

Memorial Day Edition: "All gave some. Some gave all."

# Centreville Press

Volume 148 | Issue 21 | 75¢ | May 22, 2026 | Full Digital Edition

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

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## Local Veterans Honor Fallen Service Members During Memorial Day

BY CANDACE JOHNSON  
REPORTER

Memorial Day is a time to honor those who gave their lives while protecting our country. Veterans remain an important part of our nation's history, and I had the privilege of speaking with several local veterans to hear stories of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

William Holifield, a veteran who lives in Brent, highlighted the legacy of William Gardner Jr., who lost his life during the Battle of Fire Base Mary Ann in South Vietnam. Holifield said his family was close to Gardner and that his loss deeply affected the community. "I remember the day he died and the day of his funeral," Holifield said. Gardner died in February 1971 and was later honored with the naming

of the William Gardner Jr. Bridge on Highway 25 in Brent. During the dedication ceremony, several members of Gardner's platoon, including men who served alongside him in Vietnam, attended to pay their respects. Holifield said Vietnam veterans deserve greater recognition for the sacrifices they made, adding, "When I see a Vietnam veteran, I tell them they are my hero, because what those guys went through... they didn't get the recognition they deserve."

Another fallen hometown hero remembered by local veterans was Billy Jackson. Jackson served alongside Holifield's brother-in-law, and Holifield reflected on the type of soldier and person he was. "He was a pretty squared-away soldier," Holifield said.

A.J. Stabler served four years in the Marines before spending 38 years with the Alabama National Guard. Stabler knows firsthand the devastating impact of losing a loved one in service. His cousin, Arthur Jackson, lost his life in a truck accident during the Persian Gulf War after serving 18 years in the Army. Stabler described Jackson as friendly and kind-hearted. "I grew up with him, but we were just like brothers," he said. Following his death, Jackson was honored with a large funeral in Brent, and members of his unit from Fort Campbell later returned to hold a memorial service in his honor. Stabler said he wishes Bibb County did more to recognize its veterans and fallen soldiers, adding that local heroes deserve more opportu-



VIEW ALL PHOTOS (3)

HONORED ON PANEL 5W, LINE 99 OF THE WALL

**WILLIE GARDNER JR**

WALL NAME  
**WILLIE GARDNER JR**

RANK  
**SP4**

PANEL / LINE  
**5W/99**

DATE OF BIRTH  
**07/12/1950**

CASUALTY PROVINCE  
**QUANG TIN**

DATE OF CASUALTY  
**02/12/1971**

HOME OF RECORD  
**BRENT**

COUNTY OF RECORD  
**Bibb County**

STATE  
**AL**

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**ARMY**



nities to be remembered and celebrated.

Nate Royal served in the United States Marine Corps from 1974 to 2004. At 18 years old, he participated in refugee evacuation efforts near the end of the Vietnam

War. Royal said some of his proudest moments came from mentoring young Marines as a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island and later as an ROTC instructor at Prairie View A&M Uni-

versity. He said military service teaches discipline, leadership, and unity, and hopes civilians remember the sacrifices military families make, including missed time with loved ones.

## Memorial Day: The History Behind America's Day of Remembrance



BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

"That Nation which respects and honors its dead, shall ever be respected and honored itself."

Those words, spoken by Brevet Lieut.-Col. Edmund B. Whitman in 1868, continue to capture the spirit behind Memorial Day more than 150 years later.

Observed each year on the last Monday in May, Memorial Day stands as the nation's foremost annual day to mourn and honor the men and women who died while serving in the United States military. While today the holiday often signals the

unofficial start of summer, its roots are deeply tied to sacrifice, grief, remembrance, and national healing.

Originally known as Decoration Day, the holiday emerged in the difficult years surrounding the Civil War. In communities across both the North and South, people gathered to decorate soldiers' graves with flowers during springtime memorial observances. Black and white Americans alike participated in these acts of remembrance, honoring loved ones and fallen soldiers after one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history.

The tradition of placing

flowers on graves itself stretches back centuries, with similar practices documented from Classical Roman times through nineteenth-century Europe. But after the Civil War, the custom took on new national significance in America.

One of the earliest known memorial observances took place in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, in October 1864, when three women decorated the graves of fallen soldiers. Another historically significant event occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, on May 1, 1865, when Black freedmen and white abolitionist allies honored Union soldiers buried at

the "Martyrs of the Race Course" cemetery.

At the same time, women in Columbus, Georgia, were helping shape what would become Memorial Day as Americans know it today. In March 1866, the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus launched a campaign calling for a designated day to decorate the graves of Civil War soldiers with flowers. Secretary Mary Ann Williams urged communities to establish a tradition that would "be handed down through time."

Their chosen observance date was April 26, 1866. However, a similar event in Columbus, Mississippi, held one day earlier led to ongoing historical debate over which city hosted the first official memorial observance. Regardless of location, these Southern memorial gatherings honoring both Confederate and Union dead became an important step toward national reconciliation after the war.

The movement eventually caught the attention of General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, an influential Union veterans organization. On May 5, 1868, Logan issued General Orders No. 11, formally establishing a national Memorial Day dedicat-

ed to remembering war dead and decorating their graves with flowers.

The order transformed scattered local traditions into a national responsibility.

Logan had witnessed the growing practice of memorial observances and understood the emotional importance behind them. His wife, Mary Logan, later wrote that she encouraged him to adopt the Southern custom of decorating soldiers' graves after visiting a Confederate cemetery in Virginia. Logan believed Union soldiers deserved the same enduring remembrance.

Over time, Decoration Day gradually became known more commonly as Memorial Day. After World War I, the observance expanded to honor Americans who died in all wars, not just the Civil War.

Patriotic organizations also helped preserve the meaning of the holiday. The Woman's Relief Corps, chartered in 1883 as an auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, played a major role in maintaining memorial traditions. Members gathered flowers, created wreaths, decorated graves, and worked to preserve General Logan's Memorial Day message for future generations.

In the 1920s and

1930s, the organization placed bronze memorial tablets featuring Logan's image and General Orders No. 11 in courthouses, schools, state houses, and cemeteries throughout the country. Many of those memorials still stand today.

In more recent years, efforts have continued to preserve the spirit of remembrance behind the holiday. In December 2000, Congress established the National Moment of Remembrance through the National Moment of Remembrance Act. The commission encourages Americans to pause at 3:00 p.m. local time each Memorial Day for one minute of silence to honor those who died in service to the nation.

Though Memorial Day traditions have evolved over generations, the heart of the holiday remains unchanged. It is a day set aside to remember sacrifice, honor courage, and recognize the cost of the freedoms Americans enjoy every day.

More than a century and a half later, the impulse that first inspired communities to place flowers on soldiers' graves still endures – a quiet but powerful reminder that those who gave their lives in service to the country are not forgotten.

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# MEMORIAL DAY EDITION

## A Day of Solemn Remembrance: The Enduring Meaning of Memorial Day

BY MIKE HOBSON

REPORTER

mike.hobson@centrevillepress.com

As Americans prepare for the long weekend that unofficially kicks off summer, Memorial Day stands apart as a time for profound reflection rather than mere relaxation. Observed on the last Monday in May, the federal holiday honors the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces who made the ultimate sacrifice-giving their lives in service to the nation. It is a day of mourning, gratitude, and civic renewal, rooted in the blood-soaked soil of the American Civil War.

The origins of Memorial Day trace back to the years immediately following the Civil War, a conflict that claimed more than 620,000 lives-roughly 2 percent of the U.S. population at the time. In the war's aftermath, communities across the divided nation began spontaneously decorating the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers, wreaths, and flags.

These early observances, often called "Decoration Day," emerged from a shared human impulse to honor the dead and seek healing.

One of the earliest recorded events occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1865, when formerly enslaved people and Union supporters transformed a former Confederate prison and racetrack into a proper burial ground for Union soldiers and held a procession with flowers and patriotic songs. Other towns, including Columbus, Georgia, and Waterloo, New York, also laid



claim to early observances. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson officially recognized Waterloo as the "birthplace" of Memorial Day for its community-wide event in 1866.

The holiday gained national prominence on May 5, 1868, when Major General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)-a powerful organization of Union veterans-issued General Order No. 11. It designated May 30 as a day for "strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country." The first large-scale national observance took place that year at Arlington National Cemetery, where thousands gathered to honor both Union and Confederate dead. Congressman James Garfield, a future president, delivered a moving address.

Initially focused on Civil War casualties, Decoration Day

evolved after World War I to commemorate all American service members who died in any war. The name gradually shifted to Memorial Day. In 1968, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, moving the observance to the last Monday in May to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. It became a federal holiday in 1971.

### Purpose and Civic Meaning

At its core, Memorial Day serves as a collective act of national memory. It reminds citizens that freedom is not free and that the blessings of liberty come at a profound cost. Families visit cemeteries, placing flags and flowers on graves. The nation observes a moment of silence at 3 p.m. local time. Parades, ceremonies at national memorials, and the sounding of "Taps" at military sites underscore the day's solemnity.

Civically, Memorial Day reinforces the social contract between the American people and those who defend them. It fosters gratitude, promotes civic education about sacrifice and duty, and encourages reflection on the values-liberty, justice, and democracy-for which service members fought. In an era of increasing polarization, the holiday transcends politics, uniting communities in shared reverence for those who died so that others might live in peace and freedom. It also highlights the ongoing need to support Gold Star families, the loved ones left behind.

### Contrasting with Veterans Day

While often conflated in casual conversation, Memorial Day and Veterans Day honor distinct groups and carry different tones. Memorial Day specifically mourns those who died in military ser-

vice-whether in combat, training, or as a result of wounds sustained. It is a day of solemn remembrance and mourning.

Veterans Day, observed on November 11, honors all who have served honorably in the U.S. military-living and deceased-during times of war or peace. Originally Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, it was renamed in 1954 to recognize the broader veteran community. Where Memorial Day features moments of silence and grave decorations, Veterans Day often includes parades, speeches thanking living veterans, and expressions of appreciation for their service.

In short: Memorial Day is for those who never came home; Veterans Day thanks those who did. Confusing the two can diminish the unique grief reserved for the fallen. As one com-

mon saying puts it, Memorial Day remembers those who gave all; Veterans Day honors those who gave some.

### A Timeless Call

Today, as the United States faces new global challenges, Memorial Day's message remains vital. It calls on citizens not only to remember the dead but to live worthy of their sacrifice-through informed civic engagement, support for military families, and a commitment to the ideals that define the nation.

This Memorial Day, amid backyard barbecues and beach trips, pause to reflect. Visit a cemetery, attend a service, or simply fly the flag at half-staff until noon. In doing so, Americans reaffirm that the fallen are not forgotten and that their legacy endures in a grateful republic.

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# LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

## Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

Sympathy goes out to the family of Douglas McArthur Tidwell, age 84 of Perry County, who passed away on Tuesday, May 5, 2026. Services were held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at Bethlehem Methodist Church in Heiberger, AL at 11:00 a.m. Douglas will be laid to rest in the adjoining cemetery. Mack will be missed greatly by his family and many friends.

Anniversary wishes go out to Larry and Vicki Speights who will celebrate their 47th wedding anniversary on May 24, 2026.

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family of Linda Arnold Cox, 81, who passed away on May 7, 2026. Services were held on Monday, May 11, 2026 at 1:30 p.m. with visitation from Noon to 1:30 at Brent Baptist Church. Burial followed at Pineland Memorial Cemetery. Linda was a very special lady and will be missed by her family and many friends.

Birthday wishes go out to several that have birthdays in May; Kelli Shofner, Mattie Ree McMillan, Careol Murphy, Clyde Crocker, Shirley McCool Stamps, Eric Green, Donna Mitchell, Amy Mur-

phy, Connie Johnson, Mason Pipher, Henry Suttle and Savannah McGee.

Homecoming will be held at Bethlehem Baptist Church on May 24, 2026 from 10:30 a.m. til 2:30 p.m. Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

Those enjoying Mother's Day with Larry and Vicki Speights were children and grandchildren, Laura Blumenfeld and daughter Lily, Casey and Stacie Brewer and sons Phoenix and Jonah. All had a great time with delicious food, fun, and fellowship.

Charlotte Lovelady West spent Mother's Day with children and grandchildren, Hilary and Paul Perry and family at Hoover. After a delicious lunch and dessert it was swimming or sitting by the pool, all enjoying the day.

On Tuesday May 12, 2026 Charlotte West met two of her college friends from Troy days at The Oak Tavern in Prattville, Martha Graham and Joyce Murphy. After a delicious lunch they moved out to the deck overlooking the golf course, reporting a delightful afternoon.

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

## Bibb County Community Baby Shower Aims to Support Local Families and Expectant Parents

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### BIBB COUNTY COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER

to support expectant mothers and fathers in our area

**June 11, 2026 | 10 AM - 12 PM**

We will have educational opportunities and community exhibitors available to provide helpful resources for parents and families. We will also host a drive-thru donation shower where community members can drop off new and unused baby items to support families in Bibb County.

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The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. If you need a reasonable accommodation or free language access services, contact Michelle Giddens at (205) 926-4310 or mcg0046@aces.edu by May 28, 2026.

BY SAVANNA LOGAN  
REPORTER

It's often said that raising a child takes a village, and in communities like Bibb County, that idea still matters deeply — especially for expectant parents who may be walking the road to parenthood feeling overwhelmed, uncertain, or even alone.

On June 11 from

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the Bibb County Community Baby Shower will bring local families, organizations, and community resources together for a morning centered around support, encouragement, and practical help for parents and parents-to-be.

Hosted at Events by Square 1 in Brent,

the event is designed to support expectant mothers and fathers throughout the area by connecting them with educational opportunities, helpful resources, and community exhibitors focused on family wellness and parenting support.

While baby showers are often filled with tiny socks, gift bags, and enough pastel colors

to temporarily overwhelm the senses, events like this also serve a much bigger purpose. They remind parents that they are not expected to do everything on their own.

That sense of community can make an enormous difference, particularly for mothers navigating pregnancy or early parenthood without a strong support system around them. Sometimes simply knowing there are people willing to help, listen, and provide resources can ease some of the fear and isolation that often comes with major life transitions.

In addition to the educational opportunities available during the event, organizers will also host a drive-thru donation shower where community members can drop off new and unused baby items to help support local families in need.

The event will take place at Events by Square 1, located at 10450 Highway 5 in Brent.

Community members interested in supporting Bibb County families, whether by attending, donating, or simply helping spread the word, have an opportunity to be part of something meaningful: neighbors helping neighbors during one of life's biggest journeys.

## Fresh Finds and Familiar Faces Return as BMC Market Opens for the Summer Season

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BMC

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**MAY 6TH - AUG 26TH**

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BY SAVANNA LOGAN  
REPORTER

Summer market season is officially underway, and the BMC Market is once again bringing together local farmers, makers, small businesses, and food vendors each Wednesday afternoon in a way that feels a little bit like a community gathering and a little bit like an excuse to buy homemade desserts before dinner. Which, honestly, is part of the charm.

The market, held every Wednesday from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. from May 6 through

August 26, has already kicked off with a strong start for the season. Early market days featured a great lineup of local vendors offering everything from fresh produce and farm goods to wellness products, plants, handmade items, and sweet treats.

Community members who stopped by during the opening weeks had the chance to shop with vendors including Tabernacle Farms, AW Produce, C&J Farms, Plant Soul, Angel Holly's Naturals, Sustain Me, Essence Wellness, Natural Infusion of Joy,

and Whipped Temptations.

Of course, no summer market is complete without food trucks, and the first few Wednesdays delivered there too. Vendors like 9:59 Sweets & Treats, Veterans Cafe, and The Squeeze Bar helped keep shoppers well-fed, caffeinated, sugared-up, and appropriately hydrated with fresh lemonade while browsing the booths.

One of the things that continues to make the BMC Market special is the simple fact that it gives people a place to gather.

Neighbors run into neighbors. Local businesses get support. Someone inevitably leaves with tomatoes they didn't particularly plan on buying and at least one dessert they definitely did plan on buying.

Even though a few market days have already passed, there are still plenty of Wednesdays left this summer for community members to stop by, shop local, grab a bite to eat, and enjoy an afternoon supporting the people who help make Bibb County feel like home.



# EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

## Alabama's 2026 Federal and State Elections Will Be One to Remember

An Opinion Editorial  
By Paul DeMarco

The 2026 election cycle in Alabama will be one for the record books.

First, let's look at the ballots. By the time voters are done going to the polls, Alabama will be sending a slew of new leaders to both Montgomery and Washington D.C. Almost every Alabama constitutional office will turn over due to term limits, which does not usually happen during the same election period. This really is a change election in the state this year that will mean new priorities and different state agency heads when it comes to the governance for Alabama. So come January of 2027, there will be an almost complete overhaul of officials getting sworn into office.

Secondly, this will be an unusual election cycle because the top two candidates for Alabama Governor have already faced off once before in an election. Democrat Doug Jones and Republican Tommy Tuberville fought it out six years ago for a seat to represent Alabama in the United States Senate, that Tuberville ultimately won. Now they will likely be squaring off in Novem-

ber to see who will be the next governor of Alabama. Senator Tuberville has the edge in the ruby-red state for certain, but there will be a lot of monies pouring into both campaigns between now and the general election in the fall.

Finally, because of a redistricting battle being fought out in the Courts, it looks like there will be another party primary for four of Alabama's congressional seats come August, meaning voters will have an extra opportunity to mark their ballots for new districts for candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives. The legal issues are still being litigated with federal judges, so there are a lot of moving parts. Democrats are still trying to keep two of Alabama's seven seats in their hands, but Republicans want an all GOP delegation.

So gear up for a busy and historic campaign season this year.

**Paul DeMarco, a native of Alabama, is a former member of the Alabama State House of Representatives and can be found on X at @Paul\_DeMarco.**

## Representative David Faulkner – A Case Study in Effectiveness

Inside the Statehouse  
By Steve Flowers

May 20, 2026:

The 2026 Regular Legislative Session has concluded. This is an election year in Alabama. In an election year, it is common to see lawmakers introduce bills that create friendly headlines but do little to impact the health and welfare of their constituents.

State Representative David Faulkner of Mountain Brook bucked that trend in impressive fashion when he decided to file and pass a bill to create common sense regulations for Alabama's overnight summer camps.

House Bill 381, also known as the Sarah Marsh Heaven's 27 Act, was recently signed into law by Governor Kay Ivey, after receiving nearly unanimous support in the Alabama Legislature. The legislation is named after young Sarah Marsh of Birmingham, who was tragically killed in the Texas floods at Camp Mystic last summer. Her parents, Jill and Patrick Marsh, met with Representative Faulkner late last year to discuss the lack of oversight of Alabama overnight camps. When the idea of filing legislation was discussed, David did not hesitate to fully commit to the effort.

The limited oversight of these camps would truly surprise many readers. This lack of oversight does not necessarily mean they are operating unsafely. In fact, Alabama is blessed to have many fine camp operations in the state,

from the Baldwin County coast to the mountains of Mentone. Our children have been truly enriched by their experiences at these camps and will continue to be for many years to come. The Sarah Marsh Heavens 27 Act simply codifies the need for these camps to have adequate safety plans, staff background checks, and other commonsense licensure requirements. Thankfully, most of these tasks are already being done by the camps.

Another strong element of the bill is an expert-led advisory council to assist the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, who is tasked with implementing the licensing requirements of the bill. On this portion, Rep. Faulkner spent dozens of hours negotiating with a wide array of stakeholders from around the state, including camp owners. Local emergency management officials play a crucial role in planning for potential weather disasters, and their voice is critical in these discussions. They are truly heroes.

As the Vice Chairman of the powerful Rules Committee, David is often called upon by Speaker Ledbetter and other House leaders to either mediate legislation or draft amendments and substitutes to improve a bill before it reaches the floor. His background as a seasoned litigation attorney serves him in this role. Beyond the camp safety effort, Faulkner has not shied away from sponsoring other very important and monumental legislative acts.

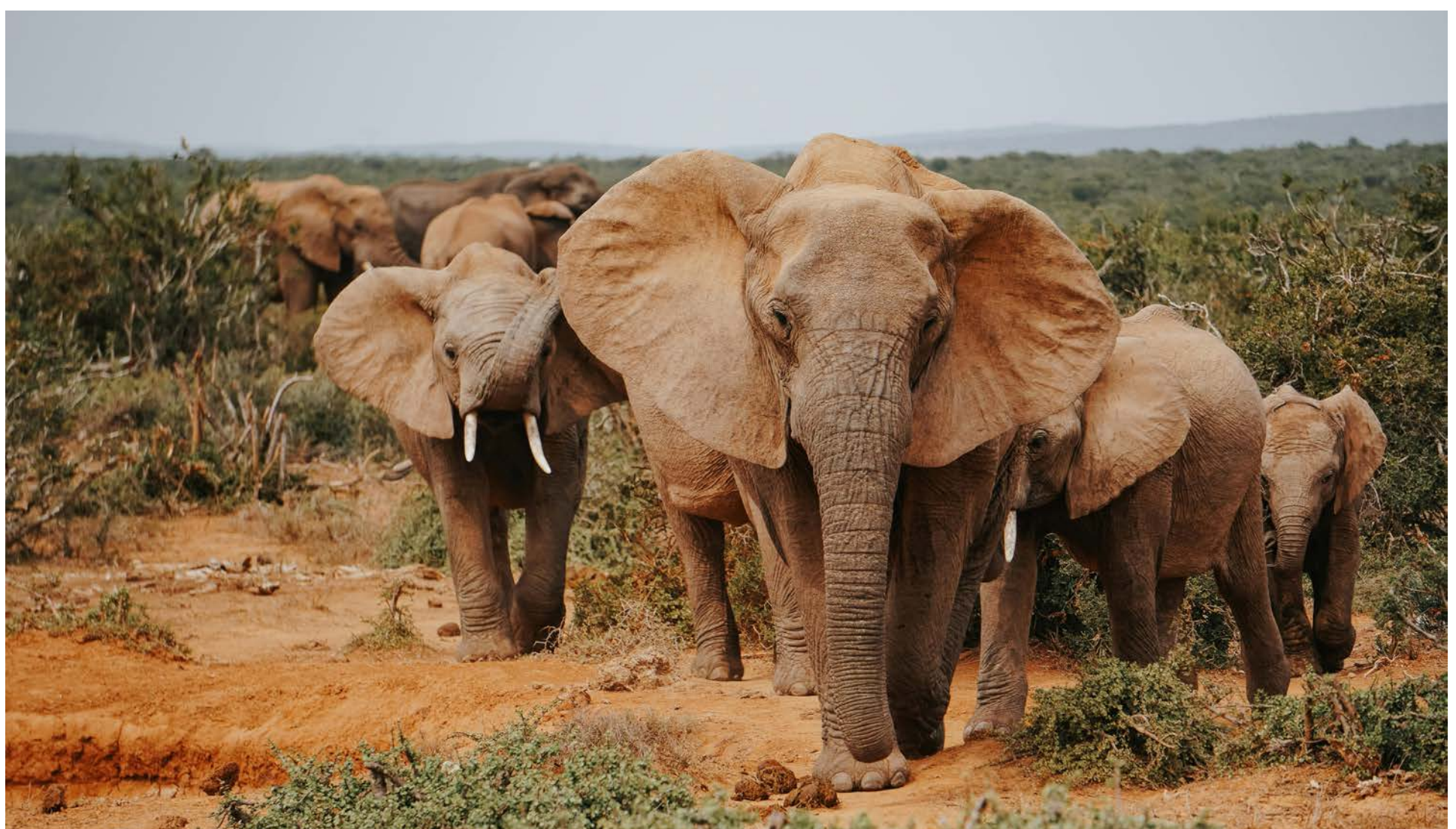
Recently, Rep. Faulkner passed another significant and poignant legislative act. He sponsored the monumental Lulu's Law – a measure aimed at enhancing beach safety by establishing a shark alert system for Mobile and Baldwin Counties. The Act was named in honor of Lulu Gribbin, a 15-year-old from Mountain Brook who survived a shark attack off the coast of Florida during the summer of 2024. Lulu and her parents are some of Faulkner's constituents. Lulu's Law is one of the most meaningful acts of this quadrennium.

In addition, Faulkner an urban legislator became the hero and darling of the Alabama Farmers Federation when he sponsored and was the stalwart leader in the House of Representatives for passage of the Alabama Farmers Federation Health Plan in the 2025 Legislative Session.

Representative Faulkner is a true case study in effectiveness and continues to win deep respect from colleagues and constituents alike. He is a legislative statesman whose influence will only continue to grow in the coming years.

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](mailto:steve@steveflowers.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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Woodstock 477-6121

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Pastor Shane Pate

Church Of God Of Prophecy  
West Blocton 938-2788

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Of God  
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River of Life Church of  
God  
9225 Hwy 82, Brent  
205-926-7600

West Blocton Church of  
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**CHURCH OF THE  
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Centreville 926-5393

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Comforter  
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Montevallo 665-1667

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Center  
Centreville 926-4555

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Antioch 926-9252

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Brent 926-5009

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Church  
Centreville 926-4321

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Brent, AL

Pondville Methodist  
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Friendship Bible Methodist  
Church  
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Co. Rd. 16 Brent, AL

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West Blocton, AL  
513-254-8241

West Blocton Bible  
Methodist Church  
355 Camellia Lane, West  
Blocton  
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Mt. Sinai Church  
Centreville 256-577-8137

James Chapel  
A.M.E. Zion Church  
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West Blocton 938-0091

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

New Hope AME  
West Blocton 540-8016

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Brierfield 205-665-4730

West Scottsville  
United Methodist Church  
North Scottsville Road  
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Presbyterian Church Rd  
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The hymn was co-written by Sanford Fillmore Bennett, who was born in New York in 1836 and later moved to Elkhorn, Wisconsin. After serving as a Second Lieutenant in the Civil War, Bennett returned home and opened a drugstore while also studying medicine. It was there, in an unlikely setting for hymn writing, that "Sweet By and By" was born.

Bennett often collaborated with his friend Joseph Webster, a talented musician who struggled with periods of depression. One day, Webster entered Bennett's drugstore visibly discouraged.

When Bennett asked what was wrong, Webster quietly replied, "It will be all right by and by." The phrase immediately sparked inspiration.

According to Bennett's autobiography, he quickly sat down and wrote the words while Webster began composing the melody beside the stove. In less than thirty minutes, the hymn was complete, and the two friends were singing it together with others in the store.

An uncle who overheard the song reportedly declared, "That hymn is immortal." He may not have realized just how true those words would become. Within weeks, children were singing it in the streets, and before long it had become a treasured gospel hymn across America.

Originally written on a simple piece of paper, "Sweet By and By" has endured for more than 140 years, continuing to remind listeners of hope, peace, and the promise of heaven.



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# NEWS

## Paying Meaningful Tribute: Highlighting Toxic Exposure Risks for Veterans in Bibb County During Military Appreciation Month

BY CRISTINA JOHNSON

Far too often, military service in Bibb County, Alabama—as with the rest of the nation—compels personnel to operate in environments where exposure to specialized yet hazardous substances is built into everyday routines rather than an exceptional threat. Whether in battlefields, training exercises, or even non-combat activities, troops may regularly encounter materials that were widely prized and utilized before their detrimental implications were fully understood or formally regulated. That said, National Military Appreciation Month—observed each May—places these realities alongside more visible tributes for military service, broadening the perspective to acknowledge the tolls awaiting during and after transitioning to civilian life. Nevertheless, as awareness of these concerns has evolved, so too has the recognition that the existing frameworks have not always kept pace with the burden of proof placed on those seeking care and compensation. In response, policymakers have advanced legislative efforts—such as the proposed Veterans Exposed to Toxic (VET) PFAS Act—demonstrating a shift toward acknowledging exposure as a serious issue that calls for urgent action.

Toxic Exposure and the Silent Toll Affecting Bibb County Veterans

Intrinsically, Bibb County features a quiet but enduring legacy of noble service and dedication embodied by more than 1,170 veterans who call the locality home. Their presence indeed speaks to a dis-

tinguished record of civic duty and national defense that influenced not only the locals but also the overall character of communities. What a large part of the public did not grasp, however, is that besides warfare, military service also encompasses an occupational hazard that is more difficult to evade. And primarily, that concern stemmed from a long-running history marked by a range of substances initially deemed a breakthrough but later found to carry significant risks. One well-documented example is asbestos, a fibrous mineral that naturally occurs in certain rocks in Alabama. As it was notably prized for its fireproofing and insulating properties, this composition was extensively integrated into old naval vessels and numerous other facilities, such as the Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base southeast of Centreville, to aid in their combat preparations. Over time, researchers established clear links between asbestos exposure and severe conditions that have impacted even rural counties—as manifested by Bibb County, which has logged fewer than ten fatalities from 1999 to 2017.

Alarming, this global health menace is not viewed in isolation; it forms part of a broader continuum of environmental hazards, which also involves per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Initially introduced and adopted by various industries since the 1950s, these synthetic compounds have been dubbed “forever chemicals” as they were acclaimed for their ability to withstand heat, water, stains, and other



materials. The armed forces—particularly the Navy—did not miss spotting this benefit, employing it years later to innovate an effective firefighting agent called aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF). Unfortunately, though this product has been proven valuable in the defense sector, its widespread use also led to serious contamination across Alabama, including at the decommissioned Army Ammunition Plant situated roughly 40 miles from Bibb County. More so, this crisis has placed countless service members susceptible to leukemia, non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, and malignancies impacting the kidney, thyroid, breast, and reproductive system.

Expanding Recognition of Exposure-Related Illnesses Among Veterans

As conversations around military toxic exposure gain momentum, a critical issue likewise

emphasized by veterans and advocates involves how certain cases—particularly those linked to PFAS—are formally recognized within the existing federal benefits systems. Although awareness and scientific investigations into this crisis have expanded considerably in recent years, many health conditions arising from these dangerous substances remain excluded from presumptive privilege granted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a result, affected veterans are forced to prove that their health issues are truly a direct consequence of their active duty exposures. This problem has become even more urgent in the wake of the Honoring Our PACT Act, hailed as a monumental legislative advancement in veterans' benefits. Primarily, the law created presumptive status for a range of illnesses related to burn pits, Agent

Orange, and other hazardous exposures—acknowledging the unreasonable evidentiary demands placed on ailing individuals. Yet even this well-intended measure falls short, as PFAS-related conditions have not been fully integrated into this updated framework.

Heeding this longstanding circumstance, lawmakers have made a decisive move and introduced the VET PFAS Act, intending to extend the reach of the VA's assistance. Specifically, this policy seeks to establish presumptive service connection for conditions associated with PFAS exposure—thereby easing the burden of proof imposed on veterans who would otherwise be required to reconstruct decades-old documentation to access support. In many respects, the measure reflects the paramount reality that toxic exposure within military service should not be treated solely as an in-

dividual evidentiary challenge—particularly when the substances involved have long been known to be carcinogenic and catastrophic to the public's health. As Military Appreciation Month highlights the sacrifices of veterans in Bibb County and across the nation, these ongoing legislative discussions also underscore a broader responsibility attached to that recognition. After all, honoring military service increasingly requires attention not only to visible acts of duty but also to the long-term occupational consequences that may continue affecting personnel long after their years in uniform have ended.

**About the Author**

*Cristina Johnson serves as a veteran advocate at the Asbestos Ships Organization, a nonprofit that raises awareness of veterans' exposure to toxic substances.*

## 4th Nine Weeks Honor Roll at Brent Elementary School

2nd Grade A Honor Roll:

Ava Clements	Henry Mitchell
Jericho "Rock" Jones	Zane Price
Cooper McMillan	
Jackson Pridmore	
Tucker Smith	
John Austin Steele	
Kenzi Swindle	
AvaNichole Hanchey	
Messiah Hill	
Xaya Hill	
Faith Jones	
Aybree Moore	
Norianna Rutledge	
Ashton Taylor	
Zander Taylor	
Aaliyah Cutts	
Noriyah Fuller	
Canaan Gray	
David Smith	
Michael Mapes	
Jordyn Allen	
Easton Buckalew	
Eden Espey	

3rd Grade A Honor Roll:

Aumireya Abercrombie	Briggs Wirnsberger
Ava Bray	Virginia Davis
Rhett Clements	Jax Downs
Tegan Coffin	Sadie Gann
Jackson Crumpler	Cameron Heard
Grant Hines	Adlee Holifield
Parker Hudson	Jack Phelps
Monroe May	Elijah Pickering
Luke Whatley	Addison Sims
Adalynn Williams	Chase Council
David Burns	Jeremy Bell
David Orellano Portillo	Adalida Kennedy
Angel Gonzalez	Emily Donaldson
Lillian Kornegay	Liam Rice
Caden Smith	
Nova Stone	
Oaklyn Acker	
Cathrine Cook	
Bryson Corley	
Annabelle Holmes	
Emory Kinard	
Paizlee Maynor	
River Miller	

4th Grade A Honor Roll:

Saylor Geohagan	Aleigh Taylor
Hazel Martin	Coleigh Taylor
Reagan Melton	Jayce Taylor
Halle Moore	Avery Williams
Elijah Purifoy	Acen Battle
Johnny Smith	Kashlyn Burton
Colton Smitherman	Bradley Colburn
Kiyaan Steward	KyLah DeHart
Greyson Traughber	Justice Dobyne
Jorja Tyner	Beau Huffman
Riley Carter	Malachi Jackson
Markayla Coleman	Akeelan Naugher
Jade Crocker	Brayden Rinehart
Jayden Goree	Braxton Sanders
Jace Hudson	Lexi Taylor
Aaliyah Melton	Zoey Thomas
Kyla Parker	Gannon Burns
Kanen Smith	Elijah Guy
Jayce Michael Taylor	Keleigh Howell
Titus Farley	Colin Hubbard
Sadie Blair Gilbert	Krislyn Johnson
Fran Mitchell	Maggie Robertson
Ava Prevost	Kaitlyn Sanders

2nd Grade A/B Honor Roll:

Fowler Caffee	Katelyn Sigler
Emily Phillips	Za'Kiyah Smith
Hannah Smitherman	Jamaya Stacy
Gunnar Spain	Juwana Suttle
Alison Webb	Parker Wilkins
Jakobe Abercrombie	Ja'Kyla Anderson
Mar'Kaila Alexander	Josalynn Belvin
Asher Kirk	Blayr Carter
Kylen Harris	Jamison Cottingham
Erixon Lopez	Ayden George
Emma Watkins	Kimora Griffin
Zoey Coley	Kinslee Huckleberry
Carter Dailey	Zeke Watkins
Christian McKenzie	
Tyrhianna Stacy	
Aaron Trobaugh	
Lucy Colburn	
Laikyn Flipppo	
Addison Grogan	
Leena Hobson	
Alphonso Huckleberry	
Ivy Murphy	
Messiah Phillips	
Colt Seales	

3rd Grade A/B Honor Roll:

Camden Acker	Zhy'mere Crews
Alberth Albarado Cano	Easton Duncan
Oleria Anderson	Harper Hall
Alyssa Bailey	Michael Sims
Jazmyn Crews	Caiden Tyler
Nasir Cutts	Mac Downs
Jeremiah Griffin	Waylen Frazier
McCoy Hain	Lucas Hobson
Blakely Holifield	Noah Jackson
Kingston Johnson	Jade Suttles
Major Tidwell	Aubrey Wheat
Reese Allen	Ania Wilson
William Alvarado Cruz	Joshua Ramos
Allison Barillas Giron	Jaleah Crews
Alex Geary	Ryder Hunter
Peyton Graves	Myles Hoggle
Keinijah Leverette	Braxton Stevens
Logan Oats	Ma'Liyah Farley
Corbin Quimby	Aubin Sanders
Amrielle Ward	
Amarion Abercrombie	
Tomaze Abercrombie	
l'Leayah Billingsley	
Kaiden Cash	

4th Grade A/B Honor Roll:

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Kingston Cottingham	Kya Cardwell
James Haynes	Khloe Childs
Kenyah Ross	Carter Haynes
Paris Sims	Rosalie Martin
Kateyanna Tabb	Darius Underwood
Connor Buzbee	
Madison Dennis	
Aiden Phillips	
Bronson Rogers	
Jazmine Suttle	
Karsin James	
Miguel Kinard	
Cesar Mazariego Molina	
Brayson Rary	
Matthew Shirley	
Ryder Spain	
Noah Abersold	
Ayden Buzbee	
Giavoni Holifield	
JaLaila King	
Rozlynn Lee	
Holden Ward	
Gunner Wehrenberg	

# The BACK PAGE

## Bibb 4-H Summer Camp Helps Kids Build Real-Life Skills Through Fun and Food

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN  
REPORTER

A new summer camp is coming to Bibb County this July, and it's offering something a little different than the usual "keep the kids busy and mildly sunburned for a week" approach to summer activities.

Bibb County 4-H will host its new 4M Life Skills Camp July 6-10, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Bibb County Extension Office and BMC Wellness Center in Centreville. Designed for children ages 10-12, the five-day camp will focus on helping preteens build practical, real-world skills through hands-on activities, storytelling, food education, and interactive learning.

The camp's theme this year is "Camp Compass," which will guide campers through lessons centered around the four "M's": Money, Math, Meals, and Manners.

According to organizers, the goal is to help kids connect everyday skills to real-life situations in ways that feel engaging and approachable rather than overly classroom-like — which is generally appreciated by children during summer break, you know.

Campers will explore

financial literacy concepts like budgeting, saving, and spending wisely while also learning how math applies to everyday problem-solving and decision-making. Nutrition and healthy food choices will also be a major focus, helping students better understand how meals fuel both body and mind.

The camp will additionally emphasize social skills and communication through lessons on manners, empathy, respect, and building positive relationships with others.

What makes programs like this especially valuable is that they teach skills many adults quietly wish they had learned earlier themselves. Financial confidence, communication, nutrition, and practical problem-solving are the kinds of tools that stick with kids long after summer ends.

Only 25 spots are available for the camp, which costs \$35 to attend.

The camp will take place at the BMC Wellness Center, located at 285 Hospital Drive in Centreville.

For more information, community members can contact Holly Hall, Extension Agent for Bibb County, at 205-926-4310 or by email at hah0056@aces.edu.

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### New Summer Camp Coming This Summer!

Bibb County 4-H  
July 6-10, 2026  
9 AM-4 PM  
Bibb County Extension Office  
BMC Wellness Center  
285 Hospital Drive, Centreville, AL 35042

**CAMP FEE: \$35 / AGES: 10-12**

**Math**  
Kids connect numbers to real-world problem solving, boosting confidence and academic achievement.

**Meals**  
Kids discover how nutrition helps youth fuel their bodies and minds with healthy choices.

**Money**  
Kids learn to budget, save, and spend wisely, inspiring financial capability.

**Manners**  
Kids practice social skills like respect, empathy, and communication that build positive relationships.

**4M LIFE SKILLS CAMP**

*Only 25 Spots Available*

Step into a world of discovery at the **4M Summer Camp**, a 5-day adventure where preteens master four essential life skills: Money, Math, Meals, and Manners. This summer's "Camp Compass" theme takes our 4-H campers on an interactive journey following storybook characters on a food journey from farms to tables. It is a unique, hands-on experience designed to build confidence and practical knowledge through the magic of storytelling and food.

**CONTACT**

Holly Hall  
Extension Agent  
Bibb County

Office (205) 926-4310  
Email hah0056@aces.edu

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## BMC HEALTH AND WELLNESS CORNER

### YOUTH PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIPS

Spring scholarship applications are open throughout the month of May for both flag football and 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).



## BMC WELLNESS CENTER

### FLAG FOOTBALL Registration now open!

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).

### DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE

Access our Early Bird discount by using code **BIRD5** by May 22nd!

Access our sibling discount by using code **SIB5** for \$10 per child! Available through entire registration period. Closes June 14th.

### FEMALES IN FLAG

We're excited to share that we secured a grant to help grow girls flag football in our area! Because of this, we are able to offer 10 girls a discounted registration rate of just \$50. This registration option will also include a waitlist. If the 6 spots fill up, please join the waitlist and we will work to connect additional players with sponsors.

### LITTLE READERS CLUB

This program is designed to help kids build reading and comprehension skills while learning something new each session through engaging topics and hands-on activities.

**Wednesday, May 27th: Ages 3-7 will meet at 12:00pm, and ages 8-12 will meet at 12:45pm.**

This is a free program, but we do ask that you let us know if you plan to attend by registering on our website! We'd love to have your child join us as we kick things off and start this new program full of reading, learning, and exploring.

