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the Shoals

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four cities

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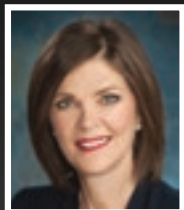
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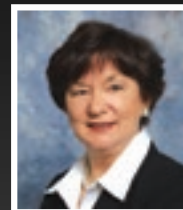
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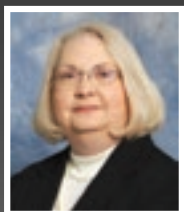
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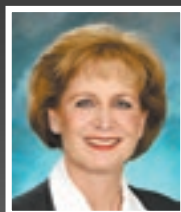
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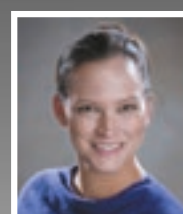
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2017-18 the Shoals

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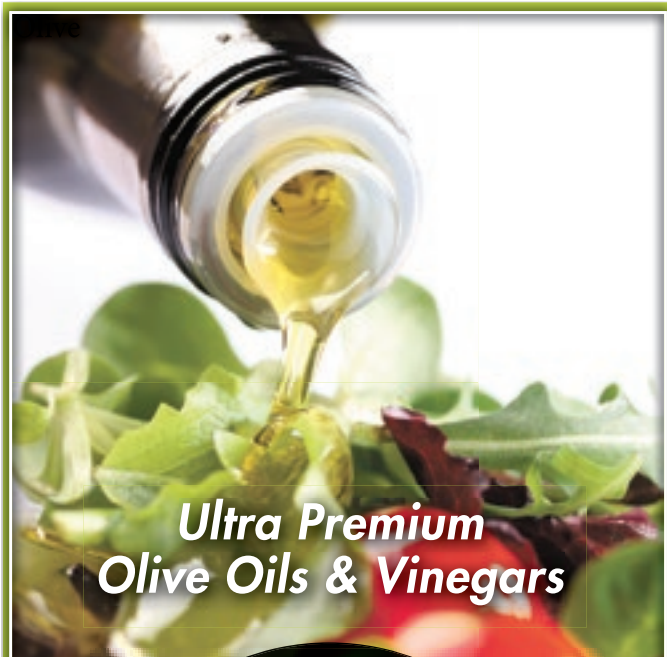
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TIME TO EAT
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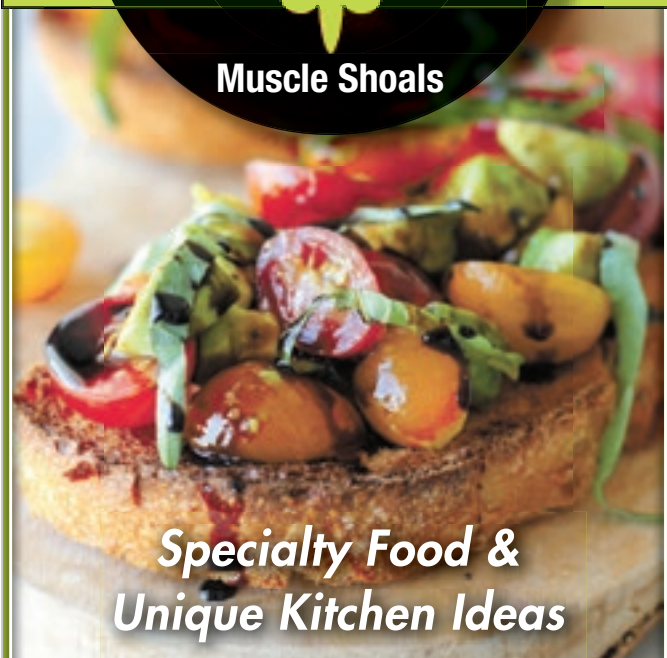




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Photograph by Matt McKean- TimesDaily

The "sport of kings" is spectacular to watch, especially at this gem of a polo club here in the Shoals.

Welcome

Bluewater Creek Polo fields can be seen from U.S. 72, and it's a fight to avoid temptation to stop and just gaze at the undulating emerald landscape. The fencing surrounding the fields can appear so white as to be jeweled on a sunny day. In the midst of it all, if you time your pass down the highway just right, the polo ponies are there contentedly munching grass, or chasing each other in a game known only to them.

It's a hidden oasis in our corner of northwest Alabama, and we invite you to visit (go to <http://www.peytonafarms.com/bwcp/schedule/> for a schedule). The polo club has a rich history, and its founder, Ed Robbins, is a jewel among teams that come from across the country to play at Bluewater. Last year, Robbins was designated the oldest active polo player as confirmed by the Guinness Book of World Records. We're delighted to introduce Bluewater and Robbins to you within these pages.

The Shoals has protected its agrarian history, including the Tennessee River that runs through it, and the beauty of our countryside. But there's also a funky vibe among us that is testament to the music that has flowed from the artists here much like the river's legend – the Native Americans who settled this area refer to the sounds emanating from the water as "singing" so it's no accident we've embraced the legend of "the singing river."

This area we call "the Shoals" has four distinct cities within its two counties. We're happy to show you how to explore every nook, cranny, field and stream. There's so much to see and do, we invite you come again, and again. But one warning: We've been known to turn visitors into residents.

Find yourself in *Florence*

...Experience Southern life at its best!



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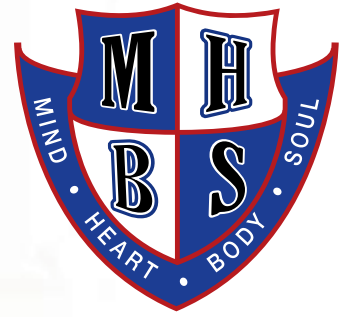
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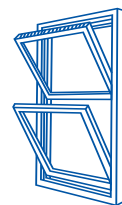
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the Shoals

distinguishing the four cities

Our name comes from the rocky shoal of the Tennessee River that flows east to west, making a northward turn to join the Ohio River at Paducah, Kentucky. The treacherous shoals are now under water, tamed finally by the Tennessee Valley Authority dams. Meanwhile, our distinct four cities were born.



Florence

Population: 40,059

When founded: 1818; incorporated, 1826

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

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

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

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

florenceal.org



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96% – Graduation Rate

\$14 Million – Class of 2016

116 – Fine Arts Courses

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63 – Athletic Teams

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14 – Average class size

10 – Top Ten Locally Funded

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Muscle Shoals

Population: 13,506

When founded: 1923

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

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

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

cityofmuscleshoals.com

Florence



Muscle Shoals



Sheffield



Tuscumbia





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Sheffield

Population: 9,107

Founded: 1884

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

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

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

sheffieldalabama.org



Tuscumbia

Population: 8,578
Incorporated: 1820

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

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

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

cityoftuscumbia.org



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

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

FLORENCE

Park information:
256-760-6416
www.fpard.com/Park

COX CREEK PARK

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

Got your skateboard with you? This is the park for you. Florence

Skate Park is located here featuring equipment manufactured by Spohn Ranch and made out of SkateLite Pro, a surface used by professionals and amateurs. The surface stays consistent in hot, cold, wet or dry weather, with frames of galvanized steel welded rather than bolted to prevent movement, and two banked wedges. Other park amenities include 12 lighted tennis

courts, a billiard building, a playground, and horseshoe pits.

DEIBERT PARK

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

This park offers tranquil nature walks along a 2.85-mile trail that winds through open areas, woods and around three ponds.

A playground, picnic shelter and restrooms also are on site.

MCFARLAND PARK

Where: Alabama 20, west of O'Neal Bridge; hours: daylight; most services are free

This park gives you the best view and access to the Tennessee River and is a favorite among boaters, anglers, campers, joggers,



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Riverfront Park in Sheffield.

bicyclists, dis golfers, bird watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts. There is a playground with picnic tables, and picnic tables dot the park with unobstructed views of the majestic river. A lighted walking trail and floating restaurant are irresistible draws, as are the swings and benches that overlook the river. Other amenities include boat ramps and slips, a baseball field, and camping area. The Florence-Lauderdale Visitors Center is located here.

RIVER HERITAGE PARK

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

This park, located near the Marriott Shoals

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

WILDWOOD PARK

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

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

MUSCLE SHOALS

Park information:

256-386-9270

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

GATTMAN PARK

Where: 901 Gattman Park Drive; see website for hours

The park has two gymnasiums, one with an indoor walking track; pavilions (two large, one small), and numerous picnic tables. Also featured is a playground, outdoor walking track, and a splash pad that opens Memorial Day weekend.

SHEFFIELD

Park information:

256-386-5616

www.sheffieldalabama.org/attractions

RIVERFRONT PARK

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

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

TUSCUMBIA

Park information:
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[www.facebook.com/
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SPRING PARK

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

Spring Park serves as a centerpiece for the town of Tuscumbia and dates back to the 1800s. It features a man-made stone waterfall, called Coldwater Falls.

The park also features a mini-amusement park for children and a splash pad. The rides, including a kid-sized roller coaster, a carousel and a train that takes passengers throughout the park, operates daily. More information, including operational dates, is available online at Tuscombairailway.com.



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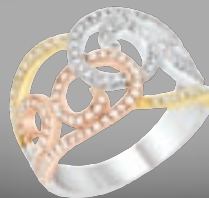
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TVA

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The TVA Rockpile Recreational Area is home to the “coolest” playground in America, according to Play Across America. The website and iPhone app named the TVA playground the coolest in America for the month of April in 2016.

Play Across America is a crowd-sourced directory of playgrounds in the country. The Rockpile Playground was applauded for its river theme. Taking its inspiration from the Tennessee River, it is situated next to Wilson Dam just a short walk away. Children can slide down blue slides that mimic water flowing out of the Wilson Dam

spillways; climb on a turtle and fish that pop out of the ground; climb and slide through a tree house; or swing on swings attached to poles fashioned to look like tree trunks. An interactive soundboard that plays animal sounds is popular with children. The board is decorated with animal tracks and pictures. The playground is just one attraction in

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



TVA Rockpile Recreational Area in Muscle Shoals.



Gattman Park in Muscle Shoals.



Deibert Park in Florence.



Spring Park in Tuscumbia.



McFarland Park in Florence.

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museums

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1569 Cook Lane, Tuscumbia

256-381-5052

ahc.alabama.gov/properties/bellemont/bellemont.aspx

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; admission charged

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



Site administrator Matthew Fesmire stands in front of Belle Mont Mansion in Tuscumbia.

TENNESSEE VALLEY MUSEUM OF ART

511 N. Water St., Tuscumbia

256-383-0533

tvaa.net

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

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



Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, Tuscumbia.

TUSCUMBIA DEPOT AND ROUNDHOUSE

204 W. Fifth St., Tuscumbia

256-389-1357

tuscumbiarailway.com

Hours: call

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



Tuscumbia Depot and Roundhouse, Tuscumbia.



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Alabama Music Hall of Fame

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

WHERE:

Location:

617 U.S. 72 W., Tuscumbia

Hours:

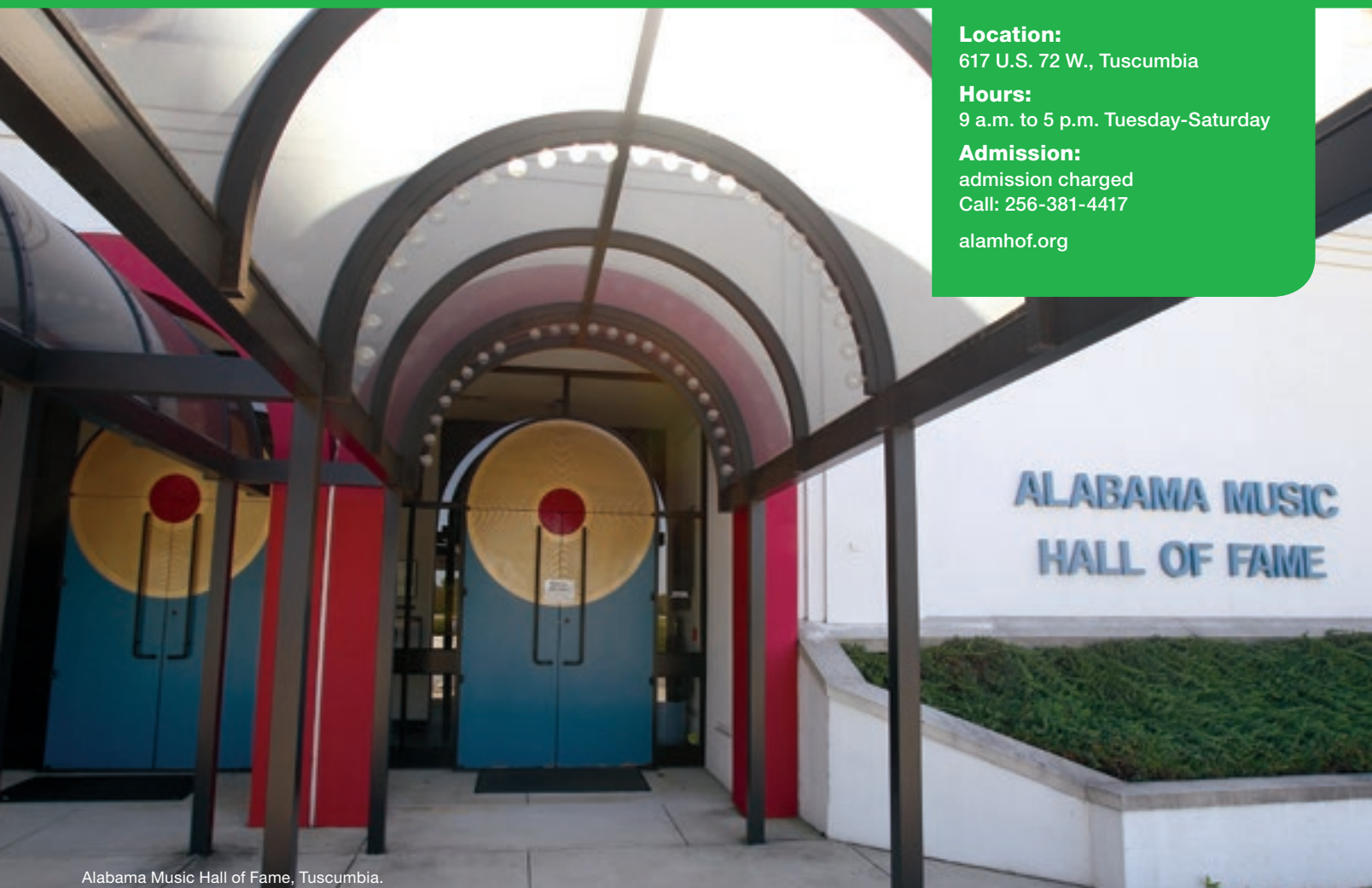
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-381-4417

alamhof.org



Alabama Music Hall of Fame, Tuscumbia.

EDITH NEWMAN CULVER MUSEUM

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

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



Edith Newman Culver Museum, Waterloo.

POPE'S TAVERN

203 Hermitage Drive, Florence
256-760-6439
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday;
admission charged

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



Pope's Tavern, Florence.

A full-page advertisement for "CLOTH + STONE a downtown boutique". It features a woman with long brown hair wearing a navy blue long-sleeved top and a colorful striped skirt. The text includes the boutique's name, address (312 North Pine St | Florence), hours (Tue - Fri 10-5:30 | Sat 10-until), phone number (256.767.0133), and social media icons for Facebook and Instagram. A vertical number "111319-1" is on the right edge.

A collage of interior design images for "PILLAR & PEACOCK INTERIORS". The central text is in a teal box. The collage includes a hand writing on a notepad, a dining room with a white tablecloth, a kitchen with blue cabinets, and a bathroom with a white sink. A vertical number "109875-1" is on the right edge.

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Frank Lloyd Wright-Rosenbaum House and Museum

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

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

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

WHERE:

Location:

601 Riverview Drive, Florence

Hours:

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

Admission:

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\$5 for students and seniors

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Ivy Green **The Birthplace of Helen Keller**

ATTRACTIONS



Ivy Green, Tuscumbia

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

WHERE:

Location:

300 N. Commons St. W, Tuscumbia

Hours:

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

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-383-4066

helenkellerbirthplace.org

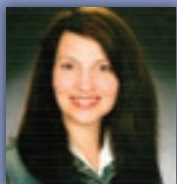
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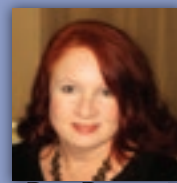
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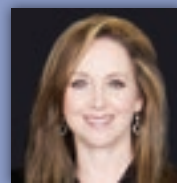
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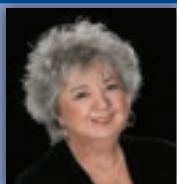
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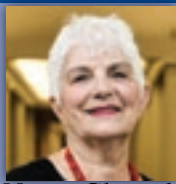
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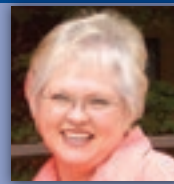
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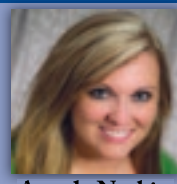
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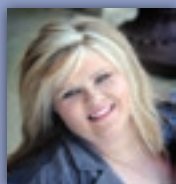
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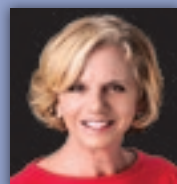
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Owner
256-366-0580

Children's Museum of the Shoals

ATTRACTIONS



Children's Museum of the Shoals, Florence.

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

WHERE:

Location:

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

256-765-0500

<https://www.facebook.com/cmsal/>

W.C. Handy Museum and Library



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

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

WHERE:

Location:

620 W. College St., Florence

Hours:

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

Admission:

admission charged

Call: 256-760-6434

Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts

ATTRACTIONS



Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts, Florence.

Known as the cultural center for Florence, the center has an arts gallery and museum that serves as an educational center and cultural hub for the area. There are annual exhibits and rotating exhibits from artists of the Southeast. Workshops and classes for all ages also take place here. The annual Arts Alive juried fine arts and crafts festival is sponsored by the center's volunteers in May at the center and in Wilson Park across from the center.

WHERE:

Location:

217 E. Tuscaloosa St., Florence

Hours:

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

Admission:

Free

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UNA's pride:

Leo and Una

Leo III and Una are the brother and sister pair of African lions who have lived at the University of North Alabama since 2003, when they came to Florence as cubs. Their campus home – the George H. Carroll Lion Habitat – anchors Harrison Plaza, which is the main entrance to the university. The habitat is an easy stop for visitors and locals to catch a glimpse of the big cats. There are two observatories that offer views of the habitat and places to catch Leo III and Una napping and playing.

Photography by Allison Carter

Leo III

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Una and Leo III



Una



about us

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

- UNA has had a live lion mascot on campus since 1974 when Leo I came to campus. Leo II came to UNA in the early 1990s.
- Leo III and Una were born in November 2002 and are the first lion pair to live at UNA.
- The lions are the guests of honor each April at a birthday party thrown in their honor. The birthday party is in April in recognition of Leo I's spring birthday.
- Leo III and Una are given a special toy each year at the birthday party. In the past, those have been high-density plastic balls, tubes and column-shaped toys.
- Una's name comes from the university's initials, but also represents a university supporters, Leo and Una Watson, from Michigan, who fell in love with the university and adopted Leo II as a philanthropy project and supported the lions for a number of years.
- Leo III's weight hovers around 520 pounds, and Una's weight typically stays around 350 pounds.
- In 2012, Leo III and Una were named the top live sports mascot in the country by totalprosports.com.
- Leo and Una eat about 15 pounds of meat each day. The amount varies some depending on the season and the lions' physical activity. They also receive a USDA-approved bone twice a week to keep their teeth clean and jaws strong.
- It costs \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year to care for the lions, and the funds are raised solely through private donations. UNA fans pass lion-shaped collection banks during home football games to collect money to care for Leo III and Una. Other donations can be dropped off at the collection box beside the lions' habitat or made through the university advancement office.
- The life expectancy of lions in the wild is 10-12 years. But, in captivity, Leo III and Una are expected to live 15-20 years.
- The lions are typically in their outdoor habitat each day from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. in winter months and from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. in the spring and summer. The door to the indoor habitat is always open to give the lions a place to stay inside if wanted.



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Hendrix's wall just off of Natchez Trace Parkway.

Tom Hendrix:

His legacy lives on

Story by Tom Smith
Photography by Jim Hannon & Allison Carter

For more than 30 years, Tom Hendrix worked on building a rock wall as a monument to his great-great grandmother whose English name was Mary Hipp, a Yuchi Indian who was among those forced to leave the Southeast for Oklahoma when she was 14.

"The Wall," as it has grown to be known, contains rocks precisely placed one-by-one, from every state and 130 countries.

Hendrix died Feb. 24. He was 83.

"Tom Hendrix was a remarkable person. He was a brilliant man," Florence Mayor Steve Holt said. "What he did to commemorate history, what he did for this

area, it will be long, long remembered."

Hendrix loved to tell the story of Hipp, whose Native American name was Te-lah-nay, and how she walked for five years to make her way from Oklahoma back to the Shoals. She was among the Native Americans forced from their homes and onto reservations in Oklahoma during the Indian Removal Act of 1830 under President Andrew Jackson. Native Americans were forced from their homes by federal troops, rounded up and sequestered in camps where conditions were so bad, many died. The survivors were forced to make the long trek to reservations in

the west, most on foot. Thousands died during the journey.

"When I got to the nation (in Oklahoma), I listened to the river and there were no songs. I knew then, I would die," Hendrix said in recounting his ancestor's words during an interview with The TimesDaily.

Hendrix said his grandmother, Te-lah-nay's granddaughter, told him stories about Te-lah-nay when he was a little boy. He said he wanted to do something to honor her memory.

The wall is never finished, he said. Its meandering shape is indicative of Te-lah-nay's travels.



"She did not make an ordinary journey. I did not build an ordinary wall," Hendrix said. The wall and the prayer circle within, draws a near constant stream of visitors from all over the world, including members of other Indian nations.

"She made it one step at a time, and I built this wall one stone at a time," Hendrix said during his talk to the thousands of people who have visited The Wall over the years.

Hendrix also authored a book, "If the Legends Fade," about Te-lah-nay's journey.

The pride in his voice as Hendrix talked about The Wall wasn't because he had worn out 1,400



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pairs of gloves, 27 wheelbarrows and four trucks hauling the more than 6.5 million pounds of stones he gathered in fields and creeks, but of what it meant and the legacy of his great-great-grandmother.

“He brought The Wall to life with his stories and he loved to tell them, and people loved to hear them,” Holt said.

Hendrix was instrumental in the Singing River Bridge getting its name.

“In his book about my great-great-great-grandmother, he wrote that she said you could hear the river sing when she came back,” Hendrix’s son Danny Hendrix said. “He changed it to Singing River, and worked with former state legislators Bobby Denton and Tammy Irons to get the bridge named.

“He got ‘Singing River’ going and there is ‘Singing River’

everywhere, which is really special when you think about the musical heritage of this area.”

Holt said it was evident that what Hendrix did, he did from “his heart.”

“His passing is sad, but his life, the history he loved and the legacy he built for his great-great-grandmother will live on in The Wall.”

His legacy will also live on in a 2015 Grammy-winning song written and sung by Roseanne Cash after she visited The Wall. Cash performed the song, which was a part of her award-winning 2015 album, “The River & The Thread” on the “David Letterman Show.”

“I’m going down to Florence, gonna wear a pretty dress, I’ll sit on top of the magic wall with the voices in my head,” she wrote.

Adapted from an article that first appeared in The TimesDaily.

TOM HENDRIX’S WALL
13890 Lauderdale 8

DIRECTIONS: From Florence, go northwest on Alabama 20, turn north on the Natchez Trace Parkway and take the Lauderdale 8 exit. Turn right.



Trace Hendrix with the “Faces” section of the rock wall built by his father, Tom Hendrix, at Lauderdale County Road 8 beside the Natchez Trace Parkway. He intends to carry on the tradition of his father, who built the sprawling wall of rocks in honor of his Native American relative that was forced on the Trail of Tears journey, yet made a return trip back.

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The Florence Indian Mound Museum.

Indian Mound recreates history

Photography by Matt McKean & Jim Hannon

The ceiling of the exhibit area in the new Indian Mound museum that opened in Florence this year practically drips water from the stalactites placed there by the specialists designing it.

When visitors enter the exhibit area, they will step into a recreated cave. It has the appearance of a recent archaeological excavation that shows strata and artifacts from various historic periods.

"I think people will be really surprised when they come here," said Terry Chase, whose company installed the exhibit area. He owns Chase Studio, which specializes in natural history exhibits.

The exhibit area includes murals depicting the area around the mound as it would have appeared during historical eras. A video explains the mound and the Native Americans who lived in the area, and a Pepper's Ghost shows detailed models of the mound from a number of historical times.



Woodlands Period exhibit area at the Florence Indian Mound Museum.

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The floor has an epoxy resin with pressed leaves and other items to simulate a forest floor. Artificial trees and greenery are included in the area.

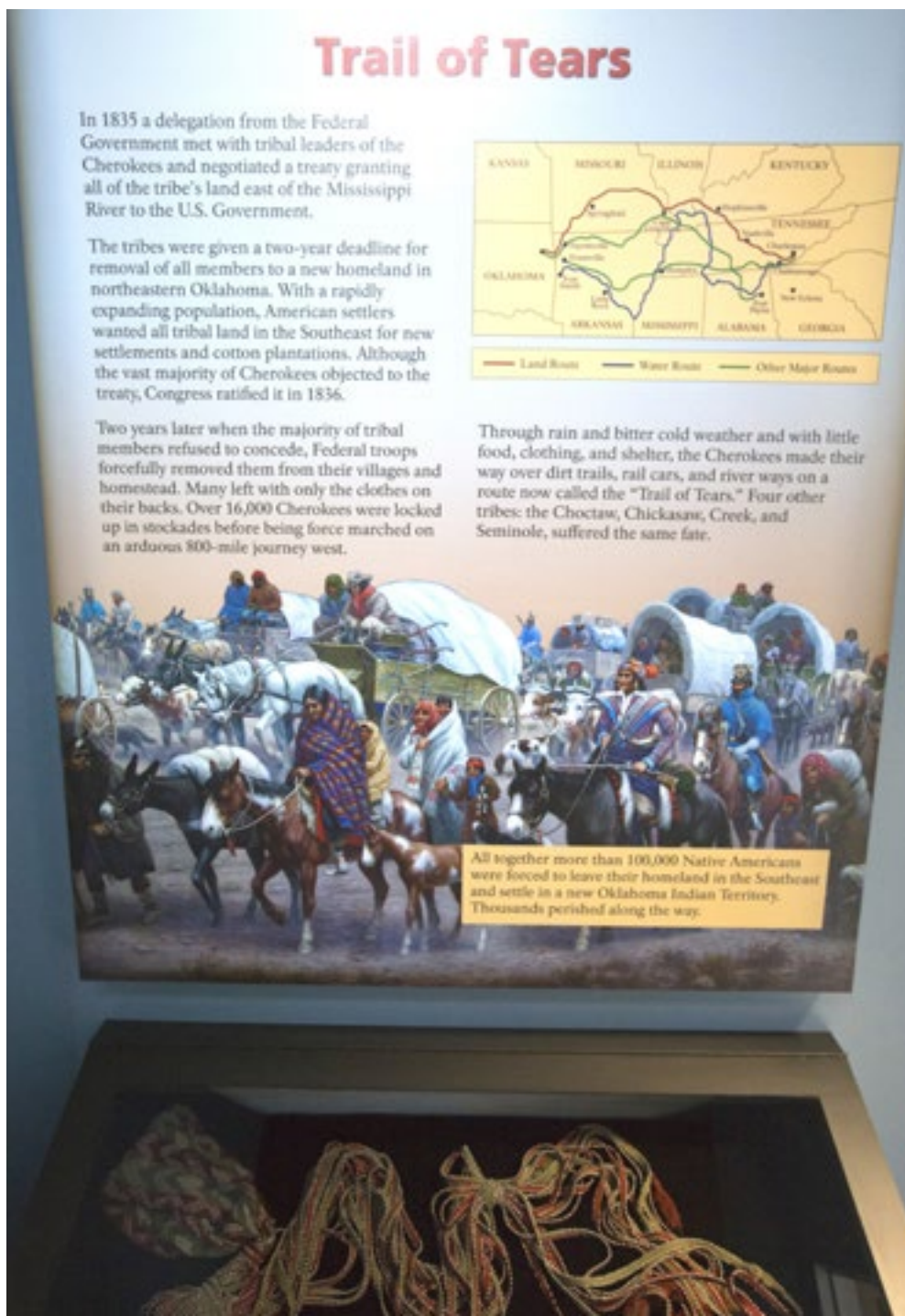
"We're telling a story in a story line here," Chase said. "In the old museum, you had to fish around various periods to find the story."

"I think students will love it when they tour here," said Libby Jordan, manager of Florence museums.

Many of the artifacts are displayed in drawers that accompany specific exhibits, which will expand display space. Among the artifacts will be a sash worn by Chickasaw Chief George Colbert, who operated a ferry and hotel nearby on the Tennessee River.

"Collectors have come to us and we have acquired several collections," Chase said.

Adapted from article that first appeared in The TimesDaily.



A Trail of Tears exhibit at the Florence Indian Mound Museum.



This Chickasaw sash was donated by Ann and Goodloe Rutland. The sash was given to a family in Colbert County by Chief George Colbert before his removal to Oklahoma in the 1830s.





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The Shoals is filled with places to see, and things to do, but there's still time to celebrate. Our area's celebrations include a variety of festivals from spring until winter. In pride of place are the W.C. Handy Music Festival and the Helen Keller Festival, both during the summer months.

The rest of the year includes Shoals Earth Day, Arts Alive, Spirit of Freedom Celebration on the Fourth of July and even one to remember special four-legged furry friends. The Coon Dog Cemetery has a celebration every year on Labor Day weekend.

As the leaves turn brilliant in autumn, Oka Kapassa-Return to Cold Water brings many members of Native American tribes back to Tuscumbia to commemorate the kindness shown to their ancestors during the terrible forced removal of American Indians in the 1830s. That time is remembered again during the Trail of Tears motorcycle ride.

And a yearly celebration will take you back to times of yore. The Alabama Renaissance Faire is recognized statewide and beyond as one of the best of its kind.

So whatever the season, and whatever your taste, there's something going on in the Shoals.

ARTS ALIVE

Florence's Wilson Park plays hosts to a myriad of artists and craftsmen who flock to the downtown park to sell their arts and crafts and compete in the juried Arts Alive exhibit at the Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts.

Anything from paintings to sculptures to clothing and woodwork can be found at Arts Alive.

For details about the festival or exhibits, visit artsalivealabama.com or call 256-760-6379.



SHOALS EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Looking to keep the Shoals beautiful, this April festival has arts, crafts, music, information booths and displays. There may even be an appearance from eco-magician Steve Trash.

The informative and fun festival rotates its location every year, highlighting a different area of the Shoals.

For details, visit shoalsearthmonth.com or call 256-767-2909.



Tennessee Valley Museum of Art
511 N. Water St., Tuscumbia



Ritz Theatre
111 W. Third St., Sheffield



256-383-0533



tvaa.net

The life and accomplishments of one of the Shoals' most famous natives, Helen Keller, is celebrated each year with a summer festival.

The weeklong festival takes place in Spring Park in Tusculumbia, not far from Keller's birthplace, Ivy Green.

The festival includes live bands and music, a 5-mile and 23-mile family bike ride, a 5-mile and 1-mile fun run, a car and truck show, a golf tournament, arts and crafts, educational displays, and a parade and street party.

Of course, no Keller festival is complete without a rendition of "The Miracle Worker" and the Helen Keller Art Show of Alabama.

The 2017 festival is June 19-25. For details, visit helenkellerfestival.com or call 256-383-4066.

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The Shoals celebrates Independence Day with food, music and, of course, fireworks. It starts at 10:30 a.m. and continues through 11 p.m. July 4 on the banks of the Tennessee River at McFarland Park, Florence. For details, call 256-740-4141.

W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Every year Florence honors W.C. Handy, the Father of the Blues, with a 10-day music extravaganza.

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The 2017 festival is July 21-29. For details, visit wchandymusicfestival.org or call 256-740-4141.



Event photos by Jackson Agee

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The 2017 festival is Sept. 8-9. For details, visit okakapassa.org or call 256-757-4438.



COON DOG CEMETERY LABOR DAY CELEBRATION



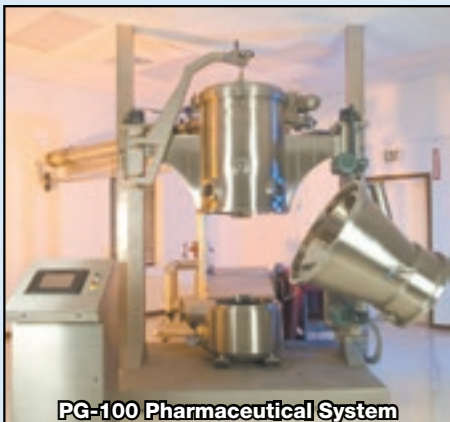
Not many places have a cemetery for coon dogs. Even fewer have a Labor Day celebration at a coon dog cemetery.

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

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

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

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



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ALABAMA RENAISSANCE FAIRE



The Fountain on the Green, better known the rest of the year as Wilson Park in Florence, hosts nobility, knights and kings as the city of Florence celebrates the annual Renaissance Faire.

The 2017 faire is Oct. 28-29. For details about the fun and educational event, visit alarenfaire.org.

TRAIL OF TEARS COMMEMORATIVE MOTORCYCLE RIDE

Motorcyclists honor the Trail of Tears by riding from Chattanooga to Florence, meeting in Waterloo for a pow wow. The riders always ride on the third Saturday in September. For detail, visit traioftears-remembrance.org.



Other Celebrations & Festivals

MONTHLY CELEBRATION

FIRST FRIDAYS

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

YEARLY FESTIVALS

RECALL LAGRANGE

— Civil War re-enactments exhibits and entertainment. Typically takes place early May. LaGrange College Site, 1491 LaGrange College Road, Leighton. Visit lagrangehistoricsite.com.

NORTH ALABAMA AFRICAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Explores African art, fashions, culture, crafts, music and food; 2017 festival is June 2-3 at the Willie Green Recreation Park, 609 S. East St., Tuscumbia. 256-383-0783

FRONTIER DAY CELEBRATION

Re-enactors showcase how early Shoals residents lived at Pope's Tavern, 203 Hermitage Drive, Florence; June 3-4. For details, call 256-740-4141.

FRANKLIN COUNTY WATERMELON FESTIVAL

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

NORTH ALABAMA STATE FAIR

The state fair is an American tradition, and that's no different in the Shoals. Rides, booths, exhibits and entertainment abound at the fairgrounds in Muscle Shoals; Sept. 19-24. Visit northalabamastatefair.com or call 256-383-3247.

OKTOBERFEST

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

ROGERSVILLE FALL FESTIVAL

Rogersville celebrates fall with antique cars, trucks and tractors, an art show, chili cook-off, children and pets parade and vendors; Oct. 7, downtown Rogersville. For details, visit rogersvillealabama.com or call 256-247-9449.

PLANTATION CHRISTMAS

It's an Old South Christmas at Tuscumbia's Belle Mont Mansion, with traditional ornaments, period holiday music, ballroom dancing; Dec. 3. Built in 1828, the plantation is at 1569 Cook Lane, off U.S. 43 S, Tuscumbia. Visit colbertcountytourism.org or call 256-383-0783 for details.

DICKENS CHRISTMAS Y'ALL

Dickens Christmas Y'all, is a holiday festival reminiscent of the classic "A Christmas Carol"; Carriage rides, snow falling, music, arts and crafts and food vendors. Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Event. Dec. 9. For information, call 256-383-9797 or 256-383-0783



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Dickens Christmas Y'all in Tuscumbia.



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A man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and a yellow and white striped tie, is sitting in a hotel lobby. He is smiling and has his hands clasped. The background shows a well-lit lobby with wooden paneling, a tiled floor, and a small display on an easel.

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LODGING

Larry Bowser at
Marriott Shoals Hotel
and Spa in Florence.

Marriott's **Bowser** *named* Franchise General Manager *of the Year*

Story by Bernie Delinski
Photography by Jim Hannon

Larry Bowser said a recognition he received in April as general manager of Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa is a tribute to the daily efforts of the facility's employees.

Bowser was named the Franchise General Manager of the Year for the Eastern Region of Marriott International.

The region includes Marriott, Renaissance, JW Marriott and several other full-service hotel brands in the region, according to a release from PCH Hotels & Resorts, which manages eight Marriott properties in Alabama.

The recipient is decided by evaluating data from all Eastern Region Marriotts based on financial performance,

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Larry Bowser at
Marriott Shoals
Hotel and Spa in
Florence.



guest experience and associate engagement, said Roy Nassau, area vice president over full service franchising

“In effect, Larry was judged against hundreds of general managers of full-service hotels in the entire Eastern Region of the United States,” Nassau said. “Over the years, he has consistently raised the bar year over

year, and 2016 was no different.”

Bowser said the employees and Shoals share the award.

“Our service scores and the service that we provide is really a testament to the quality of associates I have, caliber of people in the Shoals, work ethic and way that they look at things,” he said. “It’s just



Larry Bowser at
Marriott Shoals
Hotel and Spa in
Florence credits
staff workers
such as Will
Harvey and Karl
Barber for his
success.

a blessing.

"We're so happy the community is proud of us. I often tell hotel planners who come here that we're not just a hotel, but part of the community."

Bowser said the employees have maintained a "caring culture" since the hotel opened in 2005.

"This would not be possible without the exceptional commitment of our ownership, the Retirement Systems of Alabama," he said.

Marriott Shoals has received numerous recognitions throughout the years, including ranking No. 1 among Marriotts in north Alabama in customer satisfaction in 2008 and being named the 2015 ConventionSouth Readers' Choice Award. It

also consistently receives Four Diamond ratings.

Bowser was named 2012 Hotelier of the Year by the Alabama Hospitality Association and 2013 Hotelier of the Year by the Alabama Department of Tourism.

Tony Davis, CEO of PCH Hotels & Resorts, said the Shoals hotel consistently ranks among Top 10 hotels for guest satisfaction and Bowser is active in the community.

"Community involvement is important to Larry Bowser and giving back is fundamental to the long-term health of the Marriott Shoals," Davis said.

This article first appeared in The TimesDaily.

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Cassandra Seal, RN

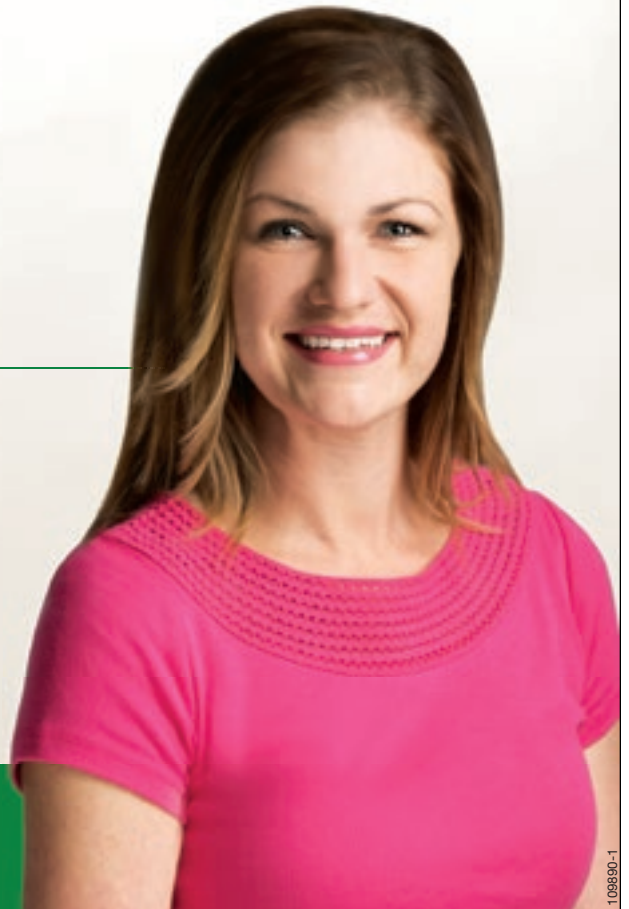
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Cassandra makes it her personal mission to walk with newly diagnosed breast cancer patients and their families as they move from an unwanted diagnosis through treatment and recovery. She is there every step of the way helping patients overcome barriers to treatment, address the financial implications of cancer, communicate with providers, and connect patients with community support and resources.

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3614 OPENS

- Muscle Shoals Sound Studios -

Story by Robert Palmer

For the first time since 1978, music and history fans will be able to see Muscle Shoals Sound Studios as it appeared in its 1970s heyday.

The studio at 3614 Jackson Highway is open for tours after months of restoration. The studio, which operated at that location from 1969 to 1978, is now owned by the Muscle Shoals Music Foundation, a nonprofit organization.

The owners of the studio at that time – the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section – moved their operations to more spacious quarters on Alabama Avenue on the banks of the Tennessee River. It was sold to Malaco Records in the mid-1980s before closing almost 20 years later.

Muscle Shoals
Sound Studio at
3614 Jackson Hwy.



"This has been a long time coming," said Judy Hood, chairwoman of the foundation. "We want to honor the history and sustain the legacy of the legendary Muscle Shoals sound."

In addition to tours, the studio will be a working recording facility, and will be available for sessions, she said.

"One thing we are very cognizant of is that 40 percent of our visitors are international," Hood said. "We're trying to have hours that suit their schedules. Some of these people have saved up for a couple of years just so they can walk into the studio."

A wide array of artists worked in the studio and produced dozens of hit records. Among the artists were Cher, Boz Scaggs, the Rolling Stones, the Staple Singers, Bob Seger, Traffic, Willie Nelson, Rod Stewart, Paul Simon, Leon Russell and Lynyrd Skynyrd.



Photograph by Matt McKean

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Visitors at the newly renovated Muscle Shoals Sound Studio at 3614 Jackson Hwy.



David Hood, Ben Tanner and Kristy Bevis talk about the restoration of Muscle Shoals Sound Studio at 3614 Jackson Hwy.



Jimmy Johnson, Dick Cooper and Jason Isbell spend time at the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio at 3614 Jackson Hwy.



The studio is the Alabama Tourism Office's Attraction of the Year, which will be heavily promoted. The Business Council of Alabama is promoting it as well.

The studio was restored with a grant from Beats by Dr. Dre, which is now owned by Apple. Though the amount of the grant has not been revealed, those familiar with it say it was substantial.

Lee Sentell, state tourism director, said the documentary "Muscle Shoals" likely played a direct influence on the decision by Beats Electronics to restore the studio.

"Without Steven Badger's documentary, the (Alabama) Music Hall of Fame would probably still be closed, and Dr. Dre and the people at Beats Electronics probably would not have known that the studio in Sheffield was just sitting there waiting to be revived," he said. "And Rick Hall might still be waiting for his lifetime achievement Grammy award."

As soon as the studio was announced as the attraction of the year, Sentell said it got international attention – a first for an Alabama attraction of the year.

"Because of this designation, (Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section bassist) David Hood was interviewed live on BBC Radio in London," he said. "That just shows the strength of the Muscle Shoals music brand."

Adapted from story first published in The TimesDaily.



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Outside Muscle Shoals Sound's original studio on Jackson Highway. From front, left to right: Cher, Eddie Hinton, David Hood, Sonny Bono, Jerry Wexler, Jeannie Greene, Donna Thatcher, Tom Dowd, Jimmy Johnson, Arif Mardin, Roger Hawkins, Barry Beckett.

Photo courtesy Muscle Shoals Sound, from The History Channel Magazine



Members of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. From left, standing, Jimmy Johnson, Barry Beckett, Roger Hawkins and David Hood, stand with others and gold records at the old Muscle Shoals Sound Studios on Jackson Highway in Sheffield.





Jimmy Johnson, Mick Jagger, Mick Taylor and Terry Woodford, in the control room of Muscle Shoals Sound Studios.
Photo Courtesy of Jimmy Johnson.



Traffic poses for a photo in the parking lot of 3614 Jackson Highway studio.
Photo courtesy of David Hood.



Rod Stewart in the 3614 Jackson Highway studio.
Photo courtesy of David Hood.



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SWEET & FAMOUS

Story by Russ Corey
Photograph by Allison Carter

The first thing that came to Rodney Hall's mind when he was informed there was a large swarm of bees behind FAME Recording Studios was to get rid of them.

Later on, however, Hall came up with the idea to take advantage of the studio's resurging popularity.

"We came up with the idea to market it as FAME honey," said Rodney Hall, president of FAME Music Publishing. "It took us a while to decide on a label and get it approved."

The label art resembles a vinyl record and reads "from the walls of FAME Studios."



FAME Studio Honey is available at Jack-O-Lantern Farms. The honey was produced by bees that lived in the walls of FAME, but were transported to Jack-O-Lantern Farms.

Don't let the irony that the bees were in a wall near Studio B escape you.

Steve Carpenter, a local beekeeper and co-owner of Jack-O-Lantern Farms, said he received a call from Linda Hall about three or four years ago about the bees.

"He worked out at the (FAME) ranch years ago," Hall said. "We knew about him."

Carpenter said the bees were in a wall at the east side of the rear of the building near the CVS Drug Store. Hall said someone saw the bees behind the building and alerted them.

"We went around and looked and there was this huge swarm," Hall said. "A few got inside."

Instead of tearing into the walls to extract the insects, Carpenter said he used a bee trap to coax the bees out.

That process took several months over a two-year period because Carpenter was unable to cut into the wall to get to the hive. So he had to slowly coax the bees out after sundown.

"I used a bee trap," Carpenter said. "It's pretty complicated."

Once the bees enter the trap, they cannot come out. The idea was to get the queen so the other bees would follow.

"I was lucky the queen left," Carpenter said.

He said there was about two pounds of bees in the walls, about 35,000 bees. Carpenter said bees are typically sold by the pound.

Carpenter said he took the bees and used them to make honey he sold at Jack O'Lantern Farms.

"It was a small colony," Carpenter said. "I didn't put them near my other ones."

Rodney Hall said it was his idea to market the honey as "FAME Studios" honey.

Carpenter said he was able to package about 10 cases of FAME honey. Each case contains 12 1-pound jars of honey.

The honey has been very popular. The negative side to that is, it's sold out for the year.

"People were buying a half-dozen bottles at a time," Hall said. "We should have more next year."

He said many jars were sold to people outside the Shoals.

Carpenter said this is the first year the colony's honey has been marketed as FAME honey.

He also touted the benefits of consuming local honey, which has been known to help desensitize allergy sufferers over time because the bees are feeding off pollen from plants where you live that trigger allergic reactions.

"I have customers who just have a fit when I run out of honey," Carpenter said. "Some buy a case at a time."

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.

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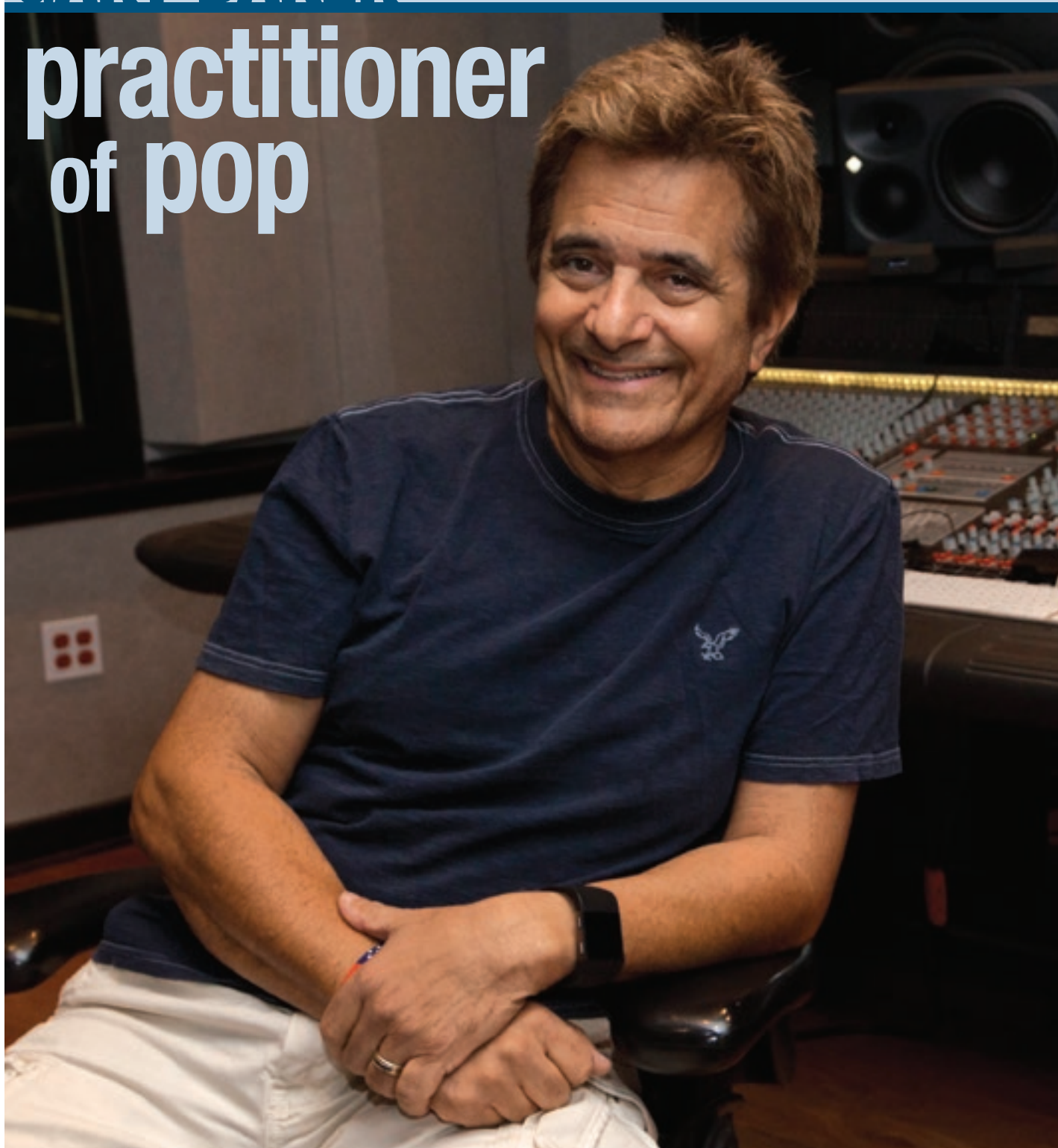
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GARY BAKER

practitioner of pop



Singer/songwriter and owner of Noise Block Recording Studios Gary Baker talks about emerging pop group, Tryon, that he is working with at his recording studio in Florence.

Story by Robert Palmer
Photograph by Matt McKean

Muscle Shoals has always been known for its gritty soul sound, but there has always been a pop thread embedded in the sound, as well.

Grammy-winning songwriter and producer Gary Baker has been one of the main practitioners of pop in Muscle Shoals, and he is working with a duo that received airplay with their song "Somebody To Love Me."

Baker, who owns Noise Block Recording Studios in downtown Florence, said brothers Stephen and Justin Kirk were brought to his attention by fellow songwriter Walt Aldridge. Back in the 1980s, they were in the band The Shooters, scoring country hits at FAME Recording Studios.

"When I first heard them in my office, with just acoustic guitars, I knew they had massive talent," Baker said.

The single was recorded in part at Noise Block, and at studios on Toronto and Cincinnati, he said.

Baker has used his studio mostly for his own projects, which includes working the the Back Street Boys, whose last album sold more than a million copies. He said some of the band members will be in town later for songwriting sessions.

"I never thought of renting out the studio," he said. "But we think Tryon will blow it wide open for this studio."

Baker and other partners are working to get an offer from a major label for the brothers. He said interest has already been expressed by labels after the single's success, and after seeing Tryon perform.

"They are in the vein of the Back Street Boys," he said. "They live in the pop world, and I love it."

The single is on the Noiseblock label, which is rarely used. Tryon is the first act for the independent label

"Somebody To Love Me" received airplay on Radio Disney, Sirius XM Hits-1 and Spotify. It reached the Top 40 on the charts.

"They will be here writing with us," Baker said. He won a Grammy for co-writing "I Swear," which topped the country and pop charts with two different artists. He also co-wrote the hit "I'm Already There."

He said some of the songwriting could be for the next Back Street Boys album.

"Stephen came up with a song for them. He comes from a spot they're no longer from," Baker said. "They will work here and write and record."

If Tryon is signed to a major label, publishing and other aspects of their work will remain with Noise Block, he said.

"Our goal is to keep as much ownership as possible, but not to the point that it hurts the guys," he said.

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.

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hunter watson Call of All



Courtesy Photo

Hunter Watson is a busy guy. Not only does the Florence native have a successful modeling and acting career, he's also lead singer and guitarist for the band Call of All.

As one of the Saviors in Season 7 of "The Walking Dead" and with roles in Tyler Perry's "Boo! A Medea Halloween" and "Too Close to Home," 2016 was a good year for Watson the actor.

Right now, he's in between acting projects and "The Walking Dead" season finale, which aired in April.

Now, Watson the musician and his Call of All bandmate, Cody Webb of Sheffield, plan to focus their energy on the band. Call of All's debut album, "War & Illusion," will be released June 6.

Watson, who lives in Colorado, was home a few weeks ago. He and Webb used recognizable Shoals sites, such as the old railroad bridge, for publicity photos. Watson is back in Denver and recently took time from his schedule to answer a few questions by phone.

TimesDaily: You are so well-rounded creatively with your modeling, acting and music careers. But, is music your first love?

Watson: Most definitely. Music is the foundation of everything I do with entertainment. Everything else just kind of developed organically. I fell into the film and modeling stuff.

Music was what I started doing when I was 15 years old. I started playing guitar and writing songs at 15. My uncle actually bought me my first guitar. He inspired a good bit of my career whether he realizes it or not.

TimesDaily: You have been part of the Shoals music scene for a long time. Have you been in bands since you were a teenager?

Watson: I started singing around the time I was 17 or 18. I was in a little rock band in Florence. We didn't have a singer, and I thought I would give it a shot. I never really thought I could sing or had a voice. I just started doing it, and one thing led to another.

Two years later, I met Corey Lawson and the late Jacob Sanders. We formed our first group, Day's Distance, in 2009. I was 19 years old.

We added a few members and got to playing in the local area. We put out our first EP in 2010. We actually ended up playing at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, in 2011. We got on local

and regional radio and did really well. We had a lot of support in the regional market and local stations like 105.5 The Big Dog. We gained some traction and were starting to play quite a few shows in the Southeast, then we had some things happening in the band. It just kind of ran its course after four years.

TimesDaily: Is that when you first saw music as your career?

Watson: Yeah. At that point, we were all still working day jobs to keep it going. But, there in the last two years, we recorded our second record and made a track with the former guitarist from the band Saliva. It was a good four-year run.

Shortly after that, I got in the studio with a friend of mine who's also from there, Cody Webb. He was in a band called Ages Apart.

TimesDaily: Is that when you and Webb formed Call of All?

Watson: We basically played a few shows together in 2012, I believe. I had known him — he had mixed and mastered our second record — but I think we actually connected around 2011. After I quit the group, I hooked up with him at the beginning of 2013. He asked me if I wanted to put together a project. I said yes, but I needed a little time to take a break. The end of 2013 was when we started the Call of All record.

TimesDaily: How did the band's music get temporarily sidetracked?

Watson: We got in the studio in 2014, but I ended up moving off to Florida. From there, I wound up signing a contract with an agency in Atlanta. We were going to put out our first single — the wheels were set into motion — but all this stuff with my film career started to develop. We had to put it on hold.

It was all definitely an organic thing. It (my film career) wasn't something that was ever expected.

TimesDaily: After seeing the photos you posted on social media from your visit to the Shoals a few weeks ago, it looks like you and Cody still have strong connections with your hometowns.

Watson: We most definitely do. The Shoals is the root of who we are as people and also musically. That area, which is home, has a special energy to it. Musically, when you get out into the world, you don't see that same type of element that a lot of the artist coming from Muscle Shoals have.

TimesDaily: How do you

describe Call of All's music?

Watson: You know, I think we sort of classify ourselves as alternative rock. I was real influenced by a lot of the '90s bands — the early '90s with the grunge movement — and also bands in the early 2000s and mid-2000s. I was a huge Shinedown fan.

I would say our new sound that we have is hard to describe. A lot of people say we have a little bit of a '90s influence, but it's fresh and new. In my opinion, and based on what people who have heard the record have said, is we have a sort of Thirty Seconds to Mars, Audioslave, Young Guns, Breaking Benjamin type of sound.

I think with a lot of the writing, it came out naturally. I just start writing a song with a chord progression and a melody and whatever else comes to me, then I hand it off to Cody and he builds on it from there. I would say Cody's one of the best and one of the easiest people I've ever worked with. It flows creatively so well.

In our choruses and verses, there's a lot build-up. There are a lot of highs and lows. That makes for the impact of the music with the listener. It hones in and resonates with listeners. It's also about being authentic with lyrics. It's being true to the music and never trying to force it.

TimesDaily: What's next? Will the band tour? Will you be able to step back from acting long enough to tour?

Watson: That's actually what we're discussing right now. We have a lot of things in the works at the moment. But we have this date — June 6. Going forward, we want to be on tour. We want to be out there in the U.S. touring unless something crazy happens.

TimesDaily: You're not planning to stop acting, are you?

Watson: No. I plan on pursuing that further. I've made some contacts out in Los Angeles. I'm going to be frequenting Los Angeles over this coming year. After these first few years as an actor, I want to see if I can take it to the next level.

Right now, we can't wait to get this record out to everyone. It's been a long time coming. We wanted to release it before but it's all about timing.

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.



Dan Auerbach cuts first session in revamped Muscle Shoals Sound Studios

Story by Robert Palmer
Photograph by Matt McKean, Jim Hannon

The last time Dan Auerbach worked at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, some extra equipment had to be brought in to finish the Black Keys' Grammy-winning "Brothers."

Things have changed.

Muscle Shoals Sound Studios is once again a fully functioning recording facility now owned by a nonprofit

foundation. The studio, which was renovated with a grant from Beats by Dr. Dre, reopened in January.

Most days, it's a museum, but the foundation that operates the iconic studio keeps it open for business, as well.

"This is light years away from the last time I was here," Auerbach

said during a break in recording in March.

"This is what I dreamed it would look like seven years ago."

Auerbach assembled a stellar lineup of session players, many of them Muscle Shoals and Memphis, Tennessee, veterans. Among them are Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section members David Hood and Jimmy

Johnson, Spooner Oldham, Bobby Wood and Gene Chrisman of American Recording Studios in Memphis, Nashville, Tennessee, A-list guitarist Billy Sanford, and backing vocalists Marie Lewey and Cindy Richardson.

In four days of work, 15 songs were recorded, he said.

"These guys are in

their 70s,” Auerbach said with admiration. “There’s no excuse for the rest of us.”

Though the studio is world renowned, it’s not just the bricks and mortar that make it special, he said.

“These guys have made timeless music. It’s all the good things about American music,” he said. “They recorded soul, rock. They made soulful pop. You can’t manufacture that. That’s why it’s so special. It’s all about the guys in the studios. Every great record label and studio was based on that.”

Auerbach said he is releasing an album of original material this summer on his label Easy Eye Records.

For Hood and Johnson, working again in the studio they founded in 1969 is special.

“It feels like we never

left. It’s the strangest feeling,” Hood said.

The studio at 3614 Jackson Highway closed in 1978, and was moved to roomier quarters on the Tennessee River. The Rhythm Section sold the second studio to Malaco Records in the 1980s, but continued to work there.

“It’s been probably 20 years ago that I last recorded here,” Johnson said. “They’ve done a wonderful job on the equipment, and the (control) board has done a magnificent job. It seems to be as good as the one we had. This might be the beginning of us doing more things here.”

Wood said he has known the Muscle Shoals players since the 1960s, but never recorded at Muscle Shoals Sound.

“We play a similar music with a similar groove,” he said. “We

listened to their records, and they listened to our records.”

The lobby of the studio remained open for tourists while the recording sessions were underway. Judy Hood, chairwoman of Muscle Shoals Music Foundation, said visitors were given free tickets to the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in compensation.

“As usual, we had visitors from all over the world,” she said. “Most of the people who visit 3614 Jackson Highway are hard-core fans to begin with, so they weren’t put off by the fact that they couldn’t go into the studio itself. In fact, the majority of them were thrilled to be standing in the building while history was being made.”

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.

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Ronnie McDowell



Musical artist Ronnie McDowell sits at the Holiday Inn in Sheffield and talks about his love of painting.

Story by Monica Collier
Photograph by Matt McKean

Ronnie McDowell came on the music scene in 1977 with his tribute to Elvis, "The King is Gone." He followed the hit with other chart-toppers, such as "Older Women are Beautiful Lovers" and "Watching Girls Go By." Over four decades, he has had more than 30 hits.

The Portland, Tennessee, native's tie to the Shoals is almost as long as his successful country music career. Wanda Myrick, of the Franklin County Arts and Humanities Council, has been "taking care" of McDowell's fan club for more than 30 years.

"Wanda asked me to come down there 26 years ago," McDowell said. "I had 'Unchained Melody' out, I never will forget it. I came then and 26 years later, I'm still coming. I

love old theaters and the Roxy is a beautiful representation of the old theaters in the small towns. Those are my favorite venues, believe it or not. I just love working at the Roxy. McDowell returned to the Roxy in March for a concert.

Myrick said she's a longtime McDowell fan not just because of his music, but because he's a nice person.

"I love his music," she said. "He has one of the most beautiful voices I've ever heard. But, it's all about the way he treats his fans. He appreciates his fans staying with him this long. He appreciates people who help him have a successful career."

This past February, McDowell released the single "Love Tattoo"

with Richard Lynch. "Love Tattoo" is a tribute to the military with proceeds benefitting American veterans through Lynch's nonprofit organization, Love Tattoo Foundation.

"My friend Richard wrote 'Love Tattoo' with a friend of his," McDowell said. "I'm a veteran, so when he called and asked me to help with that song, I was more than happy to do it. I love the song. It has a wonderful message. I was proud to be a part of it."

In addition to the "Love Tattoo" single, McDowell also released a CD in February. "Songs I Love" is literally a collection of songs McDowell has loved since he was a kid.

"That's out, and I have a new

single that was just released called, 'Two-step Boogie,' he said. "That's what it is. It's a wonderful little dance thing. It's kind of my homage to George Michael. If you remember 'Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go,' I've always loved that song. After George Michael died, I wanted to pay a little homage to him and I did with 'Two-step Boogie.' "

McDowell is back in the studio working on more new material. He's putting the final touches on a song he wrote based on the common phrase, "it is what it is."

"I've often wondered why nobody had written that song," he said. "So I wrote it. If any woman has ever had a man do them wrong, that's what this song is about. She gets tired of this old boy doing her wrong and finally stands up for herself and says, it is what it is, darling."

McDowell said he still has the same fire in his belly and passion for music that he's had from the beginning.

"Writing songs is my first

passion," he said. "I've never lost one ounce of passion for what I do or for the music business."

Not only is McDowell a talented singer and songwriter, he's a celebrated artist who has completed



38 paintings for the Disney Corp. He has taken a brief detour from his Disney project and is working on a painting he said is going to be the most favorite thing he's ever painted in his life.

"I'm dead serious," he said. "When I tell you what it is, you'll understand. In 1977, when Elvis passed away and I wrote 'The King is Gone,' I had no earthly idea my life would end up being what it is.

It was totally turned upside down in a totally positive way. I got to live my dream because of Elvis. For years, my fans have wanted me to do a painting of me and Elvis."

McDowell said it wasn't until recently that an idea for a painting of him and Elvis came to him. He said it's strange how the idea came to him after 40 years.

"I was sitting at a red light about two weeks ago, and it just popped in my head," he said. "It's me and Elvis shaking hands. And my record is behind us. It looks like a Norman Rockwell

painting. It's called, in little parenthesis, 'Elvis thank you.' The main title is 'Forever Grateful.' "

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.

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SONGS: Recorded in the Shoals

Here is a partial list of hit songs that were either recorded at studios in the Muscle Shoals area, written by Shoals songwriters or recorded with studio musicians from the Shoals:



Carter



Rimes



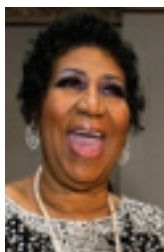
Seger



Sledge



McGraw



Franklin

AIR SUPPLY

"Even the Nights Are Better"

ALABAMA

"Once Upon a Lifetime"

ALABAMA

"Old Flame"

ARETHA FRANKLIN

"Chain of Fools," "I Never Loved a Man (the Way I Love You)," "Respect"

ART GARFUNKEL

"Watermark"

ARTHUR ALEXANDER

"You'd Better Move On"

ARTHUR CONLEY

"Sweet Soul Music"

BACKSTREET BOYS

"Never Gone," "No One Else Comes Close"

THE BAND PERRY

"Don't Let Me be Lonely"

BILLY RAY CYRUS

"Achy Breaky Heart"

BLAKE SHELTON

"Sure Be Cool If You Did"

BLOODSTONE

"Do You Wanna Do a Thing"

BOB SEGER

"Against the Wind," "Night Moves," "Rock 'n' Roll Never Forgets," "Old Time Rock and Roll"

BOBBY WOMACK

"Harry Hippie," "Lookin' For Love"

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

"Before He Cheats" "Blown Away"

CLARENCE CARTER

"Patches," "Slip Away"

CLARENCE CARTER

"Too Weak to Fight"

CRAIG MORGAN

"That's What I Love About Sunday"

DARRYL WORLEY

"Awful, Beautiful Live" "I Miss My Friend"

DELBERT MCCLINTON

"Givin' It Up For Your Love"

THE DELLS

"Give Your Baby a Standing Ovation"

DONNY OSMOND

"Go Away Little Girl," "Sweet and Innocent" "Hey Girl"

DR. HOOK

"Sexy Eyes," "Sharing the Night Together," "When You're In Love with a Beautiful Woman"

EARL THOMAS CONLEY

"Holding Her and Loving You"

FLORIDA-GEORGIA LINE

"Round Here" "Get Your Shine On"

GEORGE JONES AND TAMMY WYNETTE

"We're Gonna Hold On"

GLENN FREY

"Smuggler's Blues" "Sexy Girl"

HEARTLAND

"I Loved Her First"

HOLLIS DIXON AND THE KEYNOTES

"Paper Boy"

JAMES & BOBBY PURIFY

"I'm Your Puppet"

JIMMY BUFFETT

"Bama Breeze"

JOE TEX

"Hold What You Got"

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

"I Swear"

JOHNNY TAYLOR

"I Believe in You (You Believe in Me)"

KENNY CHESNEY

"Ain't Back Yet"

KENNY CHESNEY & TIM MCGRAW

"Feel Like a Rock Star"

LEANN RIMES

"Commitment"

LENNY LEBLANC AND PETE CARR

"Falling"

LONESTAR

"I'm Already There"

LUKE BRYAN

"Drunk on You"

LUTHER INGRAM

"If Loving You is Wrong (I Don't Want to Be Right)"

MAC DAVIS

"Baby Don't Get Hooked on Me," "Stop and Smell the Roses"

MARY MACGREGOR

"Torn Between Two Lovers"

MILLIE JACKSON

"Feelin' Bitchy," "Get It Outcha System"

MINDY MCREADY

"Guys Do it (All the Time)"

OAK RIDGE BOYS

"Bobbie Sue," "I Guess it Never Hurts to Hurt Sometime," "American Made"

THE OSMONDS

"One Bad Apple," "Sweet & Innocent"

PAM TILLIS

"Deep Down"

PAUL SIMON

"Loves Me Like a Rock," "Still Crazy After All These Years," "Kodachrome"

PERCY SLEDGE

"When a Man Loves a Woman"

R.B. GREAVES

"Take a Letter Maria"

REBA MCENTIRE

"The Fear of Being Alone"

ROD STEWART

"Tonight's the Night"

THE ROLLING STONES

"Wild Horses," "You Gotta Move," "Brown Sugar"

RUSHLOW

"I Can't Be Your Friend"

SAILCAT

"Motorcycle Mama" Sanford & Townsend
"Smoke from a Distant Fire"

SAWYER BROWN

"Treat Her Right," "This Time," "Thank God For You"

SHENANDOAH

"I Got You," "Rock My Baby," "Ghost in This House"

SONS OF THE DESERT

"Whatever Comes First"

STAPLE SINGERS

"Come Go With Me," "I'll Take You There," "Respect Yourself"

TEMPTATIONS

"A Song for You," "House Party"

T.G. SHEPPARD

"Strong Heart," "One For the Money"

THELMA HOUSTON

"Any Way You Like It"

TIM MCGRAW

"Some Things Never Change"
"One of Those Nights"

TRAVIS TRITT

"Modern Day Bonnie and Clyde"

TYLER FALL

"Redneck Crazy"

WAYLON JENNINGS

"We Had it All"

WILLIE NELSON

"Bloody Mary Morning"

WILSON PICKETT

"Don't Knock My Love," "Land of 1,000 Dances," "Mustang Sally"

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Introducing polo *and* opening *a* new world

Marc Harris, with a Philadelphia nonprofit group called Work to Ride, gets ready with his horse for a match at Bluewater Creek Polo Club in Lauderdale County.

Story by Bernie Delinski
Photograph by Jim Hannon

Marc Harris paused a moment while prepping his horse for a polo match to envision the lives he and his teammates might have encountered without the Work To Ride program.

"Maybe some kids wouldn't do well in school," the 17-year-old inner-city Philadelphia youth said. "Some would be outside doing who knows what otherwise."

"This program brings a lot of security. It's a life changer – a big life changer."

Harris then mounted the horse and headed to one of the Bluewater Creek Polo Club fields in Lauderdale County.

That response served as an ideal explanation for Lezlie Hiner's motivation behind forming Ride To Work in 1996.

The nonprofit program trains inner-city youths in Philadelphia to ride and also teaches them to play polo.

A Work To Ride interscholastic high school club and a middle school club traveled to the Shoals in January at the invitation of Bluewater polo club after the clubs met during a U.S. Polo Association Interscholastic preliminary tournament in Maryland.

Brett Brown, who coaches the Shoals club, said he was moved by the members of the Philadelphia club and the overall concept of the program Hiner created.

The Philadelphia program has been featured on ESPN, HBO and in Sports Illustrated.

"She has done an incredible feat," Brown said.



Bluewater Creek Polo Club team member Charlie Caldwell hits the ball in a polo match with a Philadelphia nonprofit group called Work to Ride at Bluewater Creek Polo Club in Lauderdale County.



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Bluewater Creek's Teena Tucker said Bluewater upgraded its arena to allow for interscholastic polo, which is drawing some interest from local youths.

Tucker said the Work To Ride club serves as an inspiration for everyone who meets them.

"The program gets the Work To Ride name from the fact that the kids have to work in the barn at the Work To Ride stables in order to be part of the program," she said. "If they do, they get to ride."

Their trip to the Shoals included a visit to local attractions, including Helen Keller's birthplace in Tusculumbia.

The Work To Ride members said that is an example of the wide range of places they have experienced.



Julian Penados, with a Philadelphia nonprofit group called Work to Ride, hits the ball in a polo match at Bluewater Creek Polo Club in Lauderdale County.

"We travel a lot," Harris said. "Some went to Argentina in November."

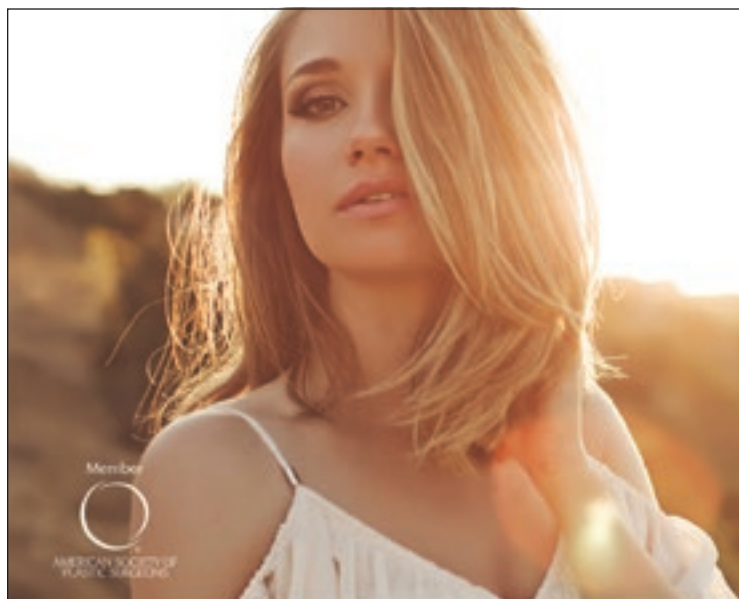
He mentioned Nigeria, China and India among other places they have played.

Harris said the program stresses academics and tries to connect players with colleges that have polo clubs. That has produced scholarships for some of the members.

"It opens a lot of doors for you," 16-year-old Malachi Lyles said. "It can do a lot for you."

Throughout the years, Hiner has discovered the Philadelphia kids have a lot of talent for the sport that traditionally is associated with wealthy white players. In fact, the team won the Interscholastic National Championship in 2011, becoming the first all-African-American team ever to do so.

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A Bluewater Creek Polo Club team, Harry Caldwell, Ry Koopman and Charlie Caldwell, get ready for a match with a Philadelphia nonprofit group called Work to Ride at Bluewater Creek Polo Club in Lauderdale County.

Hiner said the program maintains about 20 youths a year, who have to spend a great deal of time with it during a typical week, including more than 40 hours a week during the summers.

They help tend the barns that contain 34 horses. The long hours don't seem to bother them. Instead, they seem to enjoy the time there.

"Some of them would live there if they could," Hiner joked, as 11-year-old Marisol Jimenez from the middle school league smiled in agreement and hugged up to her.

This article first appeared in the TimesDaily.



Polo team members with a Philadelphia nonprofit group called Work to Ride, Malachi Lyley, Marc Harris and Julian Penados, get ready for a match at Bluewater Creek Polo Club in Lauderdale County.



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“It’s been *a* fun ride”

Ed Robbins
breaks the record
as a seasoned
polo player

Ed Robbins, at his polo field and stables in Lauderdale County, is the world’s oldest polo player.

A cross breeze and series of ceiling fans beneath the pavilion at Bluewater Creek Polo Club made for surprisingly mild conditions amid triple-digit heat indexes.

Ed Robbins took a seat at a pavilion table, looked around at the sprawling picturesque club he created in 1981, and smiled.

"It's been a fun ride out here," he wistfully proclaimed.

That can be taken figuratively and literally.

Robbins has played in countless polo matches on those fields throughout the years, ever since catching the polo bug in Wyoming.

"I went to a polo clinic in Jackson Hole and learned the

game," he said. "That's when I decided I wanted to play it."

The namesake behind the successful Muscle Shoals plastics-producing E.S. Robbins Corp., Robbins bought the polo property located off U.S. 72 in 1980. "We had polo going in 1981."

He still plays, which is a feat nobody else is able to claim.

The Guinness Book of World Records confirmed in June last year that at 85 years old Robbins set the record as the oldest active polo player.

"I guess it just worked out that way," Robbins said of his accomplishment.

He added with a laugh, "I'd rather have the title of the world's youngest active polo player."

In addition to the polo grounds, Bluewater has racehorses and a racetrack.

"I've always been a horse person all my life," Robbins said.

It's difficult to envision while looking out across the perfectly manicured green fields, but Robbins said Bluewater was a dirt field when they played the first match 35 years ago. He said the family knew they had found a great sport.

"The fascinating thing about polo is it's a team sport but it's on horses," Robbins said. "We've had a lot of good times out here. I'm glad I decided to do it."

He has traveled to various clubs, including the



Robbins leads the team onto the field.



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prestigious Wellington, Florida, club, and teams from other clubs have come to Bluewater.

"It's been a great thing, and you meet some great people," Robbins said.

He said a lot of young blood has started coming into Bluewater. "We get a lot of young players from polocrosse."

Polocrosse is a brand of polo played with a lacrosse-type stick.

"Once they play polo, they find out they like this more," Robbins said.

His daughter, Teena Tucker, said the polo club has been a wonderful experience for family and friends.

"It's a party every weekend out here," Tucker said. "We have a cookout and all bring food."

They also use the place for fundraisers, including Pets Are Worth Saving. They also have had jousting competitions in conjunction with the Alabama Renaissance Faire.

Tucker said she contacted Guinness officials after reading that the oldest active polo player was 82. Her father was 84 at the time,

so Guinness officials told her about the application process for the record.

It was a detailed process that requires a great deal of proof. She needed Robbins' birth certificate, letters from witnesses who played polo with him this summer and videos and still photos of the games.

Then she received the letter confirming Robbins as the oldest.

"I was ecstatic," Tucker said. "I thought they would find some type of picky detail."

His record will be included in the next Guinness edition and already is listed on the book's website.

The record had been claimed by Sir Charles Williams, who lives on the island of Barbados.

"Ah, he's a youngster," Robbins says of the 82-year-old.

Robbins plans to continue playing his beloved game as long as he can.

And each time he does, he'll set a new world record.

This article was first published in the TimesDaily.



Ed Robbins, at his polo field and stables in Lauderdale County, is the world's oldest polo player.





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A man wearing a red baseball cap, sunglasses, and a white sleeveless shirt is in the middle of throwing a blue disc golf disc. He has a goatee and a tattoo on his right arm. The background is a wooded area with trees and fallen leaves on the ground. A blue disc golf basket is visible in the background, slightly out of focus.

NEW DISC GOLF COURSE

a hit at
Joe Wheeler
State Park

Michael Hunt makes his short putt to the 17th basket as he plays the disc golf course at Joe Wheeler State Park.

Story by Russ Corey
Photograph by Matt McKean

A new 18-hole disc golf course that opened this year at Joe Wheeler State Park is a hit with enthusiasts of the sport as well as amateurs.

Jack White, the primary designer and builder of the new course, said some people he saw playing the course had never played disc golf before. Their reaction to the new course was exactly what he had in mind.

"It's creating a good experience that's safe and fun and has people walking away wanting to come back," White said.

Park officials say the new course is another recreational activity available to park patrons and visitors.

"We've seen a great deal of interest in it," Marketing Manager Haley Newton said. "There are people there on a daily basis."

The course winds through a mostly wooded area, up and down hills, with periodic views of the Tennessee River. White said it's suitable for new players and more experienced disc golfers.

Tim Haney, supervisor of operations and maintenance for the state parks' North Region, said the course was built by White with assistance from a few local disc golf enthusiasts.

"It's an additional amenity to bring people into the park," Haney said.

Haney said a man from Decatur contacted him about installing a course in the park. Haney eventually met White, who has designed and built numerous courses in the Southeast.

"We walked through the woods and he kind of started envisioning the course," Haney said.



Wes Bevis carries his discs on his back as he walks the 17th fairway at the disc golf course at Joe Wheeler State Park.

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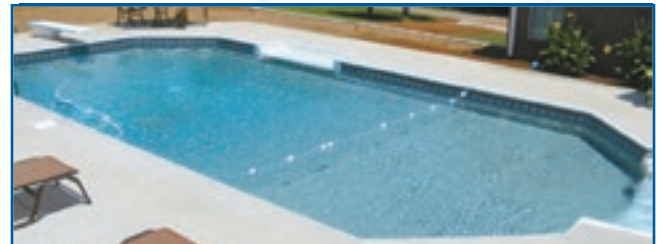
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"It's a beautiful course because not every course goes through the woods, and not every course has views of a river."

White said the Tennessee River is visible from the Hole 16 tee pad.

Newton said she has created a Facebook page for the new course. A couple of small tournaments have already been held at the course.

Haney said the course is a good use of the property, and the park

will make sure people staying at the lodge or in the campgrounds know it's there.

Adapted from an article first published in the TimesDaily.



Wes Bevis tosses a disc through the trees on the 17th fairway as he plays the disc golf course at Joe Wheeler State Park.

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take a hike

Photography by Jim Hannon



Wayne Dunkin
hikes at Cane
Creek Canyon
Nature Preserve
in Colbert County.

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

■ Shoal Creek Nature Preserve

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

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

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

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

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

■ Rock Spring Nature Trail

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

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

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

■ Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge

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

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

■ Bankhead National Forest

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

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




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The Point at Cane
Creek Canyon
Nature Preserve.



Cane Creek
Nature Preserve.

■ Old Railroad Bridge

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

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

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

Access to the bridge is from Ashe Boulevard in Sheffield.

■ Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve, Tuscumbia

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

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

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Key Cave
Wildlife Refuge.



■ Alabama Forever Wild Shoal Creek Preserve, St. Florian

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

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

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

■ Wildwood Park, Florence

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

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



Jim Lacefield leads a group
of hikers to Cane Creek
Canyon Nature Preserve



Shoal Creek
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campgrounds



■ Colbert Alloys Park and Campground

180 Alloys Park Lane, Muscle Shoals.

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■ Colbert Rose Trail

9395 Riverton Rose Trail, Cherokee.

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

■ Heritage Acres RV Park

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

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

■ Tuscumbia RV Park

18260 U.S. 72, Tuscumbia.

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

■ Wilson Dam Rock Pile Campground

663 Rock Pile Road, Muscle Shoals.

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

■ Brush Creek Park

Lauderdale 14, near Waterloo.

Open from mid-March through late October with 50 acres of primitive camping. There are no electrical or water hookups, but bathroom facilities with cold showers and a dumping station are available. No fee to camp. Thirty-day maximum stay. 256-760-5878 or 256-760-5750



Great local RV, tent and primitive camping.

■ McFarland Park

Alabama 20, Florence.

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

■ Joe Wheeler State Park

Rogersville.

This state park offers resort facilities with a lodge, restaurant, fishing, golf, swimming, tennis, convention and banquet facilities and boat slips and marina. The upgraded campsites offer all amenities and primitive sites as well.

256-247-1184; joewheeler.park@dcnr.alabama.gov.

■ Wheeler Reservation Campground

Alabama 101, east end of Wheeler Dam.

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

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If you were born after April 28, 1954, Alabama law requires you to obtain a boaters license. The Florence Flotilla of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary offers several classes each year to help boaters prepare for the boaters license exam.

Children younger than 12 are prohibited from operating boats and personal watercraft in Alabama. Youths 12 and 13 can obtain an Alabama boater safety certificate, which allows them to operate a boat while being supervised onboard by a person 21 years or older who has a valid Alabama boat operators license.

Alabama law requires a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device be on board boats for the operators and all passengers.

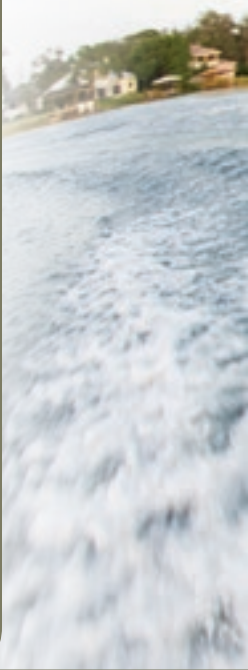
Children younger than 8 are required to wear a life jacket at all times except when riding inside an enclosed cabin. All boat operators and passengers are required to wear a life jacket while within 800 feet of the downstream side of a hydroelectric dam or navigation lock.

Personal watercraft operators and passengers, and anyone towed on skies, tubes, and wake or knee boards must wear a life jacket.

State law also requires vessels more than 16 feet long be equipped with a flotation device that can be thrown, if needed.

The Alabama Marine Police recommends all boat operators and passengers wear a life jacket at all times.

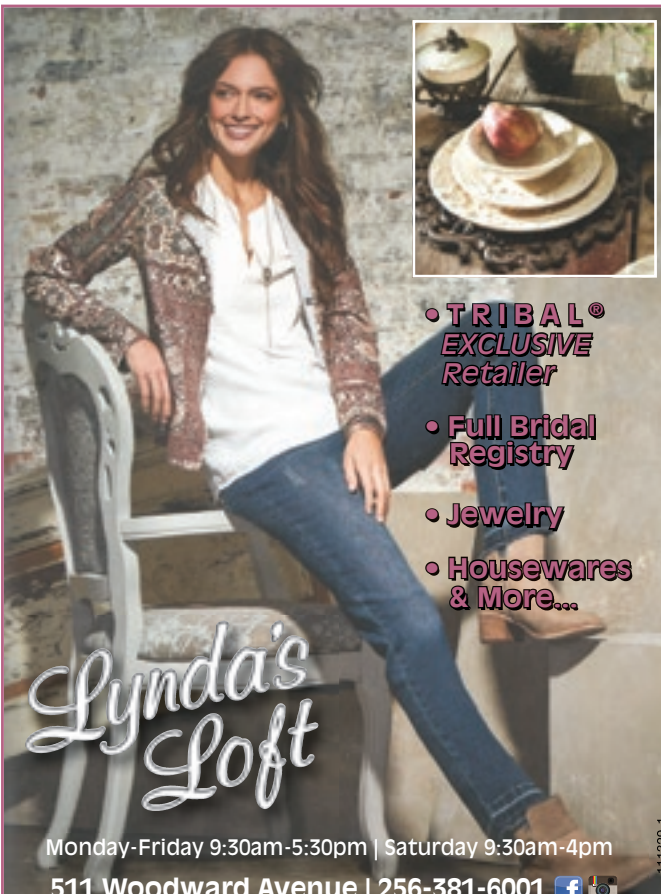

The local Coast Guard Auxiliary flotilla offers vessel safety inspections at area boat ramps during the spring and summer to help boaters make sure they have all required safety equipment onboard. For more details, call 256-757-4622.



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10 must-see sites

while visiting the Shoals

Let's say you only have a couple of days to visit the Shoals and you need some recommendations as to what sites to visit. Here are our recommendations:

The Rosenbaum House, W.C. Handy home, Pope's Tavern, FAME recording studio, Muscle Shoals Sound Studios Museum, Ivy Green, Wilson Dam, Coon Dog Cemetery, Spring Park and the Railroad Depot Museum in Tuscumbia.

Photography by Jim Hannon & Matt McKean

1

THE ROSENBAUM HOUSE - 601 Riverview Drive, Florence

This is the opportunity to experience the work of Frank Lloyd Wright from inside the walls of one of the homes he designed. The 1,540-square-foot home is the only Wright-designed building in Alabama. It was created in a Usonian style that incorporates organic simplicity by bringing in the outdoors.



W.C. HANDY BIRTHPLACE, MUSEUM & LIBRARY -*620 W. College St., Florence***2**

The small log cabin where W.C. Handy, known as “Father of the Blues,” was born is part of an attraction that includes a museum and library containing books on Handy and his music, as well as black history and culture. Handy was born in the cabin Nov. 16, 1873, and died in New York in 1958.

**POPE'S TAVERN - 203 Hermitage Drive, Florence****3**

This building's history is intriguing, being a one-time stagecoach stop that later became a hospital for Union and Confederate troops at different times during the Civil War. Andrew Jackson is said to have stopped here on his march to the Battle of New Orleans. Today, artifacts from the 18th and 19th century are displayed in the home.



FAME RECORDING STUDIOS - 603 E. Avalon Ave., Muscle Shoals**4**

This is a chance to visit the place where artists such as Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Etta James, Otis Redding, the Osmonds, Jerry Reed, Alabama and Mac Davis have recorded. All totaled, FAME has been involved in recording or publishing records that have sold over 350 million copies since opening its doors in Florence in 1959 and later moving across the river to Muscle Shoals.

**MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND STUDIOS MUSEUM - 3614 Jackson Highway, Sheffield****5**

This is where The Swampers moved to when they left FAME Recording Studios in 1969. The original studio closed in 1978, but in 1999, it was purchased and brought back to life. It is undergoing renovations even now, but there's nothing like seeing the iconic façade while awaiting its reopening. Artists who recorded here included Cher, Rod Stewart, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Wilson Pickett, Bob Seger, and the Rolling Stones.



IVY GREEN - 300 N. Commons St. W., Tuscumbia

The birthplace of Helen Keller also is the location where she famously learned sign language as a child when her teacher Anne Sullivan repeatedly spelled out "water" in Helen's hand. The pump where Sullivan drew the water is part of the sprawling indoor and outdoor attraction.

6



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WILSON DAM - *Wilson Dam Road*

7

The mammoth dam that once was a power supply center for munitions plants in World War I today is a major power source for the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was completed in the early 1920s and considered an engineering marvel for its time.



COON DOG CEMETERY - *Coondog Cemetery Road, Cherokee*

8

In 1937, Key Underwood honored his beloved hunting dog, Troop, by establishing the cemetery as his burial site. Today, it remains a unique attraction, where coon-dog owners continue the tradition of burying their pets there, beneath markers that range from small stones to large monuments.



9

SPRING PARK - *Off Main Street, Tuscumbia*

The park, which draws its name from a large spring, features a small roller coaster, carousel, and train that travels throughout the park and waterfall leading into the spring. It also features a two-story open air shelter, several single-story pavilions with lights and power outlets, public restrooms and open spaces.



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Cypress Lakes, a municipal golf course open for public play, is an 18 hole golf course in Muscle Shoals featuring 6,562 yards of golf. Our amenities include a fifteen station driving range, separate putting green, a clubhouse facility and Pro Shop. Call 256.381.1232 for tee times.



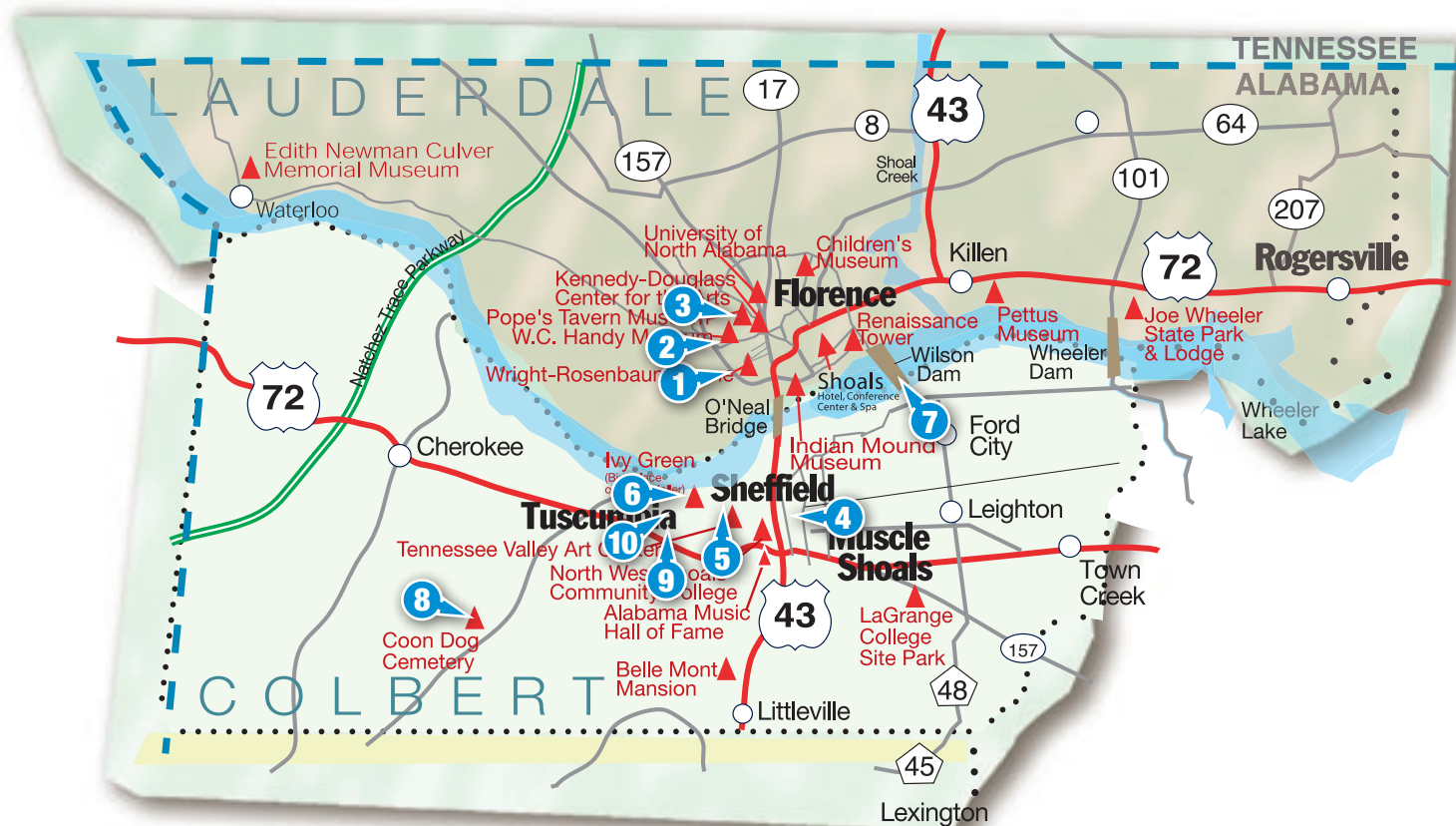
18 Holes with Cart
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10

TUSCUMBIA RAILWAY DEPOT MUSEUM - 204 W. Fifth St., Tuscumbia

This train depot was opened in 1888 and today has been renovated to precise specifications to make certain it retains its original look. It includes memorabilia inside the depot and train cars, a roundhouse and operating turntable on the grounds.





Day Trips

check out these
nearby places

NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

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



Ray's

At the bank

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256-275-7716



Day Trips

DISMALS CANYON

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



U.S. SPACE AND ROCKET CENTER, HUNTSVILLE

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



JESSE OWENS MEMORIAL PARK

In 1936, Jesse Owens made his mark in Olympic history by winning four Olympic Gold Medals in Berlin, Germany. His performance in those Olympic Games and his life were the basics of the movie, "Race," which opened in theaters in 2016. Owens was born and grew up in rural Lawrence County, in the Oakville community, south of Moulton. The Jesse Owens Museum and Park is near his birthplace and houses many photos, videos and memorabilia of his life. The museum is about 40 minutes from the Shoals. Take Alabama 157 south through Moulton and turn left on Lawrence 187. Reservations: 256-974-3636; jesseowensmemorialpark.com



POND SPRING HOME OF GEN. JOE WHEELER

The home of Gen. Joe Wheeler, a former Confederate officer and longtime U.S. congressman, is a good day trip. The Wheeler home features many items of the family's clothing and furniture. Besides the home, other buildings on the site include original slave cabins, an old ice house, log barn and other plantation outbuildings. 256-637-8513; facebook.com/GeneralJoeWheelerHome



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time to Eat

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

FAMILY

ALABAMA CHANIN FACTORY AND CAFÉ

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

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

Think fresh – as in organically grown: salads, vegetable of the day, sandwiches, quiche, daily plate, beer and wine, and other yummy items that change regularly. It's all served on the fringe of where renowned designer Alabama Chanin creates and produces

her signature fashions. When you're satiated from the lovely food, take advantage of the opportunity to tour The Factory studio.

THE BACK PORCH FAMILY RESTAURANT

Where: 16125 U.S. 72, Rogersville; 256-607-7057; Facebook page

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days

This family restaurant has a varied menu of steaks, seafood, burgers and fries, and a full salad bar. Country wholesomeness décor and features live music, karaoke, and even line dancing.

CITY HARDWARE

Where: 105 N. Court St., Florence; 256-275-3666; cityhardwareflorence.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily

With its old town ambiance and flavorful menu, City Hardware offers diners many menu choices from land and sea, billing itself as "American Cuisine with a Southern Accent."

LEGENDS STEAKHOUSE

Where: 201 N. Seminary St. Florence; 256-766-5072 legendssteakhouse.com

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

This steak house serves up far more than a juicy slice of beef. The menu

items are numerous, the environment charming and the décor tells a story. There is a covered patio seating about 50 people so guests can enjoy outdoor dining in the warmer months.

ODETTE

Where: 120 N. Court Street, Florence; 256-349-5219; odettealabama.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Odette bills itself as serving "elevated American fare with Southern and international influences." Menu items feature locally and sustainable-sourced ingredients. The atmosphere is



contemporary and relaxed. It's a local favorite

GARDEN GATE

Where: 701 Avalon Ave. Muscle Shoals; 256-383-6905; and a Florence location at 1917 Florence Blvd.; 256-349-2569

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Friday

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

CITY RESTAURANT

Where: 108 W. Fifth Street, Tuscumbia; 256-383-9809

Hours: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday
Come early and enjoy

a full breakfast or drop by for a hearty meat-and-three lunch. Burgers and sandwiches are also available.

CLAUNCH CAFÉ

Where: 400 S. Main St. Tuscumbia; 256-386-0222; Facebook page

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday-Thursday

Claunch Café specializes in downhome Southern cooking. Diners can sit inside the glassed-in porch and look out at the beauty of Spring Park. In the summer months, the glass is removed and only the screens remain. The chicken salad plate is a must-try – it's Claunch's signature dish.

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RATTLESNAKE SALOON

Where: 1292 Mount Mills Road, Tuscumbia; 256-370-7220; Reservations must be booked before 4:45 p.m. by calling 256-370-7218; rattlesnakesaloon.net

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (February.-November.); 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday (April-Sept.)

You've got to see this restaurant. There's a reason it bills itself as "the watering hole under the rock." This is a popular restaurant. See the website for reservation rules.

RAY'S AT THE BANK

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

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

Good regional fare in this new restaurant in east Florence. The building has been renovated to expose brick walls that adds warmth and charm to the dining experience, which

features sandwiches (smoked gouda pimiento cheese sounds good), slow smoked pork brisket, ribs and chicken, and soups and salads.

RHODA P'S

Where: 312 N. Montgomery Ave., Sheffield; 256-978-5179; rhodapscatering.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday

Rhoda P's has been a favorite among locals and visitors for decades. How about succulent fried pork chops, corn casserole, pinto bean and fried okra. That's the kind of mouthwatering menu items found here. Open buffet.

SEASON'S

Where: 1420 Huntsville Road, Florence; 256-349-5691; seasonsfood1420.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; 6:30-11

a.m. Saturday

This newest eatery features sandwiches and salads and is located in a renovated historical building in east Florence.

SOUTHERN FARM TABLE RESTAURANT AND BAKERY

Where: 4160 Lauderdale 200, Florence; 256-577-7009; southernfarmtable.com

Hours: 3:30-8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

Food here is prepared fresh and is billed as "made the way food was made many years before processed foods and convenient shortcuts became a way of life." Buffet featuring fried chicken, catfish, crackling cornbread, vegetables and dessert.

STANFIELD'S RIVER BOTTOM GRILLE

Where: Florence Harbor; 256-768-1721; riverbottomgrille.com

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

It's the only floating restaurant in the Shoals. The view of Florence Harbor surrounds you in this casual dining spot. When the weather permits, take a table on the deck and drink in the ambiance of the Tennessee River lifestyle. The menu is long and varied. The Stanfield's Steamer Bucket of seafood is a favorite.

SWEET BASIL CAFÉ

Where: 1627 Darby Drive, Florence; 256-764-5991; Facebook

Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday

Choose from an assortment of sandwiches or opt for the lunch plate special. Or order a "super foods salad" featuring kale, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and chicory, carrots, dried cranberries and all kinds of yummy



136 Seasons in east Florence.



Ricatoni's in downtown Florence.

ingredients with a honey lime dressing. The eatery is also a market, so take advantage of its leisurely atmosphere and browse.

SWAMPERS BAR AND GRILL

Where: One Hightower Place, inside Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa; 256-246-3600

Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

This Florence eatery features casual dining in an elegant setting with a comfortable lounge and outdoor patio for diners to enjoy. Swampers serves breakfast, lunch and dinner featuring classic American fare. The interior honors Alabama's rich cultural heritage.

THE WILD LILLY

Where: 702 Michigan Avenue, Muscle Shoals; 256-314-4447; thewildlilly.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday; 5-9 p.m.

Tuesday-Saturday

Diners will find Cajun and Creole inspired food alongside Southern traditional favorites presented with an artistic twist to feed the eyes as well as the palate. Life music is offered Friday and Saturday nights.

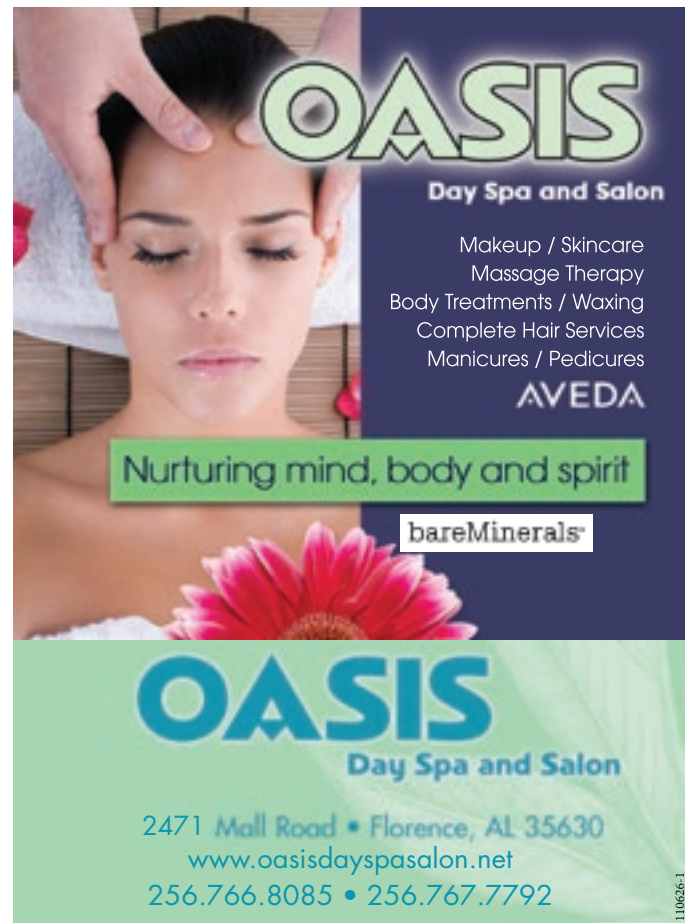
BAR AND GRILL

ON THE ROCKS

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

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

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



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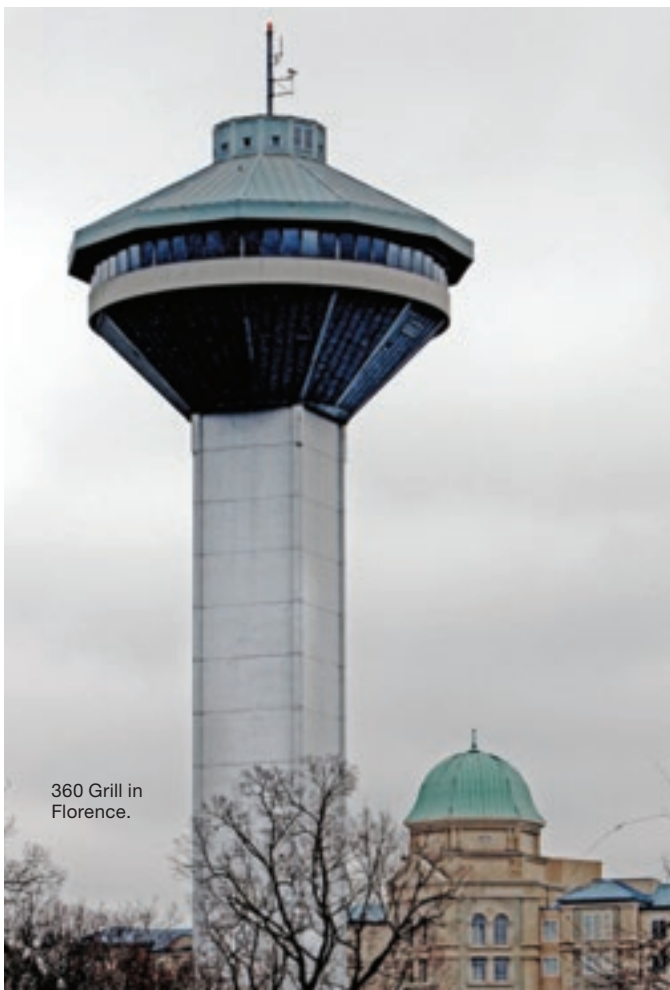
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FLOBAMA MUSIC HALL AND RESTAURANT

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

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

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

FINE DINING/ STEAKS/ SEAFOOD

360 GRILLE

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

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

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

GEORGE'S STEAK PIT

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

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

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

STANFIELD'S STEAK HOUSE

Where: 1700 Lee St., Rogersville; 256-247-3336

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Steaks, burgers, catfish, chicken and sandwiches are served at this Rogersville eatery. There is a lunch menu available for orders placed before 4 p.m.

BARBEQUE

BUNYAN'S BARBECUE

Where: 901 W. College St., Florence; 256-766-3522; bunyansbarbecue.com

Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday

This is a favorite among locals for pulled barbecue pork sandwiches and hotdogs with Bunyan's famous slaw, hot or mild. Chicken is also on the menu. Order ahead and pack a picnic lunch. Eat in or take out.

DICK HOWELL'S BBQ

Where: 1350 N. Pine St. Florence; 256-767-5830; Facebook page

Hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday

In addition to a smoked barbecue sandwich, try the rib plate, smoke turkey sandwich or stuffed baked potato with meat. The mouthwatering menu has something for every taste.

306 BBQ

Where: 322 N. Court St., Florence; 256-766-5665; 306bbq.com/Florence

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

Hickory wood smoked barbecue featuring pork, ribs, chicken, turkey, ham, and plates with a choice of sides. There are salad, potatoes and wings, too.

RICK LANNING'S BBQ

Where (three locations in the Shoals): 4260 Florence Blvd, 256-757-0200; 212 Cox Creek Pkwy. Florence; 256-766-0833; 2501 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals, 256-383-2020; ricksbbq.com

Hours (same at all three Shoals locations): 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Sandwiches, platters, potatoes and salads can be filled with Rick's smoked chicken, pork or beef.

ICE CREAM/ SANDWICHES

THE PALACE ICE CREAM AND SANDWICH SHOP

Where: 100 S. Main St. Tuscumbia; 256-386-8210

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Former home of the Railroad Hotel in 1833, then the location of Palace Drug Store in 1906, this eatery specializes in milkshakes, ice cream, burgers, sandwiches and triple scoop, tri-flavored banana splits.

TROWBRIDGE'S

Where: 316 N. Court St., Florence; 256-764-1503

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday

In the heart of historic downtown Florence, this shop features handmade shakes, sundaes, and sandwiches.



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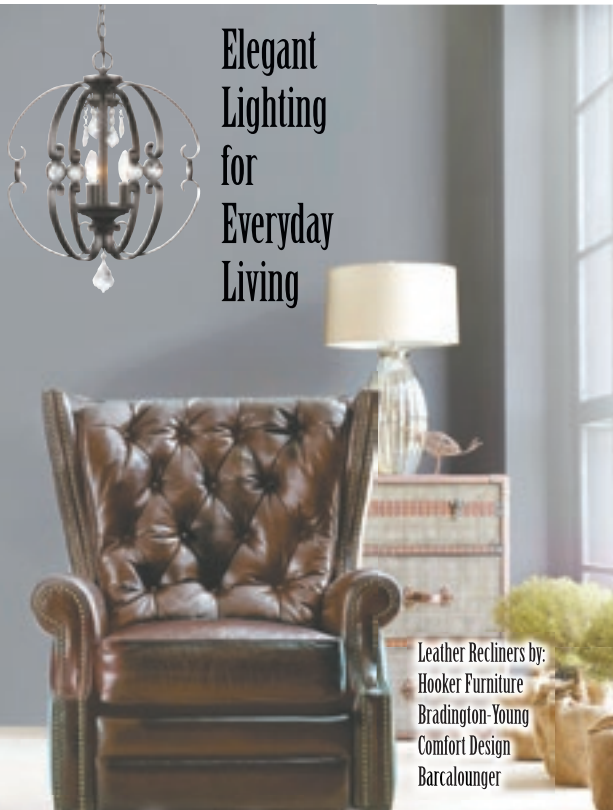
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Where: 11000 Jackson Highway, Sheffield; 256-381-5397; 550 Brighton Ave., Muscle Shoals, 256-383-4434; 2801 Mall Drive, Florence; 256-767-2750

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

LA HACIENDA MEXICAN RESTAURANT

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

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

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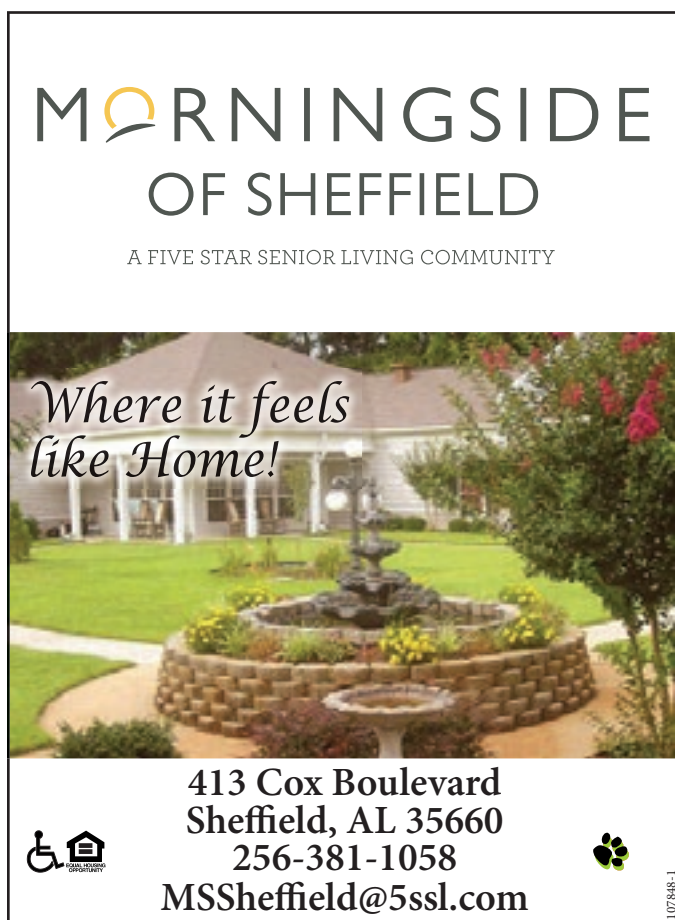
Cloverdale Road, Florence, 256-178-6843; 3721 Florence Blvd., 256-272-8444; 41 Market Square, Rogersville, 256-247-6180; 517 Avalon Ave. E., Muscle Shoals; 256-389-8282; 4001 N. Jackson Highway, Sheffield; 256-248-4279

ROSIE'S MEXICAN CANTINA

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

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

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



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ICHIBAN

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

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

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

UMI JAPANESE STEAK HOUSE

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

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

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

RICE BOX

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

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

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

YUMM

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

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

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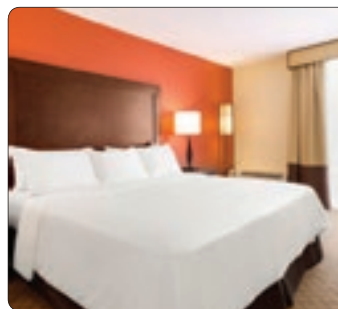
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CAJUN AND CREOLE

NEW ORLEANS TRANSFER

Where: 1682 S. Wilson Dam Road, Muscle Shoals; 256-386-0656; Facebook page

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Family recipes are served at this authentic Creole restaurant. The setting is simple, casual and laid back, evoking nostalgic images of a classic bayou eatery. A favorite main dish is the seafood gumbo and the most popular dessert is a unique version of bread pudding with bourbon sauce.

CAJUNS

Where: 4301 Jackson Highway, Sheffield; 256-381-1573

Hours: 3 p.m. to midnight Wednesday-Friday; noon to midnight Saturday

Cajun-flavored food in a relaxed environment, with delicacies such as fried oysters and shrimp, red beans and rice, frog legs, corn and potatoes. Menu also offers regular fare.

ITALIAN/PIZZA/SPECIALTY

RICATONI'S ITALIAN GRILL

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

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

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

THE PIE FACTORY

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

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

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

THE CHICAGO CAFE

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

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

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

COFFEE HOUSES

RIVERTOWN COFFEE

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

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

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

TURBO COFFEE

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

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

Coffee shop that also serves food and smoothies.



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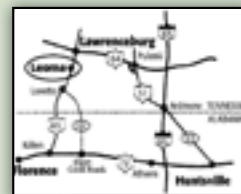
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