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What This Weekend's Winter Weather Could Mean for Bibb County

WARNING FREEZE ALERT



BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

As North and Central Alabama monitor a developing winter weather system this weekend, meteorologist James Spann is emphasizing a "plan for the worst, hope for the best" approach — especially for communities that could fall along the southern edge of a potentially significant ice event.

According to Spann, the highest likelihood for accumulating snow remains across the Tennessee Valley,

particularly north of the Tennessee River, where some areas could see several inches. However, confidence is growing that ice, not snow, may be the more serious concern for much of North and Central Alabama. Global weather models increasingly suggest an extended period of freezing rain south of the Tennessee River, caused by very shallow cold air near the surface while precipitation falls as liquid.

This type of setup

is especially dangerous. Freezing rain can coat roads, trees, and power lines with ice, leading to extremely hazardous travel conditions and the potential for widespread power outages. While exact accumulation amounts are still uncertain, some model data points toward the possibility of significant icing in parts of the state.

One factor working in Alabama's favor is that temperatures will be in the 50s through Friday, meaning in-

frastructure won't be deeply cold at the start of the event. Still, Spann cautions that the southern boundary of freezing rain is notoriously difficult to pinpoint. At this time, ice accumulation is considered possible as far south as Livingston, Greensboro, Clanton, Lake Martin, and Opelika — placing Bibb County well within the zone to watch closely. That line could shift north or south as the event unfolds.

Wintry precipitation could begin as early as midnight Friday night in northwest Alabama, spreading east and south through Saturday and Saturday night. Some impacts may linger into Sunday before ending Sunday night. While South Alabama is expected to see only a cold rain, this system is forecast to affect a broad swath of the country, from Texas to the Carolinas.

Spann stresses that residents across the northern half of Alabama should begin preparing now for the possibility of difficult travel and power outages. Best case, many communities experience only a cold rain. Worst case, parts of the state see a crippling ice storm that could disrupt daily life

for days, or longer in isolated areas.

With that uncertainty in mind, preparation ahead of time is critical.

At home, residents should ensure phones, battery packs, and flashlights are fully charged before the storm arrives, as power outages could make recharging difficult. Flashlights are strongly recommended over candles to reduce fire risk. Having at least two to three days'

worth of food and water on hand, especially items that don't require cooking, can make a significant difference if travel becomes unsafe. Warm clothing and extra blankets are also important, as homes can lose heat quickly during prolonged outages.

Simple steps around the house can help reduce damage. If time allows, trimming weak tree branches

near the home may limit the risk of ice-related breakage. Sealing drafts with towels at doors and closing off unused rooms can help retain warmth. Protecting pipes by allowing faucets to drip and opening cabinet doors under sinks may prevent costly freezing damage. It's also critical to remember that grills and generators

should never be used indoors due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

For those who may need to travel, preparation is just as important. Vehicles should be fueled up early, as gas stations may lose power. Emergency kits should include blankets, water, snacks, a flashlight, and a fully charged phone. If roads become icy, staying off them whenever possible is the safest option.

Above all, staying weather aware is essential. Forecast details will become clearer over the coming days, and small changes could have big impacts at the local level. Residents are encouraged to closely follow trusted weather sources, including James Spann's ongoing updates, and to make decisions rooted in safety and preparedness.

In events like this, readiness isn't panic — it's prudence. Stay safe and weather aware, folks! (Now would traditionally be the time to go grab milk and bread, by the way.)



A Decade of New Beginnings: How Partnership Restored Birth Care in Bibb

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

At a time when rural labor and delivery units are closing across Alabama, Bibb County stands as a powerful exception — one shaped by collaboration, long-term commitment, and a shared belief that rural families deserve access to lifesaving care close to home.

After more than 16 years without a local place to give birth, Bibb Medical Center reopened its Labor & Delivery unit in 2015. The milestone marked more than a reopen-

ing; it made history. It became the first rural L&D unit to reopen in Alabama in four decades, made possible through a strategic partnership with Cahaba Medical Care.

That partnership brought together grant support, a shared staffing model, and Cahaba's ability to recruit and train family medicine physicians who deliver babies as part of the Cahaba + UAB Family Medicine Residency. Together, these elements created something rare in rural healthcare: a sustainable model for

maternity care in a small-volume community.

Now celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the impact of the Bibb Labor & Delivery unit is both measurable and deeply personal:

- More than 735 babies have been delivered locally since reopening
- Families no longer face long, stressful drives to deliver their babies
- The unit has remained stable and operational despite rural workforce and volume challenges

For Bibb Medical

Center CEO Joseph Marchant, the reason the unit has endured is clear. "There's no question this unit wouldn't be here without Cahaba's commitment," he shared. "Delivering over 700 babies here saved the state of Alabama over a million dollars, because local care is more efficient care.

So for the state, the impact of this unit existing is pretty remarkable."

Beyond the numbers, this milestone represents something even more meaningful: restored dignity, safety, and peace of mind for rural families. It means welcoming new life in a familiar place, supported by trusted caregivers, surrounded by community.

As maternity deserts continue to expand statewide, Bibb County's story offers hope — and a blueprint. It shows what's possible when healthcare organizations work together, invest in innovative models, and center the real needs of rural communities.

Ten years in, the message is clear: when birth care is brought back home, everyone benefits — families, communities, and the future of rural healthcare itself.



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NEWS

43rd Alabama State Games scheduled for June

MONTGOMERY — The 43rd Alabama State Games, scheduled for June 12-14, has been named an America 250 Alabama certified event. Hosted by the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County, the weekend of competition will be highlighted by a patriotic Opening Ceremony on June 12 inside Legacy Arena at the BJCC.

"The Alabama State Games is excited to be an America 250 Alabama certified event," said Laura Creel Burt, executive director of the Alabama State Games and CEO of the ASF Foundation. Our Opening Ceremonies are always patriotic. Patriotism is a huge part of the Olympics as Olympians are honored to represent their country when they compete. This year being able to celebrate the country's 250th birthday during the 43rd Alabama State Games Opening Ceremony as an America 250 Alabama certified event is a great privilege for us. We can't wait to welcome athletes to Birmingham Friday, June 12th and I encourage everyone within driving distance of the

BJCC to come join this special celebration.

AMERICA 250 On July 4, 2026, the United States will mark its 250th anniversary, commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Across the country, states are selecting events, festivals and tributes that reflect the promise of America: honoring the past, celebrating the contributions of its people and looking ahead to the next generation. The Alabama State Games fit that mission. Built on core principles of academic success, healthy lifestyles and good citizenship, the Games were selected as an official America 250 Alabama event. Established in 1982 at the request of the U.S. Olympic Committee, the Alabama State Games held their first competition in 1983 with four sports and 600 athletes. Today, the annual event features more than 25 sports and welcomes upward of 4,000 athletes from across the state and beyond. Each year, generations of competitors come together to pursue gold, silver and bronze, and to celebrate the unity that

is created when sport meets community.

OPENING CEREMONY - JUNE 12

The Opening Ceremony launches the Alabama State Games weekend inside Legacy Arena at the BJCC, blending Olympic traditions, high-energy production, and a concert-style atmosphere. The Parade of Athletes and the lighting of the cauldron and a host of other exciting moments will be broadcast and streamed live through our Gray Media television partnership.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The ASF Foundation supports academic success through its scholarship program. Athletes who register and compete in the Games — and who attend Grit101 for Teens, the Athlete Leadership Summit and Opening Ceremony on June 12 — will be eligible for 1 of 17 \$2,500 academic scholarships. To date, the ASF Foundation has awarded 661 scholarships totaling over \$450,000.

www.alagames.com
www.asffoundation.org

\$43,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

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- Billiards
- Bass Fishing
- Baseball
- Baton Twirling & Color Guard
- Beach Volleyball
- Bowling
- Chess
- Disc Golf
- Diving
- Equestrian
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- Kickball
- Miracle League
- Mountain Biking
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- Pickleball
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LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

We wish to send out sympathy to several families that have lost loved ones recently: the family of Peggy Ann Caldwell who passed away on January 4, 2026, Mary Louise Reach who passed away on January 7, 2026, and Susie Spain Booth who passed away on January 7, 2026. All will be greatly missed by their family and friends.

Belated birthday wishes go out to David Daws who recently celebrated his 75th birthday with a birthday celebration. Among those in attendance was C

We want to wish David many more Happy Birthday's to come.

Charlotte West recently spent several nights with Paul and Hilary Perry and family. We want to wish Hilary a speedy recovery who underwent surgery on Tuesday.

Birthday wishes go out to several who have birthdays in January: Dusty

Hubbard, Stephen McCary, Chrystal Hathcock, Andrews Goodwin, Brenda Smith, Dylan Dowdle and Casey Brewer.

Patricia Caddis has returned home after spending a week with her daughter, Rebecca, and family in Arizona reporting a wonderful trip.

Birthday wishes go out to Phoenix Brewer who will celebrate his 8th birthday on January 27, 2026. Phoenix is the son of Casey and Stacie Brewer. Stacie Speights Brewer received a kidney transplant that was an identical match from her older sister, Laura, twenty years ago on January 27.

What a miracle that the kidney started working before they even finished the surgery.

If you have news, call it in at 205-316-1181.

West Blocton Middle School 2nd Nine Weeks Honor Roll

The faculty and staff at West Blocton Middle School is proud to recognize the scholars who have demonstrated

exceptional dedication in the classroom during the 2nd Nine Weeks of the 2025-2026 school year. Grounded in

the school's motto for the year, "Stronger Communities, Greater Success," these achievements reflect the hard work

of our teachers and students and the steadfast support of their parents and teachers.

6th Grade A Honor Roll

Rayleigh Averett
Easton Boltz
Kelby Boothe
Sophia Bovell
Jace Buford
Jade Caddis
Austin Cook
Easton Fisher
Eli Lewis
Jasper Odom
Colby Poole
Mason Smith
Dalton Terry
Brennan Watts

7th Grade A Honor Roll

William Chambliss
Amiyah Cole
Cecilia Dickson
Ava Herndon
Harper Lawley
Khloe McCullar
Jase Singleton
Baylee Thrasher

8th Grade A Honor Roll

Lucy Blake
Connor Davis
Kelsey Haley
Carter Heaton
Gavin Johnson
Kimber Kinard
Willow Sampley
Emma Strickland
Ashley Terry



6th Grade A-B Honor Roll

Alyssah Bates
Aubree Stacy
Brandon LaGrone
Brantlee Clemmer
Caiden LaFoy
Caleb Allen
Camden LaFoy
Dillon Smith
Fatima Delcid Solares
Greyson Haggard
Joseph Church
Josiah Barriner
Josiah Nelson
Zayden Smith

7th Grade A-B Honor Roll

Aaron Napolis
Abigail Morris
Anniston Carter
Bobbi Kielman
Cameran Bailey
Carter Stephens
Clay Bowman
Crimson Jennings
Elijah Harris
Ella Carroll
Elyse Manning
Erica Head
Hugo Diaz-Tax
Isaiah Sims
Jameson Huffman
Jonah Hunt
Katie Head
Kenleigh Green
Leah Sanders
Logan LaFoy
Lukas Hartzell
Molly Canterbury
Ramsley Elledge
Robert Knight
Rylan Johnson
Ryleigh Jo Guy-Andrews

8th Grade A-B Honor Roll

Addelia Gaytan
Amber Russell
Andrew Palmer
Aubree Pylant
Ava Pierson
Ayla Bates
Brenson Domando
Carter Fancher
Cayden Odom
Chance Sims
Dezaray Davis
Dreyton Hogg
Dustin Sibley
Erika Suy Mus
Esme Lopp
Jason Pierce
Kadence Manning
Kailynn Smith
Kali Super
Kayleigh Pissanos
Kevin Melgarejo Gutierrez
Keyri Henriquez
Madelyn Terry
Ny'Reba Washington
Payden Forsythe
Sofia Gilham
Sophia Johnson
Tristin Hartzell
Zakaria Sanders



Growing Our Own: BMC and SSCC Continue Building Strong Nursing Pathways Through Community Partnership

BY SAVANNA LOGAN

REPORTER

Building a strong, compassionate healthcare workforce doesn't happen by accident – it happens through intentional partnerships, shared vision, and a commitment to investing in people. That's exactly what's taking place through the growing partnership between Bibb Medical Center and Shelton State Community College.

Since 2022, Alabama has welcomed more than 1,000 registered nurse apprentices statewide, creating new pathways for individuals seeking sustainable, meaningful careers in healthcare. Locally, Bibb Medical Center, alongside Shelton State Community College and the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship, is proud to celebrate the newest participants in this important program: Anna Dominguez and Maddie Scurlock. Congratulations to both as they

step into this exciting next chapter!

This partnership between a community college and a rural hospital continues to strengthen, opening doors for students while also addressing critical healthcare needs in rural communities. With two more Shelton State nursing students signing on for the apprenticeship program at Bibb Medical Center in Centreville, the program continues to place future nurses directly into real-world, hands-on learning environments – right where they're needed most.

Launched in 2022, the nurse apprenticeship program blends on-the-job learning with nursing coursework, labs, and simulations, ensuring students gain both the technical skills and lived experience required for long-term success. Apprentices also earn pay while completing clinical hours, helping remove



financial barriers and making nursing careers more accessible.

Those opportunities extend far beyond the classroom. Organizers believe these apprenticeships place students firmly on a path toward becoming licensed nurses – and, in turn, trusted caregivers within their own communities.

"We're all looking for that next future worker," shared Joseph Marchant, President and CEO of Bibb Medical Center shared with local news. "And to be here today and be able to celebrate two of these young people who are taking on that journey, that pathway of healthcare so that they can help people,

is a big day."

For Bibb County and surrounding rural areas, this program represents more than workforce development – it represents hope, access, and continuity of care. By investing in local students and supporting them from education to employment, this partnership helps ensure that compassionate, skilled nurses will be there for neighbors, families, and future generations when they need care most.

Together, Bibb Medical Center and Shelton State Community College are proving that when education and healthcare work hand in hand, everyone benefits.

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

Alabama Election Cycle Officially Kicks Off this Week

By Paul DeMarco

So the year 2026 has finally arrived and for Alabama it means a busy election year ahead.

So this is one of the most important weeks for the upcoming election cycle here in Alabama. This is the last week that those who seek to run for office this year in either the Republican and Democrat Party can officially register to run. For those candidates that do throw their names in the ring, they are either waiting to see who may also join them in the race or sizing up their opponents.

For Alabama, there is a short lead up to both the Republican and Democratic Party Primaries that are set on May 19th, and if there are any run-offs they are set for June 16th. Most of the major statewide and federal offices have had their fields set since last May when candidates could start raising money to fuel their campaigns.

All of the state constitutional officers and state lawmakers will be on the ballot. In addition, all of the federal congressional seats and one United States senate seats up. Add to that, local elections across the state will include county offices and judges as well. Finally, there will be several constitutional amendments on the ballot including strengthening Aniyah's Law, to allow judges more discretion to keep those of accused of violent crimes behind bars.

But every election cycle there is always a surprise close to or on qualification day. So as time ticks closer to the deadline this Friday, January 23rd at 5:00 p.m. we will see if there are any last minute candidates who shake up any of the races in the 2026 election cycle.

So as we kick-off the new year, get ready for the campaign season in Alabama.

Paul DeMarco is a former member of the Alabama House of Representatives and can be found on X at @Paul_DeMarco



Healthcare Costs Are Major Concern as Legislators Craft the State Budgets

Inside the Statehouse
By Steve Flowers

January 21, 2026:

As the 2026 Legislative Session evolves, it is apparent that this year's annual session will be short and sweet. That is par for the course in an election year session. This is election year and all 105 House Seats, and all 35 Senate Seats are up for election. Therefore, it is an inherent historical reality that nothing consequential or controversial is addressed in a quadrennium ending election year.

However, it is a constitutional requirement that the legislature enact a budget – in fact, both budgets. Indeed, Alabama has two state budgets. We have a Special Education Trust Fund Budget, which encompasses two-thirds of Alabama's tax revenues, and of course, we have our General Fund Budget, which has one-third of all revenues. Even though crafting the state's budgets is difficult and mundane work, it is the most important chore of a legislature.

Fortunately, Alabama has some outstanding and experienced leaders, who chair the Budget Committees, do yeoman's work, and primarily write the budgets. The Chairmen of the Education Budget Committees are Senator Arthur Orr (R-Decatur) and Representative Danny Garrett (R-Trussville). The General Fund Budget Chairmen are Senator Greg Albritton (R-Escambia) and Representative Rex Reynolds (R-Huntsville). They do an excellent job.

The larger Education Budget will be a much tougher task this year because of the rising cost of healthcare, thus health insurance. The teachers' health insurance fund was founded by and is managed by Dr. David Bonner's well run Teachers Retirement System. This Public Education Health Insurance Plan (PEEHIP) has provided health insurance coverage to Alabama's education employees, retirees, and their dependents since its creation in 1983.

PEEHIP has kept their costs in line for nearly a decade without asking the legislature or members for more money. However, PEEHIP is facing a shortfall for fiscal year 2026, due to a significant decline in federal funding for educators and education retirees. It is a nationwide problem.

There are three main reasons for this national problem: cuts to federal funding for Medicare retirees, general inflation that is driving up the cost of everything, and higher utilization by current members and retirees. Folks are living longer, and those who are living longer expend a lot of healthcare dollars. State revenues probably will not be able to keep up with these rapidly rising costs. It will be a heavy lift for the legislature.

The cost of healthcare is not just an Alabama problem. It is a national problem and probably the paramount problem facing American consumers. The cost of health insurance has risen sharply for the third year in a row, reaching just under \$27,000 for a family plan. That is a 6% increase from the year before and builds on two prior years of 7% gains.

These figures are confirmed by the most trusted and largest health insurance analyst KFF. The latest KFF survey suggests that half the U.S. population gets health coverage through a job.

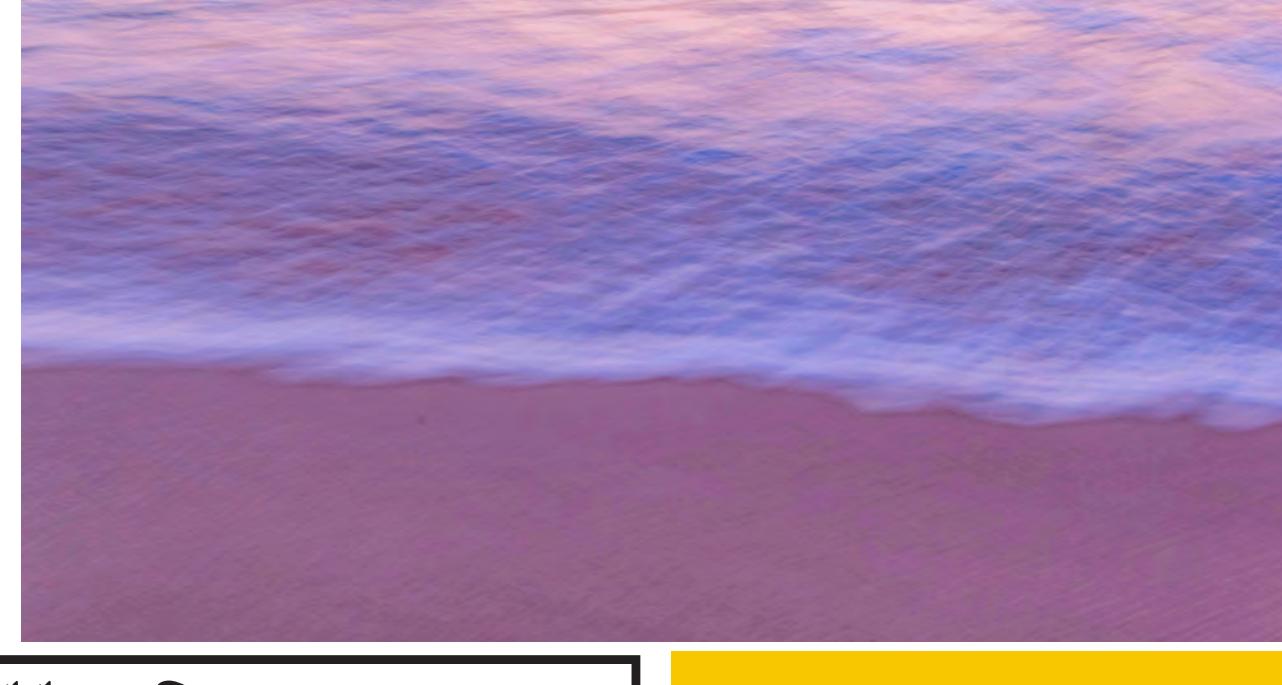
Hospital prices have also grown significantly in recent years for numerous reasons. There is an alarming increase of cancer in the working-age population. Employers are also seeing increased outlays on new and costly therapies, particularly the popular drugs known as GLP-1s, a category that includes the weight loss treatments Wegovy and Zepbound.

A good many private companies are shifting the increased cost of health insurance onto workers in the form of out-of-pocket charges such as deductibles and copayments. Legislators are struggling mightily with these problems as they craft the budgets.

This increased healthcare and health insurance cost will be a major issue in the upcoming midterm congressional elections. Millions of Americans who were covered under the Affordable Care Act have seen a significant increase in their health insurance premiums beginning this month. There will be political repercussions from voters come November. Who will be hurt politically remains to be seen but, generally, voters blame the party who is in the White House.

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.



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Lowerytown Baptist West Blocton 938-2436	HOLINESS Deliverance Temple Holiness Four Points 926-5565	God's House of Prayer 489 Co. Rd. 162 (Heiberg) Marion, AL 36756 334-683-4933 Every Sunday 11:00 a.m.
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"Jesus, Hold My Hand"

It's undeniable that the last several years have been tumultuous and trying at best due to things well beyond our control. The events and circumstances that have plagued our nation, and even the whole world, have left many of us anxious, weary, and exhausted.

Albert E. Brumley found himself navigating and reconciling similar circumstances as he lived through World War I as well as The Great Depression. By the year 1933 when he was 28 years old, Brumley had lived enough of the throes and woes of the realities of this depraved world to find himself in a mental, emotional, and spiritual state that warranted him just needing the helping hand and assurance of his Savior. Thus, he penned the beloved hymn, "Jesus, Hold My Hand."

Coming from lowly means, as his family worked as share-croppers on a cotton plantation, Brumley was well-attuned to a hard-working life. Even so, his family instilled in him a love and appreciation for music. With little to no money in the year 1926, Brumley set off to educate himself in music at the Hartford Music Institute in Arkansas. It was there that he met Eugene

Bartlett (who himself penned the hymn "Victory in Jesus") who would have a great influence on Brumley's life. Another influence on his life who must be mentioned is Goldie Schell, who became Brumley's wife in the year 1931. A product of singing schools herself, she was quite the match for her composer husband. The couple went on to live on the banks of Big Sugar Creek in Powell, Missouri, where they

raised six children. Over the course of his life, Brumley would go on to purchase the Hartford Music Company from Bartlett in 1948, as well as penning over 800 hymns – including the classic "I'll Fly Away." After a long, well-lived life, Brumley passed away in the year 1977 at the age of 72.

I don't know about you, but I often find myself in seasons of life that beg me to beseech the Lord for love, guidance, and support. "As [we] travel through this pilgrim land," there is indeed "a friend who walks with [us]." No matter the circumstances we face – whether it be "sinking sand" or "the foe" – God has promised to lead us and to hold our hand through it all. As it says in Isaiah 41:10: "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." If we continue to ask God to open our eyes, show us the right path, He will do just that by using the "Light of the World" (John 9:5) to "guide [us] day and night."

As believers, we are unfortunately not always called to a peaceful, calm life – but nevertheless, we can always count on that God will indeed "hear [our] feeble plea" when we call on Him to guide us through whatever darkness we face and to hold our hand through it all. When we find ourselves surrounded by the darkness of our present world, may we cling to the promise that if we "travel in the light divine, [we] may see the blessed way." (Micah 7:8; Psalms 18:28, 27:1, 119:105, 139:7-12; John 1:5, 8:12)



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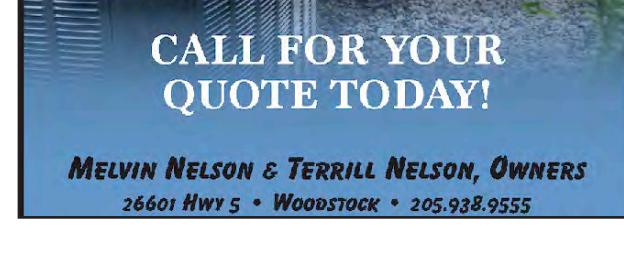
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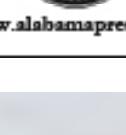
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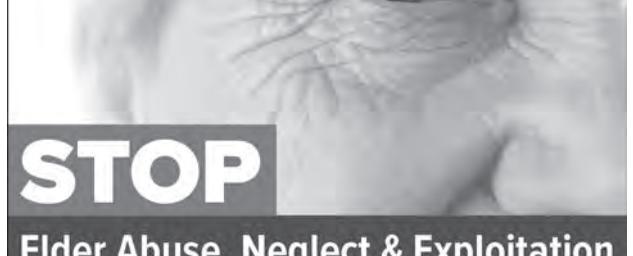
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A LOOK BACK AT 1976

Hospital Head Named



Terry J. Smith

Jim Oakley, Jr., Chairman of the Board of The Bibb County Hospital and Nursing Home, stated Monday that Terry J. Smith, 32, of Jackson, Alabama, has been hired as Administrator of the facilities to replace Gerald Buckingham who will become Assistant Administrator of Hill Crest Hospital in Birmingham, soon after August 1.

Smith is presently serving as administrator of Suwannee County Hospital in Live Oak, Florida. He has been serving in that capacity since January of this year but maintained his residence in Jackson.

Smith and his wife Susan, both natives of Meridian, Mississippi, have two daughters. They will move to Bibb County as soon as suitable housing is obtained.

Mr. Smith holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from Mississippi State University and is a veteran of 4 years service in the U.S. Army. He has held prior hospital positions at Rush Memorial Hospital in Meridian, where he worked in the accounting department. He served as assistant administrator of the Choctaw Hospital in Butler, Alabama, Supervisor to the hospital board of Jackson Hospital in Jackson, Alabama and administrator of the Live Oak, Florida, facility.

Mr. Smith will be on

West Blocton Celebrates Bicentennial

Rain couldn't dampen the spirits of the group of people who gathered at the City Hall in West Blocton, Sunday afternoon, July 4th at 1 P.M. We are proud of our heritage and glad to have an opportunity to be a part of the great celebration going on all over the United States on this day.

At exactly 1 P.M., three boy scouts started ringing the giant freedom bell set up on the lawn of the City Hall. This bell has an interesting history: the date 1892 is engraved on one side. I learned that it was donated to the St. Francis Catholic Church on Gunlock Hill many years ago by Mr. Albano Ferrire. Mr. Ferrire was the father of our present Mayor Frank Ferrire. When St. Francis Church closed the bell found its way to a little Catholic Church on the hill, in West Blocton. When this Church closed, Mayor Ferrire was able to obtain the bell, which made a beautiful addition to our local ceremonies.

Inside the City Hall, Mayor Ferrire welcomed everyone to our Bicentennial celebration and announced the flag raising ceremony to be held outdoors. The beautiful flag pole was erected by the citizens of West Blocton, a Bicentennial Community, on June 14, 1976.

Mr. A. N. Kitchen led the singing of the West Blocton Bicentennial theme song, "God Bless America." He introduced Mrs. Lydia Keyes, chairperson of the local Bicentennial work

group. Mrs. Keyes has worked faithfully and loyally to make our town a Bicentennial Community. We thank you Mrs. Keyes and salute you as one of the better examples of a patriotic citizen.

Reverend Althoff of the United Methodist Church gave the address of the day - reminiscing about the wars and involvements of our great country. He told of the outstanding dedication of our Mrs. Keyes. In his prayer to our Almighty God we were reminded that this land of opportunity was bought at a price and each of us has a duty to perform to help pay the debt we owe.

On the wall nearby is a reminder of the debt one of our Bibb County men had to pay. It is a beautiful picture of a proud and stately battleship, the 'Ross Gray'!

And now, the big event for us, the raising of the flag of the United States of America for the first time to the top of our new flag pole. Mrs. Keyes pulled the rope, assisted by Mr. Kitchen.

The wind was kind; it blew the flag gently causing it to unfurl and wave proudly over the little group gathered below.

The Boy Scouts led the group in pledging allegiance to our flag. It was a proud moment! Then the Bicentennial Flag was raised to rest below Old Glory. We the people of West Blocton are proud to be a part of this great celebration, the 200th birthday of our country.

O. L. P.

Neighbors Do A Good Deed

When Ray Connell, owner of Central Television Sales and Service, fell from the roof of his new building last week and suffered a broken arm it looked like his construction was over. At least for a while.

While Ray was convalescing in the hospital a group of about a dozen of his neighbors gathered at the building with hammers and nails and in a short time had finished roofing the building. Connell was starting on the shingles last Wednesday evening when he made an awkward step and fell 10 feet or so to the ground.

Mrs. Connell said the neighbors spontaneously gathered at the building last Friday afternoon and gave their weekend evening off to help with the building. She said it was "wonderful."

The good neighbors were J. C. Davenport, E. C. Downs, Ganus Robinson, C. W. Dunlap, Earl Tyus, Charlie McCary, Ted Brown, Ben Fenton, Gordon Hallman, Earl Mayfield, Walt Green, Johnny Downs, Leonard Robinson and Hoyt Johnson.

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MRS. KENNEDY GETS AWARD FOR MERIT

Mrs. Gwinn Kennedy of Centreville received the 1976 Award of Merit from the Alabama Historical Association when it was presented to her by Centreville Mayor Cecil Crews during Saturday activities at the Shane Williams Park. The award was for her contributions to the community while she served as Chairperson for the Centreville Bicentennial Commission.

LET FREEDOM RING!

Everybody wanted to ring the bell beside the Centreville Baptist Church when it tolled as did bells all over the nation in celebration of this country's 200th birthday at 10 a.m. Sunday. Because of the participation offered by everyone, the bell here rang longer than the two minutes planned, despite a slight drizzle.

STEAMBOATS SAILED THE CAHABA

by David Hedstrom

At least nine steamboats attempted to navigate the Cahaba River as far as Centreville during the nineteenth century. The first five steamers arrived here and made it back to the Alabama River unmolested, but the sixth boat capsized after leaving Centreville. The last steamboat blew up in 1884.

The first five of these recorded vessels visited Centreville between 1836 and 1849, according to an 1874 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers survey recently provided by W. L. Pratt, Jr., of Centreville. Unfortunately, the capacity and draught of these steam-powered boats are unknown.

In 1836, the side-wheel steamer "Marion" left Mobile with an unspecified cargo for the Cahaba River, though it can be assumed that a wide variety of general goods were imported on these steamers. The "Marion" ascended to Centreville and returned with 100 bales of cotton.

The stern-wheel steamer "Irene" went to Centreville in 1844. During the following year the side-wheeler "Noxubee" came here. Two more stern-wheeled vessels came next, and these were the "Ark" in 1847 and the "Motive" in 1849.

It was about 1849 when the river was crossed as well as

The BACK PAGE

Why Pollinators Matter and How Alabama Extension Is Helping Protect Them

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

Pollinators may be small, but their impact on our ecosystems is immense. Bees, butterflies, moths, and other pollinating insects are essential to the health of our environment, supporting native plants, food crops, and the

balance of ecosystems that sustain life across Alabama and beyond. Protecting them isn't just beneficial – it's necessary.

That shared responsibility was on full display during the Great Southeast Pollinator Census, a hands-on citizen science initiative supported and facil-

tated in Alabama by the Alabama Extension. Through this program, Extension helps connect communities, educators, and families to real-world research, making pollinator conservation both accessible and engaging.

In 2025, nearly 3,000 Alabamians participated in the

census, submitting 2,867 pollinator counts from 55 of Alabama's 67 counties – an 82 percent county participation rate.

The program also played a meaningful role in education, with 62 educators incorporating the census into STEM and STEAM classrooms, encouraging students to observe, question, and better understand the natural world around them.

Beyond participation numbers, the census sparked deeper awareness. When asked whether taking part changed their understanding of the benefits insects provide to gardens and ecosystems, more than 800 respondents said it did. Over 400 reported a moderate increase in understanding, while another 421 said their perspective changed significantly. For some, that awareness led directly to action, with 62 Alabamians cre-

ating new pollinator gardens specifically to support the census and the species it highlights.

Pollinators are responsible for fertilizing a large portion of flowering plants, including many crops that feed our communities.

Without them, ecosystems weaken and food systems become less secure. Yet pollinator populations face increasing threats from habitat loss, pesticide use, and environmental stress.

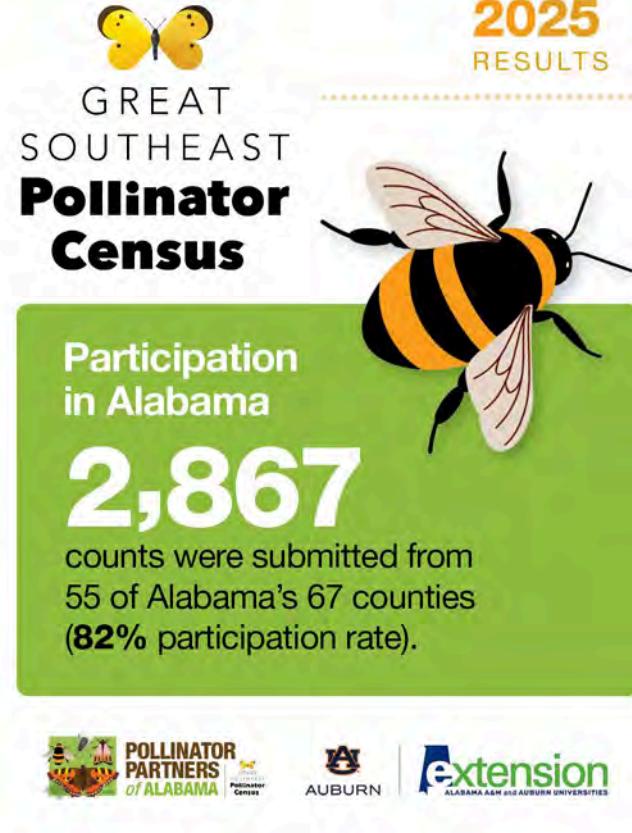
By supporting initiatives like the Great Southeast Pollinator Census, Alabama Extension is helping bridge the gap between science and everyday stewardship.

Participation in the census is simple and approachable. Volunteers select a blooming plant, observe it for 15 minutes, and count the pollinators that visit – such as bees, butterflies, moths, and mosquitoes. That information is then

submitted online, along with the plant type and location, contributing valuable data that helps researchers better understand pollinator health and distribution.

Looking ahead, the Great Southeast Pollinator Census will return on August 21–22, 2026. This year's goal is ambitious but possible: representation from all 67 Alabama counties. With continued support from Alabama Extension and engaged community members across the state, it's a goal well within reach.

When we support pollinators, we support the systems that feed us, sustain biodiversity, and keep our landscapes thriving. Through education, community science, and small acts of care, Alabama is proving that meaningful environmental stewardship can begin right in our own backyards.



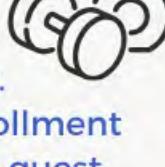
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