

# Centreville Press

Volume 148 | Issue 20 | 75¢ | May 15, 2026 | Full Digital Edition

Subscriber Access [www.bibbvoice.com](http://www.bibbvoice.com)

205.926.9769 | [editor@centrevillepress.com](mailto:editor@centrevillepress.com)



## New Bucket Truck Helps Bibb County Road Department Tackle Roadway Trimming Efforts

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

Bibb County drivers may soon notice crews hard at work along local roadways again, as the Bibb County Road Department prepares to resume trimming operations with the help of a newly acquired bucket truck added to the county fleet.

According to the department, the new equipment will help improve day-to-day operations and make roadway maintenance safer and more efficient moving forward. Trimming overgrown limbs and clearing roadways may not always be the flashiest work happening in a county, but it plays an important role in visibility, road safety, and helping residents travel local roads more safely year-round.

The department expressed appreciation to Brian Davis, the Bibb County Commissioner, and Jeff McKinney for supporting and approving the purchase of the truck.

Officials shared that the addition will strengthen the depart-

ment's ability to handle roadway trimming projects more effectively as work continues across the county.

The department also made a point to thank Bibb County residents whose tax dollars help fund important county operations and equipment purchases like this one.

The department emphasized that community support plays a direct role in helping maintain and improve county infrastructure.

While a bucket truck may not sound particularly exciting unless someone has ever tried trimming tree limbs from the wrong end of a ladder, the investment represents another practical tool that helps county crews do their jobs more safely and efficiently.

As trimming work resumes, residents can expect to see crews continuing efforts to clear back overgrowth along roadsides throughout Bibb County in the months ahead.



## Bibb County Mental Health Awareness Event Planned for May 28

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

Community members are invited to come out on May 28 for a day focused on connection, awareness, and support as Indian Rivers Behavioral Health hosts a Mental Health Awareness Event outside the Bibb County Probate Office.

The event will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and is designed to help encourage conversations around mental health while connecting residents with resources and community support in a welcoming setting.

In recent years, mental health aware-

ness has become an increasingly important conversation in communities of all sizes. Events like this help remind people that mental health is just as important as physical health and that support, education, and resources matter. Whether someone is personally navigating challenges, supporting a loved one, or simply wanting to learn more, opportunities like this can help reduce stigma and encourage healthier conversations across the community.

Attendees can also enjoy a few fun extras throughout the day, including raffle-style door prizes, with giveaways including a 50-

inch television. Food trucks will also be on site, giving visitors a chance to grab lunch and spend time connecting with others while supporting the event.

Organizers are encouraging Bibb County residents to stop by, learn more about available mental health resources, and take part in a community event centered on awareness and well-being.

While the giveaways and food trucks may help draw a crowd, the larger purpose remains meaningful: reminding people that no one has to face life's challenges alone and that support systems exist right here in the local community.

**COME JOIN US!!!**  
**BIBB COUNTY**  
**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EVENT**

**OUTSIDE BIBB COUNTY PROBATE OFFICE**  
**MAY 28, 2026**  
**9:00am-2:00pm**

**DOOR PRIZES (RAFFLE STYLE) INCLUDING A 50 INCH TV!!**

**\*THERE WILL BE FOOD TRUCKS ON SITE!**

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# NEWS

## West Blocton Preparing for Another Good Time at the Cahaba Lily Festival

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

One of West Blocton's most beloved annual traditions is set to return on May 16 as the community prepares to welcome visitors for the Cahaba Lily Festival, a day centered around one of Alabama's most unique natural treasures and the small-town charm that surrounds it.

With good weather in the forecast and plenty of excitement building, organizers are encouraging everyone to mark their calendars and plan to spend the day in West Blocton. Activities will take place both along the river and throughout Main Street, giving visitors plenty to

explore from morning into the afternoon.

The festival will feature a kids zone, a variety of vendors, and several food options, alongside the town's local restaurants that continue to make downtown West Blocton a welcoming stop for visitors year after year. Whether someone comes for the lilies, the shopping, the music, or simply a relaxing day outdoors, the event offers a little something for everyone.

One of the highlights of the afternoon will begin at 1:00 p.m., when Larry Davenport, widely regarded as the world's leading authority on the Cahaba Lily, will present his talk, "Romancing the Lily." Davenport's

presentations have long been a favorite part of the festival, offering insight into the history, beauty, and ecological importance of the rare flowers that bloom along the Cahaba River.

At 2:00 p.m., the Webb-Tigert Ukulele Duo from Nashville, Tennessee will take the stage for a live concert, adding another layer of fun and entertainment to the afternoon festivities.

The Cahaba Lily Festival has become more than just a celebration of a flower. It's a celebration of community, conservation, local culture, and the natural beauty that makes West Blocton and the Cahaba River so special.

## QuiltFest 2026 to Feature 300 Locally Made Quilts



More than 300 quilts made by Birmingham-area quilters will be on display at QuiltFest 2026 at the Bessemer Civic Center, June 12 and 13, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

"We like to say that every quilt tells a story, and who doesn't like a good story?" said Ann Griffin, QuiltFest 2026 co-chair. "For only \$10, attendees can see hundreds of quilts, from wall hanging size to king-sized bed quilts. They will step into a world of color, texture and storytelling as we showcase our quilts and the people who keep this craft alive. Every item on display was made by a member of the Birmingham Quilters Guild, and you are sure to find a story you like among the collection."

A vendor mall will feature items for sale, including fabric, sewing machines, notions, kits and more. Children and adults can stop by the Make-It-And-Take-It booth to design a quilt block or make a key ring, and a Silent Auction will benefit Grace Klein Community. The guild also sponsors a boutique

with handmade items for sale to offset costs of the show. Live demonstrations throughout QuiltFest will help beginner and expert quilters alike learn more about the art of quilting.

An old-fashioned 'bed turning' at 11:30 am and 1:30 pm both days will tell the stories of vintage quilts owned by members of the guild. Several quilts are stacked on a bed, and they are turned back one at a time as a narrator tells the history and discusses the pattern and techniques used to make each quilt.

There will also be a special display from Quilts of Valor. "The Quilts of Valor Foundation awards quilts to military members and veterans who have been touched by war," said Kate Starcher, Birmingham area group leader for Quilts of Valor. "The Birmingham area group has presented over 250 quilts since 2021." A professional longarm quilter, Starcher will also have original quilts on display at QuiltFest.


For those wanting to learn the art of making quilts, hand sew-

ing classes are being offered for an extra fee on Friday. Registration for 2-hour classes on hand piecing and English paper piecing (EPP) is at [shopinthemaking.com](http://shopinthemaking.com). The cost for the class and supplies is \$60.


"I love the creativity of using fabric to produce works of art that bring joy to me and to others," said Sharon Hosch, QuiltFest co-chair. "I always look forward to this opportunity to share my love of quilting with a larger community. I hope folks will come spend some time with us, learning more about our craft."

Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance online at [bhamquilters.com](http://bhamquilters.com). Children 5 and under are free.

About the Birmingham Quilters Guild The Birmingham Quilters Guild has 200 members dedicated to promoting the love of quilts by encouraging and preserving the art of quilting. They meet at the Homewood Senior Center every second Monday (except August) at 9:30 am. Social time begins at 9:00 am.

**GARY UBER**  
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COUNTY COMMISSIONER



**DISTRICT 2**

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MAY 19**

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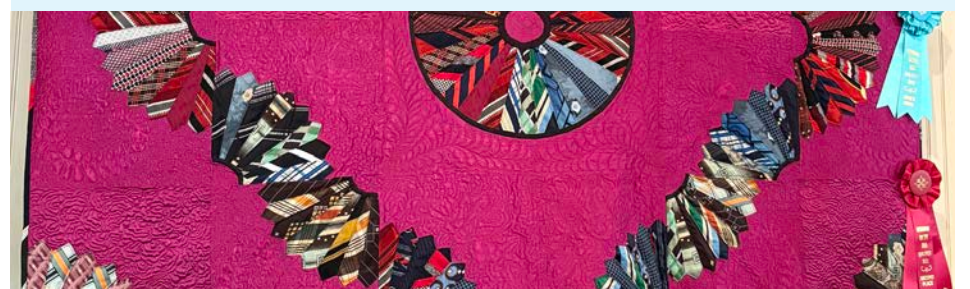
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# LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

## Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

Friends and relatives of the Centreville – Brent area will be interested to know that Johnnie Watts Tidwell of Calera passed away in Gulf Breeze, Florida on April 29, 2026 at the age of 97. A visitation was held on May 5, 2026 at Bolton Funeral Home in Columbiana with a service held at the American Village National Cemetery near Montevallo where she was laid to rest by her husband, C.E. Tidwell. Johnnie will be missed by her family, many friends and neighbors in Calera. As one friend remarked she was a mess and adored. We will always miss you Aunt Johnnie.

Anniversary wishes go out to Stan and Kasie Stamps who recently celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary.

Patricia Caddis recently spent Thursday and Friday in Tennessee with her children and grandchildren.

Sympathy goes out to the family of Durward Earl Boyles who passed away on April 26, 2026 at the age of 86. A service was held on Thursday, April 30, 2026 at Bethel Cemetery in Brent, Alabama. Mr. Boyles will be greatly missed.

The Bibb County Relay for Life was held on Saturday, May 2, 2026.

Birthday wishes go out to several that have birthdays in May; Carol Murphy, Clyde Crocker, Shirley McCool Stamps, Tommy Worrell, Jeff Loper, Debbie Spencer Grammer, Allan Wyatt, Patricia Caddis, Mike Watts, Bea Wyatt, Savannah Pierce and Joyce Burson.

Sincere sympathy goes out to the family of Billy Colley who passed away on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at the age of 66. Services will be held on Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at Green Pond Presbyterian Church at 2:00 p.m. Billy will be greatly missed by family and many friends.

Anniversary wishes go out to Steve and Sarah Webb who celebrated their 45th Wedding Anniversary on Saturday, May 2, 2026.

We wish to extend sympathy to the family of Wyman Foster, age 94, who passed away on May 1, 2026. A graveside service was held at Liberty Freewill Baptist Cemetery at Lawley, Alabama on May 3, 2026. Wyman will be missed greatly by his family and friends.

The BCHS Class of 1961 met on Friday, May 1, 2026 for their annual monthly breakfast, always having a good time.

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

## Bibb County Republican Party Annual Banquet 2026



Front row (L-R) Kevin Cotner, Angie Langston, Pat Clark, Candice Rice, April Weaver, Mitch Kemmer, Stephanie Kemmer, Seth Young, Lane Lightsey, Heath Johnson, Gary Uber. Back row Charles Caddell, Mike Hobson, Ty Corbell, Darrel Weaver, Mike Oakley, Christian Sanford, David Daniel, Valerie Cook, Reese Lee, Dale Ellinghausen, Jarred Keith Kornegay, Corky McFarland.

BY MIKE HOBSON

REPORTER

mike.hobson@centrevillepress.com

May 11, 2026

Last week the Bibb County Republican Party hosted a successful annual banquet at the Bibb Wellness Center. Guests were able to meet state and local candidates and mingle with other party members.

The event was attended by most of the local candidates running for public office along with local republican party members and numerous candidates for state offices.

The Meet & Greet that preceded the dinner gave local and statewide candidates an opportunity to mingle

with local citizens and talk politics in a relaxed setting.

Statewide candidates were either present in person or sent campaign representatives to meet the public. These included Tommy Tuberville (Governor), Barry Moore (Senate), Pam Casey, Katherine Robertson (Attorney General), Glenda Jackson (Sec of State), Jack Williams (Sec of Agriculture), April Weaver & Russell Bedsole (Senator and Legislature) Gary Palmer & Case Dixon (Congressman).

Local candidates included Candice Rice, Kevin Cotner, Lane Lightsey, Gary Uber,

Charles Caddell, Keith Watkins, Keith Kornegay, Heath Johnson, Corky McFarland, Ty Corbell.

The Local GOP Executive Committee includes April Weaver, Mike Hobson, Mike Oakley, Valerie Cook, Craig Cargile, Keefe Burt, Stephanie Kemmer, Pat Clark, Kayla Cooner, Richard Kemmer, David Daniel, Angie Langston, Dale Ellinghausen, Seth Young, Camille Gibson, Christian Sanford, Darrel Weaver, Allen Franklin, Ty Corbell, Reese Lee and Matt Downs.

Following the dinner guests were treated to remarks from ALGOP Chairman Scott Sta-

thagen, an address by former Bibb Medical CEO Joseph Marchant, discussing economic development successes in Bibb County, and a lively keynote address from Greg Reed, Secretary of Workforce Development for the State of Alabama. Greg's address was entertaining, informative, and enjoyed by all.

Local party chairman April Weaver said that she was pleased with the success of this year's event and the outstanding attendance. "We are looking forward to next year" she said.

## Cup of Joy Coffee Shop Prepares Students for Life

BY CANACE JOHNSON

REPORTER

If you haven't checked out the Cup of Joy Coffee Shop in Bibb County, you're missing out. More than just a coffee shop, it serves as a place where students can be themselves, learn valuable life skills, and brighten people's day.

The coffee shop was made possible through a transition grant designed to support special education students after graduation.

Located inside the Brent-Centreville Public Library, the shop operates on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Customers can enjoy a variety of items, including coffee, muffins, bagels, and cookies.

The program employs six staff members and rotates 20 students through various work sites. Donations help fund the

shop, which aims to prepare students for employment opportunities beyond the coffee shop itself. Students say they enjoy serving customers, and organizers hope to expand operating hours during the summer.

"We are able to work with our team, our students, and teach them soft skills and work skills that will help them be prepared for life after high school," said Jennifer Downs, Special Education Coordinator for Bibb County Schools.

While the program focuses on teaching life and workplace skills, Downs says it is equally rewarding to watch students enjoy their work while serving the community. Customers also do not have to worry about overspending, as refreshments are complimentary, though donations are welcomed.

All donations go directly back into the shop to help cover food and supply costs.

Although this is the first program of its kind in Bibb County, Downs hopes it will inspire additional opportunities throughout the community and continue opening doors for students.

"Even if we expanded to something like a small restaurant or a flower shop, our main goal really is to have our students working in jobs outside of our jobs," Downs said. "We have one student that is a really good hostess. She would be an excellent hostess for a restaurant here in town or in another community." Support from the community is helping turn the students' hard work into meaningful real-world experience and new opportunities for the future.



LANE WATTS

LIGHTSEY

Bibb County Superintendent

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#### Student Success First

- Strengthen math, literacy, and college/career readiness
- Support the whole child — academically, socially, and emotionally

#### Supporting Teachers & Staff

- Respect educators as professionals
- Focus on mentoring, retention of teachers, and clear expectations

#### Accountability & Growth

- Use data to improve instruction, not punish schools
- 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  
 438 Moody Rd, Centreville, AL 35042

# EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

## The work for a better, more inclusive Alabama continues despite an outrageous special session

### ALABAMA ARISE STATEMENT

Gov. Kay Ivey on Friday signed into law two bills that could set the stage for special primary elections in some of Alabama's congressional and state Senate districts this year. Those special elections would occur if a federal court lifts an injunction blocking the state from using maps that it found to violate the Voting Rights Act. Ivey called legislators into a special session to pass the bills this week after a U.S. Supreme Court decision gutted key provisions of the Voting Rights Act last week.

Alabama Arise executive director Robyn Hyden released the following statement Friday in response:

"This special session was an affront to inclusive democracy and basic fairness, and it was a clear example of our policymakers' misplaced priorities. Just days before Ala-

bama's primary election, our legislative leaders hurried to pass bills that would dilute Black Alabamians' voting power. These new laws threaten to erode representation and engagement of all communities.

"What lawmakers choose to prioritize shows what matters to them. Alabama legislators have declined for years to take action to close our state's health coverage gap, or to expand access to public transportation and affordable housing. Instead of making needed investments to improve the quality of life for every Alabamian, our lawmakers rushed back to Montgomery for an outrageous 11th-hour redistricting effort that came after some voters already had cast absentee ballots in the upcoming primary. The estimated cost of these special elec-

tions, if they occur, is more than \$5 million out of the General Fund.

"This special session and the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that prompted it both underscore the vital need for people across Alabama to show up and vote in the upcoming 2026 elections, including the May 19 primary. Alabama Arise will continue to work alongside advocates across our state to defend and expand voting rights, both this year and in the years to come.

"We will continue advocating for policies to reduce hunger and hardship. We will continue advocating to ensure people have the resources they need to secure a happy and healthy future. And we will continue advocating together to build a better, more inclusive Alabama for all."

### Press Statement

I am Wes Allen, Alabama's Secretary of State.

Today, I want to make sure Alabama voters understand exactly what's happening with our elections. I will not recap what has brought us to this point. The purpose of this press event is to provide clear, timely information based on what we know now about the May 19 Primary Election and August 11 Special Primary Election.

Most importantly, Primary Election Day on May 19 is still happening, and it is very important. The May 19 Primary Election will go forward as planned, and I want Alabama voters to be prepared to vote Tuesday, May 19th.

A federal court had previously required Alabama to use a court-mandated congressional map. As of yesterday, May 11, the Supreme Court of the United States lifted that requirement. That means Alabama will now move forward using its own 2023 legislatively enacted congressional map.

The May 19 primary includes many important races, including numerous statewide constitutional offices, local races, state legislative, and judicial

races, as well as statewide constitutional amendments. All of these will proceed as normal, and results will be tabulated, canvassed, and certified.

Certain congressional races will be handled differently in accordance with the Governor's Proclamation. Congressional Districts 1, 2, 6, and 7 are affected. Votes cast in those congressional races on May 19 will be tabulated and made public.

However, per Act 2026-612, votes for those races will be void for purposes of determining the party nominee.

Per Governor Ivey's Proclamation, there will be a special primary election on Tuesday, August 11, 2026, for Congressional Districts 1, 2, 6, and 7 only. There will be no runoff for the August 11 Special Primary. The candidate who receives the greatest number of votes will be the party nominee of that primary election.

Qualifying for Congressional District 1, 2, 6, and 7 with the political parties will begin May 20. The qualification deadline with the parties is Friday, May 22, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. The parties will certify their qualified candi-

dates to the Secretary of State by noon on Tuesday, May 26, 2026. Petitions for independent candidates and minor parties for the Special Primary Election are due by 5:00 p.m. on August 11.

Here is what I want every Alabama voter to remember: Go vote on May 19. Votes for statewide constitutional offices, local races, state legislative, and judicial races, as well as statewide constitutional amendments will count on May 19. If you live in Congressional Districts 1, 2, 6, or 7, your vote for those races on August 11 will decide those races.

I have complete confidence in Alabama's election officials as we carry out both the regular 2026 election cycle and this special primary election. I appreciate the hard work already done by local election officials, absentee election managers, and my team at the Alabama Secretary of State's Office.

As more information becomes available, I will share it as quickly as possible with Alabama voters.

Again, May 19 remains the 2026 Primary Election Day. Be sure to vote that day.

## Primary Elections Are Next Week

Inside the Statehouse  
By Steve Flowers

May 13, 2026:

Our much-anticipated 2026 Primary Elections are next Tuesday, May 19. We have been awaiting this for a while. This is our big election year in Alabama politics. All our constitutional offices are on the ballot. Also, all our legislative seats are up for election. Most states elect their Governor in the same year as the Presidential election year. Alabama, and several of the other Southern states, have their Governor's race in what is termed nationally as the 'off-year' election year. We refer to this year in Alabama as our gubernatorial year.

In bygone years, more Alabamians would cast their ballot in gubernatorial year elections than in presidential years. We were more interested in who was governor, than who was president. More importantly, Alabamians were more interested in who was sheriff of their county.

The winners of our statewide Republican primary next week will be elected. Winning the GOP primary in the Heart of Dixie is tantamount to election. However, most of the hotly contested contests will be headed to a June 16 runoff. On June 16, it will be all over but the shouting. The general election will be nothing but a coronation.

We were looking forward to an intriguing governor's race this year. With Kay Ivey term-limited, the brass ring of political office in Alabama is open. Senator Coach Tommy Tuberville made the unorthodox and bewildering decision to not seek a second, six-year term in the U.S. Senate, and chose to run for governor. Coach Tuberville will stroll to election as governor next Tuesday with only unknown, token opposition.

Tuberville's open senate seat will be the marquee race next week. Early on, it looked like a close two-man race between First District Congressman Barry Moore, and two-term Attorney General Steve Marshall. However, the all-powerful, deep pocketed, dark money, Right Wing National Club for Growth came to the table. They brought a barrel of money into the state, along with President Donald Trump, who is in their lap, as are most GOP senators in Republican states in America. They own most, if not all of the Republican members of the U.S. Senate. The Club for Growth has backed, from the get-go, Congressman Barry Moore for the senate race. These conservative billionaires and multi-millionaire 'no government' oligarchs will spend what it takes to make Barry Moore our next conservative GOP Senator. They have out spent all of the other candidates put together by a ten to one margin for Moore.

Therefore, Barry Moore will lead the field, significantly, next week. However, he will probably be forced into a runoff. However, the surprise of the night may be young Jared Hudson. He may make the runoff instead of Steve Marshall. He is coming on strong with a little money, and movie star good looks. Hudson will be harder than Marshall for the Club for Growth and Barry Moore to beat in a runoff. However, they will spend what it takes to prevail. They have unlimited deep pockets.

Former Supreme Court Justice Jay Mitchell will lead the field in the contested open Attorney General's race. He is facing two formidable female opponents. Assistant Attorney General Katherine Robertson will probably run second to Mitchell, and be in a runoff. Blount County District Attorney Pam Casey will run a strong third. Pam Casey will team up with and endorse Mitchell in the runoff. Mitchell and Casey detest the fact that most of Robertson's money has come from out-of-state, dark money PACs, and they have had to raise their money the hard way, from Alabamians.

The Lt. Governor's race will be a close and interesting battle royale. It will be a three-man contest between current Secretary of State Wes Allen, Agriculture Commissioner Rick Pate, and Republican Party Chairman John Wahl. Chairman Wahl has been the beneficiary of over a million dollars of Club for Growth money and President Trump's endorsement.

Caroleene Dobson will waltz to victory as Secretary of State of Alabama next Tuesday. She may be the largest vote getter. Caroleene Dobson is the real thing. This young lady exudes class, integrity, and humility, with a six generations deep, Black Belt pedigree, and Harvard education. She is the brightest star on the Alabama political horizon. She has future Governor written all over her.

Young Derek Chen should prevail in the race for State Auditor.

Young Boozer will be elected to an unprecedented fourth term, next week, as State Treasurer.

The Agriculture Commissioner race will be too close to call. Christina Woerner McClinnis, Jack Williams, and Corey Hill are all well qualified. It will be interesting to see which two make the June 16 runoff.

Y'all vote. 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@steve-flowers.us](mailto:steve@steve-flowers.us).



# Centreville Press

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The Centreville Press (USPS #098-880) is published each Friday by Bibb Community Media Inc., Centreville, AL 35042.

2026 Yearly Subscription Rates: \$45.00 All Access + tax  
Periodicals postage paid at Centreville, AL 35042.

POST MASTER: Send address changes to  
Centreville Press, P.O. Box 127, Centreville, AL 35042

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Bibbville Baptist  
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Brent 926-7687

Cahaba Valley Baptist  
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Calvary Baptist  
Centreville 926-4079

Camp Branch Baptist  
Church  
2590 Camp Branch Rd  
West Blocton

Cedar Grove Baptist  
West Blocton 938-0828

Centreville Baptist  
Centreville 926-7069

Community Baptist  
Centreville

Deer Creek Missionary  
Baptist Church  
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Ebenzer Baptist Church  
Brierfield 665-4865

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West Blocton 938-7220

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205-938-7479

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Centreville 926-7775

Green Pond Baptist  
Green Pond 938-7769

Haysop Baptist  
Centreville 205-310-1316

Hopewell Primitive Baptist  
West Blocton 553-7603

Johntown Baptist  
West Blocton 938-7621

Liberty Baptist  
West Blocton 938-2090

Liberty Baptist  
Duncanville 759-9647 /  
759-4074

Liberty Freewill Baptist  
926-6496

Little Hope Primitive Baptist  
Centreville 926-4236

Lowerytown Baptist  
West Blocton 938-2436

Lucille Baptist  
West Blocton 966-3556

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Woodstock 938-7096

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Brent 926-9223

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Centreville 926-3867

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Randolph 366-1163

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Pastor 834-2557

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Brierfield

Smith Hill Baptist  
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Tuscaloosa 553-9733

St. Thomas  
The Apostle Church  
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Montevallo 345-7018

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926-LOVE

North Bibb Church of  
Christ  
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God  
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513-254-8241

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Centreville 256-577-8137

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

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## "Love Lifted Me"

Few gospel hymns have remained as warmly loved through the years as Love Lifted Me, the joyful song written in 1912 by hymn writer James Rowe. Though much of Rowe's life has faded into history, his music continues to resonate in churches more than a century later.

Born in Devonshire, England, Rowe moved to the United States in 1890 at the age of 25. Over the years, he worked a variety of jobs, including railway work, before finding his calling as a songwriter, editor, and publisher. He reportedly wrote more than 19,000 hymns throughout his lifetime, though Love Lifted Me became the song most remembered and cherished by generations of worshippers.

After writing the lyrics, Rowe turned to his friend Howard Smith, a church organist from

Connecticut, to help create the melody. According to the story, the two men gathered in Rowe's home, reading and humming through the words together until the tune slowly began to take shape. The result was a simple, singable melody perfectly suited for congregational worship.

The hymn quickly gained popularity through the evangelistic crusades of Billy Sunday, one of the best-known evangelists of the era. Though Howard Smith later developed crippling arthritis and could no longer play in church, the song they created together continued spreading far beyond their own time.

Though James Rowe passed away in 1933, Love Lifted Me remains a reminder of the power simple gospel songs can have across generations.



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 Marcus Scott Burns  
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 Landon Blake Rich  
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 Savanna Rene Ward  
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## OTHER NEWS

# College Student Crafts Cottage Food Business After Alabama Extension Training

By Mary Wilson

AUBURN UNIVERSITY, Ala. — Baking has been a lifelong passion for Elizabeth Belcher.

“Growing up, we did Saturday morning breakfasts with my grandpa, and he always baked his own bread,” Belcher said. “I think I baked my first cake when I was 7 years old. My parents had to taste test a few mistakes, like when I used granulated sugar instead of powdered sugar for icing, but I’ve always loved to bake for people. It honestly feels like my love language is to bake for others.”

Now a sophomore at Auburn University studying business administration and marketing, Belcher thought a desk job was her likely future until she started baking sourdough. The loaves were a hit with friends who wanted to place orders. That interest made Belcher reconsider her career goals.

“A while back, someone asked me what I saw myself doing with a business administration degree, and I said that I wanted to own a bakery,” Belcher said. “I had never said that out loud before, and I was kind of freaked out because it

felt insane. Recently, though, I have felt like maybe it’s something I can do.”

Starting with Certification

Along with being her first taste tester, Belcher’s mom gave her guidance. Before starting a business, she encouraged Belcher to pursue a Cottage Food Law certification through Alabama Extension. The certification allows people to produce and sell certain nonhazardous food items made in their home kitchens.

The mother-daughter duo attended a class with Janet Johnson, a food safety and quality agent with Alabama Extension at Auburn University.

“The Alabama Department of Public Health became the regulator of the Cottage Food Law when the legislation was originally passed in 2014,” Johnson said. “At that time, Alabama Extension created a training program to explain regulations and safety requirements. There’s also a test to become certified. Without that certification, you can’t really start a cottage food business. So, we help people understand what they can and can’t do in their home kitchens to make sure they’re doing the right



thing.”

After the class, Belcher took and passed her certification exam. Then, she started selling items through her new business, Eats by Elizabeth.

“Janet was great and so funny,” Belcher said. “She made the experience fun. She told us to remember that we’re selling to people, so our kitchens should be a place that someone would want to eat out of. I also learned you couldn’t put meat inside your sourdough. I had thought about offering something like a bacon-cheddar loaf, but that’s not legal under the Cottage Food Law. Being certified

has definitely been a confidence booster.”

Building a Business Eats by Elizabeth offers a variety of baked goods, from signature sourdough loaves and bagels to cakes and cookies. With sales, Belcher is saving and reinvesting in her business.

“I found out that people in college don’t always have a bread knife,” Belcher said. “So, I bought a bread slicer, and I charge \$1 more on a sourdough loaf if a customer wants it sliced.”

Johnson said the ability to slowly build a business is one of the benefits of the Cottage Food Law certification.

“You can start this in your home without all the overhead costs,” Johnson said. “Plus, you can see whether or not your product is going to sell. You can get your feet wet and see if this is something you really want to do without putting in a lot of money. Sometimes, people start small and grow into a big company. Other times, people decide they want to take a step back and keep their business small, just making a little money to cover minor expenses or a vacation.”

For Belcher, her unspoken dream of running her own bakery now feels more achievable.

“I’ve heard it said that your career should be something you enjoy doing so much that you’d be fine not getting paid for it,” Belcher said. “For me, that’s baking. I bake whenever I’m stressed, not stressed, excited, sad

— anything. I will always bake, and I always have. I’ve never gone more than four weeks without making something. My main goal now is a storefront. Literally, six months ago, I would have never thought of that. Now, I see this is something people want, and I could definitely succeed.”

Cottage Food Law Training Options

In recent months, Alabama Extension’s food safety and quality team has expanded its Cottage Food Law training to include on-demand options in English and Spanish.

“We still offer the face-to-face option, which I like best because I try to make it fun,” Johnson said. “However, if you don’t have time for an in-person training or the schedule doesn’t fit your availability, you now have more choices. We can help a lot of people who want to be entrepreneurs and work from their homes.”

To find out more, visit [aces.edu/go/CottageFoodBusiness](https://aces.edu/go/CottageFoodBusiness).

This story is one of five articles published to celebrate Alabama Extension Week, April 12-18. To learn more about Alabama Extension Week, visit [aces.edu/go/ALExtensionWeek](https://aces.edu/go/ALExtensionWeek).



# The BACK PAGE

## BMC Wellness to Celebrate Women's Health Month with Special Ladies' Day

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

BMC Wellness is inviting women from across the community to slow down for an afternoon focused on wellness, creativity, and connection during a special Ladies' Day event celebrating Women's Health Month.

The event will take place on May 20 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and will offer a relaxed and welcoming space for women to enjoy a little self-care while learning more about the importance of prioritizing their health.

Guests can look forward to raffle prizes, women's health education, and a creative "Petals & Paint" activity led by Melissa Thompson of Cahaba Flowers. The event will also feature Obagi sales, giving attendees an opportunity to browse skincare products while enjoying time with friends and fellow community members.

While the afternoon includes fun touches

and hands-on activities, the heart of the event is centered around encouraging women to invest in their well-being. Between busy schedules, work, caregiving, and everyday responsibilities, it can be easy for personal health to slide to the bottom of the list. Events like this serve as a reminder that wellness is not just about appointments and checklists, but it's also about community, support, education, and taking time to recharge.

BMC Wellness has continued to provide programs and events that encourage healthier lifestyles in approachable and engaging ways, and this Ladies' Day gathering is another example of that mission in action.

Whether someone comes for the flowers, the raffle prizes, the wellness information, or simply an hour of good company, the event promises to offer a meaningful way to celebrate Women's Health Month close to home.



MAY 20TH | 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

# LADIES DAY

RAFFLE PRIZES, PETALS & PAINT  
WITH MELISSA THOMPSON FROM  
CAHABA FLOWERS, OBAJI SALES  
& WOMEN'S HEALTH EDUCATION!

CONTACT BMC WELLNESS FOR MORE INFO  
INFO@BMCWELLNESS.COM | (205)926-3360

## 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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.



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