

A Salute to
**Talladega, Lincoln
& Munford**
COMMERCE
2017





Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Through multiple owners and name changes, Munford Food Mart remains committed to its mission of serving local customers and providing them with the convenience of shopping locally.

Munford Food Mart's mission is to serve the community

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

MUNFORD -- Munford Food Mart Stock Manager Terry Tarwater believes the local grocery store's purpose is to serve the community.

Tarwater has worked at the grocery store since 1995.

"I've worked here since I was a high school student, and it's something I've always wanted to do," he said. "I've pretty much done it all, and would love to have my own store one day."

The stock manager noted that the store was first called Three B's Grocery and was later named Pickette's Grocery before becoming the Munford Food Mart.

"The business has gone through multiple owners and name changes, but our mission to provide for the community hasn't changed," he said.

Tarwater stressed that it's crucial that Munford area residents shop local.

"We depend on the community to stay open, and we want to provide them with good services in return," he said. "Munford is a very small community, but the grocery store is here to serve them and keep our residents from having to drive 20 miles north or south to the nearest grocery store."

Tarwater said that despite being in the ideal location for the Munford community, the store still has its challenges.

"We still have difficulty with keeping up with major businesses," he said.

To compete better with larger competitors, the store has built multiple additions, including its own gas station and Subway restaurant.

"The gas station opened about four years ago," Tarwater said. "(Store owner Amit) Patel previously owned a gas station in Lincoln, so he has experience in running them."

The adjacent Subway restaurant opened more recently. According to Tarwater, it stays busy.

"It always seems to have steady business and offers the same menu as other Subway restaurants," he said.

Tarwater noted that Patel's goal is to become more involved with the town.

"The store takes pride in being able to serve its community," Tarwater said. "We help out with various events throughout the year. We donate bananas to the football team and other products to the schools."

When asked why he has worked for the same business for so many years, Tarwater replied, "It's because of the people. You really get to know the customers, and our work team is like family."

Munford Food Mart is at 44201 Alabama Highway 21. Hours are 6 a.m.-9 p.m. seven days a week.

The gas pumps operate 24/7 for those making a payment with a credit or debit card; otherwise, it operates during store hours.

For more information, call 256-358-4591.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The adjacent Subway restaurant is a recent addition to the Munford Food Mart premises. It offers a full menu and remains steadily busy.



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'HERE TO SERVE'

Gaither's Florist passes ownership to Sylacauga native Memory Williams

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Memory Williams, right, has purchased Gaither's Florist from former owner Gay Gaither-Webster. The floral shop has served Talladega for more than a decade.

This new year for Gaither's Florist in Talladega holds many new beginnings, including new ownership.

Memory Williams of Sylacauga purchased the building and began operation on Jan. 13.

"It has been challenging at times and certainly an adjustment, but everyone has been very supportive," she said.

For a while Williams said she worked from home doing small arrangements, to be with her three children -- Aaron, Mandolin and Grace.

"I've also worked in a greenhouse and went back to school to become a pastry chef," she said. "I was just waiting for the right door to open."

That opportunity came after talking to her cousin, who works at Griffin's Jewelry next door to Gaither's Florist.

"She told me about the building and that the owners were looking to sell," Williams said. "Everything just fell into place."

Before taking on Gaither's, Williams owned and operated Blossoms Florist, which served the Childersburg and Sylacauga communities for several years.

"My customers have been great to me and have said they will continue to stick with me. That means a lot," she said.

Gay Gaither-Webster, who owned the business for 14 years, said she's proud to pass the baton to Williams.

"It was just time for me to retire," she said, "but I have full trust in Memory and know that she will do a wonderful job."

When asked what's her favorite aspect of the job, Williams replied, "The people. They become like family."

Williams noted that she is humbled by getting to play a role in big events in people's lives, such as weddings, holidays, school functions, funerals

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Gaither's

From Page 3A

and memorials.

"Funerals are always tough, but you want to make sure the family is happy and the person's last wishes are granted," she said.

When her mother died on Mother's Day several years ago, Williams said that's when she realized the dedication it takes to be a florist.

"I really wanted to have a blanket of a specific type of lily that she loved," she said. "My usual florist didn't have them in stock, so I tried someone else who was new. He knew my mother, and drove all the way to Atlanta to make sure that we had them for her funeral. I will never forget that."

Gaither's offers a variety of floral and gift services, including: fresh-cut

bouquets, silk and candy arrangements, wreaths, gift baskets and more.

Flowers are a seasonal item, but the business will try to order specific requests for customers.

In the future, Williams hopes to become more involved in the community.

"I would really like to work with the students at AIDB and to be able to provide them some type of apprenticeship."

She said she'd also enjoy being a part of the city and county's outdoor classrooms. "I have experience with working in greenhouses and landscaping, and I'm here to help."

The price range for items at Gaither's can vary. "It really just depends on what the customer is looking for," Williams said. "We do ask that all delivery orders be a minimum of \$35."

The shop provides

online ordering services and a 24-hour order line.

"We felt that was important for emergency cases, such as a death occurring after hours,"

Williams said.

Gaither's is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10: a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, and is at

704-D Battle St. East in Talladega.

For more information, visit www.gaithersflorist.net or call 256-480-0090. "I am here to serve

the community, and look forward to working with the local businesses and schools," Williams said. "I feel it is my ministry to just love people."



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Gaither's Florist offers a variety of products, including fresh-cut bouquets and silk arrangements.

April in Talladega Tour of Homes is back!

Friday & Saturday April 7-8, 2017

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Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Tracing its origins back to a simple conversation between its current owners, the Haynes Street Pawn Shop has become a fixture in the Talladega business community.

Haynes Street Pawn has incidental start, determined future

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home staff writer

Haynes Street Pawn Shop has been doing business across the street from Walmart for seven years now, and basically owes its existence to a random conversation between its owners.

Co-owner Joe Ballow one day asked future business partner Steve Hurst what his plans were for the Haynes Street building.

"He said he was thinking of putting in either a restaurant or a pawn shop," Ballow said. "I said if he put in a pawn shop, I would go in with him."

Ballow said he had once worked for about a month in a pawn shop in Anniston before the owner developed health problems and had to get out of the business.

"But I was there every day. I got in before he did and left after he did. I watched and learned. Most of the time, you can learn a lot more just by keeping your mouth shut."

When he and Hurst went into business, "I knew guns already. I'd been collecting guns since I was 21, and I knew about tools, too. The only thing I really had to learn was about jewelry. But I got a diamond tester, and I learned that, too."

They also took used electronics in the early days, but will not be doing that anymore.

"We've quit taking tools, too," Ballow said. "And we're not taking any electronics other than TVs that are from 2015 or newer. So if somebody's looking to compete with us, this would be a good opportunity for you. We did good business in those things for a while, but now we're just going to be focusing on guns and jewelry."

Before opening up, however, Ballow and Hurst both had to undergo extensive vetting for a federal firearms license, a process that took three to five months by itself.

"As far as the city was concerned, the building was in decent shape," Ballow said. "We had to fix some wiring and some plumbing issues for the city, but not too bad."

Federal standards also called for a secure building.

"You need a good alarm system and bars. I had a friend with a pawn shop in Oxford where somebody ran a car through the front of the building and broke into the jewelry case," he said. "You couldn't do that with ours, we've got steel pipe and concrete out front. And we've got alarms upstairs and downstairs that let us know if anything moves. We've actually had flies set it off in the summer."

Although the focus may be narrowing in the future, the business is both expanding and here for the long haul.

"We've already added on a 30-foot-by-30-foot expansion in the back, and then built another 15-foot-by-45-foot addition."

They've also hired a jewelry expert and added a part-time employee.

"I love Talladega," Ballow said. "Talladega's my home. I've built four houses since I came back here. I was born here, I moved away and then I came back. I'm planning on staying here."



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The shop offers a variety of items for sale -- including musical instruments and some electronics -- but owners say its current focus is on jewelry and firearms.



'Even bigger this year'

Talladega Chamber isn't resting on past successes

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home staff writer

The year 2016 was all about the networking, according to Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jason Daves.

"We had eight networking events altogether last year, including the Chamber Coffees, business after-hours, things like that," he said. "They were all well attended. Now we're looking to building on that, with an event on the last Thursday of each month except July and December, when people tend to be on vacation. We're looking for better turnout and participation this year."

Most events drew 30 or 40 people last year. Events through May or June of 2017 are already booked, with the March event coming up at the Talladega campus of Central Alabama Community College.

There will also be networking opportunities hosted by Lincoln businesses, and at some point this year, there will be a special event honoring local first responders.

"We gave out our first valor award at the luncheon this year, and that went very well," Daves said. "But there are still lots of people that don't fully understand what our police officers, deputies, firefighters and paramedics do for us every day. That event is still in the planning phase."

There were six ribbon cuttings at new businesses in 2016, including Alpine Bay and Griffin Laser Engraving, and the chamber was a major participant in several big community events, including April in Talladega, a tradition that will be honored in full this year.

"They couldn't do the tour of historic homes last year, but we will have a tour this year and a lot of new activities as well," he said.

The chamber also will be hosting an observance of the National Day of Prayer in May, and will continue working with the city of Talladega on the Christmas Parade and Christmas Village on the Square.

"We had great turnout for those events last year, and we're hoping to make them even bigger this year," Daves said. The dates for those events will be announced later.

The chamber was also a part of author Alton Carter's inspirational presentation at the Ritz Theater (free for the students who attended), and partnered with the city in its rebranding effort. This is primarily a city effort, he said, but the chamber is making expanded use of the new logo and trying to help promote tourism.

Daves also said there will likely be more "lunch and learn" events for local business owners, such as one hosted with the Pell City Chamber with a speaker from the state Department of Labor, or a presentation by Municipal Clerk David Sparks on retail sales and shoplifting.

"They were both very informative, and I'd like to see a couple more of those this year," Daves said. "We encourage business, organizations, nonprofits to let us know what they're struggling with, and we'll get a class put together."

The Yeti Challenge is back this year, and looks to be as popular as it has been in years past. "You don't even have to buy anything; it just puts you in the mind of shopping locally," he said.

The awards luncheon will be returning this year, along with the Chamber Ambassador program. This year's group of ambassadors includes 26 students in grades 7 through 12 in the city and county school systems. Some 950 students have passed through the program since it was revived early in Daves' tenure as director. This year's class will also visit Montgomery to watch the state Legislature in action.

And there will be a new leadership class this year, and a new, more user-friendly website has been unveiled at www.TalladegaLincolnchamber.com. Chamber members will be given a log-in allowing them to post their own information.

The chamber also attracted 17 new members last year.

For more information, visit the chamber's website or call 256-362-9075.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Talladega Chamber of Commerce officials hope to build on the organization's success during the past year with a full slate of events scheduled during 2017.



203 South Street W.
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Talladega is a city that is proud of its heritage and excited about its future. A community rich in natural resources, history, hospitality, opportunity and adventure, Talladega enjoys the leadership of a progressive city council and manager, which combines with the tenacity and resilience of its residents to make it a city that is accomplishing much toward making itself a better place for those who live, work, study and play here.

- Highlights of 2016's accomplishments**
- Reduced Part 1 crimes – aggravated assault, rape, murder, robbery, arson, burglary and theft – by 14.6%
 - Launched the Award-Winning City of Talladega "At Every Turn" brand
 - Produced the first-ever City event, "Christmas on the Square"
 - Co-hosted ABC 33/40's Talk of Alabama morning show live from Talladega
 - Obtained numerous grants, including a \$400,000 ALDOT grant for ADA improvements to the courthouse square
 - Approved more than \$3 million in capital expenditures for the city
 - Approved more than \$5 million in capital expenditures for Talladega's water and sewer infrastructure
 - Partnered with the USDA to assist The Square Cup Coffee Shop, a local entrepreneurial venture
 - Constructed a new grant-funded restroom facility at Veterans Park
 - Opened the City of Talladega Recycling Center
 - Created the City of Talladega's Human Resources Department

Whether it's residential and business development, public safety, recreation and culture or overall quality of life, Talladega is a city on the move toward a progressive future.

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 Anniston (256) 237-2006
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 stephanie@bainlawoffice.com

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 Steele (256) 570-0777
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Lincoln Chiropractic
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 Lincoln (205) 763-2222

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 (256) 249-2126

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Beck First Aid & Safety, Inc.
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 Trussville (205) 467-0222
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Lucky's Sporting Goods
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 Cropwell (205) 338-8822
 luckysbait@gmail.com

Rodney's Marine Center LLC
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 Cropwell (205) 525-4500
 rodneysmarinecenter@gmail.com

Less Than 1 Year

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 squarecupcoffee@gmail.com



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Usrey Funeral Home has been part of the Talladega community for almost a century.

‘NO GREATER REWARD’

Usrey Funeral Home takes pride in helping families through tough times

By KELLI TIPTON
Special to The Daily Home

Usrey Funeral Home in Talladega and Pell City is a family-owned and operated full-service funeral home that offers professional, compassionate service to families during one of the most difficult times in their life – the loss of a loved one.

The Talladega facility on North Street has been a vital care-giving member of Talladega County and surrounding areas for 90 years. It was opened in 1927 by Ralph Usrey. He operated it until his death about a decade later. Then, shortly after World War II, the firm was purchased by Marshall L. Colvard, who operated the business in partnership with Kaiser Leonard. Colvard's son-in-law, Bill Perry, bought into the business in 1970. Perry's son, Mike, joined the firm in 1994, and Mike's brother, Steve, came into the business in 2003.

“Our family lives by the philosophy that there is no greater reward in life than to help another human being at one of the most difficult times of their lives,” said owner/operator Mike Perry.

Whether a family chooses to have a traditional service or a non-traditional service for their loved one, they can expect caring, sensitive and thoughtful assistance from Usrey's funeral service professionals.

“Traditional services usually start with a visitation, followed by the funeral ceremony in the chapel, which is

followed by a burial committal service at the cemetery,” he said. “A non-traditional service is a cremation or a memorial service with no body present. You can also have a traditional cremation service where the body of the loved one is present for visitation and the funeral ceremony, but it is cremated afterward.”

Usrey's has numerous options for cremation, which is growing in popularity.

“But the value and meaning of a traditional funeral service is that it is a vital stepping stone in the healing process,” he said. “Research suggests that most people who are having long-term problems with grief did not go through the experience of a traditional funeral for their loved one.”

Pre-planning is one way to ensure that your family knows what your preferences are.

“A pre-planned funeral is much easier on the family,” he said. “Otherwise, there are a lot of important business decisions that must be made by surviving family members in their time of grief. If you pre-plan, these decisions have already been made. Another benefit is that you pay what prices are today, and they won't increase 20 years down the road.”

Perry finds satisfaction in helping families through the healing process. “When people come up to me and thank me for my help, it is rewarding,” he said. “We have helped generations of families in this area, and people tell us that we are like family to them.”

One of Perry's favorite quotes is from Sir William Gladstone: “Show me the manner in which a nation or a community cares for its dead. I will measure exactly the sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals.”

“It still stands true today, and not just for the funeral home,” he said. “Our local communities always show great support for friends during their time of grief. I've seen people stand in line for hours, in 100-degree heat, to visit a family during visitation and pay

their respects. The communities we serve understand these values and the importance of it.”

Usrey Funeral Home in Pell City opened in 2003, in the former Chapel Hill Funeral Home. Mike's brother, Steve, oversees operations there. The family also owns and operates Pine Hill Memorial Park and St. Clair Memorial Gardens.

For more information, visit www.usreyfuneralhome.com.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The operators of Usrey Funeral Home are committed to helping local families dealing with the loss of a loved one.



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'Like family here'

Heavenly Hair Salon builds customer loyalty with home-like atmosphere

By **KELLI TIPTON**
Home staff writer

Heavenly Hair Salon in Talladega offers much more than standard hair services. The salon, owned by Jana Gunter, provides customers a place to "feel like family" while their hair is combed, cut, colored and curled.

Gunter's long-time business partner, Shane Thomas, said she can't believe how time has flown by since they opened the salon 20 years ago.

"Jana and I have worked together probably 23 years. We both used to work at Margaret's Beauty Salon, but August will be 20 years that we've been in business here. It just seems like yesterday, but I can look at pictures of me and the building, and I can see it," she said laughing. "We are all like family here. We treat each other like family, and we treat our customers like family."

Elaine Stringer of Talladega is a regular customer.

"I've been coming here for 10 years," she said. "Shane does a really good job on my hair. They make me feel like family, and they make me feel comfortable and special. I enjoy the other customers that come in, and I like the atmosphere."

Virginia Hurst of Talladega has been coming in once a week for 12 years.

"I get my nails painted and my hair done every week," she said. "This place is like home to me, and it makes me feel good to have my hair done."

Gunter said some of her customers have been with her since she started doing hair 26 years ago.

"Virginia has been with me for a long time," she said. "She's seen me grow up. She was there for my first baby. My customers are like family to me. I enjoy them watching my family grow, just as I enjoy watching their families grow. I enjoy helping people to feel better and to look better. Having your hair done just makes you



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The staff at Heavenly Hair Salon in Talladega attributes its success during the past two decades to creating a comfortable environment and treating customers like family.

See **Heavenly**, Page 12A

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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Heavenly Hair Salon enjoys making customers of all ages look their best.

In business for the past 20 years, the salon is located at 100 South St. E. in Talladega.

Heavenly

From Page 11A

feel better about yourself."

Carren Cherway also has a booth at the salon. She joined Gunter and Thomas four months ago.

"I really enjoy doing color," she said. "I do foils, and I do bayalage, where the color is kind of painted on. It's great for doing highlights."

The inside of the salon was recently remodeled. Gunter's husband, Bull, used pine and poplar trees from his pasture to create beautiful wall-to-wall paneling.

"These were some trees that had been struck by lightning," he said. "I just put them in the saw mill and cut them up."

He's remodeling the outside of the salon as well.

"The outside will be metal and concrete block," he said. "It all will be painted whatever color they choose."

Heavenly Hair Salon's prices range from \$7 for a comb out to \$60 and up for a perm, color or highlights. It is at 100 South St. E., Talladega. Business hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. For more information, call 256-362-2995.

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Blazings Beauty Supply offers variety of cosmetic products for Lincoln community

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

LINCOLN -- Blazings Beauty Supply is one of the city's newest businesses.

The shop officially opened Dec. 20, 2016, and is owned and operated by Riverside native Angela Henderson.

"Every community deserves access to local beauty supply products," Henderson said.

The supply store provides a variety of weaves, wigs, braids, hair care products, nail care products, makeup, jewelry, fragrances, hair tools, accessories, hair pieces, purses and even a men's section.

"I try my best to keep in stock what my customers want and request," she said.

The store's products range in price from less than \$10 to just more than \$100.

Henderson is a graduate of Faulkner University with a degree in business.

"Opening my own business is something I've always wanted to do," she said.

Henderson has dedicated the new store to her late mother, who died in April 2016 from a brain illness.

"My mother was a beautiful person and we miss her every day," she said. "Her passing is really what sparked the drive for me to do this."

Henderson said family is important to her.

"I am married to my wonderful husband, Ernest Johnson, and we have two children, Arianna Swain and Destin Swain," she said.

Henderson's brother, Alan, helps run the store, along with her husband and children. "It takes a lot of hard work," she said.

When asked what products have been the most popular, Henderson said the crochet-styled braid-ins have been a big seller.

"A lot of my customers love to purchase braids and weaves that are colorful," she said. "They often are looking for something bold."

Henderson added that one of her personal favorite items is the Vivica Fox stretch cap. "It's really comfortable to wear," she said.

In the future, Henderson hopes to expand her product list and would be open to partnering with a future salon.

"I believe that inner and outer beauty is a gift from God like any other gift, and it should be treated as such," she said.

Blazings Beauty is open 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday and 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday. Blazings Beauty Supply is at 45248 Highway 78, Suite 248 in Lincoln.

For more information, call 205-548-2032 or visit www.blazingsbeautysupply.com



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Angela Henderson is the owner of Blazings Beauty Supply. "Every community deserves access to local beauty supply products," she said. The store is at 45248 Highway 78 in Lincoln.



Talladega singer-songwriter is musical entrepreneur

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

It has been suggested that an independent musician is the epitome of the modern small business owner, that America's small business pulse sets its rhythm to musical entrepreneurs.

According to some labor studies, though, working musicians often do not benefit from the economic output they produce for a city or region, and their contributions to local economies may be underappreciated. But that doesn't stop rising young musicians from putting their creativity on display for consumers and audiences.

Guitarist and singer-songwriter Ben Myrick is an example of such determined artists.

Currently a sophomore studying building science at Auburn University, the Talladega native plans to move to Nashville upon finishing his degree. In the meantime, he is paying his dues and earning his way by performing at venues locally and throughout the state and promoting his recordings.

Myrick's beginnings in music: "I started playing guitar at 13, and I got into country because my grandparents listened to Merle Haggard and guys like him, and my dad always had George Strait playing when I was riding around with him. I started singing at 16, writing my own music and playing around the Talladega area. My roots come from traditional country and guys like Alan Jackson and Jamey Johnson, but I also incorporate other sounds."

His first single: "I released it last February, and you can get it on iTunes and all of those places. It's called Small Town Southern Things, and it's all about me growing up in Talladega and what me and my friends did trying to keep ourselves busy in a small town." Myrick plans to release an EP next year.

His views of small town life: "I've never been a big city guy. I grew up on a 1,000-acre, so I'm used to being in the middle of nowhere. I love Talladega, and my music is basically me telling stories about it, girls, doing stupid things and hanging out."

The business side of making music: "It gets aggravating trying to book places to play sometimes. You have to have a patience about it. It takes lots of advertising and promoting yourself and word of mouth, and you still never know if you'll have a good sized audience show up for a gig or if you'll just be playing for the guys sitting next to you on stage."

"A lot of artists took a very long road to get to the success they've had the traditional way, but the age of digital music has definitely changed the game a lot. In the old days, the record companies would come across a guy they thought had talent and put a lot into developing him as an artist. Now, when they look at you, they want to know how many people you can bring with you. They want you to be already selling yourself and promoting yourself on Instagram and Twitter and have a built-in audience before they pick you up."

Available for performances: To book Myrick for a venue or event, email benmyrickmusic@gmail.com or visit [@Benmyrickmusic](https://www.facebook.com/Benmyrickmusic) on Facebook.



Small Town Southern Things is local country artist Ben Myrick's debut single. "It's all about me growing up in Talladega and what me and my friends did trying to keep ourselves busy in a small town," he said. The single is available at the iTunes Store and other digital music vendors.

Submitted photo



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Ben Myrick gets ready for a live performance. The Talladega singer-songwriter is a student at Auburn University while he also pursues a career in music.

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