

Honoring Firefighters for National Firefighters Day! See Page 7...

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205.926.9769 | editor@centrevillepress.com



Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department: Built by Community, Sustained by Service

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

In rural communities like Cedar Grove, safety doesn't happen by accident. It's the result of neighbors stepping up, working together, and building something that protects everyone. The Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department stands as a lasting example of that commitment, serving as a vital lifeline in an area where no county-funded fire service exists.

The department's roots trace back to early 1982, when members of the Cedar Grove community met with county officials and the Alabama Forestry Commission to address a critical need: reliable fire protection. With support from both groups, the idea quickly gained traction, and by September 30, 1982, the foundation was formally laid.

On that day, the first official meeting of the department's incorporators was held in Cedar Grove. A dedicated group of local resi-

dents came together to establish what would become a cornerstone of the community. During that meeting, the Certificate of Incorporation was presented and approved, and the group adopted a constitution and bylaws to guide the department's future.

Leadership was also established that day, with Howard Marchant serving as Chief, Don Harmon as Secretary, and Thomas Medders as Treasurer. Additional leadership roles included John Hubbard as 1st Assistant Chief and Howard Atchenson as 2nd Assistant Chief. These individuals, along with the full group of incorporators, didn't just form a department — they built a legacy of service that continues more than four decades later.

The full list of founding members is as follows: Howard Marchant, Don Harmon, Thomas Medders, John Hubbard, Howard Atchenson, Stevie Atchenson, Glover Medders, Charles Logan, Sr., Charles Lo-



gan, Jr., Charlie Hubbard, Lambuth Marchant, Jacob Marchant, Jack Harmon, Frank Stewart, Virgil Stewart, Patton Marchant, Jeff Griffin, Truman Johnson, and Roy Hubbard.

The department was officially organized in October 1982 and has operated ever since through a combination of dues, donations, and state grants. Covering a five-mile ra-

dus from the station, as well as assisting other departments as needed, Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department provides critical emergency response in an area where every second counts.

Volunteer fire departments like Cedar Grove are especially important in counties like Bibb, where there is no county-funded firefighting force. These departments fill

a crucial gap, ensuring that residents are not left without protection. The firefighters themselves are local men and women who volunteer their time, often balancing jobs, families, and personal responsibilities, yet remain ready to respond when emergencies arise.

"With many of our volunteer departments in Bibb being in heavily forested areas, volunteer departments, along with the forestry department, are the first line of defense against fires getting out of control, like we're seeing in south Georgia right now," shared Cedar Grove Chief Brian Logan. "Over 75% of our calls are for bush fires. Quick response and mutual aid between our departments are critical to containing these fires quickly."

Over the years, the department has continued to strengthen its capabilities. It earned an Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating of 9, which can help lower homeowners insurance premiums in the coverage area. Continued improvements in training and equipment have the potential to further enhance that rating, benefiting the entire community.

Through its partnership with the Alabama Forestry Commission, the department began with access to essential equipment, including a 10-ton truck with a 900-gallon water ca-

capacity, a 1-ton brush truck, and a 1½-ton truck with a 400-gallon tank for additional water supply. These resources were a critical game changer in responding to both structure fires and wildland incidents.

The Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department has long been certified by the State of Alabama, meeting established standards that allows it to receive state and federal funding. Additionally, it operates under a mutual aid agreement with the Alabama Forestry Commission, ensuring coordinated support when fires become more complex or dangerous.

At its roots, the Cedar Grove Volunteer Fire Department represents the strength of a community that chose to take care of its own. In Bibb County, volunteer departments are not just helpful — they are essential. They are the first to respond, the ones who stand in the gap, and the reason so many families can feel safe in their homes.

Supporting these departments through donations, involvement, or simply spreading awareness helps ensure they can continue their mission. Because in Cedar Grove, and across Bibb County, safety is not something taken for granted. It's something built, protected, and sustained by the people who call it home.



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NEWS

A Cup of Joy Brings Opportunities for Students

BY VICKIE BROWN
 The Bibb County Special Education Department from the Bibb County Board of Education in partnership with the Brent-Centreville Library have opened the coffee shop "A Cup of Joy." The purpose of the coffee shop is to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to develop job readiness skills to help prepare them for the workforce post high school. The Bibb County SPE Department under the leadership of Jennifer Downs, SPE Coordinator, received a grant to support their transition programs through the Alabama State Personnel Grant from the Alabama State Department of Education. The grant consists of federal funds awarded through the Office of Special Education Programs. Currently only 40% of students with disabilities are employed post high school so the goal is to give students more hands on community work experience opportunities. Currently there are students

receiving community work experiences at Bibb Medical Center, Hope Compassion Kitchen, Norris Chiropractor and Brent-Centreville Library. Vickie Brown, Retired Educator who works part time with the SPDG grant serves as instructional Coach for the Bibb County transition team and states "this is a beautiful partnership between the Bibb County Schools Transition team under the leadership of Jennifer Downs and the Brent-Centreville Library to give our students valuable training and work experiences to hopefully lead to employment opportunities. The Brent-Centreville Library board led by Beth Downs were on board to "think outside the box" and help make this a reality." The coffee shop currently has a "soft roll out" after the ribbon cutting and open house held April 21st and will be open on Tuesday's from 9:00-11:00 am and are serving coffee, muffins, bagels and cookies.



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 MAY 19**

Let's make **BIBB BEAUTIFUL!**

Secretary of State Wes Allen Reminds Alabamians of Absentee Voting Deadlines Ahead of May 2026 Primary Election

Montgomery, Ala.— Wes Allen, Alabama's Secretary of State, reminds Alabama voters that county absentee election managers must receive mail-in absentee ballot applications by Tuesday, May 12, 2026. The deadline to return an absentee ballot application in person is Thursday, May 14, 2026. Absentee ballots being returned in-person must be received by the county absentee election manager by close of business on the day before the election, May 18, 2026. Absentee ballots returned by mail must be received no later than noon on Election Day, May 19, 2026. It is recommended to mail in your absentee ballot application and absentee ballots at least two weeks before the deadline for county absentee election managers to receive them. Voters are required to present a valid form of photo identification before voting at their polling place or by absentee ballot. For more information on absentee voting in Alabama or to download an absentee ballot application, visit www.AlabamaVotes.gov.

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LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

Sympathy goes out to the family of Vickey Perry Ingram, 71, or Calera who passed away on Friday, April 17, 2026. Services were held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026. Vickey was a former resident of Brent, Alabama. Vickey will be missed by her family and friends.

Relay For Life of Bibb County will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at Heritage Park, Brent, AL. If you need more information contact Ryan Thompson.

Birthdays wishes go out to April birthdays; Barbara Cottingham, Phyllis Watkins, Roger Brothers, Monica Wimberly, Edwin Snipes, Judy Richardson, Janiece Hubbard Holifield, Sharon Fondren Newton, Shirley Doss, Joon Phillips Roulaine, Tonya Woodruff, Sidney Seales, John Genley.

Anniversary wishes go out to Dennis and Lori Stripling who recently celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary. We wish this couple many more years of happiness together.

Those enjoying

lunch at Vallarta Mexican Restaurant on Saturday for a birthday celebration for Larry Speights were Larry and Ficki Speights, Laura Blumenfeld and Lily, Casey and Stacie Brewer, Phoenix and Jonah. After lunch all returned to the Speights home for birthday cake, ice cream and other party favors. All reporting a good celebration.

Sympathy goes out to the family of Patti Creel Loyd who passed away at the age of 53. A graveside service was held on April 21, 2026 at 2:30 p.m. in Asby Cemetery. Patti will be missed by all who knew her.

The Joyful Hearts of Brent Baptist Church met on Monday, April 20, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Enjoying a late lunch at Olive Garden in Alabaster on Tuesday recently were Charlotte Lovelady West, Dot Tidwell, Pam Long and Peggy Reynolds. Reporting plenty of talk and laughter with all high school friends.

If you have news call it in at (205) 316-1181. Take care and God bless.

Community Effort Underway to Bring Senior Center to West Blocton

BY SAVANNA LOGAN REPORTER

A new effort is gaining momentum in West Blocton, and at the heart of it is a simple but powerful goal: creating a dedicated Senior Center for residents ages 60 and older. Community leaders and organizers say the vision goes far beyond constructing a building — it's about creating a space where connection, support, and belonging can thrive.

The proposed Senior Center would serve as a hub for social interaction, activities, and fellowship, offering a welcoming environment where seniors can gather, stay engaged, and build meaningful relationships with each other. Organizers also hope the center could eventually provide meals locally, making it an even more valuable resource for the community's senior population.

able resource for the community's senior population.

To help bring this vision to life, organizers are calling on the community for support: specifically, signatures from residents ages 60 and older. These signatures will help demonstrate the need and interest in establishing the center right here in West Blocton. Those who know someone in that age group are also encouraged to help spread the word and ensure as many voices as possible are included.

Flyers with more information can be found throughout the community, including at churches, drug stores, Town Hall, gas stations, and local banks. Residents can also contact Senior Center Coordinator Sheila Smith directly at (205) 938-7622 to



learn more or add their name to the list.

Supporters say a Senior Center would provide lasting benefits — helping reduce loneliness, encouraging active lifestyles, and offering a safe and supportive place for seniors to gather. Beyond that, it represents an investment in the well-being of a

generation that has given so much to the community, which is a worthwhile endeavor in and of itself.

As the effort continues, one message remains clear: every signature brings West Blocton one step closer to making this meaningful and much-needed resource a reality.

Celebration on the Green Returns with a Full Day of Fun in Centreville



BY SAVANNA LOGAN REPORTER

The Brent-Centreville Public Library is once again inviting the community to gather for one of the most anticipated events of the summer—Celebration on the Green, set for Saturday, July 11, 2026. Held at the BMC Soccer Fields, this annual tradition brings together families, friends, and neighbors for a full day of entertainment, connection, and hometown pride.

From morning to night, attendees can expect a wide variety of activities designed to offer something for everyone. The event will feature a patriotic parade, live music, a car show, and a CMC 5K, along with a lively mix of vendors and food trucks serving up local favorites. For families, there will be plenty to enjoy with inflatables, games, a train ride, and contests that add to the day's festive atmosphere.

As the evening winds down, the celebration will culminate in a fireworks display, offering a memorable close to a day centered on community and celebration.

Organizers with the Brent-Centreville Public Library continue to make this event a highlight each year, creating a space where the community can come together, celebrate the season, and enjoy time with one another. It's an opportunity not only for fun, but for supporting local vendors, showcasing talent, and strengthening the connections that make the area feel like home.

Those interested in becoming a vendor or pre-ordering event shirts can do so online at brentcentlib.com.

With a packed schedule and something around every corner, Celebration on the Green promises another year of unforgettable moments for Bibb County.

West Eoline News

By Jane Hannah

Welcome neighbors Kenneth & Amy Watkins. They purchased the house next door a month ago. We know many of the same people, so it's like having more family nearby.

Amy Ellison is a true fighter. Since her hip was removed, she has recovered; learning to stand and pivot from wheelchair to potty, bed or chair. With "check ins" from neighbors and some friends, she is almost independent. God is so good.

Chad & Stacey Thompson and guests Jim Kirkendall, Jackie McMurry, Robbie Drake, and Jane Hannah enjoyed food and fun Friday night.

Cindy Garner, Ruth Deason, Jim Kirkendall, Jo Kitchen & Jane Hannah visited Geneva Mullins Saturday afternoon. After several rounds of Rummikub, everyone left to

continue at Jo's. After a little driving mishap and pickup of pizza, the games continued. Cindy & Ruth left first to take Wayne his dinner and a neighbor joined the group in more rounds. Fun was had by all. Laughter was shared in repeating how the car door got cramped.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Watson Fondren 5-3, Jo Russell 5-4, Teresa Rachal 5-6, Pene Norvell 5-7, Luke Dowdle 5-10, Owen Vessels & Jeremy Holladay 5-12, Joseph Freeman & Micah Fondren 5-21, Rhonda .assengale 5-24, Talon Kitchen-Perez 5-29, Truett Caddis & Judy Meigs 5-31.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY to Paula & Courtney Ervin 5-2, Del & Lisa Deason 5-21, Aubrey & Adam Campbell 5-25!

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- Emphasize growth and continuous improvement

Safe, Supportive Schools

- Strong counseling and mental health services
- Partnerships with families and community organizations

Community Trust & Transparency

- Open communication with parents and fiscal responsibility
- Local decisions rooted in Bibb County values

The Republican Primary Election will be held on May 19, 2026. Please consider voting for Lane Lightsey for Bibb County Superintendent of Education.

Paid for by Friends of Lane Lightsey
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EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

Alabama runs on workers. It shouldn't run over them.

An Opinion Editorial
By Adam Keller

Every day across Alabama, working people provide the labor to keep this state running.

They are the nurses caring for patients on long shifts in understaffed hospitals. The autoworkers and manufacturing workers building the vehicles and equipment that power our economy. The teachers shaping the next generation. The sanitation workers, truck drivers, construction crews, warehouse workers, public employees and so many others who keep our communities functioning day after day.

Alabama runs on workers.

Yet it often seems the people who make this state work have the least say over their work conditions and their communities' future. Many workers are struggling with rising costs, unsafe job sites, unpredictable schedules and wages and benefits that haven't kept pace with the cost of living. And too often, when workers organize collectively to improve their lives, they are met with fierce opposition from employers and their political allies. Meanwhile, Alabama's bare-bones public services do not meet our families' needs.

One recent national study ranked Alabama among the worst states in the country for working people. More and more of us are tired of Alabama being at the bottom of everything good and at the top of everything bad when it comes to quality of life.

It doesn't have to be this way. A better Alabama is possible, but only if working people come together and fight for it.

That's why workers and allies across the state are coming together for a Workers' Week of Action from April 27 through May 1. This series of events, gatherings and actions will lift up the voices of working people and highlight the importance of dignity, safety and fairness on the job.

Throughout the week, communities across Alabama will host events highlighting the challenges that workers face and the solutions that come when working people stand together. "The Valley Labor Report," the South's largest labor talk show, will kick off the week with a special livestream on Monday, April 27, at 6 p.m. Organizers from across Alabama will share updates on active campaigns and struggles, local events and ways to help grow working-class power.

Tuesday, April 28, is Workers Memorial Day, when we pause to remember workers who have been killed or injured while doing their jobs. Every year, working families lose loved ones to workplace accidents and preventable hazards. As the old labor movement mantra says, an injury to one is an injury

to all. Honoring those we have lost means more than remembrance. It means committing ourselves to making workplaces safer for the living.

The week culminates with May Day, known around the world as International Workers' Day, a celebration of the power of working people standing together for fairness and justice. Workers everywhere will be taking action, with Alabama events in Huntsville, Jacksonville and more.

These two days, taken together, tell a powerful story. One reminds us of the human cost when workers are treated as disposable. The other reminds us of the strength workers have when we stand together and demand something better.

We encourage workers across Alabama to share their stories and organize for change. From autoworkers facing unsafe conditions to health care workers squeezed by hospital consolidation and closures, from educators facing legislative attacks to federal workers having their rights stripped, from immigrant workers afraid to report to the job site to families struggling to make ends meet, we all have a story to tell about our experience as a working person in this state.

Throughout history, progress has come when everyday people organize and demand something better. Labor rights, civil rights and so many of the freedoms we value today were not simply handed down from above. These gains were won by ordinary people standing together and demanding justice.

That same spirit is alive today. Workers across Alabama are organizing for safer workplaces, better pay and the dignity and respect everyone deserves on the job. They are building solidarity across industries, communities and backgrounds to fight for an economy that works for the many, not just the few.

Because when workers have a voice, the entire community benefits.

Safer workplaces mean fewer families devastated by tragedy. Better wages mean more money circulating in local businesses. Stable jobs mean stronger communities where people can build a future for their children.

In short, when workers do well, Alabama does well.

This Workers' Week of Action is about lifting up those voices and reminding our neighbors that our state's prosperity depends on the people who do the work. Working people across Alabama are sending a simple message: Our state should put need over greed.

Very Few Open or Contested State House Races

Inside the Statehouse
By Steve Flowers

April 29, 2026:

Like the Alabama State Senate, the State House of Representatives will have very little turnover. Our state legislative seats are becoming analogous to congressional seats when it comes to incumbency. Over 80% of the legislature is unopposed. The partisanship makeup and faces will be pretty much unchanged. The House will have a supermajority Republican complexion. It will remain 75% Republican. There will be a strong continuity of leadership in the House of Representatives between this quadrennium and the next quadrennium.

The leadership on both sides of the aisle will be returning. The Speaker of the House will, again, be the respected and powerful Nathaniel Ledbetter, a Republican from Dekalb County. He will have the affable gentleman from Mobile, Chris Pringle, by his side as Pro Tem. The major Committee Chairmen will remain the same. Joe Lovvorn (R-Auburn) will chair the Rules Committee. Representative Danny Garrett (R-Trussville) and Representative Rex Reynolds (R-Huntsville) will chair the Budget Committees.

The Republican Leadership will return, including House Majority Leader Paul Lee (R-Dothan), Andy Whitt (R-Huntsville), Matt Simpson (R-Mobile), David Standridge (R-Blount), Reed Ingram (R-Pike Road), Alan Baker (R-Escambia), Chip Brown (R-Mobile), Chris Sells (R-Butler), Ginny Shaver (R-Cherokee), David Faulkner (R-Jefferson), Chris Blackshear (R-Russell), Steve Hurst (R-Munford), and Jamie Kiel (R-Franklin). Veteran Steve Clouse (R-Ozark) will prevail for a ninth term and will continue to lead the conservative Wiregrass delegation.

There are three young rising stars in the Republican ranks, who are returning: Brock Colvin (R-Marshall), Parker Moore (R-Morgan), and James Lomax (R-Huntsville). Lomax has an interesting challenger in his Madison County reelection bid. Former legislator and veteran, right wing Congressman Mo Brooks is running against young James Lomax. The youngster is expected to prevail, and the victory will catapult him into stardom.

Some other Republican stalwart legislators who are becoming major players in the House are Susan DuBose (R-Shelby), Corley Ellis (R-Shelby), Phillip Pettus (R-Lauderdale), Randy Wood (R-Calhoun), Margie Wilcox (R-Mobile), Allen Treadway (R-Jefferson), Frances

Holk Jones (R-Baldwin), Jennifer Fidler (R-Baldwin), Donna Givens (R-Baldwin), Mike Shaw (R-Jefferson), Marcus Paramore (R-Pike/Dale), Ed Oliver (R-Tallapoosa), Mayor Jeff Sorrells (R-Hartford), Kenneth Pascal (R-Shelby), Danny Crawford (R-Limestone), Russell Bedsola (R-Shelby), Mark Gidley (R-Etowah), Leigh Hulseby (R-Shelby), Bill Lamb (R-Tuscaloosa), Ron Bolton (R-Tuscaloosa), and Troy Stubbs (R-Elmore).

There is a cadre of superstars, who came to the House during the past quadrennium who have tremendous potential and will be sterling legislators. This list includes Bryan Brinyark (R-Tuscaloosa/Fayette), Kristin Nelson (R-Chambers), Norman Crow (R-Tuscaloosa), Jeana Ross (R-Marshall), Cindy Myrex (R-Cullman), and Heath Allbright (R-Cullman).

There will be a few interesting House races. Democrat Marilyn Lands will be striving to defend her purple Huntsville Seat. Alva Lambert is attempting to capture a Democratic seat in Montgomery for the Republicans. The best race in the House will be in the Houston/Henry County seat. Incumbent Rick Rehm is being challenged by popular Henry County former Probate Judge David Money.

The Democrats will return a stellar cast of outstanding and veteran legislators. The Democratic leader Anthony Daniels (D-Huntsville) will be returning. He is special.

There are some truly outstanding women coming back, who have all been in the House for decades, including Laura Hall (D-Huntsville), Pebbliin Warren (D-Macon/Tuskegee), Barbara Boyd (D-Calhoun), and Mary Moore (D-Jefferson).

There are some very distinguished gentlemen who have immense seniority and wisdom. Included in this list are Thomas Jackson (D-Clarke), Berry Forte (D-Barbour), Mayor Sam Jones (D-Mobile), A.J. McCampbell (D-Marengo), Chris England (D-Tuscaloosa), Jeremy Gray (D-Lee), and Kenyatte Hassell (D-Montgomery).

The Alabama House of Representatives will be stock full of wise leaders, and will be led by a wise, stable, strong as new rope, Speaker of the House in Nathaniel Ledbetter.

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.

Alabama runs on workers. And when workers stand together, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

Adam Keller is the Worker Power Campaign director for Ala-

bama Arise, a statewide, member-led nonprofit organization advancing public policies to improve the lives of Alabamians who are marginalized by poverty. Arise's membership includes

faith-based, nonprofit and civic groups, grassroots leaders and individuals from across Alabama. Email: adam@alarise.org.

Centreville Press

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THE STAFF

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

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Real Truth Holiness
Church
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Brent 926-5009

Trinity Spirit Holiness
Church
Centreville 926-4321

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812-675-1543
210 4th St. Brent, AL

Brent Methodist
190 Tabernacle Rd.
Brent, AL

Pondville Methodist
9:15 - 10 AM Sundays
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Friendship Bible Methodist
Church
205-225-4000
Co. Rd. 16 Brent, AL

Ada Chapel Bible
Methodist Church
12540 N. Scottsville Rd.
West Blocton, AL
513-254-8241

West Blocton Bible
Methodist Church
355 Camellia Lane, West
Blocton
205.826.5763

Mt. Sinai Church
Centreville 256-577-8137

James Chapel
A.M.E. Zion Church
926-5607

Bible Methodist
West Blocton 938-0091

Hopewell A.M.E. Zion
Harrisburg 926-5777

New Hope AME
West Blocton 540-8016

Tabernacle United Methodist
Lawley

Waymon Chapel AME
Brierfield 205-665-4730

West Scottsville
United Methodist Church
North Scottsville Road
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Ridgeville Church Of The
Nazarene
Brent

Spencer Church Of The
Nazarene
Brent

PENTECOSTAL
New Life West Blocton
Pastor Greg Brock
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Pleasant Hill Upper Cumberland
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Church
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First Brent Seventh Day
Adventist
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Fellowship Community
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Scottsville Union Church
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Scottsville 205-503-6096

Victory Tabernacle Church
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Centreville
926-9455 or 361-2763
Pastor Butch Tucker

Yahweh's Harvest
926-9044

The Refreshing Place
Church
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Woodstock, AL 35188
Pastor Wayne Keeton

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Marion, AL 36756
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Sandy Chapel Community
Church
926-4934



"It Is Well With My Soul"

The beloved hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" was born out of one of the most profound personal tragedies in hymn history, offering a powerful testimony of faith in the midst of unimaginable loss. Written by Horatio Spafford, the hymn reflects a life marked by both success and deep sorrow.

Spafford was a successful attorney and real estate investor whose fortunes changed dramatically after the Great Chicago Fire destroyed much of his property. Around that same time, he endured the heartbreaking loss of his four-year-old son to scarlet fever. Hoping to bring rest and renewal to his family, Spafford arranged for his wife and four daughters to travel to England ahead of him while he remained behind on business.

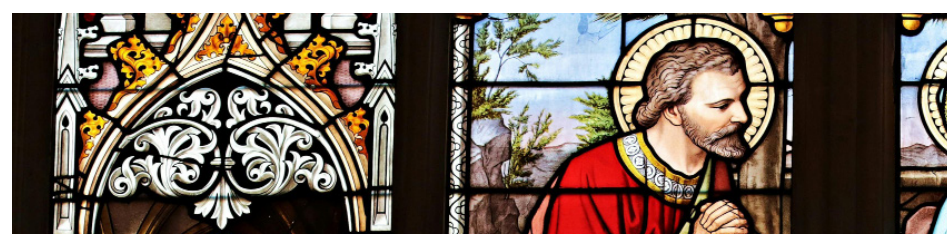
Tragedy struck again when the ship carrying his family collided

with another vessel and sank in the Atlantic Ocean, claiming the lives of more than 200 passengers, including all four of his daughters. His wife, Anna, survived and sent a now-famous telegram that read, "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

As Spafford traveled to meet her, the ship's captain informed him when they were passing over the site where the tragedy had occurred. It was there, in the midst of overwhelming grief, that Spafford penned the words that would become this timeless hymn: "When peace like a river... It is well, it is well with my soul."

Though life is often unpredictable and filled with both joy and sorrow, this hymn continues to remind believers that even in the darkest moments, peace can still be found through faith.

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SPECIAL EDITION

Recognizing Bibb County Firefighters Ahead of National Firefighters Day

BY CANDACE JOHNSON
REPORTER

The Brent Volunteer Fire Department is there to answer the call. They step up to help, despite working with limited resources and a small, dedicated team.

Fire Chief James Murphy said the department began expanding its role about a year ago, with several firefighters training to become EMTs to better serve the community.

"For some crazy reason, I decided I wanted to be an EMT too," Murphy said. "There was about six of us... it took three months going to class two nights a week... and so far, I think four of us have passed our test."

The added certification comes as a response to a growing need across Bibb County, where emergency medical services are stretched thinly. With only two ambulances serving the county, and occasional backup from other areas, response times can be delayed.

"A lot of times we may have a 30- or 40-minute wait for the ambulance to get there," the chief said. "So, our job is basically to keep people alive until the ambulance gets there."

That responsibility has dramatically increased the department's workload. After responding to 548 calls last year, the department is now expected to exceed 1,000 calls this year, averaging three to four calls a day in addition to fire emergencies.

Despite the growing demand, funding remains a major hurdle.

"We get a little bit of money from the county and a small amount from the state, but our money is stretched pretty thin," Murphy stated.

Major equipment costs continue to strain the budget. The department recently spent about \$20,000 on a fire engine, while new trucks can cost up to \$500,000. Basic protective gear for a single firefighter runs around \$3,000, and breathing equipment can reach \$15,000.

"Everything we purchase is so expensive," he said. "We've got to figure out a way to fund that."

Unlike larger, paid departments, Brent relies entirely on volunteers. "We've got a good group of dedicated people," the chief said. "Nobody gets paid. They do it because they want to help the community."

Currently, the department has 15



members, but needs closer to 20 to operate effectively. Recruiting new volunteers has been difficult to say the least.

"It's hard to get people to volunteer," he said. "We need young people... us older guys can't keep doing this forever."

To address that, the department actively engages with local students through outreach events and training opportunities. High school students can join by learning the basics and prepar-

ing for potential careers in firefighting or emergency services.

Beyond recruitment, the department is also working more closely with neighboring agencies through the Bibb County Firefighters Association. The group meets several times a year to coordinate training, prepare for large-scale emergencies, and improve response strategies.

"We're learning how to plan together and work together," the chief said.

Reflecting on his decades of service, the chief said moments of teamwork stand out the most, especially during major incidents like the AmeriGas fire from March 2025. "The way our people responded... and kept it from spreading, that's something I'm proud of," he said. "If you've never been in a fire, you can't see. You're crawling on your hands and knees... your hose is your best friend."

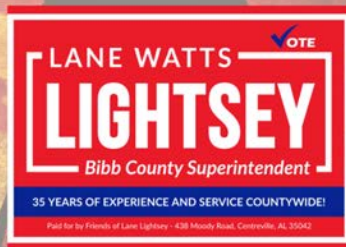
Even with the challenges, he remains

proud of his team, highlighting firefighters like Steve Stano and Billie Glaze for their dedication and leadership.

Going forward, the chief hopes for stronger community and local government support to help the department grow alongside the county.

"Bibb County is growing," he said. "And in order to do that, we've got to expand our fire protection."

Thank You Bibb County
Firefighters & First Responders



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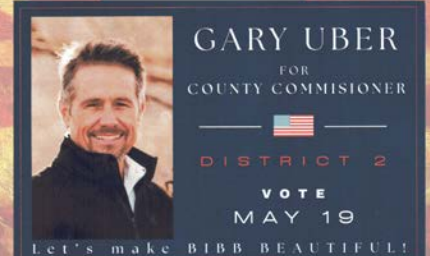
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SPECIAL EDITION

Bibb County Volunteer Firefighter Organizations Serving Our Communities

BY MIKE HOBSON
REPORTER
mike.hobson@centrevillepress.com

Volunteer firefighters and first responders form the backbone of emergency services across the United States, providing lifesaving intervention in fires, medical emergencies, natural disasters, and hazardous incidents. While career departments dominate urban centers, volunteer organizations-particularly in rural areas-deliver essential protection to roughly half the nation's population, or about 170 million people. Here in Bibb County, Alabama the rural VFD's fill an indispensable need to our communities.

These unpaid heroes respond to calls that professional departments cannot economically sustain in low-density regions. Their role extends far beyond extinguishing flames; they stabilize trauma patients, mitigate disasters, and foster community resilience. In rural volunteer departments, this service is not merely supplemental but indispensable, offering rapid response where distance and sparse resources would otherwise leave communities vulnerable.

Rural volunteer fire departments hold unique value for local communities. More than 80 percent of the nation's 29,452 fire departments are all-volunteer or mostly volunteer, with the majority serving towns of fewer than 25,000 residents. Approximately 48 percent of volunteer firefighters protect communities smaller than 2,500 people, often covering vast agricultural or forested territories spanning dozens of square miles. In these settings, volunteers arrive within minutes-critical when every second counts for cardiac arrest, vehicle extrications, or barn fires. Their presence prevents catastrophic property loss, supports local economies by protecting farms and small businesses, and strengthens social bonds.

All of our volunteers are neighbors, farmers, or local business owners who know the terrain, water sources, and building layout. This familiarity enables faster, more effective operations than distant career units could provide. Economically, volunteer services deliver billions in uncompensated protection annually, sparing rural taxpayers the multimillion-dollar burden of full-time staffing. Beyond response, these departments double as community hubs, organizing safety education, blood drives, and youth programs that build civic pride. Without them, many rural areas would face prolonged response times or no coverage at all, risking lives and livelihoods.

The importance of volunteer service cannot be overstated. It embodies civic duty and altruism in an era when many communities struggle with declining participation. Volunteers balance full-time jobs, families, and personal lives to answer calls at any hour, often without pay. Their commitment sustains emergency services in places

where tax bases cannot support career firefighters. Yet this model demands rigorous preparation. Training and certification requirements mirror those of professional counterparts, varying by state department but adhering to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. New recruits typically complete Firefighter I and II courses-totaling 110 to 300-plus hours-covering fire behavior, hose operations, search-and-rescue, ventilation, and ladder work.

Many departments mandate Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification within the first year, since medical calls now comprise the majority of responses. Additional certifications include Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, CPR for healthcare providers, Traffic Incident Management, and wildland firefighting. Departments provide this training at no personal cost, often through state fire academies or local programs.

Ongoing education is mandatory: annual refreshers, physical fitness tests, and specialized drills ensure readiness. Volunteers invest hundreds of hours yearly, demonstrating that unpaid service still upholds professional standards.

Responding to emergencies exposes volunteers to significant risks, particularly in rural environments where industrial farms, chemical storage, and aging infrastructure intersect. Hazardous chemicals present a constant threat. Farm pesticides, fertilizers, propane tanks, and fuel depots can release toxic vapors or corrosive substances during fires or spills.

First responders must don specialized gear for HAZMAT operations, yet exposure to carcinogens in smoke or airborne particulates remains a leading occupational health concern. Explosion risks compound these dangers. Rural incidents frequently involve pressurized gas lines, grain silos generating combustible dust, methamphetamine labs with volatile precursors, or overturned tanker trucks carrying flammable liquids. A single spark can trigger catastrophic blasts, as seen in past incidents involving ammonium nitrate or propane. Structural collapse, limited backup resources, and long transport times to trauma centers heighten peril. Volunteers operate with heightened vigilance, relying on scene size-up and mutual aid from neighboring departments. These risks underscore the bravery required, as each call may involve life-threatening unknowns far from urban support networks.

Despite their critical contributions, rural volunteer organizations face severe funding challenges. Operating budgets derive primarily from local taxes, donations, fundraisers, and

\$500,000, turnout gear and SCBA units require frequent replacement, and fuel, insurance, and training expenses climb steadily.

Stagnant local funding and declining volunteer numbers exacerbate the strain. Many departments report rising call volumes, aging apparatus, and recruitment difficulties. Without sustained support rural communities risk losing their first line of defense entirely.

Recently local firefighters responded to an involved fire at a local auto repair shop. They were faced with knowing the building contained compressed gas cylinders that were subject to dangerous explosions. Most of our local citizens were aware of the highly dangerous fire that occurred at a local propane gas facility near Bibb Medical Center and the risk involved with large quantities of stored propane gas on the scene. A similar situation occurred a few months ago with an involved fire at a timber/pole mill in Brierfield where explosive chemicals were exposed to the fire and firefighters could not approach the blaze safely.

Bibb County firefighters benefit annually from a local sales tax share, with a small portion going to all of the local VFD's on an annual basis. They also receive some revenue from local tag sales. According to a local source each fire department receives between \$15,000 to \$18,000 each year and depend on that revenue to pay expenses. Some local departments have their own local fundraisers, apply for grant funding and accept donations.

Volunteer firefighters and first responders exemplify selfless service that binds society. In rural America, their departments are lifelines, delivering professional-level protection at minimal public cost while nurturing community spirit. Through demanding training, they meet high standards; facing chemical and explosive hazards, they accept profound personal risk. Yet funding shortages jeopardize their sustainability.

Supporting these organizations-through donations, advocacy, and volunteer recruitment-ensures that no corner of the country is left unprotected. Their continued dedication preserves safety, equity, and resilience for generations to come.

To aid our Bibb County volunteer organizations please remember to move over when you hear an emergency vehicle approaching. Stay out of the way of local firefighters to they can do their jobs. And please be sure that your property has a visible address at the roadway so responders can identify and find your location in case of emergency. The life you save could be your own.



Thank You Bibb County
Firefighters & First Responders

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Firefighters & First Responders

OTHER NEWS

Brent Elementary School 3rd 9 Weeks A, A/B Honor Roll

2nd Grade A Honor Roll:

Ava Clements
 Jericho "Rock" Jones
 Cooper McMillan
 Tucker Smith
 John Austin Steele
 Kenzi Swindle
 Jennyfer Salazar
 AvaNichole Hanchey
 Kylen Harris
 Melissa Hill
 Xaya Hill
 Asher Kirk
 Aybree Moore
 Norianna Rutledge
 Ashton Taylor
 Zander Tyler
 Canaan Gray
 Addison Grogan
 Ivy Murphy
 Colt Seales
 Parker Wilkins
 Jordyn Allen
 Easton Buckalew
 Jamison Cottingham
 Eden Espey
 Henry Mitchell
 Zane Price
 Zeke Watkins

3rd Grade A Honor Roll:

Ava Bray
 Rhett Clements
 Jackson Crumpler
 Grant Hines
 Blakely Holifield
 Parker Hudson
 Monroe May
 Luke Whatley
 Adalynn Williams
 David Burns
 William Alvarado Cruz
 Angel Gonzalez
 Lilli Kornegay
 Caden Smith
 Nova Stone
 Catherine Cook
 Bryson Corley
 Zhy'mere Crews
 Easton Duncan
 Harper Hall
 Annabelle Holmes
 Emory Kinard
 Paizlee Maynor
 River Miller
 Briggs Wirmsberger
 Virginia Davis
 Jax Downs
 Mac Downs
 Sadie Gann
 Cameron Heard
 Adlee Holifield
 Jack Phelps
 Elijah Pickering
 Adalida Kennedy
 Braxton Stevens
 Emily Donaldson

3rd Grade A/B Honor Roll:

Cor'liah Bell
 Fowler Caffee
 Amari Craighead
 Jackson Pridmore
 Hannah Smitherman
 Mason Whaley
 Emily Phillips
 Elijah Taylor
 Gunnar Spain
 Alison Webb
 Jakobe Abercrombie
 Mar'Kaila Alexander
 Ethan Billingsley
 Lillian James
 Faith Jones
 Erixon Lopez
 Emma Watkins
 Maddie Carter
 MJ Cleveland
 Zoey Coley
 Aalliyah Cutts
 Carter Dailey
 Raylynn Hunter
 Cayson Pence
 David Smith
 Tyrhianna Stacy
 Lucy Colburn
 Leena Hobson
 Laikyn Flippo
 Za'Kiyah Smith
 Messiah Phillips
 Lee Copeland
 Josalynn Belvin
 Blayr Carter
 Ayden George
 Eli Sadler
 Aumireya Abercrombie
 Camden Acker
 Alberth Albarado Cano
 Oleria Anderson
 Alyssa Bailey
 Tegan Coffin
 Jazmyn Crews
 Nasir Cutts
 Jeremiah Griffin
 McCoy Hain
 Jameria Heard
 Kingston Johnson
 David Orellano Portillo
 Major Tidwell
 Reese Allen
 Alisson Barillas Giron
 Alex Geary
 Peyton Graves
 London Haynes
 Keinijah Leverette
 Logan Oats
 Corbin Quimby
 Ambrielle Ward
 Amarion Abercrombie
 Tomaze Abercrombie
 Oaklyn Acker
 Ava Allen
 l'Leayah Billingsley
 Kimberlynn Holifield
 Trey'Shawn Tabb
 Caiden Tyler
 Waylen Frazier
 Unique Hill
 Lucas Hobson
 Noah Jackson
 Addison Sims
 Aubrey Wheat
 Ania Wilson
 Chase Council
 Aubinie Sanders
 Ma'liyah Farley
 Josiah Rutledge

4th Grade A Honor Roll:

Saylor Geohagan
 Reagan Melton
 Halle Moore
 Elijah Purifoy
 Colton Smitherman
 Kiyaa Steward
 Greyson Traugher
 Riley Carter
 Jade Crocker
 Jayden Goree
 Jace Hudson
 Aaliyah Melton
 Kyla Parker
 Aiden Phillips
 Titus Farley
 Blair Gilbert
 Fran Mitchell
 Aleigh Taylor
 Coleigh Taylor
 Jayce Taylor
 Avery Williams
 Acen Batte
 Kashlyn Burton
 Bradley Colburn
 Justice Dobyne
 Beau Huffman
 Malachi Jackson
 JaLaila King
 Akeelan Naugher
 Brayden Rinehart
 Braxton Sanders
 Lexi Taylor
 Zoey Thomas
 Gunner Wehrenberg
 Gannon Burns
 Keleigh Howell
 Colin Hubbard
 Maggie Robertson

4th Grade A/B Honor Roll:

Kingston Cottingham
 Andrew James
 Kenyiah Ross
 Paris Sims
 Johnny Smith
 Jorja Tyner
 Connor Buzbee
 Markayla Coleman
 Madison Dennis
 Macey Duncan
 Kanen Smith
 Jazmine Suttle
 Jayce Taylor
 Arieana Cole
 Miguel Kinard
 Caesar Mazariego Molina
 Ava Prevost
 Brayson Ray
 Matthew Shirley
 Ryder Spain
 Harlyn Wingard
 Noah Abersold
 Ayden Buzbee
 KyLah DeHart
 Roylynn Lee
 Holden Ward
 Elijah Guy
 Krislyn Johnson
 Rose Martin
 Kaitlyn Sanders
 Darius Underwood



OTHER NEWS

Bibb County Economic & Industrial Development Authority Announces Acquisition of Cahaba Veneer by Manthei Wood Products

BY MIKE HOBSON Centreville, AL —
REPORTER 4/24/2026
mike.hobson@centrevillepress.com

The Bibb County Economic & Industrial Development Authority (EIDA) is proud to announce that Manthei Wood Products, a nationally recognized, family-owned hardwood veneer manufacturer, has acquired Cahaba Veneer in Centreville, Alabama. This investment represents a significant milestone for Bibb County and underscores Alabama's continued leadership in the forest products industry.

Strengthening a Key Local Industry

Cahaba Veneer, founded in 1995, has long been a vital part of Bibb County's industrial base. Known for its high-quality hardwood veneer and ability to serve specialized markets—including engineered flooring, custom plywood, and niche applications such as skateboard veneer—the company has built a reputation for craftsmanship and adaptability.

Manthei Wood Products brings a legacy dating back to the 1940s, when the Manthei family began producing veneer in Michigan. Now in its third generation of family leadership, Manthei has grown into a respected leader in the hardwood veneer industry, known for innovation, quality, and long-term investment.

A Major Win for Bibb County and Alabama

The acquisition ensures continued operations at the Centreville facility, the retention of 67 jobs, the addition of 37 new jobs, and a capital investment of up to \$10 million. Not only is this important in terms of future economic impact, but it also helps secure the future for one of Bibb County's oldest and best known places of business, as the facility Manthei is investing in dates back to around the year 1900, when it was owned by the Belcher family and over the years has made everything from hardwood flooring to broom handles.

"This is a tremendous win for Bibb County," said Stephanie Kemmer, Chairman of the Bibb County Economic & Industrial Development

Authority. "Cahaba Veneer has been a cornerstone of our industrial community, and Manthei's investment ensures that legacy will continue to grow for years to come."

"Manthei Wood Products (MWP) is very excited to operate in Centreville, AL. MWP is a third-generation family business based in Petokey, MI, focusing on converting North American hardwood timber into veneer and plywood, with the mission to cultivate God-given potential in our people and forests so our families, communities, and world flourish. This new plant will be a key piece in our wood manufacturing business, allowing us to expand our plywood and veneer operations through both vertical integration and new product offerings. We thank the Centreville and Bibb County communities for the strong welcome we have felt, and we are delighted to be part of this area's growing business community" said Abe Manthei of the Manthei Group.

Statewide Economic Impact

State leadership emphasized the importance of the project to Alabama's economy.

"The Manthei Wood Products announcement is significant for several reasons," Alabama Secretary of Commerce Ellen McNair said. "First, it represents the evolution and expansion of a well-regarded, long-standing facility and employer in Centreville. Second, it's a reminder that as Alabama's industries become more diverse, forestry is still a foundation of our economy. The state welcomes Manthei Wood Products."

"Economic development in rural communities like Centreville is essential to the future of our state," said State Senator April Weaver. "This investment preserves jobs, creates opportunity, and reinforces Alabama's role as a leader in manufacturing and forestry."

Local and Regional Support

Local and regional leaders highlighted the importance of the announcement for workforce development and community stability.

"This investment speaks to the strength of our

region's industrial base and the opportunities we see in advanced materials and wood processing, said Steve Ammons, President & CEO of the Birmingham Business Alliance. "The Manthei Group's decision to grow in Bibb County builds on an existing legacy while creating new jobs and capacity that will support long-term economic growth across the Greater Birmingham Region."

"This investment speaks volumes about the strength of our workforce," said Donny Jones of West Alabama Works. "It creates real opportunities for career growth and strengthens the economic future of this entire region."

"This is about jobs and the future of Bibb County," said Matt Downs, Chairman of the Bibb County Commission. "We appreciate Manthei's commitment to our people and our community."

"Cahaba Veneer has been an important part of Centreville for many years," said Centreville Mayor Barry Cooner. "We are excited to welcome Manthei Wood Products and look forward to continued growth and success here at home."

Industry Perspective

"The forest products industry is a cornerstone of Alabama's rural economy," said Stephanie Fuller of the Alabama Forestry Association. "Investments like this strengthen the entire supply chain and ensure long-term sustainability and innovation in our industry."

Looking Ahead

Manthei Wood Products plans to continue operations at the Centreville facility while investing in equipment, efficiency, and expanded capabilities. The acquisition positions both the company and the region for long-term success in both traditional and specialty markets.

"This is exactly the kind of partnership we strive to support," added Chairman Kemmer. "It reflects confidence in Bibb County, our workforce, and the future of our local economy."

Centreville Main Street Veteran Banner Program 2026

Centreville Main Street is excited to announce our first Veteran Banner Program!

Any United States Military Veteran that is currently or has been a resident of Bibb County is eligible for this banner program. Veterans, or loved ones thereof, are eligible to apply.

Due to the limited number of light poles in Uptown Centreville, only twenty-seven Veteran Banners will be available each round. Banners will be on a first come, first server basis, no exceptions.

Price per Veteran banner: \$300

Veteran Banner display schedule: the weeks surrounding Veterans Day & Memorial Day with the possibility of periodically throughout the year in coordination with other Centreville Main Street banner display schedules. Banners are guaranteed for two years of showing. Approximately 7-12 weeks per year.

Banners will be displayed in Uptown Centreville on approved light poles ONLY.

After two years Veteran Banners will be retired and returned to the applicant.

At the end of the two years, the applicant will have an opportunity to "renew" their Veteran Banner for \$200, to continue the display of the banner for two more years. If banner rips, breaks, or tears, Centreville Main Street will replace it at our expense.

Those interested should fill out the attached application and submit along with payment to Centreville Main Street Executive Director, Katie Cheslock.

Banner Design:



Centreville Main Street Veteran Banner Application 2026

For this first round of Veteran Banners, Applications are open April 21st – May 5th, or until all spots are full. Banners will be first displayed for Veteran's Day, 2026.

To have your Veteran represented, please fill out the form below and submit along with a **high resolution (1500 x 1200 pixels or 9 MB, or 5 x 7 size) military photograph**. Photographs can either be submitted digitally via email or can be attached to paper application for us to scan. Photographs will be returned to the applicant after processing.

Make checks payable to Centreville Main Street, Inc. Mail or hand deliver payment to Centreville Main Street office at 1100 Walnut Street, Centreville, AL 35042

Applicant Information

Applicant Name: _____

Relationship to Veteran, if Applying on Veteran's Behalf: _____

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Information for Banner Display

Service Member's Full Name: _____

Rank: _____

Service Branch: _____

Dates of Service: _____

I certify that all information on this application is true and the Veteran was not dishonorably discharged from the United States Military.

For Centreville Main Street Use Only:

Application approved High res photo received Payment received Banner ordered

The BACK PAGE

Music, Fellowship, and Community Spirit Set for Brierfield Ironworks Park

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

An uplifting day of music and community connection is coming up as Brierfield Ironworks Park prepares to host a Flea Market and Gospel Singing event on Saturday, May 9, 2026. With a full lineup of local artists, the day promises to be filled with meaningful moments and familiar music.

Organizers are looking forward to welcoming a talented group of performers who will take the stage throughout the morning and early afternoon, each bringing their own voice and style to a celebration centered on faith, music, and togetherness. The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. with Larry Stone, followed by Kenneth Tanner at 10:30 a.m. At 11:00 a.m., Loretta Jent will perform, with Donna Weaver taking the stage at 11:30 a.m.

The music will continue into the afternoon

with Allen Sanders at 12:00 p.m., followed by Yolanda Mitchell at 12:30 p.m. At 1:00 p.m., attendees can enjoy a performance by Lynnox Poe, with Linda Vines closing out the lineup at 1:30 p.m.

Alongside the music, the flea market will offer visitors a chance to browse, shop, and connect with others in the community, adding to the warm and welcoming atmosphere for all who attend.

More than just an event, the day is designed to bring people together — celebrating not only local talent, but also the shared values of love, unity, and community spirit. Whether attending for the music, the fellowship, or simply to spend time outdoors, visitors can expect a meaningful and enjoyable experience at Brierfield Ironworks Park.

**Brierfield Ironworks Park
Gospel Singing
May 9, 2026**

10:00 AM * Larry Stone
10:30 AM * Kenneth Tanner
11:00 AM * Loretta Jent
11:30 AM * Donna Weaver
12:00 PM * Allen Sanders
12:30 PM * Yolanda Mitchell
1:00 PM * Lynnox Poe
1:30 PM * Linda Vines

Bring a lawn chair and join the fun!

BMC HEALTH AND WELLNESS CORNER

FARMERS MARKET

The BMC Farmers Market is almost here!

We're excited to announce that our Farmers Market opens May 6th and will be held every Wednesday from 2:00pm to 6:00pm!

Come shop fresh, local produce, handmade goods, and more. It's the perfect midweek stop to support local and stock up on goodness.

Interested in becoming a vendor?
Contact bibbwellness@gmail.com



BMC WELLNESS CENTER

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

During the month of May, families may apply for assistance toward Flag Football and all Summer Camps. We encourage families to apply early to take advantage of available opportunities and secure placement in upcoming programs. Learn more at bmcwellness.com/youthprograms.

FLAG FOOTBALL Registration opens May 11th

The number one reason families choose NFL FLAG is simple: it's fun. The no-contact format and team-centered approach make it easy for kids to play without the stress or risk of tackle football, while still enjoying all the excitement of the game. bmcwellness.com/flagfootball

SUMMER CAMP

Campers can expect a mix of skill-building drills, team games, and friendly competitions that help them improve their abilities while staying active. Beyond sports, we focus on building confidence, teaching sportsmanship, and encouraging friendships that last beyond the summer. bmcwellness.com/summercamps

BMC APRIL EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Phillip "Buck" Cunningham

Buck has been a valued employee of Bibb Medical Center since July 2007, serving as a Maintenance Technician. What he enjoys most about working at BMC is being part of a great crew and getting to connect with residents, hearing their stories along the way.

Buck was drawn to this career path through his enjoyment of fixing things and problem-solving, bringing those skills to his role each day.

Outside of work, Buck enjoys hunting and fishing.



EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
NEW ENTRANCE | OPEN 24/7