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205.926.9769 | editor@centrevillepress.com



School Board Members: The Real MVPs



In sports, the Most Valuable Player is the one whose leadership, preparation, and decision-making elevate the entire team. In public education, that same description fits our local school board members.

This January, during School Board Member Recognition Month, we proudly recognize school board members as The Real MVPs, leaders whose work often happens behind the scenes, yet whose impact is felt every day in classrooms, hallways, and communities across Alabama.

School board members are entrusted with one of the community's most important

responsibilities: governing public schools in a way that supports student success while reflecting local values. They set the vision for the school system, adopt policies, oversee budgets, and ensure accountability for academic outcomes and fiscal stewardship. These decisions are complex, far-reaching, and often made under challenging circumstances.

Unlike professional athletes, school board members serve without the spotlight or applause. They balance board service with full-time jobs, family commitments, and community involvement. They attend lengthy meetings, review extensive

materials, participate in training and engage with stakeholders all to ensure students have access to safe, strong and meaningful learning environments.

School board members also serve as a vital link between the community and the classroom. They listen to parents, educators, students, and taxpayers, weighing diverse perspectives while keeping the best interests of children at the center of every decision. Their leadership ensures that public education remains locally governed, transparent, and responsive to community needs.

Across Alabama, more than 130 local school boards work collaboratively with superintendents and educators to strengthen public education. Their efforts shape not only what students learn today, but how well prepared they are for tomorrow's workforce, higher education, and civic life.

As we observe School Board Member Recognition Month, we encourage everyone to take a moment to recognize these dedicated public servants. A thank-you note, a social media post, or a



Front Row (L-R): Superintendent Kevin Cotner and BOE President Camille Gibson. Back Row (L-R): Morris Moody, Elaine Jones, BOE Vice-President Cheryl Dodson, Mike McMillan.

kind word of appreciation can go a long way in acknowledging their service.

To the school board members of Bibb County Schools and

across our state: thank you for your leadership, your teamwork, and your unwavering commitment to students. You may not wear jerseys or step

onto a playing field, but your impact is undeniable. You are, without question, The Real MVPs of public education.

CPB Board Votes to Dissolve Corporation Following Congressional Defunding



BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) announced January 5 that its Board of Directors has voted to dissolve the organization after 58 years of service to the American public, marking a significant turning point for the nation's public media system.

According to CPB, the decision follows Congress's rescission of all federal funding for the organization and comes after sustained political attacks that made it impos-

sible for CPB to continue operating as intended under the Public Broadcasting Act.

"For more than half a century, CPB existed to ensure that all Americans—regardless of geography, income, or background—had access to trusted news, educational programming, and local storytelling," said Patricia Harrison, President and CEO of CPB. "When the Administration and Congress rescinded federal funding, our Board faced a profound responsibility: CPB's final act would be to protect the

integrity of the public media system and the democratic values by dissolving, rather than allowing the organization to remain defunded and vulnerable to additional attacks."

First authorized by Congress under the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, CPB played a central role in building and sustaining a nationwide public media system of more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public radio and television stations. Over decades, CPB-supported programming became a trusted civic resource, delivering educational content such as Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street, providing emergency alerts during disasters, and supporting fact-based journalism that strengthens civic participation.

CPB Board Chair Ruby Calvert de-

scribed the decision as both painful and necessary.

"What has happened to public media is devastating," Calvert said. "After nearly six decades of innovative, educational public television and radio service, Congress eliminated all funding for CPB, leaving the Board with no way to continue the organization or support the public media system that depends on it."

She added, "Yet, even in this moment, I am convinced that public media will survive, and that a new Congress will address public media's role in our country because it is critical to our children's education, our history, culture and democracy to do so."

CPB's Board determined that maintaining a defunded, non-functional corporation would not serve the public interest and

could leave the organization vulnerable to political manipulation or legal risk. As part of its orderly closure, CPB will distribute remaining funds in accordance with Congress's intent and continue supporting the American Archive of Public Broadcasting. CPB's own archives, dating back to 1967, will be preserved in partnership with the University of Maryland and made accessible to the public.

While CPB's role is ending, Harrison emphasized that the mission of public media continues.

"Public media remains essential to a healthy democracy," she said. "Our hope is that future leaders and generations will recognize its value, defend its independence, and continue the work of ensuring that trustworthy, educational, and community-cen-

tered media remains accessible to all Americans."

While the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is dissolving, local public radio and television stations are expected to continue serving their communities. These stations remain locally owned and operated, staffed by journalists, educators, and producers who live and work in the areas they cover. However, CPB's closure removes a major source of stable federal support that helped ensure consistent educational programming, emergency alerts, and local reporting – especially in rural communities. Moving forward, local stations may rely more heavily on community support, partnerships, and future congressional action to sustain the trusted services many residents depend on every day.



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NEWS

Backpacks, Bugs, and Back-to-School Germs: Keeping Illness at Bay This Season

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

As students head back to school after winter break, classrooms across Alabama are buzzing again with learning, laughter, and unfortunately, germs. COVID, the flu, stomach viruses like norovirus, and RSV are all making the rounds right now, turning what should be a fresh start into a game of “Is it allergies or am I actually sick?”

While we can’t bubble-wrap our kids (though many parents have briefly considered it, myself included), there are practical steps families can take to help slow the spread and keep everyone a little healthier this season.

First up: the often-forgotten germ hotspots. Backpacks, jackets, lunchboxes, and water bottles go everywhere your child goes – and pick up souvenirs along the way. Giving these items a regular wipe-down or wash can make a real difference. Think of it as evicting unwanted microscopic roommates. Shoes, too, deserve an honorable mention.



If they’ve been on a school floor, they’ve seen things.


At home, keeping commonly touched surfaces clean – door knobs, light switches, remotes, and countertops – can help cut down on household spread. No need to turn your house into a sterile lab, but a little extra sanitizing goes a long way during peak illness season.

Good hygiene remains one of the strongest defenses we have. Frequent hand-washing (with soap, not just a good splash of water), covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding face-touching are simple habits that really do work, even if reminding kids to wash their hands still feels like a full-time job. (Because it is.)

And perhaps the

most important (and sometimes hardest) step: keeping kids home when they’re showing symptoms of something contagious. Fever, vomiting, persistent coughs, or “I feel awful” vibes are all signs it’s time for rest, not attendance awards. One missed school day can prevent many missed days later – for your child and everyone else’s and their teacher and the janitor and their cousin, too.

Illness may be making its rounds, but with a little vigilance, some disinfecting wipes, and a shared commitment to looking out for one another, we can help keep our schools and homes healthier. After all, the only thing we want spreading right now is knowledge, not norovirus.



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School Choice for a Strong Alabama

How the CHOOSE Act Expands Education Options for Alabama Students

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

Alabama families exploring educational options for their children may benefit from understanding the Creating Hope and Opportunity for Our Students’ Education Act of 2024, commonly known as The CHOOSE Act. Administered by the Alabama Department of Revenue (ALDOR), the CHOOSE Act is designed to expand educational opportunity and flexibility for eligible K5–12 students across the state.

Through the CHOOSE Act, Alabama offers refundable income tax credits known as Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). These accounts can be used to help cover tuition, fees, and other qualified education expenses at approved Educa-

tion Service Providers (ESPs) in Alabama. ESAs are intended to support families in choosing the educational setting that best fits their child’s needs.

Under the program, families may receive:

- \$7,000 per participating student who is enrolled in a participating school
- \$2,000 per participating student participating in a home education program, with a maximum of \$4,000 per family

Families should be aware of important application timelines. The portal for the 2025–2026 academic year is currently closed. However, applications are open for the 2026–2027 academic year. The renewal application portal for current participants opened on December 15, 2025, while the application portal for new

families opened January 2, 2026.

Eligibility requirements vary by academic year. For the 2026–2027 school year, students must be enrolled in grades K5–12, be residents of Alabama, and live in households with incomes not exceeding 300% of the federal poverty level for the 2025 tax year. Beginning with the 2027–2028 academic year and beyond, the income requirement will be removed. Students will only need to be Alabama residents enrolled in grades K5–12 to qualify.

The CHOOSE Act represents an evolving effort to broaden access to educational resources for Alabama families, offering new pathways for students to succeed both in and beyond the classroom.





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United Way of West Alabama Campaign Surpasses Goal, Raises Record \$4.9 million for Community Needs

[Tuscaloosa, Ala. – December 29, 2025] – United Way of West Alabama (UWWA) announced today that its annual fundraising campaign has surpassed its goal, raising a record-breaking \$4,907,705 to support critical programs and services across West Alabama. The campaign exceeded its ambitious \$4.8 million goal, marking one of the most successful campaigns in the organization’s history. The announcement came during halftime at The University of Alabama’s Men’s Basketball game at Coleman Coliseum.

The campaign officially launched in August with United Way’s annual Kickoff Luncheon and was led by Campaign Chair Josh Hayes, attorney at Prince Glover Hayes. Thanks to the generosity of individuals, companies, and volunteers throughout the community, the campaign achieved historic results.

“This campaign reflects what’s possible when a community comes together with purpose,” said Hayes. “I’ve seen firsthand the commitment of our volunteers, campaign cabinet, and donors, and I’m incredibly

grateful for their dedication to helping our neighbors in need.”

Several standout achievements helped drive this year’s success:

1. Hunt Refining Company raised a historic \$1,004,039, marking the first time a single donor has surpassed \$1 million in a United Way of West Alabama campaign. Hunt also became UWWA’s largest donor for the eighth consecutive year.
2. The University of Alabama exceeded its goal, raising more than \$400,000.
3. Tuscaloosa City Schools students raised more than \$66,000 during their annual Student Drive, an increase of 58% from the previous year. Arcadia Elementary School raised the most with more than \$12,000.
4. A dedicated Campaign Cabinet, along with a strong group of Loaned Executives (LEs) and Employee Campaign Champions (ECCs), worked tirelessly to drive participation and results.

Funds raised through the annual campaign

support 30 local nonprofit partner agencies and help meet urgent community needs beyond those organizations. Campaign dollars allow United Way of West Alabama to respond quickly when unexpected challenges arise, such as the creation of a Food Assistance Grant launched in November to address immediate food insecurity.

“These funds help us support health, education, financial stability, and disaster relief and recovery for families across West Alabama,” said Jackie Wuska Wear, President and CEO of United Way of West Alabama. “One in four people in our community is impacted by United Way-funded programs. That means people you know. This campaign truly changes lives.”

While the campaign has officially surpassed its goal, donations are still being accepted. Every dollar raised continues to strengthen the community, support local nonprofits, and ensure help is available when it’s needed most.

To learn more or contribute, visit www.uwwa.org or call (205) 345-6640.

LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family of James Ivaloy Loper, 85, who passed away on December 27, 2025. Services were held on Tuesday, December 30, 2025, at 11:00 A.M. at Thomas Mill Baptist Church. Burial was in Tuscaloosa Memorial Park. Brother Loper will be greatly missed by his family and so many friends.

Anniversary wishes to out to Mike and Virginia (Kornegay) Dean who celebrated their 54th Wedding Anniversary on December 27, 2025.

Sincere sympathy goes out to the family of Margaret Suttle, 93, who passed away on December 28, 2025. A graveside service was held on December 31, 2025, at Pineland Memorial Park with Rev. Steve Vernon officiating. Ms. Margaret, a very sweet lady, will be missed greatly by her family and so many friends.

We wish to extend sympathy to the family of James Epperson who passed away on Thursday, December 25, 2025, at the age of 79. Services were held on Wednesday, December 31, 2025, at Rocko Funeral Home with burial at Little Hope Primitive Baptist Church cemetery.

Sympathy also goes

out to the family of Elaine Marie Burt who passed away December 22, 2025, at the age of 79.

Birthday wishes go out to several that have birthdays in January: Mandy Langford, Dianne Kyzer, Bobby O'Dell, Michael Murphy, Donald Perry, Devyon Watts, Tammy Gray Boyd, Doris Parker, Lauren Baggett Pate, Connie Lightsey and Donna Brothers.

Charlotte Lovelady West spent Christmas with children and grandchildren, Paul and Hilary Perry and family.

Joining Larry and Vicki Speights for Christmas Eve were children and grandchildren, Jim and Laura Blumefeld, Liam and Lily, Casey and Stacie Brewer, Jonah and Phoenix. All enjoyed delicious food, opening gifts and games, reporting a great Christmas.

Odie and Doris Newman joined Mary Jo Griffin, Tyler, Rachel, Ada and friend Richard on Christmas Day with a lot of food, fun and fellowship.

If you have news, call it in at 205-316-1181. Take care – God Bless. Hope each and everyone had a Merry Christmas and will have a Happy New Year.

BMC Hosted Blood Drive for National Blood Donor Month

BY CANACE JOHNSON
REPORTER

January is National Blood Donor Month, and Bibb Medical Center helped meet the ongoing need by hosting a community blood drive on Jan. 7 from noon to 4 p.m. The drive took place at the BMC Wellness Center Meeting Room inside the Wellness Center.

Hospital officials say winter is often one of the most challenging times to maintain the blood supply, making local donations especially important. Those interested in donating in the future are encouraged to bring a photo ID and to be well hydrated before arriving.



State Representative Russell Bedsole Announces Reelection Bid for Alabama House District 49



ALABASTER, AL – State Representative Russell Bedsole (R-Alabaster) officially announced today that he will seek reelection to the Alabama House of Representatives, District 49. Bedsole, who has represented portions of Shelby, Bibb, and Chilton counties since 2020, will run on a platform centered on public safety, constituent service, and conservative leadership.

Since first being elected in a 2020 special election and subsequently reelected in 2022, Bedsole has become a leading voice in Montgomery for law enforcement and community security. A Major with the Shelby County Sheriff's Of-

fice, Bedsole brings decades of first-hand experience to his role as a legislator.

"It has been the greatest honor of my professional life to serve the people of District 49," said Representative Bedsole. "When I first went to Montgomery, I promised to be a champion for the safety of our families and a steady hand for our local communities. We have made great progress, but there is still work to be done to ensure Alabama remains a place where our children can safely grow, learn, and thrive."

During his tenure, Bedsole has been a key advocate for pro-public safety legisla-

tion, working to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the resources necessary to combat crime and protect Alabamians. He currently serves on several vital committees, including the House Judiciary Committee and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee.

Beyond policy, Bedsole has earned a reputation for his "boots-on-the-ground" approach to constituent service. "Whether it's helping a neighbor in Chilton County navigate a state agency or advocating for infrastructure improvements in Bibb and Shelby, my focus is always on the people I represent," Bedsole

added. "I am asking for the opportunity to continue that work."

The primary election is scheduled for May 2026, followed by the general election in November.

About Russell Bedsole

Russell Bedsole is a Major with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and a former member of the Alabaster City Council. He is a devoted husband and father, a member of Church of the Highlands, and a dedicated public servant. District 49 encompasses parts of Shelby, Bibb, and Chilton counties.



Jax State Announces Fall 2025 Dean's List

JACKSONVILLE, AL (01/05/2026)-- More than 1,400 students have been named to the Dean's List for their outstanding academic performance at Jacksonville State University in Fall 2025. To be named to the Dean's List, students must earn a 3.5-3.99 GPA for the semester while completing at least 12 GPA hours of course credit.

Makenna Mcmillan of Centreville (AL)

Kyla Underwood of Centreville (AL)

Jada Washington of West Blocton (AL)



EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Practice Of Sheep Stealing

Reflections
By Michael J. Brooks

A colleague accosted me in the Monday morning pastors meeting after Bob and Kay joined our church the day before. He told me he'd invested many hours in marital counseling leading to their recommitment, and he was disturbed to hear they'd presented themselves for membership in our church. He believed I'd "courted" and persuaded them to leave his church.

I'm still unsure how he knew this so quickly in days before social media.

Actually, I was surprised when the couple presented themselves for membership since we'd not talked about this beforehand. It was natural to have them with us occasionally since Kay's mother and father attended our church.

In that day, most churches "voted in" new members immediately, though this practice has declined in favor of further conversation and perhaps new member classes.

My fellow pastor and I talked later. I convinced him of our church's innocence in this purported "sheep stealing"--the term that we used more often in years past to describe the practice of encouraging "sheep" from another church to unite with our church, often done with criticism of the home church or pastor.

Pastoral ethicists long decried this practice. Gaylord Noyce in his book, "Pastoral Ethics," wrote, "It is unethical aggressively to woo [members] away from a congregation in which there are not clear reasons for their inactivity or alienation. We are not to demean the gospel and the church by hawking our wares like competitive salespeople after their private commissions. Least of all should we belittle other congregations and their clergy."

No pastor enjoys losing sheep to other folds, though sometimes this is understandable. A divorce can lead couples to find other churches. Sometimes Christians feel called to participate in specific ministries that their own churches may not offer. And some members have purposely committed to leave their mother church to help start new churches.

But there should never be overt criticism of other congregations in an effort to pry members away.

Some pastors have learned to play down perceived church rivalries by not announcing the church new members come from with words like, "John Doe comes to us today from a sister church and wants to join us in our work."

Ministers and lay leaders can assist in the biblical ministry of reconciliation if they learn of needs or brokenness that the home church might not be aware of. A simple phone call can alert a neighbor pastor about a situation requiring attention and give opportunity to reach out in compassion.

The desire for unity expressed in Jesus' prayer in John 17 is reflected, at least in part, when we build connections with fellow ministers and congregations and treat them as teammates, not competitors.

"Reflections" is a weekly faith column written by Michael J. Brooks, pastor of the Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama. The church's website is siluriabaptist.com.



There Is a New King of Higher Education in Alabama

Inside the Statehouse
By Steve Flowers

January 7, 2026:

As the last legislative session of the quadrennium begins, the budgets are the priority, as always. The education funding dollars will not be flowing as prolifically as they have the past three years.

There will be some wrestling within the education community for dollars. This jockeying will be confounded even further because of an exponential jump in health insurance costs.

There will be a tug-of-war within the higher education community. The clear winner of that battle will be the Alabama Community College System, and rightfully so.

Our Alabama Community College System educates and prepares ALABAMA students for ALABAMA jobs. The ACCS has quietly become the engine and mainstay for job creation and workforce development in our state.

Therefore, the new king of Alabama higher education politics is the Alabama Community College System. Their budget affects 25 communities all over the state, both large and small. Over the last decade under the leadership of Chancellor Jimmy Baker, the ACCS has become a political giant. They have taken a rightful place at the table.

This locally driven power has been enhanced by the fact that Alabama, and the nation, have realized that technical and job-related education is the real impetus for a state's growth and prosperity.

Local legislators understand protecting and enhancing their local community college is their most important job for their district. Their community college is many times the largest employer in their district. Even when it is not the largest employer in a district, the community college is responsible for training the workforce for the district's largest employers. Legislators also know that 96% of their hometown kids are going to go to work in their hometowns. Most legislators want to vote first for their own district's needs and prosperities. All politics is local.

The Community College System is poised to dominate public university funding for at least the next five years for another unique reason. Never in history has there been the perfect storm where every major legislative leader's paramount priority will be their community college.

Senator Arthur Orr of Decatur is the Czar of Education dollars in Alabama. He has been Chairman of the Senate Education Finance Committee for the last 10 years and will probably be for the next five years at least. His primary interest is Calhoun Community College, which sits on the Decatur/Huntsville border, at the center of the state's most growth prominent area. It, therefore, garners the interest and loyalty of the sizeable Decatur/Huntsville legislative delegation, which includes Representative Rex Reynolds of Huntsville, Chairman of the House Budget Committee. The enrollment of Calhoun Community College is already over 10,000 and will probably be 20,000 over the next five years.

Jeff State's enrollment is at 10,000, also. It is probably as important to Orr's counterpart, Representative Danny Garrett of Trussville, as UAB.

The most powerful legislator in the state is Speaker of the House Nathaniel Ledbetter of Rainsville. His primary interest are the two colleges in his area. His alma mater, the Northeast Alabama Community College, and Snead State in Boaz. These two colleges are his UAB. Senate Majority Leader Steve Livingston of Scottsboro has the same interest as Ledbetter.

The President Pro Tem of the State Senate is Garlan Gudger of Cullman. His primary interest is protecting his college and major employer, Wallace Community College in Cullman County. Their School of Nursing is bolstering the growth and prosperity of the burgeoning Cullman Regional Medical Center.

Speaking of medical centers, Dothan has become the medical mecca for southeast Alabama, northwest Florida panhandle, and southwestern Georgia. Healthcare is the largest employer in Houston County. The entire Wiregrass delegation, all Republican, realize this and their one unifying factor is the growth and prosperity of Wallace Community College, which supplies most of the top-level nursing needs for that area of Alabama.

Bevill State in Walker County has been the focal point for job creation for that area for decades, and will be for generations to come. It is of utmost importance to the Walker County legislators.

Finally, Mobile is moving towards becoming a national leader in shipbuilding. The entire Mobile delegation recognizes that Bishop State will be the training ground for their workforce. It unites the Republicans and Democrats in the Mobile delegation. Neighboring Baldwin County is the fastest growing county in the state. It is a very prosperous county and has a 100% Republican delegation. This sizeable legislative delegation is very cognizant that their Coastal Community College is also the fastest growing college in the state. It is approaching 10,000 enrollment and most of these legislators' constituents' children are headed towards Coastal and will stay home after college.

Folks, when it comes to higher education funding, all politics is local, and the Community College System is poised to be the King of Goat Hill.

See you next week.

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers. He served 16 years in the state legislature. Steve may be reached at steve@steveflowers.us.

Centreville Press

P.O. Box 127 • 32 Court Square West • Centreville, AL 35042
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THE STAFF

David Daniel..... President
Thomas Michael HobsonEditor
Lynn Hamric.....Reporter
Savanna Logan.....Reporter
Candace JohnsonReporter

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Little Hope Primitive Bap- tist Centreville 926-4236	CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST 2300 South Scottsville Rd Centreville 926-5393	Sandy Chapel Community Church 926-4934
Lowerytown Baptist West Blocton 938-2436	EPISCOPAL The Church Of The Holy Comforter Montevallo 665-2769	
Lucille Baptist West Blocton 966-3556	St. Andrews Episcopal Church 925 Plowman Street Montevallo 665-1667	
Mission Baptist Woodstock 938-7096	HOLINESS Deliverance Temple Holi- ness Four Points 926-5565	
Mt. Carmel Baptist West Blocton 938-2379	Word of Faith Worship Center Centreville 926-4555	
Mt. Ebell Baptist Brent 926-9223	Free Will Apostolic Holi- ness Antioch 926-9252	
Mt. Grove Baptist 938-3410	Real Truth Holiness Church 646 S. Scottsville Road Brent 926-5009	
Mt. Moriah Baptist West Blocton 926-5425	Trinity Spirit Holiness Church Centreville 926-4321	
Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church Brent 926-9009	METHODIST	
Mt. Tabor Baptist Brent 926-7156		
Mt. Zion Baptist Centreville 334-366-5903		
New Hebron Baptist West Blocton 938-2101		
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“It Is Well with My Soul”

“Saved alone, what shall I do?” Received from his wife who had miraculously survived, this telegram served to inform Horatio Spafford of the tragedy of losing his four daughters in a shipwreck while his family was on a journey to Europe. Having to attend to urgent business matters, Spafford sent his family ahead with plans to join them a few days later.

No strangers to tragedy, the Spaffords had already suffered greatly before with losing their young son to pneumonia, as well as with the Chicago Fire destroying Spafford’s business in that very same year. However, they recovered and continued on with life as one must do, only to be struck with a greater tragedy of losing all four of their daughters on the same day years later. On his journey to join his wife, Spafford penned the beloved hymn “It Is Well with My Soul” in his grief.

I’ve often wondered – how on earth did he manage to say “it is well with my soul” in the midst of unimaginable pain? How could he know this “peace like a river” when his daughters, these children that he loved with what I imagine his whole heart, were taken from him? When he found himself in this unthinkable place of pain, he didn’t raise his fist at God, blaming Him, questioning His goodness. No, somehow, Spafford found rest for his soul and comfort for his sorrow in the presence of the goodness of the Lord.

I’m not sure if you have ever thought about it this way – but what if Spafford’s daughters had been spared? What if their mother’s pleas had been granted? Would then Spafford have been brought to the lowest of lows where He encountered the refuge, the strength, and the intimate love of God in a way that only acute suffering affords? Think about it – would we have this beloved hymn now, that has served to comfort and sustain those through their own grief, reminding them that while today’s sorrow proves real, our hope in Christ holds its rightful place in the eternal? I don’t have the authority to say for sure of course, but I highly doubt it.

Often the realities of what rips our hearts from our very chests are the very things that teach us the most about God’s unending

goodness, if we allow it – as juxtaposed as that may sound. As Christians, we are called to a life of suffering, as Paul talks a great deal about in the New Testament. Blessings too, undoubtedly – but suffering nonetheless. I can’t pretend to even begin to explain why. (One must often humbly recognize their own limitations in divining the ways of the Almighty.)

The hope interposed into the grief and sorrow of this hymn remains not only heart-wrenching, but as close to a perfect picture of absolute surrender one could ever hope to hold. There is a distinct peace – perhaps that peace that passes all understanding that Paul tells us about in Philip-pians 4:7 – that can only come from an absolute release of control. It’s highly unlikely that any of us could ever bring our own selves to this place of surrender of our own accord. But

when we find ourselves there, if you have ever experienced it, there’s nothing like it. This inexplicable peace, this sure as the sun sustaining one has the choice to find in resting in the truth that above all, God is good – well, for lack of better words, it’s something beautiful to behold.

Like Spafford, perhaps you have faced unimaginable pain in your own life. Could you still allow God to work good “when sorrows like sea billows roll?”

When Spafford penned these words that have brought comfort to so many, I scarcely believe he imagined that people would still be singing his hymn almost 150 years later. But what good God has worked from it in the omnipotent and omniscient ways that only He can.

One thing I have learned, if it’s worth anything – God’s plan for redemption and hope cannot and should not be limited to only what our human minds can imagine. Can we fathom the eternal, the infinite? No – truly, we can’t. Our minds just aren’t wired that way, and perhaps that’s precisely how it should be.

The next time we find ourselves in a place of hopelessness, of grief, of dejection – may we all do our very best to lean into the pure goodness of God and His ways to say, “even so, it is well with my soul.”

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* Pulse Research, October 2019



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NEWS - AND A LOOK BACK AT 1976

AARP Alabama Now Accepting 2026 Community Challenge Grant Applications



The annual program aims to make communities in Alabama more livable for people of all ages

Montgomery, AL—AARP Alabama invites local eligible nonprofit organizations and governments to apply for the 2026 AARP Community Challenge grant program, now through March 4, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern. AARP Community Challenge grants fund quick-action projects that help communities become more livable by improving public places, transportation, housing, digital connections, and more.

Now in its tenth year, AARP will double its investment, awarding over \$8 million in grants as part of its nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for all residents, especially those age 50 and older.

“Through the Community Challenge grant program, AARP Alabama works closely with local residents, advocates, and policy-makers to improve the quality of life for people of all ages, especially Alabamians 50 and older,” said Candi Williams, AARP Alabama State Director. “We look forward to the opportunity this year to provide increased support to communities across the state.”

This year, the AARP Community Challenge is accepting applications across three different grant opportunities. All projects must be consistent with AARP’s mission to serve the needs of people 50 and older along with other eligibility criteria.

• Flagship grants support projects that

improve public places; transportation; housing; digital connections; and disaster resilience. Awards range from a few hundred dollars to \$15,000.

• Capacity-building microgrants are paired with expert support, webinars, and cohort learning for projects to improve walkability and bikeability; implement safe, accessible home modifications; and disaster preparedness training. Awards are \$2,500.

• Demonstration grants fund projects that encourage replication of exemplary local efforts. This year’s focus is on improving pedestrian safety, with funding support from Toyota Motor North America; expanding high-speed internet access and adoption, with funding support from Microsoft; and housing choice design competitions. Awards

typically range from \$10,000-\$20,000, not to exceed \$25,000.

“Over the last decade, AARP has invested in communities to help people of all ages and abilities to thrive,” said Nancy LeaMond, AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer. “The impact that our Community Challenge grants have had in cities, towns and counties nationwide is significant, supporting everything from crosswalks and home improvements to increased community engagement while also serving as a catalyst for further action. We look forward to expanding the program and its cumulative results over the next ten years.”

Since 2017, AARP has invested \$24.3 million toward 2,100

livability projects – including 37 in Alabama – across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands through the Community Challenge. The program aims to provide support to all community types, including rural, suburban and urban communities with a special focus on the needs of those 50 and older.

AARP Alabama works in collaboration with communities across the state, bringing people together, and providing resources and expertise to help make Alabama’s counties, towns and cities great places to live for people of all ages. Past projects funded by grants have included making Alabama’s streets safer for pedestrians, built park upgrades, and made public spaces

more accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

The Community Challenge is open to eligible 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(6) nonprofit organizations and government entities. Other types of organizations are considered on a case-by-case basis. Grants can range from several hundred dollars for small, short-term activities to tens of thousands for larger projects.

The application deadline is 5:00 p.m. Eastern, March 4, 2026. All projects must be completed by December 15, 2026. To submit an application and view past grantees, visit www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge.

Grand Jury Report

TO: THE HONORABLE O. S. BURKE, JR., JUDGE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BIBB COUNTY, ALABAMA.

Your Grand Jury reports that in a period of two (2) days we have investigated 16 cases, examined 19 witnesses, at a cost of \$37.25, and returned 11 indictments.

A committee from our body has reinspected the Bibb County Jail and continue to find it kept in sanitary and safe condition for the keeping of prisoners. The jail committee finds that as recommended in last session the sterilizer has been purchased, but the recommendations for the additional cabinet space in the kitchen for storage and screens

for windows have not been provided as of this meeting.

We find that the outside woodwork and trim and the downstairs halls are still in need of paint as reported at the last meeting of the Grand Jury. We further recommend that a privacy screen be provided in the men’s restroom, there now being a lack of said privacy of opening the restroom door. The Grand Jury requests that it be notified when this work is completed so that we can carry out an inspection. We also request a written report as to why the above recommendations cannot be complied with.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Court for its charge made to the Grand Jury and the Court officials for the many courtesies extended us during our deliberation. We see no need to remain in session at this time.

Dated this the 9th day of January, 1976.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan A. James
Foreman

The Brent Presbyterian Church will hold it’s first worship service in the new church Sunday, January 18. We welcome you to come and worship with us.

HONESTY RECOGNIZED

Mr. Jim Oakley, Jr.
The Centreville Press
Centreville, Ala. 35042

Dear Sir:

A citizen of your county has recently done a most honest thing in connection with our store. Upon returning some merchandise she was refunded, through our error, an amount nearly twice what she originally paid. She did not catch this error until she returned home. She promptly sent us a check for the overpaid amount.

Since her original purchase was cash and her refund was cash we had no record of who the customer was. We applaud Mrs. C. E. Hornsby, Jr., for her honesty. Enclosed is a copy of the letter we sent her.

Yours very truly,
GAYFER'S

Warren Dow, Mgr.
Menswear

Mrs. C. E. Hornsby, Jr.
P.O. Box 296
Centreville, Alabama 35042

Dear Mrs. Hornsby:

I am writing in response to your letter of January 8th where you sent us a check of reimbursement. First, let me say Thank You. We are glad to have a customer of such honesty and integrity as you have shown. It is people such as yourself that have made our store and company a success in this community.

Thank you again. We will look forward to serving you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Warren Dow
Menswear Manager

Old BCHS Gym Destroyed By Fire Last Week

by Mike Oakley

Fire completely destroyed the 39 year old Bibb County High School Gym around 11:30 a.m. last Thursday.

Approximately 400 students were inside the building for an assembly program when a senior high student, Yvonne McCaleb, saw smoke pouring out a back window. She alerted school officials and school principal, Clifton Anderson, who was just beginning the program aided by Coaches Charles McCaleb, Danny Gray and John Houge, guided the students and faculty members out in orderly fashion.

“There was no panic, Superintendent of Education Luman Kornegay said, and the entire building was completely emptied of people in less than 2 minutes.” Mr. Kornegay praised the actions of the students and faculty for their prompt and orderly conduct.

Fire Departments from Brent, Centreville and West Blocton came to the scene and fought the blaze and kept it from spreading to other structures.

Mr. Kornegay and several members of the fire department stated they thought the fire possibly started from a heater in the second floor dressing room in the rear of the building.

Since the opening of the new gym at the senior high several years ago, the building has been used for physical education classes for seventh and eighth grade students at Bibb County Junior High.

Mr. Kornegay said the building was partially insured, but stated there were no plans to rebuild since plans were already underway to phase out the entire junior high operation there and consolidate it in the Brent Elementary School. Some of the proceeds from the recently passed sales tax will be used to construct additional facilities at Brent to accommodate the additional students, Mr. Kornegay said.

The proposed reorganization, which is set for next fall, will house grades one through four at Brent and Centreville Elementary will handle grades five through eight. Bibb County High will handle grades nine through 12. This would eliminate the need for a junior high as such.

The old gym was built in 1936 by the late Preston Lawrence.

The BACK PAGE

Bibb Medical Center Scholarships Open, Continuing a Commitment of Community Investment

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

Bibb Medical Center continues to demonstrate what it means to be a true pillar of the community by opening applications for the BMC Scholarship and BMC Auxiliary Scholarship. These scholarship opportunities reflect BMC's ongoing commitment to supporting students as they pursue education, professional growth, and meaningful futures.

Designed to encourage students to pursue careers in healthcare, particularly within the Bibb Medical System, the BMC Scholarship helps nurture the next generation of compassionate, skilled healthcare professionals. In addition, the BMC Auxiliary Scholarship provides support for students continuing their education who may not be pursuing a healthcare career, reinforcing BMC's belief that investing in education strengthens the entire community.

The application period runs from January 1 through March 31, giving students ample time to prepare and submit their materials. Interested applicants must be currently enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an accredited college, university, or program of study, as defined by individual scholarship guidelines.

Eligibility requirements include:

- High school students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale as a full-time student.
- College students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale, be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours, and be eligible for continued enrollment.

All completed applications will be reviewed by the BMC Scholarship Committee, with scholarship decisions made by the end of April. Recipients will be notified of their awards in writing. Scholarship funds will be mailed directly to

the recipient's college, university, or school of study once proof of enrollment for the academic year has been received, with checks expected to be mailed in mid-June. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

These scholarships are more than financial assistance – they are a reflection of Bibb Medical Center's dedication to opportunity, education, and long-term community well-being. By investing in students today, BMC is helping shape a stronger, healthier tomorrow for Bibb County and beyond.

Students interested in applying can learn more and submit their application online at www.bibbmed.com/bmcscholarships. The deadline to apply is March 31.

At every turn, Bibb Medical Center continues to prove that when a healthcare system invests in people, the entire community benefits.



APPLY NOW

Your future in healthcare starts here.

Bibb Medical Center is proud to offer scholarships to students pursuing careers in the healthcare field, supporting local students as they prepare to make a difference in healthcare close to home.

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SENIOR SOCIAL & BENEFITS

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Join us at BMC Wellness Center from 11:00am-12:00pm for an informational Senior Social & Benefits Meeting focused on fitness benefits for individuals who no longer qualify for certain programs. Attendees will also receive assistance with applying for SFMNP farmers market vouchers. Refreshments will be provided!

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