

Alabama CURRENTS

Vol. XIII No. 1 • January/February 2014

A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority



LEAD ♀ FORWARD

Celebrating Women of Tallapoosa County

See Page 7

Grants available to assist with energy bills

We know and understand that paying for high home heating bills during the winter can be a significant challenge for low-income families or elderly residents living on extremely limited budgets. That's why we continue to seek ways in which we can help you manage your energy bills through energy-efficiency and weatherization efforts. It's also important for us to provide you with information when assistance is available to help mitigate some of these challenges.



In December, Gov. Robert Bentley awarded \$39.3 million in grants to assist low-income families in Alabama with home energy bills.

The grants will enable 22 community action agencies throughout the state to provide temporary assistance with electric and gas bills. Priority for assistance is given to the elderly, people with disabilities and families with young children.

Residents seeking assistance must apply through their local community action agencies. Eligibility is based on income, family size and available resources. If applications are approved, payments are made directly to the utility companies on behalf of residents.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grants as part of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The funding was made available to the state by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The community action agencies, counties served and grant amounts are listed below.

- Community Action Partnership of Huntsville/Madison and Limestone Counties Inc. (Madison and Limestone) - \$2,358,610. Phone: (256) 851-9800;
- Community Service Programs of West Alabama Inc. (Bibb, Choctaw, Fayette, Greene, Lamar, Tuscaloosa, Sumter) - \$3,331,190. Phone: (205) 752-5429;
- Walker County Community Action Agency Inc. (Walker) - \$641,320. Phone: (205) 221-4010;
- Pickens County Community Action Committee and Community Development Corp. Inc. (Pickens) - \$292,648. Phone: (205) 367-8166;
- Organized Community Action Program Inc. (Bullock, Butler, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Lowndes, Pike) - \$2,331,889. Phone: (334) 566-1712;
- Community Action Agency of Northwest Alabama Inc. (Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale) - \$1,149,014. Phone: (256) 766-4330;

- Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama Inc. (Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall, St. Clair) - \$3,104,685. Phone: (256) 638-4430;
- Community Action Partnership of North Alabama Inc. (Cullman, Lawrence, Morgan) - \$1,799,536. Phone: (256) 355-7843;
- Montgomery Community Action Agency (Montgomery) - \$2,128,337. Phone: (334) 263-3474;
- Mobile Community Action Inc. (Mobile, Washington) - \$3,911,329. Phone: (251) 457-5700;
- Marion-Winston Counties Community Action Committee Inc. (Marion, Winston) - \$588,062. Phone: (205) 921-4224;
- Macon-Russell Community Action Agency Inc. (Macon, Russell) - \$858,631. Phone: (334) 727-6100;
- Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity (Jefferson) - \$4,192,094. Phone: (205) 327-7500;
- Human Resource Development Corp. (Barbour, Coffee, Geneva, Henry, Houston) - \$1,900,283. Phone: (334) 347-0881;
- Hale Empowerment and Revitalization Organization Inc. (Hale) - \$361,343. Phone: (334) 624-0842;
- Community Action of Etowah County Inc. (Etowah) - \$894,701. Phone: (256) 546-9271;
- Elmore/Autauga Community Action Committee Inc. (Autauga, Dallas, Elmore, Perry) - \$1,746,532. Phone: (334) 567-4361;
- Eleventh Area of Alabama Opportunity Action Committee Inc. (Chilton, Shelby) - \$968,856. Phone: (205) 755-1204;
- Community Action Committee Inc. of Chambers-Tallapoosa-Coosa (Chambers, Tallapoosa, Coosa) - \$863,929. Phone: (256) 825-4287;
- Community Action Agency of South Alabama (Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Marengo, Monroe, Wilcox) - \$2,730,940. Phone: (251) 626-2646;
- Alabama Council on Human Relations Inc. (Lee) - \$1,337,444. Phone: (334) 821-8336;
- Community Action Agency of Talladega, Clay, Randolph, Calhoun, and Cleburne Counties (Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, Randolph, Talladega) - \$1,864,982. Phone: (256) 362-6611.

Full contact information for each agency can be found at www.caaalabama.org/agency-list.php. We encourage you to take advantage of these available funds by contacting your local community action agency.

We wish for you and your family a very happy 2014!

Lisa Miller

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing

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MISSION STATEMENT

AMEA's mission is to provide for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power, enabling them to preserve and enhance the benefits of municipal utility ownership for their citizens and the electric customers they serve. We strive to offer services that our Members need and can adapt to provide the best value for their communities and customers.

Alabama CURRENTS

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On the Cover

Come celebrate the women of Tallapoosa County on Thursday, Feb. 13, as the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce hosts the city's first *Lead Forward* Women's Conference at the Betty Carol Graham Technology Center on the campus of Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City.

The conference is hosted by the Chamber in collaboration with women interwoven throughout city and county businesses, civic organizations, schools and service organizations.

Women leaders throughout Tallapoosa County will be a part of the conference, including: (front row, L to R) Curtia Moon, Security Pest Control; Melody Ritchie, Russell Medical Center; Kristie Boone, Alexander City Board of Education. (Second row, L to R) Suzanne Hayes, Fairytale Journeys; Randa Marlow, Edward Jones Investments; Barbara Young, retiree volunteer; Barbara Sokol, retiree volunteer. (Third row, L to R) Mary Lyman Boone, *The Alexander City Outlook*; Corporal Sheronda Cross, Tallapoosa County Task Force; Kelli Kelly, Benjamin Russell High School; Debra Harwell, retiree volunteer. (Fourth row, L to R) Marsha Hanks, Lake Martin Gifts; Sandra Fuller, Lake Martin Economic Development Alliance; Betsy Keown, retiree volunteer; Jackie Strong, For Heaven's Sake; Nancy Ammons, Russell Medical Center. (Fifth row, L to R) Karen Treadwell, Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine at Russell Medical Center; Ann Rye, Alexander City Chamber of Commerce; Noreen Hornsby, Lakeside Mercantile; and Kem Jones, Alexander City Fire Department.

(Photo by Kenneth Boone)

Electric utility industry continues to be good environmental steward

The electric utility industry continues to face increased environmental challenges to curb emissions from coal-fired electric generation facilities. For years, electric utilities have taken a proactive approach in their environmental efforts.



Last September, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed rules that require new power plants to capture carbon emissions. EPA is expected to issue rules for existing plants this summer.

The EPA's proposal, which addresses only new power plants, is a dress rehearsal for a much larger one this year that will limit emissions from existing power plants. President Obama has directed the agency to propose a standard for existing plants by June and finalize it in 2015.

In addition, the proposed rules require all new coal-fired power plants to deploy a system of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS), even though the commercial viability of CCS is still unproven.

In a report issued by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) in 2013, emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) from the electric power sector in 2012 declined to their lowest level since the passage of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The reduction in SO₂ and NO_x emissions through the late 2000s was primarily the result of coal plants employing strategies to reduce emissions, not a reduction in the use of coal overall, EIA said.

In fact, coal generation set record highs in 2007 when significant SO₂ reduction was already underway, according to EIA. However, since late 2008, two major contributors of declining SO₂ and NO_x emissions have been: historically low natural gas prices, which have contributed to shifting some generation from coal to natural gas; and lower overall generation from coal in 2012.

The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority's (AMEA) largest partner, Alabama Power Company (APCo), has spent approximately \$3 billion over the last decade or so on environmental controls, with the result being significant reductions in traditional emissions, including NO_x, SO₂, fine particle and mercury. In fact, air quality across many areas of the state is now better than it has been in decades.

APCo is in the process of investing another \$1 billion on additional improvements, including the addition of gas capability to a number of coal units and baghouses at some large coal units. These improvements will allow the company to use more natural gas, as well as allow them to continue to use some of their most efficient and economical coal units while meeting ever-more-stringent environmental regulations. AMEA is supportive of these efforts and will incur our share of these emission-control costs.

Regarding coal, Alabama Power and its parents company, Southern Company, are using less of it. In the late 1990s, APCo was more than 75 percent coal; in 2012 they were just over 50 percent (Southern Company as a whole is now less than 40 percent coal).

AMEA believes that we need to have the ability to utilize all sources of energy – natural gas, coal, nuclear, renewables – as well as energy efficiency to continue to meet the needs of its customers for reliable, affordable power. We need the ability and the flexibility to use a variety of fuels for our customers, so we can adjust to changing market conditions, changing prices, etc., to protect our customers and keep electricity reliable and affordable, while protecting the environment we all share.

As an energy provider to 11 Member cities in Alabama, AMEA has a responsibility to continue to deliver reliable, economical energy, in a fiscally-responsible and environmentally-friendly manner. We are committed to a balanced power supply program that promotes harmony with our environment, at the lowest cost to our Member cities and the citizens they serve.

As we look forward, we see the magnitude of the environmental challenges growing larger and requiring increasing innovation and leadership to find practical, effective, reasonable and economical answers to our stewardship challenges.

To meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century and beyond, we must be proactive in our commitment to provide both affordable energy and environmental stewardship. We look forward to working together to reduce the carbon footprint we all impose upon the environment.

Fred D. Clark, Jr.
AMEA President & CEO

Resolve to make energy-efficiency improvements in the New Year



Recently my wife and I had the opportunity to spend several days in your lovely state of Alabama. Late one afternoon, we were sitting in a restaurant watching the sunset over Mobile Bay and were discussing where we might spend the night and where we might do some Christmas shopping the next day. Two tables to our left sat a

middle-aged lady who was dressed like she probably knew some nice places to shop. Well, as they say, I never met a stranger so I just walked over to her and told her that we were from Arkansas and would like her advice as to a place to stay and perhaps do some Christmas shopping.

The good news is that after about 30 minutes, we knew just about everything about Spanish Fort and Fairhope, Alabama. The bad news is that that conversation cost me most of my Christmas money.

Two days later, we were discussing the helpful lady and our shopping experiences. My wife said, "You know that lady at the restaurant was so kind to spend that much time helping us. She should go to work for the Chamber of Commerce. And did you notice how kind and helpful all the people have been in the stores? I just loved it." Well yes, I did notice it.

So what does that have to do with energy efficiency? And the answer is absolutely nothing. However, during the few days prior to that experience, we were in several other towns and looked at many new and existing homes. We were looking at different architectural designs used in the South. I always look at the energy features of any house that I visit. As usual, I found that most of the new houses were beautiful, but were not built to be nearly as energy efficient as desired, which simply means that those houses will have higher utility bills every month forever unless the energy features are upgraded.

I have been writing this column for six years and I love to do so. But at the beginning of each year, I wonder just how

many people we have helped. I am aware that in my effort to help you, I may have sometimes been a little too straight forward or a little tough on you folks. So after we returned from our trip to your state, I decided to make some calls and get opinions from some in the construction industry. I learned that there has been improvement, but it has been slow. That is about the same thing that I see in other states.

Since I have written about geothermal several times in the last year, one of my calls was to a geothermal dealer that installs systems from Mobile to Birmingham. I was told that 2013 would be their best year ever. I was so very happy to hear that. So I asked how many geothermal sales that would be for the year. And the answer was 25. They were pleased with the increase and I was happy for them, but my fast calculations told me that there is still plenty of work to be done.

Let's see now. The population of Alabama is about five million divided by three per family would equal about 1,666,666 households. Let's assume that, for whatever reason, only half would benefit greatly by installing the best heating and cooling system today. That would be 833,333 systems needed and there are only about 20 qualified installers in Alabama. So each dealer would need to be responsible for 41,666 units. At 25 units per year, it would only take 1,666 years to get the job completed. I told them thanks for the information, wished them a Happy New Year, and told them that I hoped that their sales would double in 2014.

Folks, I have no idea what the real numbers would actually be. I am just trying to make a point. Many are talking about energy efficiency and a little progress is being made. But when all is said and done, a lot more is being said than is being done. I believe that utility rates will increase significantly in the next few years and those that act now are the ones that will benefit now and even more then.

Remember that all energy improvements do have a payback. If the payback for adding attic insulation at your house is three years, you will recoup the cost in three years, if you add the insulation. If you don't add it, in three years you will have spent the exact same amount in higher utility bills and you still won't have the insulation.

Now open your mind and think about it and you will conclude that energy efficiency is a great investment. Why not resolve this New Year to take action. You may call me (501) 653-7931 and I will help you and hope that you will love me for it.

Doug Rye, an Arkansas architect, is known as the 'King of Caulk and Talk' and 'America's Energy Expert.' Doug has helped thousands of homeowners save money on their power bills. He hosts the popular "Home Remedies" radio talk program, which has been on the air for 15 years in 14 states. Doug speaks annually at American Institute of Architects meetings to hundreds of other architects on energy efficiency. He conducts over 150 energy-saving seminars per year all across the U.S. Have a question for Doug? Contact him at (501) 653-7931, or www.dougyre.com.



Doug Rye
Host – "Home Remedies"
Radio Talk Show

Social Security and tax time

April's showers bring more than just May's flowers — they also bring the deadline day for filing taxes. Don't wait until the showers arrive to prepare for tax season. Whether you are a small business owner, a retiree, or a new parent, here are some Social Security tax tips that may help you.

Are Social Security benefits taxable? They are for some people. About one third of those receiving benefits must pay taxes on some of their Social Security. If your total income, including Social Security and all of your other taxable income, is \$25,000 or more and you file federal taxes as an individual, you'll need to pay federal taxes on some of your benefits. (That amount is \$32,000 for married couples filing a joint return.)

Will I get a tax form for my Social Security benefits? Yes. In fact, you should have already received it. Social Security Benefit Statements (Form SSA-1099) for tax year 2013 were mailed to beneficiaries and should be received by Jan. 31, 2014. If you receive Social Security and haven't received your 1099, you can request one online at www.socialsecurity.gov/1099.

We had our first child in 2013. Does our baby need a Social Security number? Yes. Most people apply for their baby's Social Security number while they're still in the hospital at the same time they apply for the birth certificate. But if you didn't, you'll need to apply for your child's Social Security number in order to claim the child as a dependent on your tax return. You'll also need it if you ever apply for government benefits on behalf of the child or your family. Learn more about Social Security cards and numbers at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber.

I changed my name when I got married last year. Do I need to report it to Social Security? Yes. If you've legally changed your name due to marriage, divorce, court order, or for any other reason, make sure you change your name with Social Security, as well as with your employer. If you change with one source but not the other, it could cause your earnings to be improperly recorded. That could result in you not getting all the benefits you earned when you become eligible for Social Security in the future. You can learn more about your Social Security number and how to change your name at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber.

I own a small business. Can I report the W-2s of my employees online to Social Security? Yes, and we encourage you to do so at www.socialsecurity.gov/bsa. Filing your W-2s electronically is free, fast, and secure. Plus there's an added bonus: when you file electronically, you receive an extra month to file because electronically filed W-2s aren't due until March 31. You'll also receive an electronic acknowledgement receipt. And when you file electronically, you can print out your W-2s for your employees.

Does Social Security have any advice to make tax filing and future benefit applications go smoothly? We encourage you to carefully check your name, Social Security number and all of the data on your W-2s, your online Social Security Statement, and Social Security card to make sure they all match. If you don't have access to your card or Statement but know your Social Security number, make sure the number and information is correct on your W-2s. A mismatch could delay your tax refund and cause problems with your Social Security benefits in the future. Such errors are much easier to fix now. If you do notice an error, you should contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), or if the information on the W-2 is incorrect, notify your employer.

For more information about Social Security, visit www.socialsecurity.gov.



High School Seniors: Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) Scholarship Program Applications Available!

College scholarship applications are now available to high school seniors graduating in the spring of 2014.

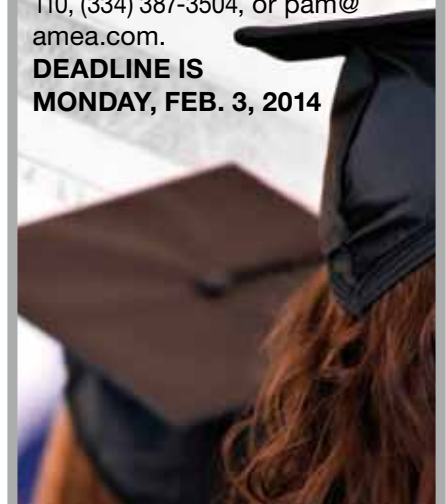
Each year, AMEA and its Members make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships.

To be eligible for either of AMEA's scholarships, a student's family must receive **electric** service from an AMEA Member city/utility and the student must attend an Alabama college or university.

Applications are currently available from school counselors in the AMEA Member cities of Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley (Riviera Utilities), LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee, or you can go line to the AMEA web site, www.amea.com, Scholarship Program

For more information on the program, contact your school counselor or Pamela Poole, AMEA's Scholarship Program Coordinator, (800) 239-2632, Ext. 110, (334) 387-3504, or pam@amea.com.

**DEADLINE IS
MONDAY, FEB. 3, 2014**



★ WATTS NEW IN
Alexander City

LEAD FORWARD

Celebrating Women of Tallapoosa County

By Ann Rye

On Feb. 13, Alexander City will host the first *Lead Forward Women's* Conference to celebrate the women of Tallapoosa County. Hosted by the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce and in collaboration with women interwoven throughout city and county businesses, civic organizations, schools and service organizations, women everywhere are invited to attend this conference, which will be held at the Betty Carol Graham Technology Center located on the campus of Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City.

The day will begin at 9 a.m. with a Women's Business Expo. Women entrepreneurs and retail businesses which market a product for women or a product women purchase for others are welcome to contact the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce for information on how to expo. Organizations which need to get their message out to women are also encouraged to participate. The exhibitors will be available throughout the day from 9 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. and then again from 1 until 5 p.m.

The lunch conference will begin at 11:30 a.m. Tickets are \$20 each. A portion of the lunch program will focus on heart health awareness for women. Donations will be accepted to benefit the American Heart Association. Attendees are encouraged to wear red to draw attention to the cause and stimulate opportunities to speak with others about heart health.

Additionally, attendees will enjoy a motivational message which will help catapult women toward future leadership. Where ever they are, be it at home raising a family or leading an organization, women will leave feeling motivated to take on their next step. And, many women will find the networking opportunities at the conference to help them get there.

During the lunch conference, a prestigious award for Tallapoosa Woman of the Year will be presented. Nominations for the award are being accepted now and can be submitted to the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce. A candidate for this award will possess many qualities including a belief in herself and motivator of others, passionate, ambitious, confident, sense of purpose, assertive, hard-working, brave, persistent, high integrity, honest, and the humility and willingness to learn. This woman should be someone who has brought about sustainable change within an organization or their community. She should be an inspiration and role model for other women and demonstrate leadership in her field or volunteer work. This award may represent past or present service and the candidate should have diverse partnerships and collaborations throughout her community.

Lead Forward Women's Conference will embrace the excitement that women share in the opportunities to make a difference in the world. This conference will encourage women to follow their dreams because dreams really do come true.

For further information or to submit a candidate for Tallapoosa Woman of the Year, contact Ann Rye at the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce, (256) 234-3461 or ann.rye@alexandercitychamber.com.

Ann Rye is president of the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce.

★ WATTS NEW IN
Lanett

***New Code Enforcement
Officer joins
ranks in Lanett***

By Jennie Gunnells

The City of Lanett has another new Code Enforcement Officer, Sergeant Jason Abernathy. He came to work for the City of Lanett as a police officer in Dec. 2010. He has many years of experience having previously worked as an officer for the LaFayette Police Department. He was promoted to Detective in 2011 and worked in that capacity for a couple of years.

Sgt. Abernathy has served as the City of Lanett's Code Enforcement Officer since last May.

Sgt. Abernathy has been a big help to Jerry Thrower, City Inspector. Sgt. Abernathy is concentrating on getting dilapidated houses torn down. Most of the City's citizen complaints are about dilapidated houses.

Sgt. Abernathy is married and has children.

Citizens of Lanett will see Sgt. Abernathy out and about in the city leaving placards on dilapidated houses and junk automobiles.

Citizens are given 45 days to either demolish or upgrade a dilapidated house. Citizens are given five days to do something with an abandoned vehicle on private property. If they do not, the property will be declared a nuisance by the Mayor Oscar Crawley and the City Council.

Mayor Crawley and the Council want to have a neater, cleaner city. Sgt. Abernathy is working hard to improve the looks of our city. Getting rid of dilapidated houses and junk automobiles also makes the City of Lanett a much safer place.

You can learn more about the City of Lanett at www.cityoflanett.com, or our City of Lanett Facebook page. The website will provide you with history, as well as photographs. Please "Like" us on Facebook.

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE IN ALEXANDER CITY:
Day Time (256) 409-2080, After Hours/Holidays – Call Police Dept. (256) 234-3421
Please do not call 911

WATTS NEW IN
Fairhope

Fairhope flower clock becomes reality

By D. Fran Morley



The City of Fairhope began construction on a 30 foot flower clock in November on the southeast slope of city-owned property at the intersection of County Road 104 and North Section Street next to Saint James Episcopal Church.

Partnering with the Committee On Public Art (COPA), a division of the Eastern Shore Art Association, the City is providing the construction and plantings under the supervision of Public Works Director Jennifer Fidler. COPA purchased the clock mechanism and assisted with the design. The design was chosen by Mayor Tim Kant and created by Fairhope landscape architect Paul Fontenot of Garden Design Solutions, Inc. (GDSI).

The flower clock was first proposed by Mayor Kant who said it has been on his wish list for many years and was approved in March 2013 by the Fairhope City Council. Funding for the clock is being provided by the City and COPA who designated money raised during the Jumpin' Jubilee public art project and auction in 2011 for the project. Fidler said the City will also provide sidewalks and parking spaces to enhance the area.

"The flower clock is unique for the Mobile Bay area and will provide an inviting and visually-attractive gateway to our city," said Clay Swanzy, Chairman, COPA. "We want it to be a source of pride for our citizens and a point of interest to our visitors. It also is another means by which art is brought to all citizens, especially those who have not yet joined our art center or taken advantage of our many sources of art offered in our area."

Larry Sims is chairman of COPA's Flower Clock Subcommittee and COPA founder Jolane Edwards is co-chair.

The project should be complete by the end of the year. For more information on the project, call Jennifer Fidler, City of Fairhope Public Works Director at (251) 928-8003 or Clay Swanzy with COPA at (251) 928-8430.



City of Fairhope Public Works Director Jennifer Fidler (left) and Mayor Tim Kant review plans for the flower clock.

WATTS NEW IN
Dothan

Preview meeting a success as Dothan gears up for 2014



U.S. - CHINA
 Manufacturing
 Symposium
 中美制造业论坛

By Cassandra Milton

On Nov. 11, 2013, the City of Dothan and the SoZo Group held a U.S.-China Manufacturing Symposium Preview at the Dothan Opera House. During the Symposium Preview, regional and international leaders discussed how to do business with China. The day-long event served as a precursor to the much larger event to be held in Dothan, March 26-28, 2014.

Following the meeting, Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz and several other local leaders conducted tours of the area for the Chinese visitors. Along with touring economic development sites, the group also visited the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine, Highland Oaks Golf Course, Westgate Tennis Center and several residential neighborhoods.

"We are incredibly pleased with the success of the Symposium Preview," said Mayor Schmitz. "And we are also excited about the serious prospects that are developing. Our international guests have been extremely complimentary of our beautiful City and genuine hospitality."

More than 500 Chinese companies are expected to be in Dothan March 26-28 for the official U.S.-China Manufacturing Symposium. Between now and March, several Chinese companies are expected to tour Dothan.

"Great things are happening in our City," said Mayor Schmitz, "and this is just the beginning!"

For sponsorship opportunities or to learn more about the Symposium, please contact Sarah Woodham, Executive Assistant to the Mayor and Commission, (334) 615-3111 or shwoodham@dothan.org.



Exhibit brings awareness to foster care

By Chris Busby

The Heart Gallery of Alabama exhibit promoting the adoption of foster care children on display in LaFayette.

LaFayette recently played host to a very special exhibit designed to help children in foster care throughout the state find a permanent home.

The exhibit is the mission of the Heart Gallery of Alabama, and it's a mosaic featuring the faces and stories of children in foster care across the state. In addition to the portraits, video messages from the children can also be seen by visiting the organization's website.

The exhibit was on display in LaFayette throughout the month of December. According to Heart Gallery program manager Elizabeth Dunn, it's the first time the exhibit has been in LaFayette and Chambers County.

The Heart Gallery of Alabama has worked throughout the state to help promote the adoption of children in foster care with the exhibit. The idea originally came from a social worker in New Mexico. Then in 2005, a group of child advocates brought the program to Alabama.

"We noticed that kids whose portraits were available got more interest," Dunn said. "That's why we started this program."

Heart Gallery of Alabama provides more than just a name for those kids seeking a permanent family.

Heart Gallery recruits professional photographers and videographers to take the photos and video messages, and their excellent work is all done on a volunteer basis. Heart Gallery works with Department of Human Resources (DHR) offices in all of Alabama's 67 counties, which make the referrals of children who will be featured. From that point, photo shoots are scheduled and the children are added to the exhibit.

The exhibit features children who are already in foster care and are available for placement statewide. Dunn says that at any given time, there can be as many as 100 to 120 kids on the exhibit.

In addition to the placement of the exhibit in cities across Alabama, the portraits and videos can be found on the website, www.heartgalleryalabama.com. It allows prospective adoptive families to learn more about the Alabama children who are still waiting. Heart Gallery of Alabama responds to potential families and also supports them through the process of adoption.

Julie Anne Hyde of the Chambers County DHR said the placement of the exhibit in LaFayette was very exciting for the community. She's hoping that it will compel more local families to consider adoption.

Statistics show that there are over 6,000 children in foster care in the state of Alabama. Of these, over 600 are available for adoption. Many of these children will be adopted by their foster parents, but the rest are still waiting.

Chris Busby is a staff writer for The LaFayette Sun.

Luverne: The name heard 'round the world

By Regina Grayson



Little Luverne Isabella Wright of New Zealand was named after the City of Luverne.

The city of Luverne is well-known for being “The Friendliest City in the South,” but it is also well-known in Hamilton, New Zealand.

It is the name of the sixth child of Marc and Sooz Wright, a little girl born in New Zealand on Nov. 26, 2007. Little Luverne Isabella Wright, or “Lulu”, just recently celebrated her sixth birthday.

And the amazing thing is she is the baby sister to her brother Austin, and four sisters: Memphis, Lafayette, Augusta and Maydelle.

“Neither of us has lived in the United States, although I did visit with my family when I was 11 years old,” Sooz Wright said. “My husband and I love your country, especially the southern states. We have some very good friends in Tennessee, so we decided to give all of our children southern-place names.”

Wright said that she and her husband would take out a map of the United States and begin poring over the names of cities and towns, especially in the South.

“Without planning it, we had the first letters A, M, L, A, and M before Luverne was born,” Wright explained. “So we

told Lafayette that we would try to find another ‘L’ name for this baby, but if we couldn’t find a really great one, we would have to go for a different letter.”

“My husband would write down several different ones we liked, and then we’d put them away and get them out later and cross some off and keep some,” she explained. “We had friends looking at maps and texting their suggestions to us. We think your city has a very pretty name — my husband just fell in love with it, and that was that!”

Wright said that she has made baby books for each child with articles, information, maps, and photos from each namesake’s location. She and her husband hope that each child will visit his or her namesake one day when they are adults.

Luverne’s paternal grandparents are Robin Wright and Jacqueline Appleyard, and her maternal grandparents are Albert and Claire Randall.

When it came to Luverne’s siblings, who range from big brother Austin to sisters Memphis, Lafayette, Augusta, and Maydelle, the question had to be asked: Where is Maydelle located?

“It’s in Texas,” her mom said.

And could we expect more southern-named children from the New Zealand family?

The bubbly mom of six laughed.

“She’ll probably be the last one.”



The Wright children: Lafayette, Memphis, Maydelle, Augusta, Austin and Luverne.



Luverne rides with big sister, Memphis.

Residential services now offered to Opelika citizens

By Jan Gunter

Opelika Power Services (OPS) has successfully built an expansive, powerful, 100 percent fiber network around the City of Opelika, which not only offers a more efficient power delivery system, it now offers state-of-the-art high speed data (Internet), video (TV) and voice (phone) services to Opelika residents. And in the months ahead, OPS will be ready to serve business and industry with these same services as well. But the power isn't just in the platform of fiber optics delivery. The real power is in how it can be used to serve the community.

This FTTP (Fiber to the Premise) system has not only enabled OPS to deliver new levels in power quality and reliability, it now gives us the ability to recognize and remedy problems which arise throughout the system faster than ever before. That's because the Smart Grid system allows data to be received in "real time", allowing OPS personnel to have almost instant notification of problems or power systems failure. In some instances, this new system will be able to not only send a "message" to headquarters of an outage, but "re-route" electrical services while the problem area is being serviced.

What this means for OPS customers is this:

- Greatly reduced outage times to homes and businesses.
- Security and efficiency measures beyond anything in the industry.
- Mitigation in the rising cost of energy generation.
- Opening up new opportunities for people to manage their own energy use if they so desire.

FTTP gives OPS the capability to deliver extraordinary services to the community, and is the ultimate tool for entrepreneurs, established companies,

and for anyone needing a system that supports complex systems of information. Instead of trying to guess what products and services the market will demand, OPS invites people to use our network to work on complex challenges and see for themselves the advantages it brings. This new system is not a "one size fits all" system, but rather a platform for mass innovation, accelerated R&D, broad testing and deep creativity.

This city-wide fiber network will definitely be a powerful recruiting tool. When Opelika's Economic Development Department recruits various industries looking for a "new home," we can now offer high tech companies lightning speed Internet services for their com-

plex computer graphics programs and systems.

Because bandwidth is no problem, Opelika's fiber optic network enables upload and download speeds 200 times faster than the current national average, and 10 times faster than the FCC's National Broadband Plan (a decade ahead of schedule). It's a platform the City of Opelika is proud to claim. It's a platform ready to be used by our citizens – right here and right now.

For more information on all of the residential services now being offered by OPS, simply call the Opelika Power Services Customer Service Center at (334) 705-5170, or visit our website at www.opelikapower.com.



A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the new Opelika Power Services (OPS) facility on Dec. 5. Shown are (L to R): June Owens, OPS Manager of Marketing and Communications; Councilman Larry Gray, Ward 2; David Horton, Director, OPS; Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller; Council President Eddie Smith; Council President Pro-Tem Patricia Jones; Councilman Joey Motley, Ward 3; and Bill Trant, Board Treasurer, Opelika Chamber of Commerce.

Electric substation dedication honors Holk

By Miles McDaniel

A new substation has been named in honor of Riviera Utilities board member of 54 years, past city councilman, and past Mayor of Foley, Arthur Holk.

A ceremony was held at the new facility in October, with Riviera Utilities General Manager Mike Dugger welcoming everyone and recognizing Holk as the namesake of the project. Dugger also introduced John Koniar, chairman of the Utilities Board and Mayor of Foley.

“Riviera Utilities would not be the utility it is today without the leadership of Arthur Holk,” said Mayor Koniar. “This substation is a tribute to the dedication of a man who has been



Aerial view of Arthur A. Holk Substation.

extremely important to our utility and the Foley community. Arthur Holk proudly served the City of Foley and its citizens throughout his career.”

Holk’s association with Riviera Utilities began May 31, 1958 when he was elected to the Board of Directors.

In addition to serving on

the Riviera Utilities Board for 54 years, Arthur was elected to the Foley City Council in 1952 and continued to serve in that capacity until 1972. In 1976, he was elected Mayor of Foley and continued to serve until 1996. While serving as Mayor of Foley, he was elected President of the Alabama League of Municipalities.

“I have been blessed to work with an excellent board of directors over many, many years,” said Holk. “It’s an honor to have a substation named after me and I appreciate it very much.”

The Arthur A. Holk Substation is located at 214 East Myrtle Avenue and will serve the continual load growth in the City of Foley.



(L to R) Grayson Moore (grandson), Arthur Holk, Frances Holk-Jones (daughter), and Carl Jones.

★ WATTS NEW IN Sylacauga

New Sylacauga industries to bring more than 100 jobs

By Emily McLain

Sylacauga has at least 107 reasons to be excited for the New Year, namely, the addition of as many jobs coming through two new industries opening later this year.

IKO Industries and Atlas Web Technologies, both roofing-related companies, are expected to be operating by the end of 2014 and are bringing about 75 and 32 jobs, respectively. In addition, IKO will invest a total of about \$145 million on construction of its 50-acre plant, and Atlas, or WEBTECH, will spend about \$15.5 million on its facility.

"These industries will do a couple of things," said Calvin Miller, director of the Talladega County Economic Development Authority. "One is provide jobs for the area, and they will use a raw material that is quarried here, so they'll keep some of our local businesses here also."

IKO Industries is a family-owned, Canadian company with operations in the U.S., Canada and Europe. Its Sylacauga plant, located off Sylacauga-Fayetteville Highway, will produce residential roofing shingles that will ship throughout Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, North and South Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee.

IKO broke ground here in 2010, choosing Sylacauga because of its access to calcium carbonate, or marble, which is quarried by several industries in the city, as well as the



IKO Industries should begin production mid-2014 and will make residential roofing shingles, while Atlas WEBTECH, located just across the highway, will also manufacture products for the building materials industry. The two companies will add about 107 jobs to the area this year. (Photo by Emily McLain).

incentives provided by the Economic Development Authority. The company is amongst the top vertically integrated manufacturers in its industry and makes every major component that goes into its residential roofing products.

Likewise, WEBTECH, a division of Atlas Roofing Corporation, also chose Sylacauga primarily for its marble.

"The Sylacauga location was chosen for the quality of its workforce and proximity to raw materials," global business leader Matthew Bennett said in a press release. "This new facility will foster business in the area through job creation, and it will enable WEBTECH to meet growing market demands for innovative building products."

WEBTECH develops coated fiberglass facers, paper facers, recycled paper, underlayments and other substrates for the building materials industry.

The Mississippi-based company announced its Sylacauga plant in October and has already broken ground at its future location on the Sylacauga-Fayetteville Highway, just across the

road from IKO. The plant will start with 32 employees, but plans to expand to 50 employees within the first three years, Miller said.

Atlas Roofing currently operates plants in four locations and is a global supplier to more than 25 countries. The company has been a key player in creating innovative products such as fire-retardant slip sheets, coated fiberglass facers, insulation board facers, gypsum wallboard facers and many other products. Atlas Roofing Corporation is the only polyiso insulation board producer to manufacture and develop its own facers, making WEBTECH a leader in substrate technologies.

The location of two roofing-related manufacturers here at the same time, and in close proximity to each other, was nothing more than a coincidence, Miller said, adding that the companies are actually competitors.

Construction at IKO should be complete by June, though Miller said operations will begin prior to that, and WEBTECH plans to be up and running by the fourth quarter of 2014.

Emily McLain is a staff writer for The Daily Home in Sylacauga.

WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee

A Day of Commemoration

By Patricia Butts

The National Park Service invites you to “A Day of Commemoration” on Saturday, Feb. 15, at the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. The ceremony, scheduled from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., will mark the end of eight years of historical preservation and restoration of Moton Field from 2005 to 2013.

The Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site’s purpose is to inspire present and future generations to strive for excellence by understanding and appreciating the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. The Moton Field experience is extended with the additions of Hangar 2 and the Skyway Club. Visitors will enjoy contemporary exhibits, a feature film and oral histories of Tuskegee Airmen, their descendants and those inspired by these heroes of WWII.

The Skyway Club is restored in furnishings of the 1940s period, replicating the space where the Airmen relaxed. Various interior photo exhibits taking you back in time and rocking chairs line the porches.

Join the Tuskegee community for a day of education, inspiration and fun. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/tuai or scan the QR code.

Patricia Butts is Management Analyst/Public Information Officer with the National Park Service (Tuskegee Institute NHS, Tuskegee Airmen NHS, Selma to Montgomery NHT)

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site

Scan QR Code for latest information!

Like us on Facebook

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™
The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Directions to the Site:

From Montgomery, AL

Follow I-85 North to Exit 38 (Tuskegee/Notasulga). Turn right on Hwy. 81; travel one mile. Turn left on Hwy. 81; travel one mile. Turn left on Chappie James Ave. (alternate route 81); travel $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site parking on left.

From Atlanta, GA

Follow I-85 South to Exit 38 (Tuskegee/Notasulga). Turn left on Hwy. 81; travel one mile. Turn left on Chappie James Ave. (alternative route 81); travel $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site parking lot on the left.

Places to Go & Things to Do

Alexander City

Wednesdays in January and February. Story Time, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Mamie's Place Children's Library, Alexander City. Weekly story time begins at 10:30. All children welcome. For details, call (256) 234-4644.

Senior Activity Center. See all the senior activities planned for the months of January and February at <http://www.acpr.me/senior-activity-center.php>.

Jan. 9 and Feb. 13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., RECYCLE Electronics. Public Works Department, behind Darwin Dobbs. Every second Thursday. CE&E Solutions will be accepting electronics for recycling and they are ADEM certified. Contact Sabrina Wood at (334) 429-8832 or Amanda Thomas at (256) 409-2020. Sponsored by the city of Alexander City and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership.

Feb. 20, 7 p.m., California Dreamin'. Alexander City Arts with support from the Alabama State Council of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Benjamin Russell High School.

Fairhope

Jan. 20, 1:30 p.m., Senior Bowl. South Squad. Autograph tent will be available after practice

Jan. 23, 2:30 p.m., Senior Bowl. North Squad. Autograph tent will be available after practice

Feb. 1, 1 p.m., Chinese New Year Parade. Come celebrate Chinese New Year with Children of the World. Our annual parade will begin at the Fairhope United Methodist Church and wind through downtown. Children from around the world will parade to celebrate the New Year. For more information, call (251) 990-3550.

Feb. 15, 10 a.m., Celebrate Arbor Day. Fairhope celebrates Arbor Day with music, refreshments, a tree seedling giveaway, awards, and more. On the grounds of Faulkner State Community College, under the beautiful live oak just north of the new building on Bancroft Street.

Feb. 15, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Ecumenical Ministries 14th Annual Chili for Charity Cook-Off. Oak Hollow Farm. Tickets are \$5 for children (3-12); \$10 for adults; \$30 ticket gets you one adult admission plus a handmade chili bowl.

First Friday ArtWalk. On the first Friday of every month, the Art Center welcomes 400-plus visitors, free of charge, for the exhibit openings. Visitors are treated to refreshments made possible by generous local business sponsors. January 3, February 7 and March 7. Artwalk is held from 6 to 8 p.m. and begins at the Eastern Shore Art Center.

Mardi Gras. Knights of Ecor Rouge, Feb. 22, 6:45 p.m.; Mystic Mutts of Revelry, Feb. 23 2:30 p.m.; Maids of Jubilee, Feb. 28 6:45 p.m.; Order of Mystic Magnolias, Mar. 3 6:45 p.m.

March 8, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., March Fantasy Doll and Toy Show and Sale. Sponsored by the Eastern Shore Doll Study Club of Alabama. Fairhope Civic Center Auditorium. Adults, \$3; Children, ages 6-12, \$1. For more information, contact Ruth Ann Brett, (251) 980-5958.

March 14-16, Fairhope Arts & Crafts Festival. Sponsored by the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce. A prestigious, highly juried show, featuring more than 230 exhibitors from throughout the country. Also part of Arts & Crafts Weekend, the 36th Annual Spring Fever Chase takes place on Saturday morning, March 15. This 10K and 2-Mile Fun Run/Walk winds through beautiful downtown Fairhope overlooking Mobile Bay.

Foley

Jan. 14, 9-11 a.m., Third Annual Visit Foley Coffee for Snowbirds.

Foley Civic Center, 407 East Laurel Avenue.

Sylacauga

For the month of January, the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will feature oil and acrylic paintings by Susan Hazzard. A reception will be held on Jan. 16 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

For the month of February, the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will feature transitional (from darkness to light) paintings by Anna Mullin. A reception will be held on Feb. 13 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

Feb. 6, 5:30 p.m., Sylacauga Arts Council Annual Dinner Theater. Please come and enjoy the return engagement of the Dill Pickers & "The Old Time Radio Program." Ticket cost is \$25. Catering by Hickory Street Café. Music by Two Virtuosos.

Feb. 22, 2014 Miss Sylacauga Pageant and the 2014 Miss Marble Valley Pageant. James Craig Smith Community Center.



2014
Happy New Year

Alabama Municipal Electric Authority

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Smoke alarms save lives

Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. Follow this simple guidance to ensure that your home is adequately protected by working, properly installed smoke alarms.

Installation Tips

- Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.
- For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds. Manufacturers are now producing battery operated alarms that are interconnected by wireless technology.
- Combination smoke alarms that include both ionization and photoelectric alarms offer the most comprehensive protection. An ionization alarm is more responsive to flames, while a photoelectric alarm is more responsive to a smoldering fire.
- Hardwired smoke alarms with battery backups are considered to be more reliable than those operated solely by batteries.
- Purchase smoke alarms from a reputable retailer that you trust.
- Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally-recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms at least 10 feet from cooking appliances to reduce the possibility of nuisance alarms.
- Alarms installed between 10-20 feet of a cooking appliance must have a hush feature to temporarily reduce the alarm sensitivity or must be a photoelectric alarm.
- If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of a ceiling. If mounted on a wall, they should be located 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows, or ceiling fans.

Maintenance Tips

- Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the TEST button.
- Smoke alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately.
- Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarm to remove dust and cobwebs.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least every ten years.
- Never paint over a smoke alarm.

For more electrical safety tips, visit www.electrical-safety.org.