

## UNA's Jones Elected to Bandmasters Hall of Fame

FLORENCE — Dr. Lloyd Jones, UNA Director of Bands, was inducted into the Alabama Bandmaster Hall of Fame last week during the annual Alabama Music Education Association conference.

The Alabama Bandmaster Hall of Fame is officiated by the state's chapter of Phi Beta Mu, a national fraternity for band directors. The hall is located at Troy University.

Jones plans to retire March 1.

Jones will be the Hall's 54th inductee, joining his father, Eddie Jones. They are the only father-son duo in the Alabama Bandmaster Hall of Fame which was established in 1975.

Nominees are selected and voted on during the fall. The Alabama chapter of Phi Beta Mu has over 100 members. A member must have had 25 years of successful teaching to be nominated for Hall of Fame.

Jones said the people and relationships he developed during his career as a band director have been the highlights of his career.

"I never thought I would be tapped for this honor," Jones said. "These kinds of things don't cross your mind, because the biggest priority is to give your students a great experience and to make sure that they're learning about music and about life."

A formal induction ceremony will take place in April in Mobile during the annual Alabama All State Band Festival.

More SHORTS... on Page 2



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Volume 143 Number 15

February 4, 2026

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## Anticipating Shoals Royale

Largest Fundraiser Returns February 21

FLORENCE - United Way of Northwest Alabama, and presenting

hors d'oeuvres, and a cash bar - all for a great cause.

sponsors Dr. Heather Brody and Clearview Cancer Center, will host the United Way's signature fundraising gala for 2026, the 4th Annual Shoals Royale, on Saturday, February 21 at the Renaissance Shoals Conference Center.

Shoals Royale has become one of Northwest Alabama's premier charity events, uniting local businesses, community leaders, and residents for a night of luxury and purpose.

This casino-themed event brings all the glitz and excitement of Las Vegas to the Shoals, complete with live entertainment, gaming tables, prizes,



entrance.

See ROYALE... on Page 6

Proceeds directly benefit United Way of Northwest Alabama and the 12 local nonprofit partners and 22 community programs it funds, helping to improve education, health, and financial stability across Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, and Marion counties.

The red carpet is being rolled out for a night of elegance and generosity, where class is mixed with community spirit. Though black tie attire is entirely optional, it's a great excuse to dress up and make a grand

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## Connolly Tabbed for Circuit Judge



FLORENCE — Lauderdale County District Attorney Chris Connolly has been appointed as the county's Place 3 Circuit Court Judge.

Governor Kay Ivey's appointment secretary notified him last week about the selection. Connolly was to be sworn into office on Monday, February 2.

Connolly fills the seat left open by Gil Self, who stepped down as judge after a November court conviction for using funds for personal gain and lying to authorities.

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## Clean Closets!



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## INSIDE this Issue

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- Alzheimer's Caregiver Series



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- Moments in Time

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February 19, 2026

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## Shorts...

Continued from Page 1

### Horticulture Conference

FLORENCE – The 29th Annual Urban Forestry & Horticulture Conference for 2026, entitled Roots of Resilience: Creating Livable Communities through Healthy Landscapes, takes place on Friday, March 6 from 8:30am–4pm at Cross Point Church of Christ, located at 1350 Cox Creek Parkway in Florence.

This event features all-day presentations by expert arborists, naturalists, and horticulturists and includes vendor displays and is hosted by the City of Florence Tree Commission and Beautification Board.

Sign-in is at 8am. Registration will be available the morning of at the door or preregistration is available online: <https://florenceal.org/64454-2/> Advance registration is \$50 and includes lunch and snacks. Late registration on the day of is \$55.

Door prize drawings will take place at noon and at 3:45pm. There will also be a giveaway for free dogwood seedlings at the end of the day.

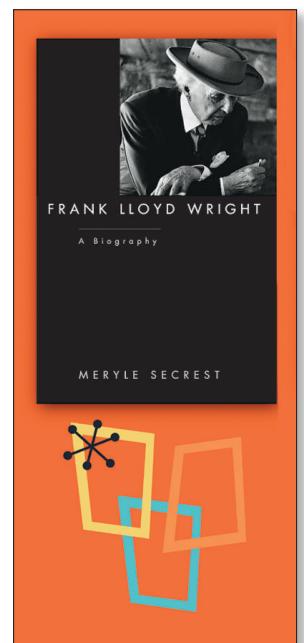
For registration information, lunch choice form and other questions please contact Sydnie Alexander at [salexander2@florenceal.org](mailto:salexander2@florenceal.org) or call 256-760-6407.

### Rosenbaum Book Club

FLORENCE – Florence Arts & Museums recently announced the revival of the Rosenbaum House Book Club, meeting at 6:30pm every Thursday during the month of February inside the Rosenbaum House in Florence. The first meeting is February 5. The house is located at 601 Riverview Drive.

The discussion will center on "Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography," by Meryle Secrest.

This in-depth portrait of America's most famous architect includes personal letters, first-hand accounts, and colorful stories of Frank Lloyd Wright, his family, and his friends. Secrest tells the story of his life so beautifully and honestly



- this is a MUST READ! Copies of the book are available in the gift shop.

The February Book Club will be led by Dorlea Rikard, a retired educator who currently serves as a docent at the FLW Rosenbaum House. Rikard has organized several events at the Rosenbaum House, including the previous iterations of the Book Club as well as Tea on the Terrace. Her return to host the 2026 FLW Book Club at the Rosenbaum House is enthusiastically welcomed.

To sign up for Book Club, visit the website calendar page at [www.florencealmuseums.com/calendar](http://www.florencealmuseums.com/calendar) or call the Rosenbaum House at 256-718-5050.

Hours of operation for the Rosenbaum House are Tuesday-Saturday from 10am-4pm and Sunday from 1pm-4pm. For tour information, visit [wrightinalabama.com](http://wrightinalabama.com), call our office at 256-718-5050, or visit our admissions office.

### Bake Sale for Pet Valentine

FLORENCE – Chloe's Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides financial aid to help with emergency medical expenses for the Florence Lauderdale Animal Shelter animals waiting for adoption, is hosting its annual Be My Valentine Bake Sale on Saturday, February 14 from 1-4pm at the Florence-Lauderdale Animal Services Building.

See **SHORTS...** on Page 6

# BETTER HEARING

WITH DR. HOLLIE GREEN



## Hearing, Relationships, and the Language of Love

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, February is a natural time to reflect on our relationships and the ways we communicate with the people we love. As a Florence native and audiologist serving The Shoals area, I've seen firsthand how hearing loss can quietly affect marriages, families, and friendships.

One of the most interesting things about hearing loss is that the person experiencing it is often the last to notice, as it happens gradually over time. But the signs and symptoms are always there. Our patients describe feeling exhausted after conversations and struggling to follow dialogue in groups, which often leads to withdrawal from social situations. Meanwhile, spouses and loved ones may become annoyed or frustrated by the repeated requests to "say that again," while the television volume creeps higher.

At Alabama Hearing Associates, there's a common joke that we help save marriages — and there's a lot of truth behind it. Communication is at the heart of every relationship, and hearing loss creates barriers that can lead to misunderstandings, tension, and emotional distance. When someone treats their hearing loss, they're not just improving their own experience — they're strengthening their connection with the people around them.

I often hear patients say they didn't realize how much hearing loss was affecting their relationships until it was

addressed. Once hearing is clearer, conversations feel easier and more natural. Couples report feeling closer, less frustrated, and more in tune with each other again. Family gatherings become enjoyable instead of overwhelming, and simple moments — like sharing stories over dinner — feel meaningful once more.

Modern hearing solutions make this process easier than ever. Today's technology is designed to improve speech clarity, even in challenging listening environments, without being bulky or obvious. Many patients are surprised by how comfortable and discreet hearing devices are, and how quickly they adapt to them.

As Valentine's Day approaches, consider hearing health as an act of care — not just for yourself, but for the people who matter most. Addressing hearing loss is an investment in connection, understanding, and shared moments. If hearing loss is affecting your relationships, now is the perfect time to take the next step.

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Sunday, Feb. 8th, 1pm-3pm

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**If you are broken-hearted and weary, come and with the Lord's help, together we will help you find peace!** We hope to see you Sunday for worship or Wednesday evening for Bible study.



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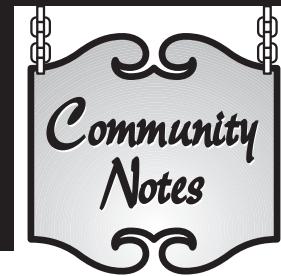
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can be assured of getting your paws on your share of the baked goods.

Order cakes, cookies, breads, cupcakes, pies and various goodies for you and your furbaby through the menu, available on the Florence Lauderdale Animal Services Facebook page, and the Chloe's Fund for Medical Needs of Florence Shelter Animals Facebook page.

Bake Sale coordinator, Lisa Wilson Rim will also accept a text or call and she will send you a menu - 804-240-6880 (local call). The deadline to pre-order is 3pm Tuesday, February 10. Pick up those orders on Valentine's Day from 1-4pm at FLAS. Didn't preorder? Take your chances that the bakers made more than were ordered. All money raised from the Bake Sale goes directly into Chloe's Fund, the 501(c)(3) non profit that provides financial aid to help with emergency medical expenses for the Florence Lauderdale Animal Shelter animals waiting for adoption.

**The 4th Annual Shoals Scale Back - Feb 21 from 1PM-4:30PM** at Coach Harvest Mitchell Gym. The theme is "Love your city, love yourself."

Hosted by Council President Kaytrina Simmons, Susan Bently, Dr. Javar Myatt-Jones, and City of Florence Parks & Rec.

For more info contact: Council President Kaytrina Simmons: 256-349-8379 or Susan Bently: 256-856-3918

**Dare to experience the dangers and delights of "Dinosaur World Live"** in this Olivier award-winning interactive show for all the family. **Thursday, February 12 at 6pm** at UNA's Norton Auditorium.

Grab your compass and join our intrepid explorer across uncharted territories to discover a prehistoric world of astonishing (and remarkably life-like) dinosaurs. Meet a host of impressive creatures, including every child's favorite flesh-eating giant, the Tyrannosaurus Rex, a Triceratops, Giraffatitan, Microraptor and Segnosaurus!

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**See NOTES... page 8**

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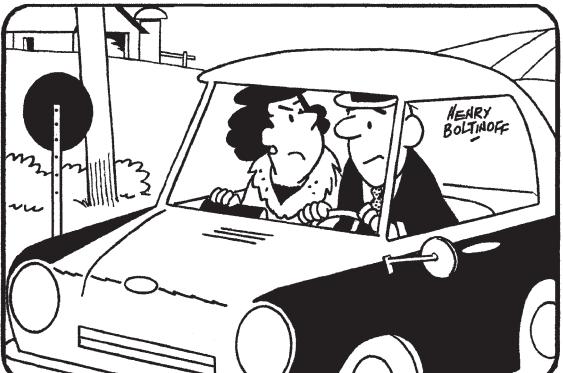
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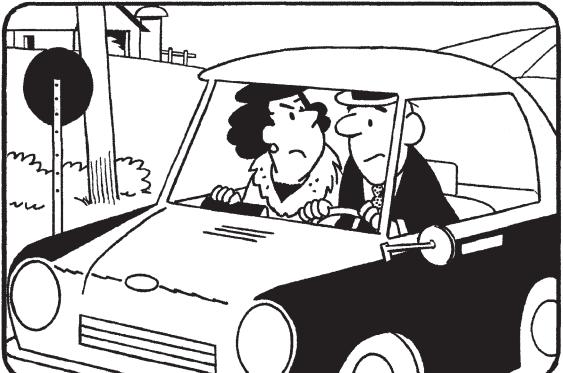
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**HOCUS-FOCUS** BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Side mirror is moved. 2. Grill is different. 3. Sign is taller. 4. Door handle is different. 5. Fence is different. 6. Headrest is added.



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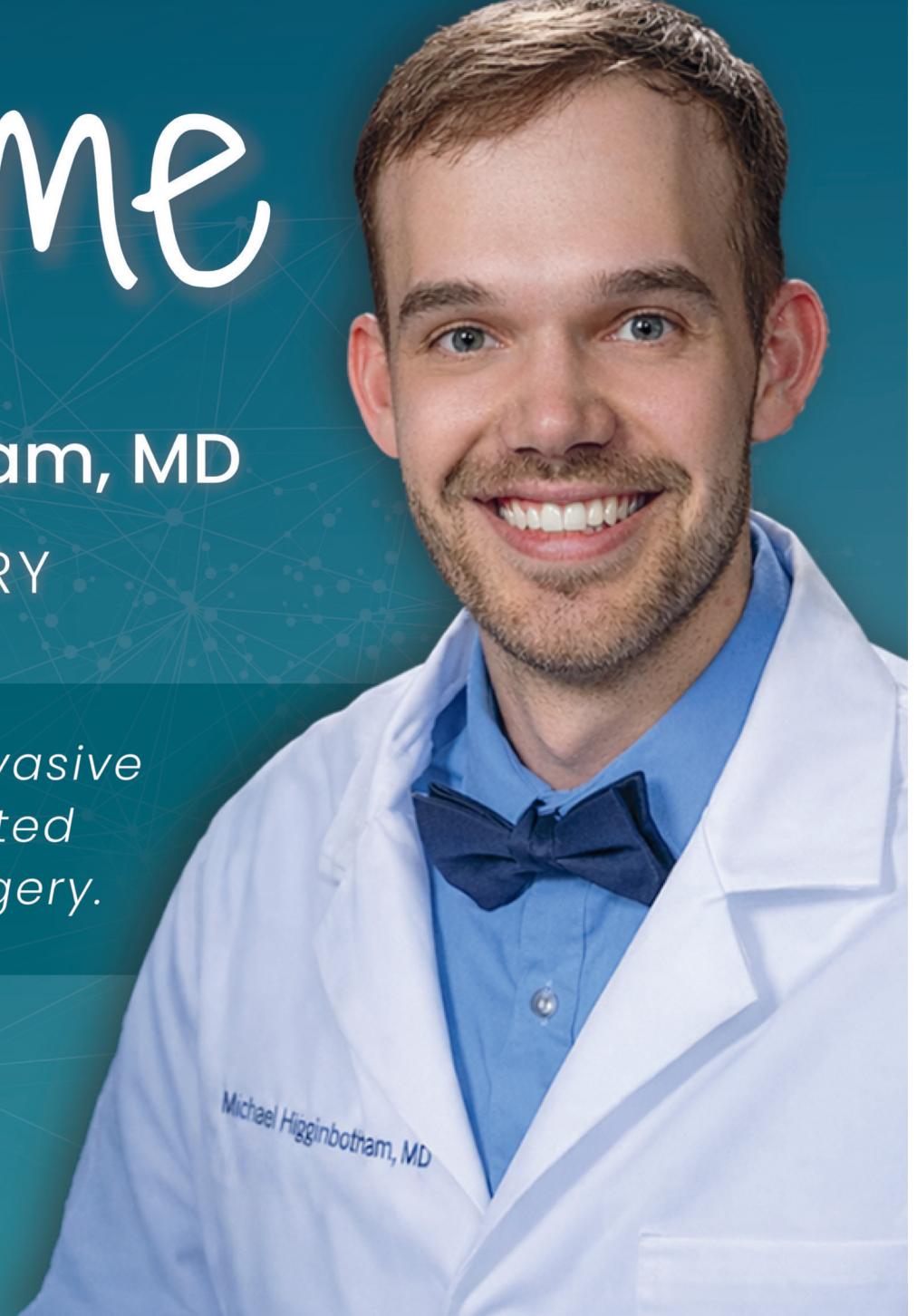
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**Please Print Ad Clearly.** NOT RESPONSIBLE for illegible handwriting

**Questions?** Call our office at 256-764-4268.

Courier Journal

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**OFFICE STAFF/SALES ASST.**  
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Ted Fallin

**OFFICE HOURS:**  
Monday - Friday  
8:00am - 5:00pm

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**DEADLINES:** Issues Published Every Wednesday  
INSERTS - 5 pm Thursday  
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CLASSIFIED ADS - 5 pm Friday unless otherwise specified

**219 W. Tennessee St.**

Florence, AL 35630  
256-764-4268  
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Your Courier Journal is published for total saturation, direct-mail delivery every Wednesday to 51,892 Shoals area and surrounding homes. It is Alabama's Largest Weekly-Mailed Direct, and enjoys a larger circulation than all local subscriber based newspapers combined.

**EDITORIAL POLICY:** Your Courier Journal accepts a variety of news releases, photos, stories, Letters to the Editor and upcoming community, church or civic events for publication as space permits. Please submit all materials in written form to:

**219 W. Tennessee St.  
Florence, AL 35630**  
or email to:  
[editor@courierjournal.net](mailto:editor@courierjournal.net)

well in advance of the planned event. The Editor reserves right to shorten, edit, reword or omit submissions as seen fit. All information submitted for publication becomes property of the Courier Journal. Information published does not necessarily reflect an opinion or endorsement by the Courier Journal, members of its management, or its staff. Advertisers are responsible for all content and claims in their advertising.

## Royale...

Continued from Page 1

The evening will feature live entertainment by Coffee Black, adding their brand of high-energy sound to the celebratory atmosphere.

"Shoals Royale is the most fun way to make an impact in our community," said Kerry Del Pizzo, COO of United Way of Northwest Alabama. "Every spin of the wheel and every hand played helps change lives right here at home."

Tickets are \$125 each or \$200 per couple and include \$250 in gaming money per person. Numerous sponsorship levels are also available with their own ticket counts, drinks, and other perks. Physical tickets will be mailed.

Ticket options and more details are available now at [givebutter.com/shoalsroyale2026](http://givebutter.com/shoalsroyale2026).

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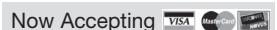
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## Shorts...

### Bake Sale for Pet Valentine

Continued from Page 2

Delectable treats and surprise goodies will be available on site. However, as usual, ordering in advance is the only way you can be assured of getting your paws on your share of the baked goods.

Order cakes, cookies, breads, cupcakes, pies, and various goodies for you and your fur baby through the menu, available on the Florence Lauderdale Animal Services Facebook page, and the Chloe's Fund for Medical Needs of Florence Shelter Animals Facebook page.

Bake Sale coordinator, **Lisa Wilson Rim** will also accept a text or call, and she will send you a menu - 804-240-6880 (local call). All the volunteer bakers have become well-known for their specialty items. The deadline to pre-order is 3pm Tuesday, February 10, but don't wait and forget. Pick up that order on Valentine's Day from 1-4pm at FLAS, located at 3240 Roberson Rd. Florence Industrial Park. If you forget to preorder, you can take your chances that the bakers made more than were ordered (they usually do).

All money raised from the Bake Sale goes directly into Chloe's Fund to benefit the animals.



people that are rooted in early traditions.

Hosted by **Beth Phillips**, this Kudzu presentation will provide an opportunity for participants to learn about Kudzu by familiarizing people with examples of the different types of kudzu products and recipes. This event will take place on Sunday, February 8 at 1pm.

Hosted by **Summer McCreless**, these three demonstrations will provide an opportunity for participants to learn how to make tea, medicine, and soap out of native plants.

- Herbal Tea: Sunday, February 22 at 1pm
- Herbal Medicine: Sunday, March 8 at 1pm
- Soap Making: Sunday, March 22 at 1pm



Hosted by **Nadene Mairesse**, this workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to make ink out of native plants. This event will take place on Sunday, March 29 at 1pm.

For questions, please call 256-760-6379 or email: [connect@florencealmuseums.com](mailto:connect@florencealmuseums.com).

### Plant Series Starts Feb. 8

**FLORENCE** - Florence Arts & Museums is excited to launch the Alabama Plants Series. This year the series will feature a combination of demonstrations, presentations, and workshops.

The Alabama Plant Series is a set of five workshops hosted at Pope's Tavern Museum at 203 Hermitage Drive in Florence. Each of these events will cost \$20 per participant.

These workshops are meant to draw the connections between Native American cultures, Alabama plants, and the products created by



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**256-764-4268**

I've warned you before. I asked you to cut this article out and tape it to your computer. This week has been especially alarming here at the store. The number of calls I have received and the customers who have walked in to have their computers repaired? It's sad. I know you all are used to a light hearted take on the world of technology in this space, but this really has me down in the dumps.



Martin Dean

### Why It's a Terrible—and Costly—Idea

These pop-ups are designed with one purpose: to frighten you into making an impulsive call. They use fake security alerts, counterfeit Microsoft logos, and blaring sirens to create a sense of panic. Once you call the number,

## Urgent Alert: Never Call Unsolicited "Support" Numbers on Your PC Screen

by "The Computer Skeptic"

you are connected to sophisticated criminals posing as "technicians." Here's what happens next:

**1. The Deception Begins:** The "support agent" will ask for remote access to your computer, often by having you download a program like AnyDesk or TeamViewer.

**2. The False "Diagnosis":** Once inside your system, they will show you normal system files or fabricated errors as "proof" of severe problems like viruses or hardware failure.

**3. The Financial Trap:** They then demand hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars for unnecessary "repairs," "lifetime security subscriptions," or "software licenses." They often request payment via wire transfer, gift cards, or cryptocurrency, which are untraceable and non-refundable.

**4. The Lasting Damage:** Worse than stealing your money, these scammers can install real malware, steal personal files, passwords, and financial data, or leave backdoors for future attacks.

### The One Thing You Must Do: TURN IT OFF

When you see one of these fraudulent alerts, your immediate action should be to not engage and not call their number. Do not click anywhere inside the pop-up, even to close it, as this can sometimes trigger malware downloads.

Instead, shut down the computer. I know, I know, the screen is yelling at you to not turn your computer off. Please trust me, this is your first line of defence. Press and HOLD the power button on your PC or laptop for at LEAST 20 seconds. This will assure your device is fully powered off. That is the secret sauce here. Modern systems are designed to go into a sleep mode for quick recovery if you just press and release the button. We want a FULL power cycle. After the system is shut down, you can safely turn it back on. When you open

your browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari) it will notify you that it was improperly shut down and offer to restore pages,

### DO NOT RESTORE PAGES.

You should be fine from this point on. If it happens again? Repeat the process.

If you called, and some of you will...After you get off the phone with the scammer, your first call should be to your bank. Tell them what you did. They know what to do. Your second call is to us, cause we also know what to do. Stay skeptical my friends. We'll see you soon.



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## Judge... Continued from Page 1

Connolly has been district attorney since January 2005. He decided to apply for the appointment at the suggestion of many of his peers.

"I'm so appreciative of all the folks in the legal community who encouraged me to seek this appointment," he said.

The Place 3 term runs through 2028.

This will leave the district attorney's post open. Connolly said Ivey will make an appointment for that position.

"I'm certainly excited," Connolly said. "I have loved being the district attorney, and I look forward to this new season in my life."

Connolly's addition will increase the number of circuit judges in the county to four. The others are Ben Graves in Place 1, Will Powell in Place 2, and Carole Coil Medley in Place 4.

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out on the fun - it's the perfect way to soak up the spirit of Mardi Gras together! Table decoration contest! King and Queen Contest! Food! DJ! Tickets on eventbrite.

The 8th Annual Northwest Alabama Farm Toy Show, February 13-14 at the Clarion Inn. This is a huge event to buy, sell, & trade farm toys. There will be a display competition, door prizes, and a pedal tractor raffle.

Times: Feb 13 4pm-8:30pm, Feb 14 8:30am-2pm

See NOTES... page 11

## Community Notes...

Continued from page 8

**Northwest RC&D Council Quarterly Meeting, Thursday, February 18.** You are invited to attend. Registration 9:30am, Meeting starts at 10am. At the Guin Holiday Inn, 5750 AL-44, Guin, AL.

(Northwest Alabama Resource Conservation and Development Council) The mission of The Northwest Alabama RC&D Council is to implement and promote impact, driven projects and activities designed to promote the sustainability and productivity of the abundant, natural and human resources of our five-county, target area while improving the quality of life within the community. The Council consists of the following counties: Lauderdale | Colbert | Franklin | Marion | Winston

Please let us know to expect your presence by February 10, 256-383-1446.

**Menopause the Musical 2® - Cruising Through 'The Change'** Thursday, February 19, 7pm at Norton Auditorium in Florence.

GFour Productions, winners of 68 Drama Desk and 54 Tony Awards has announced a new nationwide tour of Menopause the Musical 2: Cruising Through 'The Change' beginning on the East Coast followed by more than 50 cities across the United States and Canada.

Menopause the Musical 2 is the new sequel to the long-running, international hit show Menopause the Musical, a groundbreaking celebration of women who are on the brink of, in the middle of, or have experienced 'The Change.' Five years after their chance encounter in a department store, we set sail with our beloved ladies for more high jinks on the high seas - plus hot flashes, mood swings, and memory lapses! Join them on a trip of self-discovery, backed by a new soundtrack of toe-tapping parodied hits from the 70s, 80s and 90s.

Stops on the national tour include New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Indiana, Illinois, Florida, Texas, California, Michigan, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and more.

For tickets, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/SSDMenopause>

**St. Joseph Mardi Gras By Knights of Columbus Council 3989 Saturday, Feb. 7 from 6:30pm to 11pm at St. Joseph Regional Catholic School,**

Florence.

Join us at St. Joseph Mardi Gras for food, dancing, and fun! Dress to Impress at St. Joseph Mardi Gras!

Get ready for a day full of excitement and good vibes at the St. Joseph Mardi Gras celebration! This in-person event is all about vibrant colors, lively music, and amazing food. Bring your friends and family to enjoy the festive atmosphere and make unforgettable memories. Don't miss

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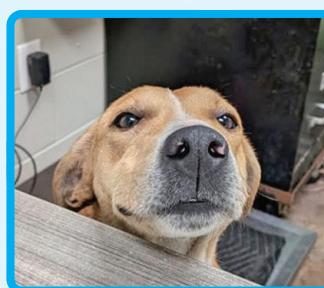
**Franklin**

Franklin is a goofy, sweet boy with the most expressive face — yes, including that adorable little tongue-out look! This handsome guy has a sleek black coat with a splash of white on his chest and a personality that shines just as bright. If you're looking for a loyal best friend who brings both fun and snuggles, Franklin is your guy.



**Biscuit**

Biscuit is a beautiful, gentle girl with soulful eyes that will melt you instantly. She has such a sweet, calm presence and gives off that loving, loyal companion energy. Biscuit is the kind of dog who just wants to be near her people and be part of the family.



This sweet girl is ready to trade the kennel for a couch and a family of her own.

**Milo**

Milo is a fluffy, adorable boy with the cutest face and a soft, expressive gaze. His black-and-white coat makes him extra eye-catching, and his personality is just as wonderful. He looks at you like he's trying to understand every word — and honestly, he probably is!



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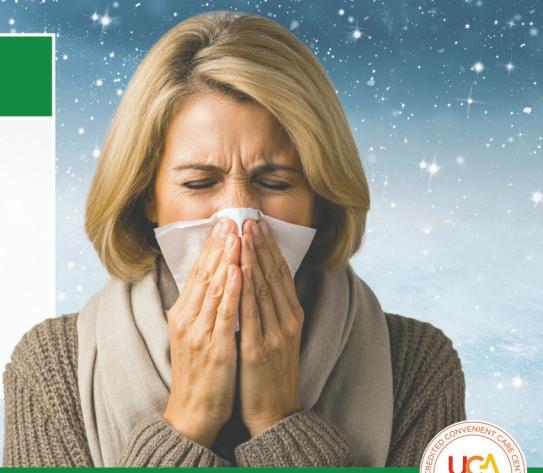
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## Notes...

Continued from page 8

**Who Killed the Love Interest? Murder Mystery Event** Saturday, Feb. 21 from 5:30pm to 7pm. At Court Street Books, 610 S Court Street, Florence) By Lin Cognito's Murder Mystery Parties

Love murder mysteries? Think you've got a good "read" on how to solve a crime? We've got you "covered" with a page-turner of a party!

Calling all detectives, true crime readers, and book lovers! Lin Cognito—the world's finest pun-cracking, match-making, clue-solving detective—is back, and she needs your help to find out "Who Killed the Love Interest?"

Join a small group of book lovers to complete puzzles, look for clues, and talk about your favorite literary tropes.

Get ready to crack up and crack the case. All Ages

**Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club,** 10am, third Wednesday, (February 18) at Helen Keller Public Library, 511 Main St., Tuscaloosa. nancy537481@yahoo.com

and making a positive impact on our community

**The Shoals Royale will return at the Renaissance Shoals Conference Center on Feb 21** from 7-11pm.

Delight in an array of delectable hors d'oeuvres that will tantalize your taste buds and quench your thirst with a selection of beverages from our cash bar. It's the perfect setting to mingle, catch up with friends, and meet fellow supporters of our community!

**The Shoals Royale will return at the Renaissance Shoals Conference Center on Feb 21** from 7-11pm.

Delight in an array of delectable hors d'oeuvres that will tantalize your taste buds and quench your thirst with a selection of beverages from our cash bar. It's the perfect setting to mingle, catch up with friends, and meet fellow supporters of our community!

and making a positive impact on our community

**Florence Wine Fest 2026 - Feb 20 - Feb 22**, at The Carriage Wine and Market, 121 E Mobile St., Florence.

Three shimmering days and nights of champagne moments, moonlit music, and generous pours — from a glittering supper-club opening to a grand wine tasting, a jubilant open-air celebration, and an exclusive Ultimate V.I.P. and Industry Brunch.

February 20-22, 2026 · Downtown Florence, AL. Explore à la carte experiences or choose the all-inclusive Ultimate V.I.P. Weekend Package. All prices include gratuity.

Ultimate V.I.P. capacity is strictly limited — first come, first serve availability. Tickets on Sale Now: [www.florencewinefest.com](http://www.florencewinefest.com)

**Getting Ready for Spring Planting!** Monday, February 2, 11am-12pm at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library

It is not too early to prepare for spring planting! Alabama Extension Agent Makahla Holloway will offer tips and practices to home gardeners.

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THANK YOU for reading the Courier Journal!

See NOTES... page 30



**Meeting will be**  
**Sunday, Feb. 8 • 2pm**  
Woodmont Church - Building B,  
2002 Darby Dr., Florence

**FRIENDS, CARING AND SHARING**

For information, email: [crimsonelf@att.net](mailto:crimsonelf@att.net)

**Herbal Tea:** Sunday, February 22, 1pm

**Herbal Medicine:** Sunday, March 8, 1pm

**Soap Making:** Sunday, March 22, 1pm

Hosted by Nadene Mairesse, this workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to learn how to make ink out of native plants. This event will take place on Sunday, March 29th at 1pm.

The Alabama Plant Series is a set of five workshops hosted at Pope's Tavern Museum. These workshops are meant to draw the connections between Native American cultures, Alabama plants, and the products created by people that are rooted in early traditions.

All of these events will cost \$20 per participant and will take place at Pope's Tavern Museum, 203 Hermitage Drive, Florence, AL. Pope's Tavern is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10am until 4pm, and is located at 203 Hermitage Drive, Florence, AL 35630. For questions, call: (256) 760-6379 or email: [connect@florencealmuseums.com](mailto:connect@florencealmuseums.com).

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**(256) 648-5710**

Ask about specific enrollment times for those who qualify.

# College, NFL, and Youth Gambling

**A** decade ago, sports betting on college and pro sports was largely illegal across the United States, except in a few places like Nevada. It was just understood to be illegal until the passage of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) in 1992, the federal law that effectively prohibited states from legalizing sports betting.

In May of 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled PASPA unconstitutional, which gave individual states the option of deciding whether they wanted to legalize sports betting.

Historically, pro and amateur sports were against sports wagering, concerned that it could undermine the integrity of the games. The NFL quickly formed partnerships to get a piece of the action. Some sportsbooks can be found inside NFL stadiums.

Some 39 states and the District of Columbia now have legalized sports betting with varying regulations, few of which they hope will restrict the betting process despite the

**See YOUTH GAMBLING... on Page 26**

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

## In A Few Words



**TOM MAGAZZU**  
Editor

February 4, 2026

**Happening  
THIS WEEK**

# THIS WEEK

## Caregiver Series

Five Saturdays  
to Help Families  
Care for, Navigate  
Alzheimer's

FLORENCE — More than 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's affects the whole family, however, there are many avenues of assistance.

The Coalition for Alzheimer's and Related Disorders is partnering with the Florence Lauderdale Public Library to present a 5-part series for caregivers and families facing Alzheimer's. Learn how to care for, communicate, and navigate through legal, financial, and medical areas as a caregiver.

Each session of the series will take place from 10:30am-12:30pm on the first Saturday



Photos: alz.org



**A Five-Part  
First Saturday Series for  
CAREGIVERS & FAMILIES  
OF ALZHEIMER'S PATIENTS  
Beginning February 7**

of each month from February-June in the library's conference room.

The series will cover an array of topics. Planned speakers include an eldercare

**See CAREGIVER... on Page 20**

**THE TENNESSEE VALLEY MUSEUM OF ART** exhibit, *Favorite Things: The Shoals Collects!*, runs through February 28. The exhibition featuring sculpture, ceramic, fiber, drawing, and painting. The museum is located at 511 N. Water St. in Tuscmibia. For more information, contact the museum at 256-383-0533.

**A CLOTHES GIVEAWAY FOR KILLEN** and the surrounding area takes place from 8-10am Thursday, February 5 at the Care Center, First Baptist Church in Killen. Winter Infants - Adults, Clothes, and Shoes.

**THE BATTING BRIGADE QUILT GUILD** has hospitality at 9am the second Monday of the month, (February 9) with a meeting at 9:30am, at Edgemont United Methodist Church in Florence. Call Liz at 601-590-4367 for information.

**THE MUSCLE SHOALS PUBLIC LIBRARY** is hosting an Adult Craft Night where participants can create Book Page Hearts, a project that blends a love of books with crafting. The event is scheduled for Thursday, February 5 at 5:30pm. Tickets are \$5, available at the circulation desk, and include all necessary supplies. Because space is limited, attendees are encouraged to purchase tickets soon. For more information, contact Muscle Shoals Public Library at 256-386-9212.

**BASKETBALL**  
MEN

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## YOUR Letters

Your Courier Journal welcomes tastefully presented typed or neatly written letters to be published as space allows. Letters may refer to timely matters of local, state, or national interest or any topic of concern or interest. Letters must include name, address and phone number for verification. (Only name and town will be published.) Letters are subject to editing. Please limit to 400 words. All letters become the property of the Courier Journal and may not necessarily reflect opinions of the Courier Journal staff, its advertisers, or a majority of readers.

• by Mail, in Person, or Mail Slot

Editor-Courier Journal  
219 W. Tennessee St., Florence, AL 35630  
• e-mail: [editor@courierjournal.net](mailto:editor@courierjournal.net)  
• FAX- 256-760-9618

## You Won't Starve!

Editor,

Hearing about a giant storm system covering a huge area of the United States is always something to pay close attention to. A winter storm bringing ice, snow, dangerous roads, injuries from falling trees and lines, vulnerable people, plunging temps, and power outages are

serious matters. Life threatening at times. All around, a bad situation for a particular duration. Everyone remains hopeful for the best outcome when all is said and done.

I've always been confused about panic grocery buying. News coverage from many states showed empty grocery shelves. Why? Is this society so focused on starving to death for a day or two (or even a week) that the food already in their pantry won't keep them alive? It's ridiculous.

... The day of reckoning is coming for the cowards in congress who refuse to stand up to a Bully-Punk ...

“

Exactly how much milk, eggs, bread and snacks does a family need to get through a weather event?

Yes, there are certainly things to make sure a family has on hand; a full gas tank for their car, bottled water, medications they need, and flashlights (I'm not a big fan of candles but if nothing else is available, then so be it). I don't see where hundreds of dollars in Doritos, soda, ice cream, cookies and cupcakes will save lives during a day or two of severe weather. I saw on a news clip of a woman piling frozen pizzas and frozen dinners on a checkout belt. Again, why? If she loses power, she's not able to cook them.

People are far too worried about ridiculous items during an emergency

**See LETTERS... on Page 14**

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## Letters...

### You Won't Starve!

Continued from Page 12

and really need to re-think what they keep on hand for food every day. No one will starve in a few days living off what is already in their pantry.

Sharon Lawrie  
Florence

### The Cowards in Congress

To the Editor,

Once again, our government appears headed for another "shut down." Speaker Mike Johnson put the House of Representatives on another paid vacation because Don Trump ordered him to, so the House would not have to face critical votes to keep the government open.

That means Congressman Aderholt is on another paid vacation.

Congress was out for the entire month of August. Then, Mikey "no spine" Johnson put them out for the entire month of September to avoid a vote on the Epstein/Trump child rape trafficking scheme.

So, where has Aderholt been through all these vacation periods? Probably hiding in a closet, because he is too much of a coward to stand up to Trump and his puppet, Mikey Johnson.

ICE is wreaking havoc on communities and killing innocent people as Aderholt and his fellow cowards are on another paid vacation to protect them from voting on issues that affect his district.

The day of reckoning is coming for the cowards in congress who refuse to stand up to a Bully-Punk. November 2026 is coming fast, Congressman Aderholt, and the voters will decide if they have had enough.

Larry J. Smith  
Florence

### A Cash Grab by Lindsey

Editor,

A Lindsey Graham cash grab attempt has temporarily shut down the Senate before the Senate can even vote on the shutdown deal made between Trump and Senate Democrats.

Graham wants Trump-style reparation payments for senators who had their phone records seized by special counsel Jack Smith during the investigation Trump's 2020 attempted election steal. ("Capitol agenda: Senate shutdown deal hits a Lindsey Graham snag," Politico, 1-30-26)

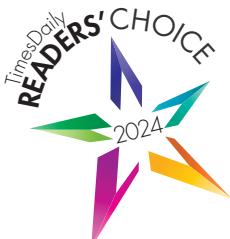
Regardless of whether this snag is resolved and the Trump/Democrat deal moves forward or not, we are getting a huge glimpse into the hypocritical mindset of a MAGA leader in the Senate.

See LETTERS... on Pg 30

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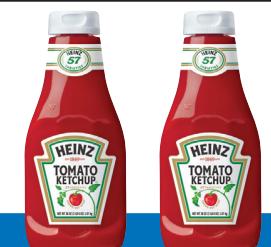
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**Mtn. Dew, Sunkist, Starry  
Or PEPSI 2 Liters**

**2/\$4**

**Mtn. Dew, Sunkist, Starry  
Or PEPSI 6 Pk. .5 Liters  
Or 10 Pk. Mini Cans**

**3/\$12 MINI**



**Lay's  
CHIPS  
7-8 Oz.**

**2/\$5**

**DORITOS  
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**Golden Flake, UTZ, Zapp's  
CHIPS OR On the Border  
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**2/\$4**

**Blue Bell  
ICE CREAM  
1/2 Gallon Or 12 Pk. Cups**

**\$6.49**



**Philadelphia  
CREAM CHEESE  
8 Oz. ....**

**2/\$5**

**Dean's  
DIPS  
16 Oz. ....**

**\$1.79**

**Country Crock  
MARGARINE  
45 Oz. ....**

**\$5.99**

**Pillsbury Grands  
BISCUITS OR  
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**Kellogg's: APPLE JACKS, FROSTED FLAKES, CORN FLAKES OR FROOT LOOPS**  
Family Size



**\$4.99**

**Oreo COOKIES**  
13-14 Oz.



**\$3.99**

**CHEX MIX OR BUGLES**  
7-8 Oz.



**2/\$5**

**RITZ CRACKERS**  
13 oz., CHEEZ-IT OR CLUB CRACKERS  
9-13 oz.



**\$3.99**

**Planters PEANUTS**  
10-16 Oz.



**2/\$5**

**Kraft DELUXE MAC & CHEESE OR VELVEETA SHELLS & CHEESE**  
10-14 Oz.



**\$2.99**

**Betty Crocker FRUIT SNACKS**  
6-10 ct.



**2/\$5**

**Nature Valley GRANOLA BARS**  
Or General Mills CEREAL BARS  
5-8 ct.



**2/\$5**

**McCormick CHILI MIX**  
1 Oz.



**4/\$5**

**McCormick TACO SEASONING**  
1 Oz.



**99¢**

**General Mills CINN. TOAST CRUNCH, HONEY NUT CHEERIOS OR LUCKY CHARMS**  
Giant Size



**\$4.99**

**Pillsbury CAKE MIX**  
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**\$1.19**

**Green Giant MEXICORN, SHOEPING, YELLOW OR WHITE CORN**  
11 Oz.



**\$1.69**

**MANWICH**  
15 Oz.



**\$1.19**

**Brawny TOWELS**  
4 Double Rolls Or Quilted Northern BRAWNY TOILET PAPER  
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107 Loads OR FLINGS  
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**Miller Lite, Coors Light Or Yuengling BEER** 12 Pk. Cans Or Bottles  
**\$12.99**

**Michelob Ultra BEER** 24 Pk. Cans Or Bottles  
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**Jack Daniel's COCKTAILS**  
6 Pk. Bottles  
**\$7.99**

**Josh Cellars WHITE WINES**  
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**Not Available At All Locations!**

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**King's Hawaiian Assorted Varieties BUNS OR ROLLS**  
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**\$3.99**

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**Pick up a copy of this ad in a Courier Journal at our store OR go online to Foodlandgrocery.com**



# Savvy SENIOR

## Do I Need to File a Tax Return This Year?

Dear Savvy Senior,  
What are the IRS income tax filing requirements for retirees this tax season? I didn't file a tax return last year because my income was below the filing threshold, but I got a part-time job in 2025, so I'm wondering if I need to file this year.

Semi-retired Joe

Dear Joe,  
Whether you need to file a federal income tax return this year depends on several factors: how much you earned in 2025, the source of your income, your age, and your filing status. Here's a quick guide to this year's IRS filing thresholds. For most people, it's

straightforward: if your gross income (all taxable income, excluding Social Security benefits unless you're married and filing separately) is below the threshold for your filing status and age, you generally do not need to file. But if it's over, you will.

### 2025 IRS Federal Filing Thresholds:

- Single:** \$15,750 (\$17,750 if you're 65 or older by Jan. 1, 2026).
- Married filing jointly:** \$31,500 (\$33,100 if one spouse is 65 or older; or \$34,700 if you're both over 65).
- Married filing separately:** \$5 at any age.

**Head of household:** \$23,625 (\$25,625 if 65 or older).

**Qualifying surviving spouse:** \$31,500 (\$33,100 if 65 or older).

For a detailed breakdown, including taxable vs. nontaxable income, you can request a free copy of the IRS "1040 and 1040-SR Instructions for Tax Year 2025" by calling 800-829-3676, or view it online at [IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep) to locate services near you.

You can also get help through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service at [AARP.org/findtaxhelp](https://AARP.org/findtaxhelp) or call 888-227-7669. You don't have to be an AARP member to use this service.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit [SavvySenior.org](https://SavvySenior.org).

Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.



## SIGNS OF THE PAST



**Location:** 34.4443°N, 87.4846°W  
**Co.Rd. 448, Mount Hope, Alabama**

The Alabama Folklife Association has some interesting historical (?) markers which border on folklore. It's not often you see "faith healer" and "fortune teller" mentioned on an historical marker.

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

software companies. Your 2025 adjusted gross income must be below \$89,000 to qualify.

If you need some help with your tax returns, the IRS sponsored Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program provides free tax preparation and counseling to middle and low-income taxpayers, age 60 and older. Call 800-906-9887 or visit [IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](https://IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep) to locate services near you.

You can also get help through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service at [AARP.org/findtaxhelp](https://AARP.org/findtaxhelp) or call 888-227-7669. You don't have to be an AARP member to use this service.

### The Two Bible Deaths

Hebrews 2:15 "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Most folks today are scared of dying, but the graveyards are proof of the first death. The reason why we fear death is the uncertainty of what follows. Today, I will with scripture clear up some foggy notions, dogmas, churches have created. Death, any kind, is the results of sin we acquired from our original parents! Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It's a physical and spiritual problem that medicine and science cannot fix! In Genesis, after the fall, God cursed the ground and everything we eat comes from the ground. Before the fall, they had no blood like we have today but, the original couple got their blood from a grape tree they were told not to touch or eat! Study the words: "grape" & "grapes" in the KJV, and you might learn something! Nevertheless, the old adage rules; "born once die twice" born twice die once". The physical death for the saved is a smooth transition, BUT the lost man has bigger troubles ahead!

The second death is where the final horror takes place. It is mentioned four times in the book of Revelation, KJV, and is connected with judgment! Born once, die twice. There's two major judgments, the judgment seat of Christ and the White Throne Judgment, where the universe is present. At the latter you will meet folks that you scorned, laughed at, and you will see your own account of rejection of their message. At the first death, everyone loses their physical body shape, but at the 2nd death judgment, the damned will lose their soul-body shape an be reduced to the body of their father the devil who is a serpent! See Isaiah 66:24 & verses Christ quoted three times: Mark 9:44,46,48! Their "worm" dieth not, a personal body, like a worm or a snake! Chew on that a while before you decide you don't need God or a Saviour!

Christ is still available and just a prayer away!

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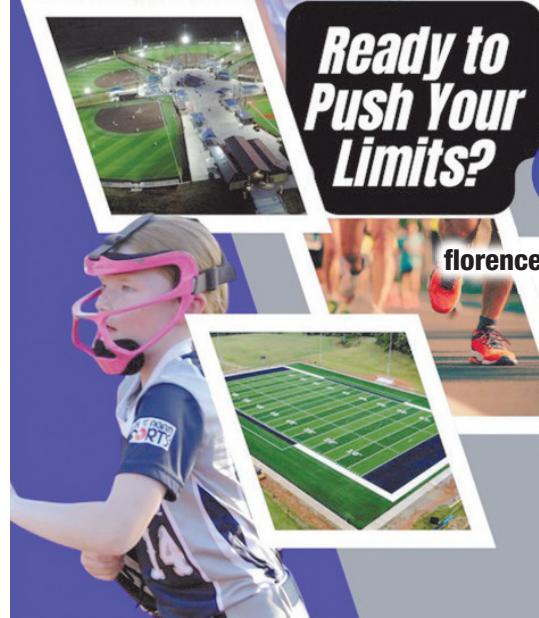
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## Caregivers

Continued from Page 12

attorney, a bank manager, a local mental health law enforcement officer, a grief counselor, a physician, a social worker, and more. There is no charge to attend.

**Feb. 7** - Types of age-related dementia, Alzheimer's stages, dealing with local first responders when needed

**March 7** - Planning for the future financially, legally, and medically, building a family and friends support team

**April 4** - Home safety and behavior changes, redirection, and medications

**May 2** - Transitions in care during the journey, including in-home care, assisted living, and skilled care nursing

**June 6** - The latter stages of Alzheimer's, including quality of life, anticipatory grief, respite care and palliative care.

The library is located at 350 N. Wood Ave. in Florence. Plenty of parking is available in the lot at the rear of the building. Please go to the library's website at flpl.org for updates and additional details or call 256-764-6564.

**FIREWOOD 4x8-Rick** Seasoned Hardwood Mix: oak, hickory, cherry, ash. \$50 You-Haul It!  
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# ASK THE ATTORNEY



## New Specialty – Personal Assets

Joel and I go to seminars at least every year. We go to personal injury and trial seminars where there is a combination of legal lectures and demonstration. We have to get up and do a portion of a trial in front of other lawyers, instructors, and jury consultants. We get to bring our own cases and hopefully find a really good approach to a better result. You have to study at night while you are out of town so you can be prepared to present your demonstration without embarrassment.

And at every seminar there are several lectures on new developments whether in law or juror attitudes throughout the United States. A persistent new subject for these lectures is the subject of law firms having to go after the personal assets of people who cause accidents and don't have enough insurance.

As money gets tight, people purchase less insurance that does not cover as much loss. This comes at a time when money is tight because everything costs more. This is a day and age where we routinely see medical bills over \$100,000.00 and the occasional \$90,000.00 pickup truck.

When someone has \$25,000.00 in coverage for property damage and they total out someone else's \$90,000.00 pickup truck, they owe the difference. We see insurance companies going after their assets and we see lawyers who are specializing in searches for personal assets such as home equity, inheritance, or pension funds. These lawyers are very aggressive when it comes to collecting money.

Joel and I have both had cases where a defendant didn't have enough insurance and had to come out of pocket to make up the difference. In this day and age when every insurance company is advertising competitive rates or dumb commercials with emus where you just "pay for what you need" the approach is to buy less insurance than what a person may actually need.

People should have enough insurance to protect their assets, whether that consists of a home, savings, or retirement. A good insurance broker can point you in the right direction and probably make an umbrella policy affordable. An umbrella policy covers a person on all of their assets (like an umbrella) and provides coverage (typically) between \$250,000.00 and \$1,000,000.00 for a small yearly premium. Cheap for peace of mind.

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



ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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**Courier  
Journal** Community Notes



# Moments in Time

- **On Feb. 2, 1925**, musher Gunnar Kaasen and his 13 dogs successfully delivered an antitoxin serum to Nome, Alaska, which was dealing with a widespread diphtheria outbreak, in a relay spanning 674 miles in five and a half days and in temperatures as low as 85 degrees below zero.

- **On Feb. 3, 1780**, Barnett Davenport murdered Caleb Mallory, in whose house he was a boarder, along with Mallory's wife, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, in their home. One of post-Revolution America's most famous crimes, it contributed to a change in the way the country viewed lawbreakers.

- **On Feb. 4, 1703**, 47 samurai were forced to display the ultimate act of loyalty to the regional Japanese lord they had followed by committing seppuku -- ritually disemboweling themselves -- for the crime of killing the official who had ordered the forced suicide of said lord.

- **On Feb. 5, 2003**, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a speech to the United Nations outlining America's case that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and making an argument for the invasion that would take place the following month. Unfortunately, some of his talking points were either incorrect or misleading, and Powell later described the speech as a blot on his record.

- **On Feb. 6, 1998**, a judge reinstated schoolteacher Mary Kay Letourneau's suspended sentence and returned her to prison for seven years after she was caught violating a no-contact order with her former student, Vili Fualaau, when she was found in a parked car with the boy.

- **On Feb. 7, 1984**, Navy captain Bruce McCandless II became the first human to perform an untethered spacewalk while in orbit 170 miles above the earth, maneuvering freely with a jet pack of his own design after exiting the Challenger space shuttle.
- **On Feb. 8, 1994**, actor Jack Nicholson approached Robert Blank's car while they were stopped at a red light in North Hollywood, accused Blank of cutting him off in traffic, and then

bashed Blank's roof and windshield with a golf club. Charges were dropped after Nicholson apologized and the two reached an undisclosed settlement that included a reported \$500,000 check from Nicholson.

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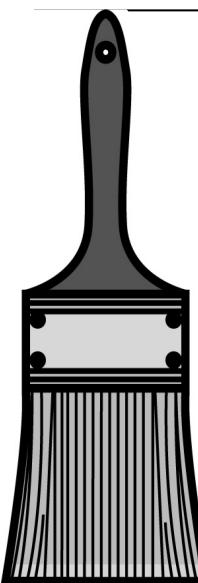
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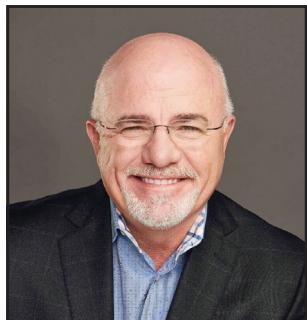


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# DAVE Says

by DAVE RAMSEY



## MY WIFE THINKS SHE OWES ME MONEY

Dear Dave,  
My wife and I have been married for nine months, and we've been following your Baby Steps plan for three months. We have about \$50,000 in debt, and I recently cashed out an old whole life policy that enabled us to pay off \$22,000 of our debt. My wife still feels weird about us doing that, since the money paid off all the student loan debt she accumulated before we got married but none of the debt I brought to the marriage. I look at everything as ours, not mine and hers. What can I do about her sense of guilt and feeling indebted to me?

Anonymous

someone, you're choosing to serve each other. You're also choosing to take on each other's debt, each other's income, each other's assets and each other's crazy parents. Everything!

It all boils down to having a shared view of a proper marriage relationship. And the proper (and biblical) view is we own everything. There's no *mine* and *yours* anymore. Now, you can't make her feel—or not feel—a certain way. But you can ask her questions to understand where she's coming from and what blockers are keeping her from being totally together in this. Talk about it. Put your heads together and practice thinking about your marriage as a union.

It will take some encouragement from you and some getting used to on her part, but if you work together, it's a muscle you can grow and develop together.

— Dave

\* Dave Ramsey is a nine-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*.

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Courier Journal

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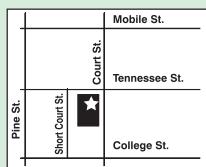
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**Guest Opinion-Editorial - Stephanie Smith, Alabama Policy Institute**

# It's Time for Accountability and Fair Play at the AHSAA

For decades, the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) has operated in the shadows, claiming the autonomy of a private organization while wielding the power of a de facto public entity. However, recent events, including a seismic shift in the state's competitive landscape, have made one thing clear: the AHSAA's lack of public accountability has reached a breaking point, and the people of Alabama have noticed.

According to a recent Napolitan News Service survey of 800 registered voters, a staggering 80% of Alabamians say that reforming the AHSAA is important to them, and 80% want to see legislative oversight of the organization. The public clearly recognizes what the AHSAA has long

ignored: any organization that uses taxpayer-funded facilities, employs staff through the state's Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), and oversees public school students should be both transparent and accountable to voters.

The AHSAA recently announced a historic public/private split for fall of 2026-27, creating separate post season brackets for public and private schools. While framed as a solution to competitive imbalance, the move actually highlights a governing body that has long marginalized its independent members through intentionally

punitive measures like the 1.5 student multiplier.

Through the years, the AHSAA has made a multitude of decisions that clearly disregarded student athlete participation and even their religious freedom. Perhaps the most egregious example of overlooking the good of student athletes was the AHSAA's recent attempt to block students utilizing the CHOOSE Act's Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). By

unilaterally reclassifying parent-directed tax credits as school-controlled "financial aid," the AHSAA prioritized its own bureaucracy and power over state law.

This overreach required direct legal intervention from Governor Ivey and Speaker Ledbetter to protect the rights of Alabama families and schoolchildren.

The AHSAA has lost the moral authority to operate without oversight. The future of fair play in athletics in our state hinges upon the legislature's ability to restore integrity, transparency, and accountability to the governance of high school sports. Alabama's students—and 80% of its voters—deserve nothing less.

January 27, 2026  
Birmingham, Alabama  
**Stephanie Smith**,  
API President & CEO  
[stephanies@alabamapolicy.org](mailto:stephanies@alabamapolicy.org)

Alabama Policy Institute  
205-870-9900 or [admin@alabamapolicy.org](mailto:admin@alabamapolicy.org)

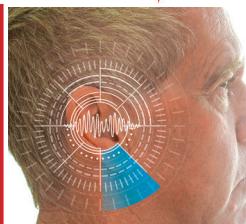
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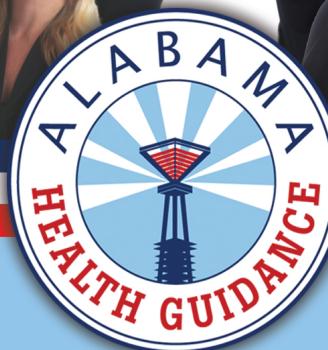
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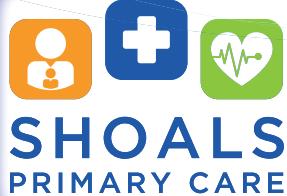


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## Commentary

### Youth Gambling...

Continued from Page 12

disclaimer, "Bet Responsibly." Those states also want a piece of the action.

The NFL is skewed far from what it was a few decades ago when it was played by real men, rough, tumble, and bloodied, team first, anything but PC, and any aspect of associated gambling was shunned.

This year have a Puerto Rican pink-attired rapper known as "Bad Bunny" featured at Sunday's Super Bowl halftime show surrounded by the extra an extra colorful Super Bowl LX logo meant to portray the cultural diversity of the host site, Santa Clara in the San Francisco bay area.

Now, former NFL coach Bill Belichick, with much of the sport's greatest all-time coaching success, not being elected to the Hall of Fame on his first ballot opportunity - because of several posturing sportswriters - is further testament to the league's overall depravity.

College sports have always had a more of a pristine image, but that too has changed in recent years.

College football and basketball are little more than minor leagues for professional sports in many cases for the key athletes with the "student" aspect largely dismissed. Gone are the days when key players would stay with a college team for 3-4 years. Many are paid athletic mercenaries with agents, taking them to the highest bidder for a year's commitment on the field or court.

College football rosters can have 50 new players or more from one year to the next depending on how many left for other teams and what fat cat supporters are willing to contribute to their favorite programs. There are a few laws and no limits. It's clearly out of hand. The background of sports has changed so much, and not for the better. However, both professional and college athletics are more popular than ever. And that is largely through a younger audience.

Now the sports gaming industry is going after our youth with ever increasing options and temptations

devoid of veracity. The marketing, the visuals, the feedback loops from activity allow the marketers to essentially know what a participant is thinking before he/she can react. Some sportsbooks now bribe people to get started with an extra \$50, \$100, or \$200 in betting money - all for with a \$5 opening bet.

The betting options themselves are a game within the games, and sportsbooks are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising yearly to keep those opportunities in front of us daily. Some \$440 million was spent on sports gambling through TV alone in 2025, according to iSpot.tv, a firm that measures marketing impact.

An extensive recent UC San Diego study of 700,000 online gamblers showed that 96% took a net loss while gambling. That is 24 out of every 25 people losing money.

Extensive sports betting can rewire your brain, the Neuro pathways that gain such satisfaction from the participation reshape the way we think, feel, and behave, prioritizing the pursuit of that energy flow above all else.

What people do and where they spend their money is their own business. That includes legalized gambling. Some do it for entertainment, not expecting to profit long term. Others hope to, then need to, but never do.

However, those who receive government assistance and subsidies from the taxpayer should not be allowed to throw their disposable money at gaming of any kind in my opinion, but that is from where the greatest gambling draw comes. Organizers know that and feed off that.

State legislators who advocate for gambling laws know that, and don't care. They want a piece of that action in the form of political contributions from private gaming advocates, so they have the power to re-distribute gaming proceeds as they choose on the backs of others. It's criminal and deceitful.

Then again, those voting against gaming in Alabama will receive political donations from Native American

tribal gaming facilities and bordering states, entities which now have a monopoly (or firm control) of Alabama's limited gaming market.

Gambling laws (lottery, casino, or sports betting) don't appear to be changing soon in Alabama. However, it's coming, eventually.

Those who listen to Sports Talk radio know it's a steady diet of sportsbook commercials from various entities, many with detailed and high-speed disclaimers and resources for gambling addicts.

And don't think your kid is not doing it simply because it is illegal in the state of Alabama. There are plenty of legal and illegal avenues to place bets. If they care to know them, they will.

I knew 50 years ago with limited options. They know now with unlimited opportunities.

The house (sportsbook, casino, or bookie) ALWAYS wins long term.

I remember a few small-time wagers with the bookie at a local pool hall with friends when I was a teenager. It was occasional fun for \$2 or \$5, taking a few teams to win concurrently on a Saturday. I never came out ahead. It was somewhat disappointing then, but certainly a long-term blessing.

I'm so glad that I can enjoy watching games now without ever having developed the need to "have something on it."

The current generation has it so much harder because marketing to that constituency is so intense and unrelenting.

Even a modest amount of success can create a "rush" that keeps one's interest in the next opportunity. It's proven to be highly addictive.

It's a dead end; just another evil temptation worthy of avoidance.

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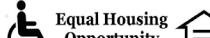
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## FLASH BACK

POP, ROCK & SOUL  
TRIVIA BY MICK HARPER

1. Which artist had his first No. 1 chart-topper with "Mandy"?
2. Who was the first to release "Got My Mind Set on You"?
3. Name the artist who was born Charles Edwin Hatcher. Hint: "Contact" and "War."
4. Who released "Mad About You" in 1986?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Risin' up, back on the street, Took my time, took my chances, Went the distance."



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Answers  
on Page 30

## Even Exchange

by Donna Pettman

Each numbered row contains two clues and two 6-letter answers. The two answers differ from each other by only one letter, which has already been inserted. For example, if you exchange the A from MASTER for an I, you get MISTER. Do not change the order of the letters.

1. Young female horse     I \_\_\_\_\_
2. Restaurant server     \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_
3. Serena Williams' tool     A \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sluggish creature     S \_\_\_\_\_
5. Code inventor     \_\_\_\_\_ R \_\_\_\_\_
6. Alternate route     \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_
7. Boxer Sonny     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_
8. Groucho's quiet kin     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_
9. Deep red gem     \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_
10. Alf or ET     \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

Foolishness     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Mitty or Cronkite     \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_

Spaceship     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric     C \_\_\_\_\_

Mickey or Minnie     \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_

Wolf down     \_\_\_\_\_ V \_\_\_\_\_

Eavesdrop     \_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

Angelic instruments     \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Harvest     \_\_\_\_\_ R \_\_\_\_\_

Steve or Woody     \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_



# Brain Zone!

## Even Exchange

by Donna Pettman

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10. Alf or ET     \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

Foolishness     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Mitty or Cronkite     \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_

Spaceship     \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_

Fabric     C \_\_\_\_\_

Mickey or Minnie     \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_

Wolf down     \_\_\_\_\_ V \_\_\_\_\_

Eavesdrop     \_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

Angelic instruments     \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Harvest     \_\_\_\_\_ R \_\_\_\_\_

Steve or Woody     \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_

### Micro Crossword

By Elizabeth C. Gorski

#### Across

- 1 Champagne choice at a New Year's Day brunch
- 5 Unhurried gait
- 6 Fry in a bit of butter
- 7 "Touch of Evil" actor/director Welles
- 8 Teary-eyed

By Elizabeth C. Gorski

	1	2	3	4
5				
6				
7				
8				

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#### Down

- 1 Loud, strident noise
- 2 Awaken
- 3 "High five!"
- 4 Wee
- 6 "You reap what you \_\_\_\_\_"

### SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

Plan	D	A	N	A	G	E			
Cache	R	H	O	A	D				
Glow	L	E	G	A	M				
Brisk	D	R	A	I	P				

TODAY'S WORD



## Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

1. GAMES: What color is Sonic the Hedgehog in the video game?
2. GEOGRAPHY: What is the former name of the U.S. Virgin Islands?
3. MOVIES: What are the colors of the striped sweater Freddy Krueger wears in "A Nightmare on Elm Street"?
4. MEDICAL TERMS: What is a more common name for pneumothorax?
5. HISTORY: By which name is Martha Jane Canary more commonly known?
6. TELEVISION: What is Hawkeye Pierce's real first name in the "M\*A\*S\*H" series?
7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a group of larks called?
8. AD SLOGANS: Which car company uses the ad slogan "Driven by passion"?
9. MYTHOLOGY: What is the head of the Egyptian god of death, Anubis?
10. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is the currency of Japan?

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# Community Notes...

Continued from page 11

**"A Taste of Ireland" Tuesday, February 17 - 7:30PM to 9:30PM** at UNA Norton Auditorium in Florence. After premiering Off-Broadway last season, 'A Taste of Ireland: The Irish Music & Dance Sensation' returns to stages across the USA in 2026, performing the show that has entertained thousands around the globe. Laugh, cry and jig into the night with a production that is Celtic, for this generation.

Performed by former World Irish dance champions, and featuring dancers from Lord of the Dance and Riverdance, 'A Taste of Ireland' transports the audience

through the story of Ireland's tumultuous history delivered with a pint of Irish wit. Watch world-class performers blend melodic folk mash-ups, live jaw-dropping a cappella tap battles and heartwarming storytelling.

**Night to Shine Shoals 2026 will be Friday, February 13,** at the University of North Alabama in the Gulliot University Center!

Night to Shine is an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older. Christ Chapel Church

has partnered with the Tim Tebow Foundation to be a part of this worldwide movement that is uniting churches of different denominations all over the world with the common goal of celebrating people with special needs.

Every guest of Night to Shine enters this complimentary event on a red carpet complete with a warm welcome from a friendly crowd and paparazzi. Every honored guest will walk the red carpet with a warm welcome from cheering fans and paparazzi before receiving the full royal treatment—including hair and makeup stations, corsages and boutonnieres, a catered dinner, karaoke, prom favors, and, of course, an unforgettable dance floor experience. The evening culminates in a crowning moment where every guest is named king or queen of the prom.

While you are here, you are valued and loved.

their electrifying tribute performances, The Fiddleworms will lead an unforgettable musical journey through the decade that gave us everything from funk and soul to Southern rock and singer-songwriter classics.

Joining them is an incredible lineup of Shoals musicians bringing unmatched artistry and passion to re-imagine the iconic hits of the 70s. Featured performers include Shoals Strings, Polyester Horns, Marie Lewey, Cindy Walker, Bay Simpson, James LeBlanc, Angela Hacker, Christopher Mefford, Jamie Barrier, Scott Campbell, Lenny LeBlanc, Gary Baker, Rob Aldridge, Jimmy Nutt, Carla Russell, Monkee Wammack, Matt Prater, Weston Stewart, Daniel Crisler, Natasha Nix, Kelvin Holly, GMane, Corey Jones, Lucie Tiger, and Greg Frank.

The Muscle Shoals Meets concerts sell out year after year in Muscle Shoals, and last season's Muscle Shoals Meets the 80s was one of the most talked-about events of the spring at The Princess Theatre. This edition promises an exhilarating blend of powerhouse vocals, tight musicianship, soulful grooves, and a whole lot of 70s nostalgia—celebrating both the timeless sound of the decade and the world-renowned musical heritage of the Shoals.

This event features all-day presentations by expert arborists, naturalists, and horticulturists and includes vendor displays and is hosted by the City of Florence Tree Commission and Beautification Board.

Sign-in is at 8am. Registration will be available the morning of at the door or preregistration is available online: <https://florenceal.org/64454-2/> Advance registration is \$50 and includes lunch and snacks. Late registration on the day of is \$55.

Door prize drawings will take place at noon and at 3:45pm. There will also be a free dogwood seedlings giveaway at the end of the day.

For registration information, lunch choice form and other questions please contact Sydhi Alexander at [salexander2@florenceal.org](mailto:salexander2@florenceal.org). 256-760-6407

**The Underwood-Petersville Community Center** is open and available. Let us host your event. Contact us at 256-764-1388 or by email [UPCC.Info@yahoo.com](mailto:UPCC.Info@yahoo.com)

**Muscle Shoals Meets the 70s on Saturday, February 28.** After rocking the house with the 80s last year, The Princess Theatre is turning back the clock once again—this time to the groovy, soulful, genre-shaping sounds of the 1970s. Tickets via [princesstheatre.org](http://princesstheatre.org)

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## Letters...

### A Cash Grab by Lindsey

Continued from Page 14

Why hypocritical? Because MAGA leaders insist upon using the same tactic when they are in the driver's seat. MAGA is currently trying to seize not phone records of a few bad actors, but rather the voter records of good citizens all across America.

Lindsey wants to get rich like The Donald, who sues for billions if some person or institution doesn't do what he tells them to do.

Good luck Lindsey. Many Americans don't have eyes to see your hypocrisy, so you might get away with your cash grab!

**Kimball Shinkoskey**  
Woods Cross, UT

### Limiting the SNAP Benefit

Editor,

I see there is a coI see there is a concentrated effort to limit what SNAP benefits can buy.

Our country is falling apart. Our congress has left the building. Iran is a real threat. And you are focused on whether SNAP recipients can get a candy bar or a soda? Heaven,

forbid they're human. If you really think this is important, then you've never had to beg for food - never had to go without, never had to watch other kids eat a candy bar and tell your kids they can't have one.

You have never had to choose between feeding your kids or keeping your electricity on, never had to ask for help, never gotten down on your knees to pray for kindness or help just to make it through the night. Never.

I've been there.

But then maybe you just like feeling superior. Or better than them. Or you like telling people what you want them to do. Not because you don't buy soda or candy but because you think you have a moral duty to tell other humans what they can do.

Our government is sending billions of our tax dollars to other countries. Is someone with SNAP benefits buying a \$2 soda the hill you stand on? If you ever had a heart or compassion, it got tired of your whining and holier-than-thou attitude and left you empty. Jesus wept. So do I, but not for you... for the poor, for the hungry, for humanity.

By the way, no one in my family receives SNAP. But I am proud that the less fortunate do.

**Linda Johnson**  
Florence

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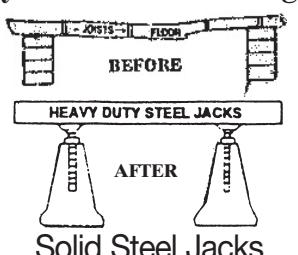
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### Even Exchange

Donna M. Pettman

1. Filly, Folly
2. Waiter, Walter
3. Racket, Rocket
4. Sloth, Cloth
5. Morse, Mouse
6. Detour, Devour
7. Liston, Listen
8. Harpo, Harps
9. Garnet, Garner
10. Alien, Allen

### CryptoQuip

answer  
Needing a much longer utensil to cut a large hunk of meat, a man declared "Knife's too short."

$$\begin{array}{r}
 3 - 1 \div 2 = 1 \\
 + \quad + \quad + \\
 6 - 4 \times 8 = 16 \\
 + \quad \div \quad - \\
 7 - 5 + 9 = 11 \\
 = \quad = \quad = \\
 16 \quad 1 \quad 1
 \end{array}$$

### SECRET CODE

What is smaller than a gnat's mouth?

**A Gnat's Dinner**

### SCRAMBLERS

solution  
1. Agenda; 2. Hoard;  
3. Gleam; 4. Rapid

Today's Word  
**LADDER**

### Sports QUIZ

by Ryan A. Berenz

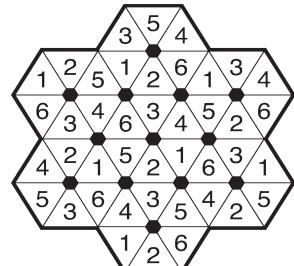
Answers

1. Frank Thomas.
2. Anthony Joshua.
3. \$500.
4. Elvin Hayes.
5. San Francisco.
6. The Notre Dame Fighting Iris
7. Michael Schumacher.

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### Snowflakes

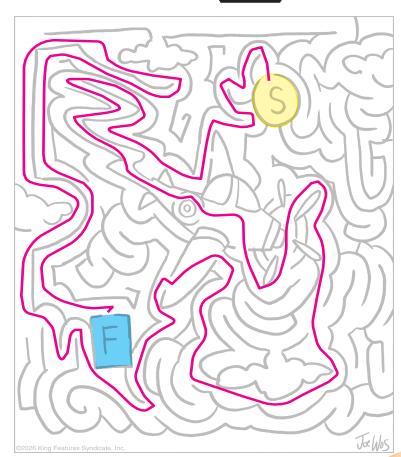
solution



### Micro Crossword

Answer

B	R	U	T
L	O	P	E
S	A	U	T
O	R	S	O
W	E	P	Y



**Word Spiral**  
Answer  
**HABANEROS**

### Kids' Maze Solution



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**Word Spiral**  
Answer  
**HABANEROS**

# Medicare Minute

## Medicare Part A Part 1

On a Medicare card Part A will have the word "Hospital" beside it. Because of that Medicare Part A is most commonly known as the inpatient or hospitalization part of Medicare. This means when a Medicare beneficiary is admitted into the hospital most of the services that are received are filed under Medicare Part A. This sounds simple but sometimes it's not.

Medicare Part A has a deductible of \$1,736 per benefit period. Notice two things here. First is the deductible of \$1,736. If you are admitted into the hospital and had Original Medicare only, you would owe the first \$1,736 of your stay. This deductible covers hospital services, including semi-private rooms, meals, general nursing, drugs as part of your inpatient treatment, and other hospital services and supplies.

The second thing to notice is the term "benefit period". This tells you the deductible is not an annual deductible but could hit you more than once in a calendar year. A "benefit period" begins when you are discharged from a hospital or skilled nursing facility and ends when you haven't received any inpatient care for 60 consecutive days. If you are admitted as an inpatient after the 60 days of no inpatient care a new benefit period begins, meaning another \$1,736 deductible. Also if you are confined to the hospital for 60 consecutive days your deductible will cover you but on the 61st day you will begin paying a coinsurance.

The good news is for most Medicare beneficiaries Part A is free. Free meaning you don't pay a premium for it. The reason for this is while you are working you pay 1.45% of your pay check into Medicare. If you did that for 40 quarters you're entitled to Part A for free. Next week will discuss the other benefits of Medicare Part A.

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](mailto:ikey@alabamahealthguidance.com). Alabama Health Guidance is an independent insurance agency and is not affiliated with Medicare or any other government agency.



Ikey Fowler



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- The living room set of "The Addams Family" TV series was actually pink.

- About 1,350 potentially active volcanoes presently exist on Earth, with the majority of them found along a 25,000-mile-long, horseshoe-shaped ribbon bordering the Pacific Ocean that's commonly known as the "Ring of Fire."

- Chopsticks in Asia are about 2,000 years older than forks in Europe.

- The color red appears in nearly every shot of Stanley Kubrick's 1980 horror classic "The Shining."

- Michelangelo only signed one piece of art, the "Madonna della Pietà," and that was supposedly because he overheard his work credited to a rival and sneaked back to include his name on the sash across the Virgin Mary's chest.

- Philadelphia cream cheese doesn't hail from Philadelphia. It originated in New York.

- People spend roughly 10% of their waking hours with their eyes closed. That's OK, we know you're just thinking.

- No American president has been an only child.

- In 1954, the mayor of the wine-growing town Chateauneuf-du-Pape in France issued a memorable decree that banned the "flying over, landing or taking off of flying saucers." It's unclear whether anyone ever considered how such an event should be handled should it defiantly occur.

- Shaquille O'Neal missed 5,317 free throws over the course of his career.

- Only three music companies are responsible for more than 80% of the music we listen to: Sony BMG, Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group.

- Spiders, like humans, can have arachnophobia. Small wonder, since certain species regularly eat each other: for food, after mating and for other reasons

# STRANGE but TRUE

scientists don't yet fully understand.

*Thought for the Day:*  
"You can make positive deposits in your own economy every day by reading and listening to powerful, positive, life-changing content and by associating with encouraging and hope-building people." -- Zig Ziglar

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