

Hebel, Prize Honoree

FLORENCE – Dr. Martin Hebel, music composition and theory faculty at the University of North Alabama, has been selected as a 2025 Honored Artist of The American Prize. The national honor is highly selective and recognizes Dr. Hebel's sustained excellence in the field of music composition and outstanding artistry as a repeated laureate of the American Prize.

"Music composition is inherently a collaborative artform," Hebel said. "I wish



Hebel

to express my deepest gratitude to all my mentors, teachers, family, friends, and colleagues for their tireless support and encouragement."

Six-time American Prize winner, Dr. Hebel works at the intersection of music, advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration, composing socially conscious music responding to challenges of today's global community sparks positive change.

Hebel was the 2023 winner of the American Composers Orchestra EarShot program with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. His music has been performed across the U.S. and Europe. His discography is published by Ablaze Records, Centaur Records, and the USAF Band of the Golden West.

See SHORTS... on Page 2

Volume 141 Number 41

August 6, 2025

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Pinning Ceremony Moved

Vietnam Vets will be Recognized at UNA's Guillot Center

SHOALS — Due to the overwhelming response from area veterans and their families, Congressman Robert Aderholt announced last week that the upcoming Vietnam Veteran Pinning Ceremony in the Shoals will be relocated to UNA's Guillot University Center

to better accommodate all attendees. Just under a month out, the Shoals area pinning ceremony had already confirmed well over 200 attendees.

Originally scheduled for Tuscumbia, the new location for the Shoals area ceremony



See VETERANS... on Page 6

Mayor's Forum for the Sheffield Race

SHEFFIELD—Municipal elections are scheduled statewide on August 26.

A candidate forum for mayor in the city of Sheffield will take place at 6pm Tuesday, August 19 at the Sheffield Public Library. The event is sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Northwest Alabama.

All four registered candidates for Sheffield Mayor will be attending. They are Tori Bailey, Penny Freeman, Steve Stanley, and Bryan Van Devender.

The LWNWAL moderator will ask questions ranging from city finances and top priorities to that of government transparency. Audience members will have an opportunity

See FORUM... on Page 4



The final structural beam placed at Bank Independent Stadium last week. Wider image inside.

Topped Off

Final Structural Beam in Place at New Stadium

FLORENCE — The University of North Alabama conducted a topping out ceremony of Bank Independent Stadium on campus, an event that signifies the placement of the final structural beam.

Representatives from Birmingham-based HPM, the program management firm for the

\$65 million multipurpose facility, were also on hand for the event. The project broke ground in June of this year with an anticipated opening planned for Fall 2026.

Bobby Wallace Field at Bank Independent Stadium will feature a three-level press tower with concessions, restrooms, suites, a club level and a "home tunnel" connecting the home locker room to Flowers Hall. The venue will redevelop

See TOPPED... on Page 2

INSIDE this Issue

Automotive Inside



Ray Miller GMC
Advance Auto Sales

- Ask the Attorney
- Medicare Minute
- Dave Ramsey
- Sweet Delilah Swim Club



- Adopt-a-Friend
- Cane Creek Trail Care
- Strange, But True



- Guest Op-Ed
- Hocus Focus
- New Pastor at Westminster

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- **Thur., August 7, 6:30pm:** How Not to Die?
- **Fri., August 8, 6:30pm:** Is Type-2 Diabetes Reversible?

Location: Holiday Inn Express, 180 Etta Gray St. Florence
Limited Seating! Please call 269-222-1711 to reserve your seat!

- **Sat., August 9, 11 am:** The Advantage
2 pm: How to Reverse Diabetes, Hypertension,
Prevent Stroke & Weight Management.

Location: Shoals SDA Church - 2011 CR-41, Florence

BP & BMI Screening, Carotid Artery Ultrasound (Suggested donation \$20) are available with appointments on Thur & Fri starting 5 pm, RSVP Required info@shoalssdachurch.org or call (269) 222-1711.



Topped

Continued from Page 1

the previous athletic complex, incorporating UNA's football, baseball and soccer teams and marching band into the reimagined design. In addition to athletic practices and sporting events, Bank Independent Stadium is designed to enrich the city with concerts, live performances, and other community events.

"Today's Topping Out is one of many milestones in

the construction of Bank Independent Stadium that UNA and North Alabama Athletics will be celebrating, said UNA Athletic Director, Dr. Josh Looney. "Our student-athletes, coaches, and staff eagerly anticipate using this great facility.

Additional project partners at the complex include Davis Architects as the architect, Ampere as the sports consultant and Fite Building Company

as the general contractor for the football stadium package.

The final structural beam at UNA's Bank Independent Stadium was lowered into place last week during a celebration ceremony with university, bank, and construction officials, as well as student athletes and fans among the onlookers. *UNA photo*

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Shorts...

Continued from Page 1

Great Share Drive Effort

SHEFFIELD – The 12th annual Helping Hands Foundation and Bank Independent School Share Drive conducted from June 30–July 18 contributed a total of \$1,492.85 in cash and an additional 3,771 school supply items to local partner organizations.

Over the past 12 years, the School Share initiative has generated a total financial impact of \$334,242.23 across the communities Bank Independent serves.

"School Share continues to be a powerful example of what we can achieve together," said **Macke Mauldin**, CEO of Bank Independent. "Thanks to the generosity of our community, we're able to equip students with

the tools they need to succeed in the classroom."

Bank Independent partners with local organizations across its seven-county footprint to ensure that donations are distributed to area families in need. Locally, donations will be distributed through Sidney's Safe and Teacher Supply Depot in Lauderdale and Colbert counties.

Sick & Tired? Free Seminar

FLORENCE—Are you sick and tired of being Sick and Tired?

A free 3-Day, 4-Topic Health Seminar August 7-9 on how to choose better health with Dr. **Clarence Ing**, Internal Medicine may be able to help.

See SHORTS... on Page 4

Yard Sales

An exclusive listing of the better sales in the Shoals area.

To list your sale, use the classified form on page 4.

WE MUST receive your ad by Friday prior to the Wednesday release date. (8 days before a Saturday sale)

FLORENCE GARAGE / MOVING SALE, 410 Co. Rd. 345, (left off Cow Pen Rd.) Fri. & Sat., Aug 8th & 9th, 7am-3pm. Portable Air Conditioner, Orric Vacuum Cleaner, Old wood framed pictures, Wicker glass top Coffee Table, Wicker Loveseat, Fish Cooker, Rice Cooker, Iron Skillets, Stuff - and More Stuff! For info. call 256-577-5846

FLORENCE INSIDE YARD & BAKE SALE Westminster Presbyterian Church 1520 Rickwood Rd., Fri., Aug. 8th & Sat., Aug. 9th, 7 am - 2 pm All proceeds to benefit Caring Place. Housewares, Furniture, Books, Electronics, & misc.

FLORENCE INSIDE MOVING SALE, 6921 Co Rd 61, Fri. & Sat., Aug 8th & 9th, 6am-Noon, No Early Sales! Rain or Shine

RIVER HEIGHTS ESTATE SALE 108 Holland Drive Sheffield, Alabama 35660

Friday, August 8th 9:00 - 3:00 (Numbers given out at 8:30)

Saturday, August 9th 9:00-2:00 (Numbers given out at 8:30)

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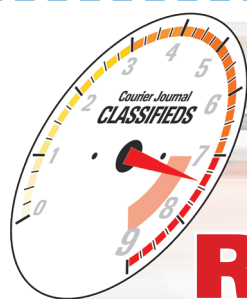
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Forum...

Continued from Page 1

to submit questions of their own, provided that the questions are directed to all candidates.

Topics can essentially be of anything relevant to city business and citizen interest.

"We are excited to partner with the Sheffield Public Library to host this important event," said Charla Neuman, President of the League of Women Voters of Northwest Alabama. "There are many undecided voters out there who are thirsty to learn more about the candidates running for office but don't have easy access to information about them. This gives candidates an opportunity to talk about the issues important to them."

The candidate forum will also be livestreamed on the LWVNWAL's Facebook page: <http://facebook.com/lwvnwal>.

The League of Women Voters has a long history in the Shoals area. The expanded League of Women Voters of Northwest Alabama now serves Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, and Lawrence Counties.

If voters have more questions, they can email the LWVNWAL at lwvnwalabama@gmail.com.

Shorts...

Sick & Tired? Free Seminar

Continued from Page 2

The first 2 topics are covered on August 7 and 8, at 6:30pm at Holiday Inn Express, in Florence.

August 7 - How Not to Die; August 8 - How Not to Diet

Health Screening available with appointment \$20 (Limited space)

The event culminates

on Saturday, August 9 at Shoals Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2011 CR. 41 (Jackson Rd.) in Florence

11am - The Advantage; 2pm - How to Reverse Diabetes, Hypertension, Prevent Stroke & Weight Management

This free community event is sponsored by the Shoals Seventh-day Adventist Church

For more information: ShoalsSDAChurch.org or call Stanley (local cell) 269-222-1711

Basketball at NA-Schedules

JACKSONVILLE, FL – The Atlantic Sun Conference announced the 2024-25 men's and women's basketball schedules for the league last week.

The University of North Alabama men's team begins an 18-game conference slate at home on January 1, 2026.

Much like last season, the conference schedule format includes two games a week over a nine-week period, starting the first week of January and ending the last week of February. The schedule includes a home-and-home series with seven league members and single games against Austin Peay, Jacksonville, Lipscomb, and North Florida.

The Lion men are coming off a stellar campaign, finishing the 2024-25 season with a 14-4 conference record. UNA won

See SHORTS... on Page 10

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DEADLINES: Issues Published Every Wednesday
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I served on the Florence City Board of Education, District 3 in 2008-2012. I am currently serving on the Board of Directors with Florence Education Foundation since 2012. The Florence City Council also appointed me as a current Board member for Scope 310. I am presently serving as committee member for Shoals Homebuilders Association and as a volunteer with the Lowe's Heroes Program.

I am a member of Epsilon Sigma Alpha to help raise funds for St. Jude Children's Hospital. In December 2019, I was appointed to serve on Florence City School Board for District 4 due to a death of a board member.

I am a huge Florence Falcon fan and a supporter of our great school system. I love working with the school faculty and staff to make our system a positive



Chaney

one and the best in the state. In my opinion, we have the best teachers and students of anywhere in the state.

I believe the duties of the school board should be transparency, honesty, accountability, determined, dedicated and working in harmony with each other.



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Community Notes

COMMUNITY NOTES may be submitted for non-profit, civic or church-related events and published free of charge. **ASSPACE IS AVAILABLE** in the Courier Journal. Community Notes must be submitted in writing by 3pm Friday for consideration in the following week's issue. • Email to editor@courierjournal.net

Splash Pad Schedule: August 1-10: Open daily (normal schedule)
Weekday Closures Begin August 11
After August 10, the splash pad will close Monday-Thursday and be open only on weekends:
August 15-17 (Fri-Sun)
August 22-24 (Fri-Sun)
August 29-31 (Fri-Sun)
September 1 (Monday - Labor Day)
Final Day for 2025: September 1

Bethel Lauderdale MB Church at 10090 County Road 2 in Florence will be hosting "Family and Friends Weekend" on August 9-10.

A fellowship picnic - Saturday 11-5 with food, fun, games and prizes for all. Sunday will be a luncheon beginning at 11am followed immediately afterward with the preached word by Minister

Wesley Thompson, Pastor of Bethel Colbert MB Church.

"Hi Neighbors of the Shoals" meets at the Florence Public Library on the first Tuesday of each month (August 5) at 10:30am. We are a women's social group welcoming all ladies who are residents of the Shoals area. Come join us! Contact Christina Dickinson, 262-930-7762, for further details.

Homecoming at Wright Chapel Community Church in Waterloo on Sunday morning, August 10. Sunday School-10:15am, Worship Service-11am. Guest Speaker: Mike Bevis. 101 CR 8 in Waterloo. Everyone welcome.

See NOTES... page 17

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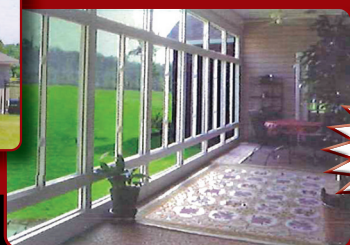
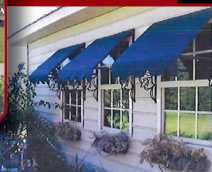
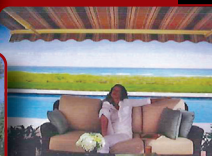
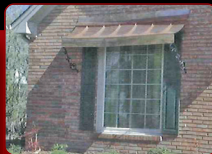
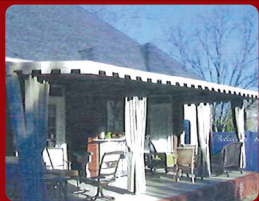
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Vets...

Continued from Page 1

is at the Guillot University Center at the University of North Alabama, 131 Shelby Way in Florence. Date and time are the same: 10:30am on Friday, August 22. Parking will be available in the adjacent parking lot off Pine St. Please register attendance in advance.

"Because of the incredible response we've received, we needed a larger space to properly recognize these heroes in a respectful and comfortable setting," said Congressman Aderholt. "We are deeply

grateful for their service, and I look forward to seeing so many veterans and their loved ones in Florence."

Only the location for the Florence event has changed. The event in Blount County remains unchanged.

Both events are part of Congressman Aderholt's ongoing effort to recognize and honor Vietnam-era veterans with official commemorative pins as a token of appreciation for their service and sacrifice.

Veterans who have not yet registered or need more information are encouraged to call 256-546-0201 with any questions. Veterans may also register on Congressman Aderholt's website, <https://aderholt.house.gov> and click on the Vietnam Pinning ceremony at the top menu bar.

NEED HELP?

CONTACT 2-1-1

Your link to community resources

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Church

(USA)

New Pastor

Westminster Presbyterian Church is pleased to announce we have a new, full-time pastor. His name is Rev. Edward Suey, III (Trey) and he is coming to us from Mt. Juliet, Tennessee.


He will be living in Florence with his wife, Marlee, and their two daughters, Eden (5) and Ira (3). Trey has experience in the ministry and also in business. He will join a wonderful team of leaders and staff to move Westminster forward serving the Lord in new ways.

Our new t-shirts and church fans have the slogan, "serving others with a joyful heart" and that is what the congregation does. A couple of weeks ago we had a Sunday we called, "God's bounty." Members of the congregation brought fresh produce from their gardens, the farmer's market or the grocery store. We delivered boxes and boxes of fresh vegetables to the Help Center in downtown Florence. Some of the members also deliver Meals on Wheels, prepare meals for the Soup Kitchen, serve on boards of non-profits around the city and so much more to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We even dance at the church when we host the Midnighters for the Handy Fest where we serve cookies and lemonade!

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as the Interim Pastor at Westminster for the past year. I hope you will come visit and maybe stay to join this wonderful congregation.

Gratefully, Rev. Dr. Susan Parker

Rev. Edward Suey, III (Trey) pictured right



If you want to learn more about what we believe, visit us Sundays at 11 am for worship service. You can also reach us at our website: www.Westminsterpcusa.net, friend us on Facebook as Westminster Presbyterian Church or find us on YouTube, WPCFlorence.

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August 9th

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the Sweet Delilah Swim Club

a Jones Hope Wooten comedy

AUGUST 7-10

"Sweet Delilah Swim Club" follows five unforgettable Southern women whose friendship began on their college swim team. They meet every summer for a reunion at the same beach cottage in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The play focuses on four of these weekends and spans 33 years, highlighting their evolving lives, trials, and relationships - a hilarious and touching comedy about friendships that last forever...

TICKETS: tennesseevalleyarts.org

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Guest Commentary

Gender Clinics Are Done— A Return to Sanity

Over the past decade, clinics that offer procedures under the label of “gender-affirming care” seemed to have popped up ubiquitously across the country like Starbucks, offering puberty blockers to minors

and anatomy-mutilating procedures like they’re handing out lattes and cake pops. Fueled by progressive ideology, activist medicine, and social media trends, clinics offering hormone therapy and permanently damaging surgeries to minors exploded in number, especially after 2015.

A decade or so ago, nearly 100 clinics across the U.S. were offering some form of gender-affirming care to youth. These clinics, often affiliated with major children’s hospitals and universities, touted themselves as a necessary resource for kids struggling with their mental health, often going so far as to suggest that these kids might not survive without them.

But now, in 2025, the number of such clinics is dropping — and fast.

See **A RETURN TO SANITY...** on Page 16

Comments do not necessarily represent those of the Courier Journal staff, its advertisers, or its readers.



SAMANTHA KOCH

The Patriot Post

Courier Journal

in the *Shoals*

August 6, 2025

THIS WEEK

Caring FOR THE Trails

TUSCUMBIA—Interested parties are invited to join the Cane Creek Land Stewards for a hands-on trail care day at Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve August 8, 16, and 22 for Trail Care events during August. This important volunteer opportunity on various Fridays and Saturdays involves building natural steps and water control features, updating trail markers, and assisting with trail cutbacks and clearing debris from the trails. No prior experience is required to participate, making it accessible for everyone interested in contributing to the maintenance of our

See **TRAILS...** on Page 18



This decked-out volunteer looks extra ready for trail care.
landtrustal.org

The Ritz Hosts This Week

Join the Five Unforgettable Sweet Ladies

SHEFFIELD—The Ritz Theatre in Sheffield invites you to experience “The Sweet Delilah Swim Club,” August 7-10, a heartwarming play that follows five Southern women whose enduring friendship began on their college swim team. This engaging production chronicles their annual summer reunions at the same cherished beach cottage in



See **SWEET...** on Page 14

Happening THIS WEEK

THE ALABAMA PREMIERE OF "ECHOES OF FORKS OF CYPRESS" takes place at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, Tuesday, August 12 from 5-6pm. This documentary delves into the intertwined lives of the enslaved people and their enslavers at the Forks of Cypress plantation in Florence. The film narrates the historical significance of the plantation, focusing on the daily lives, struggles, and resilience of the enslaved individuals who lived and worked there. Frederick Murphy will screen his much-anticipated documentary followed by a panel discussion. Descendants of the enslaved and the enslavers have united in re-imagining the plantation and its cemetery as spaces for remembrance and reflection. They seek to acknowledge the painful legacy of slavery and cultivate a collective journey toward healing and understanding.

A YARD SALE AND BAKE SALE for CaringPlace of the Shoals will take place at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1520 Rickwood Road, Florence, from 7am-2pm August 8-9 (1/2 price 10am-2pm, August 9). If you would like to donate useful and extraordinary items (no clothes) for the yard sale, drop off items by August 6, from 10am-noon. Would you like to make baked goods, jellies, frozen soups or casseroles for the bake sale? Drop off baked goods from 9am-noon August 7 at the church.



652364-1

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Editor-Courier Journal
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Scriptural Knowledge for District Youth

Editor:

The Muscle Shoals Baptist Youth are ready to go back to school with strong scriptural knowledge.

The Ministers Wives and Widows Auxiliary of the Muscle Shoals District Missionary Baptist Association recently held their Bible Bowl for the youth at First Missionary Baptist Church in Sheffield. The 2025 Theme: “Unshakable”, Psalm 62:6: “He alone is my rock and my salvation”.

God’s plan is good, His power is great, and His best is yet to come as the beginning of the 2025-26 school year quickly approaches. Academic Education helps to expand our youth’s knowledge. Christian Education is

also important while building an understanding of God’s word.

All participating youth were winners because of their efforts to learn more about God and numerous scriptures. It was heartwarming to see children of all ages singing gospel songs, praying, and quoting meaningful scriptures. Sheryl Hamilton, President of the MW&W, presented each youth a Bible Bowl Medallion and gave them words of encouragement for the upcoming school year.

Team Winners: Calvary M.B. Church, where Rev. Ronald Thompson is pastor, won the Teen and Elementary Division Trophy. First

See **LETTERS...** on Page 18

YOUR OPINION Matters Too!

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RE-ELECT KEN SOCKWELL

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- ★ 1982 Graduate of Muscle Shoals High School
- ★ University of North Alabama Graduate
- ★ Board Member of Northwest Alabama Cerebral Palsy Center
- ★ Employed at Flexco
- ★ Over 20 years Experience in the Financial Industry

- ★ Active Parent in the Muscle Shoals School System
- ★ Believes in Traditional Christian Family Values
- ★ Married to Kristi Nix Sockwell
- ★ 3 Children - Trey 2014 graduate of Muscle Shoals High School. Jay and Lauren - 8th grade at Muscle Shoals Middle School.



August 26

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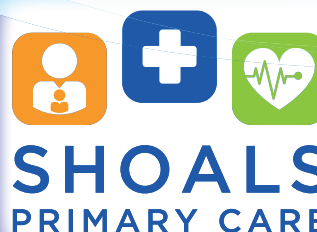
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Shorts...

Basketball at NA-Schedules

Continued from Page 4

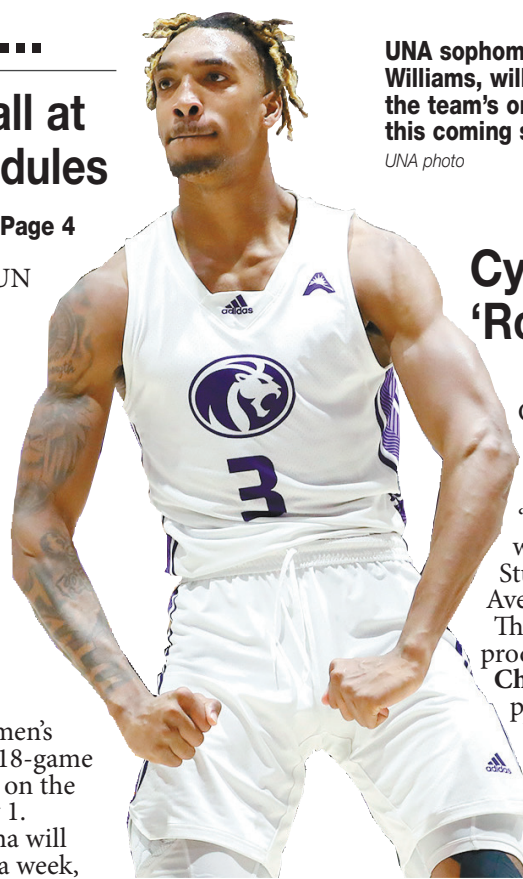
share of the ASUN Regular Season Championship, made an appearance in the 2025 ASUN Championship game against Lipscomb and went on to earn the school's first bid into the National Invitational Tournament (NIT).

The UNA women's team opens the 18-game conference slate on the road on January 1.

North Alabama will play two games a week, with many contests being played on Thursday and Saturday. The schedule consists of seven home-and-away contests against league opponents with single-game matchups against North Florida, Jacksonville, Austin Peay, and Lipscomb.

Like the 2024-25 season, UNA will also have one lone midweek game on a Wednesday when the Lions host Austin Peay on Feb. 4.

The Lions are entering their second season under head coach Candi



UNA sophomore, Corneilous Williams, will play a big role in the team's on-court success this coming season.

UNA photo

Cypress Has 'Rock of Ages'

SHEFFIELD—Cypress Moon Studios and The Full Moon Players are proud to present "Rock of Ages" this week at Cypress Moon Studios, 1000 Alabama Ave. in Sheffield.

This exciting musical production is written by Chris D'Arienzo and is produced and directed by Tonya Holly, with assistant direction by Amanda Perry. The music direction is by Hannah Ross and choreography

by Ladarius Prince. The show takes you to where dreams, love, and rock-n-roll collide. and features the iconic music Pat Benatar, Foreigner, Poison, Styx, Journey, and more.

"Rock of Ages" will be performed August 7-9, with additional encores to be announced. Tickets are available for purchase online at \$20 or at the door for \$25. For more information and to buy tickets, please visit cypressmoonstudios.org.

Whitaker. North Alabama won 13 games during the 2024-25 season while clinching a berth in the ASUN Conference Tournament.

Times for all games will be announced later. Non-conference games will be announced in the coming weeks. Fans are encouraged to visit RoarLions.com for the latest information.

For information on season tickets, fans can call 256-765-5466.

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A Florence native and graduate of Florence High School and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Dr. Holcombe is excited to return to her hometown and give back to the community that helped shape her journey.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, traveling, reading, and discovering new coffee shops. We are excited to have Dr. Holcombe join our team and look forward to the positive impact she will make on our patients and community.



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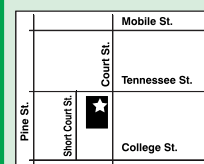
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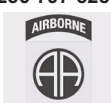
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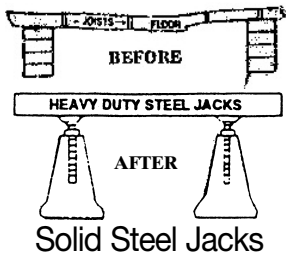
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Continued from Page 8

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It's not ones' fault to be ignorant, but it's stupid to stay that way. The bible (KJV) is clear and can be trusted. READ it. SEARCH it. STUDY it. BELIEVE it and most of all, RIGHTLY DIVIDE IT. Line up with God for a change! A lot of my blood kin believed in sincerity for salvation, and now, are in hell today. Don't make that same mistake! Line up with God! **John 1:11-12** "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" **Romans 10:9-10** "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." **Romans 10:13** "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." TRUST CHRIST, He cannot fail!

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Guest Commentary- Samantha Koch

A Return to Sanity...

Continued from Page 8

In just the past few weeks, a string of closures has made headlines. Children's Hospital Los Angeles announced the shutdown of its Center for Transyouth Health and Development, which had been one of the largest in the country. The hospital referenced a "shifting policy landscape" as one of the key reasons. Among other concerns, the hospital risks losing federal funding should it choose to ignore the current administration's crackdown on targeting children with this ideology and its life-altering practices.

Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC — another high-profile institution — announced it would stop offering puberty blockers and hormone therapy to minors. The hospital announced the decision on its website with a message that said, in part, "In light of escalating legal and regulatory risks to Children's National, our providers, and the families we serve, we

will be discontinuing the prescription of gender-affirming medications."

Yale New Haven Health in Connecticut also pulled the plug on its pediatric gender clinic. As CT Mirror reported, Yale's health system quietly stopped offering the services earlier this year. Kaiser Permanente, one of the largest nonprofit healthcare providers in the country, has also recently backed away from providing gender-related services to minors altogether.

This isn't a coincidence. It's a trend. And it's a long-overdue correction to one of the most significant stains on our country's history.

According to the *New York Times*, the Trump campaign has put this issue front and center in its policy priorities, and most of the public is ready for it. The paper outlined the Trump administration's aggressive approach in rolling back transgender medical procedures for minors, hammering down on the potential that these hospitals face of losing crucial funds if they continue to offer these services to underage patients. While the Times wrung its hands over what it characterizes as a rollback of rights, others see it as a return to sanity.

So why is this happening now? A few reasons:

1.) Legal liability is catching up.

The Manhattan Institute notes several cases that demonstrate the dramatic changes in the legal landscape over the last two years, which are empowering parents to hold politically driven teachers and doctors accountable for their part in transitioning kids, especially when they know several vulnerabilities are at play. Medical professionals who once eagerly administered hormones to teens are now facing malpractice lawsuits from young adults who regret transitioning, often permanently altered and sterilized before they could legally vote. Detransitioners are beginning to share their stories, and not only are they no longer being ignored, but they are also being amplified.

A local news feature in California highlighted a detransitioner who said she was pushed into medical transition as a teen without any real psychological evaluations. Unfortunately, stories like these are more common than most realize, and the victims are finally being encouraged to open up and share their devastating experiences.

2.) The science was always dubious. Now people are admitting it.

Despite the repeated claims that gender-affirming care is "lifesaving," the actual evidence behind it is astonishingly weak. European countries — hardly bastions of social conservatism — have been backpedaling on these treatments for years. Sweden, the UK, and Finland have restricted these interventions for minors, citing insufficient long-term research and serious side effects. Thankfully, America is finally reversing course as well.

Public opinion is also shifting because people are no longer afraid to speak up, as the woke mob has lost almost all of its ability to bully critics into silence. What used to be taboo to even question — whether it's ethical to put a 13-year-old on puberty blockers — is now mainstream conversation. More Americans are realizing this isn't about acceptance or kindness. It's about the irreversible medicalization of kids who often have coexisting mental health issues, trauma, or just a desperate need to fit in.

Parents have also had enough. Legislators — especially in red states — have responded with laws banning this "care" for minors, and even a small handful of Democrats are distancing themselves from the issue, recognizing the political poison that it has become.

Of course, it doesn't help the credibility of these clinics when they seem to treat "informed consent" like a formality. It seems like it's harder to get a tattoo in some states than to start testosterone or remove parts of your anatomy. At their peak, a large portion of the population fell for the narrative that gender

clinics were compassionate, cutting-edge, and lifesaving. But now, as lawsuits stack up and the tide of public sentiment shifts, even the institutions that helped build this movement are quietly backing down. Clinics that were once bragging about gender surgeries for teens are suddenly scrubbing websites, issuing vague press releases, and hoping the public doesn't ask too many follow-up questions or demand accountability.

A few hardline activists frame every closure as an assault on "trans rights." Still, the reality is that the medical community is starting to reckon with what many see as one of the biggest ethical and moral failures of our time.

When the history of this moment is written, we will look back at these closures as the beginning of the course correction for a path people never should have taken.

As for those gender clinics closing up shop, maybe now they can pivot to something less controversial and truly beneficial to the health of their patients, like gluten-free juice cleanses. Or colonics. Or anything, really, that doesn't involve prescribing cross-sex hormones or the cutting off of body parts to a 14-year-old who just downloaded TikTok. It's long past time for the medical community to get back to helping and healing rather than harming.

Samantha Koch is married with three children and was a 2020 candidate for State House District 1 in Denver, Colorado. Since that campaign, she has become keenly aware of how important it is to stay informed about what is taking place in government. Koch is unafraid to speak up honestly and challenge the mob, hopefully inspiring others to do the same. She also runs a YouTube channel and can be followed as Outspoken Samantha on Facebook and Twitter.

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Distracted driving accidents are *always* preventable. Driving can become mundane at times, but it's important to distract yourself safely so that no one gets hurt. For example, listening to podcasts or music so that your primary focus is on driving.

If you are a parent, it is critical that you avoid distracted driving at all times, but especially in front of your children. Children will pick up on your actions much quicker than your words.

It's important to practice safe habits behind the wheel. You want to make sure that your passengers know how serious you are about driving without distractions. One of the most effective ways to lead is through example. Be a good example for your friends and family by avoiding driving while you're distracted.

Buckle up, drive safely, and as always, your referrals are appreciated! 256-764-0112



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Notes...

Continued from page 6

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired? FREE 3-Day, 4-Topic Health Seminar on how to choose better health with Dr. Clarence Ing, Internal Medicine August 7 and 8, 6:30pm at Holiday Inn Express, Florence
August 7 - How Not to Die;
August 8 - How Not to Diet
Health Screening available with appointment \$20 (Limited space)
Then, on Saturday, August 9 at Shoals Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2011 CR. 41/Jackson Rd. in Florence
11am - The Advantage; 2pm - How to Reverse Diabetes, Hypertension, Prevent Stroke & Weight Management
This free community event is sponsored by the Shoals Seventh-day Adventist Church. For more information: ShoalsSDAChurch.org or call Stanley (local cell) 269-222-1711

Church Revival at Wright Chapel Community Church in Waterloo Sunday-Wednesday, August 10-13. Sunday at 5pm with speaker Arnold Sheets; Monday- Wednesday at 7pm with speaker Tim Hanback. 101 County Road 8 in Waterloo. Everyone welcome.

Shoals Walk Across America Walk Across Alabama 2025. The Shoals Community Clinic - offers an annual challenge called Shoals Walk Across Alabama. This year, the program is partnering with Tru Freedom Riders, The Alabama Extension Systems, and the YMCA of the Shoals to offer participants opportunities for walking, education, and prizes. Everyone is welcome to attend. The event is free.

Register at any of the weekly group walks. The objective of the walking challenge is to help people set reachable, activity goals and to establish a more active lifestyle. The group will meet once a week for a 1-mile walk at various locations around the Shoals.

Weekly Walks (Thursdays at 4:30 p.m.) SCHEDULE:

- August 7- Martin Park
- August 14 - Sheffield Riverfront Park
- August 21 - McFarland Park
- August 28 - Wilson Park
- September 4 - "Breaking Gym Barriers" Florence YMCA
- September 11 - McFarland Park
- September 18 - Spring Park Tusc.
- September 25 - UNA Fountain
- October 2 - Shef. Riverfront Park
- October 9 - McFarland Park
- October 16 - Riverfront Heritage Park

Misfit Quilters Wanted - This is a craft group for adult friends who draw, craft, paint, sew, quilt, embroider, crochet, etc. (all adult artisans are welcome). Bring your project to work on and come join the fun! This group will meet at the Florence Lauderdale Public Library (in the Board Room) once a month. 2025 dates for this summer/fall are from 1-4pm on Sundays, Aug 10, Sept 21, Oct 19, Nov 16, and Dec 7.

Zach Williams - Sunday, August 10, 7pm at Norton Auditorium in Florence., Come hang out with Zach Williams this summer for an acoustic night of music, stories, and the songs you love - favorites like "Chain Breaker," "Rescue Story," and "Lookin' for You" - all in

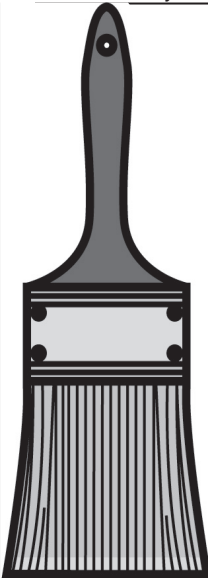
See NOTES... page 22



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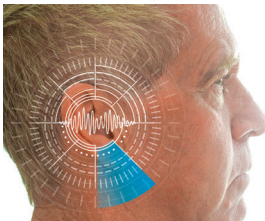
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STRANGE but TRUE

• **James Doohan, beloved by Star Trek fans as "Scotty,"** was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Milwaukee School of Engineering after it was discovered that half of the school's students had been inspired to pursue engineering careers by the fictional character he portrayed.

• **A boy born with only 2% of his brain** defied

doctors' expectations when the organ grew to 80% of the average size.

• **The first written ice cream recipe** was found in a 1665 recipe book.

• **Rocking chairs were used in mental facilities and hospitals** to soothe and comfort patients long before their widespread adoption in homes.

• **Some asteroids** get pulled into a planet's gravity and become their moons.

• **White-tailed jackrabbits** are the greatest land jumpers, having been recorded leaping 21 feet vertically.

• **In early 1949, Victor T. Hoeflich** introduced the "Man-from-Mars Radio Hat," featuring a portable radio built into a pith helmet. It retailed for \$7.95 and was sold across the country for a while, but lost popularity due to its technical limitations, which included losing its signal and making annoying squealing noises.

• **A man was jailed for two years for cheating at poker.** His method? Using infrared contact lenses to see cards pre-marked with invisible ink.

• **The Finnish word "kalsarikännit"** means to get drunk alone at home in your underwear.

• **In Alaska, plants can grow exceptionally large** due to receiving up to 20 hours of sunlight daily, which greatly enhances their photosynthesis process.

• **When Nebraska implemented a law** allowing parents to leave unwanted newborns at safe havens, no age limit was specified. Within just weeks, 36 kids had been dropped off, but not one was a newborn and the oldest was 17.

Thought for the Day:
"A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."
-- Ruth Graham

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Letters...

Scriptural Knowledge

Continued from Page 8

Missionary Baptist in Tuscumbia, where Rev. Jimmy Shaw is pastor, won the Pre-Teen Division Trophy. Bethel Colbert Church won the Participation Trophy. Rev. Westley Thompson is their pastor. Rev. Patrick Smith is Dean of the Congress.

The Ministers Wives were looking forward to attending the Alabama State Congress of Christian Education in Huntsville July 28-30 at the First Missionary Baptist Church on Blue Springs Road. The MW&W wishes all students in the Shoals Area a rewarding 2025-26 school year.

Sheryl Hamilton
MW&W President
Russellville

Trails...

Continued from Page 8

local natural spaces. Participants are recommended to wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes and bring personal water, snacks, and work gloves, though extra water, gloves, and tools will also be provided on site. Led by Kat Robertson, this event offers a chance to help maintain and improve our trails while enjoying the great outdoors. Please note that registration is required, and a separate registration form must be completed for each individual participating, as each person must sign a waiver. Guardians may sign up on behalf of minors. Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve is located at 251 Loop Road in Tuscumbia. To register, please visit landtrustal.org and look under events.



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SIGNS OF THE PAST



Caroline Lee Hentz

Educator and author Caroline Hentz was among the first female novelists in America. Her 13 volumes were some of the most popular in the U.S. during the mid-1800s, and her three dramas were produced in major cities.

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Caroline was born in Massachusetts in 1800 and died 1856 in Florida. Her father had served as a soldier in the American Revolutionary War and her brothers fought in the War of 1812. She lived in 7 states over her lifetime. Her father founded several girl's schools, one of which was in Florence, AL.

~ **Courtesy David Curott** ~ author of
"Historical Markers and Other Signs of the Past"

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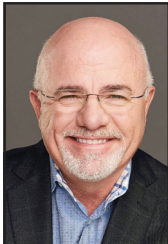
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DAVE Says

by DAVE RAMSEY

FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT NOW

Dear Dave,
I'm 22, working my way through college and I've already been able to start setting money for life after graduation. I had a talk with my parents recently about my plans once I get a real job and get out on my own. They seem to think I'll be okay, but sometimes things can seem so overwhelming. How do people manage and prioritize more adult responsibilities like investing, marriage, having kids and everything else?



Kieran

Dear Kieran,
You're right, it can be overwhelming if you look at all these things as if they have to be done right now. But I'll tell you something you already know: You don't have to do everything right now. It's great to look toward the future, and have a plan, but you're only 22. You've got plenty of time to decide what's important to you. For now, let's just say you've done a great job so far. Take a deep breath and relax. You're way ahead of the game compared to most young people your age, and you should be proud of your accomplishments.

Now, all the things you mentioned are great goals. Some of them *ii* kind of intimidating, but those aren't what you're facing right now. In my mind, finishing college is your number one priority. Then, after you graduate and begin life on your own, you

can begin looking at the other things you mentioned—one at a time. Once you find a good job, you can begin setting aside for retirement. If your car is about to roll over and die, that first step may be a better vehicle. If there's a special lady in your life, you might begin focusing on marriage somewhere down the road.

Don't be too intimidated, Kieran. Things are often easier to deal with when you break them down into smaller pieces and address them individually. There's a funny old adage that goes something like this: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Do you get what I'm saying? Nobody can do four or five big things at once and do them all to the very best of their abilities. Decide

what matters most, put it at the top, and list everything else in descending order of importance. Once you've done this, go down the list, focus and knock them out one after the other.

You're a smart and determined young man, who has accomplished a lot already. Something tells me you can do just about anything you set your mind to!

— Dave

Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national bestselling author, personal finance expert and host of *The Ramsey Show*. He has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *CBS This Morning*, *Today*, *Fox News*, *CNN*, *Fox Business* and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions.

Medicare Minute “Medicare Part A Part 2”

Last week we discussed how Medicare Part A will cover you if you are admitted into the hospital. A hospital, under Medicare, can be acute care hospitals, critical care hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, long term care hospitals or mental health care.

The one aspect of Medicare Part A we get the most questions about is coverage at a skilled nursing facility (SNF). To be covered by Medicare at a SNF certain criteria has to be met. First, of course, is you must have Medicare Part A. Next your doctor has determined that you need daily skilled care given by, or under the supervision of, skilled nursing or therapy personnel. Your skilled nursing care will have to be in a SNF that is certified by Medicare.

What a lot of people don't know is that you must have a “qualifying” hospital stay to be covered at a SNF. Under Medicare a “qualifying” hospital stay is at least a 3-day inpatient stay prior to being admitted to the SNF. If you go to the ER and are held one day for observation and are admitted into the hospital for two days this does not constitute a “qualifying” hospital stay. If you are admitted on a Monday and discharged the following Wednesday this is not a “qualifying” hospital stay. In the two examples above those are 2-day inpatient stays. A good rule of thumb is you must be admitted as inpatient for at least three midnights.

You also need to know that Medicare Part A will only cover you for 100 days at a SNF and only 20 of those days are at 100%. In other words days 1-20 are covered at 100%. Days 21-100 you will pay the first \$209.50 per day and Medicare pays the rest of the cost. Starting with day 101 you will pay 100% of the bill.

If you have questions regarding any aspect of Medicare or Medicare health plans feel free call us at Alabama Health Guidance (256-648-5710), stop by our office at 885 Florence Blvd (Four Lane Shopping Center) or email me at ikey@alabamahealthguidance.com. Alabama Health Guidance is an independent insurance agency and is not affiliated with Medicare or any other government agency.



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Notes...

Continued from page 17

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Parks and Recreation is Now Registering for Fall Sports! We have THREE amazing programs starting soon: Fall Soccer • Girls Flag Football • Flag Football All programs: \$45 registration. Age determination: July 31st. Practice starts: following registration. Season begins in September. Registration closes August 9th - spots fill up fast! Register today and give your child an amazing fall experience with friends and fun!

Summer's favorite fruit takes center stage during the annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival in Russellville August 15-16. The Watermelon Festival offers arts and crafts, a variety of watermelon contests, car and truck show, food vendors, children's activities, games, and musical entertainment, along with free samples of watermelon.

The festival weekend begins with opening ceremonies at 6:30pm on Friday with live music taking the stage both days.

Contests centered on watermelons, including watermelon seed spitting, the largest melon, best tasting melon, most unusual and best-dressed melons, are a highlight each year entertaining festival goers of all ages. Over 100 vehicles are expected for the car and truck show on Saturday morning, and additional activities include a 5K run and 1-mile fun run, character guests to entertain the children, and the Franklin County Extension Office contests. All activities take place along Main Street (Jackson Avenue). Hours are 6-10pm on Friday and 10am-10pm on Saturday. Admission is free. For more details, visit the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce website at www.franklincountychamber.org and click on the Watermelon Festival link or call 256-332-1760. For the latest information, like the Franklin County Watermelon Festival page on Facebook and Instagram.

Shoals Community Theatre — The 2025-26 Zodiac Players and Gingerbread Players theater season at the Shoals Community Theatre, 123 N. Seminary St., Florence: "Barefoot in the Park," play, Zodiac Players, 7:30 p.m. Aug. 14-16 and 2 p.m. Aug. 17, directed by Adam Neal. For information regarding tickets, upcoming shows, or season tickets, go to www.theshoalstheatre.org or call 256-764-1700.

Mustang and All-Ford Show and Shine — The Shoals Mustangs present the 16th annual Shoals area Mustang and All-Ford Show and Shine from 8am - 2pm Saturday, Aug. 16 at McFarland Park, 200 James M. Spain Drive, Florence. Registration is from 8 a.m. to noon. Registration fee is \$20 for first car and \$10 for additional cars. www.shoalsmustangs.com

Crafted Conversations - Thursday, August 21, 6-9pm, at the Singin' River Live, 526 E. College St., Florence. Hosted by Dale Cohen with music by The Dirty Rain Revelers. Doors open at 6pm. Music starts around 6:30pm.

Admission is free! Snacks provided. Bring a friend! A unique evening of live music, interviews, conversations and community discussions on a chosen theme, which changes each month, with different musical guests each month.

Come join the Creative Crafters at the Killen Library. This is a craft group for adult friends who draw, craft, paint, sew, quilt, embroidery, crochet, etc. (all adult artisans are welcome). Bring your project to work on and come join us! This group will meet at the Killen Library once a month. Here are the dates for the rest of the year....

All Saturday Mornings: August 23, Sept 27, Oct 25, Nov. 15, Dec. 20 from 9am-12:45pm. All adults welcome.

TVAA Member Show Now - Aug. 22 ARTworks at Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, 511 N. Water St., Tusculumbia. The museum is open from 9am to 5pm Tuesday-Friday and from 10am to 5pm Saturday. Admission: \$5, \$3 for students and free for members.

The Yellow Dandies will be at The Ritz Theatre, 111 Third Street, Sheffield, from 7-9 p.m. Aug. 23. Cost: \$15-\$25.

The Yellow Dandies group is a high-energy string band from Alabama blending bluegrass, swing, and folk with a playful, modern twist.

The Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts in Florence will present a fiber exhibition, "Holding on to Past & Present Memories" by Mississippi artist Lukeise Swanigan from Now - August 21. The Aberdeen, MS native is a self-taught artist inspired by nature and childhood memories. Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts tours are free and open to the public. The KD Art Center is located at 217 E. Tusculumbia St. in Florence and can be reached by calling 256-760-6379.

LifeSouth Bloodmobile Dates: **Wednesday, August 6** Genesis Healthcare - Glenwood Center, 211 Ana Drive, Florence, 10am - 4 pm

Thursday, August 7 Custom Synthetic Fibers, 101 Jarvis Brewer Dr., Rogersville, 8am - 4 pm

Friday, August 8 Custom Synthetic Fibers, 101 Jarvis Brewer Dr., Rogersville, 6am - 12 pm

Saturday, August 9 First Baptist Church of Lexington, 301 Taylor Kizer St., 12pm - 6pm

Sunday, August 10 North Highlands Church of Christ, 2101 N Jackson Ave N, Russellville, 11:30am - 4pm

Monday, August 11 BAM (Books-a-million) Florence, 10am - 4pm

Tuesday, August 12 Shoals Area Association of Realtors, 364 Cox Creek Pkwy., Florence, 10am - 6pm

Wednesday, August 13 Colbert County High School, 2200 High School St., Art Building, Leighton, 8am - 3:30pm

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BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



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Courier Journal ADOPT A FRIEND

Meet Velvet!

Full of Energy and Even More Love! She's an 8 month old Shepherd mix with a playful, energetic personality and a heart full of love. Velvet would thrive with an active family or someone who enjoys outdoor adventures and playtime. She's ready to bring fun and companionship into your life!

Velvet



Meet Bailey!

A Big Heart and Even Bigger Personality! Bailey is a 5-year-old American Staffordshire Terrier mix with a big smile and an even bigger heart. She's strong and has bursts of medium to high energy, but she calms down quickly and walks nicely on a leash once she settles in. Bailey is ready to meet her forever family and give all the love she has to offer.

Meet CoCo!

Coco has been in foster care for 350 days, patiently waiting for her forever home. She's just as sweet and beautiful as her name suggests. Coco is a 3-year-old brown mixed breed weighing around 36 pounds. She walks beautifully on a leash, adores car rides, and has been living in a foster home with four other dogs. Coco does best with calm, independent dogs — no puppies or high-energy companions, please. She loves treats, thrives on attention, and will happily climb into your lap for cuddles.



Meet Mr. Giggles!

Mr. Giggles is a 10-year-old pup whose world was turned upside down when his owner passed away. Now he's patiently waiting at the shelter for someone to give him the second chance he deserves. This little guy is about 27 pounds of pure love. Calm, quiet, and gentle — he didn't bark once all day. He walked perfectly on a leash, rode calmly in the car, and wasn't fazed by other dogs or even kittens. He seems good with kids too! He isn't neutered yet, but that's already in the works. Whether you can adopt him and give him forever, or foster him just for a little while — it would mean the world to him!



The adoption fee is \$85 and includes everything your new pet needs to be on track for a happy, healthy life: vaccinations, a microchip, spay/neuter, and heartworm test.

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