

Shoals
WOMAN

August 2023

**Shoals
Woman
of the
Year**

**Dr. Kim
Jackson**

House Divided
Lanfairs find fun in rivalry

**NAMC nurse finds
refuge in wildlife
photography**

**Sheffield teacher
is passionate
about donating**

**Lotus Recovery House
offers hope**



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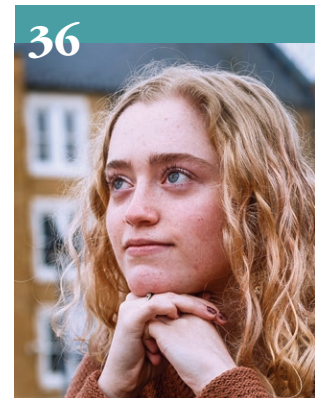
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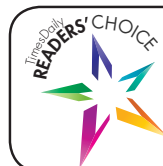


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ON the COVER



Photograph by Dan Busey

There aren't many people who willingly step away from their job and transition to something new just on faith.

But Dr. Kim Jackson did just that.

She got a call in October 2015 to step away from her office job of which she had just received a pay raise and establish Crossroads Community Outreach of the Shoals.

Less than a year later, the nonprofit was running out of her home with the assistance of her twin sons.

Since then, Crossroads has assisted thousands of people whether they be homeless or just in need of a hand during a rough patch of their lives through outreach, the day center or community events.

"This is a walk of faith for me," she said.

Her family has grown exponentially because the people she serves are an extension of her family, she said.

"Kimberly Jackson is all about community service and giving back," wrote one of the people who nominated her for Shoals Woman of the Year. "She puts the needs of others consistently above herself. She is committed to serving."

Her service to the community and to her family is just one reason why she is the 2023 Shoals Woman of the Year.

Each year, the selection process gets more difficult when Shoals Woman of the Year nominations are whittled down to the final five. It becomes obvious how many wonderful, strong women we have living right here in the Shoals. They excel above and beyond the responsibilities implied in their career title or business name.

We are proud and humbled to again share with you the profiles of five of the finest, not just the finalists, who embody a giving and generous character which makes the Shoals the best place to live.

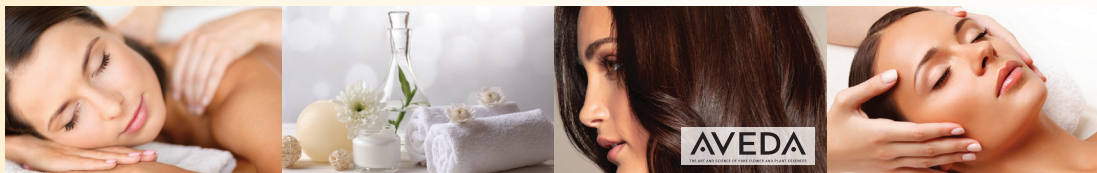
All of these women have had to endure challenges of one type or another, but they all persevered and have made their mark.

We are so happy to be able to shine a huge spotlight on these incredible women of the Shoals.

They all have worked so hard to lift others up.

Now, it's our turn to lift them up.

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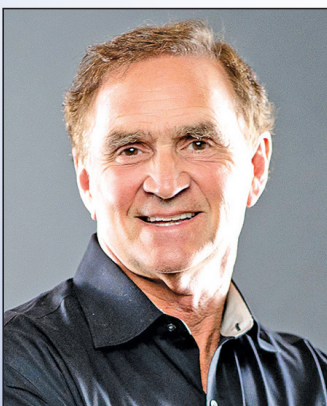


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DR. KIM JACKSON

gives a face and voice to the people she serves

by KEVIN TAYLOR

Photos by DAN BUSEY

You can call it a leap of faith or just answering the call from a higher being, but that's exactly what Dr. Kim Jackson did.

Jackson, who holds her bachelor's, master's and doctorate from Samford University, worked in the corporate world for almost 20 years to support, then, her twin sons. She was doing so well that she had just received a raise.

But something changed one day in October 2015. She got a call.

"God called me to this, and I had never worked with the homeless before," she said. "I did office management and worked in human resources, but I heard Him clearly that day."

Shortly thereafter Jackson put in her notice and stepped away from her corporate job to establish Crossroads Community Outreach in the Shoals, where she is the founder and director of the nonprofit agency.

"That happened in April 2016, and I've never looked back," she said. "This is a faith walk for me."

And she never told anyone of her plan, including her parents.

"I've watched God do the supernatural over these last almost nine years," Jackson said. "I remember leaving my job that day thinking, 'I don't

know, I don't know.' And I didn't know. I just knew that I had given God a solid, yes, that this was what I was going to do. And sitting here today, he's not disappointed me at all."

Since April 2016, Jackson and Crossroads have assisted thousands of people whether they are homeless or just need some assistance during a rough patch in their lives through street outreach, the day center or community events.

For instance, Crossroads does Easter and Christmas events, which benefit between 300 to 500 people.

"So anywhere we try to connect with the community, any resources that we see that are missing or gaps, that's where we step in to try to offer assistance," she said.

Before establishing a homeless day space and resource center in the Shoals, Crossroads began operating out of Jackson's home with the help of her twin sons.

"He's held His promise to me," she added. "We've gone from working out of my house, making bags with my sons to having nearly \$1 million in donations over the last eight years to serve the homeless in this area along with having everything being paid for and having a robust volunteer base."

Jackson said being nominated and named a Shoals Woman of the Year finalist,

**2023 SHOALS
WOMAN OF
THE YEAR**

Dr. Kim Jackson





is part of God keeping his promise.

He and Jackson aren't done.

Her tireless work and dedication to so many, who she calls her family is why she can now add 2023 Shoals Woman of the Year to her list of accomplishments.

Jackson feels that she has been chosen to be the voice for so many homeless people who may be afraid or incapable of standing up for themselves.

"The people I serve everyday are who keep me motivated," she said. "When I go in and talk to someone like the mayor, I'm not speaking for myself. I'm speaking for the people that I serve who are suffering. I am the voice of the people who may never get the opportunity to speak with the mayor or be interviewed by the newspaper. I make sure I speak for them and their heart."

Jackson takes every win – no matter how small it may seem to others – when it comes to giving assistance to those who may be homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless.

"What motivates me is knowing that you're connected to people and seeing people go from out on the street, strung out on drugs, suffering with mental health issues, to seeing them work now, having a house and even being married. One person sent me a message and said, 'Miss Kim, had you not been there, I wouldn't be here.' That's what keeps me going."

Does she ever have any time for herself beyond Crossroads?

No.

"This is what we do all the time," she said. "My garage is filled with supplies and socks. My twin boys, who are now 19, and my 3-year-old daughter and I live Crossroads. It's family. The people that I serve are our family. The men and women we serve are an extension of my family. They just happen to be living on the street or have schizophrenia

or may have a disability or they may be struggling with substance abuse, but they're an extension of my family."

There's love there, and it's not one-sided. Jackson said she may not hear those three words – I love you – but the appreciation the people have for her is just as fulfilling.

Then, when she is told those three little words, it's everything to her.

"The appreciation that you get from somebody is so genuine when you're talking to somebody that doesn't have anything or have anything to lose," she said. "And so they're sitting there and the love and appreciation they have is so raw and so authentic, because they don't want anything. They're not trying to manipulate you to get a job or position or anything like that. When they tell me that they love me or we embrace, it's from such an authentic place, because this is somebody who has gone through the roughest of rough times and lost a great loss."

So what does being named Shoals Woman of the Year mean to Jackson?

"Oh gosh, it would be giving a face and a voice to the people that I serve," she said. "The people that I serve can't be here. So, it would be acknowledging that the people that I serve do exist, giving them a face, giving them a voice, acknowledging that they're there."

"This means to me that the community that I serve, sees the effort because this type of work you don't do for any type of awards and that kind of stuff. To be acknowledged and recognized by people in your community, even if just the nomination itself, just knowing that people out in the community are seeing the work that we do means that they acknowledge that the people that I serve exist. And that matters to me."

Shoals Woman of the Year
2023 Finalist:
AMY DAUGHERTY THOMPSON



AMY DAUGHERTY THOMPSON offers complete hope to those in need

by KEVIN TAYLOR
Photos by DAN BUSEY

It all started with a cup of coffee in early 2022 with a conversation dealing with human trafficking.

Since that conversation and cup of coffee, it became Amy Daugherty Thompson's focus which led to her pursuit to establish a residential facility to care for survivors.

Thompson dug into the numbers. She found that of the 300,000 or more human trafficking victims in America, there are about 2,500 beds available for them. More times than not, those survivors are in a facility up to 90 days and not given the proper counseling and guidance to change their lives, she said.

Thompson eventually joined forces with Thistle Farms in Nashville, Tennessee, to develop and open Holos Hope.

"I was terrified. I tried to think of every reason why I wasn't qualified to do it and couldn't do it. And every time I tried to think of it, God opened the door," she said.

A few months after finding just the right house, Holos Hope opened its doors to human trafficking survivors in February. Since then, it has helped seven women and is currently assisting four survivors. Thompson said one to two women a week are turned away because they don't have the space.

"I knew it was a task that I could not save every one of them, but

I said if we can save or help one woman, it makes it all worthwhile," she said.

The difference between Holos Hope and other human trafficking programs is that Holos Hope is a two-year free program for the women. They not only are provided safe housing, but they are given free medical and dental care.

"We had one girl come with no teeth at all and now she has the most beautiful smile," Thompson said. "They're getting their medical needs met because they've come in with a lot of physical trauma -- just from different things that have happened to them. They're getting connected to specialists all over the area. They're doing group and individual therapy. They're learning life skills, how to cook, how to garden, how to do just arts and crafts and go through 12-step recovery programs. As they move through the program, they're able to go back to school and get their education. And then once they do the education component, then they actually start doing job training which hopefully leads to employment. They're learning not just the education in the job, but they're learning the financial empowerment skills to change the whole trajectory of their life."

So where does Holos Hope come from?

"I wanted this to be a very holistic approach and I wanted them to experience physical,

emotional, mental and spiritual healing. The Greek word for complete is holos, so it translates to complete hope," she said.

Holos Hope is just one piece of Thompson's life puzzle. She has three boys -- all under the age of 10 -- and a private practice. She said this year has been one of the hardest for her.

"You kind of feel attacked from every angle doing this kind of work because you're facing and going to war with evil and this world with trafficking," she said. "They have hope now. They come in so worn down, and nobody wants anything to do with them -- their families are fed up with them. They come here and they've got two or three women that are loving on them and you can just see that slow transformation. They just start to sparkle."

Thompson said she's never been one to seek the spotlight, but she was "humbled" when she found out that she was named a finalist for Shoals Woman of the Year.

She said the focus should be on the women of Holos Hope and not her.

"A lot of times they are labeled as whores, prostitutes or the addicts and now they're getting to be seen as whole, healthy, redeemed, loved and chosen."





DR. JACQUELINE PARSONS is motivated by love for her community

by KEVIN TAYLOR
Photos by DAN BUSEY

There are few people in Red Bay who arguably have more school and community spirit than Jacqueline Parsons.

There aren't many people who will search far and wide for a tiger statue to welcome students to the cafeteria.

Parsons had been looking for a tiger statue for quite some time. It wasn't until a recent trip to Branson, Missouri, where talk of the tiger began and someone mentioned an ornamental concrete company in Mississippi which may have just what she was looking for.

"I went up there and sure enough they had one that was in the very back and they were going to make a mold out of it, but it had it sitting there for years," she said. "Then they didn't know if they weren't going to make any more, and I said 'well, sell me that one.' They had to repair its tail just a little bit and I brought it to school. That was a happy day."

That is a prime example of the love the educator of 24 years in the Franklin County School System has for the children of Red Bay and her community.

It's projects she spearheaded like that which led to Parsons being nominated for Shoals Woman of the Year.

"I thought about my friends who nominated me, because they know that I feel like as long as the job gets done, it doesn't matter who

gets the credit for it because the outcome is what is important," said Parsons, who is in her sixth year as assistant principal at Red Bay High. "That they that they thought enough of me and thought that I was worthy of such honor is very humbling."

Parsons' drive to serve her community is a reflection of her family and fellow high school classmates like Scotty Kennedy, who was a couple years ahead of her. She admired his passion for being involved in the community.

"I liked that because I really love Red Bay. It's where I was born and raised as well as my children and grandchildren. So, I wanted to be a part of that community. My uncle also had a love for Red Bay. He wasn't really active in anything, but it was just his love for the town. So, for me, my motivation is just for the love of the community and the people that are there."

Being told yes is another motivation for Parsons. She typically won't take no for an answer.

"Even if I'm told no sometimes, I just know I've got to work a little harder," she said. "But if I can make it happen, I want to make it happen."

Since Parsons has been at Red Bay, she has been instrumental in getting projects funded through grants to improve the educational experience for the children. She

recently secured a grant for shade structures for the children to be outside and remain cool during the warm late summers and springs of the school years.

She recently secured a donation of 20 gallons of paint. The school librarian asked for the library to be repainted since it had not been painted since it opened in 1999. The project grew because there were some issues with the flooring in the library, so it too was fixed.

Once the library was painted, there was some paint left unused, so the sign to the playground was given a fresh coat. Then the columns to the shade structures soon were painted to look like huge Crayons.

Later, a mural was painted depicting the Peanuts characters playing on the playground.

"The children thought that it was a new playground, even though it was the same equipment," Parsons said with a huge smile.

It's projects like that which drive her each and every day to see a smile on the faces of children in and around Red Bay.

"I enjoy doing [projects for the school and the community]. It's just part of me. It just gives me energy. I've got a purpose to get up in the morning."





MARGARET FORSYTHE

finds her best reward is a child's smile

by KEVIN TAYLOR
Photos by DAN BUSEY

It's often said that there's nothing more rewarding as a parent or guardian than to see their child happy and smiling.

Margaret Forsythe took that to heart not only with her own children and her grandchildren, but in playing an active role in the reopening of the Children's Museum Shoals at Diebert Park in Florence.

Forsythe, who is owner of an engineering and construction firm (Forsythe & Long) as well as One Stop Manufacturing here in the Shoals, was approached by a friend and asked to help with the reopening of the museum.

Before jumping right in, Forsythe asked for advice from her daughter.

"She said 'Oh, Mom, I always loved the children's museum.' And I thought, well, I've got six grandchildren, this is gonna be great," Forsythe said. "So, I walked in the door and when I saw the structure -- being an engineer and being in construction -- I was like, 'this building has great bones.' The people that came before us, they did a wonderful job. ... I was impressed right off the bat. And I was like, 'Yes, I'm gonna have a lot of joy doing this.'"

Florence is one of less than a handful of metropolitan areas in the state which has a museum devoted to children. Forsythe estimates that the Children's Museum Shoals welcomes around 10,000 children per year and the numbers keep increasing.

The museum had around 12,000 visitors last year and is on pace to reach or exceed that mark this year.

"What impressed me about the children's museum was when you walk in the door, children can touch everything. Nothing, pretty much, is off limits," she said. "There's lots of toys, there's over 20 exhibits. In the backyard, there's a little creek, there's a sandbox, there's riding toys and the Junior League and Lowe's recently put in a new venue in the front yard for children with disabilities so they can maneuver around."

And the best reward, according to Forsythe, is to see the smiles and the excitement on the faces of the children when they walk in the doors.

"They're happy; they're excited. A lot of them run in the door," she said. "The fact that they have new things to play with, and they're not in front of the TV or a video game. ... It just brings me great joy, that they're happy and having a good time."

After that initial visit, Forsythe was active in helping to reopen the doors to the museum in June 2017 and keeping the doors open. She has served in just about every leadership role possible from being president of the board to currently serving as its treasurer.

Forsythe learned to be active in the community at a young age from her parents and grandparents growing up in the small west

Alabama town of Demopolis.

"I saw the joy that it brought them and how much they enjoyed it even in a small town," she said. "My dad, being a member of Kiwanis, helped with Pancake Day, deer hunts and lots of different projects. So then when I was in high school and being in a small town, we had a lot of fun doing these projects together and serving."

Forsythe also remains active in serving as a mentor for young people who are considering a career in engineering. She talks to high school students to get an idea what area of engineering they are interested in and offers advice to them on which school may be the best fit for them.

"We've trained a lot of young engineers who are just getting started out and gone on to other places," she said. "We wish them well and hope they all succeed."

Forsythe said she was surprised to get the call notifying her that she was a finalist for Shoals Woman of the Year. She even questioned it.

"I said, 'are you sure?' I just felt a lot of gratitude and thought that I am very blessed to have such a great team at the Children's Museum -- great volunteers, great board members and great staff and extremely generous donors. I also thought about the people who came before me. This is just such an honor and I already feel like a winner to be nominated," she said.





SHANTRICE BYRD

always wants to bring hope

by KEVIN TAYLOR

Photos by DAN BUSEY

Shantrice Byrd is a self-proclaimed fixer.

When presented with a problem, she wants to find the solution.

Dewayne Malone and Lonzo Jones were presented with a challenge after establishing a local Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) for young men in Sheffield. They were approached by young women also wanting to be in the program, so they immediately reached out to Byrd.

Maybe it was fate that brought Byrd into the JUMP fold as a mentor.

“I may have been 20 [years old] and I remember saying to myself, ‘I want to, one day, be in a room full of girls and bring encouragement to them as well as just honestly keep it real with them to let them know that how important their worth is. I don’t want them to make the same mistakes that I have made,’” she said. “I’ve always been someone who kind of had to learn the hard way. And thankfully, through the support that I’ve had and the grace that I’ve been shown, that never really turned out really bad for me, but it could have. So, I wanted to make sure I could be someone that other young ladies could have as an example to do the right thing.”

Just like mentors for the young men, Byrd was required to spend at least 6 hours a week with their mentee, whether it was simply over the phone, having dinner together, going to a movie or even a ballgame together.

Byrd’s first mentee said she was headed down the wrong path. She said if it wasn’t for Byrd, that she may have been in a bad situation today.

“We hung out all the time and became really good friends,” Byrd said. “I was someone she could count on, and she was someone that I learned from.”

JUMP grew from a handful of young people in 2017 to having as many as 60 in the program now. All of them look for a positive role model and a second chance. The program’s goal is to give the young people a boost of self-confidence, teach them to make the right decisions, think for themselves, be independent and work toward a goal, Byrd said.

“My goal is to always bring hope into the life of any individual that I encounter across the board, whether it be a parent or a child,” she said. “They may feel like it’s the end of the world and don’t deserve anything better, but I’m not going to hold that against [them]. ... I don’t want people to feel like just because they do something wrong or they make a mistake that they’re a bad person and they’re beyond redemption because that’s not the case. I’ve made many bad decisions and every day I still wake up trying to make a difference. I just want everybody else to know that they can do the same thing.”

As a Shoals Woman of the Year finalist, Byrd said her nomination was never a thought.

“I like attention for our program, I do not like personal attention,” she said. “I absolutely love what I do and it does my heart good to know that other people see it.”

She attributes her drive to be a fixer and a healer to her mother who “has a heart for others.” Byrd said her mother not only provided for her, but for others like cousins and even people in church.

“At a younger age, I used to feel like her doing for them took away from what she’d done for us. It never did,” she said. “I also asked myself, ‘what would it feel like to not have a mom or a dad? Or what would it feel like to have a mom and a dad, but they don’t want anything to do with you?’ I couldn’t imagine. So, I had to learn at an early age to stop being selfish. I knew from the beginning that just because of her example, that it was always something that I wanted to do.”

Byrd said she also received confirmation from God at an early stage in her spiritual life that she was to become a vessel for healing.

“I provide a listening ear to someone that may be in need,” she said. “It may be so simple as having to pick someone up and take them to church or making a phone call every morning to hold them accountable. It may also be making myself available to spend time with someone who may not otherwise have anyone to be with. That’s my calling.”





Who will be the 2024 Shoals Woman of the Year?

The Shoals Woman of the Year awards are designed to acknowledge the women in our community who have demonstrated leadership. These women will be celebrated at a special event.

**This is your chance to nominate the next Shoals Woman of the Year.
All nominations must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. April 23, 2024.**

To nominate by letter:

Please discuss the following about your nominee in detail on a separate sheet.

Nominee Name/Address/Phone/Email

Nominated By/Contact Phone

Describe your nominee's achievement in the community. (Provide specific examples)

Explain how the actions and activities of your nominee build community.

List your nominee's involvement in the community. (Include the organization and positions held)

Explain how your nominee made an impact in your community.

Explain your nominee's actions and activities and how they promote inclusivity.

For USPS Mail, send nomination letter to:

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219 W. Tennessee Street
Florence, AL 35630

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For Email, send nomination letter to:

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To nominate online:

For online entry visit https://www.timesdaily.com/site/shoals_woman_of_the_year_nominationform.html

For more information on Shoals Woman of the Year nominations or the event, please contact Mara Beth Cravens at 256-740-5811 (marabeth.cravens@timesdaily.com) or Renita Jimmar at 256-740-5815 (renita.jimmar@timesdaily.com).



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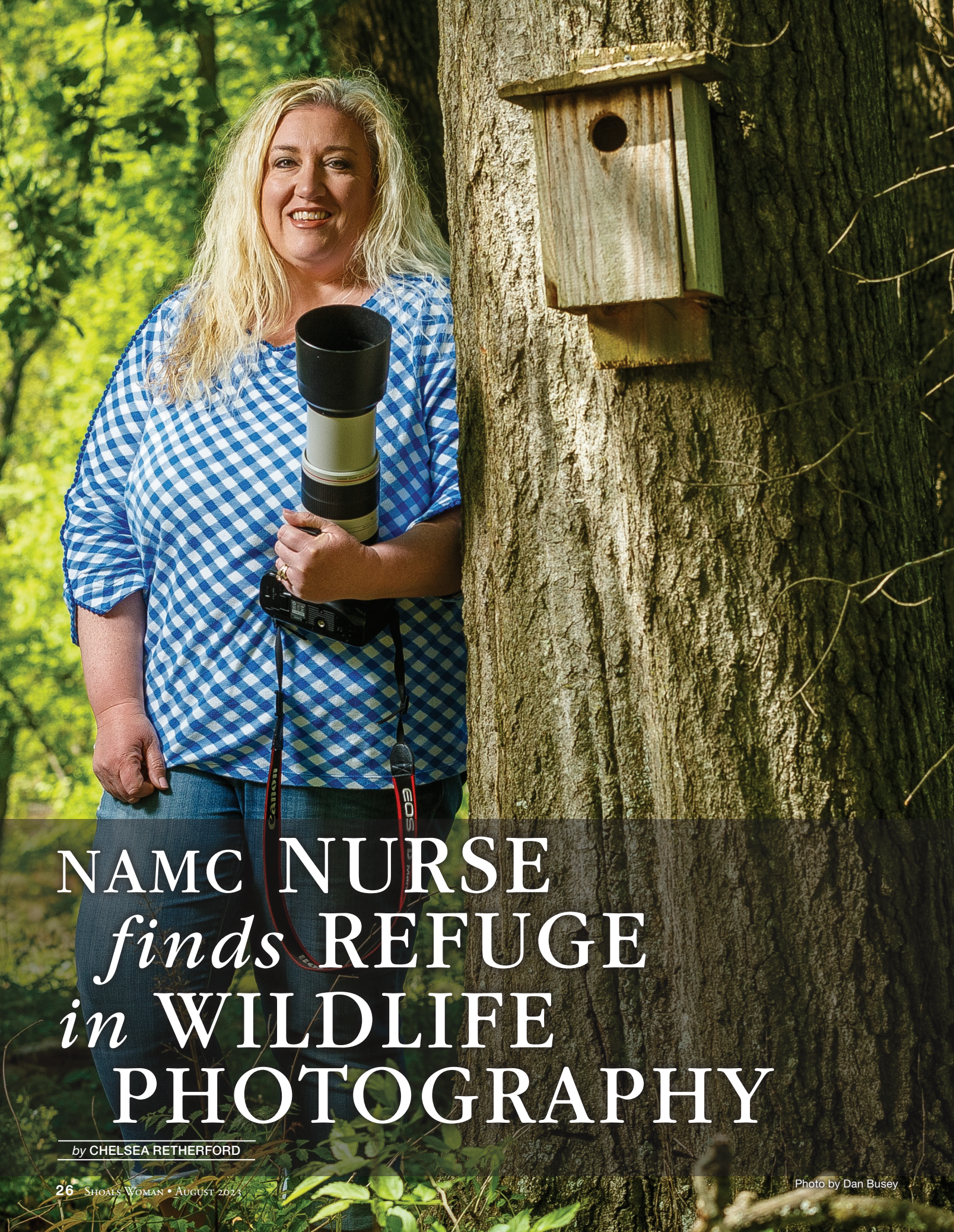


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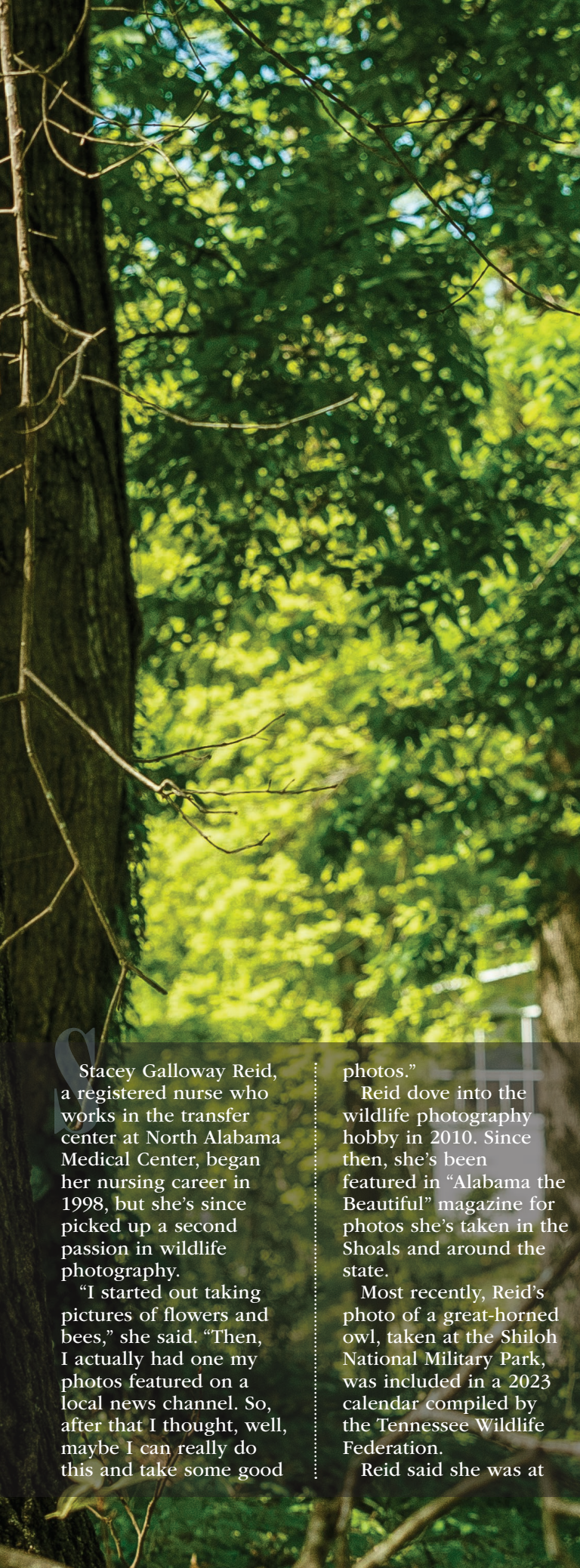
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NAMC NURSE
finds REFUGE
in WILDLIFE
PHOTOGRAPHY

by CHELSEA RETHERFORD



Stacey Galloway Reid, a registered nurse who works in the transfer center at North Alabama Medical Center, began her nursing career in 1998, but she's since picked up a second passion in wildlife photography.

"I started out taking pictures of flowers and bees," she said. "Then, I actually had one my photos featured on a local news channel. So, after that I thought, well, maybe I can really do this and take some good

photos."

Reid dove into the wildlife photography hobby in 2010. Since then, she's been featured in "Alabama the Beautiful" magazine for photos she's taken in the Shoals and around the state.

Most recently, Reid's photo of a great-horned owl, taken at the Shiloh National Military Park, was included in a 2023 calendar compiled by the Tennessee Wildlife Federation.

Reid said she was at

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the Shiloh Park when her interest in shooting wildlife first piqued with a siting of bald eagles.

“That’s where I got my first eagle pictures,” she said.

Now she’s found an eagle’s nest to shoot regularly that is much closer to home in Colbert County. Reid said she’s watched a particular pair of eagles that have lived near the Tennessee River for years.

“They’re on a schedule, and it’s really neat to watch them,” she said, adding that she loves capturing special moments in the birds life cycles.

“They work on their nest. They add sticks to it at the beginning of the year, and you’ll watch them work on their nest

in the fall. Then they’ll start sitting on eggs sometime in late January or early February. Then one day you’ll see them start bringing in food because they’ve got babies,” she said. “Then you get to watch the babies grow up and leave the nest.”

Reid said she’s also watched a family of foxes grow older at a favorite spot in Colbert County.

“They’re really playful when they’re little,” she said. “One time, one of the adult foxes came out and just laid out in the grass for us and posed, stretched and yawned just like it was there for a photo shoot. It was real funny, and we got some really good pictures.”

Reid said she also



Stacey Galloway Reid rarely travels anywhere without her camera to capture wildlife in its element.

Photos by Stacey Galloway Reid

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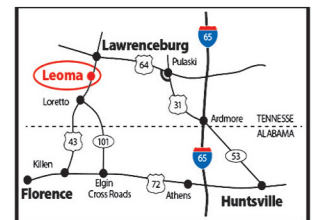
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Stacey Galloway Reid's hobby grew during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when she was a charge nurse in NAMC's critical care unit.



Photos by Stacey Galloway Reid

frequents Cades Coves and the Smokey Mountain National Park to photograph bears and an array of owls, but some of her best photos have come a little more spontaneously as she's traveled county roads all over north Alabama.

The self-taught photographer said she picked up a few tricks from others in the same trade, but she never had any formal training.

Her hobby continued to grow as she sought reprieve from the stresses of her career, especially at the height of the COVID pandemic when she worked as a charge nurse in the NAMC critical care unit.

"That was when I left bedside nursing during COVID. It was just really


hard," she said. "I would take my camera to work with me, and when I got off shift, I would go take pictures. I had to get my mind off of it."

While her hobby serves as an escape, Reid said the pastime also takes patience and commitment.

She said she's spent many hot summer days waiting for a fox or bluebird to appear or stood hours in freezing weather to capture an eagle fly over.

"You may go home and not get the shot that you wanted. You might be disappointed, but that's just part of it," she said. "It does take dedication."





Reid said her pastime takes patience and commitment.



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Katie Lanfiar, Alabama fan, left, and Justin Lanfiar, Auburn fan, face off.

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by CHELSEA
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IN RIVALRY

Rivalry week used to be a tense time in the divided Lanfair house, but husband and wife Katie and Justin say they enjoy watching a close Iron Bowl game together — each saying they try to keep the bragging and celebrating to a minimum.

“It’s the close games that are the most fun,” Justin said.

Although he grew up rooting for Alabama, Justin, a Florence native, changed his tune after high school.

“It’s a funny story,” he said, explaining how he switched colors and now bleeds orange and blue.

He was a student at Auburn University from 2005 to 2008, when he graduated with a degree in building science.

He said school pride became infectious, especially after attending his first football game at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

“Once you sit in the



stands, it’s all over from there,” he said. “It’s just a big family. You can’t help but convert to an Auburn fan.”

Katie graduated from the University of Alabama in 2007 and later earned an MBA from the University of North Alabama in 2008.

“I always tell him I’m

pretty bulletproof as an Alabama fan because I went to Alabama during the Shula years. I’m used to having a hard go,” she said with a laugh.

Mike Shula was head coach at Alabama from 2003 to 2006 and had an overall record of 26 wins and 23 losses during that time.

Katie was a devoted fan before she started her first semester in Tuscaloosa, but like her husband, she said attending her first home game sealed the deal.

“It’s just a different atmosphere there. He talks about the Auburn family, but it’s a true ‘bleed Crimson’ kind of mentality,” she said.

She and Justin started dating in 2010, and like most divided couples, share a story that may have tested their loyalty to one another over their chosen teams.

Justin had invited Katie to watch the game with some local friends he typically watched the Iron Bowl with, and to convince her, he told her there would be other Alabama fans in the mix.

“I didn’t lie. There was one other Alabama fan,” he said.

“This was the game where Alabama jumped up 24 to nothing very



Alabama fan Katie Lanfair puts her husband, Justin Lanfair, Auburn fan, in a playful head-lock.

quickly, and it's in Tuscaloosa. I was so proud of Katie and the other Alabama fan, because the Auburn fans were pretty emotional about it," he retold the story. "It was one of our better seasons. It was Cam Newton's year, and we just knew it was going to be a close game and not a blowout. They did a great job of respectfully celebrating."

After halftime that year, everything changed.

"A different Auburn team came out to the field. Auburn starts scoring touchdowns. Cam Newton's passing, throwing, and it was just amazing."

As Katie remembers it, "They were not as kind," she said with a laugh.

As proud as Justin was for his team, he was a

little sorry to admit his friends were waving Auburn shakers in Katie's face by the end of the fourth quarter.

"We did not watch the game together again for five to seven years. We decided maybe watching separately was better for the health of our relationship," Katie said.

Justin and Katie, who have been married 10 years and are parents to six-year-old Sophie and four-year-old Saylor, brave the game together more these days.

Neither of the Lanfair daughters have committed to a side just yet, but both their parents agreed "they 'Roll Tide' more."

"I blame Katie and her parents for that. Katie's mom, Paula, is a very devout Tide fan," Justin said. "Katie,

as you can imagine, will dress the girls up more in Alabama. Their wardrobes are a little more Alabama-friendly, but Sophie will yell 'War Eagle' every time she sees an eagle out on the river, where we live. Katie tries to teach her to say 'War Chicken.'"

The couple said the family tries to "keep it fun until we can't," each recalling the "Kick Six" game in 2013 that left Justin and his wife pretty divided when Auburn player Chris Davis caught the ball after Alabama's failed field-goal attempt and secured the 34-28 win.

"We watched that game separately," Justin said. "After the game, I drove across town to play Katie 'We Are the Champions.'"

He and his wife have

a longstanding tradition where the fan of the winning team plays a victory song to their spouse.

"I got my revenge a little bit last year," Katie said. "Justin had a song ready because he thought they were about to pull out a win. Little did he know they were going to lose. So, I pulled out a song, and me and our daughters danced and made a big deal in front of him."

"We always say, 'We're going to be so good.' Then slowly, as game day gets closer, it's a little bit of trash talk. Every day, just a little bit more and a little bit more," Katie said.

But in the end, the couple agreed, it's all in good fun.



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UNA student dreams of being *a* best-selling author

by CHELSEA RETHERFORD
Photos by DAN BUSEY

Delana Mohr, a sophomore at the University of North Alabama, said a love of reading and her passion for writing go hand in hand.

“If I’m not writing, I’m reading,” Mohr said. “My mom introduced me. Every night, she would read me a book and all that. I have grown up with this love for reading.”

The 19-year-old author from Helena recently published her fifth novel, which is also the second installment of her second trilogy.

“Falling Stars,” which was released this month, is Mohr’s favorite self-publication so far.

Author Delana Mohr sits for a portrait at the University of North Alabama

The sci-fi novel follows the story of Cassian, who grew up learning to fear the Invaders, an alien race that attacked Earth 13 years prior to the story's setting. When Cassian meets an Invader for the first time, she's forced to turn to the enemy for help and must learn to trust someone she was taught to hate.

"I'm already seeing some maturity in my writing," Mohr said. "I'm not perfect yet, but I've seen my own growth. With that book, when I was reading and editing it, I forgot I wrote it."

Mohr published her first book, "Torches," in June of 2020 at the age of 16. After the novel was released, she published her second story, "Flares," that

December. The final in the trilogy, "Ashes," was published in April 2021.

"It was only supposed to be the one book," she said. "I wrote 'Torches,' and then I didn't know what to do with it. I had like 300-plus pages and I didn't want them to just sit on my laptop, so I YouTubed and Googled so many different things. That's when I landed on Amazon Kindle Publishing. I tried that, and here I am."

She said she was inspired to write her first original novel after reading "The Ashes Trilogy" by Isla J. Bick.

While Mohr said most of her classmates were wowed that she had published three novels before her high school graduation, she admits most of her friends

and peers weren't avid readers.

"Just in general, a lot of people my age don't read," she said. "I struggled a little bit with feeling support from my friends, but they were super happy about it. Like they loved the idea and would tell me, 'That's really cool that you're published.'"

She said she's felt most supported by her parents, Jason and Stacie Mohr, and added that her mother is her official editor. While both her parents continue to encourage her pastime in writing, they also urged their daughter to pursue a career that would provide a reliable, steady paycheck.

Mohr, who is majoring in exercise science and pre-professional

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studies at UNA, has hopes of becoming a physician's assistant after graduation.

"It confuses everyone," she said and laughed, explaining that most assume she'd major in English or Literature.

"I really enjoy cardiology. That's kind of what I want to go into, but I haven't fully decided because I have a lot of shadowing I have to do, and I have two years of grad school after this for the program," she said.

"Eventually, I'm hoping to be a best-selling author.

That's the goal — if you asked me about my dream job."

In the meantime, Mohr said she draws lots of inspiration for her work from first aid and anatomy classes.

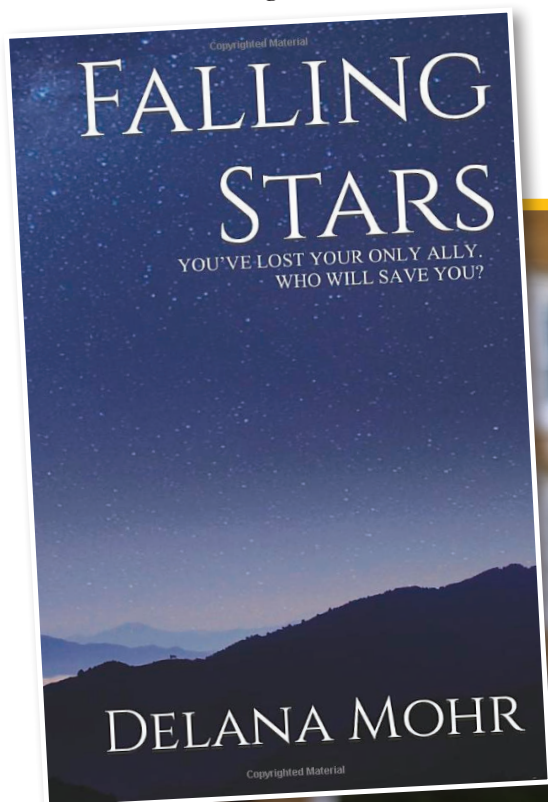
"I put my characters through a lot," she said. "My mom would prefer that I not write the injuries and things like that. That's the difference between my parents. She thinks it's scary and a little gruesome, but Dad is like, this is great.

"Like I was telling my mom, real life isn't all rainbows. That's what I figured out with the first series as I was writing. It had to be realistic, and that's just how I write now."

Mohr said she began veering away from writing post-apocalyptic stories after reading her first fantasy novel, "Red Queen," by Victoria Aveyard. Now she's started reading a second fantasy series, "Throne of Glass," by Sarah J. Maas.

"I used to be into dystopian stories. That's why the first series I wrote was in that genre too," Mohr said. "Now that I'm reading fantasy, I have several books lined up and I know one is going to be a fantasy novel. I'm super excited about that one."

Mohr is currently writing "Rising Suns," the final installment in her "Burning Skies Trilogy."

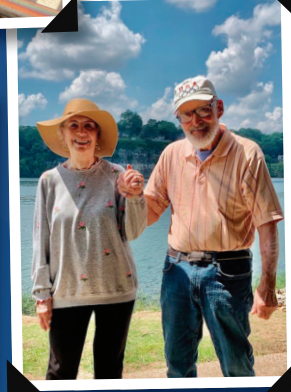


The UNA student said she drew lots of inspiration for her work from her first aid and anatomy classes.

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Sheffield teacher is passionate about donating

Sheffield High health sciences teacher Laura Beth Cole prepares to give blood with the help of phlebotomist Lacey Johnson at the LifeSouth Community Blood Center in Florence.

by CHELSEA RETHERFORD

Photos by DAN BUSEY

Laura Beth Cole became a regular blood donor as a student. After she began teaching health science at Sheffield High School in 2018, she became passionate about hosting her department's bi-annual blood drive through LifeSouth Shoals Community Blood Center.

"The first time I ever donated, I was actually in nursing school. I had always wanted to donate before, but I didn't weigh enough," Cole said.

Ever since she gained enough to meet the 110-pound minimum requirement to become a blood donor, Cole said she donates whole blood at least twice a year.

"I want to start donating a little more regularly because I'm determined. I'm competitive," she said with a laugh, adding that she hopes to make the "Gallon Club" by

giving her eighth pint of blood soon.

While Cole's competitive nature drives her to continue donating, she said the things she witnessed as labor and delivery nurse motivated her passion to give.

When people would find out she was a women's operating room nurse on the labor and delivery room floor, she said most would assume she had a "happy job."

"I do feel fortunate. I worked in a place in medicine that was primarily happy. I tell people though we have the highest highs, we have the lowest lows," she said.

"You think nowadays, moms don't die in childbirth. Babies don't die. Tragically, those things do still happen, and moms need blood. I have a friend who needed 17 units of blood after giving birth. If 17 people

hadn't donated blood, she would have died."

Cole said she tries to remind her students of that important fact whenever she begins promoting an upcoming blood drive at the high school.

"Just one donation can save up to as many as three lives because it can be separated into the different components. It is so needed," she said.

Jody St. John, the Shoals Regional manager at LifeSouth, said the high school blood drives make a lasting impact on the local blood center's ability to stock area hospitals with donations.

"You want to have successful high school drives, because if the students have a great experience, they become donors for life," St. John said.

The last Sheffield High School blood drive hosted by the Health Science Department garnered the Shoals Community Blood Center 42 units of blood. The number is close to average for the high school, Cole said.

“Sometimes it’s a little more, sometimes a little less, but I’m really proud of that because we’re a pretty small 2A school,” Cole said. “My students definitely get on board. It might be the free snacks and drinks they get. That helps, and the free T-shirts.”

Cole said grants and scholarships are also exciting incentives to host a blood drive.

According to St. John, the LifeSouth High School Grant program provides grants to the host school to help fund supplies, equipment and staff time needed to host the blood drive.

School clubs and organizations who help organize the drive, like the school’s Beta Club or Honors Society, can also directly benefit from the grants.

“Based on our two blood drives last year, Life South donated \$1,000

to Sheffield’s Health and Science Program,” Cole said.

St. John said LifeSouth also provides scholarship opportunities to students who help coordinate a blood drive on their school campus or during their summer or winter break.

She said Cole’s efforts to continue the drive at the high school are invaluable to her community.

“One thing I love about LifeSouth, it stays within this community,” Cole said. “So, you would never know it, but the pint of blood I donated — and God forbid my children get in a car accident tomorrow — my own blood could be the very blood that saves their life.”

Cole said she took over the Sheffield High health science blood drive from former instructor Elaine Price, who now teaches health science at Allen Thornton Career Technical Center.

“Even though I had donated before, the thought of taking on something like that was really daunting,” Cole said. “Elaine encouraged me, and I found out, it’s

really not that hard. You just open the door, and it practically drives itself. It’s become the days I look forward to the most out of the entire school year, and the students do too.”

She said more than students turn out to donate, however. Many faculty and staff members opt to donate during the blood drive, as do many of the students’ parents, and even some of the faculty members’ spouses.

While some first-time student donors show a reluctance to being poked with a needle, Cole said many of them overcome that fear quickly and even return to donate at the next blood drive.

“Yeah, there’s a little bit of discomfort,” Cole said of giving blood. “So many of my kids are so afraid to donate because they don’t want to be stuck with needles, but then so many of them are like, ‘Oh, that wasn’t bad. I carried on over that? That wasn’t a big deal.’

“They feel a sense of pride knowing that they’ve just saved someone’s life.”

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Tiffany Smith, left foreground, stands for a portrait with women of the Lotus Recovery House in Florence.

LOTUS Recovery House *offers hope*

by CHELSEA RETHERFORD
Photos by DAN BUSEY

Tiffany Smith knew the stakes when it came to her own recovery from addiction to heroin. After one year clean, she decided to open the Lotus Recovery House for Women in 2015. Her efforts took another four years to materialize.

Now that the Lotus House is open, she expects the same willingness and perseverance from the women who become tenants on the property.

"It's a pretty intensive program," said Jamie Roberson, secretary on the board of directors at Lotus House. "These ladies are miracles. They come in with nothing — some of them straight from jail — they're lost and in need of help."

Lotus House opened in 2019 after Smith began renting a property owned by her husband on East Mobile Street in Florence. Her idea stems from her own

desperation and subsequent efforts to better her life.

She said her addiction started in 2008 when a prescription for pain medicine ended.

"I was getting a large amount (of prescription medication), but when I was cut off from my doctor, I switched to heroin," she said. "I became homeless. I was a garbage can junkie. I had no regard for my own life at that point. In 2012, I got arrested."

Towards the end of her sentence, Smith reached out to a local 12-step program known as The FARM (Florence Addiction Recovery Manor). Smith said she owes her own success story to the structure she found in the program.

"I got clean, I put in the work, and now I'm a good mom to my two children, Gracie and Gavin," she said. "They've been raised

in 12-step meetings. I'm a good mother today. I'm a productive member of society."

The FARM also inspired Smith to open a halfway house with similar structure and rules for its tenants. She talked with her husband, who owned the Mobile Street properties, but the house she was interested in was already occupied. By the time the tenant turned in her notice, Smith was five years clean.

"It was like God was telling me, 'OK, now it's time,'" Smith said. "We prayed and put a lot of thought into opening, and in 2019, we opened with eight beds in the one house."

The program quickly grew, and Smith found herself in need of more space. The Lotus House property now includes adjacent houses and apartments capable of

housing up to 35 women.

“We don’t keep a waiting list. If they want a bed, they will text me every day,” Smith said. “It shows their willingness. It shows that they’re in the right frame of mind and they can follow directions.”

Before tenants are accepted into the program, they must submit an application and be 90 days drug free.

New residents are required to attend 90 program meetings within their first 90 days. When those meetings are completed, all residents are required to attend a minimum of five 12-step meetings per week; submit to regular evaluations or drug tests; become employed full-time; and follow an intensive list of house rules and regulations.

The program has proven successful to a majority of women who seek residency at the Lotus House, Smith said.

To graduate, the ladies must have their driver’s license reinstated and obtain a car.

“Those are the basic fundamentals,” Smith said. “You can’t get to meetings without a license and a car. You can’t get to work.”

Graduates are required to have a safe home plan and a relapse plan, which outlines the steps the graduate intends to take when they feel they are at risk of relapsing, or have fallen back into addiction.

Those steps might include calling a sponsor, but the graduate also needs to list a backup number in case their sponsor cannot be reached.

Ladies are also required to work at least 4 and 5 of the 12 steps before they are considered for graduation.

Roberson said she remains dedicated to the program, not only because Smith is her good friend, but also because she’s seen first-hand the success of the recovery house.

Her husband’s ex, who is the mother of two of Roberson’s children, battled addiction.

She was in and out of jail, Roberson said. Her family had given up on her; her children barely spoke to her. Roberson pointed her to Lotus House and asked Smith for help.

“She told me, ‘Jamie, she won’t be treated any differently from the other girls,’ and that was great. I didn’t want her to be. She needed help, and nothing else was working,” Roberson said.

After graduating from the program, Roberson’s family member kept her steady employment, got back on her feet, and are now active in her daughters’ lives.

Smith said it can take the average person nine tries before they successfully make it to recovery.

“If there’s a heartbeat, there is hope. Tiffany taught me that,” Roberson said. “When you see these ladies graduate, and they have all these things restored back in their lives, it’s the most beautiful experience to watch.”



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Karen Grisham has seen a drastic rise in the past five years in the number of grandparents raising their grieving grandchildren.

The director of The Healing Place grief counseling center in Muscle Shoals is on a mission to provide the resources those individuals need to thrive in their role.

Grisham said the support group meets the last Tuesday of each month.

“It seems that almost the majority of our clients coming for grief services are grandparents,” Grisham said. “We have about 10 grandparents who attend other sessions here, so we realize the need for this support group.”

She said many of the grandparents who come to The Healing Place are single and are overwhelmed trying to raise their grandchildren in a much different world than the one they raised their own children in.

“They aren’t comfortable in the role and they really don’t have a peer group,” she said. “They feel isolated. They know the importance of what they’re doing, but not how to do it. They’re a generation removed and feel out of the loop on a lot of things.”

The Healing Place offers free counseling/therapy services for children and their families dealing with grief.

Kay Claunch of Muscle Shoals is among those who in 2018 found herself in the role of parent to her 8-year-old granddaughter, Gia.

Claunch’s only child, Gillus Carter, 30, was the victim of a homicide in Tuscumbia in August 2018.

“Gia was 3½ when her father died and we were

Grandparents group meets a growing need

by LISA SINGLETON-RICKMAN

Photos by DAN BUSEY



Director Karen Grisham leads a grief therapy session at the Healing Place in Muscle Shoals.



Kay Claunch, left, and her granddaughter, Gia, sit for a portrait inside their home Friday in Muscle Shoals.

both so lost,” Claunch said.

“My son was everything to me, and while I’ve experienced a lot of loss in my life, there’s no pain that cuts as deep as losing a child. The day I buried

my son, I buried half of myself. Gia is my only sunshine now, and she is my total focus in this world.”

Not knowing where to turn, and admittedly reeling not only from

her son’s death, but from becoming a parent for a second time at age 60, Claunch and Gia got involved with The Healing Place.

Claunch has custody of Gia, now a second-grader.

“When she first came to live with me, she was really shy and didn’t talk much, which I understood because of what she’d been through,” Claunch said. “I was adapting to being a Mama again. And the services we received from The Healing Place helped me open up to others and not feel so alone.

“It was a godsend and I know this support group for grandparents will be a tremendous help to people.”

Grisham said the group sessions will allow for one-on-one help for participants, as well as in the group setting where they can get to know each other and share strategies.

Grisham said she will address the grandparents’ concerns and go over some basic parenting skills applicable to children today.

“There are so many concerns for these grandparents and they question their ability to do a good job raising their grandchildren,” Grisham said. “They’re dealing with a lot of emotions, a lot of loss themselves.”

As for the children being raised by grandparents, Grisham said she often addresses (the children’s) fears.

“It isn’t unusual for children to start thinking about the grandparents being older and the possibility of losing them as well,” she said. “I always encourage the grandparents to have a plan and let the children know that someone will be there to take care of them.”



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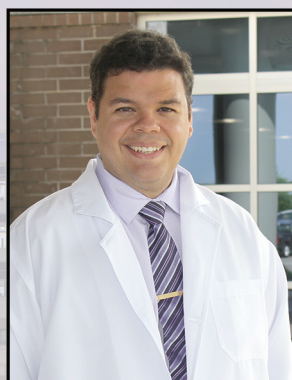
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VETERANS FIND PEACE, CALM IN EQUINE THERAPY

by LISA SINGLETON-RICKMAN
Photos by KEVIN TAYLOR

James Hanvey hugs one of the horses in a pen at Serenity Counseling in Florence.

They've served and sacrificed for their country in ways most will never know.

Now, through Serenity Counseling's "Renewed Warriors" program in Florence, the area's veterans have the opportunity to be on the receiving end of service through horses.

Counselor Cayron Mann leads a group, currently six members strong, in equine-assisted therapy, which has been proven successful for many suffering from anxiety or post traumatic stress.

For veterans attending Mann's weekly sessions, the pairings between them and the horses have been a life-enriching experience. Some even referred to it as "life sustaining."

Mann said the connection between a veteran and a horse, as well as veterans connecting with other veterans, has brought peace and joy to participants.

"It's truly an incredible thing to see the connections as they interact with each other and the horses," Mann said. "At times, I just step back as they begin talking and sharing."

The program allows for pairings between horse and veteran to occur naturally.

Army veteran James Hanvey, who has been in the program for a year, recalled how his horse, Becca, chose him in the most distinct manner.

"She was a good ways away from where I was

standing and she poked her head out and took off right to me," he said. "She's a spirited girl and I love that about her. She's perceptive, like all these horses out here. She feels my emotions and processes them. It's really quite an experience."

Many of the horses at Serenity Farm are rescues, who, like the humans who have befriended them, have endured their share of trauma in life.

"That's the connection, I think," said Zach Gamble, a member of the group for the past two years. "It's a beautiful relationship really because with Max (his horse pairing) it's been a matter of us both building trust. I carry a

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Cadara Parks, who is a veteran, brushes Candy in the horse pen at Serenity Counseling in Florence.



Zach Gamble, who is a veteran, interacts with the horses.



A horse smells the hand of Keith Zeal, a veteran.

lot of stuff around, but the minute I get out of the car out here it all goes away.”

As the trust relationship builds between veteran and horse, the veterans have the opportunity to help groom and care for the horses.

Some members of the group are also preparing to ride the horses.

Gamble is among those who is working toward riding his horse, a huge stride for him as he admits he was never previously a horse person.

“I was intimidated at first, but Max came straight for me — he claimed me,” Gamble said. “I’d been in therapy of one sort or another since 2009 and it was always a hit or miss experience, but this is the sense of calm and security that I need.”

The newest members of the group, Cadara Parks and Ema Smith, said that in the month they’ve been in the program, they’ve already made a deep connection, both with the horses and the other veterans.

“My horse, Candy, and I built a bridge that very first day, and I knew then that this was going to be a good thing for me,” Parks said.

The therapy moves at a natural pace, Mann said, adding that EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing), is a significant approach.

It focuses on the individual’s present concerns and relies on the belief that past emotionally charged experiences are overly



Ema Smith, a veteran, offers a carrot to one of the horses.

influencing the person's present emotions and thoughts about himself.

It helps break through emotional blocks that prevent a person from living an adaptive, emotionally healthy life.

Keith Veal is one of the more reserved members of the group. Paired with Toby, a

purebred Spanish Mustang, he's also spent two years in the program.

He joined at his wife's urging saying only: "I was struggling and I had to do something."

The connection with Toby has a centering effect on Veal, he says.

"My emotions literally

transfer to him and the counselors can watch (the horse) and see how I'm doing," he said.

As Tuesday's session was wrapping up, the talk among the group turned to how more veterans should get involved.

Gamble said there's a whole community

of veterans who would benefit from the program. Hanvey agreed.

"It's not the traditional therapy setting and I'm hoping to see a lot more veterans come and participate," Hanvey said. "It definitely makes a difference."

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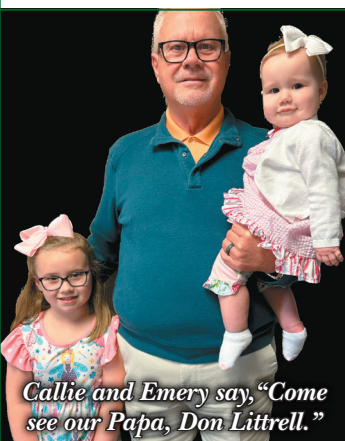
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Just call Holley Hamm "The Birthday Fairy."

Her nonprofit organization by the same name is gaining momentum and putting smiles on the faces of many area children attending Title 1 schools, which have a high ratio of economically disadvantaged students.

Hamm, who believes every child should be celebrated on his/her birthday, took that idea last year to a friend,

Alyssa Carbine, who teaches kindergarten at Harlan School in Florence.

"I provided the birthday surprises with just as many special items as I could pull together and I'd drop them off for the teacher to put out for the birthday boy or girl. The children never see me," Hamm said.

Hamm wanted the birthday recognitions, or "Sprinkles" as she

Birthday Fairy sprinkles her magic at Title 1 schools

by LISA SINGLETON-RICKMAN
Photos by DAN BUSEY

Holley Hamm holds both boys and girls birthday present bags for upcoming celebrations.

calls them, to be spectacular — a lot of bling for the girls and super cool for the boys.

She wanted to go all out with bakery cupcakes, a large goody bag and name-brand backpacks loaded with fun items and school supplies. Each child also gets a special, personalized birthday slipcover for his/her chair at school decorated in fun, vibrant colors.

“I just wanted it to be

a really fun, wow-type experience for these kindergartners on their birthday because they should be celebrated and I wanted them to know that,” Hamm said.

By the end of last school year, “The Birthday Fairy” was in high demand for all the kindergarten classes at Harlan.

As the demand grew, Hamm had to change her strategy a bit.

She received nonprofit

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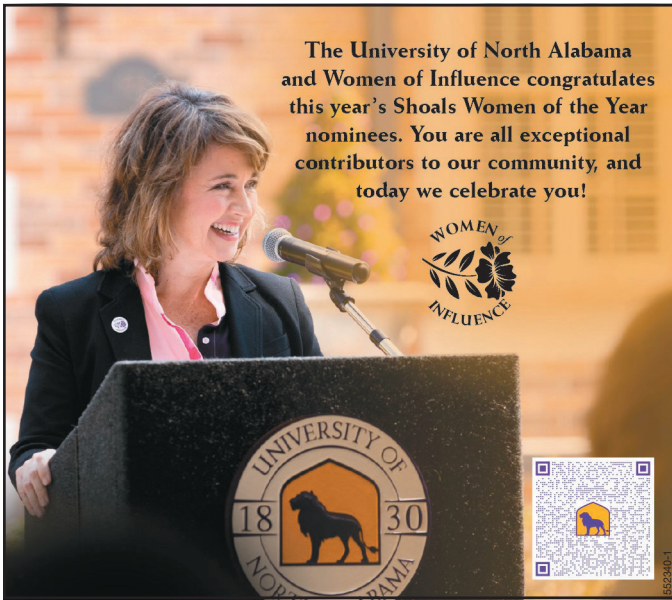
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The University of North Alabama and Women of Influence congratulates this year's Shoals Women of the Year nominees. You are all exceptional contributors to our community, and today we celebrate you!



501(c)3 status for The Birthday Fairy, Inc. last summer.

Wanting to celebrate even more children, she expanded her program to include another Title 1 school, Threadgill Primary in Sheffield. She also includes special needs children through fourth grade at the two schools.

Threadgill has become the primary school of focus this year with more than 90 kindergartners.

Threadgill Principal Matthew Syesta said Hamm's mission fits perfectly with the school.

"Some of the kids we serve don't always have the same access to these kinds of things," he said. "To bring this love and element of surprise to our children is exactly what we strive for here."

Syesta said the teachers love and appreciate Hamm. They say she brings with her a bit of a "Christmas/tooth fairy" feel.

To keep the program going with its expansion Hamm is relying on donations and volunteer support.

With a group of friends helping her decorate bags and deliver to schools and

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Bailee Tiffin, left, and Whitney Brink work together on personalized birthday decor.



Mischa Bishop uses hot glue to fix lettering as she works on personalized birthday decor.

her friend Sylvia Rocha making the fabric chair covers, she said her growing program is proof of what happens when people come together to help others.

“I absolutely could not do this without the help of my friends and generous donations,” Hamm said. “I honestly feel like the Lord has had his hand on this from the beginning and I’ve seen how he has blessed our efforts and these precious children.”

She has established a donation chart with a breakdown of sponsorships that determines how many children can be served by each amount. A platinum sponsorship of \$5,000 provides birthday supplies for 100 children.

A gold sponsorship of \$3,000 provides for 60 children. A silver sponsorship of \$1,000 provides for 20 children and a bronze sponsorship of \$500 provides for 10 children. A \$50 donation sponsors one child.

The Sheffield City Council, in conjunction with Sheffield Utilities, recently gave Hamm a \$3,000 donation for her program.

Mayor Steve Stanley said he can think of nothing more beneficial than bringing happiness to children.

“This is a wonderful thing they’re doing,” he said. “Any time you can recognize these children and make them feel special it’s a really good thing.”



Miriam Goodman, left, and Mischa Bishop work together on personalized birthday decor.

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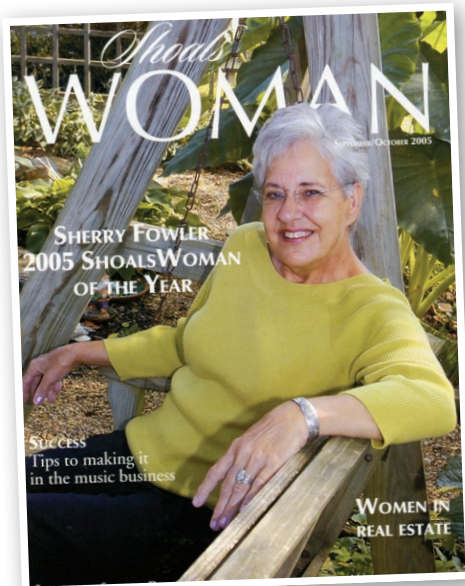
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 Linda McFall
 Kaytrina Simmons
 Dr. Kimberly Jackson
 Gwen Schajatovic
 Angela Jackson

Michele Hamilton
 Dr. Jacqueline Parsons
 Dr. Waynett S. Boyd
 Cass Thilman
 Sarah Collins Evans
 Stacy Suggs
 Debbie Bell Bradford
 Kayla Robertson
 Ronda Hood

past WINNERS



2005 | SHERRY FOWLER

Fowler was chosen for her work with the North Alabama Head Injury Foundation. Her daughter, Mary Darlene, sustained a debilitating head injury in 1986 when she was struck by an intoxicated driver. Fowler was advised to place her daughter in a nursing facility. She refused. She received the training necessary to care for her 19-year-old daughter at home. Fowler continued working with the foundation after her daughter's death in 2005.

2006 | NATALIE GORDON

Gordon was 24 years old when she battled cancer and underwent a life-saving surgery: the removal of her left arm and shoulder. She was mother to a 7-month-old and a 3-year-old and Gordon said she was not prepared to lose parts of her body. More importantly, however, she said she was not prepared for her children to lose their mother. She said the surgery was traumatic and depressing, but Gordon adjusted and became an inspiration to others. She vowed not to let her loss stop her.



2007 | KAY PARKER

Parker and a friend, Sharon Scogin, developed the idea for The Healing Place after Parker saw a television report about a grief support center in Portland. She believed a similar center was greatly needed in the Shoals. The Healing Place became a haven where adults and children learn to work through their grief after a loved one's death. Parker's goal was to give people a place to be heard and to learn healing thoughts, including learning how to cherish memories and keep them from being debilitating. Parker passed away Sept. 25, 2021.



2008 | BETTY BURDINE

Burdine has spent her life helping people, first as a nurse, then as coordinator of the Lifewise Seniors program for Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital in Florence. She didn't stop there, but volunteered in several community endeavors. She helped raise money for the American Heart Association and was instrumental in procuring the monument for Lillian Diebert in Diebert Park in Florence. Burdine's caring nature extended to Lillian Diebert, who she would look in on before Diebert's death in 2011.



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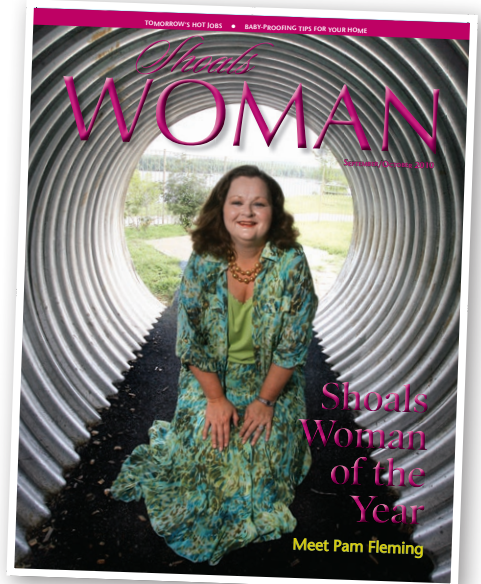


2009 | FELICE GREEN

Green retired from the University of North Alabama in 2003 but didn't sit still. She has a special love for children and will don costumes to read to children at various outlets across the Shoals. Green also expressed her love of art and dance and became a member of the Poza Dance Troupe while remaining active in Delta Sigma Theta sorority, which she helped charter at UNA. She is a known organizer of events during the W.C. Handy Music Festival including the ABCs of Blues & Jazz. She is a volunteer with the Salvation Army and St. Vincent De Paul Society at Our Lady of the Shoals Catholic Church in Tuscumbia.

2010 | PAM FLEMING

Fleming's outgoing personality helped her carry on a tradition she first learned from her parents: help people in need. She was honored for her work in helping to create the boundless playground at Riverfront Park in Sheffield. The playground is play-friendly to any child, regardless of his or her abilities, with a sandbox that wheelchair-bound children can roll up to and play in. Fleming also was instrumental in getting a new home for the Ealy family when their daughter, Shanteki, was diagnosed with leukemia and was told she could not return to her home because of its condition.





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2011 | DEBBIE RAPPUHN

Rappuhn took her daughter to the Florence-Lauderdale Animal Shelter for a school project but soon returned to offer her services as a volunteer. She painted and scrubbed and initiated improvements that included a cat habitat room, a puppy room and a laundry room with a sink for bathing animals. She was appalled at the number of animals euthanized and dedicated countless days to finding homes for those unwanted pets – even if it meant sending them to other shelters and homes across the country.

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2012 | ELBA BARNES

Barnes needed to care for her ailing parents and moved from Birmingham to Florence to be near them. She soon realized there was an important gap in available services in the area: there was no place where adults like her parents could go for social interaction, exercise and art activities. Such a place would also offer respite for caregivers. Barnes brought an idea for an adult day care to Westminster Presbyterian Church. In July 2009, Westminster Interfaith Caring Place opened, initially as a Sunday-only program. By November, it was offering a mid-week break so caregivers could go Christmas shopping. Eventually the nonprofit center would operate Monday through Friday.

2013 | SARAH JENNIFER THOMPSON

After Thompson's sister, Sidney, died in January 2006, Thompson honored her sister's memory and founded Sidney's Safe! Foundation. It was a place where other women could learn how to stand strong against domestic abuse and how to seek recovery from addiction. The foundation has branched out to help children, too. It is an outreach that provides hundreds of bags of food a week to local schoolchildren who otherwise would go hungry.





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2014 | SUSIE MARTIN

Susie Martin was only required to spend four hours a month with the girl who became her “little” at Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Shoals, but she and 13-year-old Sabrina Carles are together every weekend, all weekend. The program allows Sabrina to be Martin’s Little until she is 15, but Martin jokes she will keep her until Sabrina gets married.



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2015 | ANGIE HAMILTON

Angie Hamilton presented the idea for a one-stop center that could streamline help for victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse and physical abuse, and elder abuse – cases she saw regularly as an assistant district attorney in Lauderdale County. The idea was immediately well received, and One Place of the Shoals was born.



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2016 | NINON PARKER

Ninon Parker grew up on the front lines of celebrating the history of the Shoals, including as a member of Ivy Green's first cast of "The Miracle Worker" – the stage play that celebrates the awakening of Helen Keller to the world around her. Parker's community involvement is one of historical preservation and business promotion that keeps the Shoals a vital place that recognizes its important past, as well as its exciting future.



2017 | MERCY WINTERS

A member of the Salvation Army Women's auxiliary, Mercy Winters was instrumental in bringing the successful Empty Bowl Luncheon to the Shoals as a fundraiser for the Salvation Army each year. She is hands-on in her volunteer work, not only in helping to plan the luncheon each year, but leading her "clay mates" group to meet at her and her husband's ceramic business to make the bowls that are featured at the luncheon. She has even gotten her neighborhood involved in community charity work by organizing an Iron Bowl event that benefits a different charity each year.

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2018 | JESSICA DAVENPORT

Jessica Davenport's children, Kruz and Paizlee, were born with Schimke Immuno-Osseous Dysplasia, or SIOD. In simple, dire terms, the children have a rare form of dwarfism that brings with it renal failure and a weakened immune system. It's also fatal, with a life expectancy of 9 to 11 years. Instead of falling apart, Davenport founded Kruzn for a Kure Foundation and has raised the \$1 million needed to get the attention of wealthy philanthropists who can raise the \$6 million needed to kick researchers into finding a cure for the rare disease. In the 12 months since Davenport received the Shoals Woman of the Year award, she and her husband Kyle have moved to California where Kruz has not only received his mother's stem cells, but one of her kidneys as well. Paizlee is being prepped to receive the same from her father. Keep abreast on these remarkable children and their parents through Jessica Davenport's Facebook page or the Kruzn for a Kure Foundation Facebook page.



2019 | GINGER WILLINGHAM

Ginger Willingham has always had a heart for service, and in 2014 learned there were children in the community whose only opportunities to eat were at school. After much prayer and discussion, she was inspired to establish Isaiah's Call, named for Isaiah 58 in the Bible. She and a bevy of volunteers pack food bags with enough food for the children and their families to have during the weekend. They started with seven families at one school and now serve more than 200 families at schools in Colbert and Lauderdale counties, as well as Safeplace, a local shelter for women and men and their children who are fleeing domestic violence.



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2020 | MARY DAY SMITH

Mary Day Smith was on active duty for the Alabama National Guard on Helton Drive when fellow Korean War veteran Ralph Dula visited her there and became her mentor. He recruited her to join the American Legion. When Smith joined the Legion there were a lot of guys, but slowly she worked her way up and became the first female commander for this area. Smith became heavily involved with programs all over north Alabama. “When there’s a crisis in your life, its easy to dream about a rescue that immediately rushes to your side, determined to clear the crisis and put you and your family back into a good place” and that is what Smith has a hand in doing. She doesn’t seek thanks for anything but she claims that she sees the thanks come to her in unexpected places. Smith believes in the Legion slogan “Veterans Still Serving.”

2021 | PAM CLEPPER STUMPE

When you look up the word selfless in the dictionary, there very likely may be a photo of Pam Clepper Stumpe next to the definition. The consensus opinion of her is that when she gives of herself, all worries can be thrown out the window. When she and her husband relocated to the Shoals, the couple soon became active in the community, including the Colbert County Sheriff’s FAME Girls Ranch. Clepper’s work with the ranch has varied over the years. She and the “posse” went through house parent training so they could spend the night at the ranch and give those house parents already at the ranch some much-needed time off. She also organized the group to bring meals to the ranch to help the house parents. Some of those within her posse were teachers, so they chipped in and helped to tutor the girls. By the fall, Pam’s Posse was 25 members strong, and they helped to kick off the inaugural FAME Ranch Round-Up, which has gone on to become a huge event for the ranch. So why does she go that extra mile? “I just enjoy seeing someone succeed and find within themselves all the good that they are and what they can be,” she said. “If I can help just a little bit in helping them get there, then that just brings joy. I love to lift people up and make them see what they can do better. Or what’s inside them that they don’t even know they have.”



2022 | AMY GOSS ROBINSON

Amy Goss Robinson, who is a Sheffield native, left the area and obtained her doctorate in physical therapy at the University of South Carolina before returning home in 2011 to provide physical therapy here. Two years later, her world was turned upside down. She was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer which resulted in the removal of her breasts at 36 years old. While she was being treated for cancer, she sought out local support groups pertaining to breast cancer patients and found nothing. So, rather than throw up her hands and accept it, she helped found and develop her own breast cancer support group right her in the Shoals. The Breast cancer Recovery and Awareness Together (BRAT) Pack was formed with the help of Dr. Patrick Daugherty in 2014. After the surgery to remove her breasts, she also began to investigate the possibility of becoming a foster mother. After becoming a foster parent, she had several children stay with her on a short-term basis. Her first possible long-term child came into her home in April 2018. About seven months later his twin sister and older sister were reunited in Amy’s home, where they remain. Not long after finishing breast cancer treatment, Amy met Chad Robinson and were eventually engaged. The couple wanted to adopt the children but were hit with the hurdle that they had to be married at least a year. They married and a year later, COVID-19 stepped in the way and slowed the court system to a near halt. It wasn’t until March 2022 that the three children became Robinsons. Hurdle after hurdle presented themselves, and Amy Goss Robinson cleared it by a mile.





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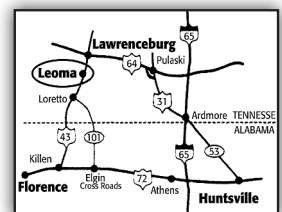


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