

Logan Martin Homes Edition

# LAKE SIDE *LIVING*

## CHRISTMAS IN THE SOUTH

- ▶ At the St. Clair County Fair
- ▶ New boutique and salon opens- just in time for the holidays
- ▶ Holiday events in the lakeside area

See inside for more!

December 2025



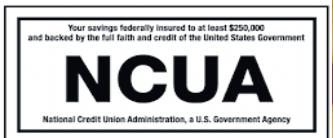


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ON THE COVER: The colors and elegance of the holiday season. Photo by Tucker Webb

## Logan Martin Homes Edition LAKESIDE LIVING

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Celebrate the gift of reading

“**R**eading should not be presented to children as a chore, a duty. It should be offered as a gift.”  
That's what Kate DiCamillo (the Newberry Medal-winning author of children's fiction) has said, and Vallean Jackson believes it.

Since publishing her own children's book, the quote has taken on even greater meaning, and she's pleased to offer youngsters the opportunity to experience the gift of reading through her words and imagination.

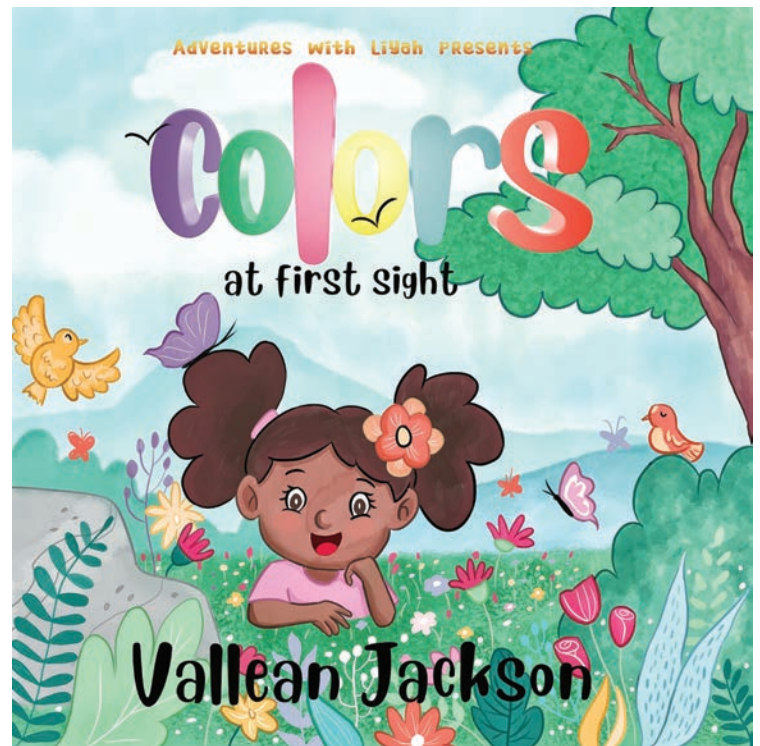
“I love writing books,” Vallean said. The Jacksonville State University alumna (class of 2015) has written adult fiction, but *Colors at First Sight* is her first effort aimed at children. “I have always had the idea to write a children's book but never pursued it further. Once I had my daughter, watching her growing curiosity has been an inspiration.”

The 26-page book, brightly and whimsically illustrated by Navi Robins, is available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Google Books. According to the author, its target audience is parents with children ages 2 and older, and it can be enjoyed by preschoolers and even elementary school students.

Its theme, Vallean says, is “learning and adventure, as with each page the main character Liyah explores a different color. Liyah is very curious, eager to learn, and loves taking adventures. This adventure involves colors we see everyday and makes the connection to how colors are tied to so much. This helps her learn her colors as well as explore things and realize what she enjoys and dislikes. The use of word and color association serves to help readers learn their colors. I have always believed that repetition helps learning.”

*Colors at First Sight's* debut on Amazon has been met with 5-star reviews. “The reviews I have received have been beautiful,” Vallean said. “That tells me people are seeing the vision I intended them to see, and that feels amazing. I'm glad people are reading it and reading it to their children. Reading is a way to gain knowledge, and knowledge is your power. No matter what is going on around you, your knowledge is something that cannot be taken from you.”

Books -- print and electronic -- are great gifts at any time of year, and they take on a special significance when they're



written by local authors such as Vallean.

If her name seems familiar to you, it's probably because you've seen it right here in *Lakeside Living*. She's been among the magazine's regular contributing writers for a while now. You'll see her byline again this month, along with contributions from Laci Braswell, Michelle Love, Loyd McIntosh, Madeline Kline, CJ Knight, and Dr. Sarah Moreman. Art is provided by our talented lead photographer Tucker Webb and first-rate contributors Bob Crisp and Tim Badgwell.

It's been said that a book is a gift you can open again and again, and I believe that can apply to a magazine as well. As we approach the end of another year, the entire staff of *Lakeside Living* thanks you, our readers, for your support. We count it a privilege that you continue to bring us into your homes and lives month after month and year after year. We hope you enjoy this issue, and we look forward to what's ahead in 2026.



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# HOOK, LINE & SINKER

## Give the gift of fishing this Christmas

**A** lot of people don't associate December and fishing.

Heck, to be honest, I can't blame them. December can be marked by brutally cold temperatures and sometimes even snow. But let's not forget old Saint Nick, who is just around the corner. So here are some Christmas gift ideas that your favorite anglers can enjoy all year long.

Let's take them by season.

If you're looking to buy that special fishermen something for the winter season, always remember the importance of a good fishing suit. When I think about December, January, and February on the water, it gives me PTSD. Frigid-cold air, coupled by wind and other variables can make it truly miserable on the water. Having a good fishing suit for these conditions is a must. My pick would be

the 100 MPH suit made by Bass Pro Shops, or a similar suit. These top-of-the-line fishing suits can be pricey, but I can assure you that the recipient will absolutely love his or her new performance gear.

For spring, my Christmas recommendations are swimming jigs for bass fishermen and Charlie Brewer sliders in junebug color for crappie fisherman. These two baits springtime are simply hard to beat. These are two lures that will always be on my front deck during March, April, and May.

For the summertime fisherman, I suggest a good PFD. Personal floatation devices are a must when the weather is warmest. Having a good life jacket could be the difference between life and death. Summertime always registers the highest numbers of boats on the

water, so please think safety and give the gift of a good life jacket.

Fall bass anglers will appreciate unwrapping jerk baits, topwater baits, and soft-bodied flukes. For crappie fishermen, a medium light dock shooting spinning reels/rod combo will make great gifts. Both are solid for the fall months. All game fish will be feeding heavily, and this equipment will get the job done.

Make the anglers on your holiday list remember this season with a special gift. And I hope that you shop local at such Logan Martin area stores as the new and improved Coosa River Tackle in Cropwell and Tackle Box in Oxford. All locally owned stores will be thankful for your support this holiday season. Merry Christmas to all!

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# Christmas in the South

**Celebrating in style with our traditional Southern hospitality**

Written by **MICHELLE LOVE**

Photography by Tucker Webb and Bob Crisp

*I have always loved the holiday season. The time from Halloween to New Year's is when I thrive.*

**I** love the cold weather, I love the themed movies and TV show episodes, I love the cheesy holiday ads that make me cry. But what I love most about the holidays is Southern traditions. I have been very blessed to grow up and experience Christmas in the South – something special that people who live outside the area cannot understand.

Christmas in the South means celebrating in style. When I was growing up, one of our favorite things to do as a

family around Christmastime was to drive around all the neighborhoods and see the holiday decorations. People would go all out with their twinkling lights, inflatables, and even music to pair along with the light



show. I remember one house had a honky-tonk Christmas party every year where people dressed up in Western wear and celebrated with Garth Brooks and George Strait playing on the lawn.

Christmas in the South means eating the best food. Southerners just know how to make the most comforting meals, and what I've learned over the years is everyone has certain recipes that their family makes around the holidays that are unique to their family. Some families do beef wellington, some do rum spice cake—but no matter the recipe, Christmas in the South means there's always room for extra people at the table, and everyone gets a plate. Food is a love language in the South – that's just a fact – and during the holidays, there is an abundance of love.

Christmas in the South means an extra











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dose of kindness for those who need it most. I remember my grandmother inviting people over for the holidays who may not have a family to celebrate with. I remember my mom and I donating to the toy drive so kids who may not be able to get what they want from Santa can still have a good Christmas. It's easy to get caught up in the materialism of Christmas, but some people just want one thing: time with friends or family. The weather is colder, but the homes and hearts of Southerners are always warmer during the holidays.

Christmas in the South means there are a hundred parades happening across the board. Some are in the morning and some at night, but either way it means you will see families getting to the parade site an hour early with their folding chairs, hot cider, and blankets to get the best spot available. Kids are jumping up and down, cheering as Santa comes by on his sleigh waving to the excited crowd. It's like a

more wholesome and colder Mardi Gras, the big celebration before Santa comes down the chimney. Southern parades mean there is a collective feeling of joy down several streets that even the biggest curmudgeons can't scoff at.

Finally, Christmas in the South means

comfort. The South is one of the few places where no matter who you are or what your story is, you are always welcome in someone's home, church, or party. People in the South are already known for their hospitality, but I feel like it goes a little farther during Christmas.







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Christmas is often referred to as the Season of Light, a time of festivity and hope.





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Christmas parades and other holiday events mark the season in local communities.







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# LITTLE STITCHES & Co. and Heirloom

Family ties and community connections are the foundation of new boutique and salon

Written by **MADELINE KLINE**  
Photographed by **BOB CRISP**

**J**ust in time for the holidays, Pell City welcomes two new businesses to its downtown community.

Little Stitches & Co. and Heirloom celebrated their grand openings in mid-October at 1st Avenue South. Little Stitches & Co. is a custom embroidery children's boutique. The storefront shares

its space with Heirloom, a hair salon which specializes in color and extensions. Both businesses are owned by two of Pell City's own, Abbye Grimes and Tina Dailey. They're sisters-in-law, and they love working together to support both their businesses and others around them.

Little Stitches & Co. truly started in 2020. Previously an elementary school teacher, Abbye saw a gap in the market for charming children's clothes when she was expecting her son. She bought her own embroidery machine and started to

make children's clothing that she – and later many others – could enjoy. Facebook moms' groups and an Etsy page kicked off her online business, and she had a strong start sharing her designs with other parents, not just locally but across the country. While Abbye hadn't always intended on starting an ongoing business, she quickly found her passion.

Opening a storefront was not her initial plan, but Abbye found she needed more space for the expanding business. Now that the boutique has opened, she



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has needed to temporarily close her online store to keep up with in-person demand, although her goal is to have it back online soon. Abbye credits a lot of her success to the overwhelming local support from her neighbors. Word of mouth and curious shoppers popping in to see what's new have kept the store busy.

Family and community are strong themes in the Little Stitches & Co. and Heirloom journeys. Abbye said that she has had "so much fun" working with her sister-in-law and that having each other's backs have made both their businesses stronger. She also expressed how much she loves watching the children dressed by her shop grow. Some of her customers have been coming to buy gifts for years: for baby showers, coming-home outfits, first Christmases, and birthdays.

Tina has been a hairstylist for a decade now, and joining Abbye at their location downtown has been great for them both. Tina posted on her Facebook page about her







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mother being a hairstylist and how family influenced her business. Even its name, Heirloom, directly references family and the skill passed down to her. She says that "beauty isn't just created. It's cared for, nurtured, and passed down with love."

Abbye and Tina are local, ambitious businesswomen, who love family and tradition and look forward to growing in Pell City. They also want you to be on the lookout for special Saturday releases and pop-ups this holiday season, inviting more local businesses to join them downtown. Outside their shop, your first greeting will come from Lucy the Porch Goose. Lucy is currently dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, so if you're passing by, Abbye, Tina, and Lucy will be happy for you to "honk" to say hello.







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# TOASTING THE TOWN WITH LACI



## AT THE ST. CLAIR COUNTY FAIR

'It's a dream come true,' organizers say of event's second year

Written by **LACI BRASWELL**  
Photos by **BOB CRISP**

**I**t may be Christmastime, but it's still autumn until December 21.

It's my favorite season. Fall includes the festive Halloween and Thanksgiving holidays, and the season (especially to me) signifies community, family and sense of togetherness.

The St. Clair County Fair is a good example of an autumn event that combines all three. It returned for its second year in early November, and it served as the perfect platform to unite the community, spotlighting area agriculture students, local farmers, and vendors, musicians and veterans. I was glad for the opportunity to go again this year and see how it's expanded

since my visit last year.

The two-day event was once again spearheaded by the St. Clair County Soil & Water Conservation District and held at the St. Clair County Arena in Odenville.

It is also the brainchild of several of the fair committee members, including Jodi Shirley and Courtney Wren, who both had children competing in livestock competitions. According to Shirley, last year's fair had about 4,000 in attendance. "We want to continue to expand it," she said. "We are so proud of how it's grown."

As I did last fall, I took my boyfriend Corey along for the trip. We opted to go Saturday morning, a fun way to pre-game the Alabama-LSU football matchup, which highlights one minor change in this year's fair: its dates. Organizers said they wanted to push the event back several weeks to allow more livestock





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showings.

Our first stop once we got to the fair was the lamb show, where I don't think a smile ever left my face while looking at those adorable creatures. Growing up in the city, I haven't been fortunate to be around livestock on a regular basis.

Courtney, who helped organize the fair's livestock competitions, explained to me, however, the shows are so much more than a beauty competition for animals.

"They really teach the kids about responsibility and how to take care of a living creature," she said. "The judges are looking for a variety of things, but how they maintain eye contact and handle their animal can make or break them."

Courtney added that in addition to exposing the children to caring for the livestock, it also teaches them how to be confident presenting in front of adults. She also told me that children as young as 3 signed up this year, with almost 40 total participants.

"It's such a unique environment," Courtney said. "All of the students mean serious business in the ring but always hang out around the tents with each other afterwards. I'm proud of their sportsmanship."

The fair's theme this year was "Red, White and Blue," which coincided with the Veterans Day holiday. The fairgrounds included several opportunities for veterans to be honored and to enjoy fellowship with one another, including at a special Veterans' Coffee Hour. "They really enjoyed it, and I'm glad we were able to honor them in some way for their sacrifice," Shirley said.

She was also proud that the fair added more live demonstrations, such as milking, butter churning, and beekeeping, providing up-close and personal learning



experiences for guests.

My next stop was the vendors market, because if you know me, I'm a shopaholic and cheerleader for small businesses. Once inside, Corey and I decided to do a walk around the entire premises, making sure not to miss anything that was offered.

Immediately I was drawn to the Cornerstone Bakery booth. Although it does not have a brick-and-mortar location, workers said they may be found on social media.

The independent bakery offers a plethora of options, including a hearty variety of sourdough loaves -- my recent obsession.

We decided to purchase a pumpkin cinnamon swirl loaf and a loaf of jalapeno cheddar. Naturally, I had to have something to spread on them -- that's where Grandma Betty's Pepper Jelly came to save the day.

I opted for the pecan apple flavor and got Corey's mother a jar of the peach for her upcoming birthday. She is the reason I'm somewhat of a pepper-jelly snob.

This year's slate of vendors included South of Sanity; Bee Still Honey Company; Cornerstone Bakery; The VLB project; Grandma Betty's Pepper Jelly; Howard Family Farm; Get Lit; Val's Incredible Edibles; Still Water Farm; K&B Kreations; Grandma B's Sweet & Swag; Paper Pie; Cozy Quilts; JP3D; 4 J's Sweet Sensations; The Barefoot Cowgirl; South East Nonprofit; and Second Shots, all of which I want to personally shout out for our readers to support.

By this time, our stomachs were rumbling for some tasty fair food. While listening to some live music performed by Bluegrass Connection, Corey and I chowed down on a delicious creation by Carnival Cravings.

The Conecuh sausage bowl we ordered was overloaded with Conecuh sausage (as its name suggests), a substantial amount of queso; peppers; and tater tots. It was delicious and the perfect





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snack to hold us over until dinner.

In addition to Bluegrass Connection, this year's music lineup featured Blue Heart, Big Country, The Cake Walk Band, Rusty Allen, Hatchet Creek, Berritt Haynes and Beyond Blessed.

Both Shirley and Courtney said plans are already being made for next year's fair, aiming to keep it around the same time. I encourage everyone in the area to take a few hours out of their weekend next year and attend. You won't be disappointed!

The organizers wanted to express their gratitude to this year's sponsors: St. Clair County Cattlemen's Association; Union State Bank; St. Clair County; Visit St. Clair; Mezrano Law Firm;

Tractor Supply; Dixie Sod Farm; Thank A Farmer; St. Clair County Soil and Water Conservation District; Coosa Pines Federal Credit Union; ALFA Farmers Federation; Winsouth Credit Union; Southland Golf Carts; Ft. McClellan Credit Union; St. Clair County Farmers Co-op; Alabama Farm Credit; Exit Coosa Realty-Michelle Green; Metro Bank; AmFirst; Howard Holiday Family Farm; Turner Family Farm; Royal Sausage; St. Clair County EMA; and Logan Martin Civitans.

"It has been a dream come true," Shirley said. "We couldn't do it without their support."





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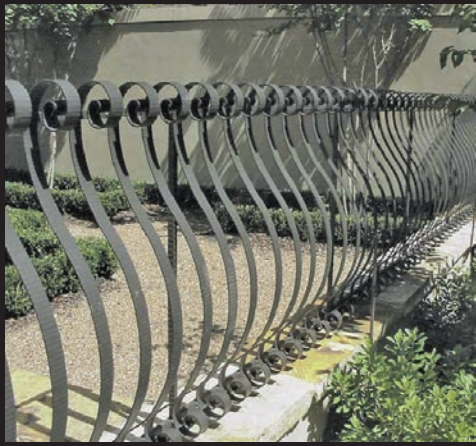






The fair was held at the St. Clair County Arena & Event Center in Odenville.





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# SKY-HIGH AMBITIONS

## Future pilots find their wings in Pell City

Written by **LOYD MCINTOSH**  
Photographed by **BOB CRISP**

It's 8 a.m. on a bright and sunny Saturday, and a crowd is milling about at the St. Clair County Airport in Pell City. It's not quite fall yet, but there is a crispness in the air that makes it clear autumn is just around the corner. The sun is high, the sky is a bright blue, as puffy white clouds meander by.

For an old sports reporter like me, it's a great day for college football. For those who get a thrill by defying the laws of gravity, it's a great day for something else: flying.

The St. Clair County Aviation Career Day is an annual event bringing together a mix of professional flight schools, industry recruiters, and hobby pilots eager to share their passion for flight and recruit the next generation of aviation professionals.

Hosted at the airport, the fair featured aircraft displays, helicopter rides, and



informational booths, all designed to showcase the wide range of careers available in aviation. From commercial pilot training and aircraft maintenance to air traffic control and engineering, the

message was clear: there's a place for everyone in aviation.

Nicholas Jenkins, director of aviation at Wallace State Community College, was on hand to promote and recruit for





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the school's aviation/flight technology program. A retired Army pilot, Jenkins said he became interested in flying when he was 13 years old.

With a high demand for pilots, mechanics, and other aviation-related roles across the country, Jenkins believes aviation career days are an important way to pass along the flying bug to the next generation of aviators.

"There's a large need across the world for pilots, mechanics, and everything else having to do with the aviation industry," he said. "Events like this are crucial for reaching the new generation of pilots and fostering interest in aviation careers."

Also attending the event was Nancy Miller-Borg, a representative of the Alabama Chapter of The Ninety-Nines, an international organization of women pilots founded in 1929 with Amelia Earhart as its first president. While she doesn't fly any longer, Miller-Borg obtained her pilot's license in 1972 and flew mostly single-engine prop planes for decades.

She began flying at a time when



female pilots at any level were rare. Today, she volunteers her time with The Ninety-Nines, which has members all over the United States and in 35 countries, encouraging young ladies to take to the air.

"We have scholarships for women

all over the state who want to earn their private, commercial, or instrument ratings," Cain said. "It's about visibility and opportunity and letting women and girls know this is open to them."

The event attracted many families, many with small children who enjoyed



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looking at the various planes parked on the tarmac. Some of the other kids and young adults, though, were interested in pursuing aviation as a career. Among them was Evan Black, the son of former Pell City Schools Communications Director Matt Black. An aspiring pilot, Evan's interest in aviation began with a suggestion from his father.

"My dad really got me interested in flying," he said. "He threw it out there, and I came out here, enjoyed it, started looking at the planes, and thought, 'Yeah, I'll try it out.'"

Now training with Ben Bayless, Evan is working toward his private pilot's license in a Piper aircraft before transferring to Liberty University's aviation program. His long-term goal is to build flight hours and eventually move into the world of corporate aviation, flying private jets for business clients.

"I want to go into corporate flying," he said. "I want to fly with a company, private jets, something like that."

Another attendee was Phil Williams,



a retired Marine and Army veteran, who brought his Quad City Challenger, an experimental light-sport aircraft that looks like a go-cart with wings. It's emblazoned with custom graphics (including a pinup model) in the style of a World War II bomber.

"It's named after my wife, Patricia, and I've got my grandkids' names painted on

both sides. They don't even know it yet," he said.

Williams was in the process of shining his plane as he described the aircraft's capabilities. "Max speed's 100 miles an hour, usually cruises around 60 to 80. She only burns around three-and-a-half to four gallons an hour. I can run non-ethanol instead of 100 low-lead," he explained as I





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tried to pretend I understood anything he was talking about. All I can think about is that scene in “Fletch” when Chevy Chase, disguised as an airplane mechanic, says authoritatively, “That’s a nice wing. I love this shape.”

A retired helicopter mechanic, Williams

keeps one plane in Talladega and another in Shelby County. “I grew up in Charleston. My dad was in the Air National Guard, so I guess it’s in the blood,” he said. “I’ve flown everything from Hueys to Blackhawks, but this one’s special. I built it myself.”

He points to a bright red handle among

the plane’s controls.

“You pull that, a rocket shoots out the chute, and it brings the whole plane down slow and steady. Of course, it only works if you’re at least 200 feet in the air. Otherwise, it’s more of a conversation piece.”





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More scenes from the St. Clair County Airport's aviation day.





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# LAKESIDE FLORA & FAUNA



## FISHING beyond the waters

Written by

**DR. SARAH ELIZABETH MOREMAN**

Photographed by **TIM BADGWELL**

The fog hovers over the water, blurring the forests into a dark green Monet-style painting. The water itself is still; it is morning and untouched by watercraft. Or rather, is it the coldness of the morning that discourages humanity from encroaching upon the sacred stillness? And here I am, sitting on a newly sanded, newly painted Adirondack chair, hunched beneath a thick quilt, warming my insides with the spiciness of hot cider as part of my breakfast some mornings; and, this morning is no different. I already enjoyed my mother's ever-delicious homemade breakfast casserole and cinnamon rolls.

It is a rare weekend when my parents and I decided to visit their lake house so we could bring over the Adirondack chairs I blessedly found on the side of the road. They were of strong quality, but the dark pink paint was peeling horribly, and their feet were rotting a bit. After



a quick inspection, Dad said that with some sanding, a new coat of paint in another color, and sealing them, this set of four would last a long time. We pulled them into the truck and hauled them away to begin the renovation process.

That was months ago, when mosquitoes were feasting on our ankles and knees, and sweat beaded on our hairlines as we worked on the road-tossed chairs. Now, we are enjoying the fruit of our labors this weekend, and I am sitting in one, taking in





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the sights of the silent, cold lake.

Since it is quiet out here in the cold season, more wildlife is out. Bald eagles, ospreys, egrets, and herons are fishing in their own manner. I watch as the ospreys circle before swooping down, feet-first, to catch flipping three-pounder prey, while the long-legged egrets and blue herons wade in the shallows, their beaks sharp arrows plunging below the surface to capture fish. Occasionally, a bald eagle circles in the sky before startling an osprey to drop its prey as part of its hunting strategy to secure food.

Observing this diversity of avian fishing tactics pulls my mind into this train of thought about the Scriptures where Jesus invites others to follow Him by saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." These chosen disciples leave everything behind to follow Him.

Rubbing the smoothed, navy blue-painted wooden armrest of the Adirondack I am sitting in, I reflect on the spiritual meaning of fishing, where many people crave truth more than ever these days. The reflective surface of the lake captures what I perceive truth should be and is. Truth is a mirror, a reflection of who and what we are: image-bearers of our Creator. We are called to fish by creating connections with others, to seek out relationships. We are not created to live life alone. We are not meant to work alone, and the fact that Dad and I worked together on these four Adirondack chairs exemplifies the truth of our purpose, our being...to have relationships.

How do we fish? How do we seek to relate with others? The way the herons and egrets companionably fish while the ospreys take care to hold on to their prey in their spicules portrays the importance of not letting things hinder us from having camaraderie. Materialism is one of the strongest hindrances to our seeking relationships. Successful fishing sometimes means letting go of what holds us back, such as the bad prey of materialism, pride, jealousy, and gluttony. Bad prey also includes unforgiveness, bitterness, and the insistence on being right. Sometimes fear drives us to feel the need to keep up with the Joneses, or should I say, the Kardashians as the modern Joneses, in terms of possessions and appearances. By going in this direction of viewing fishing, we choose to let materialism and pride take over our senses, weighing us down to the dark depths of despair and overwhelm. We let such terrible carrion blind us to opportunities for making friends and having civilized, meaningful discussions about heavy topics such as "religion, politics, and her," or him, as Sammy Kershaw's song goes.

We need to view the purpose of fishing from a different perspective.

We fish for sustenance and clarity. Sustenance is quality time, because it is rare these days. When we fish, we fish with intention, patience, and care. We fish with respect for life, freedom, and relationships. In everything we do, speak, and act, we reveal how we are fishing. Are we fishing for genuine connections? Or, are we fishing to serve our own gains?






I am paraphrasing this adage: Feed a child with fish, and the child experiences instant gratification without seeing the value of taking time to connect with others in relationship. The child may fish for compliments to feed his or her own needs and wants without thinking about others.

In contrast, teach a child to fish, and the child sees the importance of taking the time to seek connection, ambition or desire. The child fishes for connection by giving and sharing quality time, understanding the integrity and free will that relationships require.

To reiterate, we fish for what brings sustenance to life. Some



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of us may be afraid to seek to connect with others, because we have let the fish slip through our fingers due to rejection or abandonment. However, we are called not to worry or be afraid. More fish will come at the right time, especially after we gain clarity of how free will is a gift. Our fishing should allow for moments of letting go as part of our seeking true relationships. This time of the year brings us closer to the longer evenings and shorter days, bringing us closer together in fellowship as we celebrate the meaning of the season.

Bringing my attention back to my surroundings to see the birds in their various stages of fishing, I see God's hand in their beauty and ways of fishing. Each bird is different, yet they perform in ways that happen naturally, as we should live life naturally by seeking relationships through quality time and goodwill, both with our Creator and with others. In short, fishing is an act of seeking truth, which is learning what free will truly means. Furthermore, free will and quality time are gifts of love that we seek to give to others, not demanding others to love us, but allowing others to see that love in our actions, words, and thoughts as part of connecting with them and building their trust to engage in relationships with us.

When we let fishing happen naturally in our lives by not insisting on our own way and timing, we will see more opportunities for truth to be revealed to us through intentional connections, meaningful conversations, and by putting aside ourselves to be more present in the moment with others.

The sound of autumn oak leaves and pine needles crunches behind me, pulling me out of my thoughts.

"Think the dark blue is the right color for the chairs, hmm?" Dad asks as he leans down to take my now empty mug and hand me another steaming cup of hot cider. In this exchange of mugs, he tests the sturdiness of the new paint on the armrest. I nod in agreement.

"We did good with these Adirondacks. Aren't you glad?" I motion for him to sit in another Adirondack chair. He sits, and we turn to watch a bald eagle fly off into the sky with a twisting fish in its talons.





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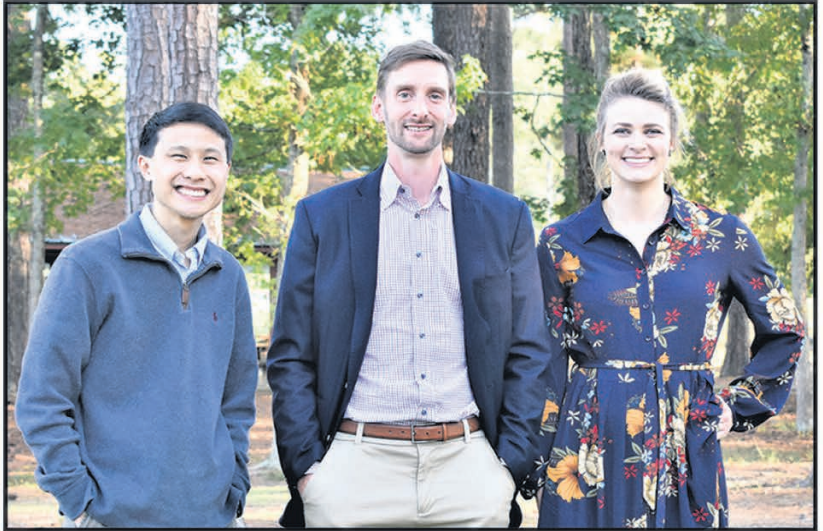
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# CALENDAR OF

# Events



## DECEMBER

### AREA CHRISTMAS PARADES

Sylacauga Christmas Parade: 6 p.m. **December 4**

Lincoln Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting: 6 p.m. **December 4**

Talladega Christmas Parade: 6 p.m. **December 8** (Theme: Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree)

Childersburg Christmas Parade: 6 p.m. **December 11** (Theme: All Things Christmas)

Pell City Christmas Parade: 7 p.m. **December 12** (Theme: Lights, Camera Christmas!)

## DECEMBER 5

### ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A FAIRYTALE CHRISTMAS

Hosted by The Heart of Pell City, this 8th annual Christmas tree lighting festival begins at 6 p.m. in front of the St. Clair County Courthouse. The event will feature live dance performances, musical entertainment, a special appearance by Santa and Mrs. Claus, free mini candy bags for the kids, and hot chocolate and apple cider (while quantities last). Participating downtown businesses on Cogswell Avenue will sponsor an open house starting at 11 a.m., with special one-day sales, treats, and more. Festival attendance is free.



## DECEMBER 6

### WHITE ORCHID CHRISTMAS GALA

Heart to Heart Events presents this charitable community affair at 6 p.m. at the White Orchid Events Venue at 47265 U.S. Highway 280 in Sylacauga. The evening will include a festive dinner, live band, a comedian, and prize giveaways. Tickets are \$60 each. To purchase tickets and for more information, call 205-746-4852 or visit [www.worchideventvenue.com](http://www.worchideventvenue.com).



## DECEMBER 13

### JINGLE BELL RUN

Lakeside Park hosts this third annual benefit organized by the Rotary Club of Pell City. The past two events have raised more than \$100,000 to boost the missions of worthy charitable organizations in the Logan Martin community. This year, it will include a 5K run, 10K run on a nationally sanctioned course, and a 1-mile fun run/walk. Registration begins at 7 a.m., with the race starting at 8. Runner medals and cash prizes will be awarded. Santa Claus will be on hand, and hot drinks and biscuits will be available. For registration details, visit [www.runsignup.com](http://www.runsignup.com).



The Children's Place



## DECEMBER 13

### TOUCH-A-TRUCK PALOOZA

Benefiting The Children's Place (St. Clair County's Children's Advocacy Center), this free event is scheduled for 12:30-3:30 p.m. at the St. Clair County Agricultural & Multi-Event Center (100 Arena Drive) in Odenville. Bring the entire family and enjoy such activities as Touch-A-Truck (with emergency vehicles, tractors, and more), pictures with Santa, vendors, and holiday crafts. For more details, visit the event's Facebook page.

## DECEMBER 13

### THE MARSHALL TUCKER BAND

The Oxford Performing Arts Center hosts this evening with one of the most celebrated Southern rock bands at 7:30 p.m. The concert showcases Southern rock at its finest: raw, heartfelt, and unforgettable as the band performs its classic hits: "Can't You See," "Fire on the Mountain," "Heard it in a Love Song," and more. For ticket information, visit [www.oxfordpac.org](http://www.oxfordpac.org).



## DECEMBER 14

### CHRISTMAS WITH NEAL MCCOY

Join country music star Neal McCoy for a festive night of holiday cheer at the Oxford Performing Arts Center at 7 p.m. A platinum-selling artist known for hits like "No Doubt About It" and "Wink," McCoy has entertained audiences with his charismatic stage presence and high-energy performances. Celebrate the season with a mix of classic Christmas favorites, country charm, and heartfelt moments in a family-friendly show that's sure to warm your heart. For ticket information, visit [www.oxfordpac.org](http://www.oxfordpac.org).

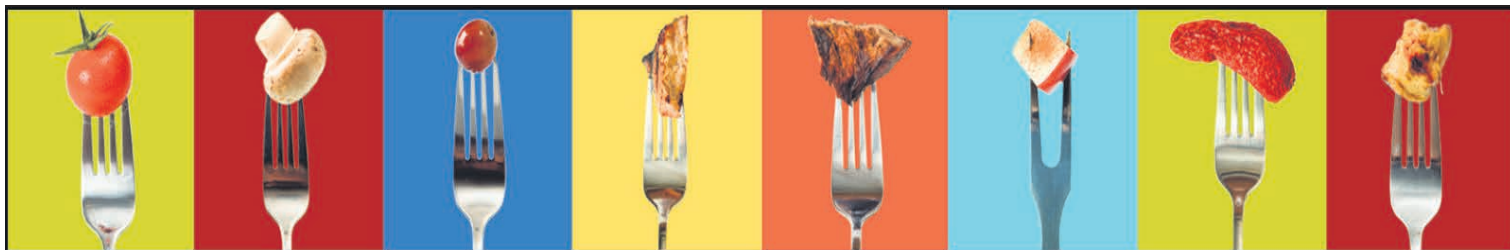
## DECEMBER 20

### THE BLACK TIE CHRISTMAS BALL

You are cordially invited to an evening of elegance, fine dining, and celebration at The Gathering Space (877 Old Birmingham Highway, Sylacauga). The Black Tie Christmas Ball is a night to remember filled with dinner, a DJ, and holiday cheer. Dinner begins at 7:15 p.m. Formal attire is suggested, and BYOB is permitted. For ticket information and more details, visit the event's Facebook page.







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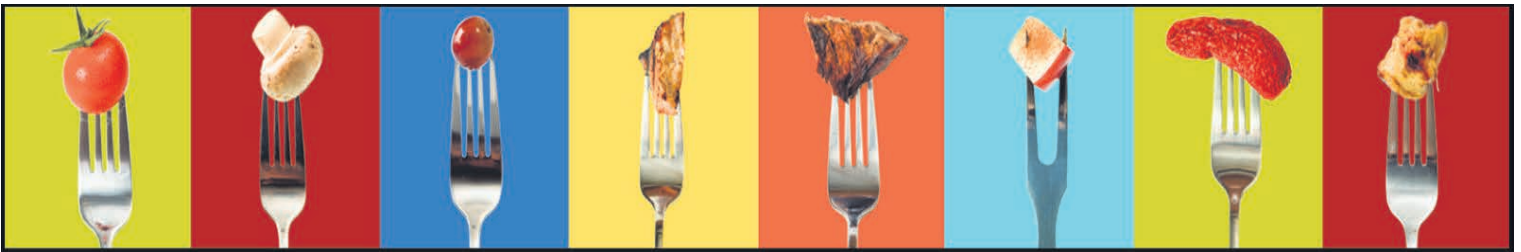
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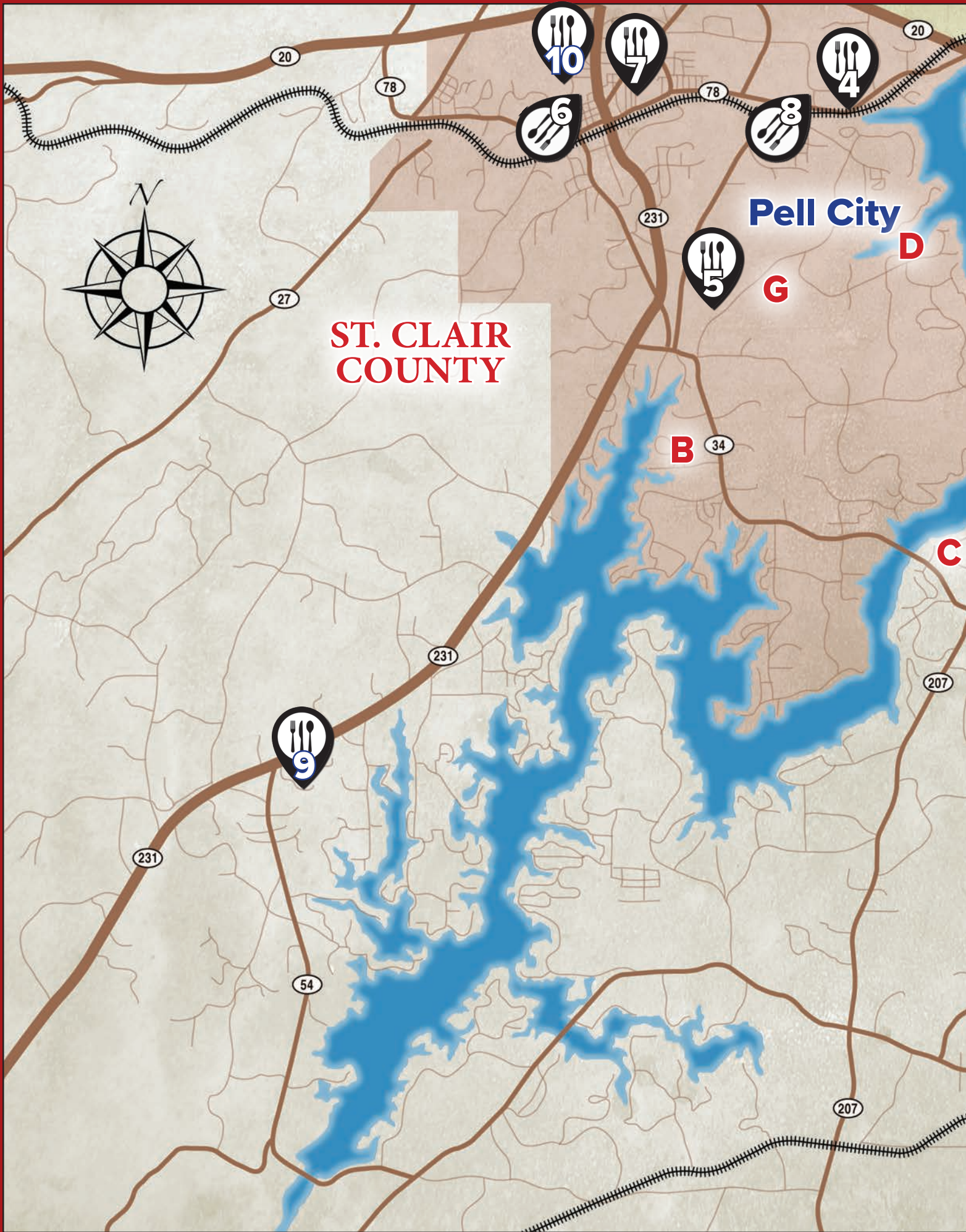
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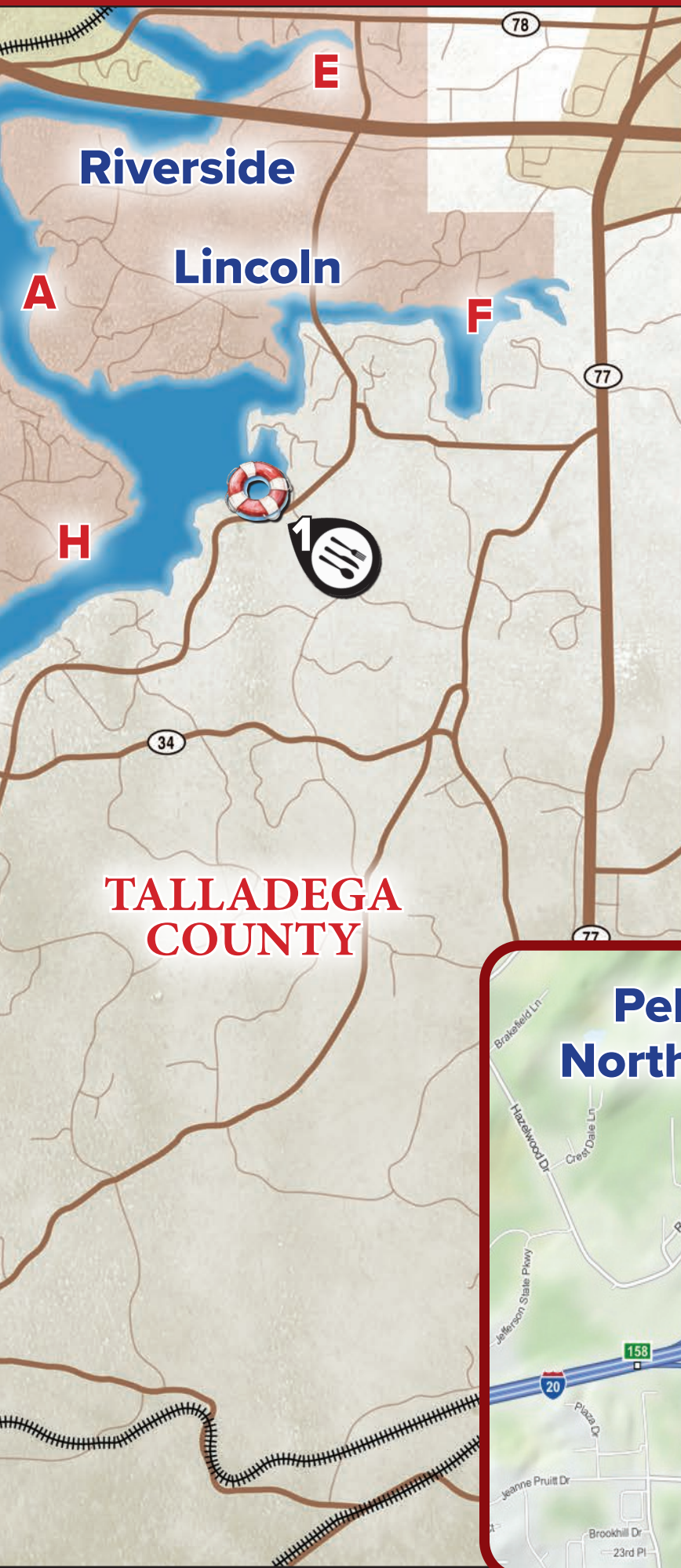
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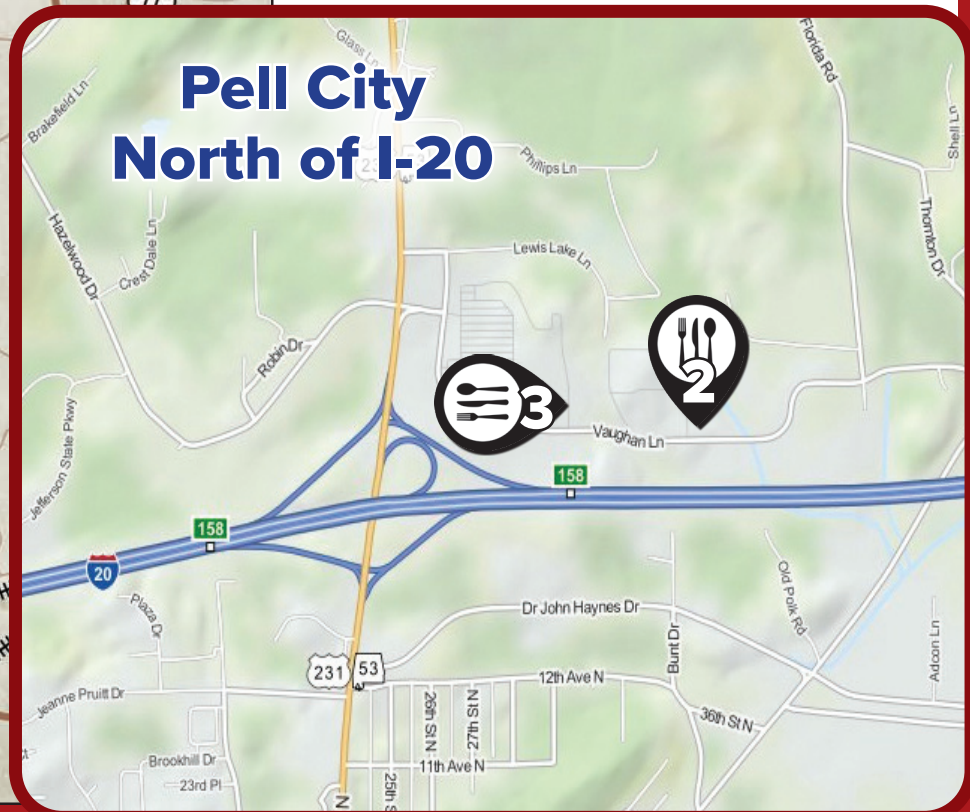




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- 8 – Oishi Asian Restaurant**
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- A – Logan Martin Dam**
- B – Lakeside Park**
- C – Stemley Bridge**
- D – St. Clair Airport**
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# “LIKE HAVING A REALTOR IN THE FAMILY”

Written by **VALLEAN JACKSON**

*Submitted photo*

**A**sk Jeff Krafft what he loves most about real estate, and he'll tell you that it's helping people. Whether it's a first-time home buyer holding their new keys or a family selling a home filled with memories, he believes every client deserves care and attention.

“My mother got into real estate when I graduated high school and just seeing her and talking with her really got me interested in the industry,” he said. “I almost got my license back then, but the recession hit, so I moved on and tried different things. I was never really quite happy. They all just felt like jobs, whereas in real estate, I don't look at it as a job. It's truly a career, and I love doing what I do.”

As a Realtor with EXIT Coosa River Realty, Krafft has been serving clients since 2018. What keeps him going year after year is that he genuinely has a heart for people. Each client's story is different, and whether they're buying their first home or needing to sell unexpectedly, he finds joy in guiding them every step of the way.

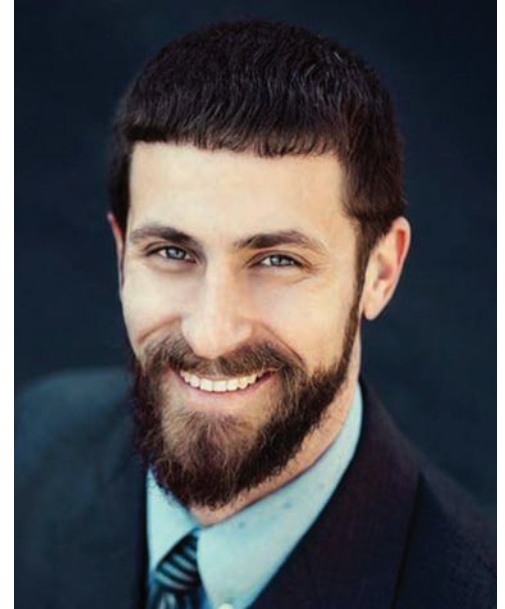
“I'm not in it for the money, as some people might be. Some of my best moments are when I'm helping that first time home buyer get their

keys. I've seen everything from smiles and laughter to tears, and being able to hand them the keys to their first home is what makes this career fulfilling.”

Krafft lives by a simple motto: “Working with me is like having a Realtor in the family.” He strives to build genuine relationships with clients and connections that last well beyond closing day. He understands that homeownership isn't a quick race but a marathon. As life evolves, he's there to help clients navigate the next chapter, whether that means selling, downsizing, or beginning the process again.

When discussing today's housing market, Krafft said he believes that things are looking positive overall. “Interest rates have stabilized, they're at historic averages, and inventory is increasing,” he explained. “Homes are starting to sit a little longer, which means buyers aren't going into homes with negative equity. It's giving people more breathing room financially and taking away that intense competition we saw when buyers were offering far above listing prices just to win. Builders are still building, and homes are going up left and right in Leeds, Moody, and Odenville.”

According to Krafft, there's no “right” time to buy a home. “It's more about meeting your needs at a



Jeff Krafft

particular time. When looking for a home, potential buyers should avoid looking for homes that are perfect upon walking through the door. You have to be able to look past the paint color or cabinets and focus on the bones of the home. Superficial things can be changed.”

Having spent most of his life in Moody, Krafft says St. Clair County has always felt like home. “My life started in Moody, and I'm raising my daughter here. It's the only place I've ever truly felt at home. For anyone relocating here, there's a great mix of small-town charm and city convenience. You're close to the metro area, the lake, and great schools. It's a wonderful place to raise a family or retire.”



# A BIT MORE ABOUT JEFF

**Favorite snack:**

Butterfinger

**Favorite beverage:**

Sweet Tea

**Favorite movie:**

Hacksaw Ridge

**Favorite team/sports:**

“Roll Tide!”





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**118 SAINT JUDES LANE**

MLS# 21434830

2 BDRM 2 BATH, FULL BASEMENT HEATED AND COOLED, .8 ACRES. RECENTLY REMODELED

**\$269,900**



**Mini RV Park!!**

**595 DABBS LANE**  
LINCOLN, AL 35096

MLS# 21425154

**\$799,900**



**24 WOODS FERRY RD., LINCOLN, AL**

MLS#21424013

**\$695,000**

COMMERCIAL BUILDING/BARNDOMINIUM, 3400 SQ FT, POLE BARN W/ STORAGE 1850 SQ FT, 1000 SQ FT NEW HOME, 3 BR, 2 BA UPDATED RENTAL, 2 RENTAL RV LOT RENTALS



**881 RIDGEWAY CIRCLE**  
TALLADEGA, AL 35160

MLS# 21413620

**\$650,000**



**15.6 fenced ac., 4BR, 4BA**

**40x40 Building**

**740 MOUNT OLIVE DR**  
PELL CITY

MLS# 21432831

**\$499,900**



**Mini Farm In Town!**

**1409 23RD ST**  
MLS# 21417765

**\$399,900**



**Finished Basement**

**740 HICKORY ST**  
MOODY

MLS# 21432198

**\$299,900**



**Newest Neighborhood**

**1 1/2 LOTS**

**0 BIG MITTEN LN**  
LINCOLN, AL 35096

MLS#21397289

**\$299,000**



**28.94 Acres**

**LOT AT 0 COVE SHOCCO ROAD**  
TALLADEGA

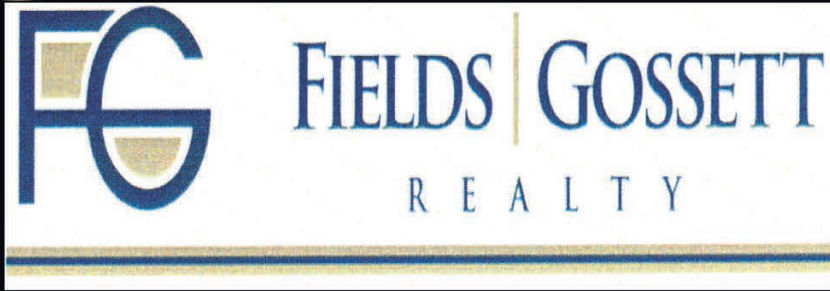
MLS#21433205

**\$120,000**



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with gratitude  
and faith. May  
your heart and  
home be filled  
with His love.**

*“Every good and perfect  
gift is from above.”*

*— James 1:17*

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# #1 Team

## Across 3 Lakes

Lay • Logan • Neely

LAKE ACCESS

LOGAN MARTIN

Autumn Ln,  
Pell City  
Lot 13

**\$27,900**

COMING SOON

465 River Forest  
Talledega  
Land

**\$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

488 Rabbit Road  
Cropwell  
4 BR, 3BA

**\$574,900**

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**

560 Davis Acres Drive  
Alpine  
2 BR, 2BA

**\$345,000**

LOGAN MARTIN LAKE

115 Riverview Lane  
Talledega  
3 BR, 2 BA

**\$498,900**

UNDER CONTRACT

Lot 23  
Stonegate Circle  
3 BR, 2 BA

**\$299,900**

COMING SOON

175 Reed Road  
**\$399,900**

NEW LISTING

2151 Mount Moriah Rd.  
Pell City  
4 BR, 2 BA

**\$248,900**





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



**70 Choice Circle**  
9 Acres  
**\$149,900**



**SOLD**  
**44164 HWY 78**  
**Condo #106**  
**\$269,900**



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



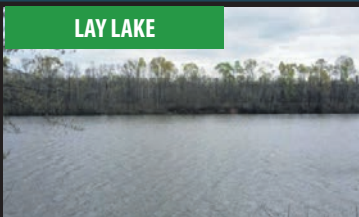
**LOGAN MARTIN**  
**44164 Hwy 78 Unit 207,**  
**Lincoln** 4 BR, 2 BA  
**\$275,000**



**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**



**UNDER CONTRACT**  
**Stonegate Circle**  
**Lot 24**  
**\$14,000**



**3 ACRES**  
**COMMERCIAL**  
**AL Hwy 21 Acreage**  
**\$140,000**



**MULTI FAMILY**  
**7th Avenue N,**  
**Pell City**  
Land/Lot  
**\$149,900**



**1835 NW OLD HWY 26**  
Land  
**\$175,000**



**LOGAN MARTIN**  
**140 S Lake Shore Dr,**  
**Talladega**  
3 BR, 2 BA  
**\$499,000**



**WATER ACCESS**  
**LOGAN MARTIN**  
**26 Waters Edge,**  
**Pell City**  
Land/Lot  
**\$35,000**



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





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3200 Aquarius Drive,  
Alpine, AL 35014  
MLS# 21427231  
**\$299,900**

**NEW LISTING**



1604 Truss Ferry Rd.,  
Pell City, AL 35128  
MLS# 21435358  
**\$289,900**

**LAKE VIEW**



475 River Forest Lane Unit  
1150, Talladega, AL 35160  
MLS# 21428786  
**\$309,900**

**UNDER CONTRACT**



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

**NEW LISTING**

**PRIVATE LAKE**



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



128 Pacific St.,  
Pell City, AL 35128  
MLS# 21433330  
**\$439,900**



2002 Cleveland Farms Parkway  
Pell City, AL 35128  
MLS# 21434088  
**\$549,900**

**GREAT NEW PRICE**



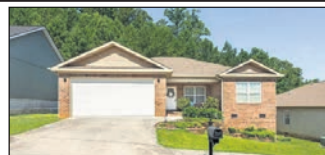
2058 Edgewood Dr,  
Moody, AL 35004  
MLS# 21431247  
**\$294,900**

**NEW LISTING**

**ACREAGE**



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



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

**UNDER CONTRACT**

**LAKE VIEW!**



254 Osprey Dr.,  
Pell City, AL 35128  
MLS #21434959  
**\$384,900**

**NEW LISTING**

**LAKE VIEW**



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

**LAKE VIEW!**



475 River Forest Ln. STE 4140,  
Talladega, AL 35160  
MLS# 21417721  
**\$259,900**

**UNDER CONTRACT**



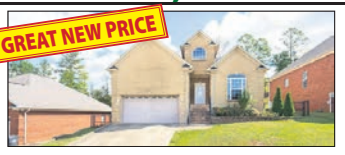
100 Harbor Pointe Dr  
Talladega, AL 35160  
MLS# 21427677  
**\$339,900**

**SOLD**



84 Harbor Pointe Dr  
Talladega, AL 35160  
MLS# 21420072  
**\$339,900**

**GREAT NEW PRICE**



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**

**NEW LISTING**

**LAKE ACCESS**



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

**NEW LISTING**

**GOLF COURSE**



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

**NEW LISTING**

**ACREAGE**



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





**Caran Wilbanks**

*Your Friendly Lake & Neighborhood Realtor*



**205.368.9772**

2319 Cogswell Ave. | Pell City, AL 35125



**732 River Bend Cir  
Talladega, \$990,000**

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**



**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**



**1524 Martin Street S  
Pell City, \$550,000**

Commercial property on Hwy 231 currently operating as a body shop. Features two 70' x 70' concrete block buildings with metal roofs, 5 bays, 4 metal roll-up doors, office, and 1 bathroom. Includes two rental houses on-site for additional income. Deeded driveway access, 5 ac gives ample space for expansion, and flexible commercial use potential. Ideal for auto, industrial, or investment use. **MLS 21422860**



**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**



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**LOTS FOR SALE!**

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

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



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a Home*

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**Garrett Burgess**  
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**Lauren Holladay**  
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205-218-0090

### UNDER CONTRACT



15 Old Roadway, Cropwell, AL  
MLS# 21389324  
**\$407,900**

### HOME WITH ACREAGE



7046 Wolf Creek Road S, Pell City, AL  
MLS # 21395062  
**\$549,000**

### UNDER CONTRACT



270 Saint Smith Circle, Cropwell, AL  
MLS# 21419207  
**\$239,900**



1017 Pecanwood Drive, Anniston, AL  
MLS# 21436325  
**\$294,900**



00 Speedway Blvd Unit#/Parcel #8, Lincoln, AL  
MLS# 21435124  
**\$100,000**

*We are wishing  
you a wonderful  
holiday season!*

### LAKE VIEWS



2703 Abbott Dr., Pell City  
MLS# 21419382  
**\$579,900**

### SMALL FARM



2310 Mineral Springs Rd., Pell City  
+/- 16 Acres MLS#21431754  
**\$599,000**



116 Solar Shield Blvd, Odenville, AL  
+/- 2.80 Acres  
**\$259,900**

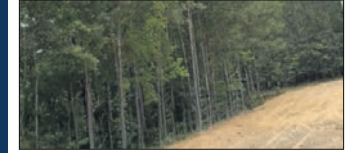
### ESTATE LOT W/ VIEW +/- 20 ACRES W/ ROAD FRONTAGE



4947 Hwy 231 #2, Vincent  
MLS #21413976  
**\$325,000**



4947 Hwy 231, Vincent  
+/- 100 Acres MLS #21414705  
**\$1,000,000**



Lot 1 & 2 Amber Drive, Jackson Gap  
+/- 2.27 Acres  
**\$800,000**

### COMMERCIAL PROPERTY



0 Vaughn Ln, Pell City  
MLS# 21373880  
**\$2,000,000**

### 2 HOMES ON 26 ACRES



4265 Stemley Rd, Talladega  
+/- 26 Acres MLS# 21427041  
**\$599,900**



00 Speedway Blvd Unit#/Parcel #7, Lincoln, AL  
MLS# 21435155  
**\$45,000**



0 Allred Rd Unit #/Parcel # 2, Lincoln, AL  
MLS# 21435119  
**\$40,000**

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A photograph of a woman with curly hair smiling and holding a young child. The child is wearing a grey knit hat and a dark jacket, and is clapping their hands. They are standing in front of a large, decorated Christmas tree with warm white lights. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a festive setting.

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