

# Alabama CURRENTS

September/October 2015

A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority



## MAINSTREET

ALEXANDER CITY  
ALABAMA

Creating a place of family traditions

See Page 3





### Scholarships: Our best investment in tomorrow

Ask a student, or a professor, or a parent, and he or she will likely tell you that scholarships do make a difference. In many of our own lives, receiving scholarship money made the difference between finishing school on schedule or taking time off to save money, or between attending our first-choice school or settling for a more affordable institution. Many times, graduates will tell you that without the support of a scholarship, college or a technical school would have been impossible.



We must continue to make smart investments in our children. Alabama has always ranked high in economic competitiveness. That kind of news is important to those of us calling Alabama our home, and it brings a certain responsibility to you and me personally, as well as the business community.

The business community has a vested interest in lending support to the education of its community. The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Members are committed to investing in the children of the communities we serve 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 the AMEA Scholarship Program will have a long, lasting effect on many young lives.

Since 1992, AMEA and its Members have demonstrated our commitment to education by providing scholarships to the graduating high school seniors who receive their electric service from AMEA Members, including Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Riviera Utilities (Foley), Sylacauga and Tuskegee. Granted only to graduating high school seniors, the student must attend a four-year college, a community college, a technical school or vocational school within the state of Alabama.

Each year, AMEA and its 11 Member cities make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships. In 2015, AMEA and its Members awarded \$82,500 in scholarships to students throughout the state.

If you have a student who might qualify for this program, we encourage you to go to the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program, and download one of the scholarship applications. **Application deadline for the 2016 program is Monday, Feb. 1.**

We take our role as a good corporate citizen seriously. That's why we, along with our Members, support education initiatives that contribute to making our state economically competitive. Together, we can all help the next generation of leaders by giving them the support and experiences they need today to make sound decisions in the future.

*Lisa Miller*

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing



### Prepare for a safe autumn

With the change in seasons and the coming busy holidays, the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority and its 11 Members, along with the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), urge everyone to keep electrical safety in mind when preparing your home for the fall season. A little safety planning could prevent devastating property loss, injury or death due to electrical accidents. Keep these tips in mind.

#### Outdoor Safety

- Be especially careful not to let ladders, trimmers and other tools and equipment come in contact with overhead wires.
- Unplug and safely store battery chargers that won't be in use again until spring.
- Safely store warm weather tools like lawn mowers and trimmers drained of fuel, and check cold weather tools and their power cords for unusual wear and tear. Repair or replace worn tools or parts right away.
- Keep dry leaves swept away from outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords.
- Use a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) in series with your extension cord or be sure the outlet you connect to is protected by a GFCI.

#### Indoor Safety

- Avoid overloading outlets, and never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit.
- Don't run electrical cords under rugs or carpets. If they overheat, they could cause a fire.
- Use extension cords only on a temporary basis; they are not intended for use as permanent household wiring.
- Don't use appliances with frayed, cut or damaged cords; they can cause a short or fire.
- Water and electricity don't mix. Don't place any electrical appliances where they might come in contact with water.

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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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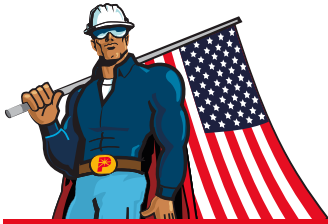
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## On the Cover

**M**ainStreet Alexander City is a non-profit organization that works to promote the beautiful historic downtown area. Downtown business owners, dedicated citizens and many others help to restore the great downtown history and create a place of family traditions as well as making new memories. Throughout the year, MainStreet offers many great opportunities for downtown fun.

The Farmer's Market is located in Broad Street Plaza on Saturdays in June through October. You can find a variety of homemade items along with fruits and vegetables. Homemade soap, lip balm and pork sausage are just a few of the items you can find on any given Saturday. The Farmer's Market is open from 7 until 11 a.m.

This past May, MainStreet Alexander City presented "Downtown Dining Under The Stars". Calhoun Street was transformed to an elegant dining experience. Diners enjoyed great food served on candle-lit tables and open skies. Food, fun and fellowship ensured a great dining experience. *(Photos courtesy of Denise Walls, MainStreet Alexander City)*



**Public Power**

AN AMERICAN TRADITION THAT WORKS®  
#PublicPowerWeek • October 4-10, 2015

**Public Power:  
An American tradition**



For more than 130 years, public power has been a tradition that works across the nation on behalf of its communities and customers. More than 2,000 cities and towns in the United States light up their homes, businesses and streets with public power – electricity that comes from a community-owned and -operated utility. Each public power utility is different, reflecting its hometown characteristics and values, but all have a common purpose: providing reliable and safe, not-for-profit electricity at a reasonable price while protecting the environment.

From small towns to big cities, wherever public power exists, it is an expression of the American ideal of local people working together to meet local needs. And many of the public power systems in Alabama have been providing electricity long before the investor-owned utilities and the rural electric cooperatives.

Public power is not a new idea. Public power is one of the oldest forms of electric utility ownership in the U.S. In fact, some of the nation's largest cities — Los Angeles, Nashville, Seattle, Memphis and Orlando — operate locally-owned electric utilities. In Alabama alone, 36 cities serve over one million consumers covering the state from Riviera Utilities (Foley) in Baldwin County to Huntsville in the Tennessee Valley.

Of course, many public power utilities serve as few as 3,000 customers. One thing unites them all, no matter how big or small: a commitment to community and affordable, responsible power. No stakeholders, just neighbors.

Like community schools, parks and hospitals, public power utilities are local institutions working to meet local needs. Public power means homes and businesses run on electricity provided by a not-for-profit, locally-owned utility. That means the community has more control, so all the benefits produced by public power — including affordable energy costs, better service, and a focus on local goals — stay in the community. In the end, public power does exactly what its name suggests; it puts power in the hands of the public.

To celebrate and honor this American tradition, public power systems across the country will recognize Public Power Week, Oct. 4-10, which is a national, annual event sponsored in conjunction with the American Public Power Association (APPA) in Washington, D.C. APPA is the service organization for community- and state-owned electric utilities.

Public power communities, like AMEA's 11 Members, are powered by the people, for the people.

*Fred Clark*

AMEA President & CEO



**Discovering secret places  
where air leaks hide  
can save you money**

Cracks around windows and doors were once considered to be the home's most prominent air leaks.

Then building specialists starting measuring air leakage with a device called a blower door. As a result of that research, we've learned that caulking small cracks and weather-stripping doors and windows isn't very effective at reducing air leakage. The biggest air leaks are lurking in the attic, around the foundation, and where utilities pass through the building's outer shell. When you have large hidden air leaks, sealing the little ones doesn't reduce your heating costs much.

Find a specialist in your region who performs energy audits and blower-door testing. The blower door could tell you whether or not air leakage is a problem in your home. If your energy audit shows that air leakage is an energy and comfort problem, go looking for large openings in your home's shell. You'll often find large air leaks under bathrooms and kitchens where pipes and wires are installed. Go into your attic, too, and note where pipes, wires, recessed light fixtures, and chimneys penetrate your ceiling. Follow the plumbing and wiring and you'll be on the right track.

When you find openings that allow air to leak into and out of your home, seal them with durable materials. Don't worry about cracks smaller than 1/4-inch. For cracks between 1/4-inch and 1-inch, use liquid foam that comes in a can, or stuff fiberglass tightly into the opening. For larger openings, use rigid foam board or plywood, and seal the edges with more liquid foam. If you seal around chimneys, be sure to use fire-proof materials such as sheet metal.

Every opening you seal will reduce the amount of heated air you lose this winter.

For more energy-efficiency tips, visit [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Hometown Connections, Energy Efficiency.



# The little house that any family can afford

## (Part 1)

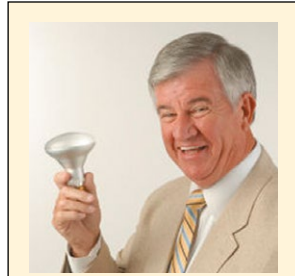
About 25 years ago, I was asked if I could help find a way to build a new house for a 74-year-old retired school teacher in a small Arkansas delta town. I was told that this precious lady had touched the lives of just about everybody in the town. I also learned that the roof of her old family home had literally fallen in while she was there and that she had no other place to live. Her only income was a \$400 per month retirement check. The local lumber company had agreed to build her a house, at cost, if reasonable. I visited the house and found a live opossum in the bath tub, hundreds of big red wasps, and I could actually see the blue sky through the big hole where the living room ceiling had fallen in.

To make a long story short, I and an architect friend designed a little 600-square-foot one bedroom house that would fit her needs. She applied for, and was approved for, a subsidized loan from FmHA. The little house was constructed to be super energy affordable, and as the locals said, "That is a really cute house with that steep roof, nice colors, and it even has a geothermal system for heating and cooling. It sure doesn't look cheap." The house payment was \$57 per month, the taxes and insurance were \$20 per month, and the total electric bill was about \$30 per month. So for about \$107 per month, this sweet little lady, with very little income, got a brand new house that she could afford.

During the entire process, we were told by many that no one would want to buy or live in a little one bedroom house. I truly received a blessing from that little project and affordable housing has been in the back of my mind ever since. I was hooked and I knew that someday, I had to do more affordable houses.

For the next 20 years or so, my wife and I would drive through rural town after rural town and she would hear me say, "Look at that vacant lot. It would be a perfect spot for a little affordable house, and it looks like this town could really use it."

About three years ago, while my wife and I were on our way to help raise money to restore the childhood home of the late Johnny Cash, we saw a highway sign that listed that little town to be just a few miles ahead. I remembered that the little house was built in a very depressed area. I wondered if the lady's little house was still standing and in what condition it might be after 20-plus years of use.



**Doug Rye**  
Host – "Home Remedies"  
Radio Talk Show

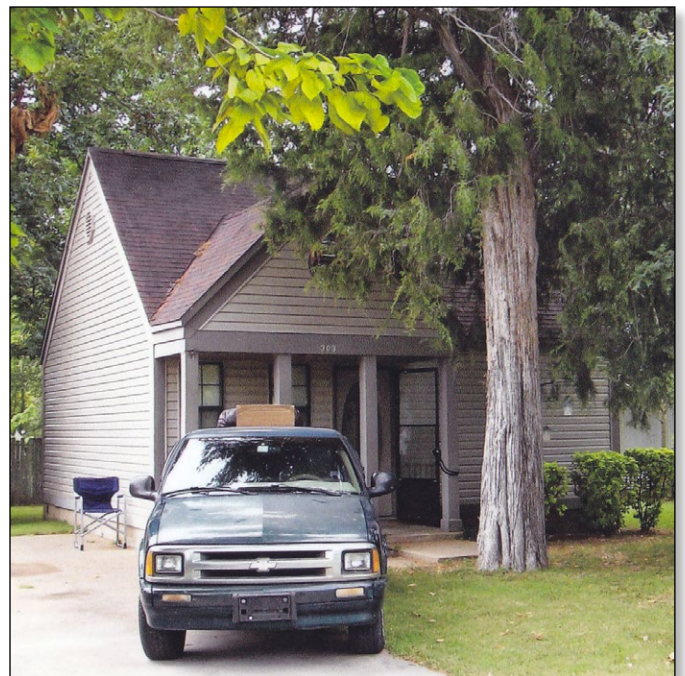
The town had changed considerably, but we drove right to it. I was amazed. The house looked exactly as it did when built. The only difference was that the little western cedar tree that we worked so hard to save was now about 50-feet tall. We took a few pictures and then knocked on the front door. We were greeted by a gentleman who was renting the house and he agreed to let us look inside. Again, I was happy to see that it looked so good and noticed that the original little geothermal unit was still being used. As we were talking, the landlord happened to come to the house. He told us that the house had never been vacant since it was built, and he wished that he had 10 more houses just like this one.

Now folks think of this...this little row crop farm town of about 2,000 people was losing population every year, and this fellow was wanting more small affordable houses. I decided on that very day that I would try to be more involved in affordable housing.

Well, about two years ago as I was showing a lot in a little rural town to my wife she said, "If you are ever going to build small affordable houses, you had better get started." So we started and you will see them in the next issue of *Alabama Currents*.

Until then, have a good fall season.

*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](http://www.dougrye.com).*



## Labor Day isn't your only reward for hard work

On Labor Day, many Americans enjoy a long weekend to commemorate the hard work they do the rest of the year, as well as those who support working people. With barbecues and ballgames, beach trips and fireworks, this annual holiday often marks the unofficial end of summer. Established in 1882, Labor Day has become a timeless American tradition that many look forward to all summer.

Labor Day also reminds us that all our hard work is paying off in more ways than one — including paying into a retirement fund that makes you eligible to collect monthly benefits after you reach retirement age. If you work 10 years, and receive four credits each year for a total of 40 credits, you'll enjoy the security of Social Security retirement benefits. Remember, those years don't have to be consecutive. You can check your Social Security Statement and make sure you have enough credits by opening a my Social Security account at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

Credits are the building blocks we use to find out if you have the minimum amount of covered work to qualify for each type of Social Security benefit. If you stop working before you have enough credits to qualify for benefits, your credits will stay on your record. If you return to work later on, those credits will be added so that you can qualify. We pay benefits to anyone who has enough credits.

When a worker files for retirement benefits, the worker's spouse may be eligible for a benefit based on the worker's earnings. Another requirement is that the spouse must be at least age 62 or have a qualifying child in her or his care. By a qualifying child, we mean a child who is under age 16, or who is eligible to receive Social Security disability benefits.

The spousal benefit can be as much as half of the worker's full retirement benefit, depending on the spouse's age at retirement. If the spouse begins receiving benefits before "normal" (or "full") retirement age, the spouse will receive a reduced benefit. However, if a spouse is caring for a qualifying child, we don't reduce the spousal benefit. If a spouse is eligible for a retirement benefit based on his or her own earnings, and if that benefit is higher than the spousal benefit, then we pay the retirement benefit based on the worker's own record. Otherwise, we pay the spousal benefit. In other words, we pay the higher of the two benefit amounts.

The best way to see what those benefits might be is to visit Social Security's Retirement Estimator at [www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator). The Retirement Estimator is an easy way to get an instant, personalized estimate of future retirement benefits. The Estimator uses your actual earnings history to compute a benefit estimate.

In the past, applying for benefits could be laborious, requiring you to drive to a Social Security office, wait, and fill out paperwork. Now, you can visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/applyonline](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyonline) to find out everything you need to know about applying online for retirement benefits. And, when you're ready, you can securely file the application online in as little as 15 minutes.

In most cases, after you submit your online application electronically, that's it. There are no additional forms to sign or paperwork to complete. In rare cases, we'll need additional information, and a representative will contact you.

Labor Day might mean something a little different once you're retired, but that's a pretty fair trade off when you're no longer laboring. Spend a few moments considering what your hard work has earned in the form of Social Security protection for you, your family, and working people everywhere.

Learn more about Social Security at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).



**Kylle' D. McKinney**  
*Public Affairs Specialist*  
*Social Security Administration*

## AMEA and its Members kick off 2016 Scholarship Program

Will you be graduating from high school in the spring of 2016? Do you receive your electricity from a public power utility in Alabama? Then if your answer to these questions is "yes," you could be eligible to receive a scholarship from the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Member cities/utilities.

Since 1992, AMEA and its Members (Alexandria City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley-Riviera Utilities, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee) have provided scholarships to area high school seniors through the AMEA Scholarship Program. Scholarships, totaling approximately \$82,500, were awarded in the 2015 program.

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 a Member's electric utility and the student must attend an Alabama college or university.

Applications are currently available from school counselors in these Member cities, or you can go online to the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program.

Applications are reviewed and winners are selected by an independent panel of Montgomery area college guidance personnel. **Application deadline is Monday, Feb. 1, 2016.**

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





WATTS NEW IN  
**Dothan**



***conducts inventory of joint use pole attachments and overhead electric system facilities***

By Chris Phillips, P.E.

**C**urrently, Dothan Utilities has pole attachment agreements with multiple phone and communication companies allowing them access to utilize city poles to support their wire and associated facilities.

Dothan Utilities has contracted with Patterson & Dewar Engineering (PDE) to conduct a Global Positioning System (GPS) inventory of the joint use pole attachments and the overhead electric system facilities. The City will be provided digital maps of all existing joint use attachments which will aid in proving attachment counts as well as providing accurate data on street lights, security lights, transformers, poles, conductors and other equipment.

The compilation of this data will facilitate a searchable database enhancing engineering abilities and will also aid in expediting the removal of antiquated stub poles. Integrating the data collected by PDE into the City Geographic Information System map will greatly improve the accuracy of the soon to be implemented Outage Management System, thus improving response times during outages and improving customer service.

This inventory began in June and is expected to last for eight to nine months. PDE is currently utilizing the right-of-way and, when necessary, residential yards to physically access the city's electrical poles to gather the necessary information regarding each pole's GPS location, record an inventory of all equipment associated with each pole, and take pictures. Employees with PDE are required to carry a City of Dothan I.D. and their vehicles are marked with a city contractor placard.

For any Dothan Utilities' customers who have questions concerning this inventory project, please contact Chris Phillips, (334) 615-3300.

*Chris Phillips is the Electric Operations Superintendent for Dothan Utilities.*

WATTS NEW IN  
**Alexander City**

***Alexander City seeing positive changes***

By Randy Thomas

**T**he City of Alexander City has many positive things happening all over the community. The City was recently awarded almost \$1 million for the removal of



*Alexander City Light and Power Department crews remove numerous trees at T.C. Russell Airport.*

airspace obstructions and a parallel taxiway extension at the T.C. Russell Airport. This project was originally scheduled to be constructed in two phases due to the cost. However, thanks to the City receiving good bids on the project, the money to complete the entire project in one phase was close. Instead of hiring a contractor for the removal of numerous trees that were obstructing the airspace, the Alexander City Light and Power Department spent several weeks removing those trees with their crews. Not only was this a savings to the City, but it also allowed the construction project to be completed as one project instead of in two phases.

"This project would not have happened this year without the work and support of the Alexander City Light and Power Department. These guys did a great job," said Community Development Coordinator Randy Thomas.

Other projects of interest include a program to remove over 40 dilapidated houses and other structures throughout the City with a grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and another grant from the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) to replace sidewalks on Broad Street along with streetscaping in that area. The City will then resurface that area, completing the resurfacing of the downtown streets with a recently approved ½ cent sales tax increase earmarked for street improvements and resurfacing. In addition, the City is currently working with Norfolk Southern and ALDOT to upgrade four railroad crossings in the downtown area to provide safer crossings.

Another city-wide project of excitement that will have a positive affect is the renovation of the Hamp Lyon Stadium area as part of the downtown revitalization effort. MainStreet Alexander City, the Tallapoosa County Commission, the Alexander City Board of Education, the Alexander City Sports Foundation, several civic groups and the City of Alexander City have all partnered to make the renovation effort a success.

*Randy Thomas is the Community Development Coordinator for the City of Alexander City.*

# WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee

## Tips to lower energy consumption and save money

By Gerald B. Long, CPA, CGMA

**A**s I was riding in to work, the weather report came on and the meteorologist announced that the temperature was going to be 97 degrees and the heat index would be 107 degrees. Because it's been so hot lately, I decided to do some research to determine the average daytime temperature in Macon County for the month of July 2015. According to the Agricultural Weather Information Service, the average temperature for July was 94 degrees, with the heat index even higher.

In order to survive in this type heat, refusing to run the air conditioner is not an option. According to the U.S. Department of energy, the cost of heating and cooling the typical U.S. home represents 48 percent of the home's energy cost.

I wrote an article a few months ago with tips on how to lower energy consumption to save money. I decided to include ways to reduce energy consumption without having to spend a lot of money, while keeping some of the other tips previously published.

The cost of the energy bill for your home is driven by two components: your energy consumption and the rates charged by your utility. There is nothing you can do about the rates charged by your utility (our rates are cost-based, and are professionally developed), but you are in control of your consumption. It's like driving a car. You can't control what the local service station charges for the gas to fill up your car, but you can control how much driving you do.

So, buckle up and review the suggestions provided here to see which options will work for you.

- Close your curtains or blinds - In the summer to help keep you cooler on the hot days, lower your blinds and close your curtains on the sunny side of the house. This tip will allow you to stay cooler in the summer and help to cut down on increased electric usage.
- Turn off lights – Lights add heat just like the sunlight does and they also consume electricity. So turn off all unnecessary lights.
- Take control of your thermostat – When you are not home, turn the temperature up. And if you are going to be out of town, turn the system off.
- Make sure off is really off – Even when you think a device or appliance is turned off, the power may still be on if it is plugged in. This is especially true with equipment that has a transformer (small black cube on the end of the power cord). Be sure to plug small appliances into a power strip. Then all you have to do is flip a switch when you aren't using them.

- Landscape for a cooler house – Mature trees not only add curb appeal and value to your home, but they keep your house cooler when strategically placed around your property. Plant trees on the south and west sides of your home to provide shade from the hottest summer sun. Trees should be planted 10-20 feet away from your home. Your air conditioner will operate more cost-effectively if it's in the shade, and planting trees in front of windows to shade your home can lower your air conditioning costs.
- Replace light bulbs – Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL) cost more than incandescent bulbs, but incandescent bulbs can cost the same to operate as 6 to 10 fluorescent bulbs and fluorescent bulbs last 10 times longer. An even better choice is the LED bulbs because they last even longer than the fluorescent bulbs, although they are more expensive. The fluorescent bulbs contain mercury, so if you break one, cleanup can be a hassle. Mercury is a dangerous heavy metal, and proper cleanup and disposal of CFL bulbs is critical.
- Use sleep mode – Acquire computers and peripherals that will automatically go into sleep mode or turn off when not in use.
- Microwave vs. Electric Stove – When you have a choice between using the microwave or an electric stove, always use the microwave which can consume as much as 90 percent less energy.
- Time Your Use of Appliances – If possible use heat-generating appliances at night when the temperature is cooler. A hot oven in the heat of the day forces the air conditioner to work harder to keep the house comfortable. The same goes for the clothes dryer and dishwasher.
- Hot or Cold Wash Water? – Wash laundry in cold water. According to Michael Bluejay, aka Mr. Electricity, washing clothing in cold water rather than hot can save \$152 per year.
- Ceiling Fans – Turn on ceiling fans. A ceiling fan will make your room feel cooler. Mr. Electricity says it could save \$438 per year.
- Unplug Devices – Unplug phone chargers, camera battery chargers, and the like. Even better, by using a power strip, you can shut off electricity to these devices all at once. Consumer Reports noted that you can save \$25 to \$75 each year just by putting your computer on standby.
- Choose Efficient Refrigerator/Freezer - The first step in reducing the cost of refrigeration/freezing is to make sure you are using an energy-efficient refrigerator/freezer. If your refrigerator/freezer is several years old, you need to upgrade to a newer model since efficiency values have increased dramatically. If you have a newer model, check the thermostat. For refrigerators, 36 to 38 degrees F (2.2 to 3.3 degrees C) is ideal; for freezers, 0 to 5 degrees F (-17.8 to -15 degrees C). This data was taken from the American Council for an Energy-efficient Economy (ACEEE). Defrost your freezer. Too much frost buildup will reduce efficiency. Check the seals by closing the door



on a piece of paper. The paper should hold firm in place. If not, replace the seal. Finally, use good refrigeration habits. Don't leave the door open for long periods of time. Know what you want before you open the door. Also, cool hot food before refrigerating or freezing it.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, heating water is responsible for 18% of U.S. home energy use. We use heated water to take showers, clean clothes and dishes and for many other reasons. To reduce your energy consumption in this area, follow these tips:

- Check the thermostat. You probably don't need your water hotter than 120 degrees F (50 degrees C).
- Insulate the hot-water storage tank and first six feet of pipes connected to the tank. This will ensure that you are not losing heat during storage and transport.
- Reduce sediment buildup by removing a quart of water every three months. Sediment buildup can lower the unit's efficiency.
- Take shorter showers, and as previously noted, wash clothes in cold or cool water.

To reduce energy consumption from your cooling system and improve efficiency, you can take the following steps:

- Have a pro check the unit every year. Proper fluid levels, coolant charge and insulation are crucial.
- Close vents in rooms you hardly ever use.
- Upgrade to a timed thermostat that will automatically switch off the AC as the temperature outside gets cooler.
- Make sure you have at least 16 inches of insulation in your attic. This will keep more of the sun's heat out of your living space so the AC doesn't have to work as hard. (Source: *All things frugal*).
- You can also upgrade to a more efficient model.

A home's heating system is one appliance that can consume a lot of electricity. Short of an expensive upgrade to improve efficiency, you can do the following to reduce electricity consumption in this area (Source: *Mother Nature Network*):

- Upgrade to a programmable thermostat.
- Set the thermostat to the lowest temperature at which you're comfortable.
- Seal and insulate your home's ducts.
- Make sure nothing is blocking your vents.
- Replace your filters regularly.

I hope these tips will help you reduce your consumption and keep some of your hard-earned money in your pocket.

*Gerald B. Long is the assistant general manager of the Utilities Board of Tuskegee.*

## WATTS NEW IN LaFayette

### LaFayette to host 2nd Annual Native American Festival and Pow Wow in October

By Chris Busby



Last year's Native American Festival and Pow Wow in LaFayette featured demonstrations on Native American lifestyle like the Creek warrior pictured here.

The City of LaFayette will play host to one of the most unique cultural events in the state and Southeast, Oct. 16-18. Members of the Cherokee, Creek, Dakota, Navajo, Choctaw, Muscogee and Lumbee Native American tribes will converge upon the city over those three days to present the 2nd Annual Native American Festival and Pow Wow on the grounds of the Chambers County Agricultural Park in LaFayette.

Highlighted by Native American living history programs, crafts and skills demonstrations, music and dancing, the Native American Festival returns to LaFayette after a very popular inaugural event in 2014.

"Our first Native American Festival held last October was considered a great success," said Barbara Andrews, Executive Director, Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, which is sponsoring the event. "The Chamber's Board of Directors felt the Native American Festival is not only a wonderful source of family entertainment for our local residents, but a way to draw people from surrounding areas to come and visit Chambers County and LaFayette."

Because of the reception from last year, this year's festival has been extended from two days to three. The first day, Oct. 16, will serve as a "Students Day," in which fourth graders from throughout LaFayette, Chambers and surrounding counties will be invited to come experience a day of fun, learning and cultural growth. The Oct. 16 "Students Day" will take place from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

"Last year, the kids were more excited when they left than when they got there because they didn't know what to expect," Chambers County Schools Superintendent Kelli Hodge said.

*Continued on page 10*

WATTS NEW IN  
**Sylacauga**

## **Sylacauga Blue Bell plant resumes producing ice cream**

By Christa Jennings

**A**fter months of working with the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Blue Bell plant in Sylacauga once again began producing ice cream in late July.

On April 27, Blue Bell embarked on an intensive cleaning program while also conducting new training programs for its employees at all four production facilities in Alabama, Texas and Oklahoma. These new programs stemmed from an investigation earlier this year which indicated that some Blue Bell products were the source of an outbreak of listeriosis, a life-threatening infection caused by eating food contaminated with the listeria germ.

As a result of those findings, on April 20 Blue Bell Creameries voluntarily recalled all of its products made at all of its facilities. In May, Blue Bell Creameries and the Alabama Department of Public Health entered into a voluntary agreement outlining a series of steps and actions Blue Bell would take as part of its ongoing efforts to bring its ice cream products back to the market.

With Blue Bell ice cream being a local favorite among numerous Southerners, the progress comes as good news for those who are eagerly awaiting the return of their beloved ice cream brand to store freezers.

According to Jenny Van Dorf, a public relations market specialist with Blue Bell, the company carefully reassessed its operations, and improvements made or underway, as of early August, across the company's production facilities include:

Disassembling and steam cleaning production equipment, including comprehensive cleaning and sanitation each day.

Establishing enhanced protocols and quality assurance requirements for environmental and product sample testing, including a rigorous monitoring program for listeria.

Replacing or repairing floors and ceilings, as well as modifying HVAC systems.

Establishing new employee uniform and footwear programs.

"We are producing ice cream in Sylacauga and are pleased at our progress as we move forward and can be confident that we are producing a safe product," Van Dorf said in an e-mail dated July 31. "It's going to take several weeks to build inventory, and we do not have a date when products will return to the market at this time."

She added that at that time the company had approximately 150 employees at the facility in Sylacauga. As production increases, the company will continue to bring back more furloughed employees.

"We are also making good progress at our facilities in Broken Arrow, OK, and Brenham, TX, but are not currently making ice cream at either," Van Dorf said in the same e-mail. "Due to their varying sizes, we anticipate that Broken Arrow will be ready to resume operations sooner than our larger facility in Brenham. We're excited to be getting closer every day!"

*Christa Jennings is the senior staff reporter at The Coosa County News in Rockford.*



WATTS NEW IN  
**LaFayette**

## **LaFayette to host 2nd Annual Native American Festival and Pow Wow in October**

*Continued from page 9*

"They had never experienced anything like that; they actually got to participate in demonstrations of the Native American ways of life. I know they can't wait to return this year."

On Oct. 17 and 18 from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., the festival will open to the general public. Festival activities include historical programs that offer a description of Eastern Woodland Indians' lifestyles of the 1800s, which will feature full encampments as well as live staged performances. Demonstrators will show how Native Americans made tools, musical instruments and weapons. The event also will feature several stage performances, dancing, story telling, as well as drum circles and an abundance of Native American foods to sample and purchase. Several Native American vendors will be on hand offering authentic Native American products, and each person who purchases a ticket will be eligible for raffle drawings of authentic Native American items.

"With all things considered, I feel the interest and attendance level for our 2nd Annual Native American Festival and Pow Wow will be something everyone will be talking about for some time and the GVACC is extremely excited to be able to offer this wonderful event once again," Andrews added.

For more information on the festival, please call the Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, (334) 642-1411, or e-mail [bandrews@greater-valleyarea.com](mailto:bandrews@greater-valleyarea.com) or [croyster@greatervalleyarea.com](mailto:croyster@greatervalleyarea.com).

*Chris Busby is the community development manager for the Chambers County Development Authority and is a contributing writer for the City of LaFayette.*



# WATTS NEW AT Riviera Utilities

## Riviera Utilities participates in Tennessee Valley Lineman Rodeo

By Miles McDaniel and Susan Whitworth

It's no wonder Scott Jantz responds with a smile when he is asked about representing Riviera Utilities in the Tennessee Valley Lineman Rodeo held in June. Jantz walked away with a third place win in the "Individual Journeyman Overall" category.

Jantz was bitten by the rodeo bug about two years ago when he and a co-worker had a chance to watch a lineman rodeo in Memphis. He says that he saw right away that this was a chance to "show what I can do." It was the type of work he and others do every day at Riviera Utilities. Jantz is proud of his 14-year association with Riviera Utilities and of the group he works with.

"You can't get a better bunch of guys," he says. "They're part of your family" and even get together to socialize on the weekends.

Immediately after coming back from that first experience in Memphis, Jantz threw himself into preparing for future rodeos. He began getting up at 4 a.m. to work out and soon lost 20 pounds for his effort. He has continued the routine for much of the time since then.

The events are as much like real life on the job as possible. Of the category which required him to "rescue" a 180-pound dummy which simulates a non-responsive co-worker, Jantz says simply, "I hope I never have to do that (in real life)."

Jantz and nine of his co-workers from Riviera Utilities drove over 500 miles to Sevierville, TN, for the June 12-13 rodeo, which has been held annually since 1998 by the Tennessee Valley Lineman Rodeo Corporation. Other Riviera Utilities employees who participated either as contestants or judges were Darrell Townley, Brady Beck, Elon Koski, Justin Frasier, Nick Baggett, Richard Sanspree, Robby Ray, Roby Tomlin, and Greg Wenzel.

Jantz's wife, Brooke, and children Kailynn (12), Emma Kate (9), and Tyler (4) also travelled to Sevierville and watched as their dad (and husband) competed in each of four categories, including Hurtman Rescue, Double Dead End Bell, Switch Change, and Skill Climb. He scored a perfect 100 in each event for a total of 400 points. The next scoring factor was time, so that Jantz's time of 25:11.92 decided his third place win.

Jantz is definitely bullish on his career choice. He considers it a stable job and the self-sacrifice involved is worth it for the reward of feeling good about helping people. He and

others worked 16 or 17 hour days for an extended time after Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Any lineman at any utility company can tell similar stories. Still, Jantz wouldn't do anything else but offer up his skills to the residents of Baldwin County day in and day out.

*Miles McDaniel is Manager of Public Affairs and Susan Whitworth is an Accountant III for Riviera Utilities.*



Scott Jantz (second from left) accepting his third place Overall award. Shown with him are (L to R) are Tom DeBell, Greg Wenzel and Brad Pitt.



Riviera Rodeo Team (shown L to R): Greg Wenzel, Elon Koski, Justin Frasier, Richard Sanspree, Nick Baggett, Darrell Townley, Robby Ray, Brady Beck, Roby Tomlin, Tom DeBell. Not shown is Scott Jantz.

# ★ WATTS NEW IN Lanett

## Washburn honored for coaching legacy

By Wayne Clark

**D**an Washburn wasn't expecting anything special when he and wife, Shirlene, agreed to help long-time friends Loring and Debbie White with some kind of function they were going to host in July on their White Acres Farm near Camp Hill. The Washburns and the Whites had maintained a friendship for years, stemming from the time Dan coached Loring the one year he was at Prattville High in the 1970s.

They'd previously made the trip from their home in Opelika to White Acres to assist the Whites with some event in their "Cook House" banquet hall, where wedding receptions, family get togethers and class reunions often take place. They weren't surprised to see lots of cars parked outside when they got there. They'd seen it all before.

But when they entered the building and over 150 people yelled "Surprise!" and he started recognizing familiar faces from the past, the former Lanett High School (LHS) Panther coach knew somebody had pulled a good one on him. He had absolutely no idea he was walking into Dan Washburn Night and that he'd have a chance to spend an evening, and be roasted by, players he coached at Lanett High from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s.

There was much smiling, handshaking, back slapping, hugging and remembering some good old times at LHS. Following a barbecue meal with all the trimmings and the presentation of a "Through the Years" slide show, the coach was in front and center for a roast from several of his former players including David Winchester, Tim McCollum, Anthony Hardy, Mitchell Hamilton and his son, Jeff Washburn. Also taking part were Susan McCollum Miklic and Dan's wife, Shirlene.

The funny thing about the roast was that the speakers, for the most part, hurled barbs back at themselves. Even in a kidding sense, they weren't going to say anything bad about someone they lived in fear of when they were young and have great admiration for today.

David Winchester, who's now a dentist working for UAB, was a sophomore at LHS the first year Washburn coached at the school.

"We'd heard that he was from LaFayette and had been assistant coach at Valley High," he said. "But he made his presence known very soon."

After losing their first game of the year to LaGrange High, Washburn used a line he'd heard from his mentor, Valley coach Doug Lockridge, that it's tough to make chicken salad out of the sort of stuff chickens leave. Winchester said he then toughened them up some. It was no fun at the time, but it



*David Winchester (at right) was a sophomore on Dan Washburn's first Lanett High School (LHS) team in 1967. He went on to letter for three years with the Panthers and was part of a winning program Washburn (at left) brought to Lanett. Winchester was the first of five former players to roast their former coach in a lighthearted event held after dinner and a slide show. Winchester, who's now a dentist in the Birmingham area, said that he's quite proud of what his young coach would go on to accomplish, first in winning over 100 games at LHS and then in having a very successful career as the executive director of the Alabama High School Athletic Association. (Photo by Wayne Clark)*

would pay off later.

"I'm so proud of what he's accomplished, being in the state national high school halls of fame," he said. "He's one of my true heroes."

Tim McCollum, a former Lanett quarterback from the early 1970s, said that it wasn't a good idea to try to keep secrets from the coach. If some players wanted to celebrate a big win in football by slipping off to the backwater afterwards and celebrating with some late-night revelry, Coach Washburn had ways of finding out about it and making you pay for it in practice the next week.

McCollum said that Washburn was a master of using psychology in motivating his players to play above their heads and give it their best. The best example of this is what he did in getting his team ready to play undefeated and top-ranked Valley in 1970.

"He had us ready to play mentally and physically," he said. "In the locker room before the game, we were like a bunch of wild dogs wanting to get out on that field."

He said that everyone in the locker room wanted to knock the door down when their coach told them he knew they were ready to play and were going to win and win big. Though already knocked out of the playoffs, Lanett beat a very good Valley High team 28-0 that night at Jennings Field. Valley, who'd already clinched a playoff berth, bounced back from that to go on and win the 3A championship.

"I can't put in words what Coach Washburn and Shirlene mean to me," McCollum said. "Back then, we were proud to be called Coach Washburn's boys. We still are."

Former player Anthony Hardy, whose dad was an assistant on Washburn's staff in the 1970s, said that Washburn was a heck of a man and a heck of a coach.



"He always had you ready to play," he said. "You knew everything the other team was going to do through film study. He was awesome in having you ready to play."

"If you didn't hustle, you didn't play," he recalled. "If you got knocked down, you'd better get back up and be better on the next play. The fundamentals he taught us prepared us for life. Thanks, coach, for all that you've done. Congratulations for being in the Hall of Fame, and thank you for what you did in dotting all the i's and crossing all the t's in getting my dad in the Hall of Fame, too."

Both Washburn and the late James Hardy are members of the Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame. Washburn was inducted in 2000 and Hardy a few years after that. Coaches Doug Lockridge and Mal Morgan are also members.

Randall Maddux, who was the starting quarterback on Washburn's teams of the late 1970s, emceed the event. Helping him plan it – while keeping it a secret from their former coach – were Toby Nixon, Mitchell Hamilton, Johnny Allen and Randy Palmer.

Maddux said that a Dan Washburn Night was something that was long overdue.

"I think it meant a lot to him that so many of his former players, cheerleaders and spouses came to it. It shows that he meant a lot to them. It was good to see guys like Perry Griggs, Bobby Lee and Tank Summers and so many others who were there."

Arthur Bennett came all the way from Little Rock, AR, to be there for this special event.

Washburn, who turned 75 this past spring, started in sports at LaFayette High in the 1950s and later played collegiately at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UT-C). He was an assistant on the staff of Doug Lockridge at Valley High from 1962 until 1966 and the head coach at Lanett High from 1967 through 1982, compiling a record of 109-54-4.

After stepping down from coaching following the 1982 season, he served as the superintendent of Lanett City Schools for seven years. He also served on the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) some 16 years on its central board and legislative council.

Washburn later served with distinction as the third full-time executive director of the AHSAA. Several new and revitalized events flourished under his leadership. These include the Super Six High School Football Championships, the Final Four Basketball Championships, the Elite Eight Volleyball Championships, and the All-Star Sports Week in the summer.

Washburn was president of the National High School Federation Athletic Association in 2005-06. On Sept. 29, 2006, the Lanett High football stadium was renamed Morgan-Washburn Stadium in honor of the school's two Hall of Fame coaches.

Five years later, in 2011, Washburn was inducted into the National Federation of State High School Associations Hall of Fame.

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

## WATTS NEW IN Luverne

### *Peanut Boil Festival slated for September*

By Carol Staller

The Sixth Annual Peanut Boil Festival, sponsored by the Crenshaw County Chamber of Commerce, will be held in Luverne on Saturday, Sept. 26. The Peanut Boil Festival will begin at 8 a.m. and continue through the day to 5 p.m.



The Chamber announced a change in the date from Labor Day weekend to the last weekend in September for several reasons, including extreme heat, conflicting activities, and access to many participants who were unable to attend because of Labor Day holiday plans.

The festival includes arts and crafts, activities for children, rides, an antique car show, a beauty pageant, and a 5K fun run. Entertainment for visitors will be under the big tent. Delicious food of all kinds will be provided by food vendors from across the state.

The new location of the festival has also been announced. Turner Park in Luverne, located on Hwy. 331 South, will provide an expanded venue, easy access and great visibility for those who travel Hwy. 331 to the beaches of Florida.

The Chamber is excited to bring this new date and location to an already popular festival and is working diligently to make the 6th annual festival a great and enjoyable family day.

For booth applications or additional information, please call the Chamber office at (334) 335-4468 or (334) 372-7548, or visit the festival website at [www.peanutboil-festival.com](http://www.peanutboil-festival.com).

*Carol Staller is the administrative assistant for the Crenshaw County Chamber of Commerce and the Crenshaw County Industrial Development Authority.*



## *Roundhouse spurs a startup culture in Opelika using the city's Gig network*

By Jake Wright

The settlement originally named Lebanon by its inhabitants would come to be known as Opelika, Alabama in the late 1830s. The city underwent substantial economic growth and development due to the railroad that cuts through the town and continues on to Montgomery. Like the dramatic changes that transformed the area in its formative years, the Opelika economy has seen economic and technological advances in recent years that have once again made it a hub for commerce and innovation. The city's commitment to developing a nationally competitive economy is best demonstrated through its designation as "Gig City," becoming one of the few cities in the U.S. to offer one-gigabit-per-second fiber Internet speeds to its residents and local businesses.



of what we do is web-based. We rely heavily on productivity apps and file sharing, and since moving into our office at The Roundhouse, we've seen an immediate increase in communication and overall efficiency. The availability and ease of access of fiber Internet in Opelika is often taken for granted when we do work elsewhere. While the lightning fast Internet is especially beneficial to tech companies like SimplyProse, there are many other businesses that have seen increases in productivity across a variety of industries. All across the city, entrepreneurs have opened their doors for business, and the culture is more visible than ever. Opelika has been crafting its unique blend of small-town character and technological innovation for several years now, and we are especially privileged to be able to grow with the city.

The city of Opelika has become a rising name in the Southeast by taking

risks, and speaking where other cities have remained silent. Installing the infrastructure for fiber Internet was a choice made by city leaders, and the commitment to the people and businesses of Opelika was reaffirmed. Internet infrastructure is becoming increasingly important to the viability of even the smallest local economy. Myriad companies operate extensively online, and by taking the steps to give businesses the support needed in today's economy, the business ecosystem can operate more efficiently and without limitations. Technological advances are inevitable, and cities like Opelika refuse to be left behind.

SimplyProse is one of the companies that has benefitted greatly from the advances that Opelika has made. Our site is launching in September, and we hope that you'll give our site a chance, especially if you're a writer.

*Jake Wright is CEO of SimplyProse.*

Our company, SimplyProse.com, is based out of The Roundhouse, a startup incubator located on S. 8th Street in Opelika. SimplyProse is an online writing platform that affords all writers a space to create, receive critique, and market their work for profit or personal enjoyment. Writers decide who can view and contribute to their work, which suggestions are most beneficial, and connect with a literary professional or publisher on our marketplace to further advance their project.

The team and I started SimplyProse last year during a startup competition called, Tiger Cage, which is sponsored by Auburn University's Harbert College of Business. Our company is built on creativity and collaboration, and most



*Jake Wright (L) and Cole Kinchler of SimplyProse.*



# Places to Go & Things to Do

## Alexander City

**Every Wednesday in September and October, 10 a.m., Story Time.** Mamie's Place Children's Library. Stories, crafts, songs, games. Everyone welcome. Special event, holiday, and Saturday programs are planned each month. For more information on all programming and services offered at Mamie's Place Children's Library, call (256) 234-4644, [www.amrlibrary.net](http://www.amrlibrary.net), or like us on Facebook.

**Every Saturday, 7-11 a.m., MainStreet Farmer's Market.** Broad Street. For more information, contact MainStreet Alexander City, (256) 329-9227.

**Every third Monday of each month, 2 p.m., eBook Workshop.** Adelia M. Russell Library Conference Room. Over 20,000 eBooks available – free [www.amrlibrary.net](http://www.amrlibrary.net). No late fees or charges – eBooks return automatically. For help or more information, call (256) 329-6796 or attend the workshop.

**Sept. 10 and Oct. 8, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., RECYCLE Electronics.** Public Works Department, behind Darwin Dobbs. There is a \$10 fee for TVs. Contact City of Alexander City Public Works at (256) 409-2020 for more information. Sponsored by the City of Alexander City and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership.

**Oct. 8, 5-7 p.m., "Rally in the Alley".** Celebrating Chair-ish Alexander City. Downtown on Main Street. For more information contact MainStreet Alexander City at 256-329-9227.

**Oct. 8, 12 noon, Steve Flowers at the Adela M. Russell Library.** Steve Flowers is Alabama's most watched and read political columnist and commentator. For more information, see <http://www.newsouthbooks.com/ofgoatsandgovernors>

**Oct. 17, 7:30-11 a.m., Chair-ish Alexander City.** Local artists create unique designs on chairs for raffle. Broad Street Plaza. For more information contact MainStreet Alexander City at (256) 329-9227.

**Oct. 17, 1:30-3:30 p.m., MainStreet Great Pumpkin Roll.** Other free children's activities in Strand Park. For more information, contact MainStreet Alexander City at (256) 329-9227.

**Oct. 30, "Trick or Treats".** Mamie's Place Children's Library. Stories, games, special guests, photo booth and of course candy. For more information about any of these and other programs for the library, call (256) 329-6796, visit [www.amrlibrary.net](http://www.amrlibrary.net), or like us on Facebook.

## Daphne

**Sept. 26 and 27, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 27th Annual Jubilee Festival.** An Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce event. The Jubilee Festival offers fine art, crafts, great entertainment and great food in Olde Towne Daphne (Scenic 98). No admission. For more information, call the Chamber at (251) 621- 8222, or visit [www.eschamber.com](http://www.eschamber.com).

## Dothan

**Sept. 25 and 26, PorktoberQue.** Houston County Farm Center. PorktoberQue is Dothan's Oktoberfest and barbecue competition. It has all of the elements of an Oktoberfest (polka music, beer, bratwursts) combined with a sanctioned barbecue contest and many other events that include the whole family. Admission is \$4 and children 6 and under are free. For more information, visit [PorktoberQue.com](http://PorktoberQue.com), or call (334) 699-1475

**Oct. 3, 7:30 a.m., Alzheimer's A Walk to Remember.** Westgate Park. The perfect way to honor and/or remember loved ones with Alzheimer's disease and their families. For information about this annual event sponsored by the Alzheimer's Resource Center, call (334) 702-2273, visit [www.wesharethecare.org](http://www.wesharethecare.org), or email [alzheimers@graceba.net](mailto:alzheimers@graceba.net).

## Elberta

**Oct. 31, 8 a.m. - 9 p.m., Original Elberta German Sausage Festival.** Held at the Elberta Town Park (Hwy. 98 E). The best German sausage you have ever tasted! Made from a secret recipe developed by the founding fathers of Elberta. Arts and crafts, live music, carnival rides, baked goods and more. Contact us at [festival@elbertafire.com](mailto:festival@elbertafire.com).

## Fairhope

**Sept. 4 and Oct. 2, 6-8 p.m., First Friday Art Walk.** Downtown Fairhope. First Friday Art Walk is a community art and entertainment event held the first Friday of each month. The event is free and open to the public. Begins at Fairhope Art Center, stroll through downtown Fairhope visiting art galleries and listening to music. For more information, call (251) 928-2228.

**Sept. 17, 6 p.m., Black-Out Cancer Ball.** Fairhope Civic Center. The evening is packed with dancing, entertainment, an honoree presentation, dining, auctions and everyone wears black. Proceeds from the Black-Out Cancer Ball will support the American Cancer Society's mission.

**Sept. 17, 7 p.m., Fairhope FETE.** Clearwater Polo Complex. Merchants participate in a fashion show, in-store events, trunk shows, and featured specials from Thursday, Sept. 17 through Saturday, Sept. 26, the day of Polo at the Point. For more information on Fairhope FETE, visit [www.facebook.com/FairhopeFete](http://www.facebook.com/FairhopeFete)

**Sept. 19, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., 28th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup.** Fairhope Municipal Pier and Park. Please call (251) 929-1466 to register your group or organization or for additional information.

**Sept. 24-Nov. 12, 3 p.m. until sundown, Fairhope Fall Farmers Market.** Behind the Fairhope Public Library. The market will feature local farmers, bakers, fresh Baldwin County produce, fresh cut flowers, local honey, plants, baked goods and more. The Fairhope Public Library will hold story times and children's activities at 4 p.m. each Thursday at the market. For general information or for information about becoming a vendor at the Fall Outdoor Farmers Market, please call (251) 929-1466.

**Sept. 26, Polo at the Point.** Sonny Hill-Clearwater Polo Complex. Hosted by Point Clear Charities, Inc. and presented by Mercedes Benz of Mobile and Grand Hotel Marriott. Tickets range from \$10 (tailgating) to \$150. For more information, visit [www.poloatthepoint.com](http://www.poloatthepoint.com), or call 251 928-9704.

**"Fall into Fairhope".** A cultural, four-day event in Fairhope. Visitors have the opportunity for trips and evening events with the Alabama Coastal BirdFest and an outdoor art festival with over 70 fine art artists from all over the country.

**Oct. 1-3, 12th Annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest.** Alabama Coastal BirdFest will offer your favorite expertly guided birding trips to prime spots along the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail, as well as new trips — on foot and by boat — that focus on more of our great outdoors. For more information visit, [www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com)

**Oct. 3 and 4, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 33rd Annual Grand Festival of Art.** Fairhope Faulkner State Campus. Admission is free. The show features more than 70 local, regional, national and international artists with more than 20,000 visitors expected. For information on all of the Fall into Fairhope events, visit [www.ESArtCenter.com](http://www.ESArtCenter.com), or call 251-928-2228.

**Oct. 3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Grand Festival of Books.** Fairhope Faulkner State Campus. The Grand Festival of Books includes author readings, book signings, and other activities for readers of all ages.

**Oct. 3, 7 p.m., Phantasy of the Arts.** Fairhope Civic Center. Chicago's legendary comedy theater, "The Second City: Improv All Stars," an irresistible hour of improvised comedy, returns. The show will headline Fairhope Educational Enrichment Foundation's (FEFF) Phantasy of the Arts 2015. For more information, visit [www.feefonline.org](http://www.feefonline.org), or call (251) 990-FEEF

**Oct. 24, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Downtown Fairhope Trick or Treat.** Downtown Fairhope. Children are invited to wear their Halloween costume and trick or treat in downtown Fairhope. Just look for the pumpkin sign in the window to see who is participating. Parents drop by the Welcome Center for pictures and don't forget your camera. For more information, call (251) 929-1466.

## Foley

**Oct. 3, Creek Crawl.** Graham Creek Nature Preserve and Creek Crawl event. 23460 Wolf Bay Drive, Foley. Proceeds benefit the Nature Preserve. For more information, call (251) 952-4011.

**Oct. 3, 4th Annual Alabama Festival of Flavor.** Held in the streets of Historic downtown Foley. Guests can sample food prepared during cooking competitions, learn about traditional Southern recipe secrets from our locally-famous chefs, attend a food and wine pairing or acquire tips on creating your own organic garden at home.

## Gulf Shores

**Oct. 8-11, 44th Annual National Shrimp Festival.** Held at the public beach access in Gulf Shores, where Hwy. 59 ends and intersects with Hwy. 182. For more information, contact (251) 968-6904, or <http://www.myshrimpfest.com>.

## Opelika

**Sept. 4 and Oct. 2, 6-9 p.m., First Friday. Downtown Opelika.** Live music and stores open late.

**Sept. 24, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., SportsPlex Senior Health Fair.** Ages 55+. Free health screenings and a variety of services will be available.

**Oct. 23, 6-8 p.m., The Great Pumpkin Splash.** Ages 6-12. The SportsPlex pool will turn into a floating pumpkin patch. Kids can also enjoy harvest relay races, the pumpkin roll, prizes and more. Must pre-register by Oct. 20.

**Oct. 23, 4:30-10 p.m., On the Tracks.** Downtown Opelika. A food and wine event with arts and entertainment.

**Oct. 27, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Fall Festival and Children's Carnival.** Opelika SportsPlex. Children 12 and under. Hayrides, prizes, games, rides and entertainment. Kids can enjoy inflatable slides, special booths, local mascots and much more.

**Halloween. Trick or Treat Night. Celebration night TBA, depending on high school/university football schedules.**

## Sylacauga

**B.B. Comer Memorial Library 2015 Fall Brown Bag Series, "Looking Forward to the Past".** All programs begin at 12 p.m. Sept. 16, 16, Elnora Spencer – "The Best of the Blues"; Sept. 23, Fay Gibbons – "Halley: the Story of a Depression Era Georgia Mountain Girl"; Sept. 30, Peggy Jackson Walls - "A Century of Gold Mining at Hog Mountain —1839-1939"; Oct. 7, Troy Jones - "The Nashville Experience: Small Town Boy and Big Town Song Writing"; Oct. 14, Wayne Flynt - "In Sylacauga, Who is the Watchman? And What is She Watching?"; Oct. 21, TBA; Oct. 28, Monique Laney - "When Histories and Memories Collide: How Huntsville Made Sense of Its German Rocket Team's Nazi Post"

**Sept. 17, 6:30-8 p.m., Annual Photography Competition Awards Reception.** Comer Museum & Arts Center.

**Oct. 10, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Annual BBQ Cook-Off and Fine Arts & Crafts Fair.** Comer Museum & Arts Center.

# Alabama Municipal Electric Authority

804 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

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WATTS NEW IN  
**Fairhope**

*Fall into Fairhope* returns to  
Fairhope  
Faulkner  
campus

By D. Fran Morley

Once again, the Fairhope campus of Faulkner State College is THE place to be the first weekend in October. The campus is the center of Fall into Fairhope, which features Alabama Coastal BirdFest's Bird & Conservation Expo, the Grand Festival of Books, and the Grand Festival of Art. The weekend also includes a First Friday Artwalk on Friday, Oct. 2, in downtown Fairhope.

"The Grand Festival of Art has had several locations over its 33-year history, but we love our new home under the trees on the south side of the Faulkner campus," said event chair Malia Mullican. "It's convenient to downtown for parking, but it's off the streets so we can spread out in the shade. It's a great spot, and we're happy to share the weekend with the other events. On campus, one event will flow right into the next.

There really is something for everyone to enjoy in Fairhope that weekend." The Grand Festival of Art, Oct. 3 and 4, welcomes fine artists and craftspeople from across the U.S.

Alabama Coastal BirdFest's Bird & Conservation Expo takes place at the new amphitheater on the southeast corner of the Faulkner campus on Saturday, Oct. 3. The free, family-friendly event features sea creature touch tanks, raptor demonstrations, booths, vendors, exhibits, and lots of hands-on fun for kids of all ages. The event is part of the four-day BirdFest, with more than 30 guided trips by boat and on foot, two evening events, and workshops.

The Grand Festival of Books, Oct. 3, includes author readings, book signings, and other activities for readers of all ages. A few of the authors already scheduled are: Jennifer Horne, *Tell the World You Are A Wildflower*; Jamie Kornegay, *Soil*; Matthew Quinn, *Scribe*; Moira Crone, *The Ice Garden*; Frye Gaillard, *Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters*; and Karyn Tunk, *Jubilee!* Additional authors to be announced.

For information on all of the Fall into Fairhope events, "like" the Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FallintoFairhope/](http://www.facebook.com/FallintoFairhope/) or visit: [www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com](http://www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com); [www.ESArtCenter.com](http://www.ESArtCenter.com); or [www.pageandpalette.com](http://www.pageandpalette.com). You may also call (251) 929-1466 for information on Fairhope or any of the events listed above.

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