

Alabama CURRENTS

November/December 2015

A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority

*Home for the
Holidays
in Lanett*



FROM THE EDITOR

Electricity remains one of life's great conveniences and a valuable commodity

Across America, nearly every facet of our lives depends on electricity. Electricity doesn't just power homes, schools and businesses here — it energizes entire communities and drives the economy.

Take a quick look around. Everything in your home or workplace is either powered by electricity or produced with the help of electrical power. Of course this includes your computer, phone and kitchen appliances. But electricity is also the power behind the clothes you wear, the food you eat and the heated or cooled air you breathe.

And of course during this holiday season, we use electricity to power our Christmas tree lights, cook our special holiday meals, and watch those wonderful holiday classics on TV.

Since Thomas Edison's first power plant lit up 800 light bulbs in New York City on the evening of Sept. 4, 1882, electricity has become our most prevalent energy form. It drives our nation's economy and powers smart technologies that enhance our quality of life.

Today the electric power industry is a robust industry that contributes to the progress of our nation. America's electric companies pay billions of dollars in tax revenue, employ nearly 400,000 workers, provide a variety of public service programs to benefit the local communities they serve, and produce one of our most valuable commodities — electricity.

It's important to understand that electricity remains one of life's great conveniences. What would life be like without electricity? Electricity is the never-ending source of fuel for the home handyman, the amateur chef and the small business owner. We power homes, farms and businesses with dependable and affordable power, and there is no limit to what you can use it for. Electricity makes life easier.

Electricity is everywhere. Right now it's powering your devices, heating or cooling your home, and entertaining your children. Our job is simple: power your life, and fade into the background. We affect everything, but are hardly noticed.

Electricity continues to be a good value, especially when compared to other consumer goods. Consider the cost of a gallon of gas 30 years ago compared to today's price. How about a pound of coffee or a loaf of bread? While this doesn't take the sting out of rising costs, it does show that the cost of electricity has remained relatively flat, despite its increased use and value to our daily lives. Electricity remains one of the true bargains among crucial U.S. commodities.

As it was in the beginning and still remains today, the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) will stay true to its mission of providing for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power. Providing reliable, low-cost power isn't just our job, it's our reason for being. This mission has guided us for the past 34 years and will serve us well into the future.

As we enter the holiday season, my wish is that everyone has many, many magical moments. I hope that the lights bring a special illumination to your hearts and spirits. I hope that the time that you spend with others takes on a very special feeling of sharing and caring that is representative of this special time of the year. May you enjoy all the happiness the season can bring and may His eternal love bring you peace throughout the coming year.

Lisa Miller

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing



AMEA and its Members sponsor 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 (Alexander 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, 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.



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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

Inside This Issue

2 **AMEA and its Members sponsor 2016 Scholarship Program**

News From AMEA Members

6 **Piedmont**

10 **Riviera Utilities**

7 **Alexander City**

11 **Utilities Board of Tuskegee**

7 **Dothan**

12 **Opelika**

8 **Fairhope**

13 **Sylacauga**

9 **LaFayette**

14 **Lanett**

Features

2 **From The Editor**

6 **Kyle' D. McKinney**

4 **In My Opinion**

15 **Places To Go & Things To Do**

5 **Doug Rye**

On the Cover

In 2004, under the direction of Lanett Mayor Oscar Crawley, the city started a new tradition. It was Mayor Crawley's vision to remember one of Lanett's citizens during the Christmas season. Mayor Crawley introduced the idea of dedicating the lighting of the city Christmas tree by a family member of a citizen who has left a lasting impression on the city and its citizens.

Shown in front of last year's city Christmas tree are (front row, L to R): Charlene Chandler (Bobby Chandler, 2014); Bea Sanders (Mack Sanders, 2006); Shirley Terry (Richard B. Terry, 2012); and Elsie Johnson (Bubber Johnson, 2011). (Second row, L to R): Kay Ray (William Larry "Fotchie" Ray, 2008); Mac Langley (Barbara Langley, 2005), and Lanett Mayor Oscar Crawley. (Third row, L to R): Lanett City Councilman Jamie Heard; Councilwoman Shirley B. Motley; Allyson Jones, City Treasurer; Donald Sykes and Jaclyn Sykes (Professor L. B. Sykes, 2004); and Councilman Kyle McCoy. (Fourth row, L to R): Deborah Daniel, City Clerk; Ronnie Tucker, Recreation Director; Major Ryan Ashley, Lanett Police; and David DeLee, Superintendent, Electric and Gas Departments. (Not shown): Honoring Roy Matthews, 2007; Linda Fuller (Millard Fuller, 2009); Wannie Pierce (Ernie Pierce, 2010); and, Oreatha Hardy (Coach James Hardy, 2013). (Photos by Photographer Steve Winslett, PureDesign)

Editor's Note: The cover photo, which shows Mayor Oscar Crawley in the group, was taken in December 2014. Mayor Crawley passed away on Oct. 6, 2015.

Weatherization: Saving money by saving energy

When the weather gets colder, we tend to turn up the thermostat. Of course, the downside to this is a rise in heating costs. While everyone loves holiday presents, a big heating bill is something we'd rather not discover in the mailbox. Fortunately there are a few simple tricks to keep your home cozy and warm without spending a fortune.



Few of us relish the idea of paying more for anything than we need to. But when it comes to our winter utility bills, we just may be paying more than we need to simply because we've not been diligent about winterizing our home as well as we could.

One area that has been of interest to me is air infiltration and how your home can lose most of its heat and cool air to air leaks (inside and out). Simply put, you may be throwing money out the window. So let's talk about how we can solve this problem.

Testing of older homes shows that approximately 50 percent of all air in a house is lost to the exterior or outside due to air infiltration. If 50 percent of the air is lost, that means that same amount of air has to be replaced with outside air, winter or summer. If you can stand at your window or door and feel cool air coming in, just imagine how much warm air is escaping your home.

This begs the question...how can I prevent heating and/or cooling the outside air and how do I keep that air inside the house? This can be economically solved by proper application of caulking, weather-stripping, and in some cases, adding insulation.

Weatherization is the first place for the average home dweller to concentrate for the most benefit with the least effort or expense. Taking the steps to weatherize your home is important to keeping it warm without cranking up the thermostat.

Weatherizing your home involves locating air leaks and sealing them to keep the heat inside during the colder months and it assists in reducing your heating bills. Inadequate insulation and air leakage are the leading causes of energy waste in homes.

Weatherize your home by caulking and weather-stripping places where cold air is coming in the house. Reducing air infiltration can cut your monthly energy bill substantially. The most common places where air escapes homes are: floors, walls, ceilings, ducts, fireplaces, plumbing penetrations, doors, windows, fans, vents and electrical outlets.

Here are some general tips on how to make your home energy efficient for the cold months to come:

- Reduce heating and cooling needs by investing in insulation and weatherization products. Warm air leaking into your home in summer and out of your home in winter can waste a lot of energy. Insulation wraps your house in a nice warm

blanket, but air can still leak in or out through small cracks. Often the effect of small leaks is the same as keeping a door wide open. One of the easiest money-saving measures you can do is caulk, seal, and weather-strip all the cracks to the outside. You can save 10 percent or more on your energy bill by stopping the air leaks in your home.

- About one-third of a typical home's heat loss occurs through the doors and windows. Energy-efficient doors are insulated and seal tightly to prevent air from leaking through or around them. If your doors are in good shape and you don't want to replace them, make sure they seal tightly and have door sweeps at the bottom to prevent air leaks. Installing insulated storm doors provides an additional barrier to leaking air. Most homes have many more windows than doors. Replacing older windows with new energy-efficient ones can reduce air leaks and utility bills. The best windows shut tightly and are constructed of two or more pieces of glass separated by a gas that does not conduct heat well. If you cannot replace older windows, there are several things you can do to make them more energy efficient. First, caulk any cracks around the windows and make sure they seal tightly. Add storm windows or sheets of clear plastic to the outside to create additional air barriers. You can also hang insulated drapes on the inside — during the winter, open them on sunny days and close them at night.
 - Appliances account for about 20 percent of a typical household's energy use, with refrigerators, clothes washers and dryers at the top of the list. When shopping for new appliances, you should think of two price tags. The first one is the purchase price. The second price tag is the cost of operating the appliance during its lifetime. You'll be paying that second price tag on your utility bill every month for the next 10 to 20 years, depending on the appliance. Many energy-efficient appliances cost more to buy, but save money in lower energy costs. Over the life of an appliance, an energy-efficient model is always a better deal. When you shop for a new appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label — your assurance that the product saves energy. ENERGY STAR appliances have been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy as the most energy-efficient products in their classes.
 - Water heating is the third largest energy expense in your home. It typically accounts for about 14 percent of your utility bill. Heated water is used for showers, baths, laundry, dishwashing and general cleaning. There are four ways to cut your water heating bills— use less hot water, turn down the thermostat on your water heater, insulate your water heater and pipes, and buy a new, more efficient water heater.
- Winter is the time for cozying up by the fire and enjoying a mug of hot chocolate with a blanket, but to keep your whole home comfortable it's important not to neglect the equipment that keeps it that way. If you maintain it properly there should be no reason for an outrageous heating bill in the cold winter months. Remember, you have the power to control your energy bill.

Best wishes for a bright 2016. We pray that it will bring you peace, joy and happiness.

Fred Clark

AMEA President & CEO

The little house that any family can afford (Part 2)

The response from the September/October *Alabama Currents* column was just amazing. It just proves that many are in need of a small house that is affordable. In response to each one of you who called me, I wish that I could personally take you by the hand, help you find a building site, find a contractor, secure financing, and build you a small affordable house. Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to do that. So I can only hope that some good folks in Alabama will see the need and proceed with building such houses.

As I mentioned in the last issue, my wife and I were looking for a lot in a small town to purchase and build a small affordable house that just about any family could afford. We found a perfect such lot in Mulberry, Arkansas with a population of about 1,700. We presented our idea to the mayor and about 30 attendees at the new senior citizen center. The idea was warmly accepted and we were received with open arms. They all agreed that the town needed new affordable housing.

I kept thinking that just one new house would not only help a family, but would add one water and sewer customer, add one electric meter, increase the tax base, and might help the town retain the school by not losing student numbers.

The news spread quickly and we started getting calls immediately. We purchased the lot, received a building permit, and were ready to dig the footing. Then it started raining. Finally after two months of wet weather, we dug and poured the footing. Construction went well and it was exciting to watch the daily local traffic almost come to a stop to get a look at the little house. Soon folks started asking if they could tour the house. We were very encouraged by the number of folks interested in seeing the house, but did not want to show it until it was completed.

We ran some numbers and decided that the first open house for the public would be on Aug. 22. We invited the mayors from other towns to tour the house on Aug. 18 and had a great turnout. We invited realtors for Aug. 19 and had three times the number expected. We did not plan to show the house on Aug. 20 and 21 because we needed those days to do final touch up and cleaning for the announced open house. But people just kept coming and we kept showing. Folks,

I am writing this column on Oct. 1 and people are still calling us wanting to see the little house. Why am I telling you this? It is because I am convinced that every town in America



Doug Rye
Host – “Home Remedies”
Radio Talk Show



needs more small affordable houses. Now let's take a look at the important features of the little house.

1. The house contains 800 square feet of living space on the ground level, and about 700 square feet of conditioned space on the second level to be used for storage, playroom, future room expansion, or whatever one chooses. There is one bedroom with large walk in closet, one bath room, full kitchen with nice pantry, dining room, laundry room, living room, and stairway to second level. All doors are 36 inches to allow for easy accessibility.

2. The energy efficient features include:

- 2x6 exterior walls with foam insulation
- Rigid foam for perimeter floor slab insulation
- Attic encapsulated with 6" of foam insulation
- Triple-glazed windows which are 30 percent more efficient than those with double panes
- LED fixtures are used for all lighting
- A super, efficient geothermal heating and cooling system, and all ductwork is located in the conditioned space

As you can see in the picture, maintenance free materials were used for all exterior surfaces. And best of all, the electric bill for the first full hot summer month was \$41.17. Need I say more?

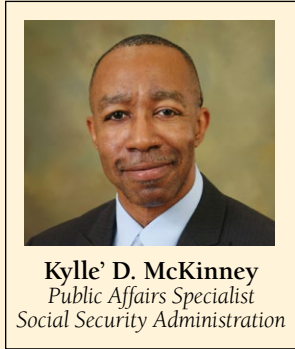
If a mayor or builder in your town wants to do a small house that just about any family can afford, just call me and I will help.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to you all!

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

A day dedicated to the new you

Proudly displaying your new last name on a marriage certificate is only the first step in legally changing your name. Now that the wedding and honeymoon are over, you need to tell Social Security so you can get a corrected Social Security card.



If you have changed your name, whether due to marriage, divorce, or for another reason, the way to change your name with Social Security is to apply for a corrected Social Security card. This ensures that your legal name matches our records, thus avoiding possible problems in the future, such as a delay in obtaining any federal tax refund owed or not getting full Social Security credit for all your earnings.

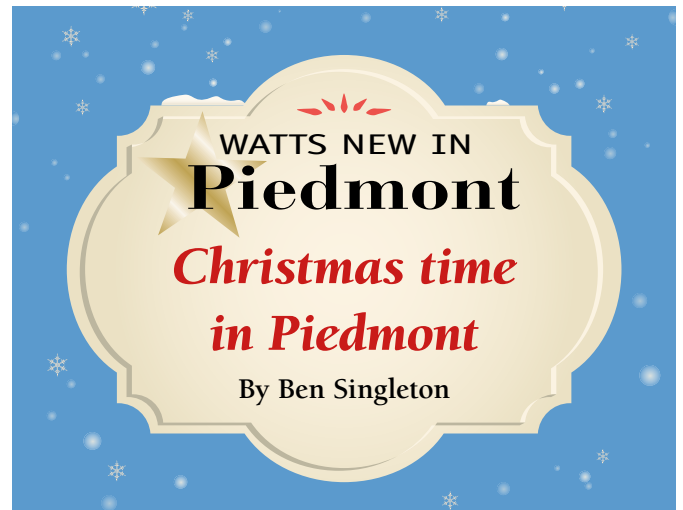
There are a number of other reasons you may want to get a Social Security card: starting a new job, verifying eligibility for government services, opening a bank account, obtaining medical coverage, filing taxes, and legally changing your name. In most cases, unless an employer or other entity specifically requests to see your card, all they really need is your number. But, be cautious when sharing your Social Security number. People who commit fraud or want to steal your identity will often ask for your Social Security number. Always verify the identity of anyone who is asking, whether you're online, on the phone, or face-to-face.

If you just had a baby, he or she will need a Social Security number. The main reason is to show your child's dependent status on your tax return. In most cases, you apply for your newborn's Social Security card and number, as well as the baby's birth certificate, in the hospital.

If you need a new, replacement, or corrected Social Security card, you can find all the details at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber, including the "Learn What Documents You Need" page, which lists the specific documents we accept as proof of age, identity, and citizenship. Each situation is unique, but in most cases, you simply need to print, complete, and either mail or bring the application to Social Security with the appropriate documentation (originals or certified copies only).

After you receive your Social Security card, don't carry it with you. To reduce your risk of identity theft, keep your card in a safe place with your other important papers.

Learn more about your Social Security card and number at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber.



The City of Piedmont is gearing up for a great holiday season. Piedmont's annual Christmas Parade will be on Tuesday, Dec. 1 at 6 p.m. The City of Piedmont encourages any business group, church group, and antique car and tractor to join us.

Parade float entries will be judged in three categories: Best Overall, Most Original and Most Christmas Spirit. The Christmas Parade will be complete with Santa Claus riding on a fire truck.

The Eubanks Welcome Center will be decorated and open daily throughout the holiday season. We welcome you to stop by and take a look around.

"We hope that this will be a great time and great parade for everyone", said Mayor Bill Baker.

For more information on the Christmas parade or to sign up, contact Ben Singleton at (256) 447-3582 or Carl Hinton at (256) 447-3596.

Ben Singleton is Communication Technician for the City of Piedmont.



Piedmont Museum

WATTS NEW IN Alexander City

The holidays are here

By Kim Dunn and Tracy Kendrick

Alexander City's Annual Holiday Open House will take place on Sunday, Nov. 15 from 1 until 4 p.m. Many local retailers will open their doors on Sunday afternoon to showcase their holiday decorations and gift ideas. Most will offer great deals and specials throughout the day. Santa will also be downtown, so it's a great time to bring the kids and let them get their requests in early.



New this year will be the Cast of Characters. Christmas Characters will be stationed at the many retailers around town. We will have maps available for the kids to know who is where. Kids will be encouraged to visit all the characters and get their signatures. They can then bring their maps to Santa for a special treat. We also hope to have some special performers downtown singing Christmas carols.

The holiday festivities will continue in Alexander City on Monday, Dec. 7 at 6 p.m. with the Hometown Christmas Parade. One of east Alabama's largest parades, the participants wind through historic downtown Alexander City. Police Honor Guard, Navy Jr. ROTC, elaborate floats, dancing groups, beauty queens, marching bands, horse-riding clubs and Santa Claus highlight this highly-anticipated annual event.

The holiday festivities will continue in Alexander City on Monday, Dec. 7 at 6 p.m. with the Hometown Christmas Parade. One of east Alabama's largest parades, the participants wind through historic downtown Alexander City. Police Honor Guard, Navy Jr. ROTC, elaborate floats, dancing groups, beauty queens, marching bands, horse-riding clubs and Santa Claus highlight this highly-anticipated annual event.

The Holiday Open House and the Hometown Christmas Parade are a great way to get in the Christmas spirit. Alexander City will be filled with holiday cheer. If you have never experienced the Holiday Open House or the Hometown Christmas Parade, make your plans today.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas from Alexander City!

Kim Dunn is the Director of Marketing & Event Planning for the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce, and Tracy Kendrick is Administrative Assistant for the City of Alexander City Light and Power.

WATTS NEW IN Dothan

Dothan Utilities to relocate South Park substation

By Chris Phillips, P.E.

The Dothan City Commission has recently approved the purchase of property to relocate the electrical substation located at the intersection of Ross Clark Circle and South Park Avenue. The existing substation is a three-circuit station that is surrounded by roadways and a railroad. The new location is just outside of Ross Clark Circle on West Carroll Street.

This new property will give Dothan Utilities the ability to add additional circuits to supply existing and future electrical loads.

"We are continually working to increase the reliability and integrity of our system," said Chris Phillips, Electric Superintendent, Dothan Utilities. "The relocation of this substation to the West Carroll Street property will provide us the proper clearances needed to perform maintenance and repairs on the substation's equipment, install new updated equipment, as well as provide the needed area for expansion to accommodate future growth of the electrical system".

Site preparation has begun at the new location and procurement of materials and equipment is underway. Dothan Utilities hopes to have the new substation in service by 2017.

Chris Phillips is the Electric Operations Superintendent for Dothan Utilities.



WATTS NEW IN Fairhope

Fairhope's Ecumenical Ministries helps those in need

By Taylor Peyton Strunk

The Ecumenical Ministries (EMI) Christmas Sharing program is underway in Fairhope, ensuring that the youngest members of the community will have presents to unwrap this year.

Christmas Sharing was launched more than 25 years ago to provide the boys and girls of low-income families with the joy and surprises every child deserves during the holiday season. The process for determining eligible recipients begins in early fall, when the “angels” are qualified through an interview and intake process. By mid-November, the angels, which are identified by a number and first name only, are distributed along with gift requests, shoe and clothing sizes, to area churches, businesses and anyone else who wishes to become a sponsor.

“It’s a great way for the community



Ecumenical Ministry volunteers at work on a home repair project.

to get involved,” said EMI Executive Director Sally Deane. “For many families, adopting an angel is part of their own Christmas tradition. Many churches and organizations set up an ‘Angel Tree’ for the program, but sponsors can also contact us directly and we will connect them with an angel.”

Last year Christmas Sharing provided gifts for 421 children in Fairhope, and Deane said they are looking forward to another big year.

“It’s such a magical moment, to see the faces of these kids light up over a toy or a new pair of shoes. It’s a wonderful thing to be a part of.”

Ecumenical Ministries is a non-denominational, faith-based social service agency that has been assisting low-income families in Baldwin County for more than 40 years. Throughout the year, it helps low-income residents in the community through its seven programs, including two Emergency Aid Centers with food pantries, Meals on Wheels, Prescription Assistance, Home Repair, Community Development, Emmy’s Thrift Shop and Christmas Sharing.

Fairhope Public Utilities partners with Ecumenical Ministries to assist with heating and cooling bills. Fairhope utility customers can contribute to a fund each month on their utility bill and Ecumenical Ministries screens the applicants for need.

For questions about Ecumenical Ministries and the services they offer, call (251) 928-3430.

Taylor Peyton Strunk is a contributing writer for the City of Fairhope.



Christmas Sharing Program (Photos provided by Ecumenical Ministries).

★ WATTS NEW IN LaFayette

LaFayette Electric Department teaches students about the role of public power

By Chris Busby

The LaFayette Electric Department took on a new role for a week in early October. As part of Public Power Week, members of the department became educators, visiting local schools to teach students about the role public power plays in the community.

Like LaFayette, thousands of cities across the country celebrated Public Power Week, Oct. 4-10. Its purpose is to show the distinct advantages community-owned and -operated electric utilities provides to customers and stakeholders. LaFayette, a member city of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority, is one of more than 2,000 communities served by public power in the U.S., which includes over 47 million people.

The LaFayette Electric Department school visits were the first time such an event had taken place, and Randy Norred, Electric Department Superintendent, hopes to continue in the years to come.

“This is a great opportunity for us to show the students, who are also our customers, what we do day after day,” he said. “Not only were we able to teach them about public power and safety measures, but we also relayed that we offer quality service and take pride in serving our community.”

Along with Norred, linemen Jamie Sims, Glen Templeton and apprentice Chris Sanders, took part in the events.

The visits included several activities and demonstrations for students. The city’s utility truck was part of one lesson, in which the department showed students procedures for setting up a protective barrier and other protocol before



LaFayette Electric Department Superintendent Randy Norred lets Eastside Elementary School students get an up close look at equipment used by the department as part of Public Power Week events.

raising the bucket to work on lines. As part of the demonstration, workers emphasized all the safety equipment, including gloves, hard hats and glasses that are worn during their work. The students saw a glove safety test and had the chance to try on a pair.

Much of the equipment electrical workers use on a daily basis was on display for the students to see, including hot sticks, insulation covers and line testers. The department employees even showed the classes what happens when a line tester comes in contact with a live wire.

One other demonstration included the use of a training transformer to show the students how they are installed.

The importance of safety around power lines was emphasized throughout the event, and city workers discussed how they deal with downed lines and other hazardous situations, and gave tips on how to be safe when those issues occur at or near their homes.

The advantages of public power were also points of significance during the visits. Norred talked about how public power is owned by the consumer and thus is locally controlled. Public power also allows for lower rates and keeps revenues local.

Overall, the visits were a huge success for both the students and the electrical department.

“Public Power Week gives us the chance to emphasize the aspects and advantages of locally owned power to these students,” said Norred. “And this is something they will go home and talk to their parents and grandparents about and will keep with them throughout their lives.”

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



Eastside Elementary School students watch as LaFayette Electric Department apprentice Chris Sanders goes up in the city’s bucket truck.

★ WATTS NEW AT Riviera Utilities

Holk recalls fond memories of serving Foley and Riviera Utilities

By Susan Whitworth



Arthur Holk

“I was the runt of my class,” Arthur Holk quips, as he tells about his growing up years. He stood exactly five feet tall and weighed 105 pounds the year he and three friends tried to enlist for military service. Holk was declared too small to serve during World War II, but it seems not much else has stopped him in a lifetime of accomplishments and service.

Holk spent 40 years serving the City of Foley, first as councilman (1952-1972) and later as mayor (1976-1996). This was in addition to his career as an insurance executive and real estate investor.

Holk served a stunning 54 years on the Riviera Utilities Board of Directors (1958-2012). During that time he worked with three Riviera Utilities general managers: Sherman F. Lemler, H. Sewell St. John, Jr., and Michael M. Dugger. Lemler, he said, “used to carry a slapstick everywhere” to make any needed mathematical computations.

It is these little anecdotes that cause one to realize how much change he witnessed throughout the years. He recalls how the service area was expanded on a case-by-case basis. New lines were run to an area when it seemed enough people would benefit. Holk thinks one of the best management changes made was increasing the board of directors from two to five members. It was later decided the mayor of Foley should always be a member of the board.

Speaking of Riviera Utilities today, Holk said, “You couldn’t have a better organization than you’ve got” at the utility. He feels that the way the company is organized ensures that the rates will always be competitive.

During his years as a city councilman and later mayor, Holk was honored many times, including the State Farm Good Service Award; Alabama House resolution for outstanding achievement and service; namesake of Foley Post Office; the Melvin Jones Award; and the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce Free Enterprise Award.

His influence is evident throughout the community. One of the things he is most proud of is his part in purchasing the railroad right-of-way that was the old L&N line. It stretches from Bay Minette to near the Foley American Legion. Cities through which the line runs have been able to negotiate use of the property within their city limits. The project enabled Foley over the years to develop the John B. Foley Park, the Antique Rose Trail, and the post office property.

Holk was instrumental in bringing Rohr Industries to Foley (now United Technology Corporation). He also helped over the years with the development of Foley’s hospital, which became South Baldwin Regional Medical Center.

“I had a lot of pleasures serving Foley,” said Holk. “I’m proud of Foley and the leaders they’ve had in the bygone years.”

Still, for all his accomplishments, he seems now to enjoy most sitting by the water at his Magnolia Springs getaway and telling stories about people he’s known over the years and growing up in Foley.

When he was born in 1925, the family lived in a second floor apartment on the southeast corner of Highway 59 and Laurel Avenue. His mother managed a store downstairs. He was one of eight boys and remembers fondly that on occasion, “Daddy would give us boys a quarter to walk around town” and buy something. He speaks of other students, “I was a year behind Mickey Blackwell.”

After failing the military physical, he returned to Foley and finished his high school diploma. He then studied at Auburn University, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture in 1949.

One of his early jobs was at the Pitts Hotel in downtown Auburn, near the school campus. He remembers working from 6 to 8 a.m. and 12 to 1 p.m. at lunch. His first task in the morning, he recalls, was “to put on the water for coffee and grits.” He talks about the hotel with a smile, saying, “that’s one of those things I shoulda bought.”

He met his wife, Fannie Jo, one morning in 1950 near where Highways 104 and 59 intersect. (It should be noted that by now he had matured to five feet and 11 inches tall).

“I’d been up all night hitchhiking home from school (in Auburn) and she gave me a ride to Foley.”

He recalls going on a date in a shiny red 1950 Dodge convertible. Their relationship took off, and they married in December of 1950. They have two children; Andy, who “loves the water,” and Frances, who “was competitive even in grammar school.”

As a young married man, Holk declined to have his father co-sign a loan for some investment property. The banker said he needed a partner, to which he replied, “Fannie is my partner.” She died in May 2015.

Susan Whitworth is an Accountant III for Riviera Utilities.

★ WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee



Tuskegee Repertory Theatre teaches history locally and worldwide

By Dyann Robinson

Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc. (TRT) has been declared by the Tuskegee City Council to be the “Official Theatre of the City of Tuskegee.” This company, composed of native and/or local Tuskegee amateur, professional, creative, and performing artists, will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2016. This official designation is more than appropriate, particularly because the mission of the company is to present primarily original theatre about the history and culture of the black peoples of the world, especially the African-American people of historic Tuskegee.

Dyann Robinson is the founder/director of TRT and she also serves as cultural advisor for the Arts for the World Conference of Mayors, Inc. (WCM). Tuskegee Mayor Johnny Ford is the founder/director general of the World Conference of Mayors and believes that the theatrical works presented by TRT provide an excellent example of how theatre can be for the cities of the WCM, but in particular, for those WCM cities that form the Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance (HB TSA), to which Tuskegee belongs, and which he co-chairs, a vehicle to promote cultural enrichment for their citizens, and cultural tourism for the economic enrichment of their historic communities.

Following is a portion of a review, written by Tuskegee theatre critic and author, Marie Moore Lyles, and published in The Tuskegee News, of a recent performance of a Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc. original production, entitled, “Tuskegee Rising.” This is one of 16 plays produced by TRT that has been written and directed by Ms. Robinson. The play is a kind of musical brochure that gives, through rhymed speech and music, a brief history of the Tuskegee community from 1881 to the present. It tells how Tuskegee has risen again and again, and continues to rise and fly high, like the mythical Phoenix, in spite of, and ultimately overcoming many trials and much tribulation. The review speaks to how the entertainment of theatre, as shown in this play, can not only teach the history of a community, but can inspire and uplift an audience through the valuable lessons to be learned from the past, thus benefiting particularly the youth, but also people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, now and in the future:

“Covered in this play was the importance of the African-American vote understood by Lewis Adams as an example for

our youth today explained in their language. The lessons from Booker T. Washington to build a campus while gaining knowledge and skills to earn a living and contributing to the greater society is a second example for youth to learn how to live in this age. The proposal presented by Robert R. Moton, as soulfully sung by Allen Williams, for building a VA hospital for Negro soldiers to be staffed by Negro professionals is a third example for encouraging youth to make known the unmet health care needs of today. The tragic personal stories arising from victims of the U.S. Public Health syphilis study, introduced by Febreul Holston and portrayed by Lillian Andrus and Williams, is a lesson for today’s youth to be vigilant regarding human subject experiments conducted today. The fight for voting rights through demonstrations, lawsuits, and economic boycotts organized by the Tuskegee Civic Association is a lesson for today’s youth in continuing the battle as well as exercising the duty to vote. The tribute for remembering the murder of Sam Younge, Jr., the first college student killed in the civil rights movement in 1966, is a reminder that Black Lives have always ‘mattered. Sammy Younge, Jr. was a student at then Tuskegee Institute.

Honoring the Tuskegee Airmen through the rousing song ‘The Redtail Heroes of the Fighting Ninety-Ninth,’ sung by Quentin Gaillard, Roger Gray, and Williams involved the audience in rhythmic clapping. The youth in the audience discovered new meaning about their trips to the Tuskegee Airmen Museum.

The first act was designated in the Tuskegee Square where early events happened. The second act was designated at the Municipal Complex to relive events from 1972 to the present. Today’s youth learned that it was citizen voting that elected the first African American mayor, the Honorable Johnny Ford. The election of other black politicians to offices for the improvement of housing and city development followed. The voting for economic development created VictoryLand and there is continued use of the courts for preserving economic development in Macon County, plus voting rights everywhere.”

“Tuskegee Rising,” as written/directed/choreographed by Ms. Robinson with music written/arranged/performed by Billy Perry, continues to excite and involve audiences. The backdrop illustration created by Vincent Morgan of a red and gold phoenix bird rising from the ashes holding Tuskegee landmarks in its talons was seen by one youth in the audience as the American eagle rising. The uniforms designed for the cast by CLINTONIA should now be adopted by all tour guides in Tuskegee.

In late October, “Tuskegee Rising” was performed at Enterprise State Community College. This play will no longer be the Tuskegee story but an Alabama story that may rise to become for our youth a story of the United States of America.

We invite everyone in Alabama to consider a trip to Tuskegee to see history brought to life by the Tuskegee Repertory Theatre in its productions. Check the TRT website, www.tuskegeerep.com, for information on the TRT 25th anniversary season.

Dyann Robinson is founder/director of Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, cultural advisor for the Arts for The World Conference of Mayors, Inc., and owner/director of the Jessie Clinton Arts Centre, located in Tuskegee, and permanent home of Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc.



Holiday activities planned in Opelika

By Jan Gunter

November and December are two months where there is always something meaningful, exciting and fun going on in Opelika. It's such a great time for fun, fellowship and family, and we hope you will mark your calendar and join us for as many activities as you can. And, in case you are new to the area – or haven't been to some of the activities before – I have tried to give you a brief synopsis of what each event entails.



Please join us for Veterans Day activities

Every year, the City of Opelika celebrates Veterans Day with the very same theme, Let us never forget - freedom isn't free, as we seek to honor our veterans and tell them thank you for the freedoms we enjoy. Please join us on Wednesday, Nov. 11 in downtown Opelika for this very special day. The activities include:

- 7:45-9:45 a.m., Veterans Breakfast at the Irish Bred Pub, 833 South Railroad Avenue, downtown Opelika.
- 10 a.m., Special services at the Veterans Memorial Monument City Hall. 204 South 7th Street. Featuring special guest speaker, Senator Tom Whatley. Music by members of the Opelika High School Choir.
- 11 a.m., Special Reception at the Museum of East Alabama, 121 South 9th Street.

Christmas activities in Opelika

Christmas in Opelika is always a magical time of year for both the young, and the young at heart. Mark your calendar for some wonderful holiday cheer that will certain put you in a joyful spirit of the season.

- **Dec. 5, 11 a.m., Opelika's Annual Christmas.** Parade kicks off the holiday season with a fun and festive atmosphere, filled with music and floats – and Santa Claus himself!
- **Dec. 9-11 and Dec. 13, 5-10 p.m., Opelika's Victorian Front Porch Driving Tour.** Showcasing approximately 60 homes in the North Opelika Historic Neighborhood Association. On these nights, you can stay in your car and drive through the neighborhood streets, taking in the classic Victorian homes that are decorated with life-sized Santas, angels, toys, carousel horses and a multitude of Christmas themed figurines. The Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour has been voted one of the Southeast's top rated events, and has been featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Southern Living* magazines. Begins at the Heritage House on the corner of North 8th Street and 2nd Avenue.
- **Dec. 10, 5-9 p.m., Collinwood Neighborhood's Traditional Luminaries Tour.** The Luminaries Tour is a one-way driving tour through the neighborhood, lit with candles on each side of the road, commemorating the path of Christ's birth. Christmas scenes are portrayed along the way.
- **Dec. 11, 11 a.m., Special Postage Stamp Unveiling Honoring Medal of Honor Recipient, CSM (Ret.) Bennie Adkins.** This special event will take place at the Museum of East Alabama.
- **Dec. 11, 6-9 p.m., Christmas in a Railroad Town.** There will be activities for everyone at the great family-fun night out along Railroad Avenue in beautiful Historic Downtown Opelika. Very family-friendly event including hay rides, activities for kids, live Christmas carols, food and entertainment. And, you can book your passage for the Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour on a hayride or trolley in front of the Museum of East Alabama on South 9th Street.
- **Dec. 12, 6-9 p.m., Victorian Front Porch Walking Tour.** The streets through the North Opelika Historic Neighborhood Association will be blocked off on this night, so that the public can get out and join the neighbors, who will be dressed in beautiful Victorian Christmas apparel, for an evening filled with hot chocolate, music at various locations, stories, and other fun-filled activities.

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

WATTS NEW IN Sylacauga

Sylacauga Utilities rolls out dedicated fiber optic service

By Christa Jennings

The Sylacauga Utilities Board is taking great strides with its Internet service and is excited to announce that it now offers several different speed packages tailored to meet the most demanding of bandwidth requirements.

With more and more homes containing multiple devices that use wireless Internet, from smartphones to smart TVs, the company decided to expand its Internet package offerings to better meet the demands of its customers.

New telecommunication rates and speed classes went into effect Sept. 1. The Utilities Board now has 20 Megabits per second (Mbps), 50 Mbps, 100 Mbps and 150 Mbps speed packages available, with each being dedicated bandwidth pipes to each customer.

Whereas the old package was available to residents for \$120 per month, and more for businesses, the new 20 Mbps package starts at \$70 per month. This means customers have the opportunity to get faster dedicated Internet services at a fraction of the cost.

“The new rates are significantly lower than the previous Fiber to the Home (FTH) rates, and the dedicated pipe to each customer means that the speed stays constant and does not vary during typical busy periods, such as in the evenings,” Sylacauga Utilities’ Network Administrator Reay Culp explained.

The good news is also that customers do not have to wait long to get these fiber optic Internet packages. Culp said the FTH product is already available to customers in their electric service area, as well as in a few locations outside of the electrical service area.

“We have the infrastructure in place and are running fiber to customers as requested,” he said.

The rollout is not a full FTH deployment to every house and business, but rather it is a campaign to inform residents and to “hook to fiber” any resident or local business that has a high bandwidth requirement now or foresees the need in the near future, according to Culp.

“Demand for bandwidth has increased over the last few years at an astronomical rate with the amount of video content being downloaded such as Netflix, HULU, Amazon Prime and the console gaming systems,” Culp said. “Cloud computing or cloud storage has dramatically changed the amount of data moving out to the Internet. Customers now may have up to 10 or more devices including Wi-Fi in the



Jared Mobbs, telecom technician, re-installs a fiber optic splice closure.
(Photo by Christa Jennings)

home or business that use the Internet. Lately it appears that Internet providers are even becoming the new pathway for consumers to watch television. Many of our customers are dropping their legacy cable providers and hooking up their TVs to their Internet. Smart homes and the new smart appliances coming out are going to put even more demand for bandwidth on local networks. This new type of bandwidth requirement is still in its infancy and will continue to grow exponentially for years to come. Having a fiber optic cable connection at your home or business assures that you have the connectivity and bandwidth availability to meet any bandwidth requirement needed now or in the foreseeable future.”

Not only is this service big news for area customers, but it’s big news for the entire City of Sylacauga, as well.

According to the August/September 2015 issue of *Broadband Communities*, a national trade magazine dedicated to the state of broadband in the United States, the Utilities Board of the City of Sylacauga was one of the first four municipalities in the entire nation to offer FTH to residents and businesses with an initial startup in 1999.

“We take pride that we have this FTH product available in Sylacauga,” Culp said. “The residents and businesses in Sylacauga, once hooked up on this product, will find that this product is excellent and that our 24/7 customer support is unmatched.”

Concerning what makes Sylacauga Utilities’ FTH special and more valuable than other providers, Culp said it is the “dedicated circuit.”

“If you have a 20 Mbps circuit with us, you get 20 Mbps,” he explained. “If your neighbors have a 20 Mbps circuit with us, they have their own 20 Mbps pipe. This unshared data pipe, it is the difference!”

For more information on the fiber optic rollout or to sign up for a Fiber to the Home Internet speed package, call the Sylacauga Utilities Board at (256) 401-2541.

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



★ WATTS NEW IN Lanett

Lanett schools are best-kept secret in Alabama

By Wayne Clark

Phillip Johnson, superintendent of Lanett City Schools, can't help but be a little proud when educators from other parts of the state tell him that Lanett is the best-kept secret in Alabama.

These well-informed educators are aware of what's going on in the Lanett school district through its involvement in distance learning, its being an Alabama Match Science and Technology (AMSTI) site and its offering Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, but it's when they visit the schools that they're most impressed.

It's the visits, Johnson said, that have something of a Wow! factor. People are impressed with the appearance of the buildings, the ideal class sizes, the orderliness with what takes place in the classroom, and the positive impressions they get from the students when they pass them in the hallway. They're always of a very neat appearance in their school uniforms and address visitors with such greetings as "Hello, sir, how are you today?"

"It's fun to go to work every day. It's like a ministry," Johnson said. "We've been told that we're the best-kept secret in the state. We just need to do a better job of getting that out there locally."

With the post-William Farley bust with WestPoint Stevens, Lanett schools went through a difficult period, marked by a continuing enrollment decline and the perception the school buildings weren't up to par. The local school board has made some significant strides in getting the buildings in much better shape, and the enrollment decline has turned around.



Enrollment in the Lanett school district has increased three of the last four school years. School leaders attribute this to the influx of new families moving to Chambers County because of its proximity to the automobile industry. The \$1.2 billion Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia plant is only six miles from Lanett. Kia and its suppliers employ over 15,000 people in the two-state area. There's a growing diversity showing up in the classroom. African-American and Caucasian students are being joined by a growing number of Latino and Asian students.

"I don't know if we can call it the Kia effect or what, but our enrollment has been growing for three out of the last four years," Johnson said.

The Kia effect relates to Lanett's proximity to Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, located right next door in West Point. An estimated 4,000 people work on the 600-acre Kia pad and another 12,000 people work in the nearby supplier plants, seven of which are located in Chambers County.

Prior to the Kia boom, the Lanett school system had dropped into the 700s in terms of enrollment. For the past couple of years, it has been bumping up around 1,000.

"We're back on our way to where it was in the late 1980s when the mills were running wide open," Johnson said.

At one time in the late 1980s, Lanett High School (LHS) was close to being a 5A school. It's been holding at 2A for some time now.

With families moving into the area attracted by jobs in the automotive industry, local schools are seeing a more diverse student population. African-American and Caucasian students are being joined by a growing number of Latino and Asian students. This school year, for example, Lanett has approximately 55 students who are of Hispanic heritage.

This year marks the 118th year of Lanett City Schools. All schools are fully accredited by AdvancED (formerly known as SACS). This accreditation goes back to 1966. For three years running, the Lanett district has received U.S. News & World Report's Bronze Award for having one of the top high schools for its size in Alabama.

Lanett High School offers advanced placement courses in U.S. history, composition and literature. The school's ACCESS distance lab allows students to use laptop computers to take such courses as physics and foreign language. Students at schools such as Barbour County High in south Alabama and Spain Park High in metro Birmingham make use of this state-of-the-art technology to take courses offered in Lanett.

"We have some excellent teachers," Johnson said. "I would put them alongside teachers from any other system."

Johnson said he's talked to Chambers County Superintendent, Dr. Kelli Hodge, about a perception problem that exists with local schools. Much better education is going on in the local classrooms, they believe, than a lot of local people give it credit for. There's a good working relationship between the two systems. A total of 16 Valley High students are taking ROTC this year through the Lanett High program, and more than 20 LHS students will be taking courses at the Chambers County Career Technical Center (CTC) in LaFayette.

This has worked out very well with the students. "They're

Continued on page 16

Places to Go & Things to Do

Alexander City

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

Nov. 12 and Dec. 10, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Recycle Electronics. Public Works Department, behind Darwin Dobbs. Electronics recycling event every second Thursday. CE&E Solutions will be accepting electronics for recycling and they are ADEM certified. There is a \$10 fee for TVs. Contact City of Alexander City Public Works at (256) 409-2020 for more information.

Nov. 15, Annual Holiday Open House. Begins at 1 p.m. Call (256) 234-3461 for more information.

Nov. 21, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., MainStreet Thanksgiving Farmer's Market. Broad Street. For more information, contact MainStreet Alexander City at (256) 329-9227.

Dec. 7, Annual Christmas Parade. Presented by the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce. Join the fun as one of east Alabama's largest parades winds through downtown with elaborate floats, dancers, bands, Santa Claus and more. Call (256) 234-3461 for more information.

Fairhope

Nov. 7, 10 a.m., Veteran's Day Parade & Sunset Prayer Service. The will begin and end at the Fairhope Civic Center. Leading the parade will be Fairhope's 2015 Veteran of the Year. The celebration will continue, on Wednesday, Nov. 11 at 4:45 p.m. in Henry George Park. A sunset prayer service will be held at the Veteran's Memorial, Tears of Sorry, Tears of Joy. In addition to the sunset prayer service, Eastern Shore Art Center Ceramics (ESAC) Department has embarked on a massive effort to make several thousand red ceramic poppies inspired by the installation "Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red" at the Tower of London in November 2014. The poppies will be installed at ESAC, both inside and out at Art Walk on Nov. 6 from 6 to 8 p.m. and at the Fairhope Veterans Memorial at Henry George Park on Veterans Day between noon and sunset. After a sunset memorial service, poppies that have been purchased may be selected and taken home. Ceramic poppies will cost \$20 each or \$50 for three. Presale tickets are available at the Art Center. All proceeds from the sale of poppies will be donated to selected local veterans' organizations.

Nov. 12-15, Fairhope Film Festival. Participants can see 40+ world-class award winning films in 4 days in 5 walkable venues the beautiful setting in downtown Fairhope. Film scholars, directors, actors and screenwriters also participate in screenings through Q & A sessions and on Saturday, Nov. 14. panels. Thursday, Nov. 12, Opening Night Film, *What Lola Wants*. Montgomery native and filmmaker Monnie Willis will be in attendance for a Q & A session and a fabulous "Opening Night Party" will follow. Tickets for films and events are available online now at www.fairhopefilmfestival.org. Join us for the "Best of the Best" in cinema arts in Fairhope.

Nov. 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Fairhope's America Recycles Day. South Beach Park next to the Municipal Pier. Fairhope celebrates America Recycles Day for the 10th year by offering free collection for scrap electronic items of all kinds (computers, TVs, monitors, phones, etc.) plus a shredder van so residents can safely dispose of unneeded paper documents.

Nov. 19, 5:30 p.m., Fairhope's Tree Lighting Ceremony. Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. and the lights come on at 6 p.m. sharp. The Tree Lighting Ceremony will be emceed by the voice of the WABF, Lori Dubose.

Nov. 20, 6-8 p.m., Downtown Fairhope Holiday Stroll. Join us in downtown Fairhope for food and drink as you stroll downtown to fulfill your holiday wish list. Shops and restaurants will have extended hours from 5 until 8 p.m.

Nov. 21, 6:30 p.m., Downtown Fairhope Business Association 6th Annual Holiday Movie in the Streets. In celebration of the upcoming holiday season, the Downtown Fairhope Business Association will be hosting the 6th Annual "Movie in the Street: On Fairhope Avenue" near the intersection of Section Street and Fairhope Avenue. The popular holiday movie, *Polar Express*, will begin at 6:30 p.m. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed. Refreshments will be available and admission is free.

Nov. 22, 1-5 p.m., Fairhope's 56th Annual Christmas Open House. Live entertainment, hot chocolate and shopping opportunities for every member of the family make this annual event special every year.

Dec. 4, 7 p.m., Fairhope's Magical Christmas Parade. Fairhope's Magical Christmas Parade begins at the intersection of Morphy and Section Streets and continues down Section to Oak Street. The excitement will build as more than 50 parade units dazzle the crowd in anticipation of Santa Claus' arrival to Fairhope for the holiday season. WABF 1220 will be broadcasting the parade live.

Dec. 5 and 12, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., City of Fairhope Santa Saturdays. Santa will be in front of the Fairhope Museum of History in downtown Fairhope for children to visit. Parents may bring their cameras to take pictures. Live entertainment will be provided by *Center Stage Performance*.

Dec. 31, 8:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m., Fairhope's New Year's Eve Family Celebration. Residents and visitors are invited to bring their families and ring in the New Year dancing to the band, *Fly-By-Radio*. The band will begin playing at 8:30 p.m. at the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Church Street. Other entertainment will include DJ Wade Wellborn, face painting, fireworks and a ball drop at midnight. Handicap parking will be available on Section Street in designated handicap areas and in the parking lot behind Julwin's. For more information on events in Fairhope, call (251) 929-1466.

Lanett

Nov. 11, 1 p.m., Lanett Veterans Day Celebration. Lanett Veterans Park. Lanett High School JROTC.

Dec. 7, 6 p.m., City of Lanett Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration. Free hot chocolate, Lanett First Christian Church; and free hot dogs, Lanett Gas Department. Lanett High School Band, Springwood School Chorus, rides and entertainment for all ages. Bring your camera and take your picture with Santa Claus.

Opelika

Nov. 6 and Dec. 4, 5 p.m., First Friday in Historic Downtown Opelika. Shops open late, live music, lots of great dancing.

Nov. 8, 12-5 p.m., Holiday Open House. Historic Downtown Opelika. Snacks and drinks, free gift wrapping, door prizes and live Christmas carols.

Nov. 11, 7:45-9:45 a.m., Veterans Day activities. Breakfast for veterans and their families at Irish Bred Pub

Nov. 11, 10 a.m., Veterans Day Services. Opelika City Hall. Featured speaker will be Alabama Senator Tom Whatley

Nov. 11, 11 a.m., Veterans Day Reception for the public. Museum of East Alabama

Nov. 26 and 27, Thanksgiving. Opelika City Hall closed.

Dec. 5, 11 a.m., Opelika's Annual Christmas Parade. For more information contact, vanthony@opelikachamber.com.

Dec. 9-11 and Dec. 13, 5-10 p.m., Opelika's Victorian Front Porch Driving Tour. Showcasing approximately 60 homes in the North Opelika Historic Neighborhood Association. Begins at the Heritage House on the corner of North 8th Street and 2nd Avenue.

Dec. 10, 5-9 p.m., Collinwood Neighborhood Luminaries Tour. The luminaries follow a one-way route beginning on Collinwood Street at the intersection of North Tenth Street and Oak-bowery Road. The tour winds through the entire Collinwood subdivision and ends on McLure Avenue.

Dec. 11, 11 a.m., Special Postage Stamp Unveiling Honoring Medal of Honor Recipient, CSM (Ret.) Bennie Adkins. This special event will take place at the Museum of East Alabama.

Dec. 11, 6-9 p.m., Christmas in a Railroad Town. There will be activities for everyone at the great family-fun night out along Railroad Avenue in beautiful Historic Downtown Opelika. Very family-friendly event including hay rides, activities for kids, live Christmas carols, food and entertainment.

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Piedmont

Dec. 5, 8 a.m., 10th Annual Chief Ladiga Trail Half Marathon. The event will start in Piedmont at the Eubanks Welcome Center and will end in Jacksonville at the Community Center. For information, please call Piedmont Parks and Recreation Department at (256) 447-3367.

Sylacauga

November feature at Comer Museum is Local Artists Art Expo with Artists Reception, Thursday, Nov. 19, 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 4, 12 p.m., Dolores Hydock, "Spirits, Souls, and Saints: Stories about—and for—the angels hiding among us." B.B. Comer Memorial Library.

Nov. 17, Christmas Boutique will open at Comer Museum featuring unique items made by local artists.

Dec. 9, 12 p.m., Chris Phillips, "The Songs of Christmas!" B.B. Comer Memorial Library.

Dec. 17, 6:30-8 p.m., Open House at Comer Museum. Featuring an old-fashioned Christmas theme.

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WATTS NEW IN **Lanett**

Lanett schools are best-kept secret in Alabama

Continued from Page 15

not rivals anymore; they're buddies," Johnson said. "And that's good."

"Hands-on learning is real in Lanett schools," Johnson said. "We have math and science clubs that meet, and we have a science fair. We have some really good projects every year."

According to Johnson, Lanett High and W.O. Lance Elementary are Alabama Math, Science and Technology (AM-STI) sites.

"Two weeks of summer training allow Lanett teachers to have access to lab kits to teach critical lab demonstrations where all students can participate in dissecting or in other valuable hands-on learning," he said. "The business and marketing department at Lanett High has an articulation agreement with Southern Union State Community College (SUSCC) which focuses on information technology. Lanett students can take these rigorous courses at LHS and receive college credit in the information technology field."

Lanett students also have the opportunity to have dual enrollment with the Valley campus of SUSCC. Advanced-level students can participate in accelerated high school at SUSCC. They must have an overall B average to do this.

New electives at Lanett Junior High include STEM labs, geography, environmental science and music exploratory. All students are required to take a new visual arts course.

"Each school in the Lanett school district has new state-of-the-art computer labs including two new 30-station mobile laptop labs," Johnson said. "New iPad carts and a state-of-the-art interactive Promethean table are evident at Lance Elementary."

The Promethean board has taken the place of the chalkboard in the 21st century school house. Chalk, in fact, is something one will not find in today's school. "All classrooms in the District feature Promethean interactive boards," Johnson said.

Lanett High graduation coach Bryant Lumpkin helps students on track to graduate. Knowing the student, he said, is a matter of listening to them.



On a recent classroom tour at Lanett High School, members of the Kiwanis Club of Valley were fascinated by the work being done by the school's Robotics Club. Participating students design and build a robot that performs some kind of function. They assemble them from kits that are sent by the Society of Automotive Engineers.

"You have to do that if you want to know what's going on with them," he said. "They may have problems at home."

Lumpkin said that his favorite thing at LHS is the school's robotics club. Participating students design and build a robot that performs some kind of function.

"The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) sends us kits, and we get to keep them. We have 15 of them now."

Working in pairs, the students can refer to a massive text entitled "A World in Motion: Motorized Toy Car Challenge." They're doing this at the Chambers County CTC while competing against teams of students from other schools. At the CTC, students from all over Chambers County are learning about industrial maintenance, machine technology and automotive technology. Each of these programs incorporates a high concentration of science, technology, engineering and math, commonly called STEM.

Johnson has invited members of local civic clubs to come and tour the schools.

"We love for them to come," he said. "We feed them and show them what goes on in Lanett schools. We have teachers that could teach anywhere. I believe the best is yet to come. We'll get there sooner if we can get the community on board. There's so much negative and not enough positive that's being talked about. When we take people on tours they always tell us 'Wow! I didn't know that was going on here.'"

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