

LAKESIDE LIVING

MIMI'S TABLE & GARDEN TEA ROOM

- At the Oyster Roast Regatta
- A conversation with Pell City author Cherith Glover Fluker
- Are you benefiting from the outdoors?

See inside for more!

January 2026



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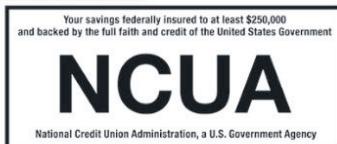
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CONTENTS

24

48



FEATURES

- 10 Tea At Mimi's Table
- 22 At The Oyster Roast Regatta
- 36 A Conversation With Cherith Fluker
- 46 How Do We Benefit From The Outdoors?

Between The Lines.....	06
Hook, Line & Sinker	08
Meet Me By The Lake.....	42
Lakeside Flora & Fauna.....	52
Calendar Of Events	58
Lakeside Chats with Cherith.....	74



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ON THE COVER: Mimi's Table & Garden Tea Room in southern Talladega County. Photo by Kenny Morris

LAKESIDE LIVING

*Covering life along
Logan Martin Lake since 1994*

PUBLISHERS

Blucher Ehringhaus

John Fry

EDITOR

Buddy Roberts

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER

Tucker Webb

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Darla Allen

PHOTOGRAPHY

Tim Badgwell

WRITERS

Susan Cook

Cherith Glover Fluker

CJ Knight

Sarah E. Moreman

DISTRIBUTION

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BETWEEN THE LINES

Marble City production studio rivals those in Music City

Though I always think it's fun to discover something new in the lakeside community, even if it's just new to me in that I didn't already know about it.

And fun aptly describes my visit to Music Works Audio/Video Productions in Sylacauga. It was there that I met three of the most personable individuals I've ever crossed paths with: owner David Harris, studio engineer and guitar tech Tim Morgan, and Jason Geise, the studio's social media and content creation manager. Erika Catt, who handles Music Works' artist development, had to be elsewhere the day of my visit, but I hope to meet her soon.

Music Works is at 2741 Old Birmingham Highway, in an 1,800-square-foot building that used to be David's auto shop, although you'd never guess that now. It's a state-of-the-art music production studio, designed by serious musicians for serious musicians, that offers recording services, mixing and mastering, music video production, photography, vocal training, choreography, songwriting support, and a stage that's large enough to accommodate a full band.

Members of the Music Works staff are all experienced musicians. David (a keyboardist) and Tim (on guitar) have played for years in bands throughout the Southeast, and Erika and Jason are both incredible singer-songwriters. They all believe such a combination is necessary for a studio experience such as theirs.

"Having a good team is important," Tim said. "No one man can do everything. As much experience as I have, David has experiences that I don't, and vice versa. That's what you need – a group of people who can round out your experience. Someone may ask me something that I don't know anything about, but Jason does know about. Or he and I might have to say, 'We don't know. Let's go ask David.' One of us will either know how to do it or know how to find the answer, and that's the key to an operation."

"There are three things you need," David said. "You've got to have the right equipment. You've got to have someone



PHOTO BY JASON GEISE

Tim Morgan and David Harris showing me the soundboard at Music Works in Sylacauga.

with the experience and knowledge. And you've got to have someone who's easy to work with. You'll find all three of those things here."

You can learn more about Music Works by visiting its website (musicworksav.com) and its Facebook (Music Works Audio/Video Productions) and Instagram ([music_workspro](https://www.instagram.com/music_workspro)) pages or by calling 256-245-7229.

I'm glad to have Music Works as part of this issue of Lakeside Living, which contains some more discoveries we've made in recent days. Join Susan Cook as she takes you on a visit to Mimi's Table for tea, Sarah Elizabeth Moreman as she looks back on one of the Birmingham Sailing Club's most beloved annual events, Cherith Fluker as she tells us all about her new book that uncovers some of central Alabama's most interesting secrets, and CJ Knight as he reminds us about how beneficial nature can be. And speaking of new discoveries, be sure to check out the new feature on page 76 before you close the magazine. You'll be glad you did.

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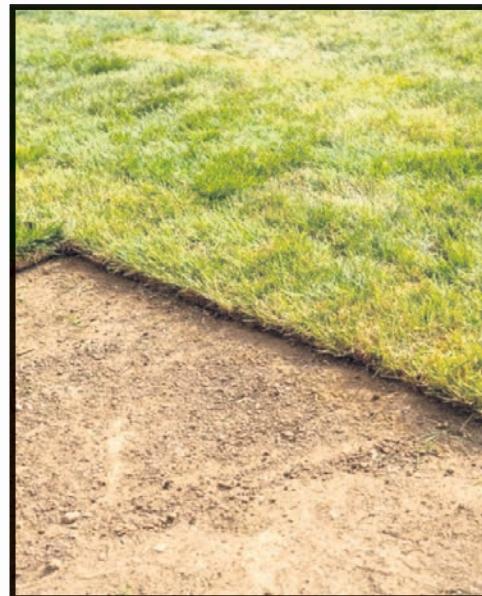
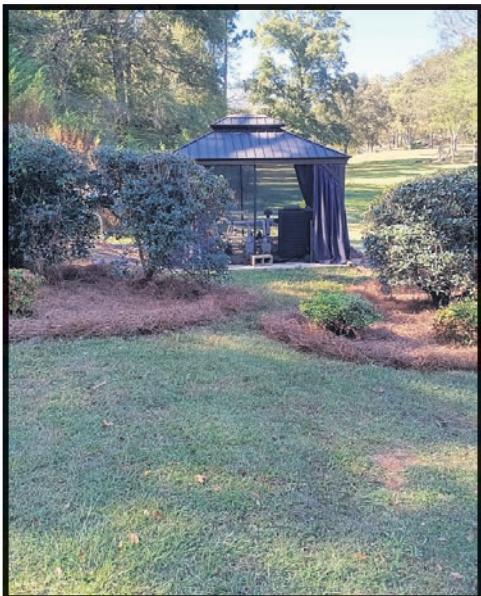
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HOOK, LINE & SINKER

How to make the best of **COLD JANUARY WEATHER**

January, often cold and windy, can pose adverse bass fishing conditions. If you can bear the frigid temperatures, the first month of the new year can be a great time to catch quality bass on the Coosa River chain. Bass, often lethargic this time of year, can show little interest in feeding, but if you're looking for the correct pattern, you can catch them even on the coldest of days.

During the month of January, I am focusing on one key structure: rock. Rock will maintain heat and can be bass havens all month long. The retention of heat can really be a big factor during these

colder months. I love to find rock shelves and rocky transition with chunk rock facing the sun. A lot of people think you have to fish really deep this time of year. This is not always the case, as shallow rocky banks near or adjacent to deep water can be bass magnets. I have caught bass in less than 2 feet of water this time of year, so don't be afraid to fish in shallow water.

My bait of choice for fishing rock and concrete in January is the Shad Rap and DT6, both in crawfish color. A slow, steady retrieve will be crucial as you maintain contact with these rock structures. A parabolic bend rod (typically a medium paired with 10-12-pound fluorocarbon line) will

work great. Both bait cast and spinning equipment will work. I really like to target channel swings in creeks and on the main river this time of year. Once you catch a couple, you should be able to replicate the pattern and expand. Also, it's worth noting that this time of the year is the best time to catch your personal best. Full of eggs and with a slow metabolism, bass in January will often be at their peak weight for the year.

Don't let the cold keep you from catching your personal best. Use shallow diving red crankbaits on rock to enhance your production as you get the new year off to a good start.

Tight Lines & Strong Hooksets,

C.J. KNIGHT



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Tea at Mimi's Table

Make your reservations at this hidden gem in southern Talladega County

Written by **SUSAN COOK**

Photography by Susan Cook and Kenny Morris

Have you ever longed to step back in time, explore a secret garden, wander into Wonderland, or have tea in the Shire?

Q'm always searching for those storybook experiences, so I was thrilled to find a true hidden gem near Gantt's Quarry in Sylacauga.

Mimi's Table & Garden Tea Room is so whimsical, charming, and thoughtfully decorated, you'll think you've stepped into the pages of a favorite novel.

The tea room has been open just over

a year, and it's already popular. There are three tea times on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and

2:30 p.m., and you'll definitely need a reservation. I was lucky to snag a spot for the seasonal Magical Victorian Christmas Tea paired with the traditional Mimi's Yellow Rose Garden Tea.

You can start with water or iced tea, but this place is too special to stick to the basics. I tried the signature Hibiscus Honey Tea first. The ruby-red hibiscus was fragrant, lightly sweet, and so refreshing that I felt like a hummingbird sipping nectar. Guests also select two hot teas for the service. I chose the Scottish Caramel Toffee Tea first and ended with the Monk's Blend. Both tea flavors were so delicate and balanced that it was hard to choose a favorite. The china teapots, cups, and plates are all delightfully mismatched, making each piece even more noticeably beautiful.



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Once the tea was poured, I turned my attention to the food. Everything at Mimi's Table is made from scratch, and you can really taste the difference. Scones, especially, are hard to get just right, and people have different expectations. In England, scones tend to be drier and denser, but in the South, we like our biscuits fluffy and tender. Teresa and her team have created a perfect middle ground: their scones are light as a Southern biscuit with the hearty texture of a classic scone. They're scrumptious with clotted cream, strawberry jam, butter, or lemon curd.

With Mimi's Yellow Rose Garden Tea, I enjoyed the best tomato basil bisque I've ever tasted. I'm embarrassed to admit I had two bowls. How could I say no? Fire-roasted tomatoes, fresh basil, and pesto combine with large croutons for a bowl that's rich, fragrant, and satisfyingly crunchy. The bisque is served alongside a decadently smoky Bacon Gruyere & Caramelized



Our products and business inspiration all started with my grandmother's chocolate cake

~ Teresa



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Onion Quiche. Every bite was comforting, elegant, and delicious.

The Magical Victorian Christmas Tea also included a generous spread of savory bites: Potato & Cabbage Colcannon, Coronation Chicken Salad in Puff Pastry Rings, and a Monte Cristo Sandwich. The English Cottage Pie, however, was the standout.

Between courses, I soaked in the atmosphere. My table was tucked in the cozy foyer, while the main tea room bustled with birthday celebrations. But you don't need a special occasion to justify a visit to Mimi's Table & Garden Tea Room. Life is short—make it memorable.

And while an afternoon tea is often primarily associated with women, rest assured that the men who visit love it too.

Mimi's Table & Garden Tea Room began when owner Teresa Yager, who, after two decades in the baking and catering industry, drew inspiration from her beloved grandmother, Mimi, to open a tea room. The logo features a photo of Mimi, Goldie Mabel Davison, at 19, her eyes shining with joy.

Mimi's presence fills the space, especially on the mantle where her brooches hang from a draped scarf. As I admired the vintage jewelry, Teresa brought out a stunning circular gold pin adorned with green gems. It was given by a lady who visited the tea room and, moved by the tribute to Mimi, gifted her grandmother's 1940s brooch to the collection. Teresa hopes the scarf will one day be filled with heirloom pins, each representing loved ones whose legacies inspire future generations.



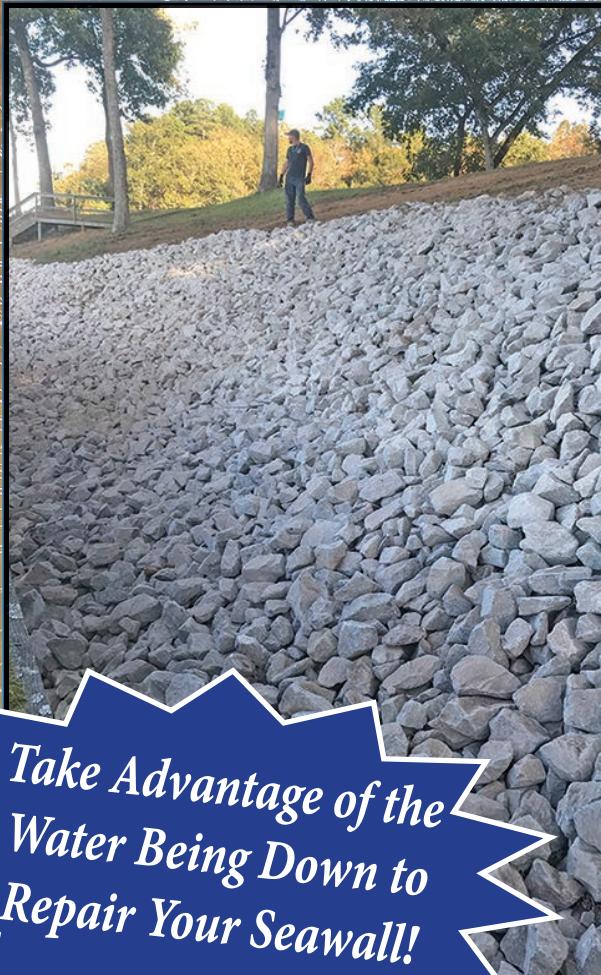
Teresa's husband Marty and her sister, Lori Reed, work alongside her, ensuring the parade of teas, soups, savory bites, and sweets flows seamlessly from the kitchen to the table.

At one point, I commented on all the delightful "extras," and Lori laughed, saying, "We're all a bit extra here." She wasn't exaggerating. Moments later, the lights were dimmed as Teresa and Lori carried out a miniature Christmas Pudding, which they proceeded to light on fire. The blue flames flickered just long enough to draw applause before dousing the dessert in a warm, decadent drizzle of custard.

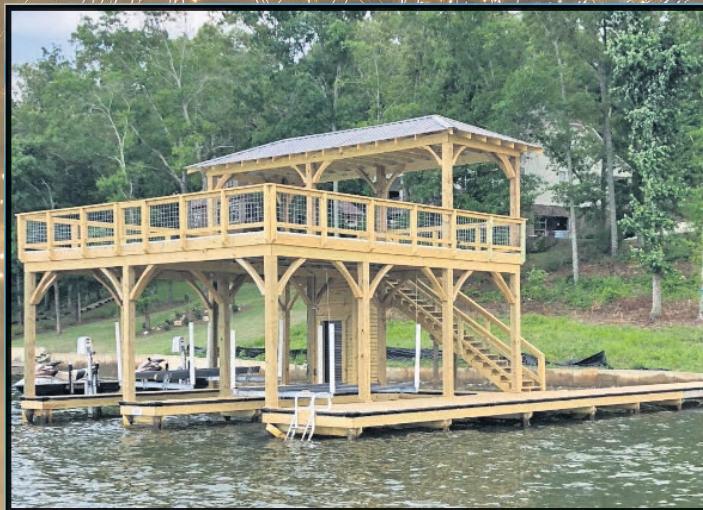
Teresa shared that "our products and business inspiration all started with my grandmother's chocolate cake. Mimi loved life. She found and saw joy in almost everything she did. She got such a kick out of everything—simple things that most people ignore. She was the comfort, and the food was just the icing on the cake."

Speaking of icing, the afternoon tea ended with a tempting selection of sweets, including Mimi's famed chocolate cake, the very recipe that began Teresa's baking journey. It was the perfect final bite.

Before leaving, Marty encourages guests to feed the goats. "Just call out 'Baby Girl,' and they'll come right over," I heard him say. As soon as I picked up the silver bucket of feed, there was no need to call them over. The sweet goats were waiting for me. I tossed a handful of feed onto the ground—rookie mistake.



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The goats made it clear they expected better. So I took another handful, leaned forward, and let the soft, damp tongue of the bravest goat scoop it from my palm. I slowly walked along the fence line, letting each goat have a nibble before I turned to go.

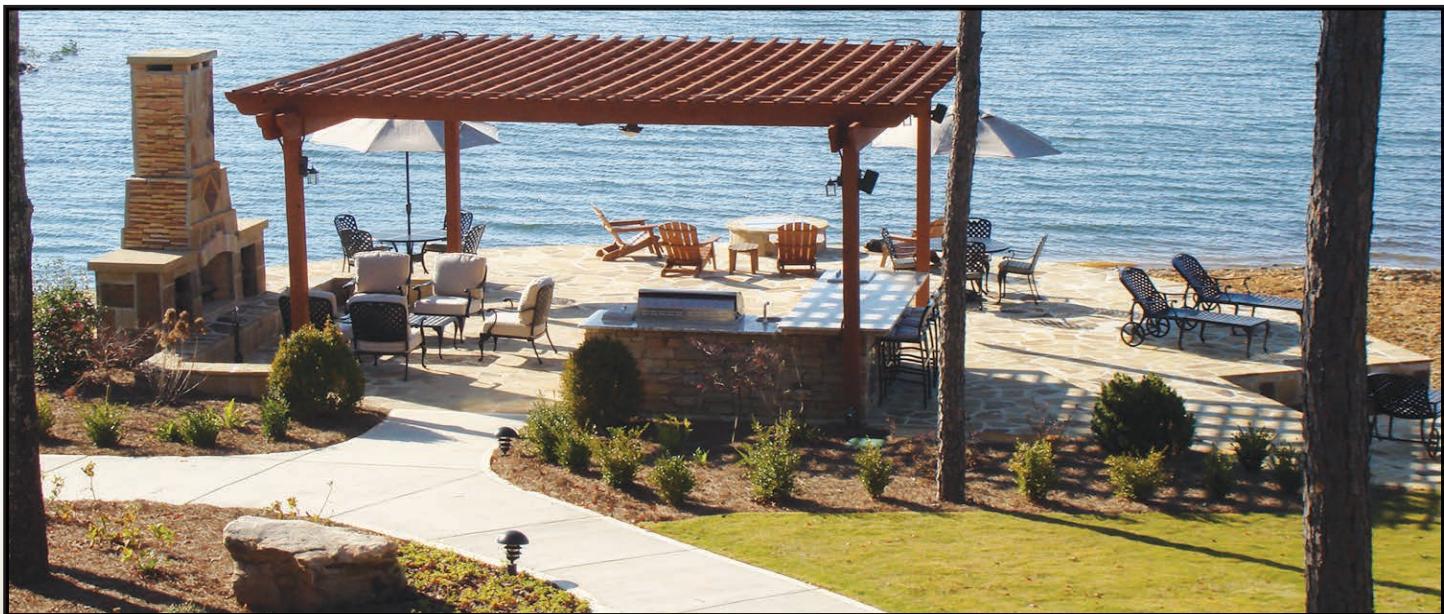
If you're looking to add a little magic to your next outing, Mimi's Table is the place. In January and February, you can follow the White Rabbit to the Alice in Wonderland Tea. From September through November, guests can channel their inner hobbit with Tea in the Shire. But the one I've set my sights on happens in late summer—Tea with the Hummingbirds. Thousands of hummingbirds flock to Mimi's Table each



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year, and while you sip Honey Hibiscus Tea and enjoy cakes, they flit all around, indulging in their own sweet feast.

Clearly, the hummingbirds know a hidden gem when they see one.

Mimi's Table & Garden Tea Room offers a rare mix of whimsy, fantastic food, and family history. As I drove down the winding driveway beneath a canopy of trees planted for members of Mimi's family, I knew, like the hummingbirds who never forget a sweet spot, I'd return, too.

The tea room is closed on Sundays and Mondays. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the tea room is open only for wedding cake appointments. On Thursdays through Saturdays, hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for tea room guests, brunch, and bakery customers. Hours may



change, so visit mimistable.net or the Mimi's Table Facebook page for current updates on hours, closures, and special events.

*Mimi's Table & Garden
Tea Room is at 4890 Shelvin
Rock Road, Sylacauga. For
reservations, call 256-404-8655.
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"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" ~2 Corinthians 5:17



Tomato basil bisque with smoky bacon gruyere and caramelized onion quiche



English cottage pie



Christmas pudding

MAKING A SPLASH

at the Birmingham Sailing Club's annual

Oyster Roast Regatta



Seeing the Lake with
SARAH ELIZABETH

Written and photographed by

DR. SARAH ELIZABETH MOREMAN

The days are growing shorter and cooler, filled with football games, bonfires, starry evening skies, and laughter that blankets the chilly weekends. Any lingering traces of good ol' summer days now feel like tender memories. However, today is warm enough to enjoy a day at the lake, with the sun blazing warm, offering one last touch of summer heat.

And I want to return to Vincent, home of the Birmingham Sailing Club, to experience the stronger winds that many BSC members take to the water with their sailboats to relish. I

was invited to return during my initial visit in June, and I am finally coming back in mid-November. Since I have not seen my friend Felecia that much lately due to my workaholic schedule, I have asked her to join me.

I texted Richard May about attending the club's year-end event, the oyster roast. He confirmed the details with "Great! I look forward to seeing you and meeting Felecia. The skipper's meeting is at 11:15 and racing starts at 12:30. Snacks, beverages, and dinner follow, probably around 4:00. BTW: we're all first name at the club so call me Richard. Let me know if you have questions."

It was Richard who made sure I got the most out of my

initial visit to the Birmingham Sailing Club by letting me observe while he steered the boat during a Sunday race. I met several BSC members, including Charlie Andrew, from whom I received messages welcoming me back and giving me more insight into what to expect at the oyster roast. I smiled as I read the details he shared: fresh oysters and shrimp from the coast, grills prepped, and savory food ready to enjoy. He mentioned that this event is one of his favorites and that he would even skip a race in Mobile simply for this oyster roast.

I hurry through my morning routine, caring for my cats and checking work emails, setting me behind on my plan to be on site in time for the skipper's meeting. A glance at the clock makes me sigh, and I text Richard to say we will be late. After a cursory glance at my navy nautical long-sleeved short dress, which I specifically bought for the oyster roast, with its pattern of white sailboats across the bottom half, a sense of excitement grows within me as I reflect on the day ahead.

Picking up Felecia, we climb the hilly, curvy, forested roads up to the lake, I share with her what I learned about the Birmingham Sailing Club during my initial visit. Once parked at the clubhouse, I turn off Darth Vader's V8 engine and smile at Felecia before asking, "Ready?" She smiles and makes a motion to grab her Brahmin handbag. I reach out to stay her arm.

I shake my head. "You do not need to bring that purse. Leave it. I will lock the Darth Vader." She pulls out a more compact wristlet, and I assure her that it should work fine. I decide to bring only my phone and sunglasses, leaving behind my jacket since it is still too warm outside. I can always retrieve it later when darkness falls and it is time to enjoy the food I have been hearing about.

I usher Felecia past the double glass front doors to the white, well-kept clubhouse. I sweep an arm out, "Welcome! See the art here? Ooh, I love this one." I stop to admire a



realistic painting of a sailboat in aesthetic shades of blues and greens. At least twenty or more nautical paintings in a variety of artistic methods featuring sailboats by the same artist are on display on their respective easels, which help set the tone for the races out on the water. Looking up, I see many white sails dotting the horizon of the lake surface.

"Let's go over to the pier," I suggest to Felecia. We make our way down the grassy hill, coated with fallen pine needles and autumn leaves. Muttering to myself about my old Sperrys that have lost their traction, I take my time to avoid slipping. Once the hill levels out onto the asphalt of the wraparound driveway sloping down to the boat slip, I show Felecia around the area before walking over to the camouflaged four-seater golf cart to greet the two people sitting in it, watching the races out on the water. The golf cart rests on the sloping driveway, giving the two of them a clear vantage point over the races.

The wide smile the lady gives us as she encourages us to join her and the man sitting next to her, who I later learn is Danny Waters, draws me in. I ask for her name, and she smiles, "Donna Graham, like a graham cracker." I laugh with her. Before long, Felecia and I are immersed in hearing about how Donna and her husband got into sailing.

"We lived in Georgia," she relates. "We were driving back and forth from '16 to '22, which was a five-hour drive. And so, we finally decided that was enough, since there weren't any ties in Georgia." Gesturing over my shoulder, she says, "We moved out here, up the road. It's the first house you see coming in, up on the hill. We built that cabin in 2016, all one thousand square feet. Easy to clean, with two bedrooms."

I lean in to confirm, "So before you moved here, you drove five hours to be here every weekend?"

"Yes, every weekend. We come here because we've always been members of the sailing club. We joined back in the '70s. We've never really let go of our love for sailing. It's just there." She smiles as she looks back out at the water before turning





her eyes to me and Felecia.

"My husband Stan is out there with my best friend, Sally. We call her Salty. He's sailing with his brother Mike today. My best friend, who usually sails with Stan, is out with another friend of ours. This should be interesting."

I lean in as she lowers her voice, pride evident in her tone. "There's lots of competition. Yeah, this should be fun since we have lots of boats out there today. There will be 99, or an even hundred, coming for dinner. The dinner is at 4. A low country boil with oysters. Very casual, and it will take place after the races. The dinner will be right up there." She points at the white clubhouse that nestles at the top of the hill, beckoning like a lighthouse. "They'll have everything set out at the clubhouse, so y'all need to stay for it. The food is good."

Felecia and I smile at her enthusiastic invitation. I ask more about her love for sailing.

"When I was little, we had a boat, an Altoona Thistle, and my family just sailed," Donna says. "And when we got married, my husband and I were looking for something we could do together. I mentioned sailing to him, and the club was doing a class at UAB, which we signed up for. This was back in the '70s. UAB also had ballroom dancing and disco dancing. I mean, they did a lot of really cool things."

Felecia exclaims, "Are you serious?!"

Donna smiles. "I am serious. We learned to disco dance at UAB. It was just a class. So my husband fell in love with sailing, and we started sailing. We sailed together for about 10 years, and then I started having children. They had to stay on shore with me. Out of our four children, we only have one who sails today. That's my oldest daughter. She lives in San Francisco and sails with a corporate team, Sea Bags, which is all women."

A horn sounds, its note carrying across the lake. "Do you

hear the horn? This is exciting. I thought we'd have more boats though. I think we've got eleven Flying Scots, three thistles in that light, and then some other boats out there too. It's beautiful when they're all under sail with the spinnakers up, because they are so colorful. I forgot to find out what color they're using. I know Salty's, but I don't know which one Stan has. That's how I can tell which boat is which, by the colorful spinnaker."

Felecia asks about what the spinnaker is.

"The big sail that comes up when you're going downwind," Donna explains. "It looks like a big balloon. You have three sails: the main sail, the jib, and the spinnaker on the Flying Scot and the Thistle. Now on the Catalina 22 too. I think there's one out there."

Shielding her eyes from the sun's glare, Donna points with her other hand at the boat gliding toward the pier.

"There's Catherine Robinson. Robert, that's her son. It's a club, and we have club boats. Three or four that are available for members. If you just want to come down on the weekend and don't have a boat, or if you don't want to put your boat in, and only want a single sail, you take those out."

Felecia comments, "Oh, that's nice."

Another sailor joins us after disembarking from the boat moored at the pier. He comments on a boat approaching, "They're coming back in, okay, which is a good decision. Right now, it's ten and gusty. There are some pretty strong gusts."

Extending his hand to Felecia, then to me, Terry Waldron introduces himself, then gestures toward the clubhouse. "Good to meet you." Donna reminds us, "When you go up there, there's water, Cokes, and about five different kinds of beer. So help yourself. Hang around for a little while."

Felecia and I drift over to some Adirondack chairs to take in the view of the lake. I turn to her and ask what she is



thinking now.

"Okay, this is typical lake life, Saturday living. There are sailboats. Happy people. Sunshine, wind on the water. But I'm surprised we have this in Alabama. It's a beautiful blessing to be able to do this, to sail in Alabama."

After a few minutes, Felecia grabs her felt hat and follows me as we make our way to the wooden-planked pier. I snap a few photos of her as we near the end of the pier before sitting down at the edge. I let out a sigh before exclaiming how gorgeous the scenery is, like we are in a bowl in this valley of a lake surrounded by mountainous trees.

So absorbed in it, I do not notice a boat drifting past to dock behind us until I feel a thud, then footsteps coming near. I turn to see Charlie greeting us. "Hi, Sarah Elizabeth, welcome back."

I say hi and quickly introduce my friend. He turns to Felecia.

"Hi. Sorry, my hands are a little wet."

"That's okay."

"It's nice to meet you." He leaves to attend to the boat, then asks if we have been out on the water yet.

Felecia responds, "Nope. Not at all."

Charlie then invites us to join him when he comes back shortly. I nod, and he boards the boat. Felecia and I decide to visit the clubhouse in the meantime. We see a couple as we near it. The man is grinning and raises his arms for a hug.

"Ben!" I exclaim, rushing over to hug him hello. My fellow TEDx speaker cohort, Ben Thompson. Then I hug his wife, Katie. I fall into catching up with them before seeing Charlie waiting back at the pier. We board and meet our fellow passengers.

"I'm Katie McKibbin." Her husband introduces himself as Scott.

Felecia asks about the race.

"The race? They're going with the spinnakers, the colorful sails. They're sailing downwind with the spinnakers right now toward that yellow mark." After a few moments, Scott explains more, "Where you're sitting, you're on the windward side. The wind's coming over this side. The other side is called the leeward side. You'll see what it looks like pretty shortly. Y'all see the difference in the water right there?"

"So that's getting ready to hit us?"



"You'll feel it here in a second. Charlie, do we want to do the spinnaker? Would that be too much?"

"I don't know. We're doing pretty good on this run, a simple run." He gestures. "We've been training on our spinnaker run."

"So this big green sail is the spinnaker, and it's bigger than both of these combined. It's like a big balloon sail."

I feel a sudden bump, as if hitting a hill beneath the water, and look up to catch the word on someone's lips, "swimming."

Swimming, I mouth before speaking. "I will not swim. I have these." I point to my ears, where I am wearing my superpower tools; in other words, hearing devices.

"You see that right there? It's like a sandbar. Charlie, let's start the motor and see if we can back away...oh, the rudder came up." Scott gestures.

Charlie points at the water. "See the current right there and how it's moving differently? There's a sandbar under it. Not good. We need a buoy."

"Hold this." Scott motions for me to hold the steer pole. I







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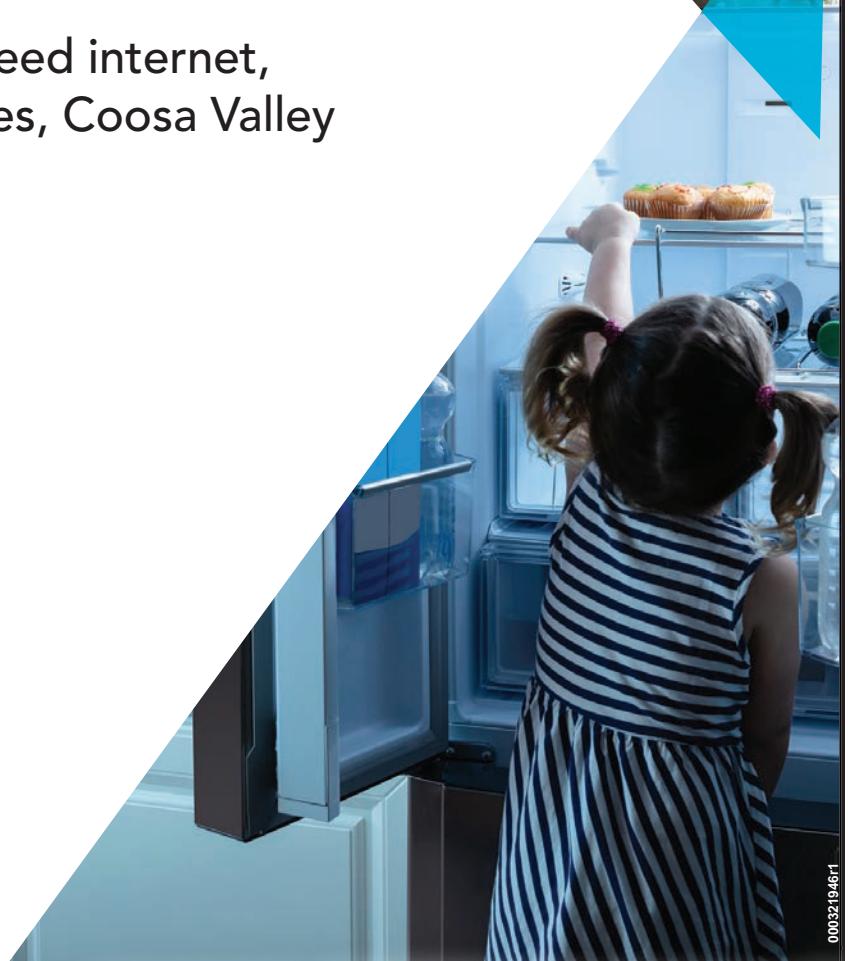
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grip it as he passes by to assist Charlie with the ropes and sails. I hear him say, "I feel like we're out of the shoal. How about you? Yeah, we'll let it back down." Scott returns and relieves me of the pole.

After some exchanges between the two sailors, Felecia asks, "So, does the boat have a name?"

"Not yet. We're still working on naming it."

"All boats have to have a name. The boat needs a name."

"Oh, come on. We've got a long list."

"We're talking about Side Chick, yeah."

"Just don't hit me with anything."

After several moments of sailing maneuvers that I do not quite comprehend, Scott turns to Felecia. "Felecia, how do you two know each other?"

"So Sarah Elizabeth and I met, like, what, six years ago?"

"Eight. It was 2017," I clarify, then listen to Felecia describing the foundation of our years-long friendship, fascinated by her perspective.

The wind picks up, prompting the men to work on the sails. Once they have control, Scott explains, "When you sail downwind, it's usually a lot calmer because the wind's at your

back. It's easier to sort of cruise when you go downwind, which is what we're doing now. Charlie, we're getting ready to jib here soon. Are you ready?"

"We got it for five whole minutes. That's a lake for you," Charlie responds, pausing to adjust the sails.

"So that's what we call jibbing. Jibbing, or tacking, means you're changing direction. Usually it's about ninety degrees. You can't go directly into the wind. You can go about forty-five degrees to the wind. This boat is fastest going about forty-five degrees downwind as well."

Scott points out, "You see that right there? That's telling us which way the wind's coming from, at the bay."

Charlie adds, "This coming up and down is exciting. Once you have this up, it's nice and calm. You could sail the whole river because of the wind." He looks to Scott. "Can you loosen the rotation a little bit?"

"What do you think? Is this your first time on a boat?" Scott asks Felecia. She responds by explaining how she used to live at the beach and that she is now getting acquainted with the lake life with her husband Brandon.

"This boat is set up for day sailing, not really to camp out,"



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A photograph of two people, a man and a woman, running away from the camera in a grassy field. They are holding a large American flag above their heads, which is slightly blurred due to motion. The background is a bright, open field under a clear sky.

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Scott says after a long lull in conversation.

"We have a little pressure coming in. Did you tie it differently this time, a little higher?" Charlie asks.

"Yes, much higher. Did you see that big fish jump out there?"

"We need to be trolling. Put some rod holders down. When I sailed a thirty-eight-foot catamaran from St. Petersburg to Gulf Shores a couple of months ago, we had rods out the whole trip. All of our battery banks died, so we had almost nothing working on board. Four of us were sailing with no autopilot, rotating two-hour helm shifts nearly one hundred miles offshore. One night, just before bringing the rods in, we caught a huge Spanish mackerel. We grilled it and made sauce right before dark."

"Charlie, prepare to douse. Pull the jib in." Scott interrupts before adding, "Prepared to douse means preparing to lower the sail. Good thing you had Charlie."

"I would not have gotten the sail in without help. Wrap the tack, please. Yes, that is the cleanest we have done it yet." Charlie counters, then conversation returns to the boat.

"I like the name 'Pressure Something.' Maybe not 'Pressure Cooking,' but something along those lines."

"The boat may be telling us no. 'Three Is a Charm' is funny. 'Side Chick,' maybe not. 'Local Draft,' 'Overdraft'... we are trying too hard."

"You could name it after your dog or create a caricature. This is a trimaran, so there is always a friendly debate about whether a trimaran or a catamaran is faster."

"We need a name related to the small mishaps, like when Scott got a blister from that line. It burned all the way through his hand."

"We are missing beverages."

"We will be there in five minutes. I think I am on grill duty tonight, roasting oysters. We bring a few hundred pounds of shrimp and oysters up from the coast every year. We serve them raw and roasted, plus a big shrimp boil with potatoes

and sausage. We spread it all out on the table. It is great."

Comfortable silence settles as we focus on the sensation of the trimaran making its way back to the pier. The sun sinks lower, and the air grows noticeably cooler.

Back at the pier, Felecia steps out first. I hesitate. She notices and reaches out to help, but to my horror, her foot slips. She plunges into the dark water. I wince as the icy splash hits my arms, unable to move, subconsciously held back by the expensive and necessary technology that allows me to hear.

Thankful that the men rush to help her out of the freezing water, I hold my breath and wait for the boat to inch close enough to the planks so I can step off without falling in myself. I hop onto the pier as soon as the gap narrows, then hurry over to Felecia.

"Are you okay?" I inwardly groan the moment the insipid question leaves my mouth.

"I'm not worried about being wet." She says. "I am worried about you." Me?

Charlie walks over to check on Felecia, then guides us toward the best path back up to the clubhouse so she can change into some extra clothes we brought along. After we thank him, he steps back to help the McGibbons with the trimaran. Felecia and I start up the asphalt path together.

"This is lake life. Do not worry about it." Felecia laughs as I cast her a concerned look.

Then, I saw a man with his young son walking towards us. To my surprise, I recognize him. He smiles and lifts his arms in greeting, "Is that you, neighbor? Hey!"

I exclaim in kind. I quickly introduce my friend and





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neighbor to each other, explaining that Felecia fell into the water and needs to change. I assure him that we will catch up later.

After we return to the Darth Vader and Felecia changes, the afternoon softens into evening. With my oatmeal-colored quilted jacket covering my now-chilled arms, I mingle among the BSC members while now warmly-dressed Felecia settles in to watch the Alabama game.

I find my neighbor, Andrew deRussy, and his son, Larkin, playing Solitaire at a table. I join them, eager to know them beyond the occasional sighting across the alley between our buildings. For several years, it has been like watching a dollhouse come to life as I see the deRussy family step out onto their balcony patio.

I ask him about his membership in the Birmingham Sailing Club. After shuffling cards for Larkin to begin a new game, Andrew begins talking about the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, with Savannah serving as the competitive location for sailing. Savannah was where he grew up, and he was 11 at the time. I lean in to say that I was sixteen during those Olympics before encouraging him to continue. He shares how his love for sailing began there and has remained a constant in his life. I then ask what brought him to Birmingham and eventually to being my neighbor.

In the middle of our conversation, someone hands him a tumbler glass with the BSC logo inscribed on it. I ask why he received it. He explains, very matter of fact, that he and Larkin won first place in today's race. I smile and congratulate him.

Richard May's family stops by to introduce themselves, and I visit with them for a few moments.

When Felecia leaves from watching the game to join us, I tell her that Andrew and I are neighbors. I laugh as he explains that he often cannot tell whether I am home. The only way he knows is when he sees the glow of my computer light illuminating my face while I work at night. I wink at Felecia and say, "See? Here is proof that I work all the time."

Thanking my neighbors for such a delightful conversation, Felecia and I walk over to where raw oysters are being shucked with special oyster knives. Several people in aprons huddle around this rib-high table. David Reich nods at me, gesturing for me to try some raw oysters. I love raw oysters, simple and fresh.



Before I know it, I am sampling a pistachio-topped dip and an artichoke dip, savoring every bite. I continue tasting the dips while watching steam rise into the darkening sky as the Thompsons manage the boiling stainless-steel cauldrons of corn and potatoes. People are mingling everywhere, some seated at picnic tables or in Adirondack chairs, eating and enjoying each other's company. The savory scents of the delicious food fill the evening air, mingling with the welcoming smoke from the grills and fryers, enhancing the atmosphere and drawing the BSC community even closer.

I watch as Ben and several others carry a heavy cauldron over to the long buffet, covered with a red gingham-checked tablecloth and piled high with sausage, shrimp, corn, and potatoes. After filling a paper plate, I step aside for a quiet moment. I text Felecia, since I have somehow lost her in the crowd while sampling the savory foods. Her immediate response is, "Of course! Back to watching the game." I quietly laugh.

I finish my plate before mingling with more BSC members, including my fellow Auburn College of Liberal Arts alumni and friend Darrell Bilbrey, sharing stories and making connections. The oyster roast seems to be winding down when I am encouraged to take home some leftovers in the large Ziplock bags provided. I fill two bags before placing them in the Darth Vader.

Then I decide to sit by the firepit to linger a bit longer. Felecia is already there. With my back to the dark, still lake, I look up at the lit clubhouse, observing the camaraderie among the BSC members. I notice the special bond in their conversations and how sailing threads through their sense of belonging. I look forward to returning for more fellowship at the Birmingham Sailing Club. In the meantime, I need to study up on some nautical terms.

Glancing at Felecia, I lean over and ask, "Are you having a good time?"

"Of course! I am glad that you invited me. It has been a great day!"

A Conversation with *CHERITH FLUKER*



Pell City author shares the secrets of Birmingham in her new book

Written by **BUDDY ROBERTS**

Photographed by **TUCKER WEBB**

“No,” I said, “I think I’d remember if I’d heard that story.”

Cherith Fluker smiled. When she smiles, it’s bright, happy, and infectious.

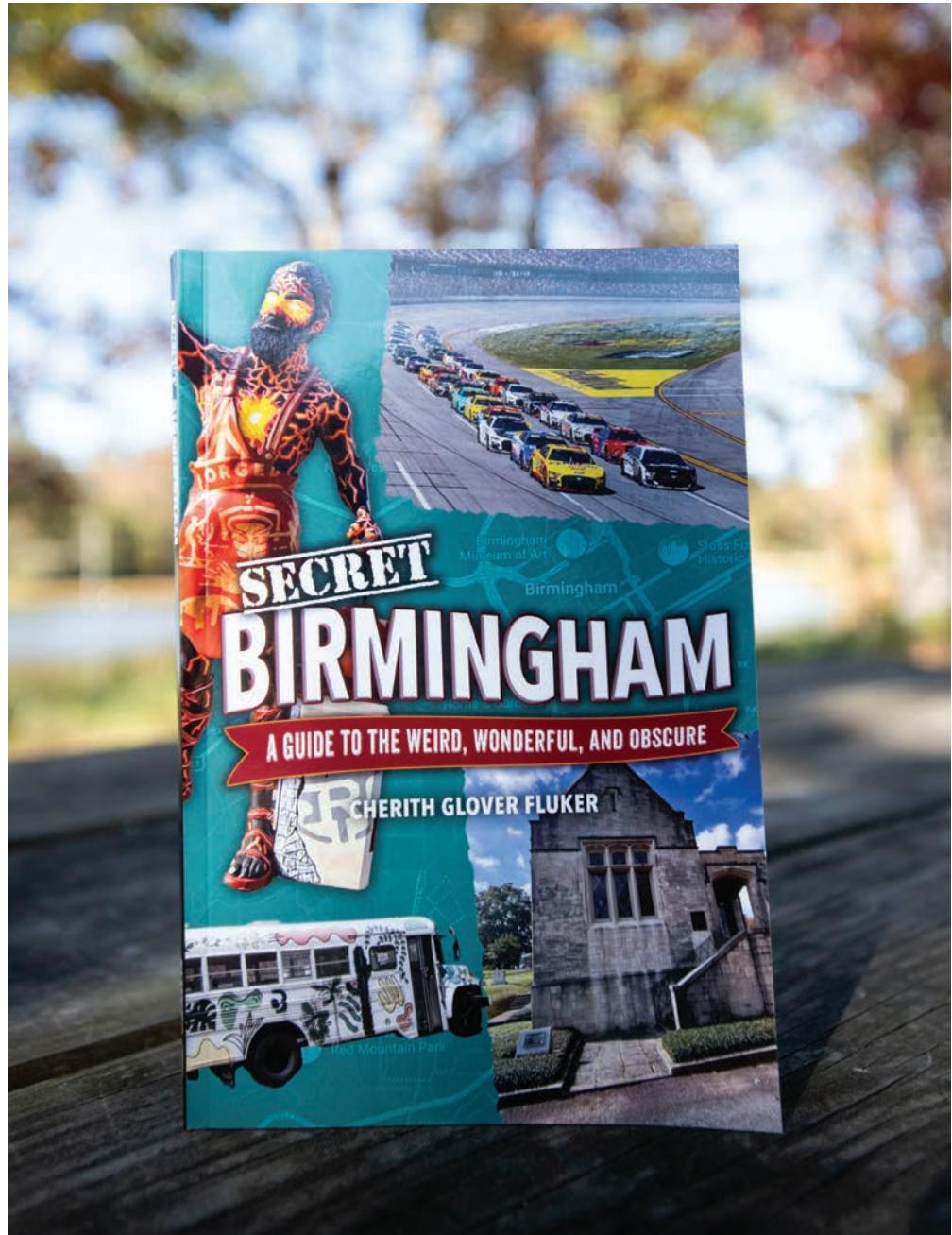
“Birmingham’s Batman,” she said. “Birmingham has...or had...its own superhero, and there’s actually a mural depicting Birmingham’s Batman that I’ve passed by multiple times but had no clue what it was. I decided to put it in the book after I asked probably a dozen people who live in Birmingham if they had heard of Birmingham’s Batman, and maybe one person said they had.”

A native of Talladega County and current resident of Pell City, Cherith is the author of *Secret Birmingham: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure*, published this summer by Reedy Press. The chapter “A Hero Without a Cape” tells the story of the Magic City’s Dark Knight, who once patrolled the streets of Birmingham on a nightly search for those who needed help.

The book is available at online retailers, at Cherith’s popular blog (whatcheriththinks.com), and at Weeping Willow Books in Pell City, where she spent a recent morning discussing it.

LL: Would it be accurate to describe *Secret Birmingham* as a city guide?

CF: Not as such. It definitely includes things to do and things to see, but that’s not its primary purpose. For example, people ask me about restaurants. This isn’t a restaurant book, but there are some restaurants in the book, those that have some sort of historical significance. I did not want this to be a book that you put it on the shelf and then six months later the things are irrelevant. I wanted it to have a shelf life, so it looks at things from a historical standpoint. We’ve got a really good, amazing food scene in Birmingham, but again, that isn’t the focus of this book. A lot of people will ask me, “Is it a things-



to-do?” It’s not really a things-to-do, but if you were had somebody coming here, you might pick it up and say, “Hey, do you want to go see these things?”

LL: So how would you describe it?

CF: Well, it’s 84 vignettes, none of them more than 300 words. I don’t see it as one about which a reader would say, “I’m going to sit down and read a book, and I’m going to grab this book, and I’m going to start at page one and go

to the end.” That’s not how I envisioned it, although people have told me that they’ve started reading it and couldn’t put it down. But I think of it more as a table book that you might pick up and say, “Hey, let’s do something different this weekend and see some of these things.” Or, “Hey, I’ve got some people visiting from out of town, and I want them to see something special before they go back.” But, you know, what has shocked me the most is how many people that are from this area

and have said to me, "I love this book. I'm learning things about my own city." I am very proud of the response and how the city of Birmingham has embraced the book.

LL: Could you give us an example?

CF: A school in Birmingham bought 20 copies because they said students don't learn some of the things that are in the book. Some of the things I wrote about are not in school textbooks, but they're things students should know about their city. People have told me they've bought copies for Christmas gifts for family members. I've had people to say, "I took this book to my grandmother, and we sat and had

conversations about her growing up that were triggered by something you wrote about." And that's so great, because those are things that I didn't think about when I wrote it, the impact that it would have on Birmingham residents and also on people who are not from the area.

LL: Which aspects of Secret Birmingham did you find most intriguing – the weird, the wonderful, or the obscure?

CF: Probably the wonderful. There are so many things for Birmingham – for Alabamians – to be proud of that came out of that city. A lot of people think about the civil rights history, and that contribution is important. And we know about the iron-

making industry of Birmingham in the past. But there are so many other things worth knowing about. Like Veterans Day. How many people know Veterans Day was started in Birmingham? And windshield wipers. They date back to Birmingham. I really tried to choose things to put in the book that had a significant impact on Birmingham's story, especially if it was something I didn't already know about.

LL: Besides, Birmingham's Batman, do you have another favorite story that you didn't know about before writing the book?

CF: Here's one that's not necessarily a favorite but one that I use at every single presentation that I do. I ask people to raise their hand if they've seen the Statue of Liberty replica on Highway 459. People will raise, and then I say, "Keep your hand up if you know why it's there. Do you know why Birmingham has a Statue of Liberty replica?" Hands start going down. That's the kind of story I wanted to be in the book. I really wanted people to know the why behind things that we see.

LL: Tell us about your blog.

CF: I consider it a self-care and travel blog. It's now five years old, and I get anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 visitors. My blog kind of led to the book, because I had been doing a lot of pieces about Alabama travel. Then I was doing some about Southeast – Gatlinburg, Dollywood, South Carolina – and I was talking to another writer on a trip who was like, 'Oh, I've never been to the Birmingham area,' and he asked me a question about something specific. I didn't know what he was asking about, and I thought, 'Why am I out here telling other destination stories when I'm not versed enough to tell people about my own area?'

LL: So you reached out to a publisher with that idea?

CF: Yes, but my first idea was to write a book about Talladega, because that's where I'm from.

The publisher said, "What do you know about Birmingham?" And I was like, 'Not enough to write a book about it.' But talking with my husband later, I remembered that for us in Talladega when





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I was growing up, if we were going to buy school clothes or celebrating birthdays or doing anything big, we went to Birmingham to do it. My husband reminded me that my dad and mom worked in Birmingham and pointed out that I serve on the board of directors for the Greater Birmingham Auburn Club. We just kept thinking of things, and he said, "You do all these things that are connected to Birmingham, plus you can do the research if you don't know." So I talked with the publisher again, and the book is out now as part of Reedy's Secret series.

LL: And here it is on the Alabama Authors shelf at Weeping Willow Books.

CF: I can't tell you how good it feels to see it on the same shelf as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is an unreal feeling and part of what has been just an amazing experience. I feel really proud when I see the book on the shelf in any store, but especially here. You can get the book on Amazon, they have it at the Birmingham Museum of Art, they have it at Dread River Distilling (they don't even sell books, but they were so proud to be in the book that they have



a display for it there) and other places around Birmingham. But I love seeing it here in our local bookstore in Pell City. Because to me, their support equals approval. They're not going to push things, but they're also not going to put things on their shelves that they don't think is great work. So that really has validated me as a writer.

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Meet Me By The Lake

ASH ARRINGTON

Written by **BUDDY ROBERTS**

Ash Arrington can get emotional when she talks about Pell City's Center for Education and Performing Arts.

"It's given me everything I have it," she says, looking at Logan Martin Lake from the Jerry Woods Pavilion at Lakeside Park on one of the last warm afternoons of 2025. "It gets me choked up when I think about it too much, truly. I'm 24 now. I've been here since I was 16 in some capacity."

Her association with CEPA began when she was a high school student performing in and directing Spotlight theater productions. She's now the center's executive director, although the mundane aspects of day-to-day operations haven't taken away her enthusiasm for CEPA's purpose and what it offers to Pell City.

"I can write in a grant all day long how many people we serve. I can track how many people attend and buy tickets and participate. I can do all of that, but until you're in the room on opening night or when a show closes and we're clearing the stage together, you can't see that tangible impact that this place makes on students, adults, and children. I've told my husband, 'I love you more, but I loved this first.' It's that intense to me."

Sporting her trademark sneakers, Ash went on to describe

CEPA's role in the Pell City community, identify one of her major goals for it, and explain what a typical day is like as executive director.

About CEPA: "Our official mission statement is that CEPA is a federally recognized 501-c3 nonprofit, and we operate a first-class event facility in conjunction with the owners, Pell City Schools and the City of Pell City. In addition to that, we seek to locate, engage, foster, and present theatrical and musical arts to the public and to provide a premier cultural arts venue for the citizens of our community. But the way I sum that up is we are the cultural cornerstone of St. Clair County, and I'm always trying to expand our reach and our service. Obviously, Pell City is our home and it's our priority, and pleasing those folks is a big deal. But I'm also really interested in bringing in people from outside in the county."

A typical day: "I'm usually awoken with a phone call. It could be a facility renter. It could be somebody at Pell City who needs help turning the lights on. It could be anything. Then I get into the office about 9, and Maci and I catch up. Maci Johnsey is the assistant director, and we spend the first 30 minutes catching up on the night before. I go through my entire inbox of emails, and then we start game-planning for all of the stuff that's on the radar. We work on multiple projects at the same time – sometimes far too many at once. And then it's a lot of hurry up and wait. There are these gigantic events



The Black Jacket Symphony returns to CEPA on January 16 for a live performance of Pink Floyd: The Wall.



CEPA hosts a Spotlight Performance of *Beetlejuice Jr.*

that just loom on the horizon for so long, and there's a lot of work you can't do until it's the day of. A lot of planning and preparation, and then it's all hands on deck."

One of her goals: "I've always wanted to put together a community forum. It would be great to invite people to the theater, tell them about what our season's looking like right now, and y'all ask questions. If anybody has any suggestions about what they want to see, tell me about them. I'll make it happen. I would love more community involvement in the selection of our programming."

Something she'd like the community to know: "It gets lonely in our office. Every now and again, somebody will just wander in, and I love when that happens. So if anybody is just interested in what we have going on, I'm there. Yes, I'm working. Yes, I have stuff going on, but if you just want to stop by and talk about what we do or how you can get involved or anything, I would love that."

Three things she can't live without: "First, my husband Hayden. He's the best. Then the Muppets. I just love the

Muppets. And Saturday afternoons. I know that's kind of specific and poetic or whatever, but I do love a Saturday afternoon when it's like 2 p.m. but I don't have any plans. It still feels like I have the whole day."

Ash Arrington style: "There is a little bit of professionalism that needs to be had, but even business professional is getting a little more relaxed and casual than it used to be, for sure. I feel the need to keep it in the middle. Do I want to look super-professional, or do I want to be able to climb the ladder when I'm needed up in the catwalk? I prefer relaxed and comfortable so I can do what I need to, and then, if the occasion calls for it, I can throw a blazer over whatever I'm already wearing."

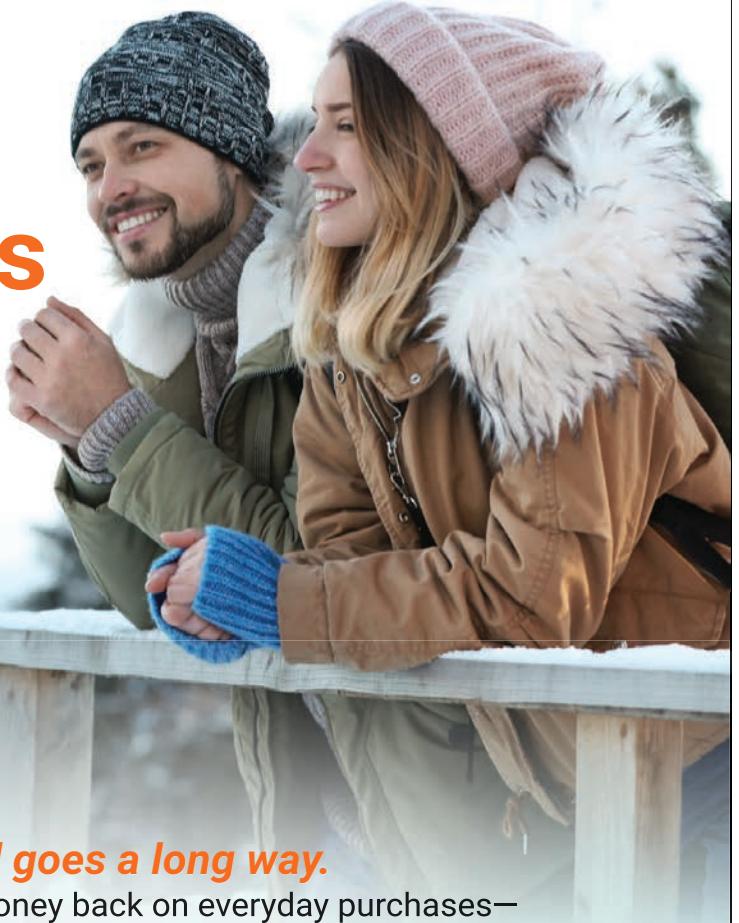
The food she could eat every day: "Birria tacos. It's either Mexican pulled pork or shredded beef – I really don't know. We have a friend, her name is Maria, and she makes the best birria in the Instant Pot."

The food she hopes to never eat again: "Pasta salad. It's a cold, wet noodle. I'm not in."



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How do we benefit from the OUTDOORS?

Consider these three ways

Written by **CJ KNIGHT**

Cou'll often hear me extolling the benefits of the outdoors. At times, I might seem a bit repetitive, but I believe it is so important to continuously praise and give thanks to the Good Lord for creating such natural nature.

In so many instances, outdoorsmen can get away from the stress of life and escape the depths of society through the backdoor of the outdoors. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the outdoors provide a medicinal healing that simply cannot be purchased on a shelf. So let's discuss three major aspects of the outdoors and what they provide to all – physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

The news lately has been very negative. Since the government shutdown and all of the negative side effects, I have noticed a very upward trend in the outdoors and the fruits of nature. Let me explain – millions of people are seemingly losing their SNAP benefits and governmental assistance during such times.

What does this mean? Disruption among food services and funding to those that rely on such federal services. During hard times, hunters are needed more than ever. Taking a backseat to modern society, hunters across this nation are now one of the main pillars that can bridge the gap between people starving. Food banks across this country are virtually begging hunters for venison. Ironic as it seems, when the government doesn't provide, the outdoors does – physically.

Just last month, in fact, Daniel McMinn from Sylacauga started the newly formed The Venison Project of South Talladega County. I believe there are thousands of people across this country who are making efforts to help others through the



CJ Knight and daughter Cora show off some Alabama Bass Trail Tournament-quality bass.

outdoors, just like Daniel, due to the recent setbacks with the economy.

The importance of being self-reliant in the outdoors during hard times cannot be overstated. This is a prime example. Look at what's going on. Outdoorsmen across this nation are needed more than ever. I will continue to encourage all to work towards self-reliance through the outdoors, because when times get tough, the outdoors will provide.

I enjoy the pleasure of taking kids fishing from time to time. I pride myself in promoting the outdoors to our youth.

Recently my cousin sent me the daily writings of a young outdoors enthusiast, Gunner Cook, who I have been spending some time with on Tuesday nights bass tournaments down at Cedar Creek. After reading what this fourth grader has written, I couldn't help but think of the mental benefits that the outdoors offers, even to a young child.

I was once that kid. Thrilled to be going fishing, I couldn't sleep at night in anticipation for setting the hook the next day. The thrill of the outdoors always provides mental positivity. Gunner and

Gunner Cook

September 26, 2025

(4)

Fishing

I believe everybody should try fishing. First, I believe everybody should try fishing because it helps you relax and make memories. When you go fishing and catch a fish you make memories. Second, everybody should try fishing because it is a good way to spend time outside. When you go fishing you spend time with nature. Third, I believe that everybody should try fishing because it lets you have fun and be patient with nature. When you go fishing it's fun to catch a fish. You also have to wait to get a bite. That is why I believe everybody should try fishing.

Talladega County student Gunner Cook explains the power of fishing in this essay he wrote for school.



Caden Nicholson with his first rack buck. He was assisted on the hunt by mentor Anthony Goggins.



Young Noah Wimmer with members during an early childhood hunt.



CJ Knight and Gunner Cook with their second-place trophies at a Tuesday Night Championship at Cedar Creek Marina

I had a great couple of tournaments recently; we even finished second place at the annual Cedar Creek Marina Tuesday Night Championship. But the truth is that no trophy can trump the joy of taking a kid fishing.

To be honest, I believe my mental wellbeing is more affected than the kids'. The outdoors will provide mental clarity for all of those who utilize it. I encourage you to continuously seek mental stability through the outdoors.

The book of Genesis has a verse that reads, "Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me." For me, when I continuously read the Word, I am reminded that the outdoors provides so much spiritual power.

I can remember as a child, looking out to the water and wilderness as a natural escape. The older I become, the spiritual



Joey Vanzant, JP Vanzant, and Matt Vanzant celebrate after a Tuesday night Championship at Cedar Creek Marina

aspect of the outdoors intrigues my mind more and more. As a person, you become grateful for smaller things. Even such simple moments as waking up to see a front porch sunrise can prove some of the most spiritual of upbringings.

In the outdoors, I'm at peace. I am at one with nature. It's not about the harvest for me anymore. That is only a bonus. It is about the quality time spent in the outdoors, which allows me to transform my mindset spiritually and give thanks to the Good Lord's creation. Even a non-believer has to respect the spiritual connection that can be achieved through the outdoors.

Society is marked by fast lanes, technological advancement, and a rapidly paced way of life. Let the outdoors free your mindset, provide for yourself and others, and guide you into the spiritual realm. It could just be your saving grace, and I'll have words with anybody who says different.

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Floyd Alfano's two young nephews show off a healthy mature doe.

LAKESIDE FLORA & FAUNA

SEEING THE LAKE IN SHADES OF GRAY

highlights the starkness of the season and prompts reflection as a new year begins

Written by

DR. SARAH ELIZABETH MOREMAN

Photographed by **TIM BADGWELL**

Standing at the edge of the peninsula overlooking the lake, with a large bald cypress behind me, skulking with its canopy cloud-like with its needle-like leaves, I focus on the sharpness of the wind cutting through my barn jacket. I should have worn a heavier coat, but I am not in the mood to turn back just yet. I will the cold, wintry air to freeze the hotness of disappointments and frustrations from the old year, to the point where they shatter into nothing. I want that shattering nothingness to happen, to allow for a blank canvas, to begin the new year on a clean slate. A slate empty and ready to be painted in hues of promises and hopes, with more love and connection.

The wind stops blowing suddenly as if listening to my ponderings. Gasping in relief from being pushed in from the harshness of the wind, my vision seems





to clear up, helping me focus and see what is on the other side of the river.

I blink, then blink again.

A boat. An abandoned, simple motorboat resting on what seems a steep inclined tracked ramp hovering above a small, square wooden dock. The surrounding trees seem to cradle the boat, its branches a protective cover from the sun.

The metal tracks of the ramp convey that this is how someone secures the boat; however, the weatherworn appearance, along with the cradling branches of hovering trees and bushes, gives a sense of abandonment.

Goosebumps creep over my arms encased within my barn jacket as I observe the way the sun filters through the still-dense canopy of trees, dappling the boat in shadows. The more I stare at the way the boat is secured, the more I realize the intricacy of how the metal tracks are engineered to support the boat through all kinds of heavy weather. As I am thinking this, another strong wind whistles, whipping my hair around.

Now feeling bone-deep chills as I

initially wanted, I lift my chin to the sky so white from the winteriness of the elements before releasing a long-drawn breath. I then yawn, as to release more of the old year. For some reason, having yawned leaves me feeling refreshed, well-rested.

I turn to walk back to my vehicle. Walking alongside the water, I pass these old stilts, or pilings, sticking out of the water. A heron perches on one post, its eye watching me as I meander past. It does not emit any noise. Only silence, which I welcome. The wind picks up again, biting my exposed flesh.

Although the coldness of the wind bites, the well-rested feeling I am experiencing gives me more clarity as I gaze around, seeing the fog that is rising from the dark water. Such clarity, newness. I let out a chuckle as I think of that word I made up when this guy back in my college days used to come by my office every night after class. I was the editor-in-chief for Auburn University's yearbook, the *Glomerata*. I was not sure about his intentions, but his persistence gave me wonder. Thus, I called what

we had as newness. After a pause, he understood what I meant.

Pages to edit, black and white photographs that a team of photographers printed in the reddit dark room, cropping those same photographs with an orange-red pencil, staff meetings to prepare and urge to meet deadlines, more pages to edit. The blur of thousands of black-and-white photographs, some of which were overexposed or underexposed.

I regret that I did not take photography classes back in those Glom days. I know that I could have been the next Ansel Adams due to my love of photography and capturing memories through unexpected moments. Still, if I have changed anything of my past, I would not be standing right here under a bald cypress tree, counting my blessings and having a new year to look forward to where I get to create new memories and try new things. I will figure out how and where to learn about developing photographs from negatives, not from a phone, but rather from a Nikon or Canon. To feel that shutter



clicking. To hear it.

Even more so, there is something about being out here, in this biting coldness of a wintry day that brings a smile on my face. I love life. I love every moment, even the bad and regrettable ones, that I have ever lived because I trust with all of my heart that the good Lord works all things together for good, so I can continue to be there for others, to serve as unto Him. Seeing

how this cold day shrouded in shades of grey provides the opportunity to renew my perspective of things as a blank slate can give. In parallel to the way the metal tracked ramp supports the motorboat, God has me in His hand. The starkness of winter reminds me of God's steady, never-ceasing omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

By remembering and renewing my faith, I feel strong and willing to endure

the starkness of winter by splashing color onto the canvas, to be intentional in creating memories that bring on that sense of newness, to explore to better comprehend how my intentional moments of color can be woven into God's storytelling throughout this coming year. And, I hope that the colors of my intentions dazzle in the hues of greens, blues, oranges, reds, and golds. Brilliant golds.

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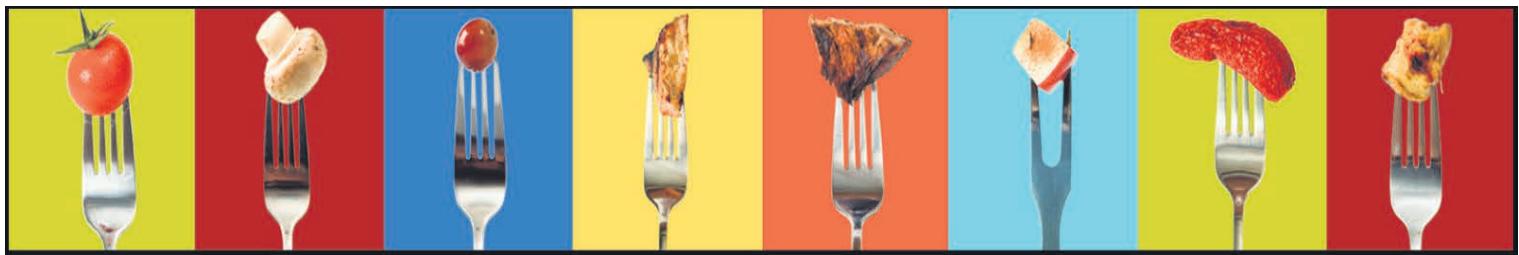
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CALENDAR OF

Events

JANUARY 9

LASER TAG AT THE REC

The Sylacauga Parks and Recreation hosts turns the J. Craig Smith Community Center into a full-scale laser



tag arena from 5-8 p.m. Laser tag is a recreational game where players score points by tagging opponents' infrared-sensitive vests using a handheld infrared device. Unlike paintball, laser tag is completely painless—no projectiles, and no mess. Thirty-minute time slots are available, with groups capped at no more than 16 participants. Each reservation equals one game. Upon arrival, players will form two teams. CACC's Adult Learning Program will be on site providing refreshments for guests. The event, but reservations must be made in advance. Time slots can be booked online at Sylacauga-recdesk.com under the Special Events category or by calling the J. Craig Smith Community Center at 256-249-8561.

JANUARY 16

PINK FLOYD'S "THE WALL"



Hosted by Pell City's Center for Education and Performing Arts, The Black Jacket Symphony recreates the classic rock album live in its entirety—note for note, sound for sound—plus a full set of greatest hits from the evening's artist. During the past decade, the Black Jacket Symphony has performed more than 40 classic rock albums, bringing an incredible night of entertainment to over a million music lovers across the US. The group of hand-picked musicians changes based upon the album being performed—and no sonic detail is overlooked, with the musicians doing whatever it takes to reproduce the album. It's a full night of rock and roll magic—plus a visual experience unlike any other. Showtime is 7:30 p.m. For ticket information, visit pellcitycepa.com.

JANUARY 29

KANSAS

The classic rock band brings its extensive catalogue (which includes 16 studio albums and five live albums) to the Oxford



Performing Arts Center. Kansas appeared on the Billboard charts for more than 200 weeks throughout the '70s and '80s and played to sold-out arenas and stadiums throughout North America, Europe and Japan. 'Carry On Wayward Son' continues to be one of the top five most-played songs on classic rock radio, and 'Dust In the Wind' has been played on the radio more than three million times. The band, currently comprised of vocalist/keyboardist Ronnie Platt, keyboardist/vocalist Tom Brislin, guitarist Zak Rizvi, guitarist Scott Bernard, violinist/guitarist Joe Deninon, bassist/vocalist Dan McGowan, original guitarist Richard Williams, and original drummer Phil Ehart. Eric Holmquist performs on drums while Phil Ehart continues to recover from a major heart attack. Showtime is 7 p.m. For ticket information, visit oxfordpac.org.

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1

BEGINNING MANTRAILING WORKSHOP

This two-day seminar is organized by Fetch and Flex and conducted by Teresa King, a Mantrailing Global Head Instructor and experienced SAR K9 handler. Mantrailing is a sport in which a dog learns to detect one specific person's scent and follow them. The cost is \$450 for 2-days. A deposit is required to hold your spot. The workshop includes classroom-style instruction, fieldwork with your dog, learning the lingo, safety guidelines, and trail laying. To reserve a spot and for more details, email Fetchandflex@gmail.com.



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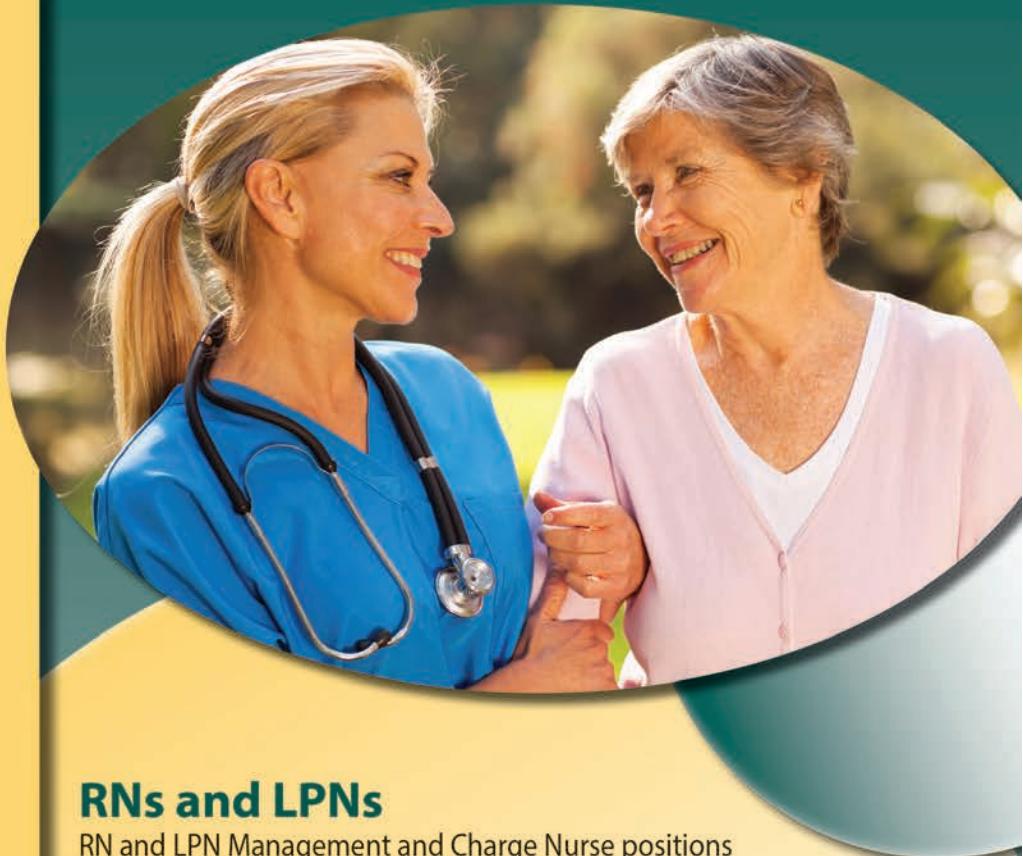


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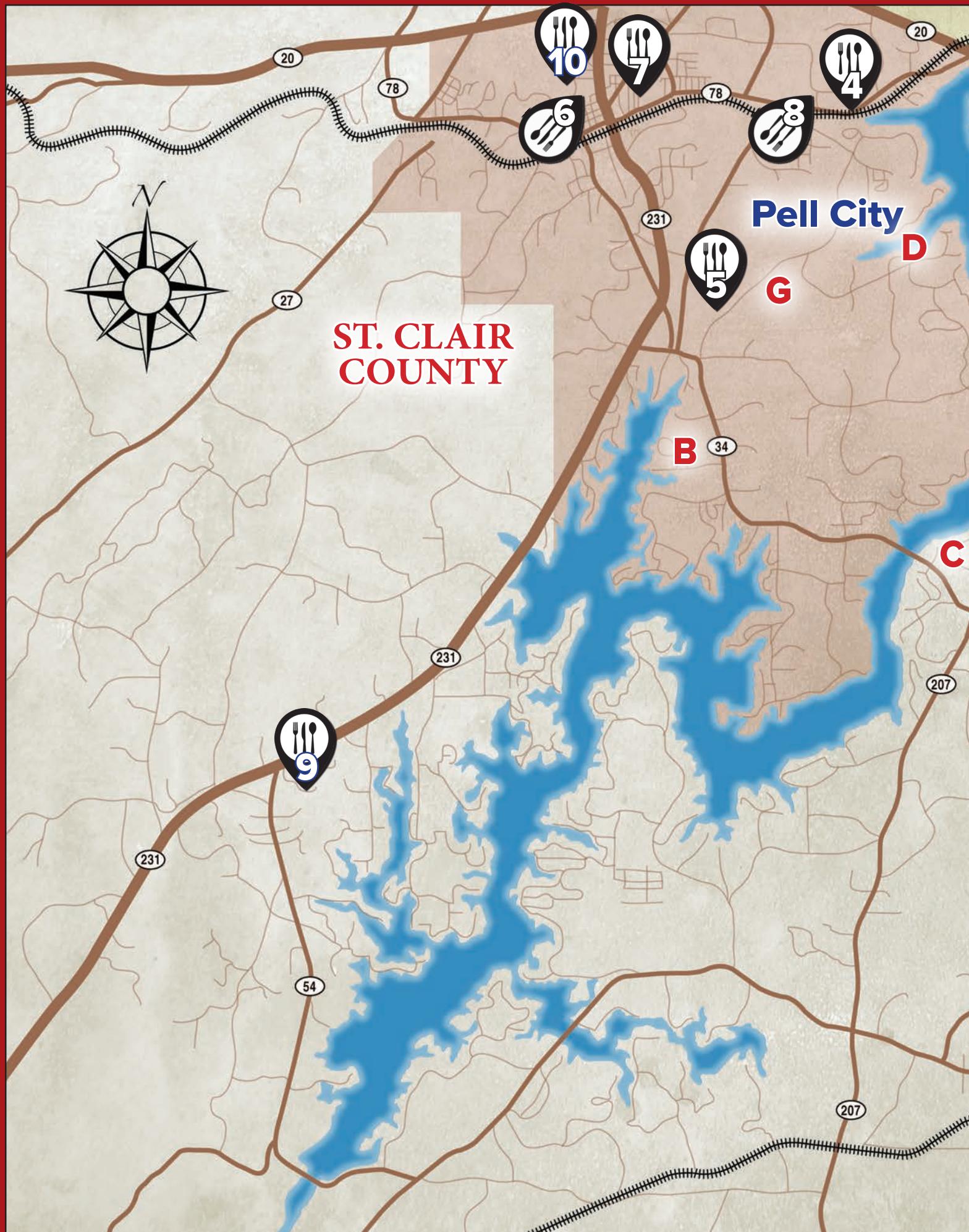
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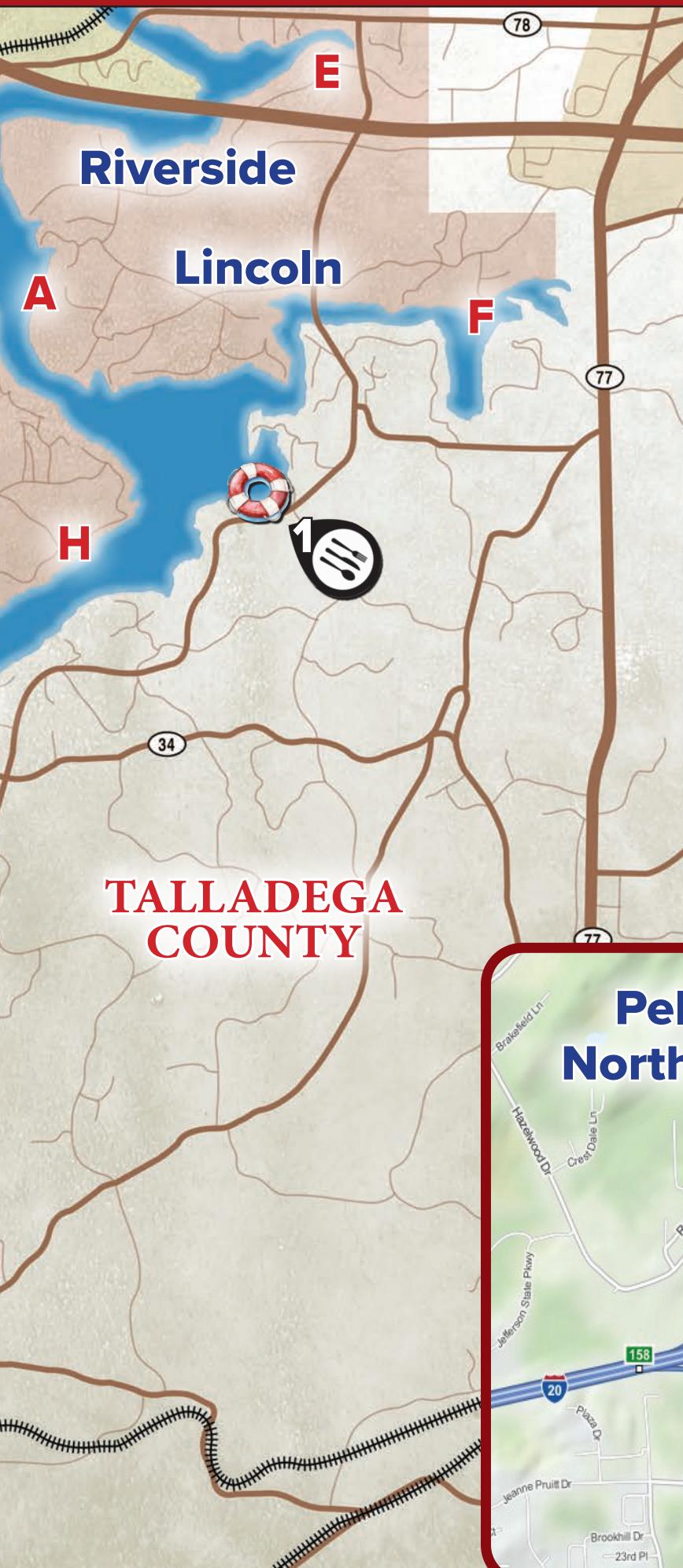
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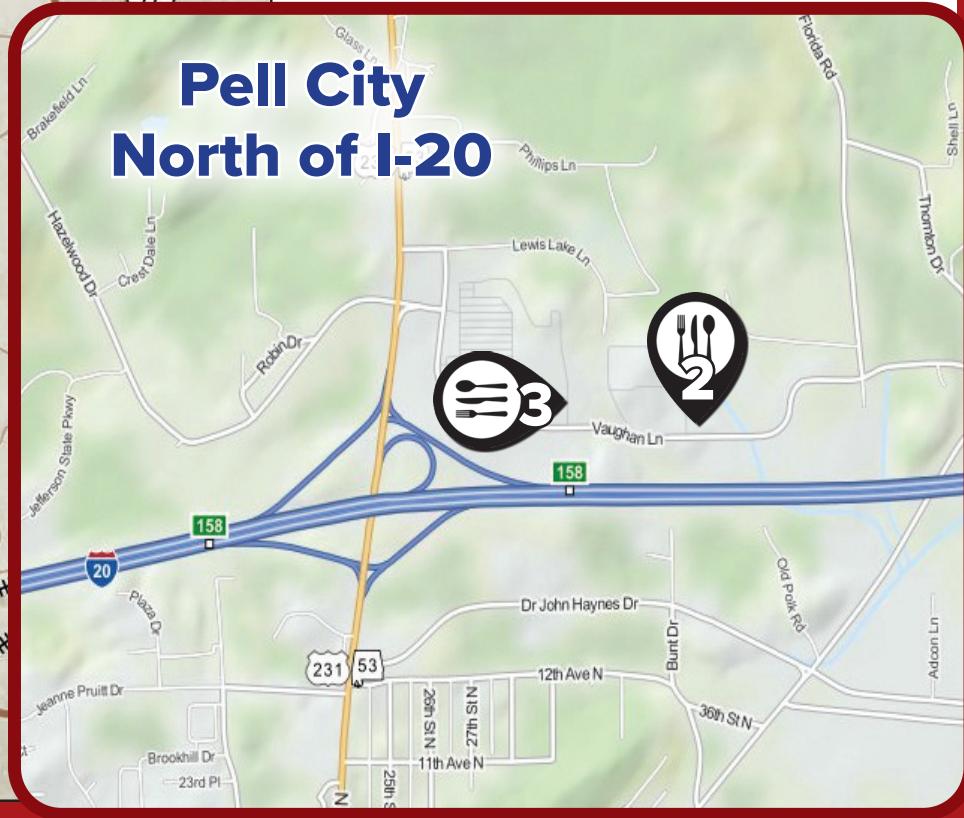


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- 1 – Poor House Branch Marina
- 2 – Aztecas Mexican
- 3 – Jade East
- 4 – Triple G's
- 5 – Jimmy's Country Store
- 6 – Maya's Mexican
- 7 – Pell City Steak House
- 8 – Oishi Asian Restaurant
- 9 – Coosa Cafe & Creamery
- 10 – Daylight Donuts

A – Logan Martin Dam
B – Lakeside Park
C – Stemley Bridge
D – St. Clair Airport
E – Mays Bend
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\$799,900 - 595 Dabbs Lane - This is a hidden gem on logan martin lake. With a panoramic view of 5.6 Acres, over 3000 ft of waterfront, this unique property offers a variety of choices for its use. A home sits on a small knoll overlooking the breathtaking views of the land and lake, large windows, stone/brick fireplace, recently updated finishes, carpet make a great home place! MLS # 21425154 Call Karen 205/473-4613



\$419,000 - 1465 Mineral Springs Road - BEAUTIFUL 2-STORY 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath home located on approximate 6.2 ACRES. The home features living room with fireplace, dining room and with den and half bath located in the basement along with the garage. It also boasts a 30x50 metal workshop with four 10-ft commercial roll-up doors, large storage barn with floored main level and upper loft. Country living with close convenience to interstate 65, shopping and schools. MLS #21435622 Call Blair 205/812-5377



\$300,000 - 1167 Camp Creek Road - PEACEFUL SETTING with this 3-bedroom, 2 bath home that feature living room with stone woodburning fireplace, outbuilding that could be used as a separate living quarter and located on approximately 2.5 ACRES. Enjoy the quiet, country setting with workshop and garden shed and 1-car garage. MLS #21434119 Call Misty 205/368-9490



UNDER CONTRACT
\$624,500 - 65 River View Ln. - MAIN CHANNEL ON LOGAN MARTIN LAKE with this 3 bedroom 2 bath one level home that features open floor plan with family room, kitchen and sunroom for breathtaking views and endless opportunities for relaxation/recreation. Also offers two piers, private boat launch and boat storage, 2-car garage. MLS #21413914 Call Laurie 205/365-3639



\$450,000 - 4954 Autumn Ridge Trail - This newly constructed home in an established Logan Martin lake access neighborhood is a find! The all-brick exterior and setting amongst mature trees create a welcoming and private atmosphere.

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MLS #21431401 Call Tina 205/337-8509.



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\$269,000 - 118 Saint Judes Lane - Th - NICELY REMODELED 2-bedroom, 2 bath home with a fresh updated appearance on a quaint street with three other houses. There is a separate laundry room and the .8 ACRES is wooded for privacy with a deck on the back of the house and small fenced area for dogs or children. Basement has a garage and workshop and storage areas. MLS #21434830 Call Karen 205/473-4613



\$369,500 - 445 Big Oak Circle - CHARMING brick 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath home nestled in desirable Twin Oaks. Home features family room with fireplace, dining room , spacious master suite, kitchen that boasts wood floors and opens to shaded deck. Upstairs you will find two of the bedrooms and the finished basement offers a large bonus room and 2-car garage. Fenced backyard and convenient location to town and I-20

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\$375,900 - 385 Fish Trap Road - Welcome to your dream lake home! As you arrive, you're immediately captivated by expansive water views and sunlight dancing across the lake. Freshly landscaped with brand new decks, this fully renovated charmer is ready for its new owners.

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\$220,000 - 1010 1st Place S - GREAT LOCATION for this 3 bedroom, 2 bath one level move in ready home, located close to downtown Pell City, schools and shopping. Home features nice family room, kitchen along with the bedrooms and laundry room and easy access to I-20 and Hwy. 78.

MLS #21426715 Call Mike 205/572-4217



\$529,000 - 530 Magnolia St. - SPACIOUS 4 bedroom (or flex room) and 2 bath one level home that offers flexible options for an office, guest room or hobby space is nestled on a generous one acre lot. Convenient Location!

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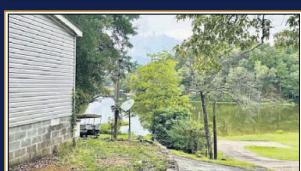
\$435,000 - 1409 23rd Street S. - Check out this unique property in the city limits. A house on 2.8 Acres and another parcel with 7.5 Acres that are metes and bounds. (Not included in the subdivision). This property has beautiful hardwood trees, a large barn/storage building, pole barn, great garden spot.

MLS #21417765 - Call Karen 205/473-4613



\$699,900 - 14 Seddon Point - Great family lake home with more than 3600 sq ft on logan martin lake. A gentle sloping lot with 273 feet of waterfront, this home is a must see! The open floor plan offers a large family room with lake views, hearth room with fireplace, dining area and kitchen. This expanded open area is great for large gatherings.

MLS #21396433 - Call Karen 205/473-4613



\$278,500 - 164 Bayou Ridge Lane - SPACIOUS 4 bedroom, 2 bath WATERFRONT mobile home features family room with fireplace, massive kitchen with large serving island, master suite with luxurious bathroom with large walk-in closet. Enjoy having your private boat launch with the deep-water slough and conveniently located to hwy 34.

MLS #21427202 Call Laurie 205/365-3639



\$629,000 - 199 Bagley Drive - PRIVACY GATED 6 bedrooms, 3.5 bath 2-story home located on approximately 11 SECLUDED ACRES that offers a lifestyle like no other with each bedroom that offers a private balcony. Also features a detached 2-bedroom, 1 bath guest house complete with full basement and 2 garage bays, one large enough for RV. The home has so many unique items and is located in Trussville with rare privacy and minutes to Birmingham and Springville.

MLS #21424083 Call Laurie 205/365-3639

Happy
New Year

2026

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NEW MERCIES,
NEW HOME
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Laurie Brasher
(205) 365-3639

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LAKE ACCESS
LOGAN MARTIN



**Autumn Ln,
Pell City
Lot 13
\$27,900**

COMING SOON



**475 River Front
Talledega
Condo
\$274,500**

NEW PRICE



**2929 Hamilton Rd
Pell City
5 BR, 4.5 BA
\$1,400,000**



**181 Stillwater Trl
Lay Lake Lot
\$99,000**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE
REDUCED PRICE



**488 Rabbit Road
Cropwell
4 BR, 3BA
\$549,900**

NEW PRICE



**402 Paradise Isle
Riverside
3 BR, 2 BA
\$350,000**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE



**107 Pine Harbor Way
Pell City
5 BR, 4 BA
\$999,000**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE



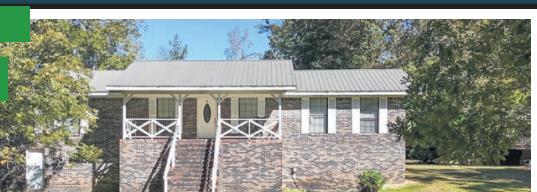
**560 Davis Acres Drive
Alpine
2 BR, 2BA
\$345,000**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE



**115 Riverview Lane
Talledega
3 BR, 2 BA
\$498,900**

NEW LISTING
NEELY HENRY LAKE



**175 Reed Road
3 BR, 2 BA
\$399,999**

NEW LISTING



**2151 Mount Moriah Rd.
Pell City
4 BR, 2 BA
\$248,900**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE


260 Skyline Trail
Pell City
4 BR, 5 BA
\$929,900



70 Choice Circle
9 Acres
\$149,900

WATER ACCESS


6393 Rainbow Row
Pell City
\$259,900

ACREAGE


30 Pinewell Dr,
Cropwell
5 BR, 3.5 BA
\$825,000

UNDER CONTRACT


44164 Hwy 78 Unit 207,
Lincoln 4 BR, 2 BA
\$275,000

COMMERCIAL


2401 12th Ave N
4BR, 4BA
\$1,400,000

**WATER ACCESS
NEW PRICE**


495 Willow Dr.,
Lincoln
3 BR, 2 BA
\$250,000

LAY LAKE


551 Liberty Shores Blvd.
Vincent
Lay Lake Lot
\$243,000

SOLD


Stonegate Circle
Lot 24
\$14,000

3 ACRES


AL Hwy 21 Acreage
\$140,000

1030 Hermitage Circle
Birmingham
\$615,000

1835 NW OLD HWY 26
Land
\$175,000



3402 Cogswell Ave
Pell City
\$274,900

WATER ACCESS
LOGAN MARTIN


26 Waters Edge,
Pell City
Land/Lot
\$35,000



0 Shore Side Ln
Lay Lake Lot
Lots #137 & #138
\$159,900

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Alpine, AL 35014
MLS# 21427231
\$299,900



GREAT NEW PRICE

1604 Truss Ferry Rd.,
Pell City, AL 35128
MLS# 21435358
\$279,900



NEW LISTING
LAKE LISTING

2002 Cleveland Farms Parkway
Pell City, AL 35128
MLS# 21434088
\$539,900



508 Lindy Cir
Pell City, AL 35128
MLS #21438352
\$1,650,000



UNDER CONTRACT
PRIVATE LAKE

5763 Shadow Lake Dr.,
Pinson, AL 35126
MLS# 21434960
\$389,900



GREAT NEW PRICE

128 Pacific St.,
Pell City, AL 35128
MLS# 21433330
\$436,900



GREAT NEW PRICE

2002 Cleveland Farms Parkway
Pell City, AL 35128
MLS# 21434088
\$539,900



GREAT NEW PRICE

2058 Edgewood Dr.,
Moody, AL 35004
MLS#21431247
\$289,900



ACREAGE

1301 Patton Rd,
Bessemer, AL 35023
MLS# 21434662
\$449,900



UNDER CONTRACT

112 Lindy Ln,
Oxford, AL 36203
MLS# 21424455
\$237,900



SOLD

332 Jerry Avenue
Talladega, AL 35160
MLS# 21434114
\$219,900



LAKE VIEW

475 River Forest Lane Unit
1330, Talladega, 35160
MLS# 21429774
\$319,900



NEW LISTING
LAKE LISTING



190 Coves Dr.,
Vincent, AL
MLS# 21436867
\$1,485,000



NEW LISTING

224 Shoal Crest Dr,
Ashville, AL
MLS# 21438353
\$279,900



SOLD

175 Garden Ct.,
Lincoln, AL 35096
MLS# 21414497
\$219,900



LAKE VIEW!

475 River Forest Ln. STE 3220,
Talladega, AL 35160
MLS# 21431835
\$249,900



LAKE ACCESS

115 Eastland Way,
Lincoln, AL 35096
MLS# 21434170
\$449,900



GOLF COURSE

245 Rome Beauty Cir.
Oxford, AL 36203
MLS# 21434292
\$879,900



ACREAGE

830 Turkey Ridge Rd.,
Ragland, AL 35131
MLS# 21435961
\$799,900



Caran Wilbanks

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2319 Cogswell Ave. | Pell City, AL 35125

REDUCED



**732 River Bend Cir
Talladega, \$890,000**

Beautifully renovated in 2020, this stunning waterfront property offers year-round water access on a large, level lot with 280 ft of shoreline. Enjoy a 2-slip floating boathouse with lift, boat launch and "Spider Be Gone" systems on both the house and boathouse. The home features 6 garages, workshop, safe room, screen porch, open decks, and covered patio—perfect for outdoor living and entertaining. Inside, you'll find real hardwood floors, two full kitchens, two laundry rooms, custom cabinetry, lots of closets, an office nook and a possible studio apartment. 3 bedrooms & 3 baths. This property is the ultimate in luxury lakefront living. **MLS# 21432733**

PRICED REDUCED



**27 Morning Glory Drive
Pell City, \$299,000**

Charming 3-bedroom, 2-bath full brick home in desirable Morningside Subdivision. Features include a spacious formal dining room, eat-in kitchen with breakfast bar, and a cozy screened porch perfect for relaxing. Also, there is a gas log fireplace in great room. Enjoy a fenced backyard ideal for pets or entertaining, plus a double car garage for ample storage. A perfect blend of comfort and convenience! **MLS# 21424915**



**499 Sweet Apple Rd
Pell City, \$55,000**

Beautiful 2-acre vacant lot on Sweet Apple Road in a serene country setting. The property is half cleared and half wooded, offering the perfect blend of open space and natural privacy. Perk test completed and survey available. Ideal for a stick-built home or bar dominium. Peaceful rural living with easy access to city amenities—don't miss this great opportunity! **MLS# 21424404**



**802 Cassie Drive W
Pell City, \$550,000**

This beautiful 3 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath home in Twin Oaks is a must to see. The home features a spacious, open floor plan. Fabulous living room with cathedral ceiling, exposed cedar beams and gas logs fireplace. Formal dining room. Kitchen includes a breakfast nook, an island bar that opens to the living room, Quartz countertops, pot filler, upgraded range hood and built-in appliances. Large master suite with tray ceilings and huge walk in closet. Custom tile shower, jetted tub, and double vanity in master bath. Screened porch off the living room with an open area for grilling. Fenced back yard with storage shed. Finished bonus room above the garage could be used as a 4th bedroom for a larger family. Leaf guard system on the gutters.



**22 Eagle Pointe Lane 22
Pell City, \$163,500**

Lake lot on Logan Martin Lake main channel 1.25 acres with 125 ft of waterfront. Enjoy a forever view and deep, year-round water perfect for your private dock. Concrete seawall. Neighborhood amenities include a pool, tennis court, and boat launch. Ideal for your dream lake home! **MLS# 21417238**

LOTS FOR SALE!

**Lot 6 Cason Lane
Cropwell, \$15,000**

**13 Hickory Lane,
Oenville, \$39,900**



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The Bain Team
Karen Bain
205-473-4613
Adam Bain
205-369-2704
LoganMartinLakeTeam.com
Karenbainfgre@gmail.com



Lakeside Chats with CHERITH

FINDING CLARITY At The Start Of The New Year

It's that time of year when the lake gets still and quiet. The same lake that held splashing kids, sunrise fishermen, and endless summer boat rides just a few months ago now seems to be exhaling. The water sits calm, almost like it's resting and settling into itself after a long season of showing up for everyone else.

And honestly? I'm taking notes.

As I stand by and watch the gentle ripples move without urgency, I'm reminded that the lake doesn't apologize for slowing down. It doesn't justify its stillness or rush to fill the silence. It simply exists in a softer rhythm this time of year. So, just like the lake, I'm choosing to start my year the same way. I'm choosing to embrace calm, ease back into my routines, and rest with intention.

Because if we're keeping it real, January doesn't always feel peaceful. We treat it like a starting line, ready to begin the race before we've even recovered from the holidays. Everywhere you go, someone is asking, "So what's your New Year's resolution?" And suddenly you feel like you should be training for a marathon, launching a new habit, organizing your house from top to bottom, drinking 85 ounces of water a day, and journaling before sunrise.

Whew.

But here's the part we often forget: nature isn't hustling. The trees aren't panicking. The lake isn't making a color-coded vision board. Everything around us is resting on purpose. It's

almost like nature is giving us permission to breathe a little deeper and move a little slower. Maybe we should take a hint?

Slowing down doesn't mean falling behind. In fact, I think clarity tends to reveal itself in those quiet, in-between moments: the mornings when you sip your coffee without multitasking, the afternoons when you take the scenic route home, and the evenings when you finally let yourself just be.

And in those pauses, we begin to hear ourselves again.

Maybe this year is nudging you toward better health. Maybe it's urging you to reconnect with your family. Maybe it's whispering about a dream you tucked away because life got busy. Or maybe, just maybe, it's reminding you to care for your mental and emotional well-being with the same intention you give everything and everyone else.

Whatever your year holds, I hope you'll allow yourself a gentle beginning.

This doesn't mean abandoning ambition or leaving your goals on the shelf. It simply means creating enough space to pursue them thoughtfully instead of frantically. It means refusing to rush into the new year already exhausted. It means giving yourself permission to exhale fully before inhaling something new.

The lake is quietly preparing for its next season. And there's wisdom in that.

So if no one has told you yet, it's okay to ease into the year. It's okay to move slowly. It's okay to rest.

This January, I'm choosing to be more like the lake—calm, peaceful, reflective, and confidently unhurried.

Here's to a year of gentle beginnings, intentional pauses, and a whole lot of grace.

A native of Talladega County and current resident of Pell City, Cherith Glover Fluker is a freelance writer and the author of Secret Birmingham. She's at work on her second book.

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