

Alabama CURRENTS

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A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority



National Historic Site helps present and future generations appreciate the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen

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And the AMEA Scholarship Program winners are...



It's that time of year again when the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Members announce the winners of the AMEA Scholarship Program. It's a very special time of year for us and our Members as we continue to make smart investments in the leaders of tomorrow. AMEA and its Members are helping enrich the lives of students throughout the state and we are proud to do our part as a good corporate citizen.

This year, 33 high school seniors will enroll in a four-year university or two-year college through the AMEA Scholarship Program. Scholarships, totaling approximately \$82,500, will be awarded in this year's program. The list of this year's winners is on this page.

Education is one key to economic development. Education and economic development are so intertwined; the success of one depends on the success of the other. The more educated a potential workforce is, the more attractive it is to potential employers. A more educated workforce can also expect higher pay levels, which helps to stimulate overall economic activity. Besides the direct economic benefits, there are indirect benefits such as an improvement in public health, and a better understanding among the public and its leaders of how to effectively and efficiently utilize resources.

An important part of Alabama's economic development efforts and success depends on having an educated workforce and access to continued education and training. More education means more jobs that make more money. That's a formula our state continues to strive for.

Today's jobs require people with more skill and more education. The job you could get 30 years ago with only a high school diploma for your academic efforts now requires some kind of postsecondary education.

The business community has a vested interest in lending support to the education of its community and we are proud to be a part of that support.

We congratulate this year's scholarship winners and wish them the very best in their future endeavors!

Lisa Miller

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing

AMEA and its Members announce 2014 scholarship winners

Thirty-three (33) high school seniors will be enrolling in a four-year university or two-year college this year with help from the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Members through the 2014 AMEA Scholarship Program. Each of the 33 scholarship recipients will receive a \$2,500 scholarship for a total of \$82,500 awarded in this year's program.

AMEA, which has provided scholarship assistance since 1992, received 134 scholarship applications in the 2014 program.

To be eligible for the AMEA scholarship or technical school scholarship, a student's family must receive electric service from a Member's electric utility and the student must attend an Alabama college or university.

"We are very pleased with the response to this year's program and we congratulate the winners," said Pamela Poole, AMEA Scholarship Program Coordinator. "Through such initiatives as the AMEA Scholarship Program, AMEA and its Members are helping enrich the lives of students throughout the state, and the benefits of this program will have a long, lasting effect."

Ms. Poole said AMEA will begin marketing the 2015 scholarship program to schools within its Member cities and also on the AMEA web site, www.amea.com, Scholarship Program, in August.

This year's scholarship recipients are:

- Abigail Blankenship, Benjamin Russell High School, Alexander City
- Jordan Boleware, Benjamin Russell High School, Alexander City
- David Harris, Benjamin Russell High School, Alexander City
- Joseph Hoekenga, Dothan High School, Dothan
- Anna Loftin, Northview High School, Dothan
- Tristan Thompson, Providence Christian School, Dothan
- Ashley Jones, Fairhope High School, Fairhope
- Mattie Simmons, Fairhope High School, Fairhope
- Philip Street, Fairhope High School, Fairhope
- Charles Inabinett, Spanish Fort High School, Riviera Utilities
- Rebecca Schneider, Spanish Fort High School, Riviera Utilities
- Emily Stokley, First Assembly Christian School, Riviera Utilities
- Kiuana Crawford, LaFayette High School, LaFayette
- Takeitha Ray, LaFayette High School, LaFayette
- Shaqweydeus Vines, LaFayette High School, LaFayette

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Lisa Miller

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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

The City of Tuskegee would like to thank the National Park Service, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site for a wonderful celebration in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen recently. The ceremony marked the end of eight years of historical preservation and restoration of Moton Field from 2005 to 2013.

The purpose of this historic site is to inspire present and future generations to strive for excellence by understanding and appreciating the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Reaching another plateau, the site now offers an additional museum facility, Hangar 2.

Tuskegee is rooted in the soil of Alabama's history and culture; celebrating the life and legacy of giants that dared to be different. Visit Tuskegee and prepare to be inspired. Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/tuai or scan the QR code. (Cover photo courtesy of the National Park Service).



IN MY OPINION

Advocating for consumers in Washington, D.C.



Recently, I participated in the American Public Power Association (APPA) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Each year, the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) participates with Electric Cities of Alabama in congressional visits to focus on issues which impact the electric rates our customers ultimately pay for electric service. This annual event remains a valuable touch point for meeting face to face with both of Alabama's Senators, as well as Alabama's seven House members.



During our visits, one area of focus was the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) requirements on coal-fired generation plants and the future expectations on greenhouse gas emissions, as well as EPA's desire to eliminate coal, our most abundant resource, from electric generation. EPA's actions have had a significant impact on electric costs to you, the consumer, over the past 10 years and will continue to do so in the future.

The electric industry is facing more than a dozen major environmental regulations between 2014 and 2020. EPA officials have stalled for two years on providing Congress and the American people with the scientific evidence that would justify regulations targeting the coal industry. The regulations have forced more than 100 coal plants to shut down, and have made it all but impossible to construct new coal-fired power plants despite rising energy demand. Since coal-fired plants generate nearly half of all the electricity used in the U.S., the EPA regulations add significantly to other upward pressures on electricity rates across the country.

We are very concerned about the potential impacts of EPA regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from new and exist-

ing power plants by establishing New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) under the Clean Air Act. In its re-proposed NSPS for new power plants, EPA would require the use of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) by new coal-fired power plants, a technology that is not commercially demonstrated or available. As a result, we, along with APPA, support the Electricity Security and Affordability Act, which would prevent EPA from mandating the use of CCS technology to reduce CO₂ emissions from new coal-fired power plants until the technology is shown to be commercially available and demonstrated.

In addition to greenhouse gas regulations, the electric utility industry is facing several other major air, water and waste environmental regulations that, if implemented concurrently or within a small timeframe, could threaten the reliability of the electric grid. We, along with APPA, support vigorous congressional oversight of EPA's regulatory actions impacting electric utilities and supports federal legislation to give utilities more time to comply with such regulations. We also support legislation that would ensure reliability of the electric grid as utilities take various actions to comply with environmental regulations related to criteria pollutants or climate change.

The U.S. has made great strides over the last several decades in reducing air pollution while both the economy and population have grown. The Clean Air Act is a clear success story for America, and will continue to be a major force in assuring further progress. As EPA embarks on the next set of ambitious regulatory requirements, it is clear, however, that the Act faces new challenges that were not envisioned when it was enacted or last amended. These challenges do not call for a radical overhaul of a clearly successful environmental statute, but they do suggest that Congress should consider revisiting with all stakeholders the best way to go forward.

The strength of the U.S. lies in carefully balancing environmental progress, protection of public health, and economic growth. Reliable and affordable electricity prices are key ingredients to our nation's future. The pending convergence of regulations that are now impacting the utility industry under the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act for coal ash management will set cumulative pressures in motion that are likely to substantially alter electricity production in this country.

AMEA continues to work with members of Alabama's congressional delegation as well as consumer advocacy groups to try to protect our way of life. We are committed to working with Congress to establish climate and energy policies that will help protect the environment, while at the same time ensuring a reliable source of low-cost energy. It is critical to do so in a way that does not impose additional burdens on our struggling economy and you, the consumer.

Fred D. Clark, Jr.
AMEA President & CEO

I'm still thinking of you



Doug Rye
Host – “Home Remedies”
Radio Talk Show

What a difference two months can make. Or we could say what a difference one issue of *Alabama Currents* can make. I wrote the last column while looking out of my office window at ice and snow. Today, I am looking out of that same window at heavy rain with a threat of tornadoes. And by the time I write the July/August column, I will probably be looking at super-hot temperatures and wishing it would snow again. Regardless of the time of year, I really will be thinking of you and trying to find the best ways to help you have a comfortable house with affordable utility bills.

In the last 10 months, some of you may have paid your highest utility bills ever. That is due to a near record hot summer in 2013 and the near record winter of 2014. No one is happy about that. But as I have written many times, high bills are likely to continue unless you take action to reduce them. While that is a true statement, I am aware that money is tight in many households and affording energy improvements may be difficult. With that in mind, I tried to think of some way to help you lower your utility bill other than by purchasing obvious energy- efficiency items such as insulation, etc.

The thought occurred to me that everyone already has, and intends to always have, a water heater. If and when your water heater fails, you will almost certainly replace it. Since you are going to replace it anyway, why not replace it with one that is more energy efficient and one that will last longer? Now that makes sense, doesn't it? You will save money every month on your utility bill and not have to worry about another new water heater for many years.

I have known for years that the cost of heating water for the average house is about 20 percent of the total utility bill. Only the heating and cooling cost, which is about

50 percent of the utility bill, is higher. So I have always looked for ways to save on the cost of heating water.

A number of years ago, I was invited to be a guest speaker at the National Association of Home Builders home show in Texas. It would take about three days to see all of the exhibits relating to home building and home ownership at this show. I only had about four hours to try to see it all. I was almost running through the aisles, just trying to get a glimpse of everything.

Once while glancing to my left, I saw several strange looking round objects. They were about six feet tall and about two feet wide, and were shaped just like a 45-caliber pistol bullet with the round-end up. I used a loud voice and asked the fellow standing by those strange objects, “What are those things?” He answered back to me, “They are water heaters”. I said, “What is so special about them?” And I shall never forget what he said. He told me that those water heaters were 95 percent efficient and were guaranteed to never leak or rust. Well I knew at that time, that most gas water heaters were less than 60 percent efficient, and that most electric water heaters were only a little over 80 percent efficient. I also knew that none of them were guaranteed to never leak or rust. So I immediately turned around and walked over to talk to that gentleman. Why, because I was thinking of all of you. I knew that if what he said was true, then thousands of the people that listened to my radio program and attended my seminars would be interested in such a water heater.

I started telling folks about that water heater and I know for a fact that since that day, thousands of folks, just like you, have purchased a Marathon® water heater and they are glad that they did. A Marathon® will save you money every month and last longer. In fact, it may be the last water heater you'll ever have to buy.

Actually, I would like to tell you more, but space will not permit. So just go to www.marathonheaters.com, or do as many others have done, and call me at the office, (501) 653-7931.

P.S. And guess what? This marvelous Marathon® water heater is manufactured in Alabama.

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.dougrye.com.

The right kind of fishing (and how not to be the catch of the day)

This Father's Day, you may be inclined to spend some quality time with Dad, maybe take him out camping or fishing. But try to make sure that nobody else tries to "phish" with you or your father.

These days, all people (including fathers and sons) need to be cautious of scams — Internet, mail, and even phone scams — which can damage your credit score and wallet. Scam artists have become shrewd. Any time someone asks for your personal information, you should be wary. Particularly cruel are swindlers who target Social Security beneficiaries.

As a rule of thumb, Social Security will not call or e-mail you for your personal information such as your Social Security number or banking information. If someone contacts you and asks for this kind of information and claims to be from Social Security, do not give out your personal information without first contacting Social Security to verify the validity of the person contacting you. It could be an identity thief on the other end phishing for your personal information. Just call the local Social Security office, or Social Security's toll-free number at (800) 772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

If you receive a suspicious call, please report it to the Fraud Hotline. Reports may be made online at www.socialsecurity.gov/fraudreport/oig/public_fraud_reporting/form.htm, or by telephone at (800) 269-0271 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Please include the following details:

- The alleged suspect(s) and victim(s) names, addresses, phone numbers, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers;
- Description of the fraud and the location where the fraud took place;
- When and how the fraud was committed;
- Why the person committed the fraud (if known); and
- Who else has knowledge of the potential violation.

Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in America. If you, your father, or anyone you know has been the victim of an identity thief, the place to contact is the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at www.idtheft.gov. Or, call (877) IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338); TTY (866) 653-4261.

Some people who receive Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits are victimized by misleading advertisers. Such companies offer Social Security services for a fee, even though the same services are available directly from Social Security free of charge. Especially upsetting are such ads that make it appear as though the ad has come directly from Social Security. By law, such advertisements must indicate that the company is not affiliated with Social Security.

If you or your dad see what you believe is misleading advertising for Social Security services from a company that does not admit it is not affiliated with Social Security, send the complete mailing, including the envelope, to: Office of the Inspector General, Fraud Hotline, Social Security Administration, P.O. Box 17768, Baltimore, MD 21235. Also, advise your State's attorney general or consumer affairs office and the Better Business Bureau. You can visit the Office of the Inspector General online at <http://oig.ssa.gov> and select the "Fraud, Waste, or Abuse" link. Learn more about identity theft at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10064.html. Read about misleading advertising at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10005.html.

And finally, while you're enjoying the right kind of fishing with Dad this Father's Day, you may want to tell him about Extra Help with Medicare prescription drug costs. If your father is covered by Medicare and has limited income and resources, he may be eligible for Extra Help — available through Social Security — to pay part of his monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments. We estimate that the Extra Help is worth about \$4,000 per year. That kind of savings buys a lot of bait and tackle. Learn more at www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp.



2014 scholarship winners

Continued from Page 2

- Deshaun Brooks, Lanett High School, Lanett
- Shoniquee Jennings, Lanett High School, Lanett
- Gabroski Truitt, Lanett High School, Lanett
- Hua Fang, Luverne High School, Luverne
- Shaniya Foster, Luverne High School, Luverne
- Morgan Taylor, Luverne High School, Luverne
- India Dow, Opelika High School, Opelika
- Will McDonough, Opelika High School, Opelika
- Marcus Marshall, Opelika High School, Opelika
- Exavyer Jackson, Piedmont High School, Piedmont
- Andrew Posey, Piedmont High School, Piedmont
- Morgan Watkins, Piedmont High School, Piedmont
- Mary Collins, Sylacauga High School, Sylacauga Utilities Board
- Elizabeth Legg, Sylacauga High School, Sylacauga Utilities Board
- Reagan Merrell, Sylacauga High School, Sylacauga Utilities Board
- JaNae McNeil, Booker T. Washington High School, Utilities Board of Tuskegee
- Simaya Moore, Booker T. Washington High School, Utilities Board of Tuskegee
- Calvonna Myers, Booker T. Washington High School, Utilities Board of Tuskegee



When you live and play in paradise, Mother Nature occasionally likes to remind you that the same forces that created the beautiful surroundings can damage them, as well.

In California or Japan, the reminder might be an earthquake; in Indonesia, a tsunami.

Along the Gulf Coast, the same forces that create balmy breezes and warm waves also can bring high winds, heavy rain and tidal surges. Fortunately, unlike with earthquakes and tsunamis, modern-day tropical weather forecasting provides ample time for preparation to protect lives and property.

If a storm is approaching the Baldwin County area (Gulf Shores and Orange Beach), the National Hurricane Center may deem an area under a Hurricane Watch or a Hurricane Warning.

- Hurricane Watch – Hurricane may have landfall in the area within 48 hours.
- Hurricane Warning – Hurricane is expected to strike the area within 36 hours.

Preparedness

- Drinking Water: Store at least one gallon per person per day for three to five days.

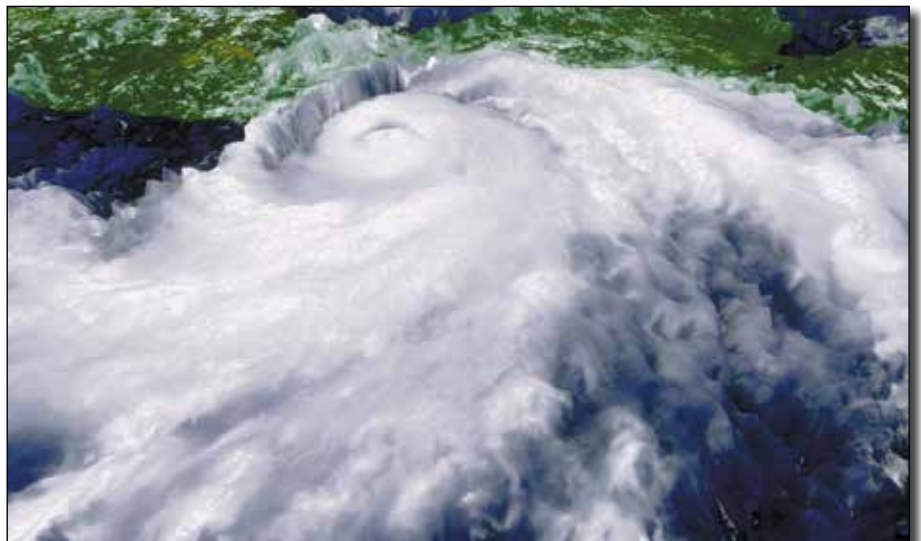
- Food: At least enough for three to five days including non-perishable packaged or canned food that needs no refrigeration and can be prepared without cooking.
- Evacuate early if located in an evacuation zone or in a mobile home. Travel no further than necessary as roads may be jammed. Take “survival” supplies (first aid kit, drinking water, canned or dried foods, manual can opener, utensils, extra medication, etc.).
- Seek shelter inside a sturdy building.

- Monitor local media outlets for up-to-date information.
- Battery-operated radio w/extra batteries
- Flashlight (w/extra bulbs and batteries)
- Paper goods such as plates, bowls, napkins, towels, and plastic eating utensils
- First Aid Kit and Manual
- Extra charcoal or propane gas for outdoor cooking. **Never cook with any of these inside your house — the smoke and fumes are deadly.**
- Full tank of gasoline: Gas pumps do not work without electricity.
- Cash and credit cards
- Special medical equipment and supplies (e.g. extra oxygen, hearing aid batteries, etc.)
- Make arrangements for shelter and safety of pets.

Generators

- Portable generators that are not properly isolated could lead to hazards. To isolate portable generators, customers should be careful that they never connect the generator to an electrical outlet. Instead, appliances should be connected directly to the generator. **Never plug a generator into a wall outlet.**

Miles McDaniel is Public Affairs Manager for Riviera Utilities.



★ WATTS NEW IN Alexander City

A summer full of reading

By Tracy Kendrick
Adelia M. Russell Library
Mamie's Place Children's Library

Adelia M. Russell Library and Mamie's Place Children's Library have a summer planned to "Spark – a – Reaction!" in reading. Adults, teens and children can all explore the "Literary Elements" or grab a "Fizz, Boom, Read!" No matter the age, our local libraries offer something for everyone. Each will offer reading programs and incentives throughout the summer to go along with great books.

"Fizz, Boom, Read" is this year's summer reading program for the children. The program encourages children to keep up their reading skills while experiencing the pleasure of reading for fun. Mamie's Place Children's Library is also offering a teen reading program this summer. The "Spark-a Reaction!" program encourages teens to explore reading for pleasure while helping with a variety of things such as self esteem, decision making and more. Activities and incentives are planned to keep the children and teens challenged while having fun.

The Adelia M. Russell Library will combine science and literature in its adult summering reading "Literary Elements". The Library will offer programs that will be interactive as well as educational. These programs will be for adults 18 and up and all programs are free. Adults can also receive a free tote when you register.

Registration will begin on May 17. Mamie's Place will host a special parent's night on May 19 from 5 until 7 p.m. Summer reading kicks off June 2 at 10 a.m. at the Charles E Bailey Sportplex Gym and the finale is on August 2.

For more information, please call (256) 329-2693, or visit www.amrlibrary.net. Also look for Adelia M. Russell Library and Mamie's Place Children's Library on Facebook.

Tracy Kendrick is Administrative Assistant for the City of Alexander City Light and Power.

★ WATTS NEW IN Piedmont

Two former athletes inducted in Piedmont Sports Memorial

By Ben Singleton

The Piedmont Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) held opening day for baseball and softball on April 5. Spring was certainly in the air, as well as special memories of two former Piedmont athletes.

Each year, the Department inducts people in the Piedmont Sports Memorial who have made a difference in the life of sports in the community. This year's inductees were Miranda and Erin Givens, two young sisters who were killed in an automobile accident in December 2008.

Miranda and Erin started playing PARD sports early in life at the ages of 4 and 6. They played sports at the local schools for several years. Miranda played PARD softball, basketball, and soccer and she also played school softball, volleyball and basketball. Erin played PARD soccer and school softball.

"We are proud to honor these two girls," said PARD Director Jeff Formby.

"Their father, brother and I are very honored for them to be nominated and inducted into the Piedmont Sports Memorial this year," said Janet Henson, mother of Miranda and Erin Givens.

Ben Singleton is Communication Technician for the City of Piedmont.



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

With the success of the U.S.–China Manufacturing Symposium, Dothan makes two economic development announcements

By Cassandra Milton

This past March, hundreds of Chinese and American government and business leaders gathered in Dothan for the U.S.-China Manufacturing Symposium.

“We are grateful to have had the opportunity to host this event,” said Mayor Mike Schmitz, City of Dothan. “This was a first for the City of Dothan, and I feel confident that we made a favorable impression on our guests. I am very thankful for our municipal staff and the many people in our community and region who helped contribute to what was an outstanding and historic event.”

With the number one objective being to establish key business relationships in hopes of securing more jobs, it was quite fitting to have Dothan make two economic development announcements on the final day of the Symposium.

In the first announcement, Nanjing Zijin-Lead Electronics, one of China’s leading 3D printer manufacturers, announced the location of a small manufacturing facility in Dothan, which will be known as Dothan 3D.

Dothan 3D General Manager Lian Ning said his company selected Dothan in part because of the warm welcome he received during his visits to the city over the past year.

“And I understand from Mayor Mike (Schmitz) that there is a line in the Bible that says ‘come to Dothan,’” Ning Lian said through an interpreter. “I hope to build a bridge between China and this part of the United States. As we are successful, I hope other Chinese businesses will follow.”

Schmitz said he aggressively courted Dothan 3D because of the potential of 3D printing technology in the future.

“The possibilities are endless,” Schmitz said. “I really think it can revolutionize a whole number of different industries. I am so honored to have them in our community, and I truly believe that this has unlimited potential.”

In the second announcement, Midwest-based accounting and consulting firm, Wipfli, announced the location of a branch office in Dothan. Among its many services, Wipfli assists international businesses seeking to expand

to the United States by helping them assess different areas such as organizational and structural issues, debt versus equity funding, global tax structuring of U.S. operations, and tax withholding requirements.

The Wipfli announcement is a positive indicator that additional international business expansion is expected in Dothan and the surrounding area.

Cassandra Milton is Community Relations Specialist for the City of Dothan.



During the final day of the U.S.-China Manufacturing Symposium, the City of Dothan made two economic development announcements. Nanjing Zijin-Lead Electronics, one of China’s leading 3D printer manufacturers, announced the location of a small manufacturing facility in Dothan. Wipfli announced the location of a branch office in Dothan. Wipfli is an accounting and consulting firm that specializes in assisting international businesses considering expansion into the United States.



SHS Career Tech program meeting workforce needs

By Emily McLain

Sylacauga High School (SHS) is expanding its Career and Technical Department by leaps and bounds, and a robot or two.

In response to workforce development needs in this region, the school is forming partnerships with local industries and educational institutions to provide students with experience in the areas employers need most.

“For more than a decade, there has been a shortage of skilled labor,” said Career and Technical program director Christie Caine. “It was when we went to a workforce development meeting and heard the same people saying the same things they have been saying for years, that they still don’t have the employees they need, that we realized we had to do something.”

In a unique partnership, SHS joined with Central Alabama Community College in Childersburg to expand its technical course offerings and bring three college instructors to its campus teaching dual enrollment. Classes offered include robotics, programmable logic control, electrical, construction wiring, machining, OSHA and lean manufacturing. More than 100 students are currently in dual enrollment classes, which count as high school and college credit, at no charge.

Robotics instructor Michael White said the experience students get through technical dual enrollment is two-fold.

“Being a high school graduate, you’re questioning what you want for your future, and it’s a unique experience for these students to at least meet a college instructor and have a college class under their belt,” White said. “At the same time, the technical experience they are getting



SHS senior Makenzie Roberson operates a robotic arm with the guidance of CACC robotics instructor Michael White. Nematik, a local industry producing engine blocks, donated the robot to the school’s Career Tech program.

is incredible. They are taking more classes than I could have ever dreamed when I was in high school, so I admire all of my students.”

A great addition to the school’s robotics class is an ABB Model 120 robot donated by Nematik, a local industry that produces engine blocks. The robot is a tabletop version of large machines in use at industries around the city.

SHS senior Makenzie Roberson, who will study engineering at Auburn University this fall, said robotics and other Career and Technical classes provide much-needed exposure to technology.

“Everything we learn, there is always an example of how it is being used today,” Roberson said. “It’s so important to me to have that real-world application, because this is where technology is moving. What used to be manual labor is now people programming robots. People think robots are taking jobs, but I don’t think that’s it. It’s changing the environment we work in and creating a different type of job.”

In addition to technical classes, the program offers courses in computer

science, family and consumer science, business, journalism and more.

SHS is eyeing even more expansion of Career Tech next year thanks to two grants. A \$389,000 grant will purchase manufacturing equipment and other tools and programs to expand technical dual enrollment. Another \$55,700 grant will purchase equipment for a Health-care Science program, for which SHS will partner with Coosa Valley Medical Center. Also starting next year, dual enrollment courses will be opened to students in the Talladega County school system.

Everyone benefits from the partnerships created through SHS’s Career and Technical program, but none more so than the students.

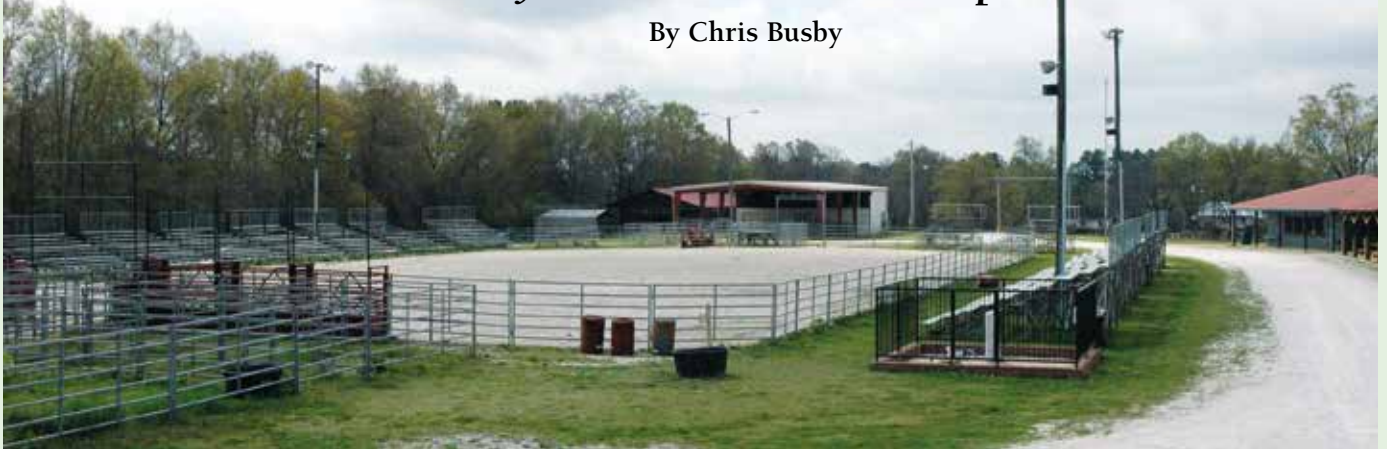
“This is exposing us to industries in Sylacauga,” Roberson said. “It’s important for our city to grow in the way that our technology is improving, and because we have so much industry here, we need to bring people back to Sylacauga in order to make our community better, and that’s exactly what this program is doing.”

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



Chambers County Agricultural Park: *An important part of the city's recreational landscape*

By Chris Busby



The Chambers County Agricultural Park in LaFayette hosts many events throughout the year including rodeos and festivals. It has become an important part of the city's recreational landscape.

One of the more impressive yet somewhat unknown amenities in LaFayette is the Chambers County Agricultural Park. The park sits on 15 acres of land on the north side of town and is available for public use. Since the completion of construction seven years ago, the park has played host to numerous events that have both solidified its reputation as a world class facility and brought out-of-towners and income to the city.

The park's arena is the main draw. Measuring 130 feet wide and 250 feet long, it boasts six bucking shoots, pens and roping boxes, and plays host to rodeos, riding clinics, steer and horse shows and tractor pulls.

In addition to the arena, the park has concession and restroom areas, a covered pavilion and picnic area, camper hookups and permanent bleachers, making it a perfect spot for any community activity. In fact, the park has played host to the Chambers County Relay for Life event for the past two years. It has hosted the Alabama Loggers Council and Forestry Association's Log-A-Load for Kids fundraiser and serves as the meeting spot for the local 4-H unit. In addition, two years ago, the Chambers County Country Fair made the move to the Agricultural Park with great success, and plans are to continue the partnership for many years to come.

The biggest events for the arena each year are the two major rodeos held in the spring and fall. The annual Sheriff's Rodeo takes place on May 9 and 10 this year, while the Pat Garrett Rodeo, which is celebrating its 32nd year, will take place October 10 and 11. There are other rodeo competitions held there, including a "Little Buckaroos Rodeo," for younger children. And last year, the Alabama state junior high and high school rodeo teams held a competition at the park.

Eddie Adams, a member of the Chambers County

Recreational Board, the organization which helps oversee the park, says that the two big rodeos each bring as many as 5,000 people into LaFayette.

"When they come here, they buy gas, groceries and support the community," he said. "And it gives us a chance to show off one of the nicest outdoor facilities in the Southeast."

An exciting new event is headed to the park in the fall, as LaFayette will play host to an authentic Native American festival sponsored by Alabama's Indian Affairs Commission. Adams said the festival, which is scheduled for Oct. 17 and 18, is an exciting new opportunity for the community that will bring people to the area and provide a fun and educational weekend for both kids and adults in LaFayette.

Along with a packed schedule this year, the Chambers County Agricultural Park is looking to grow and create more opportunities. Adams says one of the biggest goals for the future of the park is to construct a covered arena, allowing events to take place rain or shine. He also said that the board hopes to purchase additional land adjacent to the park, which could allow more stalls to be constructed and there is even the possibility of building a community farmers market in the expanded park.

Adams says the growth and success of the park wouldn't be possible without the help of the City of LaFayette and area citizens.

"It's something the entire community can take pride in. It's a showplace," he said. "It brings in revenue, and it's brought a lot of new things into this community that we wouldn't have without the park."

If you have questions about the Chambers County Agricultural Park, contact call Adams at (334) 864-9729.

Chris Busby is a staff writer for The LaFayette Sun.

Nadine's dollhouse attracts visitors to Lanett for 80 years

By Wayne Clark



The Nadine Earles' dollhouse sits near the entrance of Oakwood Cemetery in Lanett.

Eighty years ago this spring a most unusual children's birthday party took place in Lanett, Alabama. Around a dozen or so youngsters in the four and five-year-old age group gathered for ice cream and cake outside a brick playhouse that had recently been built for their friend, Nadine Earles.

What was unusual about the party is that the honoree, little Nadine, wasn't with them and that the party took place in a cemetery. Sadly, Nadine had died a week before Christmas in 1933 with an unfulfilled Christmas wish of having a playhouse in her backyard. Her father, Comer Earles Sr., had promised it to her as a Christmas present. She had longed for it as a special place she could share with her friends.

The playhouse Nadine so badly wanted that Christmas season would be built over her grave in Oakwood Cemetery. It stands today as a one-of-a-kind memorial of a father's love for his little girl. The "Daddy, me want it now" story of Nadine and Comer Earles is not something that's just known about in Lanett, it's something that went global in the days before the Internet.

People from around the world have come to Lanett to see the little playhouse they've read about. Photos and stories about the house have appeared in such publications as Time magazine and The National Enquirer. It's been written about by syndicated columnists, and the story has been translated into such languages as German, French, Japanese and Korean.

The city's grandest dollhouse today still sits near the entrance of Oakwood Cemetery. It's made of brick and still has its custom-made awnings, chimney, porch, sidewalks and retaining wall. For years it was kept up by family members; today, Lanett's best-known landmark is maintained by the

city. Inside it, the visitor can see dolls, a tea set and a 1930-era tricycle. All this surrounds Nadine's tombstone, which reads:

*Our daring little girl,
sweetest child in the world
little Nadine Earles*

And underneath that is inscribed Nadine's dying words: "Me want it now."

Before the little girl fell ill in the fall of 1933, her father had purchased the materials to build it in their backyard and had promised to have it put together before Christmas. Work had started on it before Nadine contracted diphtheria. To prevent the spread of this highly contagious and dangerous disease, the Earles home was roped off and the family quarantined. To keep from disturbing the feverish child, work was halted on the little house.

Nadine's condition worsened as the Christmas season approached. To cheer her up, her parents gave her an early Christmas, complete with gifts of a life-size doll and a china set. But what she wanted was the see the finished playhouse. "Daddy, me want it now," she said.

But it wasn't to be. Little Nadine died exactly one week before Christmas, on Dec. 18, 1933, never realizing her dream of having a little house in the backyard she could play in.

Comer and Alma Earles were inconsolable with the loss. A few weeks later, Mr. Earles decided to give his little girl the Christmas wish she wanted. She might not be alive to experience it, but erecting the playhouse over her grave would serve as a memorial.

It took the work of two contractors and several months before the work was finished. Mr. Earles was there almost every day, overseeing what was going on and offering suggestions.

For the Christmas season of 1934, the playhouse was filled with toys, dolls and a decorated Christmas tree. That tradition of keeping such children's items inside the little house continues to this day. There are lots of dolls, including one in a small stroller, a miniature manger scene and a decorated Christmas tree in there today.

Members of the Earles family had a dual purpose in keeping the little house in good condition. It's a memorial not only to the sister and aunt they never knew, but the walled plot also contains the graves of Nadine's parents. Comer died in 1976 and Alma in 1981.

For many years after Nadine's death, the playhouse was a favorite place for Mr. Earles to go. He would sit for hours on the wall that surrounded Nadine's shrine. Sometimes, people would see him there late in the evening and on rainy days.

"He was never able to let go," a family member later said. "His life revolved around her."

The ancient Egyptians built massive pyramids to honor their dead kings. Popes, presidents and monarchs have similarly been remembered over the years. But nowhere is a memorial more moving than the little dollhouse that sits in Lanett's Oakwood Cemetery. It tells the visitor from near and far how much a father loved his little girl.

Wayne Clark is the news editor of *The Valley Times-News* in Lanett.

WATTS NEW IN **Luverne**



Merchants reviving downtown Luverne with special events

By Jonathan Bryant and Kendra Bolling

A growing and diverse group of Luverne's downtown merchants have been gathering at the General Store to discuss means of revitalizing the city.

Step one involves offering an equally diverse group of planned monthly activities for both locals and visitors to the "Friendliest City in the South."

Sherry Prevett, owner of 13 and Fifth Antique and Vintage Shop, said that the formation of the committee would allow the merchants to take a proactive approach in allowing the district to grow on its own, chiefly through the strength of its own distinctiveness.

"I think that it's just the uniqueness of Luverne and of the people that make our city extra special," Mrs. Prevett said. "We have a lot of empty buildings, and we would love to get more foot traffic in the downtown area."

"We have a lot of little shops down here. We have Gary Mitchell's new art shop, G. Mitchell Gallery, which is a first for Luverne."

Mitchell said the vision is to see downtown thriving again.

"I grew up here," he said. "When I was a teenager, you couldn't even get through here. It was bustling. We want to get more businesses downtown."

"And there could be a lot more if we would only concentrate and have promotions to bring people here, not only locally, but visitors as well," Mrs. Prevett added.

But one of the main goals to draw people downtown derives from having various events and functions around the town on a regular basis.

"We're going to try to have things throughout the year," Mitchell said. "Not just every now and then. We want to draw people into town regularly."

Some of the activities the committee has planned include a car show, a Top Pig barbecue cook-off, carriage rides, turkey calling contests, arts and crafts, and more.

The committee also looks to celebrate Luverne's 125th anniversary with a Founders' Day celebration, scheduled for June 13 and 14 with a "Dance at the Depot" featuring local country-western performer Shane Owens.

"We want some vendors, and an antique car show, a 5K run, and some contests throughout the day," Mitchell said.

But according to Mrs. Prevett, the participation of the downtown merchants and Luverne as a whole is vital to the success of any upcoming events.

Either way, the committee, which is comprised of downtown merchants, is off to a strong start.

"I am so pleased with everything coming together the way that it is," Mrs. Prevett said. "This is an exciting time for the City of Luverne."

"During the first meeting we had, I think we had four or five to attend, and at the next meeting, that number doubled. I want the input of the downtown merchants because their input and suggestions are very valuable and much needed."

Mrs. Prevett added that not only was a combined effort from Luverne's citizens necessary, but it also had to be a positive effort.

"We're proud of our traditional past of starting from just a pine forest in 1889 to a thriving little community. And now we would like to continue that and have the same hometown qualities that we first began with. It's a perfect blend of people, and we're all different, and that's what makes it so important that we get out and share our plans and thoughts."

For more information about the Founders' Day celebration and the committee itself, call Mrs. Prevett at (334) 304-0099 or Mitchell at (334) 301-3337.

Jonathan Bryant is a staff writer for The Greenville Advocate and Kendra Bolling is the former editor of The Luverne Journal.

WATTS NEW IN Opelika



PARKS & RECREATION
CITY OF OPELIKA, ALABAMA

Summertime fun planned in Opelika

By Jan Gunter

It's that time of year again when Opelika folks can get outside and celebrate the arrival of spring. And Opelika's Parks & Recreation team has put together a wonderful kick off celebrating great weather and great friends, by adding great music (of all varieties) to the mix. It's Opelika's annual Noon Tunes celebration, featuring a free lunchtime concert every Wednesday in May from 12 until 1 p.m. in Opelika's Courthouse Square.

Charter Bank of Opelika will be giving away free lemonade, so all you have to do is bring a brown bag lunch (or purchase lunch from a local restaurant), a quilt or lawn chair and relax by the fountain for an hour of unforgettable musical entertainment.

- **Wednesday, May 7:** Larcus Fuller. Country and light rock songs that make you want to sing along
- **Wednesday, May 14:** Strawberry Whine. Music from today's country artists, as well as tunes from classic rock artists such as the Allman Brothers, Eagles and Jimmy Buffett. Please catch our band Crossroads at the Summer Swing Concert Series on June 25.
- **Wednesday, May 21:** Muse. Easy listening, vocal oriented acoustic

soft rock played as only Muse can, by artists such as Crosby, Stills & Nash, James Taylor, Van Morrison, Little Big Town and more. Muse will also be performing at Summer Swing on July 23.

- **Wednesday, May 28:** Martha's Trouble. Nationally-recognized Americana singers/songwriters. Also look for Martha's Trouble at Summer Swing on July 30.

Summer Swing Concerts in the Park

Every Tuesday evening the Opelika Parks and Recreation Department hosts a free outdoor concert in Municipal Park in Opelika, beginning at 7 p.m. This 15-week concert series offers a wide variety of musical entertainment including Gospel, Jazz, R & B, Praise and Worship, Oldies, Country, Big Band Swing, Folk, and Community Band music.

The Opelika Band Boosters prepare hamburgers and hotdogs for a nominal fee from 6:15 until 7:30 p.m., and Charter Bank of Opelika will provide complimentary lemonade during the concerts. Kona Ice will have shaved ice for sale at each concert as well.

The Rocky Brook Rocket will be back on the tracks for complimentary train rides.

For a complete listing of all 15, 2014 Summer Swing schedule of artists and the dates they appear, please visit the city's website at www.opelika.org. And, for more information on Parks & Rec summer events, just call the Opelika Parks and Recreation Department at (334) 705-5560, or e-mail Laura Chesser, lchesser@ci.opelika.al.us.

Jan Gunter is the Community Relations Specialist for the City of Opelika.



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One of the many great aspects about Opelika Power Services (OPS) expanding to Video (TV), Voice (Telephone) and Data (Internet) is the one TV channel OPS offers the community that no one else can...Channel 77, otherwise known as OPSVuYou.

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Places to Go & Things to Do

Alexander City

Story Time. Wednesdays in May and June. 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Mamie's Place Children's Library. All children welcome. For details, call (256) 234-4644.

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

May 8 and June 12, 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, (334) 429-8832 or Amanda Thomas, (256) 409-2020. Sponsored by the City of Alexander City and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership.

May 9 and 10, Inaugural Chuck Wagon Cook Off. Charles E. Bailey Sportplex. Wagons will arrive and begin setting up on Friday, May 9. Saturday morning, cooks will begin preparing and cooking their delicious food. The public will also be able to purchase a ticket for a plate of food from the wagon of their choice. Judging will be at 12 p.m. and the public will be served then. For more info, call Jennifer Baker, (256) 329-6736, Ext. 27.

May 17, Summer Reading Program Registration. Adelia M. Russell Library and Mamie's Place Children's Library. For more information, contact the library at (256) 234-4644 or (256) 329-6796, or online at www.amrlibrary.net. Also find us on Facebook.

May 19, 5-7 p.m., Special Parents Night. Mamie's Place Children's Library. For more information, contact the library at (256) 234-4644 or (256) 329-6796, or online at www.amrlibrary.net. Also find us on Facebook.

May 21, Senior May Day Celebration. Wind Creek State Park. Bingo, grilling, boat rides, DJ music, and line dancing. Celebration open to all 50+ groups and/or people. \$1 entrance fee to park. Call (256) 329-2910 to RSVP.

June 2, 10 a.m., Summer Reading Program Kick-Off. Charles E. Bailey Sportplex Gym. For more information, contact the library at (256) 234-4644 or (256) 329-6796, or online at www.amrlibrary.net.

Fairhope

May 1, 4:30 p.m., Fairhope Girl's Night Out. All ladies are invited to a fun night out in downtown Fairhope. The party starts at the Fairhope Welcome Center. Shops and restaurants will have extended hours. \$20 registration for an evening pass. Attendees will receive a commemorative t-shirt, swag bag, dining vouchers, coupons and favors. All participants will be entered to win great prizes. Go to www.downtownmerchants.com, or call (251) 929-1466 for more information. This event is sponsored by the Downtown Fairhope Business Association.

May 1-July 10, Fairhope Spring/Summer Outdoor Farmer's Market. The market will be held on Thursday evenings from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. behind the Fairhope Public Library on Bancroft Street in downtown Fairhope. The market will offer fresh Baldwin County produce, fresh cut flowers, local honey, a large variety of plants, baked goods and more. For more information, please call (251) 929-1466.

May 2 and June 6, 6-8 p.m., First Friday Art Walk. Downtown Fairhope.

May 31, 7 a.m., Grandman Triathlon. The event begins with a 1/3-mile swim straight out into picturesque Mobile Bay and back beside the Fairhope Municipal Pier. After the swim comes an 18-mile bike ride through the charming city of Fairhope. The ride begins with one steep hill and five miles of rolling countryside. The race to the finish line begins with a 3.1-mile run through the streets of Fairhope and along the Bay. For more information, to register or volunteer, go to www.TheGrandman.com.

Opelika

May 2, 5-8 p.m. Opelika Main Street's "First Friday" Celebration. Downtown Opelika.

May 3, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Keep Opelika Beautiful Annual "Garden in the Park" Arts Festival.

May 6, 13, 20 and 27, 7 p.m., Summer Swing Concert in the Park. Municipal Park.

May 7, 14, 21 and 28, 12-1 p.m., NOON Tunes. Courthouse Square.

May 26, 10 a.m., Memorial Day Services. Downtown Opelika.

June 3, 10, 17, and 24, 7 p.m., Summer Swing Concert in the Park. Municipal Park.

June 6, 5-8 p.m., Opelika Main Street's "First Friday" Celebration. Downtown Opelika.

June 7, Camp Good Grief. (Time to be announced). Opelika SportsPlex.

June 23, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Police Academy for Kids. Opelika SportsPlex.

June 24, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Fire Academy for Kids. Denson Drive, Opelika.

June 25, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Opelika Power Services Academy for Kids. Opelika SportsPlex

Sylacauga

May 3, Sylacauga Block Party. Central Park on Norton Ave. Fun, games, children's games, antique car show.

For the month of May, the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will feature an exhibition of artwork from the Sylacauga City Schools. A reception will be held on May 8 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

May 10, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunshine Saturday. Central Park on Norton Ave. across from Bluebell. \$10,000 giveaway at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$100 each. There will also be a motorcycle ride, Mother's Day Plant Sale, gift baskets, bake sale, carnival games, inflatables, live entertainment. Benefit for The ARC of South Talladega County.

May 17, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., Annual Fishing Derby. Lake Howard.

June 14, Diggin' It with the Dogs/Car Show. Central Park on Norton Ave. Benefitting the Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF). Events include a car/motorcycle show, arts and crafts, pet contests, and entertainment.

For the month of June, the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will host an exhibit of abstract art created by Clay Greer. A reception will be held on June 19 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

Tuskegee

June 28, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., 11th Annual Juneteenth Celebration. City Square at the intersection of East MLK Highway and South Main Street, downtown Tuskegee. The celebration is open to the public with entertainment, special recognition awards, games and food. If interested in sharing information about Juneteenth, displaying an exhibit or talent (church choirs, rappers, poets, musicians, dancers, singers, martial artists), please call (334) 727-7725 or (334) 727-1997. Vendors are welcome for a nominal fee.

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WATTS NEW IN **Fairhope**

Fairhope Museum of History presents *Baldwin County During the American Civil War: The War Comes Home*

The Fairhope Museum of History opened in 2008 and, to date, more than 100,000 people have visited the museum. The museum features changing exhibits

as well as permanent displays. The permanent displays depict a cross section of Fairhope's history including exhibits on Fairhope's founders, the Fairhope Volunteer Fire Department, the Mayors of Fairhope, the People's Railroad, local Native Americans, the Colonial Inn, Clay City, Fairhope's African-American History and much more.



Fairhope Museum of History

This year, the Fairhope Museum of History will feature a comprehensive exhibit telling the stories of Fort Morgan, Fish River, the Grand Hotel, Deer Park, Spanish Fort and Blakeley during the Civil War. *Baldwin County during the American Civil War: The War Comes Home* will narrate the experiences of Confederate and Union soldiers and seamen and describe the battles on Baldwin land, shore and waters which changed local history forever. One hundred fifty years ago this August, the U. S. Federal Navy engaged the Confederate States Navy in the Battle of Mobile Bay, resulting in the largest and bloodiest naval battle of the Civil War. Soon following, over 100,000 Union Army troops moved into the area, most advancing through Baldwin County, aiming to close the Port of Mobile.

One hundred fifty years ago this August, the U. S. Federal Navy engaged the Confederate States Navy in the Battle of Mobile Bay, resulting in the largest and bloodiest naval battle of the Civil War. Soon following, over 100,000 Union Army troops moved into the area, most advancing through Baldwin County, aiming to close the Port of Mobile.

The Museum's extensive collection of Civil War artifacts will tell the stories of those 1864 battles with weapons, letters, uniforms, and soldiers' personal items and equipment. Maps, battle plans, documents and photographs recounting the events will be displayed. Models of ships and earthworks will detail how the battles were planned and what actually happened on those local battlefields. *Baldwin County During the American Civil War: The War Comes Home* will be displayed through December. Civil War-themed speaker presentations, music shows, lectures, demonstrations and other events are planned to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the events on Baldwin County soil.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and admission is free. For more information on the Fairhope Museum of History or the exhibits, call (251) 929-1471 or stop by at 24 North Section Street in Fairhope.



An exhibit in the museum