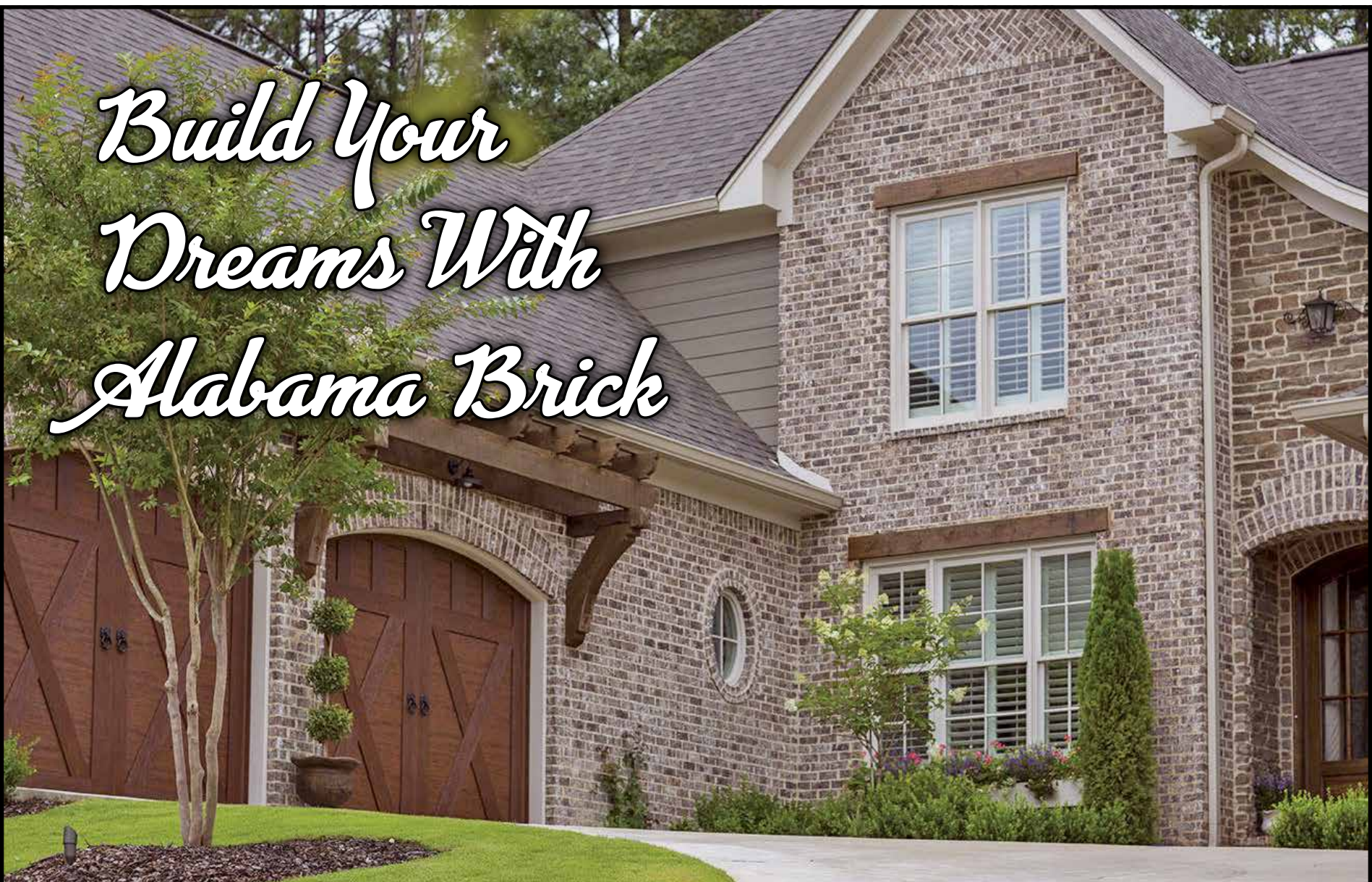
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Another milestone in arts education will be achieved by the Historic Talladega Ritz Theatre this 2019-2020 academic year. On March 17-18-19, The Ritz will present William Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” from the acclaimed Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Some 2,250 area 6th-7th-8th graders will attend one of six performances at no cost whatsoever to the students. This exciting arts education initiative is yet another reason why the Historic Ritz has become an indispensable cultural asset for Talladega and all of East Central Alabama.

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A CMP visitor examines one of the refurbished firearms available in the pro shop.

Photos by BUDDY ROBERTS

on to describe the park’s unique facilities, which they encourage local residents to come out and take advantage of.

**The park:** CMP

impression it gives visitors lets them know immediately that they’re at more than just a shooting range. “A lot of times, people think of a gun range as a

hunting, you can have a birthday party here and shoot a round of sporting clays. If you have a business, the park is great for company outings, customer appreciation events



Raines looks over game targets to be installed in a new shooting range that will open at the park in the spring. The challenging life-size targets are in the shapes of deer, antelope, elk, bear and other game animals.

Talladega is a 500-acre marksmanship park featuring state-of-the-art technology that Raines and Hardy describe as “life changing for the rifle shooter.” Its centerpiece is a versatile high-power rifle range with 54 covered firing points and all-weather Kongsberg Target Systems electronically-scored targetry at 200, 300 and 600 yards.

The park also features 15 action pistol bays, a 15-station sporting clays loop, trap field, five skeet fields and a five stand field, all of which allow “recreational users more productive time at our facility,” Hardy said. “It is very, very easy to come here and participate. No membership is required — you can’t even buy a membership here. We charge very modest daily and hourly rates for our rifle and pistol ranges and per round rates for our shotgun fields.”

CMP Talladega, according to Raines, is an ideal place for individuals who are unfamiliar with firearms to become familiar with their use. “If you have never shot before, we offer basic pistol and rifle training classes to teach you how to use your firearm. The classes focus on responsible gun ownership and safety.”

“Other facilities have some of these elements, but the difference is they’re not open to the public,” Hardy said. “There is nowhere else in the country where people who enjoy doing this as a recreational activity can do as much in one place as we offer here.”

**The clubhouse:** Described as “the crown jewel of the park,” the 13,000-square-foot clubhouse features a check-in and reception area, two multi-media classrooms, spacious lounge areas and a pro shop. The first

dirt pit out in the woods,” Hardy said. “This park is so much more. There’s a lot of recreation to be had here.”

With its upscale facilities and scenic vistas from the outdoor patio, “it’s like a country club and golf course,” Raines added.

“We’ve had baby showers and wedding receptions here, and I’m waiting for us to have our first wedding here,” Hardy said. “It’s great for outings and events. If you have a family that enjoys

and team-building activities.”

**CMP history:** It dates back to early 1900s, when the U.S. military and political leaders sought to strengthen national defense by improving rifle marksmanship skills of members of the armed forces. In 1903, Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt established the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice. From then until 1996, first the Department of War and



The park’s 54-position rifle range features targets at 200, 300 and 600 yards, with state-of-the-art electronic scoring.

later the Department of the Army managed the program that became known as the Civilian Marksmanship Program.

In 1996, the Corporation for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and Firearms Safety Inc. (which is the formal name of the CMP) was established with the mission to instruct U.S. citizens in marksmanship, promote firearm safety and conduct firearms competition, with an emphasis on youth.

**Encouraging youths to take up shooting as a sport:** “We really hope to see more youth coming out here to the park,” Raines said. “That’s the future of the sport. Even if you don’t enjoy hunting, shooting is a great sport for young people, and we’re happy to see them come here, shoot some targets or sporting clays and enjoy being outdoors and a sense of accomplishment.”

All junior visitors to the park (ages 10-17) must be accompanied by an adult. Juniors and adults must successfully complete the CMP safety class prior to participating in live fire.

**For more information:** Call 256-474-4408, email [cmptalladega@thecmp.org](mailto:cmptalladega@thecmp.org) or visit [www.thecmp.org/Talladega](http://www.thecmp.org/Talladega).

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5329 Renfroe Road  
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Pastor Justin Milliken

## Cragdale Baptist Church

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Morning Worship - 11 a.m.  
Evening Worship - 6 p.m.  
Wednesday Night - 6 p.m.

## Bemiston United Methodist Church

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Saturday Mass: 5 p.m.  
Sunday Masses:  
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P.O. Box 1085  
126 Spring St. N., Talladega  
(256) 362-4836  
Brother Bo Hamilton  
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Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Worship - 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday AWANA - 6:00 p.m.  
Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.  
Youth Meeting - 6:00 p.m.  
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Cindy Pennington



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# Oak Grove: Good people, good businesses and good things in store



Tony White serves as mayor of Oak Grove.  
Submitted photo

By SAM PRICKETT  
Special to The Daily Home

The town of Oak Grove is expanding slowly but steadily, according to Mayor Tony A. White — and that growth is expected to continue into the new year. “We’re just out here plugging along,” White says. As an example of how things are growing, he cites the success of

the town’s fall festival, which drew as many as 2,500 attendees and “was probably our biggest one yet.” There’s a reason for that growth, too: Oak Grove’s campaign to annex new property brought in over 60 families to the town. “We put a notice in the paper that gave anybody who wanted to come into the town of Oak Grove the information that they

needed to do that,” the mayor says. “We got a very good response.” Even more families have inquired about coming into Oak Grove in 2020, drawn in by the services the town offers and its lack of property tax. “They get some benefits that they didn’t have being in the county,” White says. Anyone looking to have their property annexed by the town is invited to contact town hall. More businesses are looking to move into Oak Grove, too, White says, though he’s cautious to “count my chickens before they hatch. But our current businesses are here to stay. They like Oak Grove, and we get good feedback from them.” Also coming in 2020, White says, is a renovation to the town’s sewer system, thanks to a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant awarded to the town by Governor Kay Ivey in 2018. The town had been pursuing the grant for four years. “We have a lot of infiltration from surface water that’s coming into the system and it’s overloading our pumping stations,” he says. The town spent the

last year with an outside firm that audited the sewer system to determine where the issues were specifically occurring. Now, White says, “we’re in the process of getting somebody to actually do the work.” That will involve replacing or sleeving broken pipes and sealing leaky manholes. “Hopefully when we get through with this, we’re going to reduce a lot of costs that we’ve been incurring over the

last couple or three years.” The project will begin in earnest in April, and should conclude later this year or in early 2021. Other capital projects include the “revamp” of the town park’s playground, including more materials to soften the ground and “extending the size of our playground area to accommodate a little bit more equipment,” White says. A new backhoe — purchased by the town last year

alongside two security vehicles and one street department vehicle — will help with that project. “Oak Grove is growing a little bit every year,” he says. “The revenue is good. It’s not like other big cities or anything, but we’re sustaining. We’re gaining a little bit every so often. As good as the people we have out here are, and the good businesses that we have, Oak Grove’s got some big things in the future.”

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# Talladega United Way director has ‘a servant’s heart for our community’

By NICK PATTERSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Think you’re busy? Just consider what Valerie Burrage does as the executive director of United Way of North Talladega County. She raises money. She writes grants. She delivers blankets to people who need them. She meets monthly with 24 individual partner agencies. She meets with the state United Way officials. She plans events, the kind where lots of volunteers come to work in the community. She posts to the agency’s Facebook and Instagram accounts. She sends fliers. She’ll help county residents no matter when they call. And she’ll give a speech if you need her to. “You think I sleep, don’t you?” she said, with a laugh. It is a reasonable question. But maybe her hectic schedule is not so surprising when you consider that she is the entire staff of the United Way of North Talladega County. Her office is one of only two in the state where all the staff duties fall on one executive - although she does have

because there are different needs in the community,” she said. “I have a cell phone and the number to the office rings to my cell phone. And if someone calls and needs something at 10 o’clock at night, if I can help them, I try to provide the resources. Or I’ve even gone out and met them to give them a blanket and I’ve gotten them some food.” Burrage, who is also a runner, maintains a strong focus on helping people. “Somebody said, ‘Why don’t you turn that phone off?’ And I was like, ‘No.’ I said ‘Everybody’s situation doesn’t cut off.’ Thanksgiving night, actually, someone’s house burned and I helped them get in touch with the Red Cross. What if I hadn’t answered my phone? Would they have gotten the help that they needed?” “It’s like a servant’s heart for our community and making an impact and that’s what I think the United Way is for is to provide that stability and to inform and for people to have that overall... good quality of life to live. I hope that we’re making an impact so that the people in our community that need that little bit of help have that later - that total quality of life.” There are a lot of people to help in Talladega



Valerie Burrage serves as executive director of United Way of North Talladega County. Submitted photo

a need in our community for our services,” she said. Last year, she focused on raising the public profile of the agency and helping the 24 partner agencies work more closely together. Burrage made sure each agency knows how to get in touch with the other partner agencies just by sharing contact information. “The directors would know who’s in charge of each agency and who they can contact for help,” she said. This year her goals include raising \$140,000 for community needs, marketing her United Way more, and successfully executing several upcoming projects like the March 14 Day of Giving. “That’s a day that’s going to provide for us to do service in north Talladega County and for the community to come and be involved in helping. We are looking at helping clean a cemetery, helping the Plank Road Station down in Winterboro by planting some plants down there, doing some yard work for a couple of individuals and hopefully building a wheelchair ramp for another individual,” she said. Another project, on May 16, is Build Day with the goal of building 20

beds for 42 kids. “There’s 42 kids in Talladega County that are either sleeping on the floor or on the couch or with someone,” she said. The beds are \$175 a piece, she said. “So, our goal is \$3,500 and we have about 2,500 right now.” Her goals for this year also include, “some type of shelter or some type of assistance for people who are homeless,” she said. “Either homeless, or say, maybe they had a disaster or fire or something in their home, we could put them in a place where they could stay for a week or so.” Burrage is also hoping to raise money to help people who lost their jobs to be able to pay their rent

or mortgage for a month. She’s in the process of writing a plan to obtain a federal grant for that. For a full list of projects and partners of the United Way of North Talladega County, visit [www.uwntc.org](http://www.uwntc.org)



Burrage with JoEllen Williams, center, and Stephani Burton, who serve members of the United Way of North Talladega County's board of directors. Submitted photo

some help. “It’s just me, but I have a 15-member board,” she said. Burrage has been the head of the United Way in the northern part of the county since June 1, 2019, during which time she has made efforts to tackle numerous challenges faced by the community. She came to the job after retiring from a 27-year career as a teacher and transition coordinator at the Alabama School for the Blind. She sees some similarities between what she did at school and what she does for the county. “When I taught school I felt like I was helping children be more independent and self-sufficient,” she said. “In this new role I’m helping individuals and families to get a stable income, get more education and those kinds of things. I don’t teach as much but I help provide people with resources that can help them to do better and to have more stability in their life.” The United Way of North Talladega County has 24 partner agencies that Burrage interacts with on a monthly basis. In a recent situation, she worked with Samaritan House and Armstrong, LLC to collect 300 blankets to distribute to people in the community that need them. “And also, probably about 25 brand new blankets I gave to First Family Services for their children for Christmas,” she said. “There’s something different every day

County. Burrage estimates that her agency and all the partner agencies help about 3,000 people a year. “I don’t think people realize we have this much



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# Munford to host event honoring history and progress

By SHERRY KUGHN  
Special to The Daily Home

JoAnn Fambrough is excited about a special two-day event coming to Munford in April.

It's all part of the recent progress and momentum enjoyed by the Talladega County municipality, of which, as mayor, Fambrough is quite proud.

The event, scheduled for April 17 and 18, will serve as a fundraiser for the completion of the eagerly anticipated Veterans Park, while honoring Lt. Andrew Jackson Buttram, a Confederate soldier believed to be the last who died in a Civil War battle east of the Mississippi River.

Last spring, the city held a kickoff event for the new park. At that event, Munford resident Orville McElroy and his band performed and helped raised \$450 in donations. The proposed veterans' memorial at the new park is to be made of granite with engravings of veterans' names, the years each served, and their rank and status. Dedication for the site took place on Nov. 11, and a sign was erected.

Tim Steadman, a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and the coordinator

of the Veterans Park event, shared the history behind the April events.

In 1865, Union Gen. John T. Croxton led his 2,500 soldiers through northeast Alabama in an effort to destroy the South's industrial infrastructure. In Munford, he encountered a 500-member group of Confederate soldiers known as the Confederate Home Guard, soldiers who had organized to protect their communities and who worked to coordinate with the Confederate Army to hunt deserters.

In what became known as the Battle of Munford, the clash left two Union soldiers and one Confederate soldier dead. That Confederate soldier was Lt. Andrew Jackson "Jack" Buttram. His fellow soldiers buried him where he fell, and through the years, his memorial tombstone became separated from his grave, which is now located in the front yard of a private residence.

"That is why the Historical Preservation Community, the Buttram family and residents of Munford are interested in reuniting Lt. Buttram's remains that might still exist with his memorial stone and honoring him with a fitting funeral and honorable resting place,"



Mayor JoAnn Fambrough and public library director Jenny Trickett are excited about the project to increase the library's size by 920 square feet. Completion is expected by spring.

File photo by BOB CRISP

Steadman said.

The Archeology Department of the University of Alabama is assisting the group in an effort to find and exhume any of Buttram's remains.

At the two-day event, the Samuel C. Kelly Camp 54, of which Steadman is a member, will host a city-wide event that will include a period-style, military funeral for Buttram. Civil War reenactors are expected to attend.

"The general public is invited to participate and everyone is welcome," Steadman said.

Other recent accomplishments and future goals Fambrough is excited about include:

Regarding the Munford Municipal Court, the city filled three open

positions: a new judge, Bo Hollingsworth; a new prosecutor, Robert Rumsey; and a new public defender, George Sims.

The creation of the new Priebe Mill Road began in 2019, and its completion is planned for 2020. The road, which goes through the Jenifer community, will now come out on Alabama 21 and give the town two exits from I-20.

"This will take a lot of the traffic away from the Jenifer community," Fambrough said, "and now the Priebe Mill Road is narrow, and the new one will be wider with better paving."

Munford purchased new signs for city buildings that contain basic information for visitors, such as reminders

not to bring a gun or knife into a city building.

The town now has a new roof on the community center. Also, a 920-square-foot addition to the library that began in 2019 is to be completed before springtime.

Munford re-implemented its nuisance ordinances regarding unkept yards and dilapidated buildings.

"We want to keep the town clean," Fambrough said.

The city enjoyed its first Christmas parade, complete with a festival, tree-lighting service, and a special reading of names of those that have passed away.

In 2020, the mayor wants to build a playground for children near the walking track.

Also, she and the council members are seeking a grant for the renovation of the old school building.

"We could bring the town hall, a council chamber, police department, and a courtroom all together," Fambrough said. "The senior center is already in that area."

Fambrough said the city is working with the Northeast Alabama Planning Commission to get a grant. It should provide at least 15 percent of the total cost, but much more is needed. The city will seek other funding sources.

The city is also planning to bring its baseball complex up to the standards set by the Americans with Disability Act.

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# ‘It’s all about knowing how to communicate,’ Sylacauga superintendent says



**Superintendent Dr. Jon Segars believes Sylacauga City Schools are “on the right path” for continued success.**

Photo by BOB CRISP

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

Since being named superintendent for Sylacauga City Schools in May of 2018, Dr. Jon Segars is proud of the system’s progress and many accomplishments.

“We are on the right path,” he said. “I want to stress this is a team effort by everyone in our system. It is because of their hard work and dedication.”

In looking back at his time as superintendent, Segars said the system has been successful in several areas including academics, career tech, athletics, overall safety and more. It is my goal that we keep building on what has been started.”

The superintendent is a native of Lawrenceville, Georgia. He received his bachelor’s degree in business management from the University of North Georgia. He received his master’s degree from Kansas State University. He also holds a doctorate in adult education from Auburn University.

He was commissioned to the Army in 1988. While in the military, Segars served in many leadership positions. He also served on four

deployments to the Middle East during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, along with several other assignments.

Segars was also stationed in multiple states including Texas, Colorado and Georgia. He served 22 years in the Army, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

The superintendent said his last military assignment in the Army took him to Auburn, where he served as a Junior ROTC instructor at Auburn High School for several years. Before joining the staff there, Segars served as a professor of military science at Auburn University.

Segars met his wife, Joy, while both were in the Army at Fort Benning in between one of his deployments to the Middle East.

“She was a combat engineer,” he said. Together they have a daughter, Mary Grace, who is a sixth-grader at Nichols-Lawson Middle School in Sylacauga.

Segars said it was previous Sylacauga City Schools Superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman who put him on the path to becoming a school

superintendent.

“We met while I was a new teacher at Auburn High School,” Segars said. “He became a mentor to me over the years. I learned a lot from him.”

Segars said not only did Freeman mentor him, but so has Talladega County Schools superintendent, Dr. Suzanne Lacey.

“They, along with several other area superintendents, have been a huge help” Segars said. “It’s important that we keep in contact and work together to improve our schools.”

Prior to being named Sylacauga City Schools superintendent, Segars

served as the director of career and technical education for Sylacauga City Schools ,and assistant principal at Sylacauga High School.

When asked how his military experience has helped him as an educator and superintendent, Segars replied, “At the end of the day it’s all about knowing how to communicate with people and how you convey your message,” he said.

In his spare time, the superintendent said he is most often spending time with his family or working on home improvement projects around the house.

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# Pell City Chamber of Commerce names Citizen of the Year

## Police Chief Paul Irwin says award ‘is about our department’



On the occasion of being named Pell City Citizen of the Year, Chief Paul Irwin presented the chamber of commerce’s Police Officer of the Year Award to Thomas Gray.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
Home staff writer

“It’s not about Paul Irwin. It’s about our department,” Pell City’s police chief said as he entertained a guest in his office.

It’s the office of a man who is proud of the accomplishments and accolades that have come his way, evidenced by such items on display as a news clipping about how he was named 2019’s Citizen of the Year by the Pell City Chamber of Commerce, a law degree, a John Maxwell leadership program certificate and a training certificate from the FBI.

But as any good

organizations one is a part of. Irwin knows that well and says he has always focused more on others than on himself, a focus that has determined his career path, starting with military service.

The chief is a former Marine combat engineer. He said that after he left the corps, he wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement.

He started police work in Birmingham in 1994 as a patrol officer in the city’s South Precinct.

“During my time there, that’s when I got a bunch of awards,” Irwin said while thinking back on the early days of his career.

Some of the cases he investigated while at the South Precinct include a

After 8 years in the South Precinct, Irwin spent a short time as a sergeant in the West Precinct.

He only spent about a year at that post before returning to the South Precinct as a supervisor. Irwin said that this return was motivated by connections he had made in the community.

“I had such a great relationship with the community, and they wanted me back,” Irwin said.

After he returned to the South Precinct he was placed in charge of the South Precinct Task Force, which focused on dealing with in-progress crime. During his time with the task force Irwin said he began working on a project he continues to this day: helping other officers develop their skills. He said that motivation, hard work and experience gained working on felony arrests could lead to an office moving up the ranks. Much of his focus involved helping people develop more specialized skills if they wanted to do so.

“A lot of them went on to be detectives, a

lot of them went to the tactical unit, some of them went to the crime scene units, some of them went to the crime reduction team. They moved up,” he said.

Irwin said that throughout the rest of his career in Birmingham and even now that he’s in Pell City, he continued to be interested in helping other officers reach their full potential. He continued that focus throughout his time as a lieutenant and then as a captain with the Birmingham department.

“I’ve always concentrated on leadership and being a good person and a role model to other officers, but also trying to bring them up and realize I was where they are,” Irwin explains.

Pell City’s citizen of the year also said that he focuses heavily on supporting the community. He said that this can be difficult since sometimes the community can see law enforcement in a negative light.

“Sometimes the community looks at us as the bad guy because of the things we have to

do,” he said.

Irwin said he recognizes that sometimes police have to make decisions that can lead to the loss of a life and that is a hard truth to accept. However, he said that it is important to always look at how many lives are saved or changed in a positive way by police work.

“This is something I have always preached to my officers,” he said.

“Every day you get the opportunity to change someone’s life, and to change their life in a positive way.”

He said that relationship is an incredibly important part of police work.

Irwin said that these things remain the same no matter what rank he holds or which city he polices.

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Chief Irwin has worked in law enforcement since 1994.

Submitted photo

leader knows, individual accomplishments are a reflection of the people one works with and the

bank robbery and a few shootings. During this time he also did off-duty work at a Regions bank.

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# Chicago Mike’s offers a taste of the Windy City



Chicago Mike's Hot Dogs opened its St. Clair County location in 2017.

Submitted photo

By NICK PATTERSON  
Special to The Daily Home

The name Chicago Mike’s Hot Dogs might

Collum had worked as a health care risk manager, and had left that job to get a different degree. As soon as she did, her father became

it, Collum said. They remained in Homewood for five years, before moving the business close to home, 2300 Cogswell Avenue in

we’re here. Talladega is learning we’re here, too,” she said.

Chicago Mike’s moved into an 80-year old, 800-square-foot



Friendly smiles and good food are served up at Chicago Mike's in Pell City.

Submitted photo

conjure up an image of a guy who wears his Windy City street cred on his sleeve, but patrons of the Pell City eatery know better.

In fact, Chicago Mike’s is run by Michelle Collum and her daughter Jennifer Pennington. “My daughter says we are a mother-daughter team that cooks with love,” Collum said.

It was 2012 when Collum and her husband Kyle bought Chicago Mike’s, which, at the time, had been operating in Homewood for years. But it was their daughter Jennifer’s influence - and a needed change in circumstances - that led to the purchase.

ill. “I was taking care of my elderly parents at the time and aware that I was going to have to find something else to do before I lost them or that was going to be devastating,” she said. “She [Jennifer] called and said, ‘Mom, my favorite hot dog stand is for sale’ and I shocked her and bought it.”

Jennifer, it turns out, had been eating at Chicago Mike’s for years - “the chili cheese dog, as a matter of fact,” Collum said. “The chili cheese dog sold me this restaurant. That was her favorite at the time.”

They kept the name selected by the original owner because loyal customers insisted on

Pell City. Customers followed. “We have Birmingham customers who have come and Pell City is learning

building that previously housed businesses as varied as a service station and a hair salon. After a three-month renovation

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by Collum and her contractor, the business now seats 19 inside and several more outside at four picnic tables.

And once they got a bigger space, they got an oven, and rewarded customers with a menu that has expanded considerably past just hot dogs. While most of Chicago Mike’s original menu remains, the Collums have made improvements. “We do stuffed spuds. We are a sandwich shop. We have hot dogs, hamburgers,

potatoes, lots of salads. We are a model that doesn’t exist in this area. There’s not anything else that provides what we have,” Collum said.

“We don’t give you little skinny \$2 hot dogs. We’re going to give you a giant. We’ve been called a gourmet hot dog - which makes us laugh,” she said, adding that their dog is “large, all-beef, loaded, full. If you leave here hungry, it’s your fault.”

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Hot dogs aren't all that's on the menu at Chicago Mike's. The Pell City restaurant also serves up burgers, loaded potatoes, sandwiches and salads.

Submitted photo

Dog, which adds slaw to a chili cheese dog. And their hamburgers are apparently the talk of their Pell City clientele, Collum said. "When we worked in Homewood, nobody asked us a single thing about our burgers. They just ordered them. Everyone here wants to know if we hand-patty our burgers. And the

answer is 'Oh, yeah, that morning.' We do it daily.

"We get asked for them several ways. Is it real meat? Do you make them yourselves?" she said. Chicago Mike's customers want "a real hamburger. Growing up, I called those truck stop burgers. They're a six ounce patty on a five inch bun. Everything we

do is large.. It's all big, it's all messy. You're going to get a knife and fork with pretty much everything we serve," she said.

Open Tuesday through Saturday, Chicago Mike's also stays open late enough to accommodate customers who are heading home for work at dinner time. They have a food truck - the Dog

House - which Kyle (who has what Michelle calls "a real job" at UAB) operates during festivals.

And they have a simple philosophy for winning friends and influencing appetites:

"We prepare your food when you order it, exactly like you order it with the finest ingredients we can

find," Collum said. "We have fresh delicious food prepared by a mother-daughter team who's going

to remember your name when you come back again. We'll give you the best service you'll find."



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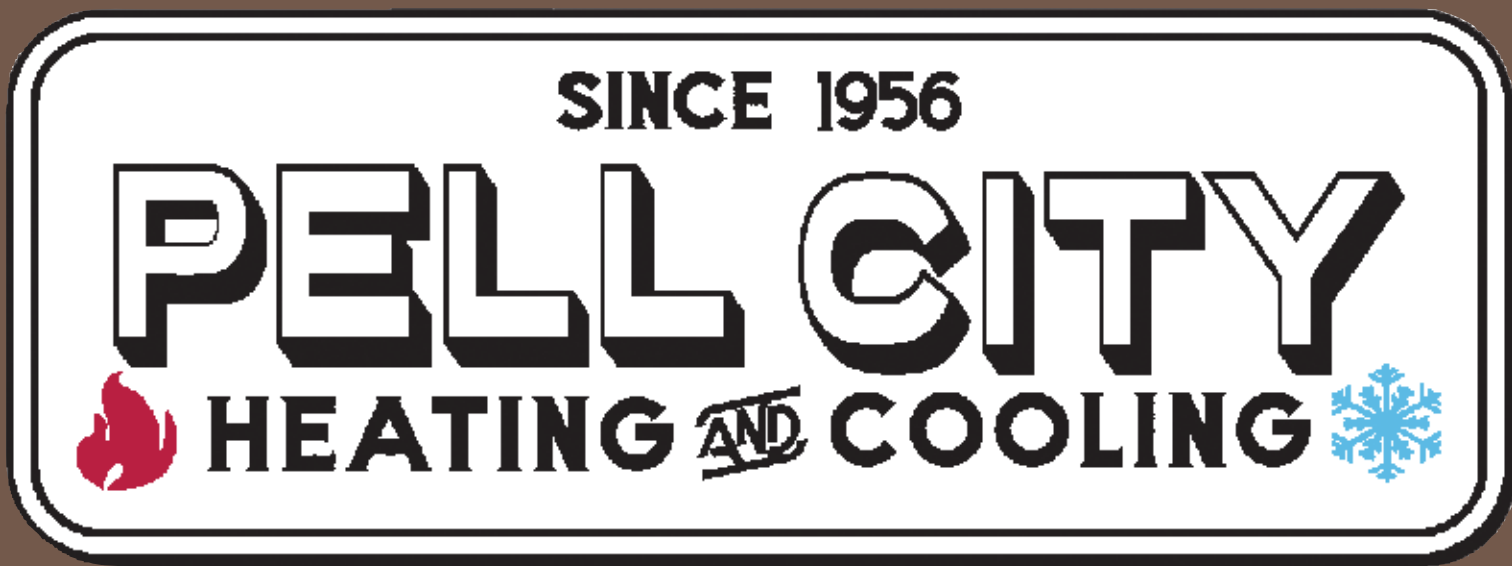
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# Small Business of the Year: Jamison Taylor School of Music



Pell City musician Jamison Taylor shares his love of music by offering local students opportunities to study instruments and voice.

Submitted photo

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

available for private lessons.  
Before long, he

named Small Business of the Year by the Pell City Chamber of Commerce.

a day off. It is my love for people that keeps me going and inspired.”



Jamison Taylor addresses the audience after his school of music was named Small Business of the Year by the Pell City Chamber of Commerce.

Photo by TUCKER WEBB

The story of Jamison Taylor’s School of Music began almost a decade ago when the talented musician moved back to his hometown of Pell City and posted on Facebook he was

opened the school at its current location at 1916 1st Ave. N., with five instructors and more than 100 weekly students, and it is still growing today. Its success was recognized late last year when the school was

Taylor said he is “greatly honored” to have received the recognition of how his hard work has paid off, even if he doesn’t really consider what he does work. “My days are really long, but I never want to take

Besides offering weekly lessons on just about any instrument and in voice, the school offers several programs that help students perform as bands at local events. The school provides entertainment

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**Jamison and Brandy Taylor display the chamber's Small Business of the Year Award.**  
Photo by TUCKER WEBB

at such events as Relay for Life, Fall Frenzy, National Night Out and at various local churches.

Taylor and his staff also volunteer and teach in area public and private schools, and Taylor personally donates his time, talent and resources to more than 20 organizations and events each year.

"Music is, always has been, and will be my life," he said. "I became the drummer at my dad's church at the age of 4. My dad was a pastor, and our church was filled with instruments. By high school, I learned the bass, guitar and piano. I have basically been playing and performing my entire life. Most nights after playing, singing and teaching all day, I still play my guitar when I get home and before I leave in the mornings."

When starting the school, "initially I offered private lessons on bass, drums, guitar, mandolin, piano and voice. We still offer those, as well as ukulele, violin, banjo, music theory, songwriting and artist development opportunities, and we have an in-house recording studio."

The school also offers a band program, music camp and opportunities for students to take part in local performances at events and venues. Taylor and fellow instructors work diligently to make sure students are not only practicing but experiencing the use of what they have learned.

"Backstage Pass,

the band program, is a year-long program where students are placed in a band to learn songs together, have monthly rehearsals, and perform at events," Taylor said.

Just as music has no expiration date, there is no age restriction to enroll in the school. According to Taylor, it is never too early or late to learn music.

"Most of our students stay with us for years. There is no recommended time for completion because you really never stop learning with music," he said.

Taylor considers his daily reward being able to share his love of music with his students and the success of those who have become professional musicians, teachers and worship leaders. And he's constantly looking for new ways of sharing.

"In 2020, we are launching preschool music and motion classes with one of our instructors, Marlene Wolf," he said. Plans for the upcoming year also include hosting the school's annual music camp the third week of June.

"I created the week-long fun environment for students ages 4 to 17 who do not currently play an instrument or take lessons to experience daily classes in piano, guitar, drums, violin, voice and ukulele," Taylor said.

Music, he added, is an art that keeps on giving and never ages. "It makes me the happiest to make music."

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# Chamber of Commerce officials are optimistic about 2020



The Pell City Chamber of Commerce's board of directors includes, from left, in front, president Caren Wilbanks, vice president Denise Olivastri, treasurer Emily Norris and ex-officio member Chris Christian; in back, Jeremiah Gilreath, Rachel Herren, Laurie Brasher, Tracy Boyd, Linda Crow, Chelsea Nabers, Anna Otterson, Patrice Kurzejeski and Krisi Edwards.

Photo by BOB CRISP

By JOHN DOWD  
Special to The Daily Home

The Pell City Chamber of Commerce takes great pride in its yearly activities and strives to bring the businesses of their community closer together.

According to Urainah Glidewell, the chamber's new executive director, "we try to have something every month for businesses to come out and build relationships with each other, along with the community. Our main goal is to bring people



**Urainah Glidewell is the chamber of commerce's new executive director.**

Submitted photo

together."

Glidewell assumed duties as executive director last December, leaving her former position on the chamber's board of directors to take over day-to-day operations. She served on the board for two years and as director is now responsible for administration duties, project leadership and information dissemination.

In the upcoming year, the chamber is proud to present many returning activities, as well as a couple of additions. One ongoing project is the chamber's initiative to highlight community members and businesses in an event called Business After Hours.

The event was started more than a year ago and is held once a month. Business After Hours

is hosted by businesses in the community, and Glidewell says the events "give local businesses the opportunity to network with others and to showcase their business." The event is held the first Thursday of every month. Information on locations can be found in the event calendar of the chamber's website, as well as its Facebook page.

Other popular returning events will be the Hometown Block Party, which is scheduled for June 6, and the Chamber Business Awards, which will be presented in November. The business awards allow the chamber to highlight businesses and individuals of the community.

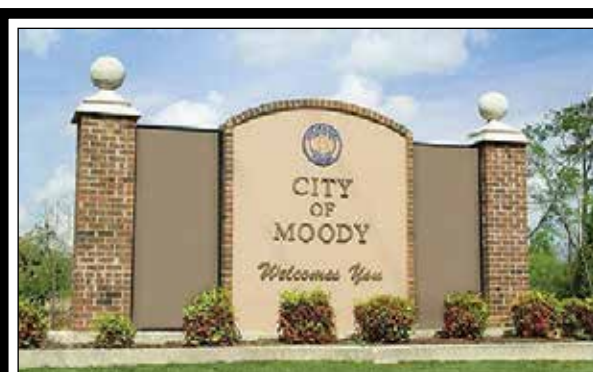
Several of the awards given out include Business of the Year, Citizen of the Year, Police Officer and Firefighter of the Year and Small Business of the Year. Each award is often presented by a representative from the community who is familiar with the perspective area. "It is wonderful to see these businesses receive recognition for all they do in the community," said Glidewell.

A new addition into the yearly lineup currently in the works is a job fair, which will bring out local businesses

looking to hire and to show off their company. The new initiative will hopefully be tried this year. Also, this year, the chamber will be host a kayak bass tournament on March 4-5. The event will be unique, as the fishing will be done completely from kayaks.

The chamber welcomed 10 new board members in January of 2020 and, with the addition of their new optimistic executive director, plans to bring another exciting year of activities to the Gateway to Logan Martin Lake. More information on events can be obtained by emailing [info@pellecitychamber.com](mailto:info@pellecitychamber.com) or visiting [www.pellecitychamber.com](http://www.pellecitychamber.com) and the chamber's Facebook page.

On the Facebook page can be found weekly business spotlights. These highlights can be found in the weekly newsletter as well. Currently the Chamber is seeking applications for the Block Party, which can be obtained by calling the office at 205-338-3377, or by visiting their website. Sponsorships for the chamber are also appreciated, and businesses can find extra publicity through this avenue as well as receiving copies of the weekly newsletter and other benefits.



The City of Moody is dedicated to the economic development and growth of our businesses and community. We are committed to work together for continued progress and success. Come be a part of the excitement as we pursue our future together!

*Joe Lee*  
Mayor of Moody

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## Town & Country takes pride in award-winning customer service



Town & Country Ford in Pell City takes pride in its knowledgeable staff and award-winning customer service.

Submitted photo

By NICK PATTERSON  
Special to The Daily Home

No matter which way the wind blows in the auto business, Town & Country Ford has a recession-proof combination: a loyal

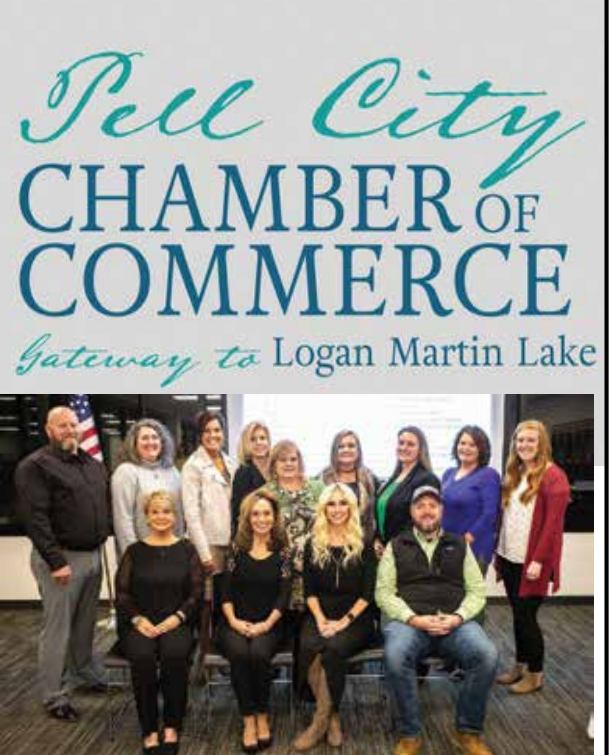
which is the original Pell City Ford building. It is now our pre-owned building and we built the new building about two and a half years ago.” More crucial than the location, though, were the people, Bailey said.

“We were able to keep a lot of the customers who were already here. More importantly we were able to keep a lot of the employees that were here. That was a key for us. A lot of good people worked here. We were

able to hang on to a lot of those guys, and that’s helped us tremendously also. A familiar face never hurts.” That holds true in both Town & Country locations, he said, estimating that the Bessemer store has kept about 80 percent of the sales force 15 years or more. “We’ve got several [in Pell City] who have been here 8-plus years of the 10 we’ve been here. So we’ve been fortunate

to have a lot of good local talent and good local people wanting to

come to work and that’s been a great pool for us to pull from in the county



*Known by most as “The Gateway to Logan Martin Lake,” much of Pell City borders picturesque waters, an inviting scene to all who visit & call this special place home. Recreational offerings are among the best in the state, schools are nationally accredited, quality health care is central to the city, and houses of worship, representing virtually every denomination, are welcoming.*



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The Ford dealership has operated in Pell City since 2009.

Submitted photo

staff and award-winning customer service, according to general manager Doug Bailey. “Our priority is to create a great place to work, first and foremost. If we have great employee satisfaction then that’s going to lead to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty,” he said. Town & Country has been in Pell City since 2009, after the ownership group behind it’s successful Bessemer dealership decided to expand east. Bailey, who had risen through the ranks at the Bessemer location since 2004, has been GM at Pell City since the store opened. The dealership took over the former Pell City Ford. “The ownership group is always interested in expanding - just looking for the right place to go,” Bailey said. “Ten years ago with all the construction and the growth east of Birmingham on I-20, and Pell City Ford being here, it just kind of made sense to come into St. Clair County and Pell City.” “We have one building on the hill,



## City of Springville

### SPRINGVILLE CITY COUNCIL



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Town & Country Ford is at 1103 Martin Street N in Pell City.

Submitted photo



Doug Bailey serves as the dealership's general manager.

Submitted photo



Town & Country ranks among the top dealers in the United States for certified pre-owned auto sales.

Submitted photo

and the city.”

Success also requires building relationships with customers, because the dealership wants them to keep coming back, he said.

“When you’re not in a major metropolitan market, controlling defection is the key. So if you give them a great experience when they purchase and a great experience in maintenance and a great experience in service and have the opportunity to sell them their next vehicle and then their next one, that’s what keeps you consistent and recession-proof.”

He’s already seen that in action, he said. “They purchased this store in 2009 in the middle of the recession. So while other businesses were closing

and other car dealers were closing, they were buying,” Bailey said. “So there’s proof to the employee- and customer-first mentality and your repeat and referral business. We depend on those guys. We can’t afford to have 20 percent of our customers buy elsewhere next year.”

Town & Country does solid business in both new and pre-owned car sales, ranking as one of the top dealers in the U.S. for certified pre-owned cars. The company also frequently wins awards for customer satisfaction – Bailey cited four president’s awards from Ford, a One Ford Elite award from the manufacturer, and an award from Ford Motor





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The dealership's service department strives to provide customers with "a great experience."

Submitted photo

Credit – all recognizing the Pell City dealership as one of the best in the country.

"The two things that mean the most to me are, number one, the number of employees that have been with us for 8-plus years and all the customer satisfaction awards we've been able to win, or that we've been able to earn, rather," he said.

Bailey is also proud of the growth at his dealership and efforts they make to provide good jobs. "In 10 years, we've grown from about 16 employees to about 52 and we continue to grow," he said. "A lot of people really don't know how many jobs and what a lot of dealers offer. Dealerships are a good source of employment. People want to stay local and learn a trade. We scholarship a couple of young men every year from Lawson State

Community College that want to be diesel mechanics. That's a two-year program and we'll put them through it and then they do like 6 weeks at school, 6 weeks here until they're done and they'll be able to make some money, have a scholarship that's paid for by us and then have a job waiting on them when they're done."

Building and retaining a strong, stable staff means investing in people, he said. "You take the time - you spend a lot of one-on-one time with people. You get to know them. We've basically become a family. We probably spend more time here a lot of days than we do at home. And you understand what their goals are and how to help them achieve them and you work to help them every day to be successful. And that's what we try to do."



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# *A Salute to* Sylacauga, Oak Grove & Childersburg **COMMERCE**





# Childersburg grows by ‘leaps and bounds’ during 2019

## Coosa Valley Chamber director sees bring future for business community



The office of the Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce is at 805 3rd Street SW in Childersburg.

Photo submitted

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

The Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce continues to grow and prosper, according to Tom Roberts, the organization’s president and CEO.

Roberts works around the clock to promote Childersburg and surrounding areas through the chamber.

“Childersburg is growing by leaps and bounds, and 2019 was another solid year for the chamber,” Roberts said. “Traffic to our community continues to increase from our surrounding areas. It’s important that we continue to reach out and work with them. We need each other to be successful. This year, we hope to continue to grow those relationships.”

Roberts said the chamber has approximately 250 members from Childersburg and its surrounding cities.

Roberts added the chamber welcomed several new businesses throughout the year.

The Glam Factory, a full service salon opened downtown in December of 2019.

Its first day of business was Dec. 13. A ribbon cutting was the next day, hosted by the Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce, Roberts noted.

The Glam Factory offers a multitude of beauty services for hair, nails and face.

It is owned by Childersburg native, Chelsee Davis. The salon is at 707 1st St. SW in Childersburg.

Earlier this month, Mimi’s Sweets and Treats also held a ribbon cutting for its new location at 1009 1st St. SW in Childersburg.

“Mimi’s is no longer just a bakery but also a deli offering sandwiches,” Roberts said.

Other local restaurants such as The Italian Cafe and Cuppa Grace are also thriving, Roberts said.

Many of the chamber’s annual events are also on the horizon.

The annual Chamber Banquet is set for Thursday, March 5, at 6 p.m. in Margie Sanford Hall on the Childersburg

campus of Central Alabama Community College.

Tickets will be available at the chamber office or from chamber board members.

Roberts said the community awards are for nonprofit, established business, new business, new industry, citizen of the year, city employee of the year and the Hall of Fame selection.

Roberts commented that the food will be catered by Coosa Valley Medical Center’s Hickory Street Café.

The next big event is CoosaFest 480 set for Saturday, April 18, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in downtown Childersburg.

“Last year we had about 100 vendors, and are hoping for good weather this time,” Roberts said.

“We will have live entertainment throughout the day from the stage. Vendor applications are available on the chamber Facebook page or at the office.”

The following Saturday, April 25, the annual Kymulga Grits Festival will take place from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Kymulga Grist Mill Park.

“There will be a great lineup of music, food and plenty of family fun activities,” Roberts said.

The chamber president added there are plans for a community-wide Easter Egg Hunt on April 11, with more details to be announced in the coming days.

The chamber also continues to build its relationship with its members and the community through chamber coffees, ribbon cuttings and more.

“Our future looks bright,” Roberts said. “Business both downtown and on the 280 corridor continues to expand. There is a lot more downtown now than people realize. We have things other towns our size don’t have, and more people are starting to take notice.”

The Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce is at 805 3rd St. SW in Childersburg. For more information, call 256-378-5482 or visit its Facebook page.



CoosaFest returns to Childersburg in April. The community festival has become a favorite local event.

Photo submitted



A youngster admires her painted face during a recent CoosaFest. This year’s event is scheduled for Saturday, April 18.

Photo submitted



Food, music and fun are hallmarks of the annual CoosaFest, sponsored by the Greater Coosa Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Photo submitted



# Childersburg veterinarian loves seeing pets get the care they need

By Vallean Jackson  
Special to The Daily Home

Childersburg Pet Clinic has been serving the local area by saving its furry and four-legged creatures and keeping them healthy since first opening in October of 1992.

“To help an animal get better and to have their owner come back to pick them up, and I see the connection between the pet and their owner to see them feeling better is one of the many reasons I love what I do,” said Dr. Kevin Moulin, veterinarian and owner of Childersburg Pet Clinic. “It is most rewarding.”

Before owning his own clinic, Moulin worked at another establishment, but he felt he needed to be better and be heard. So he took matters into his own hands and put that job behind him, which led to opening Childersburg Pet Clinic.

“A situation developed, and I told myself that I would no longer be in a predicament where I can not control how things are run, so I opened my own business.”

Childersburg Pet Clinic provides the services of medical, surgical and dentistry treatments, vaccinations, boarding and grooming



Childersburg Pet Clinic is at 1440 Coosa Pines Drive.

Photo submitted

of dogs, cats and even exotic animals.

“The animals most seen are dogs, for yearly vaccinations and checkups more than anything else.”

Asked what he would consider his busiest time of year, Moulin said it’s the summer months with the hassle of fleas and ticks on dogs and cats.

With his years of experience and being around animals so often, Moulin was asked if he might have ‘a Dr. Dolittle

syndrome.’ He rejected the idea with a laugh but said he has reached a point where he can read an animal’s behavior.

“Maybe just a certain way the animals move their tail or lays (down) can tell me a lot.”

Moulin said that he and other veterinarians are just the same as any doctor and should not be discredited of their skills and capabilities because the patient clientele is different.

“We work after

hours and we have a lot of trauma cases from animals attacking animals, animals getting shot, or hit by cars and so forth.”

Childersburg Pet Clinic has great care for all its patients and their owners. The daily reward is the compliments of a job well done and returned business. With three other employees who have been employed 10-plus years, it’s a cohesive staff that assures the best quality

care.

“Based on my profession, the advice I would give to pet owners is to make sure their animal is getting check-ups every six months for those that are unhealthy, and yearly check-ups for those that are healthy,” Moulin said. “Make sure vaccinations are up to date, get testing as needed and provide food, water, shelter and love.”

Moulin’s love for animals does not stop at his own business. He also


works with an animal shelter in Sylacauga where he does check-ups, testing, and treatments at a reduced cost. As business maintains, the doctor has no plans to expand since the last expansion in 2007.

“I honestly feel like we are as big as we will ever get, but we are always open to the option for more services as medical technology continues to evolve.”

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# Chamber director sees Sylacauga as a city of opportunity



Director Laura Strickland, in front, third from right, with members of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce's board of directors.

Photo submitted

By MICHELLE LOVE  
Special to The Daily Home

Laura Strickland loves Sylacauga. It's something that radiates from her very being as she talks about the town she grew up in. She was born and raised in Sylacauga and considers it one of

the guiding factors in making her who she is today. A graduate of Sylacauga High School and Auburn University, Strickland never forgot her hometown roots.

"I started out, upon graduation from Auburn, at Russell Corporation in Alexander City and I was with Russell

for ten years. I had an opportunity to go work for my family's business here in Sylacauga and I had also become a mom at that time. I just saw this as a great opportunity to not travel as much with my job and to have more time to be a mom. I also enjoyed getting to work with my

brother and dad in the family business," she says.

While she worked alongside her brother in their family business, the former Royal Tire Service, she also worked on the board of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce. "I served on the board of the chamber

for three years. I really enjoyed working with the chamber and I have always worked within the community as a volunteer but I really enjoyed my time as a board member."

When she and her brother sold the business in 2016, Strickland took some time to assess what her next step was for her, her husband, and child. An opportunity arose in the chamber of commerce and she has

been there ever since. "This April it will be four years," she says with a smile.

Strickland's role as executive director means she manages all aspects of the chamber including operations, programming, and member relations. "Our chamber is a typical small community chamber. We touch a lot of different areas of the community not just business and industry,"



Strickland presents the chamber's 2019 Horizon Award to Nancy Willis, owner of Trailwares in downtown Sylacauga.

Photo submitted

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Members of the Sylacauga Fire Department and owner Odessa Gumm listen as Strickland welcomes The Craft Studio to the city's historic downtown business district. "We applaud their investment in the Sylacauga community," she said. "The Craft Studio has provided many residents and visitors an opportunity to create crafts in a fun setting."

Photo submitted

Strickland says. "We work with the quality of life initiative within the community and we work towards producing lots of community events like the Christmas parade and the Kids' Fishing Derby at Lake Howard. We also work closely with our business and industry establishing opportunities for them and their businesses to grow... we work in all aspects of growing the area of Sylacauga."

Strickland loves that the chamber of commerce acts as a connection between Sylacauga residents and chamber representatives. "We like to view ourselves as that connector. Like we may not have the resources to actually implement something for a business but we do have the resources to connect them with other resources to get what they need. We've been viewed as the 'resource for knowledge' of the community."

As for what she personally enjoys about her job, Strickland loves being able to build relationships with her neighbors and fellow residents. "I enjoy getting to touch a lot of different aspects in the community. I've always

enjoyed being involved as a volunteer and having the opportunity to make a difference in making our community better. One of the aspects I really loved when I was a business owner was getting to build relationships with our customers and I still have this opportunity to help grow the community but also to establish relationships with the citizens of the community."

As far as the future is concerned, Strickland says the chamber has quite a heavy list of ideas and practices that will help Sylacauga expand. She calls it the "Our Vision 2025" plan and the theme is "igniting the future." Strickland says the plan includes expanding their leadership program that has been in existence for over 30 years and they plan to continue working with developers for the city and exploring programs related to revitalization and education expansion.

One thing is certain, Strickland's pride in Sylacauga is never waning. "One of our greatest assets that we have here in Sylacauga is our people and I think the combination of great people and opportunities really



Strickland chats with guests during an event celebrating the opening of Redmond Family Dentistry.

Photo submitted

presents...opportunities for growth and education for children and I think we have a combination of all of the factors that make

this such a desirable place to call home."

"I always enjoy hearing people who haven't lived here all their lives talk

about how they view Sylacauga because they always point something out that I overlook as someone who has lived here their

whole life. People are always friendly and they care about their neighbor here."



"Our chamber is a typical small community chamber," Strickland says. "We touch a lot of different areas of the community."

Photo submitted

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# Commercial marble production has deep roots in Sylaucauga

## *New book documents local economic impact of ‘white gold’*

By DENNIS WASHINGTON  
Special to The Daily Home

Ruth Beaumont Cook’s latest book started 10 years ago as a brochure request from Sylacauga’s B.B. Comer Memorial Library in advance of the city’s first marble festival.

“They asked me to put together a brochure about the history of the marble,” Cook said. “It was overwhelmingly successful, so the next year they asked to me write a book.”

Nearly nine years and dozens of interviews later, Cook celebrates the natural resource that nurtures both the economy and the cultural heritage of Alabama’s “Marble City” in her new book, “Magic in Stone: The Sylacauga Marble Story.”

“Whenever you start working on a book, you have all of this information but you look for a story thread through it,” Cook said. “I had no clue when I started what that was going to be.”

Cook said the clues starting coming together as she started talking to people who grew up mining marble.

“There are so many people who grew up in Gantts Quarry,” Cook said. “Most people have good memories of growing up there and work they are proud of. Telling those stories was the most interesting part of it.”

Commercial marble quarries began in Sylacauga in the late 1800s. Cook said the marble was initially used by sculptors such as Giuseppe Moretti, the Italian who created the Vulcan statue on Red Mountain in Birmingham.

“His Vulcan won gold prize at the 1904 World’s Fair, but what most people don’t know is he also took another piece with him, ‘The Head of Christ,’ which he had carved from Sylacauga marble,” Cook said. “It won a silver medal.”

The notoriety caught the attention of construction managers around the world who were seeking dimension marble for their projects. By the 1930s, Sylacauga’s creamy white marble had been used in hundreds of buildings, including the U.S. Supreme Court building and the ceiling of the Lincoln Memorial.

“It was chosen for the Lincoln Memorial because it can be cut very thin and still be strong,” Cook said. “They cut it thin enough to be translucent and then rubbed it with beeswax and put it in the ceiling.”

Despite the marble’s

beauty and strength, Cook said the demand for dimension marble in construction dropped dramatically by the 1950s.

“It became obvious that granite was much easier to withstand pollution than marble,” Cook said. “Marble is still great if it’s thick enough, but if you make a facade of it on a building, it’s probably not going to last because it deteriorates from the pollution.”

Instead of closing the mines and laying off employees, Cook said the Sylacauga marble companies survived and thrived thanks to a growing need for calcium extracted from marble deposits and used in hundreds of products, such as cosmetics, paints and glue.

“They turned to industry and began to grind up the marble into fine powder – called GCC, ground calcium carbonate – which industry had a strong demand for,” Cook said.

Cook said Sylacauga continues to be a rich marble resource more than 70 years later.

“I’ve been told there’s enough marble there for sculpture and industry for at least another 200 years,” Cook said. “The vein of marble is 35 miles long, a mile and a half wide and goes down quite a ways — 300 or 400 feet I believe. It’s a very valuable resource.”

Since 2009, the city has celebrated its heritage through the Sylacauga Marble Festival, a 10-day event drawing sculptors from around the world to work alongside an Italian master sculptor. Visitors can watch, tour local quarries and purchase sculptures. Cook said the festival brings Sylacauga’s rich heritage full circle.

“It came from art, up through all of these others, and now you have this wonderful balance,” Cook said. “You still have major industry but you also have major art appreciation. It’s a great story.”

The 12th annual Marble Festival will be March 31 to April 11, 2020. The 2019 Marble Festival, which was one of numerous events highlighted by the Alabama Bicentennial Commission as part of the state’s 200th birthday celebration, was sponsored by the Alabama Power Foundation, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Tourism Department, American Legion Post 45 Sylacauga, Architectural Stone Imports, B.B. Comer Memorial Library, Blue Bell Creameries, Blue Horizon Travel,

City of Sylacauga, Conn Equipment, Coosa Valley Medical Center, Curtis and Son Funeral Home, Imerys, Isabel Anderson Comer Museum and Arts Center, J. Craig Smith Community Center, Miller Lumber Company, Morris Custom Marble & Granite, Nemak, Omya, Inc., Pizza & Pint, Representative Ron Johnson, SouthFirst Bank, Sylacauga Arts Council, Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce, Sylacauga Housing Authority, Sylacauga Marble Quarry, Towne Inn, 21st Century Signs and Utilities Board of Sylacauga.



Commercial marble produced in Sylacauga has been used by artisans all over the world.

Photos by TUCKER WEBB



Sylacauga celebrates its heritage of marble production during the 12th annual Marble Festival, scheduled for March 31-April 11. Visitors can watch sculptors at work, tour local quarries and buy works of marble art.



Commercial marble production began in the Sylacauga area in the late 19th century.



# Sheila Curtis State Farm: Providing peace of mind in the Marble City

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Sheila Curtis and her four licensed agents have impacted the community and surrounding cities in finding savings and coverage to protect their future since they have been in business.

“Insurance is for the unexpected situations in life, and is very important to financial planning. Nothing is certain and plans fail,” said Sheila Curtis, agent-owner of State Farm in Sylacauga.

Curtis and staff cover the standard insurance policies of auto, homeowners, renters, disability and life, but they also offer financial services. As a registered representative for State Farm, Curtis can provide mortgage loans to those who qualify, checking and savings accounts, and help plan retirement.

“It is our job to explain these policies and what clients are getting. We are here to be insurance agents. It is too common that people come in and do not know all of what they purchased.”

Curtis stated that the most popular insurance they offer is auto

insurance because people have to have it to drive legally.

“I strongly believe that companies that offer quick rate quotes in minutes do a disservice to customers unless that agent is fully explaining everything and offering options. No one should ever pick your coverage for you. You should know what you are getting and understand why it is needed.”

According to Curtis, State Farm is ranked number one for car and homeowner insurance in Alabama, and she believes customers should do an insurance review once a year because life changes.

“To prevent gaps in coverage and protection, I suggest doing an insurance review. If there is a job change or new vehicle, the insurance needs to be updated as well so you are not lacking in coverage.”

To be uninsured is too common because the quoted price causes people to believe they cannot afford it or they can go without it.

“For me, having insurance gives me peace of mind. I understand what I have and why. I do not have to worry if something happens. If

my house burned down, I am covered. If I were to become disabled I would still receive a paycheck.”

Curtis said that insurance should be based on what you can afford and need. Agents are in place to guide customers in that determination, for only the customer truly knows their individual needs.

State Farm in Sylacauga cares for their customers and believes when you care about people you go the extra mile.

“Our goal is to always grow the business. It is always a part of the plan and with a building purchased a while ago, when we expand we will have the space.”

Each year, State Farm awards agents for reaching certain goals, and Curtis and staff have been achieving what they have set out to do. Due to their hardwork and dedication they were awarded the Ambassador Club recognition.

“When it comes to insurance, I can talk about it all day, but I so want people to understand why it is important to have it. Do not let comparing rates with your neighbor discourage you from getting coverage, or



Sheila Curtis's State Farm Insurance office is at 420 W Fort Williams Street in Sylacauga.

Submitted photo

change it without consulting with your agent. For me, comparing rates is like a size two, it does not fit everybody.”

Curtis added that there is no such thing as

full coverage. A customer should always pick their coverage on a needs basis and what they can cover.

“Being able to be there for our customers

is one of the most rewarding feelings, and nothing is more powerful than showing up for someone when needed.”



# Sylacauga Parks and Recreation



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# Engle Services: A one-stop repair shop

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

When the air conditioner stops working on one of the hottest days, or the heating goes out while temperatures are near their lowest, or the roof is leaking while it is pouring down outside, how many phone calls does it take to find someone to do one or all of these jobs?

Sylacauga-based Lewis Engle hopes you'll call him.

"We have been in business since 2009 and are what I call a one-stop shop. We can get right over when the problem is identified and get it fixed," said the owner of Engle Services Heating & Air.

Engle has worked in the business of repairs since 1993 and in Talladega County since 2000. In his previous business in another county, he felt stagnant with whom he was partnered with, and decided to come back to Talladega county to branch out and do more besides just heating and air.

"I wanted to offer services here in town that would allow people to to only have to deal

with one person instead of having to call multiple companies or people."

Engle Services Heating and Air can repair anything house-related that it encounters, from roof leaks and electrical issues to plumbing, gutters, fallen trees and more.

"I believe I am the only one in the county licensed to do everything. When I started flipping houses, I had to get licensed in everything, so when I opened my business, I also wanted to be able to offer those services along with heating and air repairs."

Engle said that his business is busy all year long because it offers so many services. While heating and air is seasonal, being able to prevent home damage by fixing a leaky roof, burst pipes or an electrical problem is something the company is available to handle at any time of year.

"We provide quality work, we are local, have reasonable prices, and most importantly, we make sure our customers understand what is being done and exactly what they are getting. Too often I have heard of customers paying large amounts of money for what seems like all

expenses covered and still get a bill back, or only just have paid for parts and not the actual labor. We are sure to be upfront with our customers."

All too often, Engle says, home owners overlook routine maintenance, which he describes as "less of a hit on their finances" than more costly repair work that could have been prevented.

"A lot of heating and air conditioners give out because of a lack of maintenance. You would be surprised at the amount of ants that ruin units."

Engle believes that it is always better to do preventative maintenance.

"When it comes to heating and air, I would recommend changing the filters monthly. I know some packages say a filter is good for three months, but it is good practice to change them monthly. Think of it like this: every time it is time to pay the power bill, put in a new filter."

Engle Services Heating and Air cares about the well being of their community. Even if a problem transpires and they are not the first on the list or to come to mind, they still

want to make sure their community is receiving quality work.

"When it comes to repairs, always use a licensed contractor. That is for your protection as a homeowner. If something goes wrong, it will be insured. Do not take the cheap way out just because the price is low. Cheapest is not always the best, ask yourself why is this so cheap? Get two or three estimates before deciding."

Engle said his business is a member of the Better Business Bureau and has five star reviews on Facebook and Google. He also offers discounts to seniors, military, churches and does not mind donating services if someone is truly in need.

"Finding the balance between my business and my customers is the hardest thing for me and what I do. Money is needed to keep my business up and running, but I aim to try and make sure my customers get the services they need. In a further attempt to assure customers get their problem fixed, we offer financing where we can do the job and the customer can make payments to pay us off."

Engle Services Heating and Air offers a variety of services and



Lewis Engle, owner of Sylacauga-based Engle Services Heating & Air.

Submitted photo

plans to expand their business soon in further benefit of customers. They will be putting a building on 280, next to the existing one for construction purposes.

"We have outgrown our original space, and the new building will

give us the ability to stock more parts. With greater inventory, we can get to customers quicker without having to order and wait for parts. If they did not need us, they would not have called, so it is our job to get the repairs done."

# Four decades of building rewarding relationships

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Sylacauga Glass Company reached 40 years in business in May 2019 because of great customer service and the skills to accommodate all things glass, according to its owner. If a pane is broken or needs to be installed, then they are the people to call.

"After 40 years, we are still in the same location and fully open. It was once said that we had gone out of business, but that has not ever been the case," said Debbie Sanders, co-owner.

Sylacauga Glass Company offers repairs and installs shower doors, mirrors, storm windows, vinyl replacement windows, screens, auto glass, awnings, thermal pane glass replacement, storefront glass and more. They also can come to the client and perform the service. Windshield repairs take up to an hour and other repairs depend on the situation.

"Most everyone has a broken glass from time to time and we are there for them when needed."

There is a wide variety of repairs that can take place, but for Sylacauga Glass Company, the most often used services are auto glass and shower doors.

"It is hard at times to try to please everyone at the same time, but we get the job done."

With the amount of accidents and situations

that accumulate throughout the year, business is constant and there are rarely any dull days.

"Most people do not think of a glass business as being busy, but we are service oriented and ask clients to please be patient with us as we have many customers."

Every job is repaired with care according to the situation. No one service fits everyone and Sylacauga Glass believes highly in restoring what was broken. Whether it is cutting a custom glass top, installing mirrors, or replacing drafty windows... quality service and satisfaction is provided.

According to Sanders, the best and most rewarding part of the job is the friendships that are made over the years.

With the success achieved over the years, the business continues to grow constantly, but as far as expanding the building or services themselves, everything will remain the same, just as it has since the company was founded by her husband Mike. He retired eight years ago, but his skill and desire to serve his community established the foundation on which the business was built.

"We are just thankful to be able to see Mike's dream manifest. It had always been his dream to own his own business, and when the doors opened, we walked through. When we stepped out on faith, it all fell into place in a week."



Sylacauga Glass Company is at 510 N Broadway Avenue.

Photos by BOB CRISP



The family-owned company repairs and installs glass for shower doors, mirrors, storm windows, storefronts and more.



# Preserving memories is rewarding for Shoot First Video

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Jeff Turner, owner and main operator of Shoot First Video and Photography has turned a part-time hobby into a career and lifestyle.

Turner has been in business for 12 years since he decided to leave the field of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, in which he had worked for two decades.

“Photography started off as just a hobby for me years ago, but people continued to ask me to do it. After a while, I started getting more job opportunities in photography and video. So in 2006 or 2007, I made the decision to quit construction and go into the video business.”

Shoot First Video and Photography is a business that offers in-house video editing and production services. There is nothing that has to be shipped off or handled by a second or third party. This saves time on processing an order and narrows down clients having to pay two different companies he believes.

Turner offers a

wide range of still photography and video for any occasion, promotional videos for any business or industry, and can transfer any home movie to tape or film to help preserve memories that can last for a lifetime.

“It is rare in this city and state that you can find a business that can offer a photography and video package that’s reasonable and it can be done both on location and in the studio.”

When it comes to clients, Turner takes his time to be sure to capture moments that can be reflected on for years. He believes that if a bride does not tear up from viewing her special day once it is edited with his special touches, he has missed something.

“I take great pride in what I do. When it comes to transferring old home videos, I can go back as far as 8mm. I love doing those. Almost no matter how old they are, I can transfer the video in the comfort of my own shop.”

For Turner, summer is his busiest time of year with a lot of weddings and dance recitals taking place. However, he is in business all year and will

travel to his client when needed for their event. There is no occasion or opportunity he will pass up.

“I even at times do some freelance work when I can. I truly believe I can do everything media related. Even working the cameras at a game or big event.”

Aside from his own business, Turner uses his craft within the community. Turner and his wife work with a local animal rescue shelter to help give back. His wife helps to groom the animals and he gives them their close up for pet of the week.

“To see people pleased with what I do for them is the most rewarding part of my job. To know I can restore an old family photo or video and have it bring an old memory to life really makes me feel good.”

Though editing becomes tedious at times, there is no part of his job he would slack off on. Turner has a small office he sometimes works out of and a 2,000-square-foot studio he uses part time. He has plans to soon combine the two and use the studio full time.



Jeff Turner is the owner of Shoot First Video and Photography. Submitted photo

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# \$1.35 million speculative building to boost economic development in Sylacauga area

## *Alabama Power Company program expected to bolster business growth*



**Elected officials and representatives of Sylacauga's business community were on hand for groundbreaking ceremonies at the speculative building site.**

Alabama News Center

By MICHAEL TOMBERLIN  
Special to The Daily Home

The Sylacauga Industrial Development Board is building a 60,000-square-foot spec building with the help of the Alabama Power Speculative Building Program.

The \$1.35 million project will be built in the S.B. Pinkerton Industrial Park. Officials held a ceremony today to break ground on the project.

The city of Sylacauga, the Sylacauga Industrial Development Board (SIDB), the Talladega County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) and Alabama Power are working together on the project.

“For a property like this, really for the area, what it does is it gives us an opportunity to attract companies,” said Calvin Miller, executive director of the TCEDA. “In a lot of cases, if you have a building available, they will give you a look. Otherwise, you’re just like 67 other counties and you have to differentiate yourself.”

Dalvin Marsh, SIDB chairman, said getting a company to come to Sylacauga to look is important.

“It’s easy to show a piece of land, but it’s also easier to show a piece of land with a building that’s already partially built on it,” Marsh said, adding that there have been a number of instances when a company came to look at a spec building but ended up picking another site in the same industrial park or in the city.

Marsh said the Alabama Power program “makes things happen.”

Shane Kearney, Economic Development manager with Alabama Power, said Sylacauga

has demonstrated what it can do with a spec building, having filled four of them before with companies that now have created more than 400 jobs.

“They have a track record of filling these buildings,” Kearney said.

Sylacauga is a perfect example of the kind of preparation Alabama Power provides communities to be ready for when the opportunity comes.

“If you’re not prepared, you’re not going to win projects,” Kearney said. “That’s one thing our group has been doing for many years – not just with this program, but going into communities, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses and helping them get strategic plans ready to prepare for opportunities to come.”

Laura Strickland, executive director of the Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce, said industrial projects are one of the key drivers of an area’s economy and a community’s growth.

“If people are working, they’re going to be spending money in our community and we’re going to see other aspects of our community continue to grow as a result of this industrial development,” she said.

A speculative building is a proactive approach in which a city is saying it expects to lure new industry into the city.

“The city of Sylacauga is committed to bringing new, good-paying jobs to the city,” said Sylacauga Mayor Jim Heigl. “This investment is in the future of Sylacauga men and women who will someday work there to provide a better life for their families.”

Many companies



**The Sylacauga site is the 29th statewide in Alabama Power Company's Speculative Building Program, aimed at boosting economic development in communities.**

Alabama News Center

looking to establish operations in an area want a facility that is close to ready for occupation. The new spec building will be easily modified for any number of industries that would choose to locate there.

“Having a site is a big step but having a spec building to show a company really puts you at another level when competing to win an industrial project,” Marsh said. “We’re fortunate to have the Alabama Power Speculative Building Program that helps communities like Sylacauga put our best foot forward with first-class properties.”

The Alabama Power Speculative Building Program began in 1991. It provides no-interest

loans to qualifying entities with qualifying sites to finance a majority of the costs of constructing a spec building or, in some cases, preparing a site.

The Sylacauga project is the 29th spec building for the program. More than 1,500 jobs have been created with projects that have located in the spec buildings.

“Alabama Power’s commitment to economic development in this state isn’t limited to project recruitment,” Kearney said. “Much of what we do is helping communities be ready for economic development opportunities and the Alabama Power Speculative Building Program is a prime example of that.”

Miller said projects

with a tight timeline for starting production often need a spec building they can quickly complete and begin operating.

“Having a speculative building gives a company an added reason to consider locating in Sylacauga,” Miller said. “We deal with companies all of the time who are looking for a building they can quickly customize in order to begin production as soon as possible. Sylacauga will now have a site to present to such a company.”

Miller said Sylacauga’s first spec building built with the program is expanding to twice its previous size.

“Hocking International Laboratories is doubling its size by adding 80,000

square feet,” Miller said.

He said the Alabama Power Spec Building program is vital to communities like Sylacauga.

“It’s very important because a lot of smaller areas could not build these things without the help of the power company,” he said. “Not only does their program come with the financing, it comes with the help of Alabama Power Company’s economic development group, which is one of the most effective and aggressive economic development groups in the state.”

Hogg Stone & Associates Engineers Inc. designed the new spec building, which is being built by Gaston Construction. The project is slated to be completed in January 2020.



# Collier Motors: ‘There’s no automobile we can’t repair’



The staff at Collier Motors welcomes customers to the shop at 3253 Old Sylacauga Highway.

Submitted photo

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Since 1993, Collier Motors Paint and Body has been restoring vehicles that have been damaged during accidents.

“The first couple of years were tough as a new business starting out, but things are way better now,” said Norman Collier, owner of Collier Motors. “We went from one bay in the garage of my house to a built-from-the-ground 10,000-square-foot building.”

Collier Motors was

an idea brought to life by Collier’s wife as a way to spend more time with their kids. The goal was to have a business where it would not be so time-consuming, and they would not miss out on any of their kids’ growing or activities.

“Our kids are grown and in their own careers now and we were lucky to not miss anything, and business-wise, we are more than thankful to always be busy.”

Collier Motors takes pride in being able to reconstruct any automobile after a collision. Whether it

is damage caused by a deer or another car, they can repair it. Within two days or two weeks depending on the situation and repairs, Collier said, they will restore the automobile to look as good as new.

“There is, unfortunately, always a repair for us to do,” he said. “We do about 10 to 15 cars per week, and during deer season, we get about 25 deer collisions in one month.”

Collier believes it is the way they treat people with the respect they deserve, the guarantee of their work, and their ability to

work with all insurance companies to help things not seem so frustrating in a frustrating situation are a few reasons why they remain in business.

“We work with the insurance companies to provide them what they require so the repairs can begin,” he said. “We send in the estimates and pictures needed, and depending on the condition of the car, the customer can leave the car or continue to drive it until the repairs can start.”

Collier added that the weather also plays a big

part in the business they receive.

“Rainy days that make the roads slick and bad weather conditions that can make the roads unclear at times,” he said. “We are glad to be able to have a car to repair and the customer able to come back to pick it up.”

“If you love what you do, there is not really a hard part of the job, and that is exactly how I feel. There is no automobile we cannot repair.”

The shop also takes pride in providing residents

of Sylacauga and its neighboring communities with a good place to take their vehicles for quality repairs at reasonable prices.

“We have plenty of space,” Collier said. “There are not too many places in this town with as much space as we have. We have expanded four times already and own ten acres of land with plenty of space to get bigger. However, with 14 bays, I think we are as big as I want us to be for now.”





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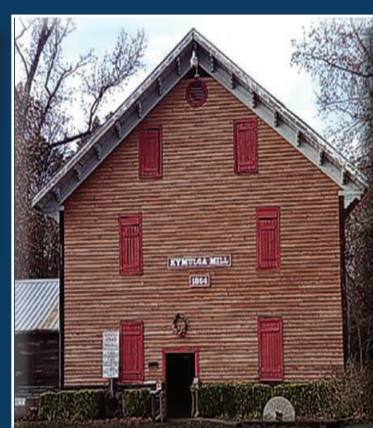
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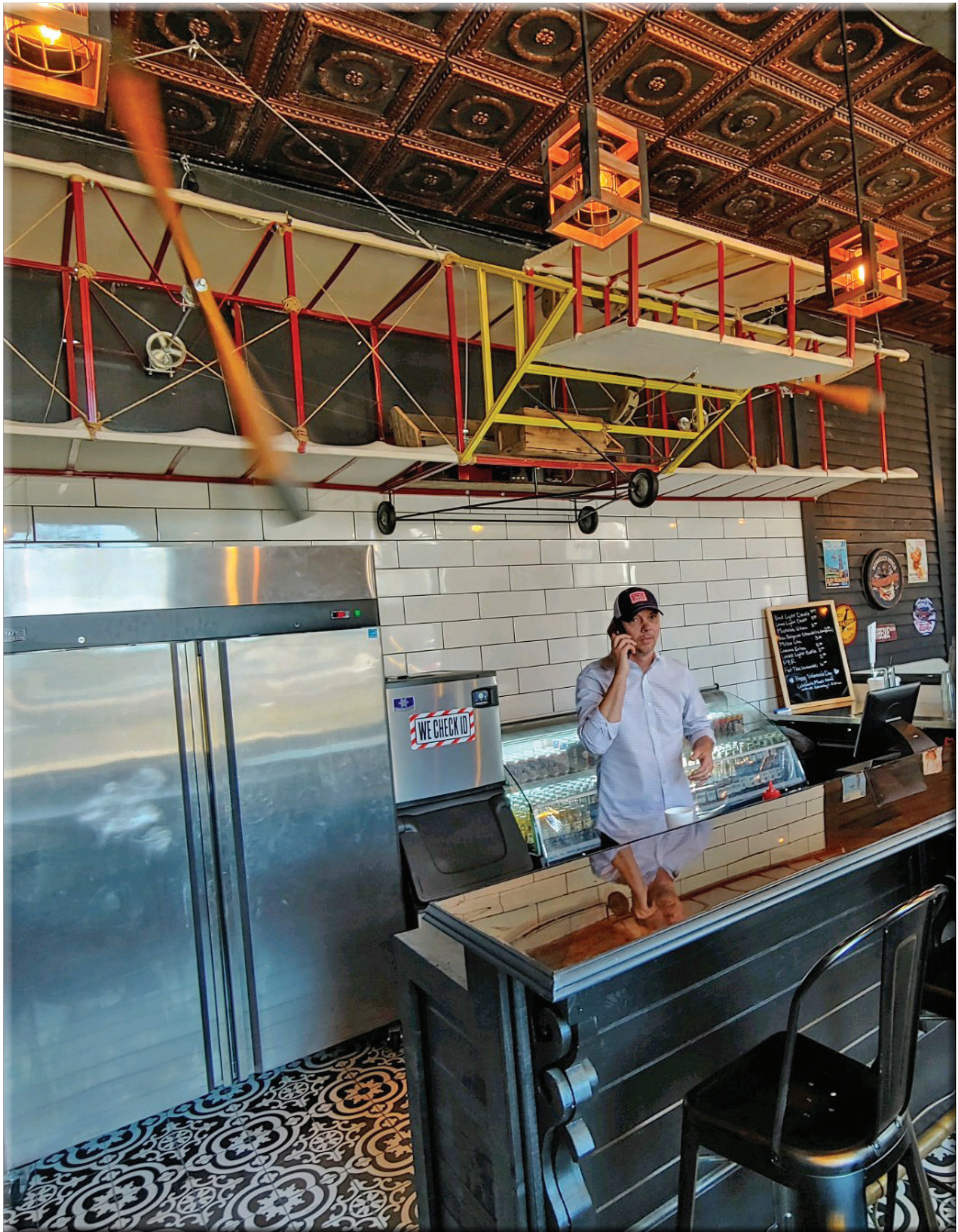


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# Talladega native returns to hometown, helps revitalize commercial sector



The Pilots Lounge, Kevin Smith’s newest project, pays homage to the history of aviation in the Talladega area.

Submitted photo

By KELLI TIPTON  
Special to The Daily Home

Kevin Smith doesn’t have a fancy office. He doesn’t sit behind a desk. He doesn’t wear a suit and tie to work. He’s not a typical businessman. But his businesses continue to populate Talladega’s historic town square, inside the buildings he purchased and renovated, and they draw people from nearby towns and cities and across state lines. The square has become more attractive in recent years, and it’s not just cosmetic. Talladega Bottling Works, on the corner of S Court and W Battle streets, houses offices for Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, and overhead,

a beautiful venue offers space for live entertainment, parties, and reunions. Across the street, the original Standard Furniture building is undergoing a transformation to become a marketplace for local art, signs and crafts. The Welch-Coleman Ballroom, on the corner of AL- 77 and East Street S is under renovation to include a dance studio, an architectural salvage store, and another spacious venue. And Boswell’s Wings on Court Street North offers a unique flight-themed dining experience featuring freshly smoked meats and sides with a Southern flair. His newest venture, The Pilots Lounge, includes an expansion

of the restaurant, which now occupies the entire first floor of what used to be a post office. “Our customers can now enjoy beer and wine, and karaoke and live music,” Smith said. New tables and chairs in front of the restaurant offer more seating for customers, who can now order adult beverages with their burgers and barbeque, but the back area features a replica of the plane Dr. Lewis Archer Boswell attempted to have patented, after witnesses saw him make a successful flight in Eastaboga in the 1890s, years before the Wright brothers flew their first flight in 1903. Unfortunately, there were no official records of his

flight. The smaller-sized model juts out from the rear wall and has two rotating propellers. It appears to be flying over the beer coolers behind a large, granite topped bar. Smith’s restaurant, and its new addition, pays homage to Boswell, who was eventually granted a patent for an Improvement In Aerial Propeller-Wheels in 1874. “My great-great-grandfather was Boswell’s neighbor. He actually witnessed that flight after helping him roll his plane off a barn roof, and he told his stories about it to family and friends, and his stories were passed down through generations,” Smith said.

In 2002, the airport in Talladega, Alabama was renamed Boswell Field in honor of the local aviator, and according to the Airport Board Chairman, if Boswell made the first heavier than air flight, it would make Boswell Field the first airport. Smith special ordered the vintage 1950s booths, tables and chairs for The Pilots Lounge, and they were delivered from California a few weeks ago. Hanging pendants provide lighting, hardwood flooring and antique copper ceiling tiles create a warm, old-time atmosphere. It’s not a typical bar. But Smith is not a typical businessman. A Talladega native, and 1993 graduate of Talladega High School,

he made his first million dollars in 2007. “I was definitely an under-achiever in school, but I’ve always been a creative person who had a lot of ideas,” he said. His work ethic and enthusiasm were developed early as an employee of the local skating rink and later as a housekeeper at the hospital. “I was so excited to be working at the hospital. There I was, mopping the floor in a dress shirt and tie,” he said laughing. “So after a while, there was a job opening at Coosa Valley for their pharmacy, so I became a pharmacy tech. And then after that, a registration clerk. But I wanted to make more money, and





Developer Kevin Smith is currently renovating the Welch-Coleman Ballroom building at the corner of Alabama Highway 77 and East Street S.

File photo



“I’ve always been a creative person who had a lot of ideas,” says Smith.

Submitted photo

I hadn’t furthered my education any, so I went into the National Guard where I trained as a combat medic,” he said.

He enlisted full-time in the army next, and was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. When he left the military, he held the rank of staff sergeant.

“I was a licensed vocational nurse for critical care and an EMT. That was my skill set. Then, in 2003, after several deployments to Kuwiat, I came here to visit my family. My wife and I were in a small Toyota, and we got rear ended by a truck. Our car was totalled, and I had a

concussion. We were sent back to Texas, where I was instructed to follow up at a hospital in seven days. I was leaving the hospital from that visit, and I was involved in another wreck that gave me another concussion. So, I had two concussions in a 10-day period,” he said.

And after five years in the military, he was medically discharged, and clueless as to what to do next. So he applied for jobs online. He submitted resumes online. Then, one of the top healthcare IT companies in the world reached out to him.

“And I wasn’t sure if I

knew anything about what they wanted me to know, but I tell the students I speak to all the time that you learn things in your life that are valuable. You just may not know that they’re valuable,” he said.

He was interviewed a few times, and he waited for a call.

“After a few weeks, they said they weren’t sure, but that I had such a well-rounded background because of the housekeeping and pharmacy tech and registration clerk jobs, and EMT training and working in various different nursing areas of the hospital, I

knew all the hospital workflow, even though I was wasn’t able to work as a nurse anymore.”

Smith was hired in December 2004, and by 2006, he was helping the company write computer programs to streamline critical care in major hospitals across the country.

“I still had not been to college, and in the meantime, these third-party contractors would come in, and they were making three times more than I was. And they would ask me how to do something, and I would tell them. I was training them on

something I had a huge part in creating,” he said.

So Smith took the advice of a friend and created his own company.

Having worked for Cerner Corporation and UAB Health System, he recognized a need for clinicians to be trained in healthcare IT by fellow clinicians who understand the workflow in hospital and clincial settings.

He founded TrainingWheel, which is now the preferred contracted provider for training and implementation support for more than 2,400 facilities.

Smith says it is

important to “know your worth,” and to be confident in it.

In the years following, he has developed dozens of computer programs for companies such as Dell and Microsoft. He has worked in the US and abroad, and he has made a good life for him and his family.

He enjoys writing music and playing guitar, and has recently been in the studio with several producers recording his songs. Some of them come to him while he’s washing dishes at the restaurant.

“Washing dishes is actually kind of fun. When you own the restaurant,” he said with a smile.

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# S&R Body Shop seeks to treat customers like family

By TAYLOR MITCHELL  
tmitchell@dailyhome.com

Lincoln is not a big place, with a population of 6,600 people, according to the U.S. Census bureau. The city is noted for its small-town feel.

That small-town, close-knit feel is what Scott Ramsey tries to give his customers when they come to S & R Body Shop.

The shop originally opened in 1988. After graduating high school, Ramsey got a job

Ramsey said. He believes the business depends on great customer service. In a small town like Lincoln, he said, it's important to treat people well because there is a huge chance they are going to remember it. Ramsey said that he knows and remembers just about all of his customers. Since most of them are from Lincoln, many are people he deals with often even if it's just in the community. Ramsey said he feels like giving them the best service possible

extra mile with each and every job. If someone brings their car in for work, we are going to do our very best every single time.” When asked how he handles the possibility of an unsatisfied customer, Ramsey said that isn't something he spends much time worrying about, because providing excellent customer service at fair prices minimizes the number of complaints his business incurs. “It's rare for S & R to have an unsatisfied customer. It's a testament to our hard work and trying to make every customer feel at home.”



The family-owned auto repair shop takes pride in its customer service and fair prices.

Photo by BOB CRISP



S&R Body Shop is at 26 St. Mary Road in Lincoln.

Photo by BOB CRISP

working in Anniston. Originally, he and his father opened the shop to do side work, but when it started picking up more and more business, they decided to make it their

is a priority. After all, that's part of being in a community. He said that he also prioritizes giving people a fair price. This is just another way Ramsey



Scott Ramsey is the owner of S&R Body Shop. The business has been in operation since 1988.

Photo by BOB CRISP

full-time focus. Since then, Ramsey has been working at the shop. It's a small shop, with only six employees, including Ramsey. Even 32 years after opening, it still remains very much a family operation, with Ramsey working in the shop and his sister working the front desk. Due to this family focus, the Ramseys try to make sure every one of their customers feels well taken care of. “We try to treat our customers like family,”

looks towards treating his customers the best he possibly can. This is something Ramsey prides himself on. “We do a good job for a fair price,” he said. The quality of work at S & R is also something Ramey takes pride in. He said that while a fair price is important to get return customers, it's also important to be able to stand by your own work. He said that his employees stand behind every single job they do. “We try to go the



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# Clark’s Insurance Center: Providing security ‘when things go wrong’

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Clark’s Insurance Center has been in business for thirty five years providing insurance coverage throughout the state of Alabama and surrounding areas.

“The original intent was to provide Talladega with more insurance options, but we have developed relationships all over Alabama and even some of Georgia,” said Louraine Roberts, agency manager.

Clark’s Insurance Center provides all forms of insurance, such as auto, business, home, life and even pet insurance. The only insurance not provided is health insurance and that is only because of the coding and billing that is required, according to Roberts. “Health insurance is one of those things where if you do not understand it, do not mess with it. But when it comes to car insurance or life insurance and so forth, I can talk all day.”

Most of the center’s policies relate to automobile coverage. “We have about 225 car lots we write insurance

for. It is good practice to start shopping for insurance before you are standing on the lot I would say. We can help you know what to expect and what paperwork to have before time.”

Roberts believes that insurance is adulting that no one wants to do. “It is not fun, but it is needed. It is the coverage you need before things happen or you decide to get that house or car. It is important to get insurance as soon as you can, and it saves money on premiums and deductibles.

“For example, kids that go off to college. I try to get parents ready for it, but that child needs his or her own insurance. If they have a car and get into a fender bender, sure, they can get a rental with a credit card, but they will have a time proving insurance that is not in their name.”

Clark’s Insurance Center cares for their clients beyond just the policies they obtain. They understand that no matter what takes place, life does not stop.

“We do more than just help with car repairs. We help give stability, Whether it is the loss of



Clark’s Insurance Center is at 106 Court Square S in Talladega.

Photo by BOB CRISP

a home, business, or loss of life. it is important to help our clients get back on track as best as possible.”

According to Roberts, when devastating things happen, money might not get back the family photos, that house you grew up in, or even provide comfort for the loss of that loved one, but it is help. Help to rebuild and start over,

help to grieve and not have to worry about certain debts, or the option to take extra time off work if needed.

“You develop a lot of relationships over the years, but to be able to give people security if things go wrong is a great feeling.”

Insurance is one of those things that involve a lot of reading to stay ahead, and Clark’s

Insurance Center aims to keep clients notified of any new changes in policies that develop.

“I can not stress enough to pay your premium. Insurance collapses when that time and date given to pay runs out. Do not stop insurance just because that car breaks down. I understand rough times happen, but just reduce coverage. You do not

have to start over.”

Roberts added that it is a myth of there being a grace period for car insurance.

“Too many accidents transpire throughout the year and the driver or drivers involved are uninsured. That grace period only applies in policies of life and health. Learn the benefits, get insured and get the proper coverage needed.”

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# Talladega: Commerce and culture combine to make this local city “more just than a racetrack”

## *Downtown is home to a thriving commercial district*



An aerial view of downtown Talladega shows off the city's historic buildings, many of which are currently being renovated or have been revitalized in recent years.

Alabama News Center

By Chuck Chandler  
Special to The Daily Home

To most of the world, Talladega is the big racetrack that opened half a century ago. The 2.66-mile NASCAR tri-oval 14 miles from downtown Talladega is familiar even to people who care nothing about vehicles racing 200 mph as 175,000 fans scream while nursing their favorite beverages in the bleachers and infield. Talladega Superspeedway is quickly becoming the “world’s most sophisticated fan experience,” as its \$50 million redevelopment project was completed last year. Billed as the “Transformation,” the rebirth of the famous facility has nothing on its namesake town founded 135 years earlier. Talladega the city is super in ways millions of followers of Petty, Earnhardt, Gordon and the “Alabama Gang” might never imagine if they haven’t traveled south along Highway 77. The town of about 15,000 residents easily qualifies for the Transformation label, perhaps outdoing the track efforts through reviving the old Courthouse Square, restoring stately mansions and attracting impressive new industries and distinctive businesses.

Talladega’s blend of building new and improving old may be unsurpassed among small towns in Alabama. The manifold instances are too many to mention, but the downtown is a good starting point. The oldest courthouse in continuous use in the state is surrounded by buildings either restored to their glory of the 1800s or under renovations moving in that direction. Even businesses that have failed have fresh facades awaiting new investment.

On one corner is Boswell’s Wings, named after a local doctor who patented airplane components and some

# April in Talladega

## Fri. & Sat. ~ April 17-18

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claim flew a plane off a barn in 1902, prompting the legend Boswell beat the Wright Brothers in flight by a year. Artisan's Alley awaits occupants on another corner downtown. The Purefoy Hotel just behind Courthouse Square is being prepped for a new life. It seems like every direction is undergoing major reconstruction, renovations or set to open doors on new businesses.

Across the street from Boswell's is the opulent former Talladega Post Office, built in 1913 for \$63,395.34 and used for mail until the local Water & Sewer Board moved in 16 years ago. People paying their bill in person today enjoy entering through the six-columned front, walking across the marble floors cut from the Sylacauga quarry, beneath the original brass lighting fixtures and handing their credit card to employees behind old-fashioned barred cashier windows. There are still horse hitching posts in back of the building.

A block south of the square stands the 1906 L&N Railroad Station that was restored to house the Chamber of Commerce. Visitors traverse the floors of tile imported from Italy, along 8-inch-tall white marble baseboards, lighted by brass fixtures converted from gas to electricity. Beneath the original red tile roof, guests are often alerted to "April in Talladega," the 45th annual pilgrimage – April 12-13 this year – showing off antebellum homes, churches and Oak Hill Cemetery. The tour changes each year but frequently features Boxwood (1854) and the Plowman-Heacock Home, generally regarded as the town's most beautiful tall-columned home.

Across the street in front of Piggly Wiggly is the Talladega Battle Monument built in 1968 over the town's still-bubbling spring. Beneath the four-winged concrete dome are bronze maps and plaques commemorating the players in the 1813 fight led by future President Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett and U.S. military forces against the local Creek Indians, who were vastly outnumbered and quickly defeated.

Talladega's Veterans Park – the city's biggest of nine recreational areas – has a long walking track with bridges that twice traverse a creek. The park has bathrooms, benches, playgrounds, two pavilions with picnic tables, a Little Free Library and WWII tank for visitors to admire. Not far away is the city's nine-hole public golf course, which is near the Talladega Bowling Center, where children and adults are entertained at night and on weekends. Spring Street Community Center has a 25-meter indoor heated pool and swimming programs for all ages.

Today, Talladega natives often head to Tina's Home Cookin' for breakfast, to Café Royale or Custom Pizza for lunch and to the

Stampede Steakhouse or Matehuala Mexican for supper. Every day around noon, the parking lot of Fincher's Delite is packed at the longtime little roadside eatery. Guys go to Michael's Men's Wear for clothing and shoes, in big or small sizes. Visitors often opt to spend the night at the pristine Somerset Bed & Breakfast, which Bon Voyage magazine named "Best in the South." And there's nearly every fast-food place or national chain retail store and hotel outside the old business area and historic Silk Stocking District.

Shocco Springs on the northwest edge of town has welcomed Baptists and others from around the world since 1910. The current 40-acre conference and recreation center has a lake and more than two dozen housing, service and presentation facilities. Alabama Power linemen often use Shocco Springs as a staging area during major storm restoration efforts.

Talladega has standout medical facilities, including Talladega Health and Rehab and Citizens Baptist Medical Center, which employ nearly 700 combined.

Years ago, Georgia-Pacific pulled up roots, dropping Talladega's economic and employment numbers. That changed early this year when the company opened a \$100 million, 300,000-square-foot lumber production plant employing 130 people. That total is but a tenth of the local employment by the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), but it marks the latest transformation in Talladega. The Presbyterian Home for Children next to AIDB is not a major employer but is a primary influence on youths coming there from difficult circumstances.

"Talladega is probably one of the most diverse communities in the nation, because of its acceptance of people with sensory deprivation," says AIDB President John Mascia. "They're just regular people here. This city and county is very special and different."

The restored and recently renovated Ritz includes the adjacent revived Otts building, where the long hallway outside the green room and management offices is lined with signed photos and posters from prestigious productions and famous singers. There's Diahann Carroll, Don McLean, Martha Reeves, Judy Collins, Mickey Rooney, Ricky Skaggs, Ronnie Millsap, Hal Holbrook and scores of other artists amidst 14 posters from prior Black Jacket concerts.

"We've pulled some coups over the years," says Culver, the executive director since 1996, except three years when he directed the Birmingham Children's Theatre.

The 1936 Ritz is considered one of the nation's best examples of



**Since being saved from ruin two decades ago, Talladega's Historic Ritz Theatre has become the centerpiece of the city's downtown district.**

Alabama News Center



**Under the direction of George Culver, left, the Ritz has given Talladega a vibrant showplace for music and theater.**

Alabama News Center



**Sue Patterson, Linda Sims and Sharlea Taylor, members of Alabama Power Company's Talladega office staff, appreciate what the city has to offer.**

Alabama News Center

art deco theaters, with its façade of opaque structural glass of the kind in New York's Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall. The building front had fallen into ruin in the 1990s, with a third of the panels missing, but those were matched perfectly with antique vitrolite glass collected by a St. Louis artisan. The huge marquee was brought back to life with red and green neon lighting crafted by a Birmingham specialist.

Culver presided over the fundraising campaign that led to the Feb. 16, 1998, reopening concert by the National Symphony String Quintet. "They said the acoustics were as good as anywhere they'd ever played," he says.

A 2018 renovation replaced the cushions in all 550 seats and removed six coats of paint from the steel frames, as the side designs were repainted by hand. The tall walls were sanded and given a fresh coat of paint with an art deco-inspired design. Eight large lamp sconces were placed along the walls,

based on the design of the lone original light. House lights, surround sound and other modern infrastructure was added.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is our arts education," says Culver, who recalls coming to the standalone cinema as a child growing up in nearby Munford. "This year we will pass 100,000 students in this theater the past 20 years to see professional arts entertainment. Very few towns, not only in Alabama but across America, can say that."

On Talladega nights, Lindsey Moses welcomes a diverse crowd to Dega Brewhouse, where the music swings from hip-hop to country to heavy metal, and none of the old, young, black, white, blind or deaf patrons blink an eye. In the mornings, Moses teaches classes at Lmo & Co., the art studio she opened in 2011; at night she serves beer and banter at her bar; when she's not eating or sleeping, she paints.

Moses goes down the smooth curving concrete bar she built four years ago,

reciting the name of each person who slides up on the black wood stools. Local hero Lt. Tommy Perry is welcomed this night with hugs and kisses from many in the crowd, just two months after being shot in the face by a killer's .357 Magnum while on patrol. "I'm just proud to be here," the 32-year Talladega Police veteran says.

One of those shaking Perry's hand is Johnny Williams, who decades ago was among the world's elite athletes. An introduction to an out-of-towner leads to small talk, which turns to amazement at the bits and pieces of Williams' life he reveals. Could this mild-mannered man have beaten an Olympic gold medalist in a footrace, played professional baseball, spent time with the Dallas Cowboys and set Ohio Valley Conference records that still stand?

"He was Bo Jackson before Bo Jackson," says Talladega High School Assistant Principal Chuckie Miller, whose father

coached Williams as an All-State basketball player. "He was a world-class sprinter, and Talladega High School didn't even have a track."

Williams would go on to be drafted by the Cowboys, despite playing football only in his sophomore year of high school. He played professional baseball in the Cincinnati Reds and Kansas City Royals organizations. Today he smiles and backs away when a reporter pulls out a notebook and pen. "No, no, that's all in the past," Williams says, shaking his head.

Moses says special people are common customers at Dega Brewhouse, Talladega's only public bar setting. Hers and nearby businesses complement Courthouse Square.

"This is why I love to live in Talladega," she says. "There's more than the racetrack, though we appreciate the racetrack, there's just so much more."



# Family-owned Talladega real estate company takes pride in educating and advising clients

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Porter and Porter Realty Co. is a family-owned business that strives to make sure their clients find a place they are happy to call home. “We are a business that offers everything real estate. From rental houses, buying a house, buying land or property, we can help,” said Joe Porter, broker and co-owner. The business has been around since 1950 and

there are tax breaks.” Porter believes that a lot of people are afraid to ask questions because they do not want to appear as if they do not already know, so they do not ask. This leads to a lot of people stuck in situations because of not knowing all the ends or questions never asked. “Too often people are stuck renting and stuck with things broken in rentals because of the assumption that the landlord should or will fix

**Porter & Porter Realty Company is at 209 North Street W.**

File photo



**Joe Porter is the company's broker and co-owner.**

Submitted photo

was originally opened by Porter’s late father, who started the business intended for insurance and real estate. “We have been in business longer than those that work here now even, so I would say we are doing something right.” Year after year, Porter and Porter Realty continues to focus on clients year round. There are no off days for them. Porter and the five agents currently on staff will show priority to anyone who has interests in a home. “One of our goals is to try and help clients realize their options, and help give them the comfort of realizing the overall process is not as bad as they might think.” Depending on the direction a client is pursuing, getting a new home can happen in a matter of days. With purchasing it can take an estimated thirty to forty days, but renting is a matter of qualifications, references and verification. “If a client ever asks me which path I think they should take, I will always say the buying route. Those monthly payments will eventually stop. It is more responsibility, but it will be paid for, and then

the problem.” There should be more education early in life to help everybody know about real estate and what they are getting into, Porter said. It is too often such big purchase options are entered into blindly, and left with damaging outcomes with the chance of it not being fixable. “My advice is, no matter buying or renting, it is important to keep your credit good. Better credit can give you so many more options. Plus it takes too much time to try and save and purchase one.” Porter and Porter Realty is a business that cares about their clients beyond just the sale. Porter and the other agents believe strongly in taking the time to make sure the process is understood. They also aim to help the prospective buyer or renter is achieve their goals. “For me, when clients have their key in their hand, it’s the most rewarding part of the whole process.” Asked if the business plans to expand, Porter said that the company “is always open for someone who wants to become an agent.”



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## TALLADEGA is the best place to be!

City council members Dr. Horace Patterson, Vicky Robinson-Hall, Joe Power, Betty Spratlin, Trae Williams, Mayor Timothy Ragland, and City Manager Beth Cheeks are dedicated and passionate about progressing Talladega.

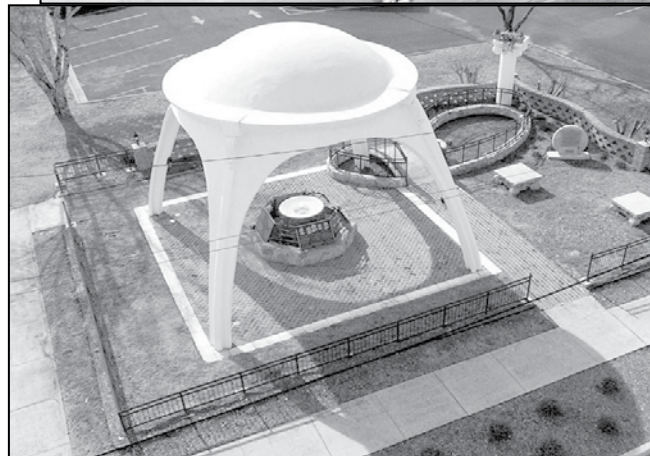
## Highlights for 2019:

- The City made numerous improvements to the existing infrastructure in 2019, including a \$1.5 million paving project and a \$900,000 sewer rehabilitation project. There is new construction and renovations happening all around the City. Which is a positive sign of growth and prosperity in Talladega.
- There is always something to do here in Talladega. From pickleball and card games to swimming and archery at the Recreation Centers, events on the Square, youth sports, and programs at the public library.
- The fourth annual Christmas on the Square event brought in visitors and gathered residents for a festive celebration that was FREE for all! The Courthouse Square was filled with twinkling lights and a Christmas Tree light show that dazzled attendees for the entire Christmas season!
- 2019 was an election year for the City of Talladega. Four out of the five councilmembers are newly elected officials. Talladega residents, also, voted in the first African American mayor in Talladega history. There is truly history occurring At Every Turn.

## TALLADEGA PROUD TALLADEGA BEAUTIFUL TALLADEGA AT EVERY TURN

City of TALLADEGA

**Join us for the  
2020 Christmas on the Square.**





By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

The mother-daughter team of Diane and Laura Swinford opened Lace and Grace Boutique in Munford because of their love for clothes and for giving back to their community.

“Our business stands out because we are the only one in town, I believe. We are a small town of about 1,200 people or so, and things around here are kind of limited. If it is not in town, people have to go to Oxford or a city of their choice to shop,” Diane said.

The decision to open the business came about because they saw a need for it in the community, as well as the opportunity to offer fashionable clothes, but at a lower price.

“We offer a little bit of everything when it comes to clothes, but we are also adjointed to Country Cuts which is a hair salon, so we are pretty busy,” Laura said.

Though the business is fairly new, Lace and Grace Boutique has been very successful in the community from a business standpoint and participating throughout the city to help others and represent their brand.

“During Christmas time, things were really

great. We even got the chance to participate in the Munford Day Parade.”

Lace and Grace Boutique is a shop built on good faith and values, and an advocate for the community. For them, it is not just about the profit but also how they can give back to others.

“A little while after Christmas, a family lost their home due to fire and by us being blessed with this shop, we were able to donate some clothes to help them start over.”

Diane said that as a recently-opened business, their main area of concern is keeping inventory up. Aside from that, the ability to help people and meet new faces is one of the most rewarding feelings.

“We will continue to let the ministry of the word lead us to be there for our community.

Through this business,  
we make a difference in  
the lives of so many.”

Lace and Grace Boutique offers weekly sales on merchandise and plans to offer the service of eyelash extensions.

Currently, the owners are testing out the success of children's clothes, but have the goal to eventually add children's clothes to the boutique on a permanent basis.



**Lace and Grace Boutique delivers fashions to Munford, Lincoln and neighboring communities.**

Photo by BOB CRISP



**The shop offers “a little bit of everything” in a cozy and welcoming environment for customers.**

Photo by BOB CRISP

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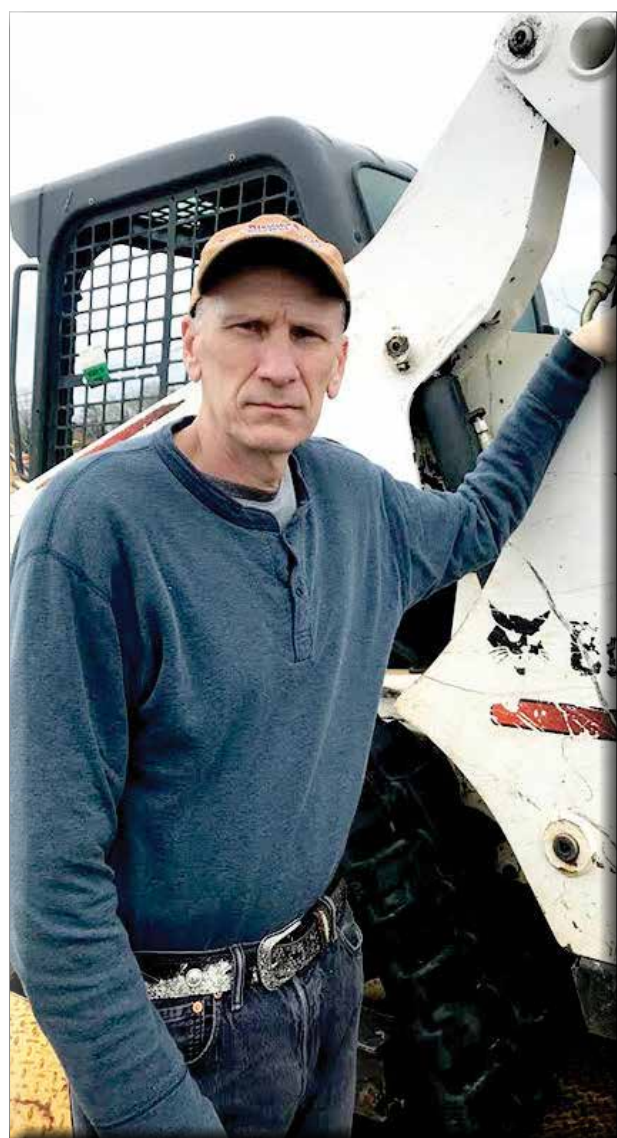
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# Need special equipment for a project? Visit Taylor Rental



**Perry Barber is the owner Taylor Rental Center.**

Submitted photo



**Taylor Rental Center is at 206 S Tinney Street in Talladega.**

Photo by BOB CRISP

By VALLEAN JACKSON  
Special to The Daily Home

Taylor Rentals in Talladega has provided the local area with the opportunity of using heavy equipment at less-than-heavy prices for 40 years.

“I opened the business because I know most people do not budget to own certain equipment due to the cost. Then there are some people who only need to use equipment once or twice,” said Perry Barber, owner of Taylor Rentals. Instead of trying to

budget in a tractor to clear off a lot or find enough chairs and tables for an upcoming event, Taylor Rentals offers the option to be able to rent what is needed. They can provide construction and party equipment, and the process is fairly straightforward.

“To reserve what is needed, come into the store, pick your date and the equipment you need and pay a deposit.”

Taylor Rentals provides the equipment and eliminates the hassle, but they do not deliver any of the equipment a customer is renting. The customer will have

to make necessary arrangements to transport any equipment that cannot be driven.

“We do not deliver. It is an across-counter rental where customers are to pick up and return the equipment.”

Taylor added that if a piece of equipment comes back damaged, the customer becomes responsible for the cost of what is damaged.

When the temperatures start to rise and things start to get warmer is Taylor Rental Center’s busy season. But Barber said business remains steady even at times other than spring

and summer.

“No matter what the season is, the most popular thing rented is tables and chairs because almost everyone needs tables and chairs at some point.”





One of the best things about Taylor Rentals aside from the savings of renting opposed to buying is the time available to rent what is needed. Barber said that a customer can rent equipment for as long as needed. He has scaffolding that has been rented for three or four years. However, no rental can be purchased.

“With providing the


services we do, I feel as if more time is left to plan when it comes to events or preparing something.”

Taylor Rentals has accumulated much success over the years and his love for helping someone solve a problem they might have with the right equipment for the job is one of many reasons his business continues to thrive.

Barber sometimes endures some challenges along the way with working with the public, as any business does, but his love for people and making a difference outweighs all else.



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Police Chief: Jeff Rutledge,  
Councilmembers: Shane Turner, Phillip McWilliams,  
Lee Garrison, Tim Lipham

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# Miller’s Barbeque: Feeding Talladega for more than a decade

By LACI BRASWELL  
Home staff writer

Miller’s Barbecue has been a mainstay in the Talladega community for the last 15 years and counting.

Since opening in 2005, owner Donnie Miller said the restaurant has only continued to grow.

Miller said he and his family previously owned Miller’s Dinner Bell, which was located off The Square, in the same building as Tina’s Home Cooking is now.

“We served Southern-style food,” Miller said. “It closed in 2002, but we would still get calls for Thanksgiving orders. We hated to see it close, but it was just hard to find help.”

Miller said he didn’t always believe he would work in the food industry.

“I previously worked for the Talladega Foundry,” Miller said.

The restaurant owner said he decided to open Miller’s Barbecue after being contacted by a friend from Alex City, who is also in food service about purchasing the former Campbell’s BBQ building.

“After thinking about it, I knew it was something I couldn’t refuse,” Miller said. “I’ve fallen in love with cooking over the years. Now it’s something I really enjoy doing.”

When asked what sets his restaurant a part from others in the area, Miller replied, “The cooker I have is aged and it really adds to the flavor. We also use hickory chips to cook with, and it gives it a distinct, smoky taste.”

Miller added the restaurant makes its own rub to marinate the barbecue meat.

“We let it cook for about 12 hours each day,” he said.

Menu items include: barbecue plates and sandwiches, hamburgers, catfish, chicken tenders, wings and hotdogs, along



According to many customers, Miller’s serves the best barbecue and burgers in Talladega. The resturant is at 408 Fort Lashley Avenue.

Photo by BOB CRISP

with an assortment of side dishes such as fries, coleslaw, baked beans and more.

Miller said some of his most popular dishes are his barbecue plates and sandwiches, burgers,

wings, corn fritters and “haystacks,” which are baked potatoes stuffed with barbecue meat and an assortment of toppings.

“Our burgers are made with 100 percent

ground beef,” he said.

Miller also emphasized the laid-back and friendly environment at his restaurant.

“We have picnic tables out front where you can enjoy your

meal outside, which is really popular during the warmer months,” Miller said. “I’m usually here, and will be glad to come out and meet you and shake your hand.”

The owner said the



Donnie Miller has owned and operated the restaurant since 2005.

Photo by BOB CRISP

restaurant also takes pride in partnering with schools and other organizations for community outreach opportunities and fundraising.

“It’s something we have continued to do over the years,” Miller said. “They’ve been a big hit, and it’s important that we give back when we can.”

Miller added the restaurant also caters for community events such as the Ritz Theatre’s annual drawdown.

“We also cater weddings, reunions, parties and more,” he said. “We have about 50 menu items from Miller’s Barbecue and some favorites from The Dinner Bell such as the turkey and dressing and pigs-in-a-blanket.”

Additionally, the restaurant also takes delivery orders for parties of at least five.

“We try to make it happen if available,” Miller said.

Miller said in the future he hopes to add new items to the menu.

“We are still trying out new items such as fried dill pickles, jalapeno poppers, a barbecue club and a turkey club.”

The owner of the family restaurant also commended his staff.

“We all work well together,” he said. “Everyone works hard to make sure the food and service is top quality.”

Miller and his wife, Michelle, have two children, Trey and Cason, and three grandchildren.

Miller’s Barbecue is at 405 Fort Lashley Ave. in Talladega.

Hours of operation are Tuesday and Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. until 7 p.m.;

Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10:30 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Miller’s BBQ is closed on Sunday and Monday.

For more information, call 256-761-0187.

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# Talladega-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce promotes business development in communities

By JOHN DOWD  
Special to The Daily Home

2019 was a huge and successful year for the Talladega-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. The organization is proud of its efforts, given the limited funding, staffing and assets. The large area the chamber covers encompasses numerous communities and businesses including several large tourist attractions, all of which saw improvement during the past year.

One such project was completed at the Talladega Superspeedway, which according to Jason Daves, the chamber’s executive director, is one of the largest draws to the community, as well as to the state, as far as tourism. The track hosts two major races a year and has programs throughout the season. Last year the facility introduced a new interactive fan experience called the Talladega Superspeedway Infield Transformation Project. As part of the project the speedway opened a modern 35,000 square-foot open air garage and social club. This part of the program is known as the Interactive Talladega Garage Experience. The facility is equipped with a 41-foot video board, garage suites viewing Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series garage stalls, souvenir shops and will even have a new tram route that will take fans to the new Garage. The facility has been named Big Bill’s after Bill French, the founder of NASCAR.

Another big draw to the area that opened in 2019 was the Museum of Art, a new addition to the Talladega College. The facility boasts housing the Amistad Murals, which are valued at \$50 million. Along with these new additions to the community, the chamber of commerce continues to build relationships between numerous businesses and tourist-drawing facilities such as the Civilian Marksmanship Park (CMP) and Top Trails.

The CMP is one of the most sophisticated ranges of its kind, hosting national shooting events as well as employing top of the line technology for sportsmen to use. The range draws people from all over the world. Top Trails is a 2,800-acre area of campgrounds, ATV trails and outdoor activities. The location presents over 100 miles of off-highway-vehicle trails for visitors to explore.

“The main goal of the chamber is to help facilitate the growth of these and other local businesses. It is important to put these places into working conjunction and to build partnerships to promote tourism and economic growth,” said Daves. The chamber also hosts a monthly event called Chamber Thursdays, which are held the last Thursday of every month at various locations and businesses around the community. These meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend and according to Daves are “a great opportunity to get members of the community into the walls of your business.” These events are hosted by members of the chamber.

This year, the chamber is working to promote the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB).

The organization is a major employer of deaf and blind workers in the area, as well as nationally. It employs throughout the state and even federally, taking on projects for the military and the federal government, as well as for the community.

The Alabama Industries for the Blind program, as it is called, creates a plethora of items like military neckties, various paper goods and even mops. The program employs over 200 deaf and blind individuals and is housed in Talladega.

AIDB is also the most comprehensive rehabilitation, education and service program of its kind in the world. It was founded in 1858 and



“The main goal of the chamber is to help facilitate the growth of local businesses,” says executive director Jason Daves.

File photo



The Civilian Marksmanship Park boosts economic development by bringing shooting sports enthusiasts from all over the world to Talladega.

Submitted photo

serves people of all ages.	programs at local college and school campuses	various concentrations.	24,000 individuals across the state.
The institute hosts various outreach	teaching labor skills in	The institute provides assistance to more than	

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