

Explore

the Shoals

**The best 18 holes
in the Shoals**

2020 Alabama
Music Hall *of* Fame
induction banquet

MS Sound
**Saying goodbye to the
legendary Little Richard**

Cook Museum of Natural Science
is 'just down the road' from the Shoals

Florence • Muscle Shoals • Sheffield • Tuscumbia

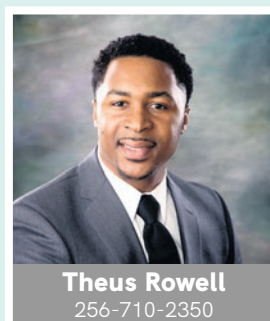
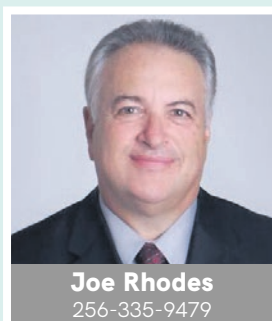
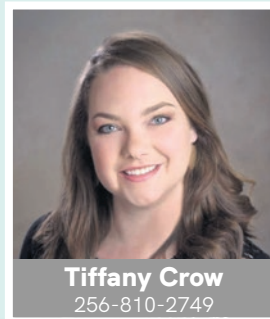
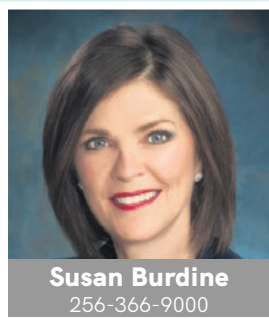
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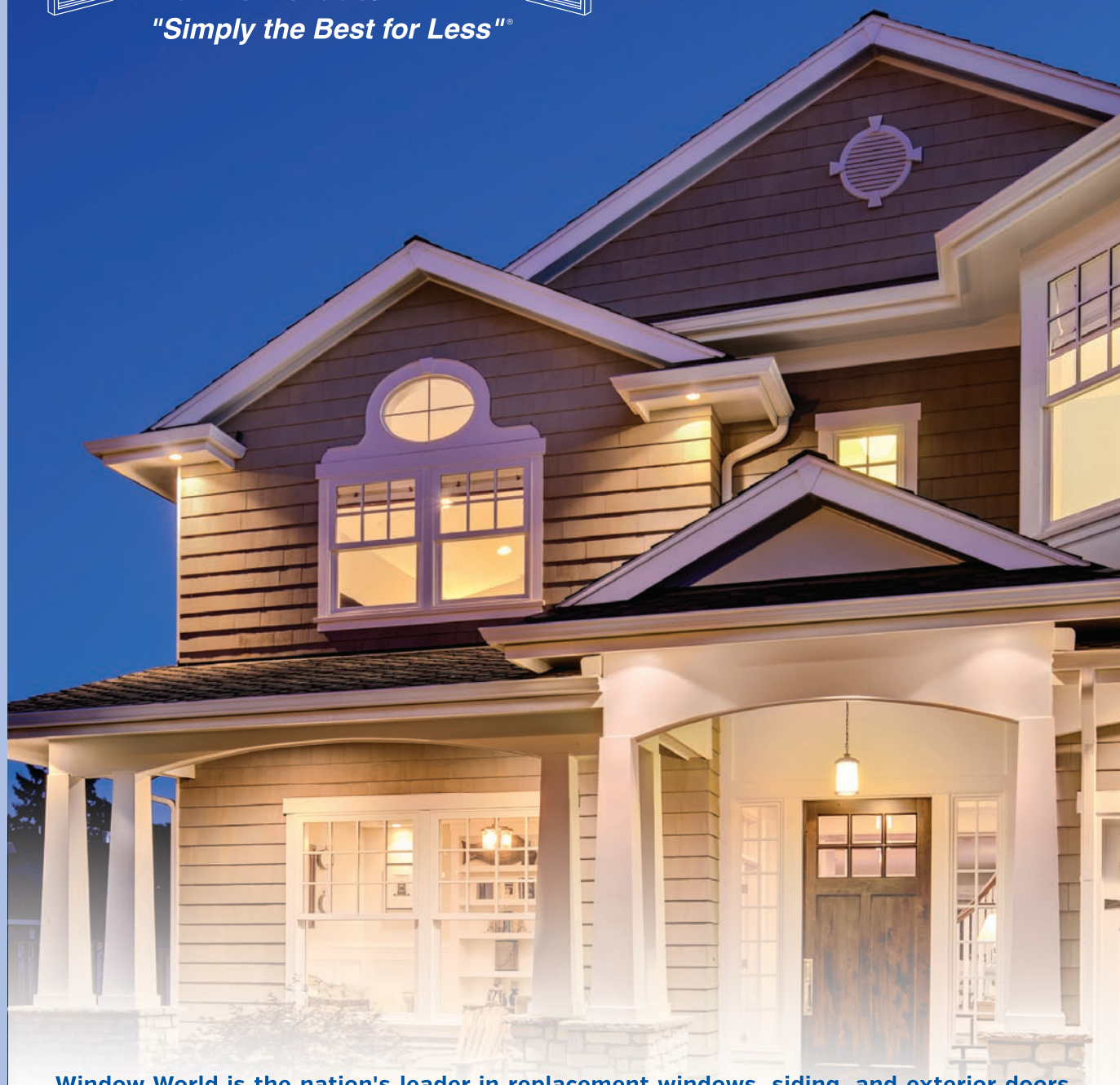


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2020-21 the Shoals

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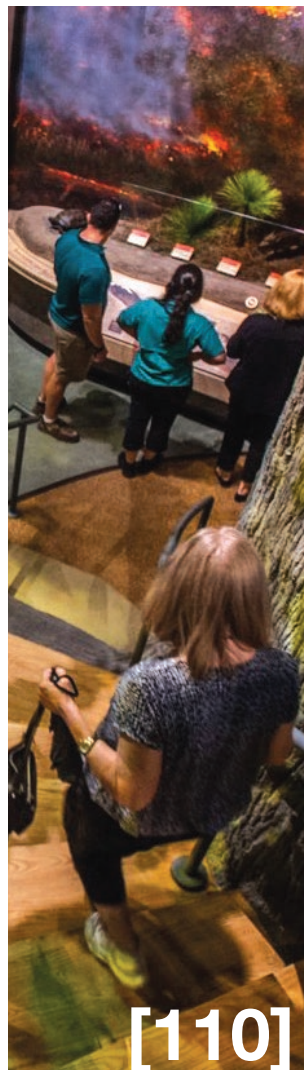
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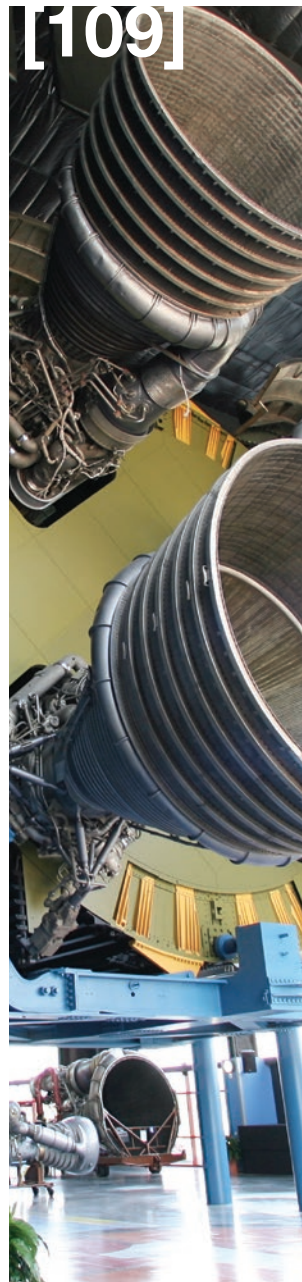
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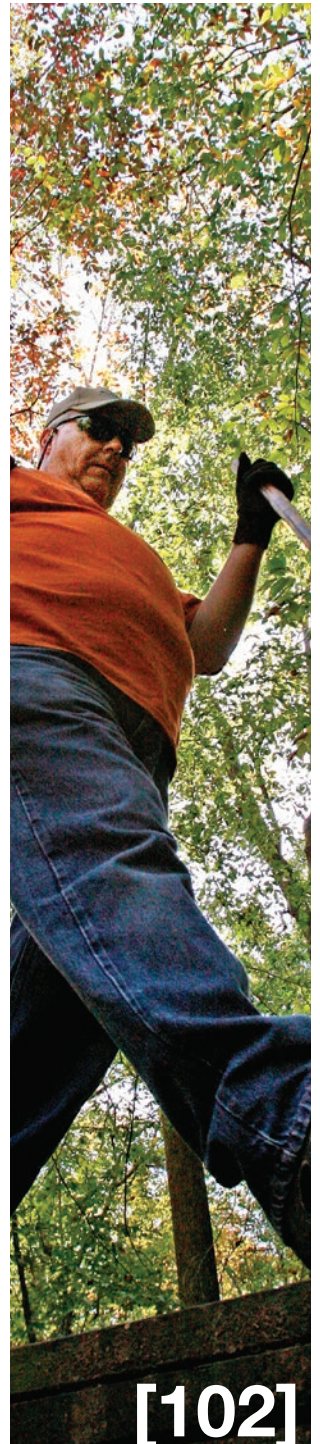
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from the Shoals

TIME TO EAT

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TIME TO EAT

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the Shoals

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Welcome to the Shoals



Colbert County Commission

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Welcome to the Shoals!

Welcome to the Shoals! Hospitality among our residents shines brighter than ever during these trying times. There's a little more space between tables at our numerous restaurants, and you'll notice people whose eyes reveal the soul of hospitality even though their smiles are shielded beneath a mask. What's not hidden, however, is our love for showing off the Shoals.

Inside these pages, we'll give you a glimpse of the four cities that comprise the Shoals: Florence in Lauderdale County, and Muscle Shoals, Sheffield and Tuscumbia in Colbert County. Visit them all and the surrounding area. You'll find family-centered parks and museums, and one of the most stunning campuses in the state: the University of North Alabama. Take advantage of the beautiful days to visit UNA's live mascots, siblings Leo and Una, who live in their lion habitat on campus. Take a stroll across campus, but excuse our progress – the beautiful fountain that anchors the entrance to the university is undergoing work to keep it a part of the tradition on campus where each year students dip a pencil into its waters for good luck.

Make sure you turn to the music section of this magazine to check out the celebration from the Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction banquet. What a night of great music and an opportunity to make great memories as some of the best musicians take to the stage and do what they do best while honoring artists who have a connection to Alabama and the Shoals area. The event takes place every two years. Bookmark the Alabama Music Hall of Fame website at alamhof.org to stay abreast of details for the next induction banquet. You'll want to return for this special night.

Sure, there are some differences in our travels in 2020, but there's nothing different about our pleasure in showing off the Shoals and the beautiful Tennessee River to countless visitors who return numerous times because being here just gets better and better. Stay a spell. You'll agree that the Shoals should be added to your travel plans every year.



ON THE COVER

Photograph by Heather Sherrill of Create Portraiture

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the Shoals

distinguishing the
four cities

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Florence

Population: 40,572

When founded: 1818; incorporated, 1826

Florence, the county seat of Lauderdale County, was established on the northern banks of the Tennessee River in the years immediately after the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812.

The town's site was surveyed in 1818 by Ferdinand Sannoner for Cypress Land Company. Sannoner, who was a native of Italy, named the new town after his favorite city in his homeland.

Florence became a textiles town and was home to some of the earliest mills in the region.

Music is a key element of the city's heritage. W.C. Handy, the "Father of the Blues," and Sam Phillips, the "Father of Rock 'n' Roll," were born in Florence. The Muscle Shoals music industry got its start in Florence, as well. The University of North Alabama has its roots in the first state-chartered university in Alabama.

florenceal.org

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Muscle Shoals

Population: 14,655

When founded: 1923

Muscle Shoals was unincorporated farm land until the early 1920s when automotive tycoon Henry Ford visited the area and proclaimed his vision of turning the flat land into a metropolis. Ford offered to purchase Wilson Dam, but was turned down by the U.S. government. Instead, the government established the Tennessee Valley Authority. In 1923, the people living in unincorporated Muscle Shoals voted 361-6 for incorporation.

Disagreement continues about the origin of the name Muscle Shoals. Some claim the muscle portion of the name is a misspelled reference to mussels found in the Tennessee River, while others say it refers to the hard work and strength used to establish the area.

In the 1960s and 1970s Muscle Shoals became known as a hit maker in the music industry. Rick Hall and his FAME Recording Studios, and talented back-up musicians, The Swampers, put Muscle Shoals on the music map.

cityofmuscleshoals.com

Florence



Muscle Shoals



Sheffield



Tuscumbia



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Sheffield

Population: 8,794

Founded: 1884

Gen. Andrew Jackson recommended that a town be established on the bluffs overlooking the Tennessee River after he and his troops camped in the area in 1817. The town was later laid out on that site and called York Bluff. The name was changed to Sheffield, after the city in England, which is on the River Sheaf.

Sheffield is the home of both locations of Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, where artists such as The Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, Boz Scaggs, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Willie Nelson, Rod Stewart and Bob Seger recorded albums in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sheffield is the home to Tuscumbia Landing, which was a debarkation point for Native Americans who were uprooted from their homes and forced to migrate west to reservations in Oklahoma under the Indian Removal Act of 1830 under President Andrew Jackson. In 2013, the city formed the Sheffield Port Authority at Tuscumbia Landing to work with groups that want to develop the site into an interpretive center.

sheffieldalabama.org



Tuscumbia

Population: 8,391

Incorporated: 1820

The French settled the land in the 1700s, but the town was destroyed. The Chickasaw Nation moved in next, establishing a town near the spring. The first white family arrived about 1815.

The town, which is the county seat of Colbert County, was renamed in 1822 in honor of the Chickasaw chief who lived there.

Tuscumbia is best known as for Ivy Green, the birthplace of Helen Keller. It had the first railway west of the Alleghenies.

cityoftuscumbia.org



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The Shoals has numerous parks, three of them on the Tennessee River, with a variety of amenities.

Residents and visitors to the Shoals can find plenty of outdoor activities.

FLORENCE

Park information:
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www.fpard.com/Park

COX CREEK PARK

Where: corner of Alabama 17 (Chisholm Road) and Alabama 133 (Cox Creek Parkway); hours 8 a.m. to dark; free; wear your protective and safety gear

Got your skateboard with you? This is the park for you. Florence Skate Park is located here featuring equipment manufactured by Spohn

Ranch and made out of SkateLite Pro, a surfaced used by professionals and amateurs. The surface stays consistent in hot, cold, wet or dry weather, with frames of galvanized steel welded rather than bolted to prevent movement, and two banked wedges. Other park amenities include 12 lighted tennis courts, a billiard building, a playground, and horseshoe pits.

DEIBERT PARK

Where: Cox Creek Parkway and Darby Drive; hours: daylight; cost: free

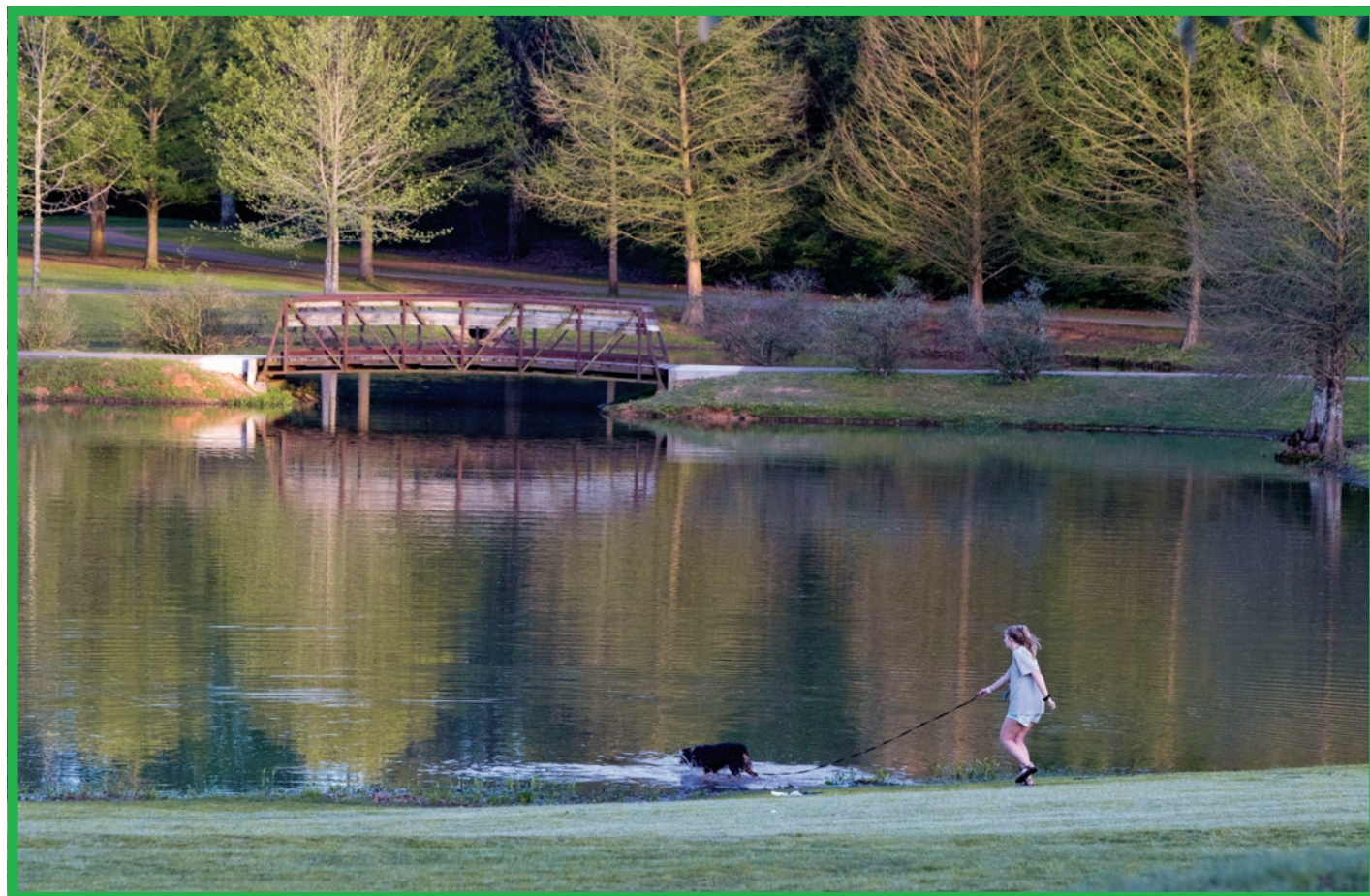
This park offers tranquil nature walks along a 2.85-mile trail that winds through open areas, woods and around three ponds. A playground, picnic shelter and restrooms also are on site.

MCFARLAND PARK

Where: Alabama 20, west of O'Neal Bridge;

hours: daylight; most services are free

This park gives you the best view and access to the Tennessee River and is a favorite among boaters, anglers, campers, joggers, bicyclists, disc golfers, bird watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts. There is a playground with picnic tables, and picnic tables dot the park with unobstructed views of the majestic river. A lighted walking trail and floating restaurant are irresistible draws,



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as are the swings and benches that overlook the river. Other amenities include boat ramps and slips, a baseball field, and camping area. The Florence-Lauderdale Visitors Center is located here.

RIVER HERITAGE PARK

Where: 800 Cox Creek Parkway; 256-760-6416

This park, located near the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa, features a playground and large splash pad that's open May to September from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. A large pavilion offers a cool place to sit when it's not rented for special events.



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River Heritage Park in Florence.

WILDWOOD PARK

Where: Waterloo Road, west of Florence; hours: daylight; free

It's all nature here, with picnic tables, a nature trail, a pavilion, and beginner and advanced mountain bike trails.

MUSCLE SHOALS

Park information:

256-386-9270

www.cityofmuscleshoals.com/Default.asp?ID=26&pg=Facilities

GATTMAN PARK

Where: 901 Gattman Park Drive; see website for hours

The park has two gymnasiums, one with an indoor walking track; pavilions (two large, one small), and numerous picnic tables. Also

featured is a playground, outdoor walking track, and a splash pad that opens Memorial Day weekend.

SHEFFIELD

Park information:

256-386-5616

www.sheffieldalabama.org/attractions

RIVERFRONT PARK

Where: 1416 Alabama Ave., Sheffield; Open daily 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Riverfront Park overlooks beautiful Pickwick Lake and features a boundless playground and splash pad for children. It is a lovely spot for fishing, picnics and has a walking trail with a stunning view of the water.

TUSCUMBIA

Park information:

256-386-5655

www.facebook.com/Tuscumbia-Parks-Recreation-491863214257810/

SPRING PARK

Where: South of downtown; hours: varies; some costs for park attractions

Spring Park serves as a centerpiece for the town of Tuscumbia and dates back to the 1800s. It features a man-made stone waterfall, called Coldwater Falls. The park also features a mini-amusement park for children and a splash pad. The rides, including a kid-sized roller coaster, a carousel and a train that takes passengers throughout the park,

operates daily. Spring Park also offers a splash pad. More information, including operational dates, is available online at Tuscumbiarailway.com.

TVA

TVA ROCKPILE RECREATIONAL AREA

The TVA Rockpile Recreational Area is home to the "coolest" playground in America, according to Play Across America. The website and iPhone app named the TVA playground the coolest in America for the month of April in 2016. Play Across America is a crowd-sourced directory of playgrounds in the country. The Rockpile Playground



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was applauded for its river theme, taking its inspiration from the Tennessee River it is situated next to and Wilson Dam just a short walk away. Children can slide down blue slides that mimic water flowing out of the Wilson Dam spillways; climb on a turtle and fish that pop out of the ground; climb and slide through a tree house; or swing on swings attached to poles fashioned to look like tree trunks. An interactive soundboard that plays animal sounds is popular with children. The board is decorated with animal tracks and pictures. The playground is just one attraction in

the recreation area. There is a paved pedestrian path that follows the river to the rockpile waterfall for a closer view of Wilson Dam. The recreation area also has campsites, hiking trails and a boat launch. The 17 miles of paved and primitive hiking trails are Americans with Disabilities Act compliant.



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Ritz Theatre, Sheffield.

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museums

TENNESSEE VALLEY MUSEUM OF ART

511 N. Water St., Tuscumbia

256-383-0533

tvaa.net

9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday; 1-3 p.m. Sunday

This regional art center has a permanent exhibit of the Martin Petroglyph, a 3,000 pound boulder depicting human footprints and snakes, carved by the prehistoric people of northwest Alabama. Also among the museum's displays is the rare and historic Chickasaw beaded and embroidered bandolier strap that belonged to Chief George Colbert, for whom the county is named.



Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, Tuscumbia.

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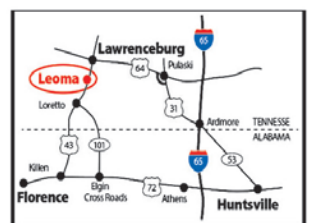
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BELLE MONT MANSION

1569 Cook Lane, Tuscumbia
256-381-5052
ahc.alabama.gov/properties/bellemont/bellemont.aspx
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wed.-Sat.; admission charged

Belle Mont Mansion is one of Alabama's best examples of the styles of the Jeffersonian-Palladian style architecture. The two-story structure was built in the early 1800s by Dr. Alexander Williams Mitchell, a native of Virginia, and one of the area's largest slaveholders. The house was sold in 1833 to Isaac Winston, who was the uncle of Alabama first's native born governor, John Anthony Winston. Winston was also the cousin of Patrick Henry and Dolly Madison. The structure was sold again in 1941 and donated to the Alabama Historical Commission.



Belle Mont Mansion in Tuscumbia.

ALABAMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME

617 U.S. 72 W., Tuscumbia
256-381-4417
Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday
admission charged
alamhof.org

This is the place to learn the rich history, ever-changing present, and bright future of the Shoals music scene. The renowned achievements of music artists who live, have passed through and continue to record in the Shoals are found here. Exhibits include a 12-foot jukebox, a wax figure of Nat King Cole, recording equipment used in Sam Phillips' Memphis Music Service, apparel and instruments from many artists.



Alabama Music Hall of Fame, Tuscumbia.

EDITH NEWMAN CULVER MUSEUM

501 Main St., Waterloo
256-767-6081
Hours: call

The museum is nestled on a hillside overlooking downtown Waterloo and the path that thousands of Indians took during the 1800s removal as a part of the Trail of Tears. The two-story structure is the town's museum and features many military memorabilia, as well as Civil War relics and Native American artifacts. On the grounds is a barn housing a collection of horse-drawn carriages. The museum was the home of Joseph Marion Newman and his wife, Sarah. Newman, a Union soldier from Ohio, purchased the house in 1918 after opening a sawmill north of Waterloo.



Tuscumbia Depot and Roundhouse, Tuscumbia.

TUSCUMBIA DEPOT AND ROUNDHOUSE

204 W. Fifth St., Tuscumbia
256-389-1357
tuscumbiarailway.com
Hours: call

It's only fitting that since Tuscumbia was the site of the first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains – built in the 1830s – it would have the area's premiere railway museum. The museum is in the former Tuscumbia Depot, which was built in 1888 and served as division headquarters for the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. The fully restored depot features rail and train memorabilia including a photo gallery. There is an interactive train simulator and telegraph demonstrations. Keeping with the historic architecture of the depot, a roundhouse was built in 2013.



Tuscumbia Depot and Roundhouse, Tuscumbia.

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Pope's Tavern

Pope's Tavern Museum's façade harkens to the time in the 1800s when it was a stagecoach stop, tavern and inn. It is one of the oldest buildings in Florence and its location pinpoints the military road that once ran through the area, connecting Nashville to the Natchez Trace, and on to New Orleans. Andrew Jackson is said to have stayed at the tavern during his march to the Battle of New Orleans. The inn was a hospital for both the Confederate and Union during the Civil War before later becoming a private family home until the city bought it in 1965. It is housed with antiques and artifacts from the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as artifacts from the Civil War and local history.

WHERE:

Location:

203 Hermitage Drive, Florence

Hours:

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-760-6439



Pope's Tavern, Florence.



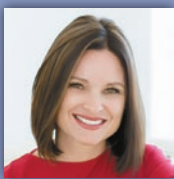
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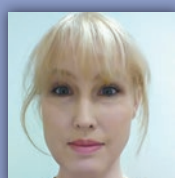
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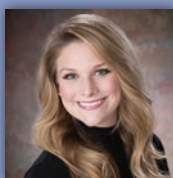
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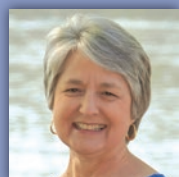
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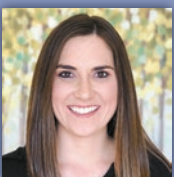
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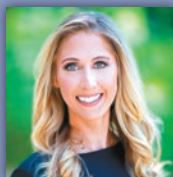
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**Bryan Austin
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256-335-2277



**Jeannie Rogers
Owner**
256-366-0580

Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts

ATTRACTIONS



Kennedy-Douglass
Center for the Arts,
Florence.





Kennedy-Douglass Annex



Southall-Moore House

Florence's Center for the Arts includes the Kennedy-Douglass Center, Kennedy-Douglass Annex and Southall-Moore House. There is an arts gallery and museum that serves as an educational center and cultural hub for the area. The center has numerous exhibits throughout the year and rotating exhibits from artists of the Southeast. The three buildings are former homes, with the main center built in 1918 and named for the Rev. Hiram Kennedy Douglass who willed the house to the city in 1975 to be used for the arts. Charles Moore donated the historic Southall-Moore home to the city in 2006. It was built in 1894.

WHERE:

Location:
217 E. Tuscaloosa St., Florence

Hours:
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Admission:
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W.C. Handy Museum and Library

ATTRACTIONS



W.C. Handy Birthplace, Museum and Library, Florence.

W.C. Handy became famous in the music world for his compositions such as “Memphis Blues” and “St. Louis Blues” and as a band conductor and author. He is heralded as the “Father of the Blues.” But before his famous life, he was born in a small log cabin in Florence on Nov. 16, 1873. The museum in his honor houses a collection of memorabilia, including his famous trumpet and his personal piano, as well as personal papers and original sheet music.

WHERE:

Location:

620 W. College St., Florence

Hours:

10 .am. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-760-6434

Announcing the Singing River Cancer Center



Introducing Singing River Cancer Center, a new state-of-the-art cancer center opening fall 2020 to serve the people of the Shoals area and surrounding communities.



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Radiation Oncologist

Dr. Stanley Clarke is a board-certified radiologist and has over 30 years of experience in the field of radiation oncology. He is currently seeing patients at Alliance Cancer Care's location in Sheffield.



Jefferson M. Trupp, M.D.

Radiation Oncologist

Dr. Trupp is a board-certified radiation oncologist who has recently joined Dr. Clarke and the team at Alliance Cancer Care. He is currently seeing new patients and consults are usually within a week.



(800) 863-0325 • www.SingingRiverCancerCenter.com • Florence, AL 35660

Ivy Green **The Birthplace of Helen Keller**

ATTRACTIONS



Ivy Green, Tuscumbia

The site of the birthplace of Helen Keller features the home and grounds, including the famous pump where teacher Annie Sullivan showed a young Keller how to spell w-a-t-e-r in sign language. That single lesson opened the outside world to the child.

WHERE:

Location:

300 N. Commons St. W, Tuscumbia

Hours:

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-383-4066

helenkellerbirthplace.org

Children's Museum of the Shoals



Children's Museum of the Shoals, Florence.

The Children's Museum of the Shoals is the area's go-to place for child development and fun through educational games and activities. It features hands-on exhibits that encourage children to play while learning about the area's culture, history, and about the Tennessee River. Deibert Park, which is adjacent to the museum, hosts a nature walking trail and a playground.

WHERE:

Location:

2810 Darby Drive, Florence
(Near the entrance to Deibert Park)

256-765-0500

facebook.com/cmsal

Frank Lloyd Wright

Rosenbaum House and Museum

Frank Lloyd Wright is among the most prominent and revered American architects of the 20th century. He designed approximately 1,000 structures spanning a 70-year career. He preferred construction where buildings blended into the landscape rather than

being obviously perched to rise independently of the ground on which it was constructed. His famous architectural designs include the Prairie, Concrete Block and Usonian, of which the Rosenbaum House in Florence is included. Horizontal lines connect

the home with the land, as do its flat roofs with overhangs, natural materials like cypress, glass and brick, access to the outside from every room, and board and batten walls. The house has its original Wright-designed furniture.

WHERE:

Location:

601 Riverview Drive, Florence

Hours:

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 1-4 p.m. Sunday.
For large group tours, call 256-718-5050

Admission:

admission charged

wrightinalabama.com



The Rosenbaum House, Florence.



una.edu

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Indian Mound and Museum

The Florence Indian Mound Museum is in its third year since its rebuild and reopening.

The museum's mission is to interpret the prehistoric culture of the Shoals area for education while preserving the Woodland period landscape of the site and fostering a community dialogue about environmental stewardship

and Native American history, according to its mission statement.

The 42-foot-high mound near the museum is one example of the work of early Native Americans who lived in Alabama before the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Creek nations inhabited the region. The mound is quadrilateral, with a

summit that's 145-by-94 feet. Early settlers found steps on the east side and there was evidence the mound was enclosed by a semi-circular earthen wall.

Inside the museum are artifacts dating back to more than 10,000 years. Displays are arranged in chronological order from Paleo to Historic periods.

WHERE:

Location:

1028 S. Court St.

Hours:

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday;
1-4 p.m. Sunday

Admission:

charged



Indian Mound and Museum, Florence.

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UNA's pride:

Leo and Una

Leo III and Una are the brother and sister pair of African lions who have lived at the University of North Alabama since 2003, when they came to Florence as cubs.

Their campus home – the George H. Carroll Lion Habitat – anchors Harrison Plaza, which is the main entrance to the university. The \$1.3 million habitat was built according to guidelines established by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The outdoor area features boulders, streams, a waterfall and a pond. Leo II and Una are free to move between the outside and inside as they wish on good weather days, and are kept inside during inclement weather days.

The habitat has received a perfect inspection score each year since it opened. The hour-long, unannounced inspection by a representative with the U.S. Department of Agriculture takes a deep look at the interior, enclosure, outside playground, the lions' food, snacks and bones, veterinary records, transport trailer and supplies used to care for the lions and for the habitat.

The habitat is an easy stop for visitors and locals to catch a glimpse of the big cats. There are two observatories that offer views of the habitat and places to catch Leo III and Una napping and playing. And peek in on the lions through their web cam at www.una.edu/lioncam

Leo III

about us

Here are some fun facts about Leo III and his sister, Una, the two live lion mascots at the University of North Alabama.



- UNA has had a live lion mascot on campus since 1974 when Leo I came to campus. Leo II came to UNA in the early 1990s.
- Leo III and Una were born in November 2002 and are the first lion pair to live at UNA.
- The lions are the guests of honor each April at a birthday party thrown in their honor. The birthday party is in April in recognition of Leo I's spring birthday.
- Leo III and Una are given a special toy each year at the birthday party. In the past, those have been high-density plastic balls, tubes and column-shaped toys.
- Una's name comes from the university's initials, but also represents a university supporters, Leo and Una Watson, from Michigan, who fell in love with the university and adopted Leo II as a philanthropy project and supported the lions for a number of years.
- As of October 2017, Leo II weighed 476 pounds and Una weighed 320 pounds.
- In 2016 Leo III and UNA were ranked No. 6 among the Top 25

live animal mascots in college football by Fox Sports. In 2012, Leo III and Una were named the top live sports mascot in the country by totalprosports.com.

- Leo and Una eat about 15 pounds of meat each day. The amount varies some depending on the season and the lions' physical activity. They also receive a USDA-approved bone twice a week to keep their teeth clean and jaws strong.
- It costs \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year to care for the lions, and the funds are raised solely through private donations. UNA fans pass lion-shaped collection banks during home football games to collect money to care for Leo III and Una. Other donations can be dropped off at the collection box beside the lions' habitat or made through the university advancement office.
- The life expectancy of lions in the wild is 10-12 years. But, in captivity, Leo III and Una are expected to live 15-20 years.
- The lions are typically in their outdoor habitat each day from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. in winter months and 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. in the spring and summer. The door to the indoor habitat is always open to give the lions a place to stay inside if wanted. Watch them on their Lion Cam at www.una.edu/lioncam



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celebrate with us

The Shoals is popular for its celebrations and festivals that are a continuous flow of entertainment from spring until winter.

That is, unless there's a pandemic.

While some festivals have

announced dates for this year's events, it's best to go to the website or Facebook page listed, or call the phone number provided with the information to double check that the event will still take place.

Events that have already

cancelled this year include the Alabama Renaissance Faire in Florence (alarenfaire.org) and Oka Kapassa: Return to Cold Water (okakapassa.org).

Festivals and events still planned for the remainder of this year include:

SHOALS SPIRIT OF FREEDOM CELEBRATION



The Shoals will celebrate Independence Day this year on another patriotic holiday by combining the event with Veterans Day on Nov. 11 in McFarland Park. Event organizers said weather is usually beautiful in the Shoals in November and expects this combined celebration to be one of the best. Usual start time is 10:30 a.m. and continues through 11 p.m. on the banks of the Tennessee River.

W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Every year, the Shoals honors W.C. Handy, who was born in Florence and built his legacy as “Father of the Blues.” There will be some abbreviations to this year’s 10-day event, scheduled for July 17-26. Visit wchandymusicfestival.com or call The Music Preservation Society Inc. at 256-766-7642.



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TRAIL OF TEARS COMMEMORATIVE MOTORCYCLE RIDE

Motorcyclists honor the Trail of Tears by riding from Chattanooga to Waterloo. The riders always ride on the third Saturday in September, this year Sept. 19.



COON DOG CEMETERY LABOR DAY CELEBRATION



Not many places have a cemetery for coon dogs. Even fewer have a Labor Day celebration at a coon dog cemetery.

But the annual Coondog Cemetery Labor Day Celebration has become one of the most popular, if quirky, events in the Shoals.

Graves will be decorated and live music and barbecue will be available.

The Coondog Cemetery is at 4945 Coondog Cemetery Road, off U.S. 72 and Alabama 247.

For more details, visit coondogcemetery.com or call 256-383-0783.



Dickens Christmas Y'all in Tuscumbia.



First Fridays in Florence.



Franklin County Watermelon Festival in Russellville.



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North Alabama State Fair in Muscle Shoals.

Other Celebrations & Festivals

MONTHLY CELEBRATION

FIRST FRIDAYS

The First Friday of every month March through December from 5-8 p.m., downtown Florence sidewalks are lined with vendors, artists and musicians. Court Street is closed off and the area becomes filled with people who love strolling, and shopping among the vendors and in downtown shops before or after having dinner in some of Florence's best-loved restaurants.

YEARLY FESTIVALS

FRANKLIN COUNTY WATERMELON FESTIVAL

It's not summer in the south without watermelon. The people of Russellville celebrate this Southern, summer fruit with music and more Aug. 21-22. For details, call 256-332-1760.

NORTH ALABAMA STATE FAIR

The state fair is an American tradition, and that's no different in the Shoals. Rides, booths, exhibits and entertainment abound at the fairgrounds in Muscle Shoals; Sept. 22-27. Visit northalabamastatefair.com or call 256-383-3247.

OKTOBERFEST

St. Florian's German heritage is celebrated in the fall, Oct. 2-3., as the downtown area is host to live music, arts and crafts, antique tractor shows and German food. For details, call 256-767-3960. townofstflorianal.com

ROGERSVILLE HERITAGE DAYS

Rogersville celebrates fall with antique cars, trucks and tractors, an art show, chili cook-off, children and pets parade and vendors; Oct. 9, 10, 11, downtown Rogersville. For details, visit rogersvillealabama.com or call 256-247-9449.

DICKENS CHRISTMAS Y'ALL

Dickens Christmas Y'all, is a holiday festival reminiscent of the classic "A Christmas Carol"; Carriage rides, snow falling, music, arts and crafts and food vendors. STS Top 20 Event. Dec. 11-12. For more information, call 256-383-9797.

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The GunRunner is more than a boutique hotel, it's an experience, with 10 suites, seven with private balconies, specially designed to celebrate local music, fashion and art icons, and honor the area's history. One suite is decorated by renowned fashion designer Billy Reid, another is themed around the legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studios. Brick walls and exposed ceiling beams give the commons area an industrial chick vibe, and a former freight elevator has been converted into a stunning bar. Suites may be reserved separately, or choose to have the "run of the house," which includes private access to all 10 suites and the common area.

GunRunner Boutique Hotel

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LODGING



The Stricklin Hotel, located in the historic 1946 Stricklin Building, is the newest addition to downtown Florence's boutique hotels. It has 24 guest rooms, each with a king-size bed. Deluxe rooms feature beautifully restored original windows that overlook downtown's main street. There are two event spaces, The Belk Hudson, designed to accommodate special business meetings, and The Stricklin Social, which has exposed brick walls and original redwood columns that is a beautiful backdrop to special occasions. The first floor houses Big Bad Breakfast restaurant, with the basement featuring an upscale vintage bowling alley and gaming space.

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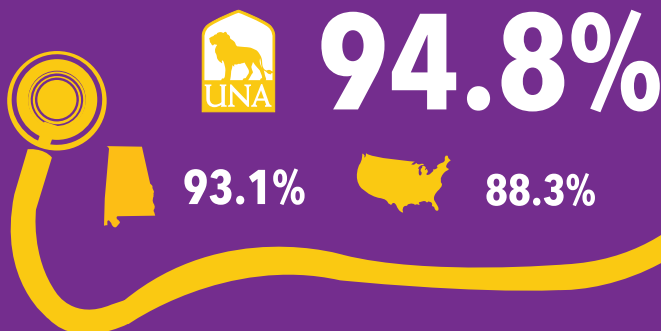
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More than 1,200 rooms are available in Lauderdale and Colbert counties, according to tourism officials.

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americasbestvalueinn.com

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115 Ana Drive, Florence; 256-764-5326;
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MEET OUR COVER PHOTOGRAPHER HEATHER SHERRILL



The beautiful photo of the Alabama Music Hall of Fame that graces the cover of Explore the Shoals and the photos on this page were taken by Heather Bradford Sherrill, owner of Create Portraiture and Bradford Farm & Venue. She has been a professional photographer for 14 years and specializes in wedding photography. Heather's creative talent, adaptability,

and attention to detail make her one of the most successful photographers in northwest Alabama and have earned her the 2019 TimesDaily Reader's Choice Wedding Photographer Award.

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Inductee Gary Baker performs "I'm Already There" with Kevin Richardson and Brian Littrell of the Backstreet Boys.

2020

Alabama Music Hall of Fame

INDUCTION BANQUET

a night of
great music,
great memories

Story by Russ Corey
Photography by Matt McKean,
Pat Hood and Caroline Oglesby

Gary Baker's smile beamed across the audience when he took the stage as one of the inductees into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

The award was presented to the Grammy-winning Sheffield bassist/songwriter/producer by two of his best friends, Backstreet Boys members Brian Littrell and Kevin Richardson.

"All I wanted to do was be one of y'all," he said, referring to the Shoals musicians he spent years watching and learning from.

Baker was one of four Alabama music achievers

to be inducted into the repository of the state's deep, varied musical history during a sold-out banquet that takes place biennially. The 2020 banquet was Jan. 25 at the Marriott Shoals Conference Center in Florence.

The hall of fame also inducted pioneering rhythm and blues singer Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, who was born outside Montgomery, and Birmingham entrepreneur/businessman Elton Bryson Stephens, whose philanthropy and business sense helped save the Alabama Symphony Orchestra.

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The fourth inductee was Huntsville native Mervyn Warren, a multi-faceted entertainment industry professional who is a performer, songwriter, television and film score composer, and producer.

“American Idol” runner-up Bo Bice and the star-studded house band opened the show with The Rolling Stones’ classic “Brown Sugar,” a track recorded only a few miles away at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios in December 1969.

Huntsville blues guitarist “Microwave” Dave Gallaher of the popular Microwave Dave and The Nukes took the stage not as a performer, but the evening’s first presenter.

Gallaher said Thornton was the daughter of a Baptist preacher who ended up working in a local tavern. Her first hit, Lieber and Stoller’s



Bart Stephens receives the award for his father, Elton B. Stephens.



Jessie Olson receives Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton’s award.

"Hound Dog," was cut with a three-piece band. Thornton's posthumous award was accepted by Jessi Olsen, a member of the board of directors of the Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls in Flatbush, New York, and student Willow Bennison.

"She taught me to be powerful and true to myself," Olsen said. "We're proud to accept this award."

"Thank you for inducting Willie Mae, finally," Bennison said.

Shoals R&B singer Carla Russell joined the house band to perform a pair of Thornton's biggest hits, "Hound Dog" and the self-composed "Ball and Chain."

Alabama Symphony Orchestra General Manager Mark Patrick said the Alabama Symphony Orchestra is the only professional orchestra in the state of Alabama.

Stephens' grandson, Bart Stephens, accepted the posthumous award on behalf of his grandfather, who founded EBSCO Industries in Birmingham and grew it into one of

Inductee Mervyn Warren holds his award after his introduction.



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A large advertisement for the City of Sheffield, Alabama. The background is a photograph of a wooden bridge with a metal frame, leading over a river. Two people are standing on the bridge, looking out at the water. The text "SHEFFIELD" is at the top in large, white, serif font. Below it, "Where Time Together Means More." is in a smaller, white, serif font. At the bottom left, "CITY OF SHEFFIELD" is in large, white, serif font, with "Center of the Shoals" in a smaller, white, serif font below it. At the bottom right, there is a circular logo for "SHEFFIELD UTILITIES" with a lightning bolt and a flame inside. Below the logo, the text "256-389-2000", "300 North Nashville Ave.", "P.O. Box 580", "Sheffield, AL 35660", and "www.sheffieldalabama.org" are listed. On the far right edge, there is a vertical blue bar with the word "MUSIC" in white, sans-serif font.



Bo Bice performs at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame 2020 Induction Banquet.

the largest companies in the state.

"My grandfather would love to have seen what you have done here with the hall of fame," he said.

The Alabama Music Hall of Fame and museum is at 617 U.S. 72 west in Tuscumbia. The banquet is its biggest fundraising event.

Stephens said his grandfather was a persistent and demanding salesman, but one who believed from early in his life that it was important to give back to his community.

"It's incredibly humbling," he said during a phone interview with The TimesDaily prior to the event. "This is a little bit unexpected, but just incredibly humbling and flattering. I know he would appreciate it deeply."

Stephens' induction is unique because he wasn't a musician. "There is not



Bo Bice and Sandra Burrows look at the Alabama Guitar.

a tradition in our family of musicianship, but there is a deep tradition of the appreciation of music," Stephens said.

Bryson Stephens said his grandfather and grandmother, Alys Stephens, both cared for the symphony and wanted to see it become financially stable.

"We're proud of him," grandson Bryson Stephens said. "He certainly did a lot for the symphony."

Littrell and Richardson thanked Baker for the impact he had on the career of the Backstreet Boys and how he accepted them as part of his family.

"What can you say about Gary Baker," Littrell said. "Small town guy with big dreams."

He said Baker gave him the courage and strength to believe in himself.

Richardson said his first trip to the Shoals was in 1998, and he hopes the Backstreet Boys can claim to be part of the rich legacy of Muscle Shoals music.

He said the group jumped at the chance to work with Baker on their sophomore album.

Richardson became emotional when as he

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Backstreet Boys
Kevin Richardson
and Brian Littrell.

talked about how Baker and his family welcomed him into their home and treated him as one of the family.

“He was a collaborating mentor and friend, and a part of our family to the end,” Richardson said.

Baker thanked the previous inductees and his family for living through the hard times.

“You made all the good times sweeter and the bad times meaningless,” Baker said, “I am southern by choice, y’all. I’ll close by saying, rock on.”

Baker and the house band played “I Swear,” the track that won he and co-writer Frank Myers Grammys, and “I’m Already There,” a Baker penned track recorded by the country band Lonestar.

Fifth season “American Idol” winner and hall of fame board member

Jamey Johnson performs at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame 2020 Induction Banquet.



Taylor Hicks performs at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame 2020 Induction Banquet.

Kelvin Holly performs on stage at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame 2020 Induction Banquet.



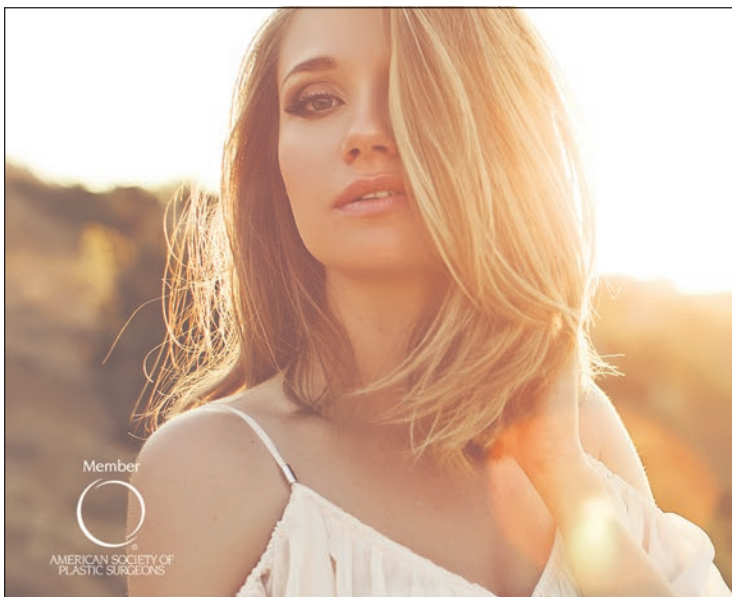
Taylor Hicks came out to announce the Alabama Music Hall of Fame's first Advocacy Award to the late Shoals businessman, WLAY radio station owner D. Mitchell Self.

Country Artist Jamey Johnson, of Enterprise, and the house band performed Keith Whitley's "Would These Arms Be In Your Way" and "Stars in Alabama," a track he co-wrote with Teddy Gentry, singer and bassist for the Grammy-winning country group Alabama.

Mark Kibble, a member of the acapella gospel sextet Take 6, which helped launch Warren's career, said he met Warren at 12 and began playing music with him at 13 years old.

He said both of them had a connection to harmony. He said artists want to work with Warren because he's a genius and perfectionist.

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Warren accepted his award and held it over his head before thanking the hall of fame and his family, many of whom were in attendance.

"I am honored to be a part of this lovely evening," he said. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart. There's no place like home."

To close the show, Shoals hit songwriter Mark Narmore and the house band performed a moving version of the Donnie Fritts classic "We Had It All" as images of Shoals artists who died in 2019 flashed upon a screen. Singer/songwriter Fritts and Swampers guitarist Jimmy Johnson were among those artists the Shoals bid farewell to last year.

Bice and Hicks returned to the stage to perform the unofficial state song, Lynyrd Skynyrd's classic "Sweet Home Alabama," with the house band.

This article first appeared in The TimesDaily. It has been edited for Explore the Shoals.

Gary Baker is center stage during a performance at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame 2020 Induction Banquet.

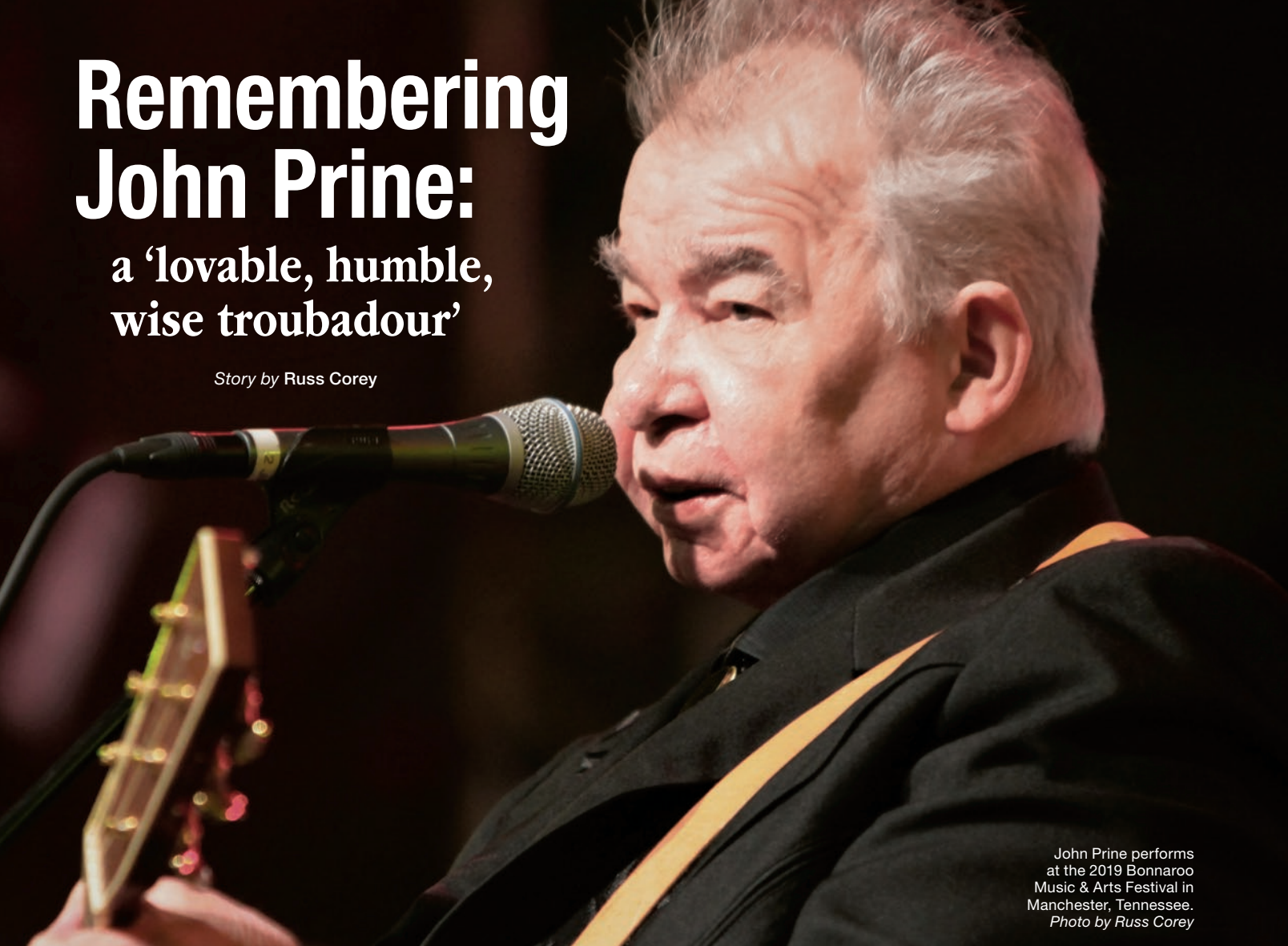




Remembering John Prine:

a 'lovable, humble, wise troubadour'

Story by Russ Corey



John Prine performs at the 2019 Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee. Photo by Russ Corey

Friends of the late Donnie Fritts said he would have taken the news of the death of his longtime friend and songwriting partner John Prine very hard.

Fritts died Aug. 27 at the age of 76 and Prine, 73, died Tuesday of complications caused by COVID-19.

Prine appeared on three of Fritts' albums, beginning with "Prone To Lean," which was recorded at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios at 3614 Jackson Highway in Sheffield.

"We've known John since about 1970," said Fritt's widow, Donna Fritts. "They were very close, indeed. Donnie helped him get his first record deal. They really

loved each other and stayed connected on the phone."

The songwriter known for "Angel From Montgomery," "Sam Stone," "Hello In There" and countless others, recorded his 1980 album "Storm Windows" at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio on Alabama Avenue in Sheffield with producer Barry Beckett.

Fritts and Prine collaborated on "The Oldest Baby in the World," a track that appeared on Prine's 1993 "Great Days: The John Prine Anthology" and Fritts' 2015 album "Oh My Goodness."

"I met Donnie Fritts because of John Prine," Shoals singer/songwriter/producer John Paul

White said. "I met John Prine because of Donnie Fritts."

White explained his introduction to Prine's songs and wit came in 1990 through "John Prine (Live)" in which he interspersed songs with the stories behind them. The one that struck him was Prine's ruminations about Fritts and "The Oldest Baby in the World."

On "John Prine (Live)," Prine says the idea for the song came from a headline he saw in a supermarket tabloid about a child who had a disease that made her look much older. He was heading home after a gig in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was supposed to record with

Fritts the next day.

Before he played the song, Prine told the audience: "So I cut the caption out and I took it over to Donnie's house the next day, and I said, lookie here, man, 'The Oldest Baby in the World.' I said, we know a mess of old babies in this world. I said, let's write a song for all of 'em. This song's only about half as short as this story."

White said Prine was determined to contribute to "Oh My Goodness," so they booked time for him to play acoustic guitar on "The Oldest Baby in the World."

"I'd worshiped him for 25 years and was thrilled to know that he was exactly the lovable, humble and

wise troubadour I always hoped he'd be," White said. "From that point, we became closer than I would've dreamed. We played many shows together, and I got to know his family, unsurprisingly just as humble and warm as he."

He said few people have influenced him as Prine has.

"His economy of lyric and down to earth approach to detailing the human condition will inform me from this moment on," White said. "I'll miss him dearly, but I take solace in knowing that John and Donnie are somewhere making cowboy movies together in the sky."

Reed Watson, a drummer label manager for Florence-based Single Lock Records, said Fritts wanted to include the track on "Oh My Goodness."



Donnie Fritts and John Prine stand outside Muscle Shoals Sound Studio at 3614 Jackson Highway in Sheffield. Fritts died in 2019. Photo courtesy Dick Cooper.

"Prine was surprised that we just wanted him to play acoustic guitar on the track," Watson said. "I think he liked that. I'm just glad that Donnie didn't have to bear this loss."

Prine sat down for interviews that would be used in the accompanying documentary, "Undeniably Donnie."

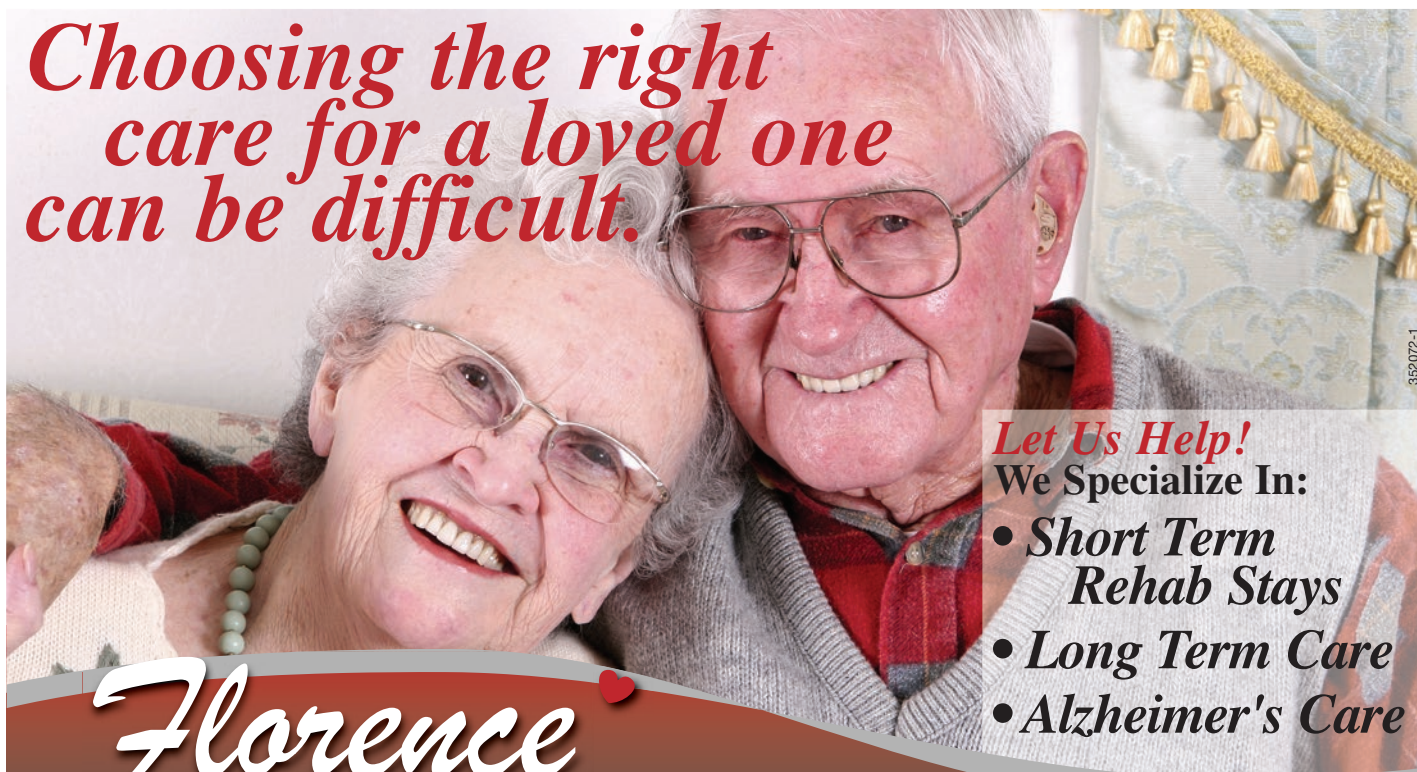
White said right now he and Prine were supposed to be touring Australia together.

"For Donnie, John Prine was a brother," said musician/producer Andreas Werner.

"They had a strong bond beyond their musical kinship and collaboration."

Werner said Fritts and Prine also wrote "You Mean So Much to Me" and "Why Is My Day So Long," a track that appeared on Fritts' 1997

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album “Everybody’s Got a Song” with Prine sharing lead vocals.

“John is one of the greatest people I’ve ever known,” Shoals music historian Dick Cooper said. “He lives up to all of the rumors about him. He’s was very personable, and he loved people in general.”

Cooper said they had a day off during the recording of “Storm Windows” and he took Prine to Decatur to meet songwriter Johnny Wyker. Prine included the Wyker track “Baby Ruth” on the album. They ended up taking a cruise on Wyker’s boat, Cooper said.

“A lot of craziness went on that day,” Cooper said. “It was one of the wackiest days of my life.”

Cooper said Prine told him a few years ago that each time his tour bus would cross the Tennessee River on Interstate 65 he would tell everyone on the bus the story about that day.

A year or so before recording in the Shoals, Prine recorded “Pink Cadillac” at Sam Phillips Recording Studio in Memphis, Tennessee. The album was produced by Sam Phillips and his sons, Knox Phillips and Jerry Phillips.

“John was a very unusual person,” Jerry Phillips said. “He had a different outlook on life, a very funny one, a humorous outlook on life and that fed into his songs. And he was able to get serious about subjects that were important in the country at the time.”

Phillips said his father, Sam, produced two tracks on the album — “How Lucky” and “Saigon.”

“We felt John was such a unique artist, Sam would really enjoy being able to produce a couple of tracks on him,” he



John Prine performs at the 2019 Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee. Photos by Russ Corey

said.

He said Prine became a very close friend to the Phillips family.

Prine was nominated for 11 Grammy Awards during his lifetime and won two. Earlier this year, he was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from The Recording Academy. He’s been honored numerous times by the Americana Music Association.

“He is a great mixture of a poet and songwriter,” Phillips said. “He was able to put his finger on the pulse of whatever he was writing about.”

Shoals music ambassador Johnny Belew said Prine would sometimes sit in with Fritts when he played at Douglas Corner in Nashville, Tennessee, with his friends, The Decoys.

“When Prine showed up it was super cool,” Belew said.

Belew was a fan of Prine’s for years and was able to meet him at a show in Huntsville several years ago through his friendship with Fritts.

“I ate a french fry with John Prine,” Belew said. “That’s my claim to fame.”

He recalled being in the car with Fritts when he received a call from Prine telling him how much he was enjoying “Oh My Goodness.”

“He was such a lovable character” Donna Fritts said. “His songs were so brilliant. Donnie was so fortunate he was able to write songs with John.”

She said the two talked about collaborating again, but illness prevented that from happening.

“I always hoped and dreamed he would come back to Muscle Shoals and do something,” Belew said.



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From left, FAME Recording Studios owner Rick Hall, Robert "Bumps" Blackwell and Little Richard at FAME in 1970. Photo courtesy of FAME.

MS Sound Saying goodbye to the legendary Little Richard

Story by Russ Corey

He carried the crown, founding father of rock 'n roll, and had a "shredded-throat style" of belting out vocals, according to Rolling Stone, but when Little Richard died May 9 from bone cancer, he also left his mark among Shoals musicians.

Three Shoals musicians who spent years working for Little Richard said

the artist was a fantastic employer who took care of his backing band.

Born Richard Wayne Penniman in 1932 in Macon, Georgia, Little Richard will be remembered for rock 'n' roll classics like "Good Golly, Miss Molly," "Tutti-Frutti," "Long Tall Sally," "Slippin' and Slidin'," "Jenny Jenny," "Lucille," "I Need Love," "Freedom

Blues," and many more over a career that began in the early 1950s and spanned decades.

Little Richard recorded what was called his comeback album, "The Rill Thing," from March to June 1970 at FAME Recording Studios in Muscle Shoals.

Shoals guitarists Junior Lowe and Travis Wammack played guitar

on the record.

Wammack recalled playing a song for Little Richard that he and Lowe had written about two weeks earlier. Richard liked the song and "Greenwood Mississippi" was included on the album.

He said Little Richard didn't like the way the takes went, so he overdubbed his vocals

over Wammack's demo track.

"That was in 1970," Wammack said. "I didn't hear from him again until 1984."

Wammack said he received the next call at his home studio.

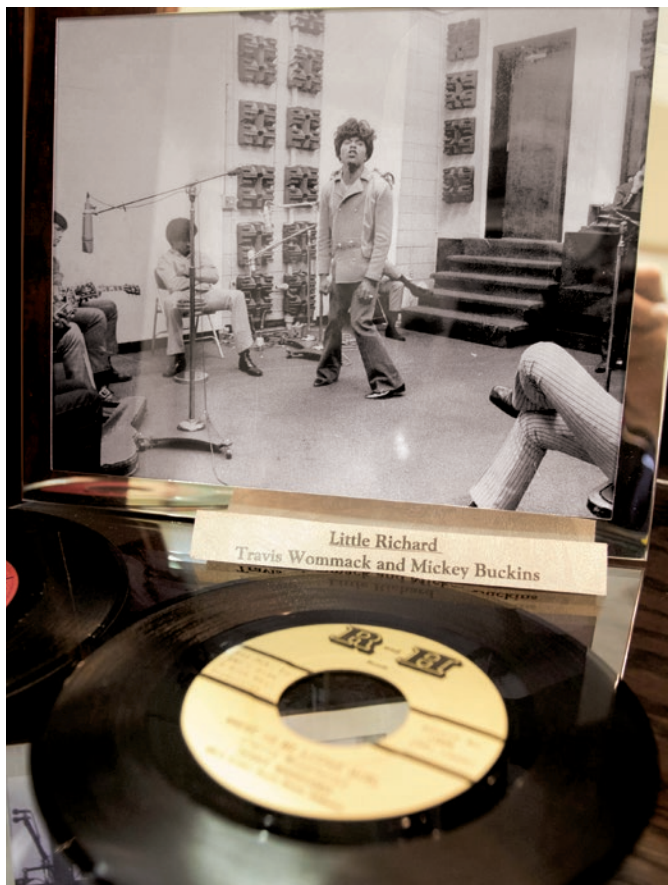
"I'm thinking about singing rock 'n' roll again," Wammack said the call began.

Little Richard then asked him to put together a "good Southern rock 'n' roll band." He wanted Wammack to get as many of the musicians who played on his album together for the band.

"So I put him a rock 'n' roll band together and we toured all over the world," Wammack said.

His son, Travis "Monkee" Wammack Jr., came on as drummer.

Wammack said his time with Little Richard ended in the mid-1990s when Wammack developed a



This Muscle Shoals music memorabilia is on display at Muscle Shoals City Hall and features Little Richard, Travis Wammack and Mickey Buckins. Photo by Matt McKean

severe fear of flying. His son left the band at that time as well.

Wayne Chaney said he spent more than 30 years working with Little Richard as his sound engineer, road manager, stage manager, equipment manager, trumpet player and band leader.

He started out as an audio engineer, but after Wammack told Little Richard that Chaney played trumpet, he left the sound desk for the stage.

For Little Richard's rider, Chaney said he always asked for more than he expected to get. Venues provided what he wanted, especially in Europe where Little Richard is revered as a rock 'n' roll icon to this day.

"In Europe he was as big or bigger than Elvis," Chaney said. "Right now in Europe, they're going



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Little Richard and Clayton Ivey
in the FAME studios.
Photo courtesy of FAME.

berserk over his death, putting memorials up. I talked to his brother earlier today. He's getting calls from every publication."

Shoals guitarist Kelvin Holly said he entered the fold after Wammack left the band.

Despite knowing Little Richard had been in poor health, Holly said the news of his death was still difficult to take.

Holly said he joined the band in 1994 or '95 along with new drummer Derrick Martin. He remained in the band until Little Richard announced his retirement in 2013.

"We talked on the phone a lot, and I'd seen him several times up to that point," Holly said.

He said the last conversation he had with Little Richard occurred last year when he and songwriter Don Von

Tress backed up country artist Billy Ray Cyrus on "The Late Late Show With James Corden."

Holly said he enjoyed the years he spent with Little Richard.

"It was exciting," Holly said. "I got to see the world with him. I had no idea I'd be with him that long. He gave me job assurance early on. Once you're in Little Richard's band, you pretty much have to fire yourself."

Holly, Chaney and Wammack all said Little Richard treated his musicians with great respect.

"He was the greatest rock 'n' roll singer ever," Wammack said. "He could have a crowd in the palm of his hand before he sang the first note."

Chaney said Little Richard took care of his employees and made sure they were paid.

"I've worked with a lot of people in the music business, and I've never worked for anyone that was as honest as he was," Chaney said.

Unlike many artists, Little Richard's contract required that he be paid before the show, not after the show.

That made for some interesting stories, like the time a promoter paid Little Richard with \$10,000 in quarters, according to Chaney.

"We put them in the back of a pickup and went around Chicago swapping them for money," he said.

When Tonya Holly's movie, "When I Find the Ocean," premiered in 2006, Little Richard performed for guests at the Marriott Shoals Conference Center in Florence.

Chaney said he recalled only one time

when Little Richard played a show on the Sabbath. It was in order to secure some other dates, so he played a 30-minute set of nothing but gospel tunes.

"We did not do a Little Richard rock 'n' roll song and it was really fun," Chaney said. "Nobody in the crowd complained."

He said it was not uncommon to see three generations of a family attending a Little Richard concert.

Holly said Little Richard is expected to be buried in a cemetery next to Oakwood College in Huntsville, where Little Richard studied to become a Seventh Day Adventist preacher in the late 1950s.

This story was first published in The TimesDaily. It has been edited for Explore the Shoals publication.



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Another goodbye

Donnie Fritts,
the man with
'more fun in his
little pinkie than
most people have
in their whole
bodies'

Story by Russ Corey

Donnie Fritts.
Photo by Allison Carter.

Donnie Fritts' close relationship with the Shoals music scene goes back to its earliest days when budding young musicians gathered on downtown movie theater balconies to talk about music and plot their futures.

His death, longtime friend David Hood said, will leave a huge hole in the local music community.

The songwriter, singer and actor had been in the palliative care unit of UAB Hospital since mid-May, recovering from heart surgery.

Fritts died in his sleep Aug. 27. He was 76.

Fritts released five albums during his long career and had bit parts in nine movies, many alongside his friend, Kris Kristofferson, with whom he toured as a keyboardist beginning in the 1970s.

In 2018, he released his final album, "June," a tribute to rhythm and blues legend Arthur Alexander on Single Lock Records.

He was known for songs like "Breakfast in Bed," "Short End of the Stick," "Memphis Women and Chicken," and his best-known track, "We Had It All," which was co-written with Troy Seals and recorded by Dobie Gray, Ray Charles, Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, Waylon Jennings, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson and others.

Hood said his relationship with Fritts goes back to high school when Fritts was a drummer in the Coffee High School Marching Band drum line with the late Jerry Carrigan. Hood was a member of the Sheffield High School Marching Band.

"That was a killer drum section," Hood said. "We were all fans of them. Then he started playing

drums with Hollis Dixon and the Keynotes."

"I've played on several albums with him," he said. "I played with him in The Decoys. This year's Handy Fest is the first time for him not to sit in with The Decoys."

The Decoys became Fritts's unofficial backup band and accompanied him on a two-week tour of Japan where they were received like rock stars.

Decoys guitarist Kelvin Holly said he's known Fritts since he arrived in the Shoals 30 years ago.

"He was pretty much like family," Holly said. "He came to all the kids' plays and ballgames and birthdays. He kind of adopted us as his band whenever he had some type of gig. He took us to Japan. We did records with him."

He and Hood both said they had a hard time finding Fritts something to eat when they were in Japan. Hood said Fritts loved well-done hamburgers and did not like fish.

"I think a long time ago he got sick on some seafood," Holly said. "We never could get any fish down him. I told him, 'Before you kick the bucket, I'm going to get you to eat some fish.' That never happened."

"We Had It All" is Holly's favorite Fritts track.

"It's the most heartfelt song that he had," Holly said. "'We Had It All' is just gut-wrenching. He was proud of it because it was recorded by so many people."

Fritts was also fond of sitting in with Holly and guitarist Will McFarlane, who performed together as "Fathers and Sons" Tuesday nights at FloBama in downtown Florence.

"It was like part of the show when Donnie got

up and did three (songs) with 'Fathers and Sons,'" McFarlane said. "I met him when I first came to town, which was 1980."

McFarlane said before he went into the hospital, Fritts was singing and looking better than he had in a while.

"He was just a delightful character," McFarlane said. "He was just funny, quick. Sometimes his reactions were so funny to me. We stood together, mic to mic, next to each other many times, singing harmonies, looking at each other smiling and singing."

Decoys keyboardist N.C. Thurman said his memories of Fritts go back to 1968 when Fritts was pitching songs at Quincy Recording Studio from a reel to reel tape recorder.

"I never saw him again until '99," Thurman said. "Since then we've done a lot of shows and wrote a few tunes, and the trip to Japan was a great experience."

Songwriter/guitarist Earl "Peanutt" Montgomery said he remembers working with Fritts at the Princess Theatre in Florence.

"I remember Donnie working as an usher, working behind the counter popping popcorn and selling candy," Montgomery said. "At night, we'd all gather in the balcony and talk music. From there we went to the (City) drug store playing music, recording music and making demos."

Shoals guitarist Travis Wammack said he and Fritts both wished they'd met each other earlier.

"I moved down in 1969 and he moved away with Kris Kristofferson," Wammack said. "We became friends about 15 years ago. We became close friends and did a

lot of shows together."

He said Fritts would come play the Sunday Positive Vibes jam sessions at Stephano's in Sheffield.

"He was kind of like me," Wammack said. "This is what keeps us going. It's what kept him going, it's what keeps me going. Music gives you something to go for."

Fritts joined Kristofferson's band as a keyboardist in 1970. He became a part of the "outlaw country" scene that included Kristofferson, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson.

He co-wrote with numerous songwriters, including Troy Seals, Gary Nicholson, Dan Penn, John Prine, Spooner Oldham, Eddie Hinton, John Paul White and others.

White posted several photos of he and Fritts to his Instagram feed Wednesday morning.

"I will miss Donnie Fritts every day for the rest of my life," White said. "He taught me that there was honor in being a songwriter. He so loved the craft, and he loved the folks that loved it the way he did. He had a million great stories, and a Rolodex of friends to die for, but the thing that will endure for me is his passion for the song."

Fritts was inducted into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 2008.

"Alabama has lost a true icon with the passing of Donnie Fritts," Director Sandra Burroughs said. "There will never be another one like Donnie."

Over the past several years, Fritts had worked with the artists and management of Florence-based Single Lock Records, which released "Oh My Goodness" in 2015 and "June" in 2018.

"Donnie was an

important part of the creation of the Muscle Shoals sound, and I think his most enduring legacy will be the way he poured into and encouraged a new generation of artists in our community,” said Reed Watson, of Single Lock Records. “All of us at Single Lock have lost the soul of our label, but more importantly, we’ve lost a true friend. We will deeply miss Donnie.”

Several friends, including Hood, Holly, McFarland, Watson, White, Lenny LeBlanc and Andreas Werner, visited Fritts in his hospital room. Judy Hood said Lenny and Will played guitar for him.

While he did not react verbally, Werner said Fritts reacted to the

music.

“That was certainly special for all of us being there to connect with him that way,” Werner said. “He was so sweet. That’s why everyone loved Donnie Fritts. He had more funk in his little pinkie than most people have in their whole bodies.”

Werner and Fritts played duo shows with Fritts on piano and Werner on guitar.

“I genuinely felt like he was as excited to be on stage with me as I was being on stage with him,” Werner said. “I’ll never take that for granted.”

Patterson Hood, co-founder of the Drive-By Truckers, said he was “beyond sad” when he learned about Fritts’ death.

“I adored funky

Donnie Fritts,” Hood said. “We had our own very close friendship that went outside and beyond our musical and family connections.”

Both of them, he said, have been lifelong “avid film nuts” whose conversations would often delve deeper into that than anything else.

“Beyond his awe-inspiring musical accomplishments, he was an actor and was one of the last surviving members of Sam Peckinpah’s film clique,” Hood said. “As a member of the academy, he received screeners of every Oscar-considered film and watched them with his unerring eye, and we’d have deep conversations about them.”

“I had hoped of having

him out to Portland (Oregon) one day to host a 35 mm screening of ‘Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia’ but his health issues intervened,” Hood said.

His father, David, said Fritts’s wife, Donna, was always a huge supporter of her husband.

“It’s a bigger thing that people realize not having Donnie around,” Hood said. “He was the closest thing to a star we had around here. He was friends with everybody, and everybody loved him.”

Fritts touched the lives of younger Shoals artists like Eric Gebhardt, who performs as the raucous blues artist “Red Mouth.” He said Fritts once invited him to his home for piano lessons.

“He’s the one man in Alabama to never say my work is weird, that it’s mad,” Gebhardt said. “He only ever complimented me sincerely on my songs, and his admiration of my ability to perform. He was also one of the first to take note of my ever-improving vocal chops. He was my rare support from that old guard, and now that I’m nearly an old guard I look forward to passing that back down.”

“I hope St. Peter doesn’t call him ‘Mr. Fritts’ as he ushers him through the pearly gates,” Gebhardt said. “Simply ‘Funky’ will do just fine.”

This article was first published in The TimesDaily.

donnie fritts
oh my goodness



Fritts’ album “Oh My Goodness”.

Donnie Fritts appeared in the following movies:

- "Jayne Mansfield's Car" - 2012
- "Birth of a Legend: The Story of the WAWA" - 2007
- "The Last Days of Frank & Jesse James" - 1986
- "Songwriter" - 1984
- "Convoy" - 1978
- "A Star Is Born" - 1976
- "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" - 1974
- "Cockfighter" - 1974
- "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" - 1973

Donnie Fritts Discography:

- "Prone To Lean" - 1974
- "Everybody's Got A Song" - 1997
- "One Foot in the Groove" - 2008
- "Oh My Goodness" - 2015
- "June" - 2018

donnie fritts
June

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campgrounds



The Shoals offers plenty of sites for primitive and RV camping, many of which are along the beautiful Tennessee River.

Brush Creek Park in Lauderdale County now has 12 new camping sites for recreational vehicles, an additional picnic pavilion, an additional bathhouse, and restroom facilities. All of the facility will be handicapped-accessible. There also are boat ramps at the campground that provide easy access to the water for campers and fishing enthusiasts.



■ Brush Creek Park

Lauderdale 14, near Waterloo.

Open from mid-March through late October. No fee to camp. Thirty-day maximum stay. 256-760-5878 or 256-760-5750

Brush Creek Park in Lauderdale County has seen some improvements this year with new camping sites for RVs and is handicapped-accessible.

Other Parks

■ Colbert Alloys Park and Campground

180 Alloys Park Lane, Muscle Shoals

Located on Wilson Lake, has RV, tent and primitive camping; electricity; water; sewage and dump station; bathhouse; and boat ramp. The park is open year round. 256-383-0783

■ Colbert Rose Trail

9395 Riverton Rose Trail, Cherokee

Located on Pickwick Lake, the grounds include tent and primitive camping, electricity, water, dump station, piers, pavilion, bathrooms, showers and seasonal boat ramps. Open all year. 256-360-2764

■ Heritage Acres RV Park

1770 Neil Morris Road, off U.S. 72, Tuscumbia

The park offers RV campsites with full hookups, coin laundry, bath house, free cable television, free WiFi. Daily, weekly and monthly rates are available, and big rigs and pets are welcome. 256-383-7368; heritageacresrvpark.com.

■ Tuscumbia RV Park

18260 U.S. 72, Tuscumbia

A park with 24 RV spots located about seven miles west of Tuscumbia. Full hookups with electricity, water, sewage, WiFi, free laundry and shower building. The park is open year round. 256-383-2363 or 800-930-7275, or TuscumbiaRvPark.com.

■ Wilson Dam Rock Pile Campground

663 Rock Pile Road, Muscle Shoals

A self-service campground opens mid-March through mid-November with 23 campsites. Rest rooms with heated showers and flush toilets, picnic tables and grills, boat ramps above and below the dam, lake and river fishing, hiking trail (10 miles), walking trail, nature area, wildlife viewing area, bird watching and bicycling. 800-882-5263; tva.gov/river/recreation/camping.htm#wilson.



A gravel path leads down to the Tennessee River at Wheeler Campground near Wheeler Dam which is now open

■ McFarland Park

Alabama 20, Florence

The park has 60 campsites open year round with electrical and water connections. It also has rest rooms, bathhouse and laundry facilities. The park is conducive to tent camping. 256-740-8817.

■ Joe Wheeler State Park

Rogersville.

This state park offers resort facilities with a lodge, cabins, restaurant, fishing, golf, swimming, tennis, convention and banquet facilities and boat slips and marina. The upgraded campsites offer all amenities and primitive sites as well. 256-247-1184; joewheeler.park@dcnr.alabama.gov.

■ Wheeler Reservation Campground

Alabama 101, east end of Wheeler Dam.

Campground has 30 camping sites open from mid-March through late October. With water and electrical connections, the park has a free dumping station, bathhouse and a fishing pier for campers. Camping fee charged. First-come, first-serve basis with a maximum 30-day stay. No reservations. 256-760-5878 or 256-760-5750.



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The best 18 holes in the Shoals

Story by Gregg Dewalt

Photos by Matt McKean and Patrick Hood

One of Robert Trent Jones Sr.'s integral golf design philosophies was that it should be hard to make a par and easier to make a bogey on any given hole.

That design influence can be found on three of Alabama's best golf courses located in the Shoals — Turtle Point Yacht and Country Club, and the self-named Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail's the Shoals Fighting Joe and Schoolmaster layouts.

Turtle Point, annually ranked among the top five courses in the state, was designed by Jones. Fighting Joe and Schoolmaster were the brainchild of Jones' protégé Roger Rulewich, who did the majority of the architecturally acclaimed Trail designs.

Why is that little bit

of history important?

Because those three courses contain the bulk of what a panel of local experts consider the best 18 holes in the Shoals.

But Jones' philosophy, while perhaps forged from his mentors, isn't the gospel of golf architecture. Every great designer has their own ideas for architecture. So do most players.

So, what makes a great golf hole? Jeff Neuman, editor of *Met Golfer* magazine, offered insight in an email response.

"A great golf hole should be a challenge to the mind and body, and a delight to the senses. It should have a strategic element, offer more than one way to play it, and fit pleasingly in the landscape. Some would say it should look as though it was discovered



Robert Trent Jones at the Shoals has a beautiful clubhouse with stunning views of the Tennessee River.

rather than built; for others, it's like the joke about honesty and sincerity being the key to success in Hollywood ('As long as you can fake that, you've got it made') — artfully manufactured surroundings can serve just as well."

Many of the great holes are what Donald Ross called half-par holes: potentially driveable par-4s, reachable par-5s, long fours where the prudent play might be to lay up on the second shot. Holes that force decisions plant the seeds of doubt in a golfer's mind, and those seeds often sprout at the top of the backswing.

For Tom Doak, "The best holes tend to be the ones that play into the most interesting greens." Whether through size, tilt, contour, or surrounding hazards, they offer challenges that

affect the golfer all the way back to the tee. He once told an associate, "If (you) made the green look as different as possible from opposite sides of the fairway, that would be a great start to an interesting hole."

University of North Alabama golf coaches Cullen Carstens and Neil Self, UNA senior golfer Jackson Wedgeworth, Blackberry Trail's Jason Vaughn, Cypress Lakes' Scott Arndt and Turtle Point's Les Holcombe compiled a list of their favorite local holes from seven courses based on aesthetics, shot value and playability. Panelists were asked to consider each of the holes from the middle tees to reflect where the majority of the general public plays from, although back tees were considered in some instances. The preliminary list featured

48 holes.

From there, the list was pared down to reflect which holes received the most votes. Par-3s were heavily favored among the panelists, with seven among the top vote-getters. However, to more closely reflect a traditional 18-hole, par-72 course, the list was separated into par-3s, par-4s and par-5s, and from there the top holes were selected to form the Shoals Dream 18.

The front nine plays to 3,630 yards from the middle tees and features water on five holes.

Dream 18: The Back Nine

After traversing a difficult outward nine holes of the Shoals' Dream 18, the back nine features spectacular views with fun holes and a sprinkling of danger at every turn.

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The yardage on the back nine softens considerably once you get past the front's daunting 3,600-plus yards. The Dream 18's back nine plays to a modest 3,159 yards from the middle tees with multiple chances for birdies. Dial in your iron play and get your putter working, and a sub-par score is easily attainable.

Make a few errors or

get distracted by the scenery and a good round can quickly go south.

The back nine starts with a par-3 — No. 18 on Fighting Joe at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail the Shoals. Scott Arndt, the former director of golf at the RTJ facility who now manages Cypress Lakes, calls it the best finishing hole on the trail.

Players need to show off their ability to shape

shots with their driver, needing a draw on one hole and a high fade on the next. The back nine also features a pair of risk-reward par-5s, a long, difficult par-3 and a smattering of fun short par-4s.

It ends with another spectacular view of Wilson Lake and a devilish short iron into the 18th green at Turtle Point.

Turtle Point, No. 13, Par 4, 336/359 yards

Neil Self says: I've seen good players hit irons off the tee but I'll always hit driver. If the greens are firm, it's one of the trickiest little wedge shots around. Hit the fairway and a solid little nipper you'll have a good look at birdie. Anything less and you probably won't keep it



You'll have to fight the urge to just stare at the stunning view at the 18th tee on the Fighting Joe course at Robert Trent Jones Golf Course in Colbert County.



The fifth hole on the Fighting Joe is well-guarded by water and bunkers.

on the green.

Former TimesDaily sports editor Gregg Dewalt, avid golfer, says: This is just a tremendous short par-4 with multiple options from tee to green. You can bomb a driver as close to the green as possible or hit something less and leave a longer, yet more-full shot into a shallow green that is hard to hold. On paper, it looks like a birdie hole. In reality, it's a tough second shot to a green that is tough to hold and par is an acceptable score.

**Schoolmaster, No. 16, Par 3,
146/157 yards**

Neil Self says: Beautifully carved out little par 3. Interesting green in both shape and severity. Triangle green makes for good variation.

Gregg Dewalt says: This is a hole that really fits a person's eye. Every

time I play this hole with friends, I feel as if I could see a hole-in-one because you have a short iron in your hands. That only adds to the thrill factor.

**Turtle Point, No. 5, Par 5,
493/566 yards**

Cullen Carstens says: If you enjoy working the ball from left to right, this hole is for you. From the white tees, players can either hit a 220-240 shot straight away, or hit more and try to maneuver a cut around the trees guarding the corner. After the tee shots, the rest of the hole plays downhill with a pond guarding the front of the green. For the big hitters, a well-placed drive will leave you just a little too far to reach the green, but close enough to convince you to try it. Another hole where you have to think your way

through every shot, the downhill elevation must be factored in on the layup shot, making sure you don't run through into the water. Approach shots to the green are usually from 80-120 yards, so make sure to leave yourself a number you are comfortable with. The green has a crown in the middle which will run putts towards both the front and back edges of the green. Such a great hole, I've seen just as many birdies as I have double-bogeys. Three good shots will earn you a par (or better), so if you can, take 5 and be thankful.

**Fighting Joe, No. 5, Par 3,
175/193 yards**

Gregg Dewalt says: One of the few holes on Fighting Joe with significant elevation change, this is another one of the great par-3s in





The fifth green at Turtle Point is one of the toughest on the course.

the area. Water can come into play on both sides of the green and also behind it, and bunkers protect the front. Because the tee shot is downhill, you get to track it all the way, wondering as the ball flies toward the green if you pulled the correct club. When the ball lands safely, you can let out a sigh of relief.

Blackberry Trail, No. 14, Par 4, 303/336 yards

Gregg Dewalt says: This is a neat little hole that mostly requires a lay-up to 100 yards. The green is divided into two sections by a ridge and is one of the most perplexing on the course. Even though a short-iron approach should leave a player stalking a birdie, the slightest miss-hit can

result in the ball resting in a watery grave and putting double bogey in play.

Schoolmaster, No. 2, Par 3, 178/196 yards

Gregg Dewalt says: another really fine par-3 that you face early in the round on Schoolmaster. This deep green can play as much as three more clubs depending

on the wind and the hole location. Water guards the front and right side of the green with bunkers on the left. It's another one of those holes where you'll take par and move on.

Cypress Lakes, No. 17, Par 3, 184/224 yards

Jackson Wedgeworth says: A 230-yard carry over water to a protected



The 10th hole at Turtle Point stretches to 219 yards and has four bunkers protecting the green.

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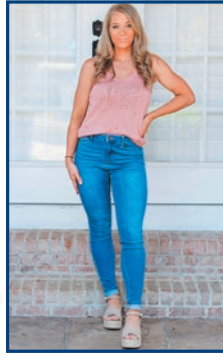
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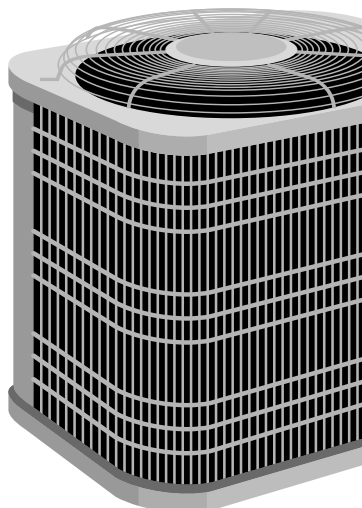
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The second hole on Schoolmaster is a tough par-3 with a deep green that can play much longer than the scorecard yardage.



The 16th hole on the Schoolmaster course at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail's The Shoals is another of the area's top par-3s.



green can be scary late in a round. This hole requires a great shot and some luck to hit the green. Many balls find the water all around this green. Keeping the ball dry on this hole is a great success.

**Turtle Point, No. 10, Par 3,
188/219 yards**

Les Holcombe says:
No. 10 is a great par-3
because of the shape
of the green and the



placement of the four bunkers, and it is 219 yards from on the back tee. It can take three different clubs depending on the hole location. And the back left bunker or over the green must be avoided.

**Blackberry Trail, No. 8, Par 5,
493/526 yards**

Gregg Dewalt says:
The perfect ending to an emergency nine — the classic risk-reward par-5. A good drive leaves a decision — try to carve a 3-wood or hybrid into a narrow opening for an eagle opportunity or lay up and go for birdie with a wedge or sand wedge. There is no bailout area if you go for it — a pull ends up in a penalty area and a fade ends up in a pond guarding the front and right side of the green. There's always a little indecision in the second shot if you go for the green in two because the pond extends slightly in front of the green.

*This story was first
published in The
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Blackberry Trail's 14th green is bisected by a large ridge.



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The eighth hole at Blackberry Trail is a good risk-reward par-5.



The 18th green at the clubhouse at Cypress Lakes Golf Course in Muscle Shoals.

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take a hike

If you enjoy hiking, the Shoals has several options with trails that wind through tranquil wooded areas, some of which border the beautiful Tennessee River.

■ Shoal Creek Nature Preserve

This picturesque place is a popular destination for those who enjoy a walk in the woods, horseback riding, bicycling and bird watching. The state-owned, 298-acre nature area features 4.5 miles of trails that provide views of cascading streams, wildflowers, wildlife and Shoal Creek.

The preserve features varying habitats including fallow fields, mature upland hardwood stands and scenic creek bottoms. It also offers opportunities for fishing, canoeing, picnicking, photography and nature study.

Motorized vehicles are only allowed in designated parking areas and access roads.

An additional 2 miles of trails at the nature area are available for horseback riding and bicycling.

The preserve is about 7 miles north of Florence and 2.5 miles north of St. Florian on Lauderdale 61. Access is available via a gravel road off Lauderdale 61.

■ Rock Spring Nature Trail

Located west of Florence, this scenic trail is a part of the Natchez Trace Parkway.

Visitors have an opportunity to see beaver and other wildlife. During the fall, numerous hummingbirds can be seen along the trail, feeding on the jewelweed that grows around Colbert Creek.

A small natural spring bubbles from the rocks near a deep pool where fish dart about. After completing the 20-minute walk around the loop trail, you might be tempted to take off your shoes and dangle your feet in the cool water. Vegetation and trees change as you move along the trail, past the stream, and on to a field and a rocky hillside. Steppingstones that provide access across Colbert Creek limit the opportunities for handicapped access to the trail.

■ Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge

Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge is located southwest of Florence and features more than 2.5 miles of gravel trails that provide opportunities for watching birds and other wildlife. Many of the birds seen there are grassland species that are not commonly found in north Alabama.

The 1,060-acre refuge is on Lauderdale 204. Take Alabama 20 to Lauderdale 2 in Florence. Travel 5 miles west and turn south on Lauderdale 223 for 1.5 miles. Then turn west on 204 for 1/4 mile.

■ Bankhead National Forest

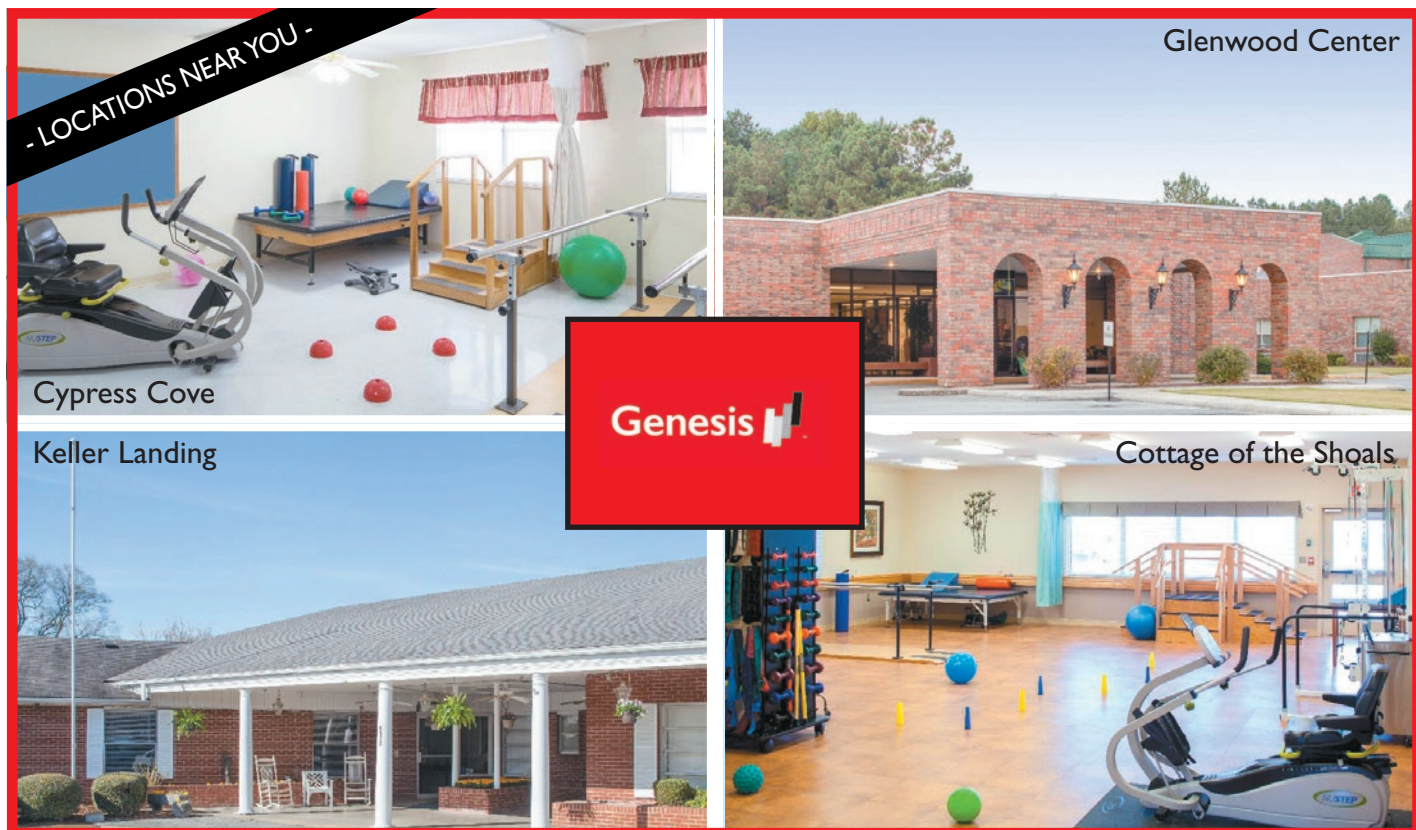
In addition to nature preserves, parks and other outdoor venues in the Shoals, Bankhead National Forest, in Lawrence, Winston and Franklin counties, has numerous trails ranging from narrow paths through wilderness to a multi-use trail where horses and all-terrain cycles can be ridden.

The forest is a popular destination for campers, hikers, wildlife watchers, horse-back riders, canoeists and kayakers. Alabama 33 south of Moulton and Alabama 195 south of Haleyville provide access to the forest. 205-489-5111.



Wayne Dunkin
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■ Old Railroad Bridge

At one time, this bridge provided access across the Tennessee River for both automobiles and trains. Today, it is used only by pedestrians.

It provides a scenic view of the Tennessee River. Many walkers time their visits to watch the sun setting over Pickwick Lake.

Hikers also can access Tennessee Valley Authority trails from the Old Railroad Bridge.

Access to the bridge is from Ashe Boulevard in Sheffield.

■ Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve, Tuscumbia

Just a short drive from the city, hikers and nature lovers can find one of Alabama's treasured forests — Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve. With more than a dozen waterfalls and 15 miles of trails, opportunity to enjoy the area's natural beauty awaits. Although the trails range from beginner to advanced, all of the real scenery requires some difficulty to see. Visitors are required to sign in to the preserve.

Go about 6 miles north of U.S. 72 on Hawk Pride Mountain Road, turn left onto Loop Road and reach entrance to preserve in about a mile and a half.



The Point at Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve.



Cane Creek Nature Preserve.



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Wildlife Refuge.



■ Alabama Forever Wild Shoal Creek Preserve, St. Florian

This beautiful part of Lauderdale County is perfect for beginning hikers, where scenic creek bottoms and vast woodlands comprise the well-marked trails.

Wooden bridges decorate the 2.4-mile Jones Branch Loop and 1.8-mile Lawson Branch Loop, making them easy to cross and providing a rustic atmosphere. A cave in the area is a great place for spelunking.

From Florence Boulevard, turn left onto Lauderdale 30, take first right onto Lauderdale 47, take second left onto Lauderdale 61, go about 2 miles and entrance road will be on the right.

■ Wildwood Park, Florence

Located a short distance from historic downtown Florence and the University of North Alabama, Wildwood Park offers trails ranging from beginner to advanced. The park is also ideal for mountain biking and jogging. The park has a picnic area.

Going south on Pine Street, turn left onto Lion Drive, then turn left onto Circular Road. Continue onto Waterloo Road, turn left after about a half-mile, and the park will be on the left.



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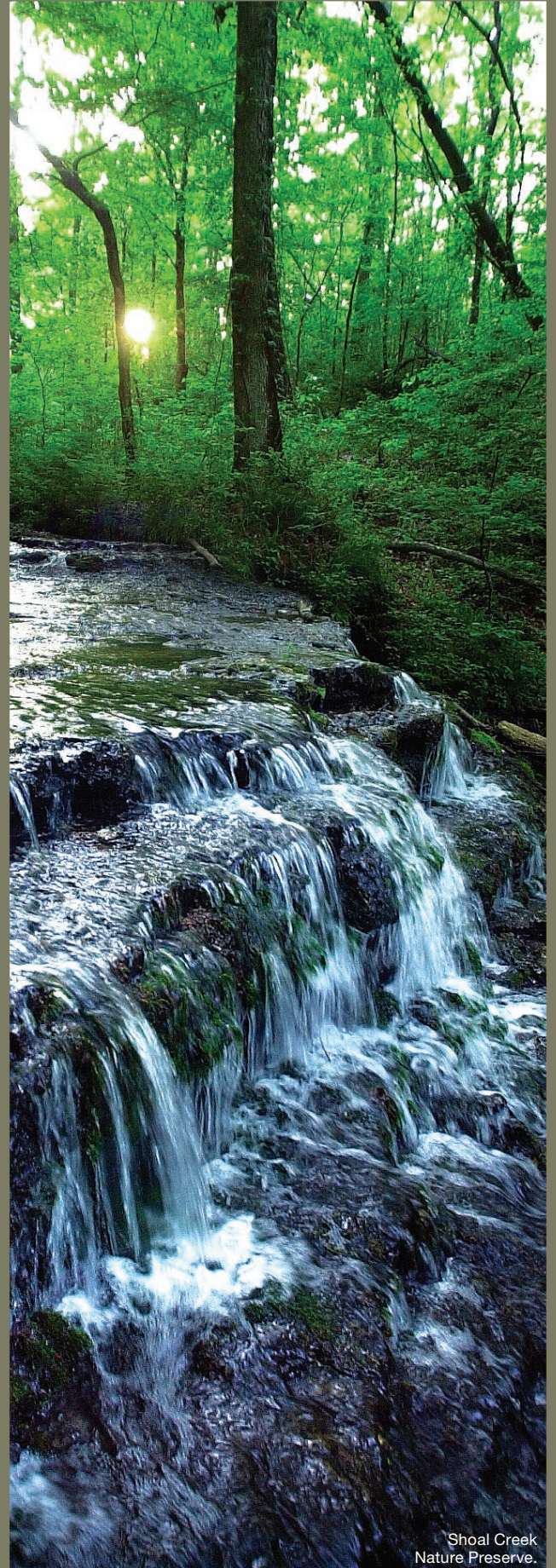


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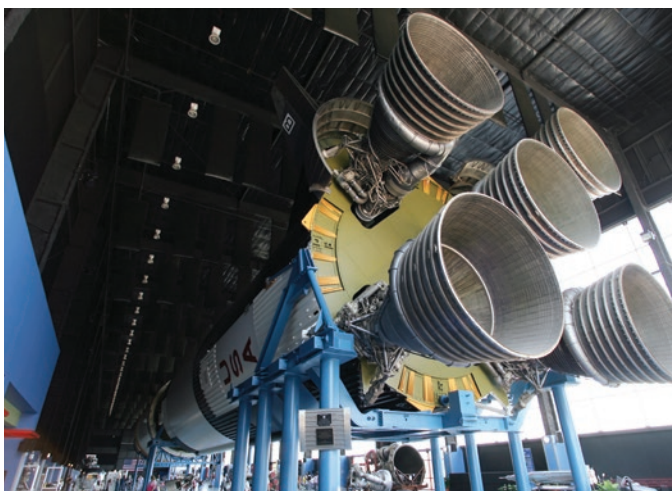
NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

Nature is always on display with a visit to the Natchez Trace Parkway. Driving the parkway is a way to enjoy the beautiful colors of autumn, and the spring offers a peek at the first colors of a new year. The Trace connects Nashville with Natchez, Mississippi and attracts more visitors each year than any U.S. National Park except the Statue of Liberty. Access to the Natchez Trace is on Alabama 20, northwest of Florence, and on U.S. 72, near Cherokee, in Colbert County.



U.S. SPACE AND ROCKET CENTER, HUNTSVILLE

Here's your opportunity to learn about the U.S. space program with space travel simulators and hands-on exhibits at the Space and Rocket Center. The center is recognized as one of the most comprehensive U.S. space museums in the world. Visitors can learn about north Alabama's role in putting man on the moon, the space race, the Apollo missions, the Space Shuttle program as well as the International Space Center. The facility is just off Interstate 565 at One Tranquility Base, Huntsville. 1-800-637-7223; rocketcenter.com.



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The Dismals Canyon is a privately owned 85-acre natural conservatory that was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1975 by the National Natural Landmarks Program. Its natural formations awe visitors and the secluded trails and woodlands feature a variety of vegetation and rock formations. Features also include a hiking trail, waterfalls, cabins, campsites and a country store. And if you visit during Alabama's sweltering summers, you'll immediately notice the cooling drop in temperature. Open weekends. 205-993-4559; dismalscanyon.com




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Cook Museum of Natural Science

is 'just down the road' from the Shoals



Athens Intermediate School students have a hands-on experience at the Cook Museum of Natural Science's kinetic sand table.

Story by Bayne Hughes

Photos by DAN BUSEY & JERONIMO NISA

In the first eight months of opening in 2019, close to 90,000 people visited Cook Museum of Natural Science.

Executive Director Scott Mayo estimated this attendance figure puts the museum on track for between 120,000 and 130,000 visitors in its inaugural year.

The museum opened June 7, 2019. Mayo was hired that August and went full time with the museum Oct. 1.

The 62,000-square-foot museum at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Lee Street in downtown Decatur features exhibit galleries, a retail store,

a restaurant and event space.

The Cook Museum is supported by paid admissions, memberships and a capital campaign. Mayo said the nonprofit has raised \$22 million in pledges and contributions. The goal is \$32.5 million.

It is one of the winners of the USA Today 2020 10 Best Readers' Choice Travel Award contest for Best New Museum. Cook Museum finished second out of 20 nominees across the United States and Canada.

Earlier this year, Mayo said he knows local residents are enjoying the museum because

they've sold more than 3,000 memberships.

"A lot of people are taking advantage of our deal in which the price of their first ticket is rolled into the cost of a membership if they decide to upgrade," Mayo said.

The museum initially used tickets that provide a time for the visitors to attend, so they could spread out the number of people in the museum at one time. However, Taylor said they found that the museum could handle the crowds so the timed tickets aren't necessary.

"When the new school year starts in August, I've

told our scheduling team I want our first field trip to be on the third day of the school year," Mayo said.

Taylor said the field trips are an example of how this first year is an experiment. Initially, they only scheduled one field trip at a time.

"We've learned we can host two or three field trips at a time," Taylor said.

Athens Intermediate School teacher Pam Morgan said the museum is the perfect place for 350 fifth-graders to begin their unit on the ecosystem. While the students quickly moved from one exhibit to

another during their visit in February, Morgan said they are learning a lot about the subject.

"The museum encompasses everything we'll be doing in our lessons," Morgan said.

Students Luke McGuire and Logan Pigg said their favorite parts of the museum were the cave and the live animals. The interactive kinetic sand table called HoloSands, which was designed and installed in the museum's geology exhibit called Foundations, is also popular.

"I couldn't get my volcano to erupt," Pigg said.



Athens Intermediate School students use interactive displays at the Cook Museum of Natural Science.

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Mayo said they plan to have seven or eight education classes next year.

The museum features at least 60,000 bees, a multitude of bugs and more than 260 other animals. It has seven aquatic tanks, including a 15,000-gallon saltwater tank.

Mayo said his crews have impressed the zoo community with their care and love of the wildlife. A consulting veterinarian from the Chattanooga Aquarium



Visitors walk through the Forests exhibit during the opening day of Cook Museum of Natural Science in Decatur.

visits regularly.

"We've got four species that are on the threatened list and we'll have an announcement soon on another one," Mayo said. "We wouldn't get these animals if we hadn't proved that we can take care of them and earned the trust of the zoo community."

Mayo said the staff is collecting attendance and other data from each of the activities it hosts to use in future operations.

Mayo said he and his staff are learning a lot and they expect to use their experience and data to be even more successful.

This article was first published in The Decatur Daily. Some content has been edited.



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time to Eat

The Shoals has plenty of variety when it comes to the dining experience. Following is just a sample of local restaurants that offer great menus.

FAMILY

ALABAMA CHANIN FACTORY AND CAFÉ

Where: 462 Lane Drive, Florence; 256-760-1090; alabamachanin.com/the-factory

Hours: Weekday lunch, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday; Saturday brunch, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Factory hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

Think fresh – as in organically grown: salads, vegetable of the day, sandwiches, quiche, daily plate, beer and wine, and other yummy items that change regularly. It's all served on the fringe of where renowned designer Alabama Chanin creates and produces her signature fashions. When you're satiated from the lovely food, take advantage of the opportunity to tour The Factory studio.

BIG BAD BREAKFAST

Where: 315 N. Court St., Florence; 256-415-8545; bigbadbreakfast.com/locations/florence-alabama

Hours: 7a.m. to 2:30 p.m. seven day a week

The aprons were designed by renowned fashion icon Alabama Chanin, the sounds of Shoals-related music mingle with conversation and the tink of cutlery against plate, and there are so many breakfast combinations on the menu, you'll just camp out there – if they'd allow you. But if breakfast past 9 a.m. is not your thing, there are salads, sandwiches and wraps, too. Ingredients are locally sourced whenever possible and the chef overseeing Florence's newest eatery is passionate about laying a great table.

BOX CAR CAFÉ

Where: 220 N. Nashville Ave., Sheffield; 256-381-7437

Hours: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday

Good variety on its breakfast menu. A recent sample of lunch, which is served beginning at 10 a.m., was meatloaf, salmon, taco salad, chicken and dressing, vegetables, salad and bread. Desserts served, too.

CAFÉ 222

256-284-7392
222 North Court Street
Florence, AL 35630
Mon-Fri 10am-2:30pm

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CHEESY BOB'S GRILLED CHEESE

Cheesybob.com
256-712-5179

Tue-Sat 11am-9pm
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CHICKEN SALAD CHICK

chickensaladchick.com/florence
256-257-0042
363 Cox Creek Parkway
Florence, AL 35630
Mon-Sat 10am-8pm
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CLAUNCH CAFÉ

Where: 400 S. Main St. Tuscumbia; 256-386-0222;
Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday through Thursday
Claunch Café specializes in down home Southern cooking. Diners can sit inside the glassed in porch and look out at the beauty of Spring Park. In the summer months, the glass is removed and only the screens remain. The chicken salad plate is a must-try – it's Claunch's signature dish.

ESTHER'S EATERY

www.estherseatery.com
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GARDEN GATE

Where: 701 Avalon Ave. Muscle Shoals; 256-383-6905;
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Garden Gate serves home cooking in generous helpings that include fare like fried chicken, beef tips and rice, slow cooked pork roast, chicken and dumplings and home-style veggies like grandma used to cook: turnip greens, potatoes and gravy, green beans, corn, fried okra, purple hull peas or white beans.

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Smoke on the Water Festival

April • McFarland Park

The Smoke on the Water Festival is more than just a BBQ cook-off - it's an event for the entire family! Sanctioned by the Kansas City BBQ Society and the Alabama BBQ Association, this cook-off will determine the very best barbeque among entrants participating from throughout the Southeast. Winners will compete for cash prizes totaling more than \$6,000.

Shoals Dragon Boat Festival

October • McFarland Park

Once you hear about dragon boat racing and become involved in this world of sport, community and fun, there is no turning back. There is much more to it than a great day on the water. There are different and interesting ways to experience the sport for both team members and spectators. Whether you've never paddled in a festival, or you paddle regularly in a dragon boat, you feel connected to it. That's the beauty of it - from the moment you pick up a paddle, you'll love dragon boat racing!

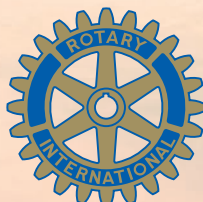


In 2011, the Shoals community, headed by the Florence and Greater Shoals Rotary Clubs, decided that education was the most important gift we could give our children. Because education is the underpinning for success in every endeavor, the community banded together to give every student in the Shoals the opportunity to continue education beyond high school.

For more information or tickets for any of these events check out www.shoalsscholardollars.com



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website for reservation rules.

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Where: 1411 Huntsville
Road, Florence; 256-275-7716;
Facebook page

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to expose brick walls that adds
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experience, which features
sandwiches (smoked gouda
pimiento cheese sounds good),
slow smoked pork brisket, ribs
and chicken, and soups and
salads.

RHODA P'S

Where: 500 N. Montgomery
Ave., Sheffield; 256-978-5179;
rhodapscatering.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Tuesday through Friday; 11 a.m.
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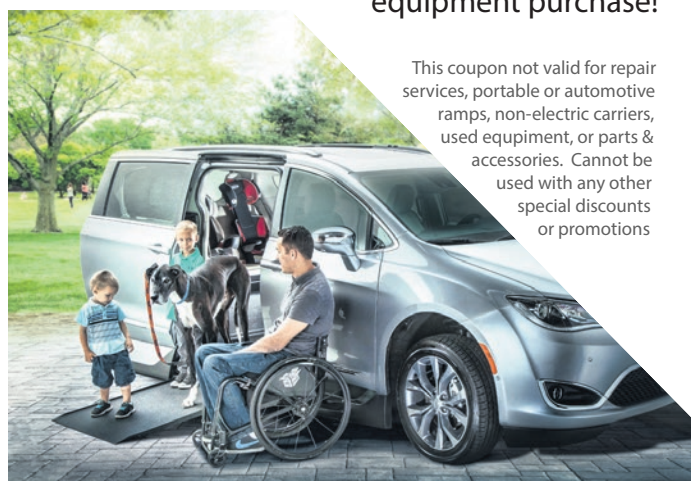
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256-314-2323
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Sheffield, AL 35660
Tue-Thur 11am-8pm
Fri & Sat 11am-9pm

BAR AND GRILL

2ND & 13 SPORTS BAR & GRILLE

Where: 213 N. Montgomery Ave.,
Sheffield; 256-978-2414

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday
through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Friday and Saturday; noon to 10 p.m.
Sunday

Casual dining with menu items
that include salads, sliders, burgers,
wings, steak, pork, and lots of sides
and desserts.

ON THE ROCKS

Where: 110 N. Court St.,
Florence; 256-760-2212;
florenceontherocks.com

Hours: 4 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Full menu for lunch and
dinner includes pub-like menu
items like hot wings, nachos,
burgers and sandwiches, grilled
mahi mahi, and steak. It is a
favorite spot for live music and
for dining and late socializing in
the heart of historic downtown
Florence.

FLOBAMA

Where: 311 N. Court St.,
Florence; 256-764-2225; Facebook
page

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.
Monday through Saturday

Another of downtown
Florence's dining and late
socializing venues, FloBama's
menu features hickory smoked
beef and pork as well as chicken,
salads, wraps. There's Tuesday
karaoke, open mic, and live
music.

SAM'S SPORTS GRILL

www.samssportsgrill.com
256-349-2300

339 Seville St, Florence, AL
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right". We apply this philosophy
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including food, service and
sports. We know we are only as
good as your last visit, that's why
our whole team is committed to
your complete satisfaction and
if we fall short please bring it to
our attention. food, service and
sports. Our hard work has paid
off as we have been voted 'best
sports grill' for 14 years by the
readers of the Nashville Scene
Magazine. Awards are great but
we know we are only as good
as your last visit, that's why our
whole team is committed to your
complete satisfaction and if we
fall short please bring it to our
attention. Thanks for visiting our
website, now its time to visit our
restaurant.

FINE DINING/ STEAKS/ SEAFOOD

360 GRILLE

Where: 800 Cox Creek Pkwy
S., Florence; 256-246-3600;
reservations required

The 360 Grille, located atop
the Renaissance Tower at the
4-star Marriott Shoals Hotel and
Spa, offers spectacular views of
the Tennessee Valley and hails
as Alabama's only revolving
restaurant.

The menu features regional
American cuisine with a
commitment to locally grown
produce, sustainable farming
practices and seasonality. A
five course chef's tasting offers
innovative takes on some
classics, while the a la carte
menu presents refined renditions
of Southern favorites. The 360
lounge offers unique cocktails
made with fresh-squeezed juices
and an award-winning wine
selection. The Chef's Table is
available by reservation and
allows diners to interact with the
culinary team as they prepare
and customize their meal. Ask
about the five course chef's
tastings.

GEORGE'S STEAK PIT

Where: 1206 Jackson Hwy.,
Sheffield; 256-381-1531;
georgessteakpit.com

Hours: 4:30-10 p.m. Tuesday-
Saturday

Known throughout the Shoals,
this establishment remains
an area classic. Diners enjoy
a selection of fine wines to
complement their meal of choice.
Menu appetizers include Oysters
Rockefeller, Fried Calamari
and the Greek Tray. Steaks are
cooked over a wood-fire grill.

JACK'S PLACE

Where: 118 W. Mobile
St., Florence; 256-349-5429;
jacksplacebistro.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Monday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and
5-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 11
a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5-10 p.m.
Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. to 3
p.m. Sunday

You've seen Chef Jack White's
work. The actor turned food
stylist has worked in more
than 100 movies and TV shows
including "The Girl with the
Dragon Tattoo," "Saving Grace,"
and "The Hunger Games" series.
For brunch or lunch, you'll find
mouth-watering selections that
include Eggs Benedict three
ways, frittata or quiche of the
day, Belgian waffles and French
toast, or maybe you would prefer
a spinach salad or tarragon
chicken salad. "Sandwiches and
such" include Panini, wraps, a
meatball hoagie or burgers, with
the "such" including brisket,
panko encrusted pork tenderloin,
pasta and flatbreads. The dinner

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menu includes main courses of hand-cut ribeye and braised pork shank among many dishes that will please all appetites.

SHEF'S KITCHEN

Where: 1700 Lee St.,
Rogersville; 256-247-3336
Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Monday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Steaks, burgers, catfish, chicken and sandwiches are served at this Rogersville eatery. There is a lunch menu available for orders placed before 4 p.m.

STANFIELD'S STEAK HOUSE

Where: 4838 Hatch Blvd.,
Sheffield; Opening 2020
See Facebook for more info.

BARBEQUE

BUNYAN'S BARBECUE

Where: 901 W. College St., Florence; 256-766-3522; bunyansbarbecue.com
Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday
This is a favorite among locals for pulled barbecue pork sandwiches and hotdogs with Bunyan's famous slaw, hot or mild. Chicken is also on the menu. Order ahead and pack a picnic lunch. Eat in or take out.

DICK HOWELL'S BBQ

Where: 1350 N. Pine St. Florence; 256-767-5830;
Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday
In addition to a smoked barbecue sandwich, try the rib plate, smoke turkey sandwich or stuffed baked potato with meat. The mouthwatering menu has something for every taste.

306 BBQ

Where: 322 N. Court St., Florence; 256-766-5665; 306bbq.com/Florence
Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Hickory wood smoked barbecue featuring pork, ribs, chicken, turkey, ham, and plates with a choice of sides. There are salad, potatoes and wings, too.

RICK'S BBQ

www.ricksbbq.com
Alabama Locations
Muscle Shoals-2405 Woodward Ave, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661
Florence-212 Cox Creek Pkwy, Florence, AL 35630
Sky Park-4260 Florence Blvd, Florence, AL 35634
Madison-7929 Hwy 72 W Madison, AL 35758
Wilson Dam-2408 S. Wilson

Damn Rd, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Tennessee Locations
Lawrenceburg-1507 N. Locust Ave Lawrenceburg, TN 38464
Commissary-2366 Hwy 43 S. Leoma, TN 38469

Fayetteville-1419 Huntsville Hwy, Fayetteville, TN 37334

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ICE CREAM/ SANDWICHES

THE PALACE ICE CREAM AND SANDWICH SHOP

Where: 100 S. Main St. Tuscumbia; 256-386-8210
Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday
Former home of the Railroad Hotel in 1833, then the location of Palace Drug Store in 1906, this eatery specializes in milkshakes, ice cream, burgers, sandwiches and triple scoop, tri-flavored banana splits.

SOUL WINGERY & RECORDS

Where: 1055 Poplar St., Florence; 256-275-7434
Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Love wings? Soul, as it's fondly referred to, is tucked in on a side street and has limited space, but you won't mind at all once you taste their wings. There are 10 flavors on the menu — you'll want to work your way through them all and start over again. Flavors include Alabama White Sauce, Buffalo, Lemon Pepper, Honey BBQ, Garlic & Herb, Cajun Ranch, Honey Mustard, Homestyle, Teriyaki, and Nashville Hot.

SUGARBAKERS

256-980-6963
1144 N. Wood Ave, Florence, AL Tue-Fri 10am-5:30pm
Sat 10am-2pm
Cakes: Carmel, Coconut, Chunk Chocolate, Strawberry, Red Velvet, Butter Yellow, Italian Cream
Gluten Free Vanilla Cake and Cupcakes. Now carrying Blue Bell Ice Cream. Chicken Salad to go!

TROWBRIDGE'S

Where: 316 N. Court St., Florence; 256-764-1503
In the heart of historic downtown Florence, this shop features handmade shakes, sundaes, and sandwiches.

MEXICAN

CASA MEXICANA

Where: 11000 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield; 256-381-5397; 550 Brighton Ave., Muscle Shoals, 256-383-4434; 2801 Mall Drive, Florence; 256-767-2750

Traditional Mexican food with starters of chips and salsa are served upon being seated. There is a wide variety of delicious Mexican fare. Popular dishes include taco salads and fajitas.

EL POLLITO LOCO-THE CRAZY LITTLE CHICKEN

www.thecrazylittlechicken.com
256-275-3851
1403 Chisholm Road
Florence, AL 35630
Mon-Sat 11am-10pm
Sunday 11am-4pm

LA HACIENDA MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Where: 153 Cox Creek Parkway, Florence; 256-764-3532

Munch on chips and salsa as you choose a meal from the extensive list of offerings or order a drink from the full bar.

FIESTA MEXICANA (SEVERAL LOCATIONS)

1550 Florence Blvd., 256-766-0100; 3364 Cloverdale Road, Florence, 256-178-6843; 3721 Florence Blvd., 256-272-8444; 41 Market Square, Rogersville, 256-247-6180; 517 Avalon Ave. E., Muscle Shoals; 256-389-8282; 4001 N. Jackson Hwy, Sheffield; 256-248-4279

ROSIE'S MEXICAN CANTINA,

302 N. Court St., downtown Florence; 256-767-5599; rosiesmexicancantina.com

Hours: Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The go-to for Mexican food and a fun atmosphere in historic downtown Florence. Create your own custom combo platter or order from the long and varied menu of traditional fare, or soup, salads and appetizers.

TACO GARAGE

256-367-0999
2907 Mall Road, Florence, AL
Tue-Sat 11am-9pm
Sunday 11am-8pm

TACO MAMA

Tacomamaonline.com
256-712-4434
121 Cherry Street, Florence, AL
Mon-Sat 11am-9pm
Sunday 11am-8pm

At Taco Mama, we believe that our guests eat with all of their senses which is why we hand-pick the music you hear in the restaurant. So, it always made sense that Taco Mama would find a home in The Shoals. Whether

it's the special sound of Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, or W.C. Handy's genre-defining blues, or Jason Isbell and The 400 Unit's brand of Americana-Southern Rock-Alt Country - Florence and The Shoals area has always kept the rhythm of its Southern Soul. Drop by the old Auto Electric Service shop on Cherry Street, grab a margarita and a basket of tacos, and jam to some cool tunes....Mama hears you humming along...

ASIAN

ICHIBAN

Where: 1207 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield; 256-389-9888; iloveichiban.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Japanese dishes featuring Sushi, a variety of rolls, soups, salads and appetizers.

UMI JAPANESE STEAK HOUSE

Where: 201 N. Cox Creek Pkwy., Florence; 256-718-6868; umijapanesesteakhouse.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., then 4:30-10 p.m. Monday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Sunday

Traditional and exotic Japanese cuisine including sushi, sashimi, teriyaki, tempura and hibachi food.

RICE BOX

Where: 1529 N. Wood Avenue, Florence; 256-767-6752

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Asian cuisine in a casual setting, specializing in Chinese and Japanese food, the menu items reflect the tastes and traditions of both countries. Long and varied menu.

YUMM

Where: 117 N. Court St., Florence; 256-349-2074; yumythaisushiandbeyond.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., then 5-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., then 5-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Sushi and Thai cuisine and everything beyond - mild or spicy and artistically prepared. Eat indoors or alfresco in historic downtown Florence.

CAJUN AND CREOLE

CAJUNS

Where: 4301 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield; 256-381-1573

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Florence, AL

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RICATONI'S ITALIAN GRILL

Where: 107 N. Court Street, Florence; 256-718-1002

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

The historic building has exposed brick walls and diners love the fresh bread and saucer of herbs and oil as a starter. Traditional Italian fare with handmade pizzas baked in a wood fire oven.

THE PIE FACTORY

Where: 106 N. Court St., Florence; 256-275-3248; and 3312 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals; 256-314-2622; pizzapiefactory.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

They make their own dough in house and you can choose from a variety of savory sauces, cheeses and toppings or choose one of their specialty pizzas and a craft beer brewed in Alabama.

THE CHICAGO CAFÉ

Where: 106 E. Mobile St., Florence; 256-710-3607; Facebook page

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. Sunday

Great, quick lunch place in historic downtown Florence serving black angus beef hot dogs, locally sourced organic bratwursts, and flatbread pizza made to order sandwiches.

COFFEE HOUSE/ BISTRO

ALABAMA BLISS AND BISTRO AND BOUTIQUE

Where: 1206 Woodward Avenue, Muscle Shoals, 256-248-4530;

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday

How about a picnic lunch while you're here? Try the grilled triple cheese pimento cheese and bacon, or the roasted chicken salad, or one of salads with a cup of soup or slice of homemade quiche. You can enjoy a Bliss meal there or take it with you knowing it has been prepared fresh onsite. Staying with family or friends and want to contribute to the home meal? Bliss offers a variety of take-home dishes ready to just pop in the oven.

RIVERTOWN COFFEE COMPANY

Where: 117 N. Seminary St., Florence 765-7128; rivertowncoffee.co

Hours: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday

Muffin or breakfast wrap with a cup of Mule Town Coffee shipped in weekly from Columbia Tennessee are favorites. Also serves lunch that includes their famous Panini and soup of the day.

THE ROCK 310

Where: 310 N. Montgomery Ave., Sheffield, 256-320-7653; therock310.com

Hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday

This charming bistro offers gourmet sandwiches and yummy pastries that include scones, muffins, Danish, cinnamon roll and desserts like blueberry white chocolate cheesecake, along with a selection of coffees. The beautiful interior is also houses Christian literature, Bibles and gifts.

TURBO COFFEE

Where: 310 E. Tennessee St., Florence; 256-483-1501; Facebook page

Hours: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

Coffee shop that also serves food and smoothies.



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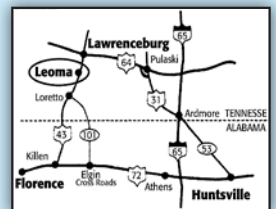
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