

A L A B A M A CURRENTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC AUTHORITY Vol. IX, No. 5 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

**City of Opelika
Sportsplex & Aquatics
Center celebrates
one-year anniversary**



New Features... What's Around the Corner on Climate Change,
AMEA kicks off 2011 Scholarship Program

Plus... In My Opinion, Doug Rye, Watts New, Places to Go and Things to Do, and more!

From the Editor

Public Power: Shining a light on public service

Public power today is an important, contemporary American institution. From small towns to big cities, wherever public power exists, it is an expression of the American ideal of local people working together to meet local needs. It is an expression of the local control that is at the heart of our federalism system.

Public power is hometown power. Public power is an American tradition that works in more than 2,000 communities across the country. That's why we take time each year to recognize and call attention to community ownership of electric utilities.

To celebrate and honor this American tradition, public power systems across the country that collectively provide electricity on a not-for-profit basis to 45 million Americans will recognize Public Power Week, Oct. 3-9.

Public Power Week is a national, annual event sponsored in conjunction with the American Public Power Association (APPA) in Washington, D.C. APPA is the service organization for community- and state-owned electric utilities.

The public power formula is working. No two communities are the same. Each has different strengths, resources, and customers. For this reason, the public power formula isn't the same for every community across the country.

As a public power system, your city/town operates the utility as a community enterprise, which holds down costs and allows all citizens to take part in making decisions about utility services.

These cities and towns light up their homes, businesses and streets with public power — electricity that comes from a community-owned and -operated utility. Each public power system is different, reflecting its hometown characteristics and values, but all have a com-



mon purpose: providing reliable and safe not-for-profit electricity at a reasonable price while protecting the environment.

While the vast majority of public power is owned by cities and towns, a number of counties, public utility districts, and even a handful of states have public power systems. Most — especially the smaller ones — are governed by a city council, while others are overseen by an independently elected or appointed board.

So what are some of the benefits of public power?

- High reliability
- Immediate access to local rate-setting authorities
- Local service and repair access
- Long-term focus on community growth
- Greater portion of revenues stay in the community
- Local employment
- Attractive nature of community-delivered electricity to new and relocating businesses
- Greater awareness of local energy needs

Your public power system is also committed to the community by its involvement and investment in numerous community and civic activities throughout the year.

We hope you will take the time to recognize the men and women who serve you at your public power system as they continue to shine a light in your hometown. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your community, home, and family.

Lisa Miller

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing



**Public Power Week
October 3-9, 2010**

More Facts About Public Power:



Number of states with public power systems (all but Hawaii)



Number of public power systems in the U.S.



Year first public power systems were created



Year by which one out of every three public power systems will celebrate a centennial



Number of public power systems serving communities with populations of 10,000 or fewer



Number of customers served by the largest municipally-owned public power system, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

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MISSION STATEMENT

AMEA's mission is to provide for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power, enabling them to preserve and enhance the benefits of municipal utility ownership for their citizens and the electric customers they serve. We strive to offer services that our Members need and can adapt to provide the best value for their communities and customers.

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ON THE COVER

The City of Opelika's state-of-the-art Sportsplex & Aquatics Center opened its doors on Aug. 31, 2009. In May, the Alabama League of Municipalities selected the City of Opelika as the recipient of the 2010 Quality of Life Award for the city's Sportsplex & Aquatics Center.

The Sportsplex has over 75,000 square feet of space and features an indoor aquatics center (with a heated pool, Jacuzzi, and steam rooms), a splash park, 2 racquetball courts, a youth game room and concession area, an outdoor walking trail, a gymnasium with large stage, a resilient rubber indoor walking track, three large meeting rooms with AV equipment, a warming kitchen, a cardiovascular area, a weight room, group fitness room, an outdoor amphitheater, a tot watch room, an Adult Activity Center, and a state-of-the-art soccer complex. (Photo courtesy of Robert Noles).

In My Opinion



Thank You

Over the past several years, the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) has followed with interest Congressional actions associated with climate change legislation.

Last year, a cap and trade bill was introduced, which we believe to be very unreasonable as it would have had a direct impact on electric rates in a significant manner.

We expressed our opposition to this legislation as being unreasonable and we were pleased when all seven of Alabama's Congressional delegation voted in opposition to the legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives. We were equally pleased that U.S. Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions opposed similar legislation in the Senate.

In my article in the last *Alabama Currents*, I informed you that cap and trade might be considered again and attempts were being made by leaders of Congress to add these provisions to the oil spill legislation. I am pleased to report that due to the opposition by the American Public Power Association (APPA), the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and many other organizations, cap and trade provisions were not added to the oil spill legislation.

On Page 6 of this issue of *Alabama Currents*, you will see a story by APPA regarding the events in this legislative development.

AMEA is certainly supportive of balanced legislation to address environmental enhancements. However, we know that this comes at a cost which all of the world's electric consumers should bear and not just those of the U.S.

We are concerned about you, our consumers, having the ability to pay for these proposals through higher electric rates. We are concerned about the ability of our poor and fixed-income seniors to pay these future costs. We're also concerned about our industries that are competing globally with foreign competitors, which do not have the same electric generating emissions requirements.

I want to take this opportunity to thank every member of the Alabama Congressional delegation for their responsiveness and understanding of what this legislation would have meant to the consumers of Alabama. Their leadership will not be forgotten.

I also want to thank you, our consumers, for expressing your concerns and opposition to this extreme legislation and to our mayors, council members, and utility board members who also stood up and stated their concerns regarding how this would impact their particular cities.

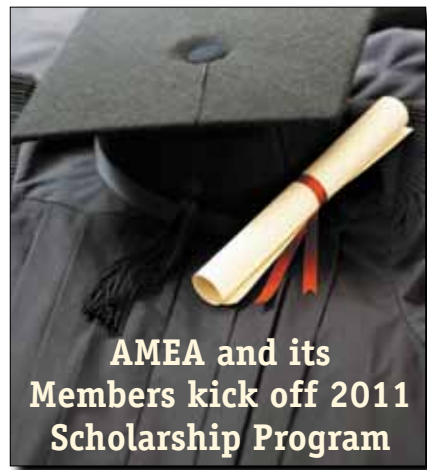
Although we are pleased with the actions of Congress in recent months, we continue to be concerned about actions of the Environmental Protection Agency as it continues to propose new and expanding regulations which are clearly intended to close coal-fueled electric generation. We will continue to keep you informed about actions in Washington which have a direct impact on your electric costs.

Thank you again for your understanding and advocacy which helped achieve positive outcomes.

When you see your current member of Congress, be sure to thank them for standing up for you in the cap and trade legislative fight.

Fred D. Clark, Jr.

AMEA President & CEO



AMEA and its Members kick off 2011 Scholarship Program

Will you be graduating from high school in the spring of 2011? Do you receive your electricity from a municipal electric system in Alabama? Then if your answer to these questions is "yes," you could be eligible to receive a scholarship from the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and your public power system.

For the past 18 years, AMEA has assisted deserving students in each of its 11 Member cities (Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley, Lafayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee) with their first-year tuition to a state university. Recognizing that many high school seniors seek training in a technical or trade program, AMEA added a technical school scholarship in 2004.

To be eligible for either of AMEA's scholarships, a student's family must receive electric service from a Member's electric utility and the student must attend an Alabama

Applications are currently available from school counselors in these Member cities, or you can go online to the AMEA web site, www.amea.com, Scholarship Program. Applications are reviewed and selected by an independent panel of college guidance personnel. Application deadline is **Monday, Feb. 7, 2011**.

For more information on the program, contact your school counselor or Pamela Poole, AMEA's Scholarship Program Coordinator, (800) 239-2632, Ext. 110, (334) 387-3504, or pam@amea.com.

Testing homes can help consumers maximize their energy costs

By Doug Rye



As I write this column, I have just returned from your fine state of Alabama. When you read this column, summer will be ending and football season will be starting. Time does go by so swiftly. It was a hot summer in Alabama, but the records show that all of your summers are not and that usually means higher utility bills.

I received a call this past May from a utility company (UC) in Alabama that went something like this:

UC: Mr. Rye, can you come help teach our employees about the ways we can help our customers have more efficient houses and lower utility bills?

Doug: When do you need me?

UC: As soon as possible. Can you come this month?

Doug: No, I'm booked solid until July 29.

UC: We will take you then.

Doug: That's great. We will plan to be there and teach you how to test houses and actually fix the houses.

To make a long story short, we were there eight days on the hottest week of the year testing and fixing houses for low-income senior citizens. This is called real hands-on training from guys with lots of experience.

The utility company provided four marvelous helpers to get the work done. I can tell you for a fact that those four helpers will never be the same. They learned plenty and will be "energy nuts" forever.

The single most important thing that they learned was that testing and fixing houses is not really that difficult or as I like to say, "this is not rocket surgery." It is mostly knowing, not guessing, what the problems are and getting to work even if it is a 100-degree day. We tested four houses and actually worked on five houses.

Each time that I write an article for this publication, it is my intent to help you. The recent trip was so successful that I believe I can help you by sharing the details of each house.

House #1:

- A typical three bedroom, brick veneer house of about 1,100 square feet that was built in the late 1970s on a concrete slab
- Single pane aluminum windows
- Electric wall heaters
- A window air conditioning unit through the wall for cooling (no ductwork)
- 4-inch fiberglass batts in the wall
- About 3 inches of blown fiberglass in the attic

There are thousands of houses in America like this one.

We first made a walk-through of the house looking

for obvious problems and then we tested the house using a blower door unit, which is a fan with instruments that measures the amount of air going through the fan at a given speed. It actually simulates the amount of air infiltration that the house has if a 20-mile-per-hour wind were blowing on all exterior surfaces of the house at the same time. The house tested at .52 natural air changes per hour, which means that 52 percent of all the air in the house could leak to the outside and be replaced by outside air every hour. Of course, that new outside air would be hot and humid in the summer and cold in the winter, and the heating and cooling system will run much more than it would if the house had less air infiltration.

We immediately went to the local home center to get the supplies that we would need. Here's the list with approximate cost:

- 12 tubes of clear acrylic latex silicone caulking, \$36
- Two cans of minimum expanding foam, \$20
- 4'x8' sheet of 2-inch foam board, \$20
- Foam gaskets for electrical switch and outlet covers, \$25
- Total cost of materials, about \$100

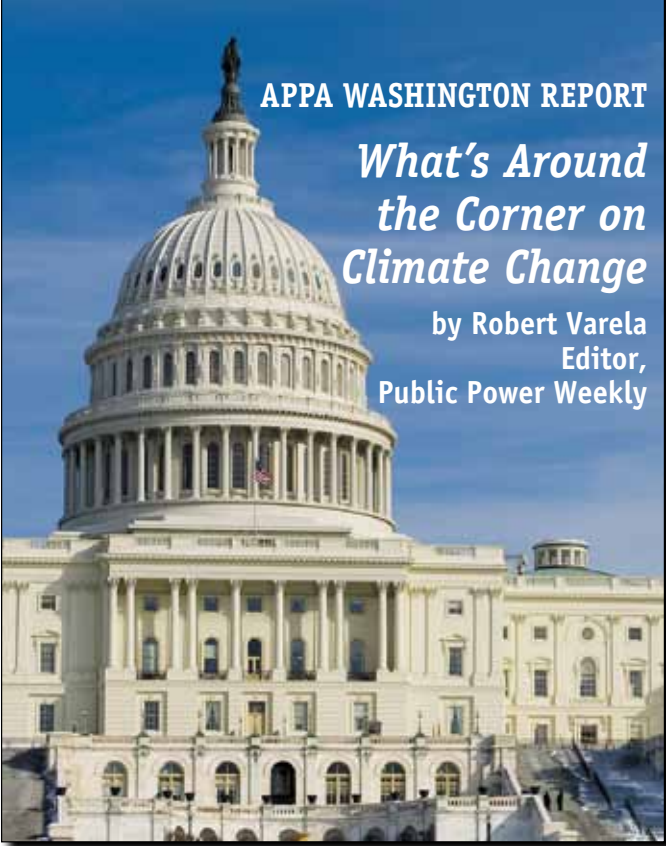
With the blower door running, we then started caulking every place where unwanted air was coming into the house. We used foam for the big holes such as those where the pipes come through the walls at the kitchen and bath sinks. We made an attic access cover from the foam board. We then tested the house again and it tested .34, a reduction of about 30 percent of the original leakage. That may not sound like much, but it's about like closing a window that was open about 3 inches every day of the year.

We then went back to the home center and purchased 30 bags of cellulose insulation at a cost of about \$325. The home center did not charge for the use of the machine since we purchased over 20 bags of insulation. It took about five hours to add 6 inches of cellulose insulation to the attic.

Two days later, one of the trainees went by the house to see how the owner was faring. When he walked in, the elderly owner said, "Man, am I glad to see you. I nearly froze to death last night." Remember, this was a week when every day was right at 100 degrees.

There will be another story in my November/December article of *Alabama Currents*. Until then, enjoy the fall, win some games, and work on your house.

Doug Rye is an Arkansas architect. He is a freelance writer for Alabama Currents, providing energy-efficiency information and tips to help customers maximize their energy dollars. Have a question for Doug? Contact him at (501) 653-7931 or www.dougrye.com



APPA WASHINGTON REPORT

What's Around the Corner on Climate Change

by Robert Varela
Editor,
Public Power Weekly

reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” Carol Browner, director of the White House office of Energy and Climate Change Policy, told reporters. “The president believes in the science, he believes in the Supreme Court decision, and we will continue to move forward.” In other words, don’t expect EPA to slow down.

Prospects for congressional action to rein in EPA are questionable. Reid last month agreed to allow a vote this year on a bill introduced by Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., to delay EPA regulation for two years, but passage by the Senate is uncertain and the House could be a bigger hurdle. And President Obama is expected to veto any delay bill.

A delay provision in an appropriations bill could be a possibility. The House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment on July 22 rejected an amendment offered by Rep. Steven LaTourette, R-Ohio, that would have put off EPA regulation of stationary sources of greenhouse gas emissions. The amendment failed on a 7-7 tie vote, with two Democrats voting for it.

Democrats will continue to try to garner the 60 votes needed to pass climate change legislation, Reid said, without committing to a timetable. However, sources say that while an economy-wide cap-and-trade bill is dead, Senate Democrats will revisit the issue this fall with a utility-only bill. For the foreseeable future, an economy-wide cap-and-trade bill seems to have been ruled out.

There has also been speculation that Democrats might try to add climate change provisions to a bill during a House-Senate conference. Citing the possibility, Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., introduced a bill in late July that would prevent cap-and-trade from being added to a House-Senate Conference bill if previous action has not been taken in the Senate.

It’s hard to say what’s ahead around this corner. One guess is that Congress will do what it so often does—nothing. The best chance for a utility-only climate bill (and it’s a long shot) would be if utilities cut a deal to support a bill in exchange for relief from EPA regulations. Democratic leaders also will face a lot of pressure from coal-state members and moderates to delay an EPA carbon emissions rule, but enactment still looks unlikely.

EPA shows no signs of slowing down on climate change or a variety of other regulations that could have significant impacts on power plants. However, the courts could slow down the agency, perhaps for a few years.

It’s an uncertain future at best, but that seems to be what’s around the corner.

The American Public Power Association (APPA), created in 1940 as a non-profit, non-partisan organization, is the service organization for the nation’s more than 2,000 community-owned electric utilities that serve more than 45 million Americans. APPA’s purpose is to advance the public policy interests of its members and their consumers, and provide member services to ensure adequate, reliable electricity at a reasonable price with the proper protection of the environment.

Efforts to pass a climate change bill appear to have turned a corner.

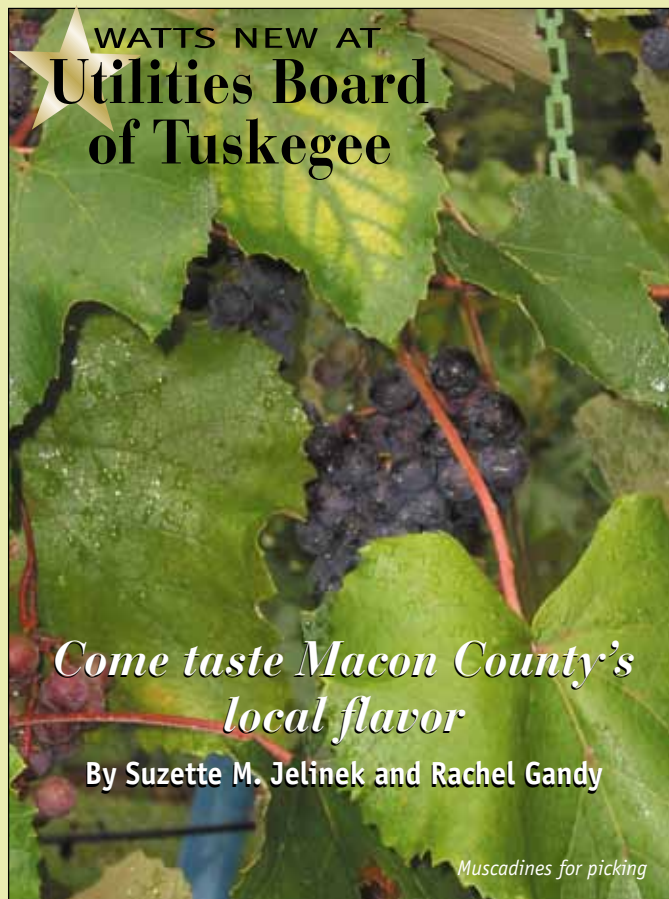
A few weeks before a self-imposed deadline of Congress’s August recess, Senate Democrats gave up on passing a comprehensive, economy-wide climate change and energy bill, specifically the American Power Act introduced by Sens. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn.

With a big cap-and-trade bill dead, they turned to Plan B—a “utility-only” bill that would impose an emissions cap on electric utilities only. Both Senate Energy Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Kerry and Lieberman put together draft utility-only bills. The Kerry-Lieberman bill ran to more than 600 pages.

With time running out, they never got a chance to finish their drafts. The utility-only concept picked up support from a few individual investor-owned utilities, but it also ran into vocal opposition from some quarters. APPA supports an economy-wide approach, under a policy resolution adopted by its member utilities in 2008. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, American Chemistry Council and American Iron and Steel Institute came out publicly against the utility-only concept.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., took it down to the wire, waiting as long as he could before tossing in the towel on passing utility-only climate change legislation—for now. “We know we don’t have the votes,” he said. Supporters reportedly were about 10 votes shy of the 60 they needed.

Reid’s decision shifts attention to the Environmental Protection Agency’s pending greenhouse gas regulations and to efforts in Congress to delay those regulations. “We will continue to use all of the tools available to us to



★ WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee

Come taste Macon County's local flavor

By Suzette M. Jelinek and Rachel Gandy

Muscadines for picking

Whippoorwill Vineryards is a small, quaint winery that was started by Tim Watkins. Watkins read a *Progressive Farmer* article about fruit orchards and ways a person can start a winery. As a teen Watkins used to make wine as a hobby with his family.

On Oct. 5, 2005, Tim Watkins and his brother-in-law, Chad Ledbetter, started Whippoorwill Vineyards. Whippoorwill Vineyards is a family-run winery with Vickie Watkins and Amy Ledbetter on the front end in charge of public relations and tasting. To enhance the experience, they sell goat cheese from Bulgar Creek Farm in Notasulga, also located in Macon County.

Whippoorwill specializes in the Scuppernong grape and four types of muscadines: Cynthiana, Lenoir, Conquistador, and Confederate Rose. They have recently won the bronze award for both their Lenoir and Confederate Rose wines compared to over 30,000 wines at a taste testing in New York. They are seeking blueberry and blackberry farmers to include in their repertoire for expanding their wine listing.

Muscadines (*vitis rotundifolia*) are native to the Southeastern United States and thrive on the heat and humidity common to the region. They are known for producing high levels *Resveratrol*, an antioxidant that blocks the effects of unstable molecules that occur naturally in the human body called free radicals. Free radicals are known to cause cell damage and have been linked to heart disease, stroke, signs of aging, and certain types of cancers and macular

degeneration of the eye. For this reason, Muscadine grapes are currently being sought after as a renewable source for *Resveratrol* and have been deemed nature's healthiest grape.

Muscadines are best known for their extraordinary flavor, high-sugar content, and an unusually thick outer skin. A single one-cup serving of muscadines would more than double the average person's antioxidant intake. That positions muscadines and scuppernongs as the elite among a list of powerful antioxidant foods that includes blueberries, pomegranate, blackberries, cranberries and raspberries. Wine is the perfect host for preserving the unprecedented levels of antioxidants found in muscadines, scuppernongs and blueberries. By preventing oxygen exposure, the antioxidant compounds are protected from disintegration by CO₂.

During the process of making wine, everything is done by hand: the harvesting, bottling, corking, and sealing.

Whippoorwill Vineyards invites everyone to come and enjoy the calm scenery and wine tasting. Whippoorwill Vineyards is located at 4282 County Road 31, Notasulga. Hours of operations are Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, 1-5 p.m. For more information, visit the web site, www.whippoorwillvineyards.com, or call (334) 401-9018 to set up a tasting.



Vickie Watkins with vat containing 16,000 lbs. of grapes

WATTS NEW IN Piedmont

Piedmont's Ivey named Veteran of the Year

By Eddie Burkhalter
The Piedmont Journal

Of all that Travis Ivey has carried with him from the battlefields of a World War II Europe, regret is not among them. The Piedmont resident was recently named Disabled Veteran of the Year by the State of Alabama Disabled American Veterans.

Blinded and deafened just 19 days before the German surrender, Ivey said he made a decision while recovering in a hospital bed that he would not allow his injuries to define him.

"Lord, here I am, I'm blind. I got it honorably. I don't have anything to be ashamed of," said Ivey. "Make me a blessing instead of a burden. So that's what I've tried to be ever since."

"He's been a fixture of this community," said Piedmont Mayor Brian Young. "I'd love to think I'd have the ability to give as much as he has, but I'm not sure I would," said Young. "You've got some people that sacrificed a lot for us to have what we have."

The son of a cotton mill worker and a homemaker, Ivey was captain of the 1939 Piedmont football team. He was drafted into the United States Army on Aug. 4, 1943, and soon found himself on a bus along with 29 other men from Piedmont, headed towards Fort McClellan.

He can recall with vivid detail some of the most infamous battles ever fought. The Battle of St. Lo, where he was a machine-gunner. The town was so badly damaged during the fight that the writer Samuel Beckett would later call the northwestern French town, "The Capital of the Ruins."

At the Battle of the Bulge, where "everything was covered with snow and visibility was zero," the Germans painted their tanks white and wore all white uniforms to blend in with the landscape. This is where his 4th Infantry Division kept at the Germans until they eventually chased them down to Nuremberg.

Not long after arriving in Nuremberg, Ivey received word from his commanding officer. "My platoon leader told me that the platoon was going to ride the tanks. They meant for us to walk through and clear out the Germans," said Ivey.

"We got into Nuremberg just as the sun was setting. A beautiful sunset. Most beautiful one I've ever seen and my last one." The date was April 19, 1945, just 19 days before the end of the war.



World War II veteran Travis Ivey of Piedmont with his military medals. Ivey was awarded two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, and four major campaign ribbons for his service. (Photo courtesy of Eddie Burkhalter, The Piedmont Journal).

Ivey describes riding the tank with six other soldiers, and at 8:05 p.m. they noticed a small, low-flying German plane silhouetted in the darkening sky.

"It circled around to our right, came in and shot a rocket that hit on the rear of our tank," said Ivey. Two of the riders died instantly, and the rest were all wounded. A medic passed Ivey by, at first believing him to be dead, but something made the young medic turn back and he picked Ivey up and carried him to safety.

"The Lord turned him around and sent him back," said Ivey.

Recovery was long and hard, taking Ivey from hospitals in Ansbach, Germany to Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. Unconscious for a month, Ivey woke to the news that he would never

see again. The German rocket that took his eyes and his hearing left him with three small pieces of shrapnel dangerously close to his brain.

"I had to learn mobility. How to travel with a cane. I learned Braille," said Ivey.

Married in 1941 to his first wife, Gladdis, the two were together for 52 years until her death in 1993. He remarried in 1996 to his current wife, Jo. No children of his own, Ivey has made a life of helping others.

After the service, Ivey attended Jacksonville State University where he received his degree in secondary education in 1958. He taught school for 25 years at E.H. Gentry Trade School in Talladega, teaching others Braille, math, mobility, and all the activities of daily living that he had to learn himself.

"I helped a lot of people," said Ivey. "I really enjoyed my teaching."

Ivey retired from teaching in 1984 and moved back to Piedmont, back to the place and the people he grew up with. In 1972, Ivey became the third blind member of a Masonic Lodge in Alabama. Twelve years later he was elected Chaplain of his lodge. In 1991, he received the highest honor that a lodge can appoint to a member, and was elected Worshipful Master.

"They said I was the first blind person in Alabama, and maybe the United States, to ever serve as Worshipful Master in the Masonic Lodge," said Ivey. Ivey still serves as Chaplain of the Lozahatchee Lodge #97 in Piedmont. He is also

a longtime member of the Piedmont First Baptist Church.

Over the years, Ivey said he has been fortunate to call other World War II veterans his friends.

"Many of them have gone on to glory. They've passed on," said Ivey, who turned 90 in July. "I'm right along behind all of them, of course some of them were a little bit older than I am. I feel good. I'm in good health, and I'm a happy individual."

A chance encounter several years ago made it possible for Ivey to reconnect with a very special person. After speaking with some new neighbors, Ivey discovered that they had known a man who was a medic during World War II.

L.V. Barker was living in nearby Weaver, and once the two men were finally able to get together for dinner, it became clear that Barker was the same medic that had carried Ivey off that Nuremberg battlefield so many years ago, saving his life. The two became fast friends, and stayed in contact until Barker's death.

The 2009 Disabled Veteran of the Year, Carl Bailey, was chairman of this year's selection committee. Bailey said when the five members of the committee began looking at this year's candidates, Ivey stood out.

"He overcame a tremendous disability to have a successful life," said Bailey. "He's got a wonderful attitude about his place in life, and how he's lived it. I really admire him. He's a special person."

Rick Freeman, senior vice commander of the Alabama DAV, said he has known Ivey nearly all his life.

"He is amazing. I would see him walking down the street and I would stop and talk to him," said Freeman. "I remember one morning I stopped and talked to him for about 10 minutes and he stopped me and said 'Hey Rick, you're going to have to take me to the bank. I forgot how many steps I was on.'"

Ivey feels it is important to speak about his wartime experiences. "Fellows like me, if we don't tell young people about World War II, they'll never know."

★ WATTS NEW IN **Dothan**

Rotarians and City of Dothan make Miracle Playground a reality

By Joette Booker

Dothan and Houston County Rotarians have once again joined forces with the City of Dothan and area residents and businesses to enhance the lives of our children. These groups have worked tirelessly to give every child the opportunity to fulfill the dream of playing on a playground, regardless of their physical abilities, by building Dothan's Miracle Playground.

The universally-accessible playground is being built adjacent to the Miracle League Field at Westgate Park. It is designed specifically for children with mobility challenges and other special needs. By removing any barriers, the playground will provide enjoyment to all children, promoting social interaction between those with special needs and typically developing children.

As a result of generous contributions from businesses, individuals and civic organizations, this dream is taking flight. City forces have come together to help put wind beneath the wings of this dream by doing their part.

Several departments, including General Services (Landscaping Division), Leisure Services, Public Works and Dothan Utilities have contributed during all phases of the project. Dothan Utilities, most specifically, by installing sewer and water service, irrigation system and all the necessary lighting by donating in-kind labor, equipment and supplies. Beginning in late June, temporary electric service was installed for construction use. Shortly thereafter, the bathrooms and parking lot lighting was installed, as well as underground service for future lighting needs.

Dothan Utilities is very passionate about both the Miracle League Field and the Miracle Playground. One of our own family members benefits greatly from both. Lane Mayes, son of Dothan Utilities Director Billy Mayes, is not only a Miracle League advocate, but a participant and athlete as well. Lane was born with Spina Bifida and is confined to a wheelchair. Since the opening of Miracle League Field, Lane has excelled as an active participant and looks forward to spending many hours on the new playground.

Mike West, Dothan City Manager, said, "The City of Dothan and Dothan Utilities are proud of all of our citizens. We are honored to have the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful project."

*Lane Mayes with
Leisure Services Director
Elston Jones*



Youth get inside look at the LaFayette Police Department

**By Chris Busby
The LaFayette Sun**



The LaFayette Youth Police Academy was started with the intention to give local youth the chance to do something active and educational at the end of their summer break. It was also a chance to give an inside look at what police officers and public safety officials really do.

"I think this week cleared up a lot of misconceptions people have about police work," said LaFayette Police Chief Kenny Vines. "A lot of kids just think we go out and arrest people, and the police academy was a chance to show these kids that it is a much more involved process."

More than 50 local youth attended the first ever LaFayette Youth Police Academy. Community Officer Daniele Clark called it an overwhelming success.

"It was much better than I expected," said Clark. "The participation and the support from the community made this work and set the groundwork for many years to come with this program."

Throughout the week, the cadets participated in a number of law enforcement activities. They made trips to the Chambers County Jail and Courthouse where they learned about the legal proceedings that go along with law enforcement.

Some of the highlights of the week included a mock crime scene set up by officers for the cadets to investigate and a high-speed police chase that included a rescue operation.

Cadets made a trip to the firing range where they learned the skills police must use when handling weapons. They were also given a sniper demonstration by a member of the local S.W.A.T. team.



Youth enjoy the activities of this summer's City of LaFayette Youth Police Academy. (Photos courtesy of Chris Busby, The LaFayette Sun, and Community Officer Daniele Clark, LaFayette Police Department)

There was also a fitness requirement for the cadets, and each day the kids started with an hour of morning exercises.

There were 53 participants and more than half were females. They were divided into seven squads and each had a squad leader.

Both Clark and Vines said that it was a valuable experience for the kids and the officers involved.

"They were a great bunch of kids," said Vines. "It was just a real success and we are already looking forward to next year."

Graduation was held at Eastside Elementary School in LaFayette and the young cadets celebrated with family and the officers the completion of a great week of fun.

Cadet Jamal Harrison was given the Top Cadet Award at the graduation ceremony.

"None of this could have been possible without the participation of the community and the donations from businesses," added Clark. "We appreciate all the support for our local youth and public safety workers. The support and response from the community has shown that the Police Academy was just another positive step for the City of LaFayette."



Dugger and Peterson receive association awards

By David Horton

Riviera Utilities' Mike Dugger, CEO/General Manager, and Richard Peterson, Manager of Water, Gas and Wastewater Departments, were recently recognized by their associations with prestigious awards.

Dugger was recently honored with Electric Cities of Alabama's (ECA) Public Service Award at the Annual Meeting and Governmental Affairs Conference in Orange Beach. ECA is a coalition of the state's municipally-owned electric utilities, which span the state from the Tennessee Valley region in the north to the Gulf and Wiregrass regions of the south.

"I am honored to be chosen for this award, especially when there are so many people in this organization who could easily have been selected," said Dugger. "I am proud of this award because we really work hard to represent our customers in the political arena and at home. It is our job to make sure we deliver reliable service at the most cost-effective price. We are proud of what we do in our communities. Thank you for this honor."

Before receiving the award, Jonathan Hand, ECA Executive Director, said, "Mike represents the standards of service and stewardship Electric Cities of Alabama seeks to recognize and encourage with this award. Not only is Mike a dedicated Utility Manager for Riviera Utilities, he also brings a common sense approach in dealing with state and federal legislation to better benefit not only municipal utilities, but the entire industry."

"On behalf of ECA, and the one million consumers in 36 cities we represent in the state of Alabama, I thank Mike for his service and friendship and am proud to present him with the 2010 ECA Public Service Award," Hand added.



Mike Dugger



Richard Peterson

Dugger, who also serves on the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority Board of Directors, has been an employee of Riviera Utilities for 21 years.

Richard Peterson received the Alabama Natural Gas Association (ANGA) Outstanding Service Award at the association's recent Annual Meeting in Point Clear. He was chosen to receive

the award based on his contributions to ANGA. Peterson demonstrated his talents as Chairman of the 2010 Spring Seminar where we had the second most attended Spring Conference for ANGA.

Peterson graduated from the University of South Alabama with a degree in Civil Engineering and went to work for Riviera Utilities in 1989.

He was involved in the design and planning of the gas, water and wastewater systems at Riviera Utilities. He and others were involved in the management of company policy and rate design for the utility company.

He is a member of American Waterworks Association, America Society of Professional Engineers, Water Environment Federation, Alabama Rural Water Association and Alabama Natural Gas Association and he serves on the ANGA Board of Directors.

"I believe that my participation in ANGA is a testament to our Manager, Mike Dugger, and our Board's commitment to the gas industry and a compliment to our gas department personnel who are so capable," said Peterson. "Without the support that comes from within our organization, I wouldn't have the opportunity to serve ANGA. The relationships I have developed within ANGA are special to me and it makes receiving this Service Award a tremendous honor."

"Riviera Utilities takes great pride in the leadership roles that our company leaders have taken on in our local and state organizations," said David Horton, Manager of Public Affairs. "The employees of Riviera are proud to extend our congratulations to Mike and Richard on these deserved recognitions. Riviera is dedicated to remaining a leader in the utility industry."



WATTS NEW IN
Opelika

Opelika's Sportsplex & Aquatics Center celebrates one-year anniversary

By Jan Gunter

Opelika's state-of-the-art Sportsplex and Aquatics Center will have been open for one year by the time you read this article and by anyone's standards, this facility has been a monumental success for the City of Opelika.

The \$32 million complex represents the largest project in the city's history, and represents the first ever public-private partnership on a construction project – with individuals and companies having contributed nearly \$5 million towards its building.

Because of the information the city gathered during a city-wide "citizen survey" conducted during the mid 2000s, the City of Opelika administration, Opelika Parks & Recreation Board, and the executive staff of Opelika's Parks & Recreation Department were nearly 100 percent certain that "if we built the complex, people would come". But as with any new idea, there was the element of "are we really sure?" that occupied every initial planning meeting as the dream began to unfold in sketches and architectural layouts. Finally, after months of anticipation,

groundbreaking took place on Feb. 21, 2008, and construction began in earnest. Meetings continued.

Finally, the question was asked: how will we determine the Center's success in the first year? Trying to be realistic in their expectations, and after many conversations with communities in other areas that had undertaken the same type of project, and taking into consideration the amount of revenues needed to sustain the new facilities in its first year, Opelika's leaders determined the following: the Sportsplex & Aquatics Center would be a success in its first year if it acquired between 700 and 800 memberships.

As of Aug. 2, 2010, here are the hard numbers for the Opelika Sportsplex & Aquatics Center.

- Total Memberships: 2,589
- Total Members: 6,906
- Opelika Residents: 80.35 percent
- Females: 52 percent
- Males: 48 percent

For Opelika's Parks & Recreation staff, this has been a year of learning quickly. For one thing the staff has grown immensely. They now have

certified trainers, therapists, lifeguards and aerobics instructors to oversee all programs.

The Sportsplex is also a member of the Medical Fitness Association and has a physician on board acting as the center's Medical Director. He oversees health risk procedures and policies to help members exercise safely. He also meets with the Director of the Fitness Center to review programs such as prenatal fitness, arthritis aqua, and tot watch guidelines.

The Aquatics Center not only is the home of the Opelika Sea Dawgs, it is also the home of Opelika's first ever Special Olympics swim team.

The Center also has a corporate wellness program. Many of Opelika's corporate businesses have teamed up with the city to offer their employees special programs to keep them healthy and this keeps the company's health costs to a minimum. The corporate wellness programs include: Initial fitness and wellness assessments, Targeted Wellness Programs, Wellness Coaching, Onsite Classes, Physician Consent and HSQs, Metabolic Testing, and presentations by area experts.

The Adult Activities Center is always buzzing with activities from the Silver Sneakers® to Wii game activities, to the trips organized and carried out by the Activities Center director and her staff. Senior adults even have their own computer labs where they can learn the basics about the Internet, Facebook, and other social media networking.

A tribute to the center's first year of success came when the Alabama League of Municipalities honored Opelika with the 2010 Quality of Life Award during the League's May Annual Meeting in Mobile.

Recreational opportunities are endless for Opelika residents through the city's new Sportsplex & Aquatics Center, said Mayor Gary Fuller.

"We believe that as we strive to make our community healthier, as we enhance the physical, cultural and social well-being of those we serve, the City is living up to the motto of our Parks & Recreation Department," said Fuller. "We truly are a community that has something for everybody."

Lanett's Cop for a Week Program proves successful

By Jennie Gunnells

The City of Lanett Police and Recreation Department began a program in June 2009, called Cop for a Week. The program was started by Acting Police Chief Tifton Dobbs. It was held at the L. B. Sykes Junior High and Community Center located on Cherry Drive in Lanett. The program was so successful that it has become an annual event.

This year, the Cop for a Week Program was offered on two different occasions, June 21-25 and July 12-16. There were 39 in the first group this year and 45 in the second.

The program is designed to help young people with career and leadership opportunities, life skills and character development. The group experiences strict discipline, drills, ceremonies and physical exercise. There were field trips to the



Youth participate in the City of Lanett Cop for a Week Program



These services include GED Preparation Classes, Literacy Programs and Jobs Readiness Classes and Parenting Services, such as Great Expectations, Special Deliveries, and the Parent Project.

They were able to experience golf cart driving, rock climbing, fighting fires, watch a high-speed vehicle chase, K-9 demonstration with CCSO Deputy Terry Wood, a live Taser demonstration, and many more helpful and useful demonstrations and skills.

School Resource Officer (SRO) John P. Norris, III, advised said the cost of the Youth Police Academy is \$50 per week and lunch is provided. SRO Norris stated that around 60 percent of the youth's costs for the program were paid by local businesses which provided scholarship funds. This allowed the youth and the community to benefit from this character building program.

Mayor Oscar Crawley said, "This is a very worthwhile program and the City of Lanett plans to keep this annual program for many years to come. Other nearby cities are beginning to offer this program. "

Chambers County Jail, Juvenile Court and the Lee County Juvenile Detention Center. For a fun-field trip, the youth visited Wild Animal Safari in Pine Mountain, GA. After the graduation ceremony, the group held a cookout for the participants and their immediate families.

The youth are taught firearm safety, drug awareness, education in administering first aid, processing crime scenes, mock domestic disputes and many other valuable life skills. Each youth must arrive on time every day wearing an academy shirt, khaki pants or shorts and tennis shoes. The Youth Police Academy has a Code of Conduct and must be obeyed by all cadets.

The youth learned formations and marching and were able to familiarize themselves with fire and police vehicles. They used drunken goggles provided by Adrian Carpenter of Circle of Care, a local agency that provides Adult Education Services.



WATTS NEW IN Alexander City

Alexander City's 30th Annual Oktoberfest is just around the corner

By Tracy Kendrick

As the leaves begin to turn and football fever is in the air, it can only mean one thing...the Alexander City Oktoberfest is just around the corner. This year will mark the 30th year for the event. Oktoberfest is held each year at the Charles E. Bailey Sportplex. This year's event is scheduled for Oct. 9 beginning at 8 a.m.

Each year the park is blocked off to through traffic. Parking is available at the Alabama Highway 22 side of the park. Trolley pickup and drop-off is available at the parking lots to take you right to the vendors. A variety of shopping and arts and crafts vendors are set up in the middle of the Charles E Bailey Sportplex. Whether you are looking for purses or Tupperware, there is always a vendor who should have exactly what you need.

What would a festival be without food? Vendors will be selling a mixture of food. You can find boiled peanuts and homemade baked goods. Funnel cakes will also be available. With so many different types of food, there will be something for all cravings.

Oktoberfest provides fun for everyone. Kids will enjoy all the activities in the Kidsfest area. If you like classic cars, you'll love the Oktoberfest Classic Cars Show. The Indian Artifacts Exhibit is also a must see. Live entertainment is also available.

Plan now to attend the 30th Annual Oktoberfest. This event is a wonderful way to spend the day with your family. From shopping and eats, to vintage cars and kids activities, you are sure to find something for everyone.

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE IN ALEXANDER CITY:
Day Time (256) 409-2080
After Hours/Holidays - Call Police Dept.
256) 234-3421 - DO NOT CALL 911

WATTS NEW IN Fairhope

Fairhope transitions to biofuel transformers

By D. Fran Morley



Electric Superintendent Scott Sligh and Joe Wolchina look over transformer.

The Fairhope Electric Department has begun switching out old transformers that use a petroleum-based mineral oil as a coolant for newer models that use soybean oil, according to Electric Superintendent Scott Sligh.

"Envirotemp FR3 fluid is a biofuel that is fire resistant, meaning it takes a much higher temperature to catch on fire," said Sligh. "It's also safer because it's free of hazardous PCBs. It has been tested by utilities around the country for the past decade, and it has an outstanding track record. My plan is to purchase new transformers that use

this fluid and begin replacing all the transformers in our system."

The new biofuel can also be used in old transformers, Sligh said.

"We sometimes have reason to recondition old transformers, and now when we do so, we'll also switch to the soy oil. It would be difficult to weed out mineral oil overnight, so this is something we will do gradually."

While the soy oil is slightly more expensive than petroleum-based, it has a lot of advantages, Sligh said.

"This oil is non-toxic to aquatic life, which is a big plus in this area. It's readily biodegradable, and much safer and easier to clean up if a spill occurs. It does not come with all the regulations that mineral oil does because there are no PCBs."

Sligh said transformer leaks are not that common and are usually small. "But if a pole is knocked down by a car or a storm, the transformer, which normally contains 12-14 gallons of oil, can spill, and that's a problem we won't have to worry about with the soy oil."

According to the organization StepUp, which advocates for safer electric transformers, soy oil helps transformers to perform better and last twice as long as those with mineral oil.

Places to Go and Things to Do

Alexander City

Saturdays in September, 7:30 a.m.-12 noon,

MainStreet Alexander City Farmer's Market.

Located at the fountain on Broad Street. Local growers exhibit and sell fruits, vegetables and plants. For more information, call (256) 329-9227.

Sept. 16, 2 p.m., Adelia M. Russell Library. Come and celebrate the life and music of country singing artist Conway Twitty. TCB Shows presents Terry Turner performing as Conway Twitty.

Sept. 21 and 22, Alexander City Parks and Recreation (ACPR) 50+: Senior Driver's Safety Course. Classes are from 8 a.m. until 12 noon at the Senior Activity Center. Registration fee is \$10 for ACPR 50+ members and \$14 for all others. Payment due by Sept. 7.

Sept. 23, ACPR 50+: Monthly Luncheon. Lunch at 11 a.m. at the Senior Activity Center. Bring \$2 and a side dish.

Sept. 27, ACPR 50+: In-House Rook Tournament. Tournament starts at 10 a.m. at the Senior Activity Center. No partner necessary. Bring \$3 to participate and lunch is included.

ACPR 50+: On Going Programs. 2nd and 4th Mondays, 2 p.m., Quilt and Sew; Mondays, 1 p.m., Bowling at IdleTime; Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m., Rook card games; Tuesdays, 1 p.m., Bridge Games; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. (Sportplex Cabin), Line Dancing; Wednesdays, 9 a.m., Mexican Train Dominoes; Fridays, 9 a.m., Canasta Hand and Foot. For more information, call (256) 329-2910.

Saturdays in October, 7:30 a.m.-12 noon, MainStreet Alexander City Farmer's Market. Located at the fountain on Broad Street. Local growers exhibit and sell fruits, vegetables and plants. For more information call (256) 329-9227.

ACPR 50+: Low Impact Fitness Classes. Mondays and Wednesdays. Classes at 10 a.m. in the Alex City Gymnastics Building located near the Chamber of Commerce. Classes are free for those who are 50+.

Oct. 2, Alex City Horse Riding Club: Ingle Walking Horse Show. For more information, visit www.achrc.com, or call Jimmy Avery at (256) 234-2925.

Oct. 9, ACPR: Oktoberfest. Activities begin at 8 a.m. at the Charles E Bailey Sportplex.

ACPR 50+: On Going Programs. 2nd and 4th Mondays, 2 p.m., Quilt and Sew; Mondays, 1 p.m., Bowling at IdleTime; Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m., Rook card games; Tuesdays 1 p.m., Bridge Games; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m., (Sportplex Cabin), Line Dancing; Wednesdays, 9 a.m., Mexican Train Dominoes; Fridays, 9 a.m., Canasta Hand and Foot. For more information, call (256) 329-2910.

Dothan

Sept. 1, First Annual Economic Summit on Jobs.

Hosted by the City of Dothan, Houston County, and the Dothan Chamber, this day-long event will feature seven categories for participants: agriculture, aviation, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, medical and healthcare, quality of life, and workforce development. For more information or to register online, please visit www.economicssummitonjobs.com.

Sept. 10, Downtown Music Fest kicks off the Dothan City Fest featuring a Songwriter's Roundtable with Buddy Buie, J.R. Cobb, Bobby Emmons, and Wayne Carson along with a musical reunion of stars from the Wiregrass and Dothan's great musical past. Event begins at 8 p.m. at the Dothan Civic Center. Balcony seating is available for \$25 per ticket. Call (334) 615-3175 to reserve.

Sept. 10-12, Dothan CityFest in beautiful downtown Dothan. This day-long festival will feature activities for the entire family: professional and amateur bike races, vendors (food, arts and crafts, clothing, etc.), antiques, live music, Zumba demonstrations, tailgating for the Alabama vs. Penn State game, a kids zone, and much more. Races start at 6 p.m. Visit www.dothancityfest.com for details.

Sept. 12, CityFest concludes with the Tri-States 100, hosted by Oncology Supply. This is three different bicycle routes, 102 mile Tri-States Century, a 68-mile metric course, and a 25-mile beginner course.

Sept. 16, Low Country Boil at Landmark Park in the Stokes Activity Barn. Food, music, auction, and children's activities. Tickets: \$60 per person or \$50 for members. Call (334) 794-3452 or visit www.landmarkpark.com for details.

Sept. 18 and 19, Wiregrass Model Railroad Show, National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds. Visit www.nationalpeanutfestival.com for details.

Sept. 24 and 25, Gun and Knife Show. National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds. For details, visit www.nationalpeanutfestival.com.

Sept. 25, Second Annual Wiregrass Football Classic. This year's collegiate football battle will be between the Tigers of Edward Waters College (Jacksonville) and the Jaguars of the University of South Alabama (Mobile). Game time is 3 p.m. at Knology Field at Rip Hewes Stadium. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$8 for students, and kids 6 and under will be admitted free of charge. For more information, please call (334) 615-3700.

Oct. 1-31, Scarecrows in the Garden. Dothan Area Botanical Gardens. Free. Visit decorated scarecrows, each with its own unique personality. Visit www.dabg.com, or call (334) 793-3224 for details.

Oct. 2, Antique and Collector Car Show. Landmark Park. Visit one of the largest car shows in the Wiregrass Region with approximately 200 cars on display, ranging in age from T-Models to custom classics. Fee is \$5 for adults; \$3 for children; and free to members. Event is hosted by the Wiregrass Antique and Collector Car Club. Visit the Wiregrass Antique and Collector Car Club website, www.dothancarclub.com, for more information.

Oct. 23, Wiregrass Heritage Festival. Landmark Park. Come watch and learn how peanuts were harvested in the Wiregrass region a half-century ago. Enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of cane grinding, syrup making, butter churning, basket weaving, soap making, and other traditional farm activities. Also, plenty of music and a wide variety of antique gas and steam engines will be on display. Fee is \$8 for adults; \$6 for senior citizens; \$4 for children; and FREE to members. Call (334) 794-3452 for information, or visit www.landmarkpark.com.

Oct. 29 - Nov. 7, National Peanut Festival and Parade. Visit the largest Peanut Festival in the South. Parade will be held Saturday, Nov. 6 at 9 a.m. in the Historic Downtown Dothan District. Visit www.nationalpeanutfestival.com for a complete schedule of events.

Elberta

Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Original German Sausage Festival. Sponsored by the Elberta Volunteer Fire Department. Held at the Elberta Town Park (Hwy. 98 E). German sausage and other food booths, beer, music, dancing as well as arts and crafts booths, children's rides and games. Contact Seth at (251) 986-5805, or email festival@elbertafire.com. You can also visit <http://www.sausagefest.elbertafire.com/> for more information.

Fairhope

Sept. 18, City of Fairhope Community Clean-Up. To participate, call (251) 990-0192.

Foley

Oct. 23, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Habitat for Humanity Baldwin County 10th Annual Chili Cook-Off for Women Build, John B. Foley Park/Heritage Park, Foley. Chili cooks, motorcycle poker run, bake sale, silent auction, entertainment, book sale, antique tractors, food and fun for kids of all ages. For more information, contact Rosemary Harris, (251) 943-7268.

Gulf Shores

Oct. 7-10, 39th Annual National Shrimp Festival. Held at Gulf Shores public beach. Delicious food, fine arts, children's art village, live entertainment (local and national acts,) sand sculpture contest and more.

Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Visit www.nationalshrimpfestival.com, or call (251) 968-6904 for more information.

Macon County

Sept. 4, 1 p.m., Benedict vs. Tuskegee University, at Tuskegee.

Sept. 18, 1 p.m., Albany State vs. Tuskegee University, at Tuskegee.

Oct. 2, 1 p.m., Miles vs. Tuskegee University, at Tuskegee.

Oct. 30, 1 p.m., Kentucky State vs. Tuskegee University, at Tuskegee.

Things to Do:

Tuskegee Heritage Museum, (334) 727-6688
Carver Museum, (334) 727-3200
Tuskegee Airmen Museum, (334) 724-0922
VictoryLand, (334) 727-0540
Tuskegee Multicultural Center, (334) 724-0800
The Oaks, (334) 727-3301
Whippoorwill Vineyards, (334) 257-2711
Tuskegee National Park, (334) 832-4470
Butler Chapel, (334) 727-3550
White Oak Plantation, (334) 727-9258

Opelika

Sept. 11, 7-11 p.m., Opelika Main Street Dinner/Auction Fundraiser. For tickets and more information, visit www.opelikamainstreet.org.

Oct. 2, 6th Annual "Think Pink" Breast Cancer Awareness Walk. Presented by Opelika Main Street and East Alabama Medical Center. Historic Downtown Opelika. Registration, 8:30 a.m. Walk begins at 9:30 a.m. Registration information available at www.opelikamainstreet.org and eamcfoundation.org.

Oct. 8, On The Tracks Food and Wine. Presented by Opelika Main Street. Historic Downtown Opelika. For tickets and more information, visit www.onthetracks.org.

Oct. 21, "The Bachelors 2010." Presented by Vows Bridal Directory and Opelika Main Street. Event Center Downtown. For tickets and more information, visit www.thebachelors.kk5, www.opelikamainstreet.org, or www.vowsbridaldirectory.com.

Oct. 25, 5:30 p.m., 4th Annual Howl'oween Costume Contest and Parade. Presented by Opelika Main Street. Historic Downtown Opelika. For more information, visit www.opelikamainstreet.org.

Piedmont

Sept. 18, Terrapin Tri-County Adventure Race. This race will consist of a challenging trail run, creek paddling and biking. The total race distance of 46.5 miles includes a 10K run, 1.5 mile paddle and a 38.8-mile bike course. The route encompasses three of northeast Alabama's premiere outdoor recreational areas located within the tri-county area of Calhoun, Cleburne and Cherokee - the Chief Ladiga Biking Trail, the Pinhoti National Recreational Hiking Trail, and the Terrapin Creek Canoe Trail. The race will finish at the Eubanks Welcome Center in downtown Piedmont. For more information and registration forms, please visit www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com.

Sylacauga

Sept. 11, Animal Rescue Foundation in Sylacauga will host Doggie Days. The public is invited to attend.

Sept. 30, Sylacauga Rotary Club will be selling Boston butts and ribs. The sale will take place at the First Presbyterian Church on South Norton Street.

B. B. Comer Museum will host the Annual Photo Competition and Exhibition. There will be an awards reception on Thursday, Sept 16, 6:30 until 8 p.m.

B. B. Comer Museum will host the Artist Selects Reunion. A reception will be held on Thursday, Oct. 14, 6:30 until 8 p.m.

Oct. 28, Annual Chamber Awards Banquet, J. Craig Smith Community Center. Call the Chamber at (256) 249-0308 for details.

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Reflections of the Comer Museum & Arts Center

By Donna Rentfrow
Executive Director, Comer Museum & Arts Center

Our partnership with the Arc through VSA Arts of Alabama is most rewarding. These special-needs adults look forward to experiencing art at the Museum each Tuesday. I've watched them grow stronger in creativity through self expression, communication, motor skills and self esteem. I love each of them individually and enjoy watching them work so well in a group setting. I have grown in many ways through them and VSA Creativity and Art Partners programs.

I am so proud of the artwork created through our on-going art classes and programs. Most children aren't intimidated and are anxious to create. Their young minds are full of imagination and enjoy expressing themselves through art. On the other hand, so many teens and adults say, "I can't paint", "I can't even draw a stick man", and "I have no talent whatsoever." Once these individuals relax and find how easy it is to create, they are amazed with their finished pieces of art. It is so exciting to hear that they can't wait for another class.

Our Art Camp "Vacation Destinations" this summer was a success. The children experienced history, painting, drawing, sculpture, and a taste of the performing arts. Within the three weeks of art camp, the children visited 15 different popular vacation places through hands-on art experiences. The parents were impressed with the program and were amazed at the art created by the children. Our plans are to provide an Art Camp again next summer.

We owe a genuine thank you to our generous and loyal patrons and supporters for making all of this possible. The community is good to support so many wonderful non-

profit organizations, such as ours. Thank you for all you have given and still give despite the nation's economic crisis. Your financial support keeps our doors open, and I am most proud to work and live among you in this great city of Sylacauga.

Hopefully, people feel a warm welcome and friendly atmosphere when visiting the museum. Visitors from all over the United States and often from other countries comment on how fortunate we are to have this wonderful museum and arts center in a city of our size. Schools from many parts of Alabama visit the museum on field trips and are amazed that we offer a hands-on art experience for the students during their tour. Often times, art is not in these schools' curriculum. We trust people leave the museum with an appreciation of Alabama's history and gain a taste and interest in the many styles and

media of visual arts. It must be working, as our art classes have grown so, that it became necessary to expand our classroom space to accommodate public demand.

We celebrate art each month with a new art exhibit with an opening reception for the artist or artists on exhibit. The museum usually entertains a full house during these events. Everyone is invited to enjoy with us, a fun evening of visual art, food and beverage and live entertainment by local musicians.

You are invited to visit and see for yourself what the museum and arts center has to offer. Daily hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., other times by appointment. Feel free to call (256) 245-4016 for information regarding exhibits or art classes.

