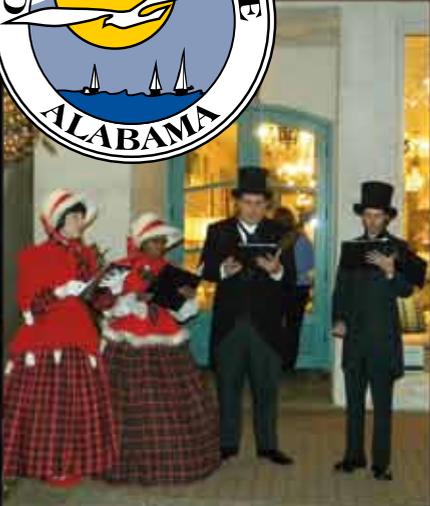
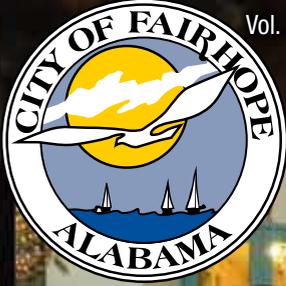


# Alabama CURRENTS

Vol. XI No. 6 • A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority • November/December 2012



*Holidays in Fairhope  
are magical*  
See Page 3

### *Count your blessings*

**N**ot only at Thanksgiving and Christmas but throughout the year, we all need to stop and count our blessings. There are challenging times in our lives, there are dark times, there may be times when you feel hopeless, and there are always happy times. During all of those times, we should stop and take a moment to be thankful for life's blessings.



I have a deep sense of appreciation for all of the amazing blessings that already surround me. I'm thankful for a loving and generous husband, being reared by wonderful parents, growing up with the best sister and brother, being the aunt to a host of great nieces and nephews, and yes, having relatively good health. I am equally blessed to work for a great organization like the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and being surrounded by a group of dedicated employees who know what service to others really means. But most of all, I have the honor and pleasure of working with the 11 Member city utilities which comprise AMEA. They, too, live the motto each day of service to others.

Many times our own attitude will determine how we see our world. When we are in a happy time, we see the world very differently than if we are in a more challenging time.

To be happy does not mean that you have everything in your life that you could possibly imagine as if you were fabulously rich. The point is that being blessed is not about what you have. It's how you feel about what you have.

If you are feeling that life is pressing you hard and that you are struggling with a multitude of issues, one thing you may want to do is to squirrel yourself away, by yourself, for just a few minutes and write down all the things you already have in your life. For example, do you have a roof over your head – millions do not; do you have your health – millions do not; do you have friends and family who love you – millions do not. I think you will find that you have more to be grateful for than you realize.

If you feel as blessed as I do, then pass it on to someone else. There are a multitude of ways you can make someone else's life a little more comfortable. Whether it's through initiatives such as Operation Christmas Child (a project of the Samaritan's Purse organization), United Way, a food bank in your area, Salvation Army or through your own church, pass your good fortune and blessings on to others.

The secret is to always count your blessings; it truly does make life easier.

My holiday wish for you is that you are thankful for all the blessings you have and may many more come your way. And may you experience the blessing that life has to offer when you find the good in every situation. We hope you have a blessed holiday season!

*Lisa Miller*

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing



### Apply now for the 2013 AMEA Scholarship Program

Will you be graduating from high school in the spring of 2013? 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.

Since 1992, AMEA and its 11 Member cities (Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley (Riviera Utilities), LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee) have provided scholarships to area high school seniors through the AMEA Scholarship Program. Scholarships, totaling approximately \$82,500, were awarded in the 2012 program.

Each year, AMEA and its Members make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships. 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 college or university.

Applications are currently available from school counselors in these Member cities, or you can go online to the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program.

Applications are reviewed and winners are selected by an independent panel of Montgomery area college guidance personnel. Application deadline is **Monday, Feb. 4, 2013.**

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

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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.

# Alabama CURRENTS

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## On the Cover

Fairhope prides itself on being a great place to visit, live, work and raise a family. In 2011, *Family Circle* named Fairhope the fourth best place in the nation to raise a family.

"We have worked for the past 40 years to make Fairhope a beautiful city and a great place to live," said Mayor Tim Kant. "Fairhope works hard to provide lots of fun family-friendly events all year long and especially during the holidays."

In November, the City of Fairhope will host a Veteran's Day parade on Saturday, Nov. 10. On Thursday, Nov. 15, Fairhope will kick-off the holiday season and light up over one million lights at the yearly Tree Lighting Ceremony. The ceremony features performances by the Fairhope High School Band, Fairhope Middle School Band, the Eastern Shore Choral Society, and even Mrs. Claus stops by to visit with the children. The fun continues with an outdoor showing of "The Polar Express" on Saturday, Nov. 17 and downtown Fairhope's Christmas Open House on Sunday, Nov. 18. Stores will be open from 1 to 5 p.m. offering refreshments and gift ideas for everyone on your shopping list.

In December, Fairhope officially welcomes Santa to town at Fairhope's Magical Christmas Parade on Friday, Dec. 7. On Dec. 8 and 15, Santa is in downtown Fairhope at the Fairhope Museum of History for "Santa Saturdays" to visit and take photos with children. On Dec. 31, Fairhope rings in the New Year with a ball drop, fireworks, a live band, party favors and more. At this family-fun event, clowns create balloon animals, provide face painting and a DJ rocks the night away just for the kids. All of our events are free and open to the public.

We love having visitors all year long, but the holidays in Fairhope are truly a magical time. We invite you to come and spend the day, weekend or week with us this holiday season.

For more information, visit [www.cofairhope.com](http://www.cofairhope.com) or call (251) 929-1466.

## Focused on Innovation and Sustainability

As this is the last issue of *Alabama Currents* for 2012, I always find the ending of a year is one that is filled with reflection. It is a time to look forward to the new year yet to come. Sometimes reflecting on the past creates a better future.



Throughout the past year, AMEA has continued to build on a foundation of reliable and economical energy for our Members and their customers. Through this mission, we continue to focus on innovation which allows us to meet the challenges of the future.

AMEA is committed to identifying electric generation options which provide our Members and their customers low-cost, reliable electric power. AMEA's 31-year history has proven that the organization is an innovator in exploring electric generation options

to improve generation costs. AMEA continues to study all types of electric generation to determine the most economical and reliable sources for the future.

Our efforts to improve your energy future have included such innovative projects as a first-of-its-kind fuel cell project, the Alabama Direct FuelCell Demonstration Project, in Vance, near Tuscaloosa, in 2000; and the construction of a natural gas-fired peaking generation plant, the AMEA-Sylacauga Plant, which became operational in 2004.

Another example of our innovation is our efforts to study the feasibility of constructing a hydroelectric generating plant at the George W. Andrews Lock and Dam on the Chattahoochee River. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved AMEA's preliminary permit on Dec. 21, 2010. The project is estimated to generate some 24 megawatts. The permit allows for a 36-month period of study.

The Andrews Hydro Project permit will provide us time to consider the economic feasibility of this project, as compared to other electric generation options.

Hydropower remains one of the cleanest, most environmentally-safe and affordable sources of renewable energy. Hydropower has long provided a source of renewable energy as annual rainfall replenishes the raw material used to make electricity. Over the last decade, depending on water availability, hydroelectricity provided 5.8 to 7.2 percent of the electricity generated in the U.S. and averaged more than 70 percent of the electricity generated annually from all renewable sources.

Existing hydropower is very inexpensive to operate. The levelized cost of electricity of new hydropower projects, of less than 50 megawatts, and incremental hydropower projects (adding generating capacity to existing dams), puts them among the least expensive forms of low-carbon electricity.

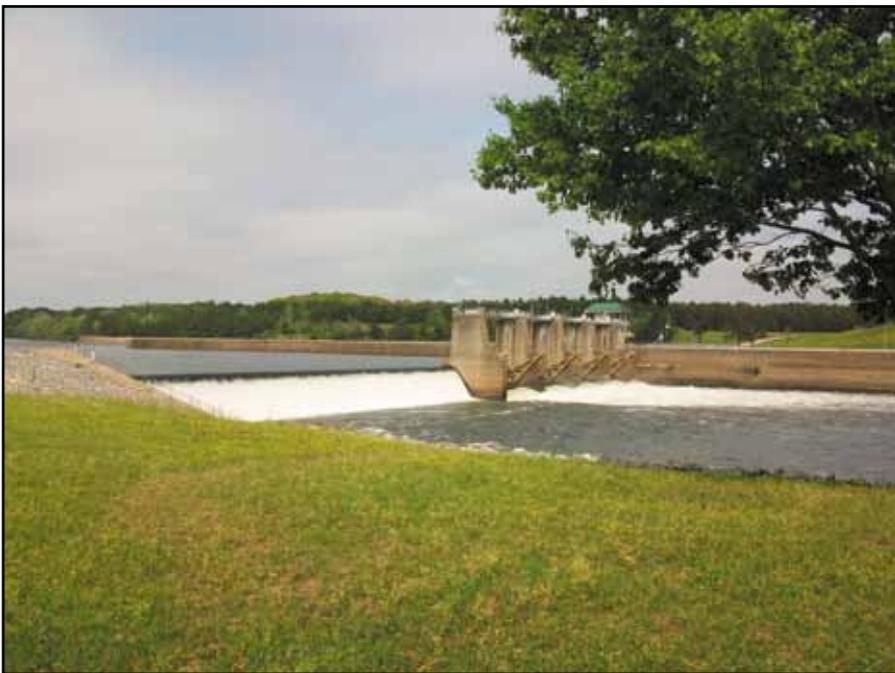
AMEA continues to have diverse fuel sources of generation from nuclear to coal to natural gas to hydropower. Our decision-making is based on long-term sustainability as we are committed to providing cost-competitive, reliable electric power for our Members and their customers. We are hopeful the Andrews Hydro Project will meet the cost benefit test as we work to maintain the most economical energy possible.

Our Members and their customers have sustained AMEA since 1981 and will continue to do so well into the future. AMEA continues to be the Power That Works For You!®

We wish you many blessings this holiday season and throughout 2013.

*Fred D. Clark, Jr.*

AMEA President & CEO



George W. Andrews Lock and Dam Hydroelectric Project

## What is the solution?

When you receive this issue, there will still be some beautiful fall colors on the trees. And it will be the time to participate in one of our great freedoms...the right to vote. I pray that God will bless our country and all of our newly-elected officials. We have the best country in the world and we should be thankful and all work to keep it that way.



I have been in every state except North Dakota and find wonderful people in every one of them. I do notice, however, that they all talk a little funny if they are not from a southern state such as Alabama. Since I wrote the last column, I have conducted several energy-efficiency seminars in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Tennessee. Two of those presentations were at high schools and one was at a state college. I love to teach all ages, but I find many of our young folks are eager to learn and, after all, they are our future.

At the college seminar, we talked about the past, the present and the future as it relates to energy. I explained to them why energy efficiency was important regardless of how electricity might be produced. We talked about green and renewable energy. And I explained to them why, in my opinion, that solar and wind were not the answer. It was an evening meeting and it was dark outside and the wind was not blowing. I pointed out the window and asked them how dependable solar and wind generation was at that moment. They were not totally shocked because they had actually installed some solar panels and a small wind turbine at their school and metering had shown very little energy generation. I explained to them why electrical generation using coal and natural gas was not going away, regardless of the number of solar panels and wind turbines that might be installed.

I also felt obligated to tell them that it was my opinion, that we could all experience significant utility rate increases in the not so far future. I also told them that I did not think that it was the fault of the utility industry.

We were about two hours into the seminar when a young man asked me this question, "Well Mr. Rye, what do you think the answer is to our nations' energy future?" I had never been asked that before, but I had actually been thinking about that very subject for several weeks. I immediately responded, "I think that we must start converting all buildings to high-efficiency heating and cooling systems such as geothermal heat pumps and plant about 90 billion trees." Now I knew exactly why I mentioned geothermal heat pumps, but the 90 billion was just a number.

Let me explain by using as an example of one average building like a medium-size restaurant. Let's say that the building requires 100 units of electricity for cooling and 50

units of electricity to heat water on a given day. That means that 150 units of electricity must be generated for this building. If I can convert that building to geothermal, it should reduce the amount of required generation by about 50 percent due to the fact that the geothermal is about twice as energy efficient as the existing system and it can produce a portion of the energy needed to heat the water at almost no cost. Oh yeah, did I mention that the utility bills are much less? I think that I can use just about any building in this example, including most houses, and have similar results by installing geothermal. You now know why many new school buildings have geothermal systems.

Now let's move on to the second part of my proposed solution. There are those who believe that the earth is getting warmer and that much of it is being caused by the generation of electricity when using fossil fuels. They believe that the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions are a big part of the problem. Well I personally don't believe that there is proof of that at all. But if they are right, installing geothermal certainly reduced those emissions and I didn't have to install any solar panels or a wind turbine to do it.

I think that everyone of us would agree that conserving our natural resources and producing fewer emissions is a good thing to do, for whatever the reason.

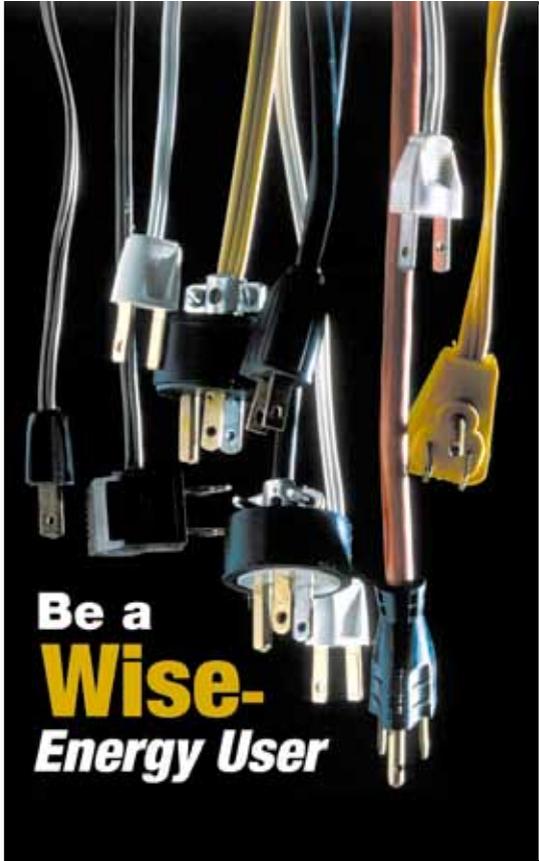
Now, are you ready for this? What do trees eat? The answer is water, soil, and CO<sub>2</sub>. Wow! Isn't that neat? What do trees produce? The answer is oxygen. Cool! That's good stuff, too, particularly since I understand that all oxygen comes from plants like trees or from algae in the ocean.

Did someone say cool? Oh yeah, trees also make shade which helps cool the earth and helps on summer utility bills. Why stop now? Trees are green and are a renewable resource. Trees help harbor wildlife. Trees help conserve water. There are, and have always been, strong ties between trees and mankind. And yes, just as I mentioned in the first sentence, they have beautiful fall colors.

Forks, I thought long and hard about this column. This column is straight from my heart. If you agree with what I have written, please join me in spreading the word and we will help our country and our own utility bills, one building at a time. Let's all look at converting to more efficient heating and cooling systems and planting a lot of trees.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

*Doug Rye, an Arkansas architect, is known as the 'King of Caulk and Talk' and 'America's Energy Expert.' Doug has helped thousands of homeowners save money on their power bills. He hosts the popular "Home Remedies" radio talk program, which has been on the air for 15 years in 14 states. Doug speaks annually at American Institute of Architects meetings to hundreds of other architects on energy efficiency. He conducts over 150 energy-saving seminars per year all across the U.S. Have a question for Doug? Contact him at (501) 653-7931, or [www.dougrye.com](http://www.dougrye.com).*



## Energy-efficient ways to control holiday spending

New electrical appliances use far less energy than older ones, but that doesn't mean you should skimp on energy-efficient behavior in the kitchen this holiday. Making these simple changes while cooking can save you energy and money:

Foods which have a long baking time, such as a turkey, usually don't require the oven to be preheated.

Avoid opening the oven door to check on food. Instead, turn on the oven light and peer through the window to make sure your pie isn't burning. Opening the oven door — even for a second or two — can drop the inside temperature by as much as 25 degrees.

Place several items in the oven at once. All food will cook thoroughly if you leave enough room around pies or casseroles for air to flow.

Electric ovens retain heat even after you turn them off, so it's safe to turn them off several minutes before a recipe's time is up. Electric stovetops work the same way: The metal element will keep foods cooking several minutes after it's turned off.

Choose glass or ceramic pans for the oven. They let you set the temperature 25 degrees lower than metal pans.

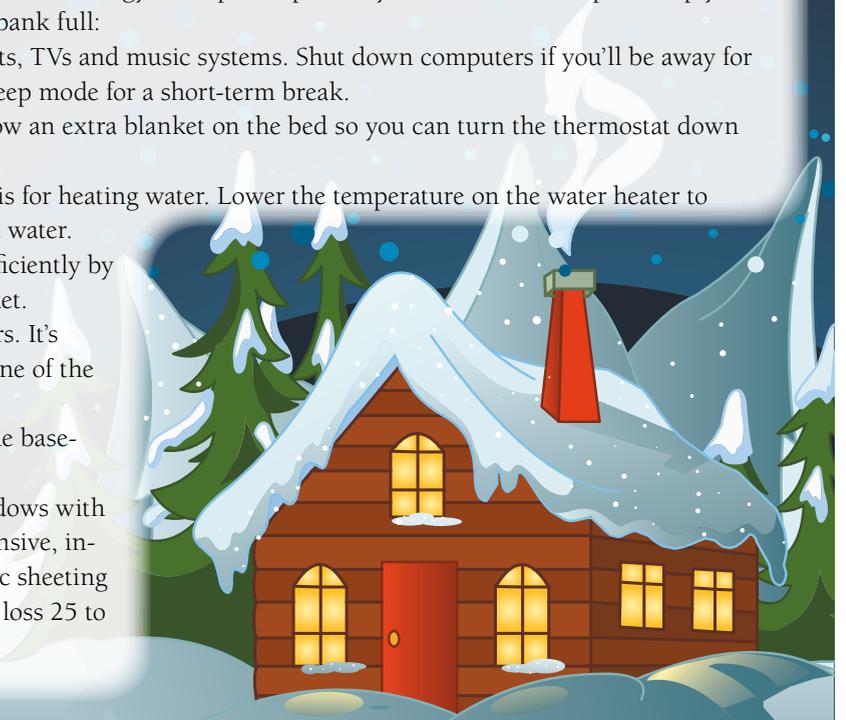
Match the pan size to the size of the stovetop burner so you don't waste heat. Just a 2-inch difference between the pan and burner can waste 40 percent of the generated heat.

Be a  
**Wise-**  
Energy User

## Your public power system offers energy-saving tips for heating your home this winter

You don't have to spend a lot of money to save energy. Your public power system offers these tips to help you lower your energy bill and keep your piggy bank full:

- When you leave a room, turn off lights, TVs and music systems. Shut down computers if you'll be away for a long period, or activate the unit's sleep mode for a short-term break.
- Dress in layers in the winter and throw an extra blanket on the bed so you can turn the thermostat down a few more degrees.
- About 15 percent of your energy bill is for heating water. Lower the temperature on the water heater to 120 degrees and wash clothes in cold water. Help your water heater work more efficiently by wrapping it in a \$20 insulation blanket.
- Weatherstrip your windows and doors. It's inexpensive and easy to do, and it's one of the best ways to trap warm air indoors.
- Seal joints in exposed ductwork in the basement and attic.
- If you can afford it, replace your windows with more efficient ones. If that's too expensive, install storm windows or smooth plastic sheeting over the panes. Both can reduce heat loss 25 to 50 percent.



# WATTS NEW IN Alexander City



## *New terminal building at T.C. Russell Airport complete*

By Tracy Kendrick

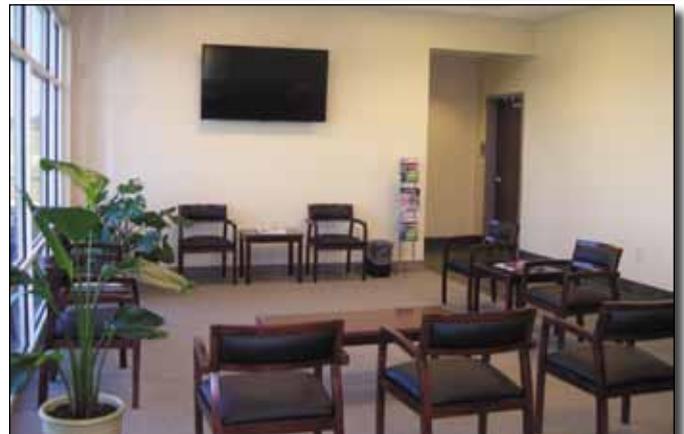
**O**n Sept. 14, the City of Alexander City held its grand opening and dedication of the new terminal building at the T.C. Russell Airport.

The new terminal was named in honor of Randy Thomas, Community Developer, City of Alexander City. Thomas has worked for over 40 years to better Alexander City. By naming the new building in his honor, the city hopes to show him how much they've appreciated all his hard work and dedication.

The new terminal offers a warm, friendly environment that will be enjoyed by pilots and passengers alike. The reception and waiting area offers many windows for the perfect runway view. A refreshment area is also available to guests while they wait. A state-of-the-art conference room is available with Internet and projector capabilities. For out-of-town pilots, a new lounge, equipped with its own restroom and shower, awaits for those waiting for their passengers' return flight.

Mike Smith, terminal manager, does a great job overseeing the Randy M. Thomas Terminal, as well as the pilots and passengers.

If given the opportunity, take a moment and visit the new terminal and see how fortunate we are to have such a nice facility in Alexander City.



TO REPORT AN OUTAGE IN ALEXANDER CITY:  
Day Time (256) 409-2080, After Hours/Holidays – Call Police Dept. (256) 234-3421  
Please do not call 911



## Yeargans to retail Miss Annabelle's Rolls

By Chris Busby  
*The LaFayette Sun*

*(Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted with permission of The LaFayette Sun).*

Over the years, Ann Yeargan has developed a number of tasty creations, including her lemon cheesecake and cheese straws. Since 1990, Ann and her husband, Ed, have operated Crème Fraîche Catering in LaFayette, and it has provided her years of practice to perfect many of her famous dishes. Now the Yeargans have taken one of their most popular items and introduced it to the public.

Miss Annabelle's Sweet Potato Yeast Rolls are available locally at Parker's Foods and Givorn's Foods in both West Point and Valley. The Yeargans are hoping Miss Annabelle's will become a retail success, and they want it to start locally.

It's an exciting time for Ann but it has taken years of hard work and patience to get to this point.

The name Miss Annabelle was Ann's nickname given to her by her father, and the original recipe for the yeast rolls was her grandmothers'. Over the years, though, Ann has added her own touches, trying new ingredients, perfecting her creations.

"We had a client that wanted something different so I kept playing around and that's when I came up with the Sweet Potato Rolls," Ann says. "I've been doing them for years, mostly for my family, but sometimes for clients just to have something different and unique."

She has created several variations of the sweet potato dough, including Sweet

Rolls, which they hope to market in the future. But the Sweet Potato Rolls have always been a crowd favorite.

Finally, in 2009 at the urging of friends and clients, Ann and Ed decided to bring the rolls to the masses. Because of their catering business, the Yeargans had a longstanding relationship with national food distributor Sysco, so it was only natural to approach them about carrying the rolls. After a taste test, Sysco was on board and began distributing the rolls to restaurants and institutional trades.

Then in January, after having success with the Sysco placement, the Yeargans decided to take the next step and enter the retail market. Regal Foods in Texas has assisted them in bringing the product to market, and the Yeargans are working locally with Mitchell Grocery Corporation in Albertville, which supplies Parker's and Givorn's. The Yeargans hope the rolls will be available at locally-owned independent grocery stores throughout the state soon.

There have been setbacks along the way, including finding the right bakery to prepare the rolls. An early partnership with a bakery in Opelika did not pan out. Then after six months of searching, Ann and Ed settled on an Atlanta bakery, Breadworks International. Ann then spent six months training the chefs there to make the rolls to perfection, which is especially difficult when dealing with larger quantities. The bakers at Breadworks International deal with 100 pounds of dough at a time, using a mixer four feet in diameter and

two feet deep. The bakery is able to produce up to 1,000 cases a week, which includes 12 packages per case.

Now Ann and Ed are focusing on getting the rolls into grocery stores. They have started locally at Parker's and Givorn's, and hope to expand in the coming months. Locally, the rolls sold out within the first two days they were on the shelves. The rolls can be found on display or in the freezer sections. They are sold in 12-count packs and retail for \$3.49 each.

"I make them for people all the time and they are always asking where they can get my rolls," Ann says. "So I'm really excited to be able to tell them where and to offer them to the public."

You can learn more about Miss Annabelle's Sweet Potato Rolls by visiting [www.missannabelles.net](http://www.missannabelles.net).



*LaFayette's Ann Yeargan is shown with one of her tasty creations, Miss Annabelle's Sweet Potato Rolls. (Photo courtesy of Chris Busby, The LaFayette Sun).*

## Riviera participates in Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo

By David Horton

**H**ow many times have you heard someone say, “I sure hope I can find a job when I get out of school,” or “I don’t know what I want to do when I graduate from school”? Can you imagine in this day and time what it would be like as an eighth grader again and confronted with a career choice? I can’t even remember when I was in the eighth grade; much less have any idea what career I wanted to follow after school. When you were in the eighth grade did you think about the future that much? I don’t think I did. Well, times have changed and the choice can be made easier with a fascinating hands-on opportunity.

What does it take to have a successful future? That was the question that was asked of more than 9,500 area eighth graders at the Third Annual Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC) Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo in September. That question was answered as students made their way throughout the expo and were introduced to many local job opportunities for their future. The event hosted students from 66 schools in eight Alabama counties (Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe, and Washington) and featured 12 of the region’s industries broken into “Worlds,” which included Safety, Architecture/Engineering, Healthcare, Communications, Energy, Construction, Maritime, Aerospace, Public Safety, Automotive Technology, Manufacturing, and Hospitality.

Riviera Utilities participated in its first Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo at the Mobile Civic Center.

“Never having been to the expo, we had no idea what to expect and we were really surprised to see all the great things that were available to the students who came to the event,” said Brad Pitt, Assistant General Manager, Riviera Utilities. “It was an eye opener for us, lots of fun, one on one opportunity with the students, and we came away with some great ideas for next year. We are excited about participating again next year and will do our part to make our exhibit successful and user friendly for the students. We want them to really learn from the experience with us.”

Taken from text on the Internet, the expo is the brain child of the SAWDC. The SAWDC Worlds of Opportunity Career Expo is an industry-led initiative that pulls together more than 115 regional companies to engage students through hands-on, career-related activities over a two-day event. Each World is led by a chairperson, called a “World Leader,” who

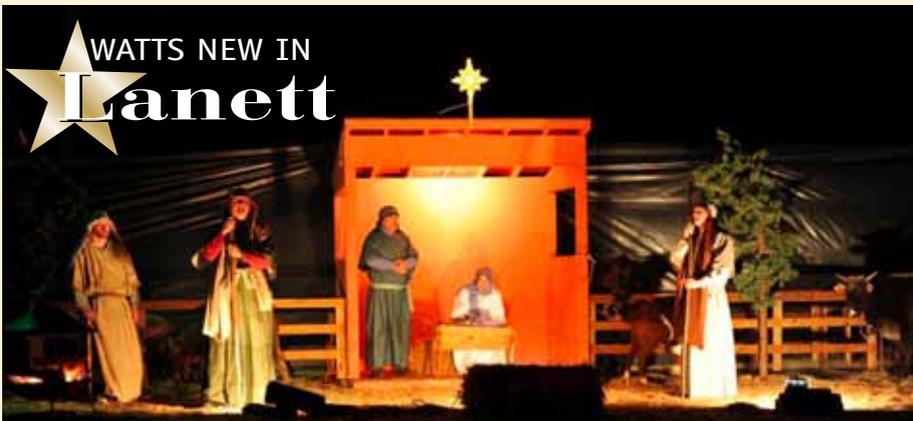
engages companies within the respective industry to create the central element of the expo, the hands-on activities. World leaders work for months to engage partners, identify careers to highlight, and create hands-on interactions that link careers to the classroom. Visiting the event for just under two hours, students pick their favorites of 12 Worlds to visit and learn about careers available close to home.

“Students visiting the World of Safety donned hard hats and personal protective equipment given to them on entrance to the event,” said Sharon Cureton, Human Resources Superintendent, Riviera Utilities. “In another area, students visiting the World of Construction could choose from activities ranging from hammering nails, building a brick wall, or operating a mini excavator to move piles of sand. In the World of Energy, students learned about electric cars, green energy, working on energized power lines, and smart metering. In Riviera’s area, students could learn to install a gas meter and connect pipe, control the pH level for water treatment, and attempt to use lineman gloves to put connectors together.”

Event groups will evaluate this year’s event and begin to prepare for next year’s expo. You can bet we will be there and show our “world” to the eighth grade students in a unique way. If we can help one student on a career path, it will be worth our time and energy.



(L to R) Riviera Utilities employees Wade Palmer, Kevin Switzer, Sharon Cureton and William Burgett prepare to demonstrate occupational job opportunities to students participating in the Worlds of Opportunity event.



## Drive-through Nativity scene is a highlight of the holiday season

By Jennie Gunnells

The City of Lanett is blessed to have a drive-through Nativity scene in the city during the Christmas season. The activity is hosted by the Lanett Church of the Nazarene, located at 1306 South Jennings Avenue. This year's event will be Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 14, 15 and 16 from 7 until 9 p.m.

The Lanett Church of the Nazarene has presented this Nativity drive-through for the past three years. The scenes have improved and expanded each year, and they plan to have the live Nativity drive-through again this year.

The Nativity is very moving and inspiring and my granddaughters and I drove through on two different occasions last year. A couple of years ago during the Christmas season, I was driving down South Jennings Avenue and I saw a man dressed like a king leading a camel down the street. I was quite surprised to see a camel on the streets of Lanett. I did a double take and went back around the block and checked to see if my eyes had deceived me. They had not.

Just about everyone loves to visit live Nativity scenes during the Christmas season. However, the Lanett Church of the Nazarene's live Nativity drive-through is truly one of the

most talked about Christmas ventures around.

Ronald and Vanessa Sessions and their daughters, Shanna and Stephanie, moved back to this area about 13 years ago. They lived in Columbiana, where they attended a church that had a smaller version of a live drive-through Nativity. Ronald wanted to start a much larger and more elaborate live Nativity drive-through at his home church, Lanett Nazarene. This location was perfect to make his dream come true.

It has taken several years to progressively improve and coordinate this

venture, but the members of Lanett Church of the Nazarene presented it for the third time last year. It has been a great success in our community.

As you enter the church parking lot, you are serenaded by the church Christmas choir in a beautiful living room scene. You are then met by greeters who welcome you and give you a CD or CD and CD player that begins your journey into the scenes of the Christmas season.

Citizens and visitors will experience scenes including: Isaiah at the well preaching the gospel to the townspeople; Mary and the angel as Mary finds out she is pregnant with the Christ child; Mary and Elizabeth as they talk of the miracle; the busy town of Bethlehem as shop owners are working with the townspeople shopping and mingling; the shepherds in the fields watching over their flock as the angel appears to them; the manger scene as we witness the birth of the Christ child; and the Three Wise Men and King Herod.

The secret to having a wonderful Nativity production such as this is the hard work and dedication of the church family. It takes the involvement of the entire church family, including kitchen duty, characters, seamstress, singers, traffic directors, donations and animal





keepers. Each and every one plays an important part in making this event work.

A number of live animals are used during this annual Christmas event and they really make the live Nativity so believable, as well as loud and lively. There are sheep, cows, goats, chickens, pigs, donkeys and even a camel.

The Lanett Church of the Nazarene members start several months in advance trying to raise monies needed for this worthy production by having dinners, barbecues and other events. No admission is charged, but visitors may make donations as they turn in their CDs at the end of the drive-through. Without the church family supporting this, they would never be able to support this ministry.

The church family keeps in mind that this event affects the schedule of all the cast and supporting members. They have meals prepared for them before each nightly event and the adults and children sit down together for a meal and prayer which puts the entire event in perspective. They invite everyone to visit this Christmas season and witness this wonderful ministry.

If any of you are in our neighborhood, please come and drive through. Last year, they had 3,900 visitors

If you are interested in learning more about the City of Lanett, please check out our website [www.cityoflanett.com](http://www.cityoflanett.com) or our City of Lanett Facebook page. Please like us on Facebook.

## WATTS NEW IN **Dothan**

# Long-time superintendent retires

By Joette Booker

**A**fter 27 years of service, long-time Electric Operations Superintendent, Richard Ash, has retired from Dothan Utilities.

Ash began his journey at Dothan Utilities as a Transmission & Distribution Engineer, working his way up to Chief Electric Engineer until his promotion to superintendent in 2001.

Many additions and improvements have taken place under his direction. Some of the most notable include the electric upgrades to both Flowers Hospital and Southeast Alabama Medical Center, as well as the complete rebuild of the 115 KV Switching Station. New developments such as the addition of Wiregrass Commons Mall, Shops on the Circle, Dothan Pavilion and most recently, the new Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine, were added to the Dothan Utilities' electric system. In addition, all newly-developed subdivisions, and some older neighborhoods, now have underground electric utilities.

Many would say that was a pretty admirable career for anyone, but this Auburn University graduate has also served his country for the past 26 years as an Air Force engineer with the 919 Civil Engineer Squadron where he has been commander for the past 11 years.

A well deserved retirement filled with plenty of rest and relaxation? Not for Ash. He doesn't plan on ending his career at this early stage of his life. He is now the newest member of the City of Tallahassee, Florida's engineering team.

Not only will his talent as a supervisor and engineer be missed, but also the absence of his laughter. When he laughed, it could be heard throughout the administrative offices, no matter where he was in the building. He had a hearty laugh and usually the story preceding that laugh was told in hopes that it would get a chuckle and brighten ones day; which is almost always what happened!

He will be sorely missed at Dothan Utilities, but we know he is doing what he enjoys and tackling the next big adventure in his life. We are confident that Ash has probably already befriended many in Tallahassee, maybe even getting a big "War Eagle" along the way.



(L to R) Ray Phillips, Manager of Compliance and Special Projects, Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA); Billy Mayes, Director, Dothan Utilities; Ash; and Arthur Bishop, AMEA Senior Operations Engineer.

# WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee

## Giving new meaning to the term “Open Arms”

By Karin Hopkins

In an effort to strengthen the bonds between the utility system and Tuskegee University students, for the overall good of the community's future, the Utilities Board of Tuskegee (UBT) has launched a campaign called Open Arms.



Mark Ennis, UBT General Manager, says, “We adopted the theme Open Arms because it really captures the respect we feel towards Tuskegee University students. So anytime we initiate a project that connects us with the student population, it will be an Open Arms activity.”

As the school year was beginning in the fall of 2012, UBT partnered with the Tuskegee University Student Government Association (SGA), Tuskegee Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Tuskegee for a welcome event held on the university's campus featuring food and entertainment. The Open Arms kickoff was a hit with the students.

Samari Smith, a freshman from the Midwest said, “It's fun, way different than Indiana.”

De'Naya Goudeau, a senior who is a native of Los Angeles said, “You guys did a really good job today. This is something you should do every year because it will just get bigger and better. It will become more popular. So it's definitely something you should



*UBT employees, including General Manager Mark Ennis, served food to a large number of students who attended the first Open Arms event.*

continue to do.”

The next Open Arms project was “Movie Night Under the Stars,” also held on campus.

From a UBT management perspective, Ennis says Open Arms fits into strategic planning goals. “As we think about ways to develop a positive image of the community within the student body, Open Arms is just one of the tools we are using.”

The Open Arms concept entices students to see the community as a warm, friendly place and perhaps consider putting down roots here for the next chapters of their lives.

Open Arms is however, one element of a much larger plan.

Ennis predicts success for various efforts underway and foresees Macon County bustling from population growth, a robust economy, revitalized

neighborhoods, more retail and dining options and more lifestyle-oriented amenities.

This optimism is based on multiple positive indicators including projects facilitated by the Macon County Economic Development Authority. The authority commissioned a retail and lodging analysis that shows local residents spend \$138 million outside the community. The numbers attracted an Auto Zone store to Tuskegee and other retailers have expressed interest. Also, developers are poised to build new contemporary homes in Macon County.

With the right conditions, many of the students who expect to spend just their college years here may decide to stay after graduation, close to the university that nurtured and trained them and in the town that welcomed them with Open Arms.

★ WATTS NEW IN  
**Opelika**

## *Spend your holidays in Opelika*

By Jan Gunter

**T**he holiday season in Opelika is just around the corner and, as in seasons past, a lot of preparation has already gone into making this another spectacular year for our community. We hope you will join us for one – or all – of these delightful events.

**Opelika Christmas Parade, Dec. 1:** As with every year, the Opelika Chamber of Commerce's annual Christmas parade will officially begin the holiday season for the city. Here is one difference about this year's parade, though. Instead of taking place on the first Wednesday after Thanksgiving, it will now be hosted on Saturday, Dec. 1, beginning at 10 a.m. So please mark your calendars and plan to join us for a great start of the Christmas holiday season.

**Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour, Dec. 5-9:** This Christmas, Opelika is celebrating like it's 1899. See the historic Victorian homes of Opelika transformed into an "Old World Christmas" wonderland. Over 60 turn-of-the-century homes will be adorned with life-size Santas, angels, toys carousel horses and other figures. Featured in *Southern Living*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Southern Lady*, the tour has since been voted one of the Southeast's top tourism events. The Lighted Driving Tour hours, 5-10 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 5, Thursday, Dec. 6, Friday, Dec. 7 and , Sunday, Dec. 9. The Walking Tour is Saturday, Dec. 8 from 6-9 p.m. and will feature live entertainment, carolers, costumed homeowners and other festivities. The streets are closed off, weather permitting, for the walking tours only. The tour begins at North 8th Street and 2nd Avenue and includes over 10 city blocks. Admission is free.

**Christmas in a Railroad Town, Dec. 7:** Whether you're a young child or simply a child at heart, there will be activities for everyone at this great night out in historic downtown Opelika. Visit

with friends and enjoy a variety of food vendors and restaurants. Bring the kids to write letters to Santa, enjoy pony rides, caroling, entertainment and other new activities. Guaranteed fun for adults include loft tours, personalized gifts made on site, and bundles of sweet treats for sale. Local retail shops will be open late for all your Christmas needs. Santa and Mrs. Claus will also be available for family photos. You can take a wagon ride through the Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour. You'll leave straight from Christmas in a Railroad Town and be delivered back once you're done. There will also be enclosed trolley rides at the Museum of East Alabama.



*A special thank you to FlipFlopFoto for the pictures*

# Places to Go & Things to Do

## Alexander City

**Nov. 1-30 and Dec. 1-31, Library Exhibit Series.** Adelia M. Russell Library (AMRL) and Mamie's Place Children's Library (MPCL) offer varied books, DVDs, audios, public access computers, periodicals, newspapers, databases (including genealogy). At AMRL, our year-long Library Exhibit Series encompasses poetry readings, musical presentations and book signings. Special exhibits in the past have included the Smithsonian Exhibit, Vietnam Memorial Exhibit, vintage garments and unique quilt displays. Instructional tours for classrooms and social clubs are available. Also, movies, games and art activities for various groups are available. Special events, author series and seasonal activities at the Children's Library. Check the library web site or look for posters and advertisements or call for upcoming events at the libraries. Adelia M. Russell, (256) 329-6796; Mamie's Place, (256) 234-4644; or browse [www.alexandercityonline.com/library.htm](http://www.alexandercityonline.com/library.htm).

**Nov. 1-30 and Dec. 1-31, Sarah Carlisle Towery Art Show.** Free year-long exhibit featuring art composed at colony retreats at Children's Harbor. Also included are select works of Sarah Carlisle Towery. Board of Education Building, 375 Lee Street, Alexander City. (256) 215-4251

**Nov. 1-30 and Dec. 1-31, Alexander City Arts Presents *September through December, 2012.*** Benjamin Russell High School Auditorium. Series of concerts, plays, dance and family entertainment highlight Alexander City Arts season. Please call the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce, (256) 234-3461 or visit [www.alexandercitychamber.com](http://www.alexandercitychamber.com).

**Nov. 11, 2 p.m., Alexander City Veteran's Day Services.** Join the Mayor and city leaders at Veteran's Memorial Park at the Charles E. Bailey Sr. Sportsplex. Visit the memorials to the Confederacy, WWI & II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. For more information, call (256) 329-6730.

**Nov. 11, 1-4 p.m., Annual Holiday Open House.** Presented by the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce, local businesses open their doors to showcase the season's most festive decorations and merchandise. A decades-long tradition. Call (256) 234-3461 for more information.

**Nov. 17, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Thanksgiving Farmer's Market.** Broad Street Plaza.

**Nov. 17, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Do-Si-Do at The Stables at Russell Crossroads.** Highway 63 North of Kowaliga Bridge. Wild West show, pony rides, mule-patty bingo and more. For more information, visit [www.russellandsonlakemartin.com](http://www.russellandsonlakemartin.com), or call (256) 212-1479.

**Dec. 1, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Christmas Market.** Children's Harbor Lodge.

**Dec. 2, 1-4 p.m., Holiday Open House** throughout Alexander City. Get those final pieces to make your holiday season complete. Alexander City retailers have what you need. Call the chamber for details, (256) 234-3461.

**Dec. 2, 1-4 p.m., Santa and Tree Lighting.** Downtown at Bud Porch Center. The Chamber of Commerce hosts Santa. Bring your cameras and your kiddies and have pictures made with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Stick around to help Santa light the community Christmas Tree. Call for details, (256) 234-3461.

**Dec. 3, 6-7:30 p.m., Annual Hometown Christmas Parade.** The parade winds its way through town to the delight of many. Join the Chamber and the parade participants as we sing and dance our way through town. Call the chamber for details, (256) 234-3461.

## Dothan

**Nov. 3, 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Southern Regional Karate Tournament .** Dothan Civic Center. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 3, ARPA Youth Soccer District Tournament.** For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 3 and Dec. 1, 9:30 a.m., Wiregrass Woodturner Club Meeting.** Alabama Agricultural Museum, Landmark Park. Open to the public. No experience necessary. Free with paid gate admission. Held first Saturday of each month.

**Nov. 3 and Dec. 1, 1 p.m., Landmark Dulcimer Club Jam Session.** Landmark Park. Must have a mountain dulcimer. No experience necessary. Free with paid gate admission. Held first Saturday of each month.

**Nov. 5, Dothan Dolphin Swim Team Tryouts.** Westgate Indoor Pool. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15, Living History.** Landmark Park, Dothan. Experience living and working on a Wiregrass Farmstead in the early 1900s with hearth cooking, gardening and sewing, to wood splitting, fire building and animal care. Costumed in period dress, students will be divided into small groups in order to participate in the different workstations. This half-day program will conclude with lunch in the Waddell House prepared by the students. Limited to a maximum of 30 students and a minimum of 20. The fee is \$12 per student. Teachers are free. No chaperones required. Homeschools must register through the group coordinator. Program Length: 4 hours (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) Suggested Grade level: 3rd-8th. Pre-registered school groups only.

**Nov. 8, Senior Citizen Day** at the National Peanut Festival Fair. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 10, Youth Football Peanut Bowl.** Rip Hewes Stadium. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 11 and Dec. 9, 4 p.m., Reptile Feeding.** Interpretive Center Classroom, Landmark Park. Watch park staff feed the snakes and learn why these animals are important to the environment. Free with paid gate admission. Held second Sunday of each month.

**Retired Military Appreciation Month Throughout November** at Landmark Park. Retired military who join Landmark Park during the month of November will receive \$10 off any membership level. Plus, retired military and their families are invited to join us for one of these specials: Free admission on Nov. 3; Free ice cream cone on Nov. 10; Free Digitarium Planetarium program on Nov. 17.

**Nov. 17 and 18, ARPA Youth Soccer State Tournament.** Westgate Park. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Nov. 27, 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.** Dothan Civic Center parking lot. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Dec. 1, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Advanced Photography Workshop.** Landmark Park. Registration required. \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. Limited to participants ages 12 and older, with a maximum of 20 participants. Bring camera, extra batteries, the camera manual, a clean media card and a sacked lunch and drink. Call (334) 794-3452 to register. This workshop will cover areas such as camera set up including ISO settings, aperture, depth of field and manual focusing. This workshop is intended for photographers with some general knowledge who would like to have a more in-depth understanding about what their camera can offer.

**Dec. 2, 1 p.m., Christmas Decorating Workshop.** Landmark Park. Bring a little holiday cheer to Landmark Park. A snack will be provided and volunteers will have a chance to create their own old-fashioned ornament to take home. The workshop is free with paid gate admission. Registration required.

# Places to Go & Things to Do

**Dec. 3, Dothan Dolphin Swim Team Tryouts.** For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3370.

**Dec. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21, Christmas Past Season Session.** Landmark Park. Students in preschool-6th grade will have a chance to experience an old-fashioned Christmas with storytelling, games, and cider. They will also have a chance to create an old-fashioned ornament. Students will attend either a morning session from 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m. or an afternoon session from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. This session is only open to pre-registered school groups.

**Dec. 6, 7, and 13, My Little Christmas Shoppe.** Rose Hill Senior Center. For more information, contact the City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700.

**Dec. 9, Victorian Christmas.** Landmark Park. Experience Christmas past with mulled cider, hot chocolate, a circuit riding preacher (Headland Presbyterian Church, 2 p.m.), old-fashioned decorations, turn-of-the-century desserts and music. Admission is free for everyone.

**Dec. 27-31, Hoops Classic Basketball Tournament.** Dothan Civic Center. Annual event featuring basketball teams from all over the Wiregrass region. For more information, call City of Dothan Department of Leisure Services, (334) 615-3700

**Landmark Park Photography Contest in February 2013.** Landmark Park will host a photo contest with the help of the Southeast Alabama Photography and Adventure Club. Photos will be accepted December 7 through January 7. Photos must have been taken at Landmark Park in the last year. Participants can enter photos in five different categories with a maximum of two photos per person per category. Photos submitted must be either 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 and must be mounted on foam core. Duplicate pictures in more than one category. Matting and frames will not be accepted. Photos will be judged on creativeness, emotional impact, originality, simplicity and overall composition in the following categories: Juvenile Division (ages 15 and younger), Farm Animals/Wildlife, Floral, People and Scenic/Architecture. The cost per entry is \$3 per photo. Winners and other photos will be on display in the Interpretive Center lobby starting February 8. Landmark Park will retain rights to photos for one year and reserve the right to use them for promotional purposes.

**Landmark Park will be closed** on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Fairhope**

**Nov. 10, 10 a.m., City of Fairhope Veterans Day Parade.** Begins at Fairhope Civic Center.

**Nov. 15, Fairhope Tree Lighting.** The City of Fairhope will kick off the holiday season with its annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. and the lights come on at 6 p.m. (sharp). For additional information, call (251) 929-1466.

**Dec. 7, 7 p.m. Fairhope Magical Christmas Parade. The annual Christmas.** Begins at the intersection of Morphy and Section Streets, and continues down Section Street to Oak Street. For additional information, call (251) 929-1466.

**Dec. 8 and 15, City of Fairhope Santa Saturdays.** Santa will be in front of the Fairhope Museum of History in downtown Fairhope from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. for children to visit. Parents may bring their cameras to take pictures. For additional information, call (251) 990-0218.

**Jan. 1, 2013, City of Fairhope New Year's Eve Celebration.** The City of Fairhope will again be hosting its annual New Year's Eve Celebration in the streets of downtown Fairhope. Residents and visitors are invited to bring their families and ring in the New Year dancing in the street. The band will begin playing at 8:30 p.m. at the corner of Fairhope Avenue and Section Street. Other entertainment will include face painting, a DJ, fireworks at midnight, free party favors and a ball drop at midnight. For more information, call (251) 929-1466.

## Foley

**Dec. 8, 10 a.m., Foley Christmas Parade.** The annual Christmas Parade winds its way through downtown Foley with festive floats, treats and throws, and of course, Santa waves a Merry Christmas to all. For more information, contact Richard Peterson, (251) 943-5001.

**Dec. 8, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Let It Snow event.** Heritage Park, Foley. Following Foley's Christmas Parade, come to Heritage Park for live entertainment, inflatable obstacle courses, storytelling with Mrs. Claus, a children's art village and snow. Concessions sold on site. Don't forget your mittens! For more information, contact Linda Hula, (251) 943-1300.

## Opelika

**Nov. 4, 12-5 p.m., Holiday Open House.** Historic downtown Opelika. Get a head start on your shopping. Plan to each brunch or lunch and enter drawings for door prizes given away throughout the day. Complimentary gift wrapping, snacks and drinks available at select shops.

**Nov. 29 and 30, 5-8 p.m., 2nd Annual Rocky Brook Rocket Reindeer Express.** Municipal Park. Come see Opelika's own "Winter Wonderland."

**Dec. 1, starting at 10 a.m., Opelika's Annual Christmas Parade.** Same great traditional Christmas parade with floats, singers, marching bands and Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

**Dec. 1-31, "Christmas in Camelot."** The magic of Christmas comes alive throughout Camelot with the many large Christmas cards, painted under art teacher, Roslyn Stern, by Opelika High School art students. The neighborhood lights are adorned with lighted wreaths and all of the houses are decorated with the wonders of Christmas. This drive-through event begins at sundown.

**Dec. 5-9, Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour.** Driving tours are Dec. 5, 6, 7 and 9 from 5 until 10 p.m. Walking tour is on Dec. 8 between 6 and 9 p.m. (weather permitting).

**Dec. 7, 6-9 p.m., Christmas in a Railroad Town.** Historic downtown Opelika. Lots of family fun activities to get the Christmas spirit moving in the whole family. Games and rides for children, tours, food and shopping for adults. Trolley and wagon rides through the Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour areas.

**Dec. 20, beginning around 5 p.m., Collinwood Luminaries Driving Tour.** Tour features the peaceful feel of luminaries as they line the streets of Collinwood subdivision. The tour begins at Collinwood Street and 10th Street (also known as Oak Bower Road).

## Sylacauga

**For the month of November,** the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will present the local artists exhibition. A reception will be held on Nov. 15 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

**Nov. 1, 6 p.m., Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce Banquet.** J. Craig Smith Community Center. This is a ticketed event. Lt Gov. Kay Ivey will be the guest speaker.

**Nov. 2-4, Sylacauga's Holiday Open House.** Downtown and Hwy. 280 merchants will offer their best holiday values. Sunday hours: 1 until 5 p.m.

**Nov. 3, "Diggin' it with the Dogs."** Support the Animal Rescue Foundation's (ARF) annual fundraiser. Sponsored by Blue Bell.

**Nov. 7, B.B. Comer Memorial Library** will host Brown Bag series speaker, Dolores Hydock. Her topic will be "Abundant Blessings: Stories for the Thanksgiving Season."

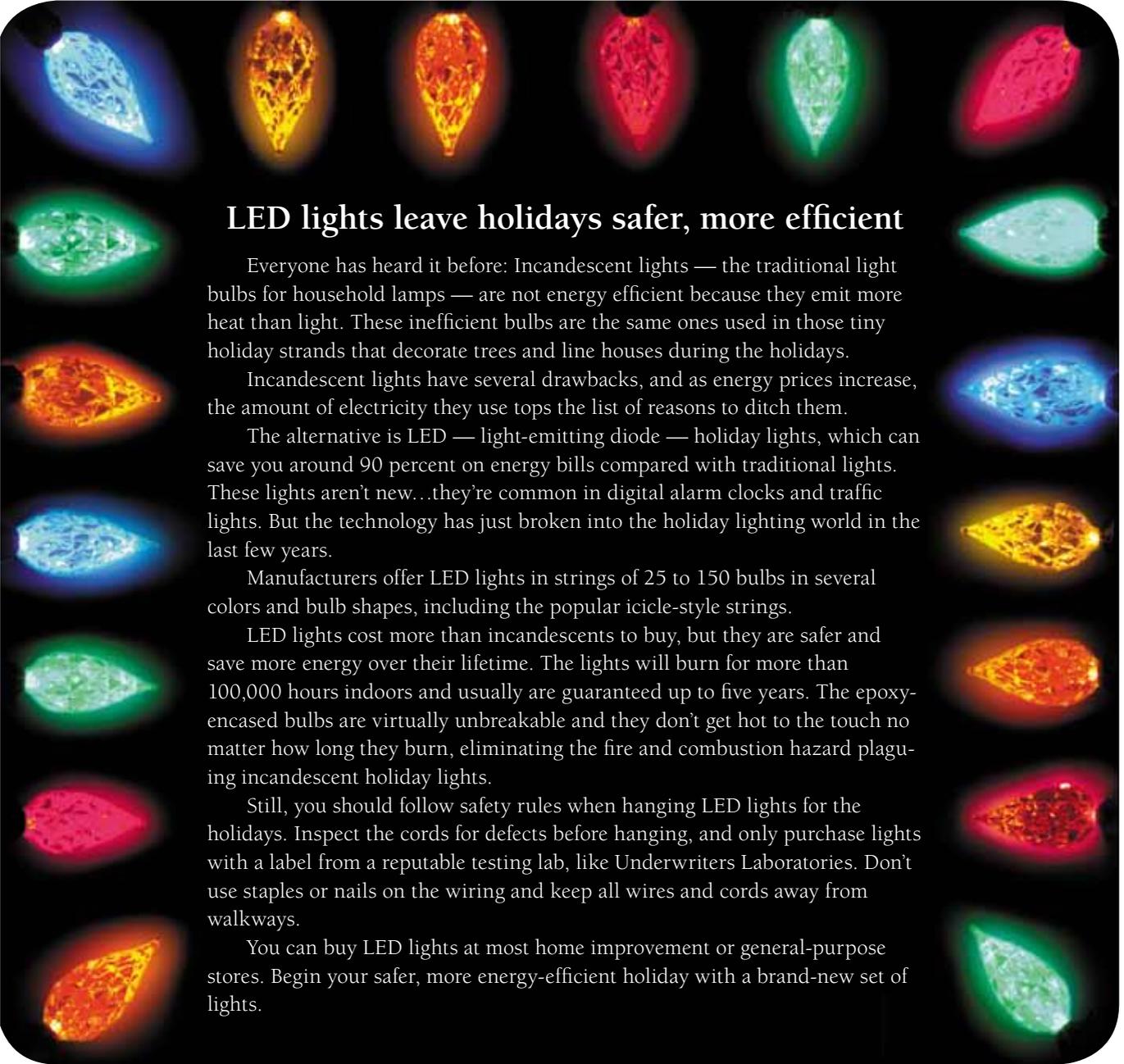
**For the month of December,** the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will feature multi-media abstract art by Kevin Whitman. A reception will be held on Dec. 13 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.

**Dec. 4, 6:30 p.m., Sylacauga's Annual Christmas Parade.** The theme this year is "A Storybook Christmas."

**Alabama Municipal Electric Authority**

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## LED lights leave holidays safer, more efficient

Everyone has heard it before: Incandescent lights — the traditional light bulbs for household lamps — are not energy efficient because they emit more heat than light. These inefficient bulbs are the same ones used in those tiny holiday strands that decorate trees and line houses during the holidays.

Incandescent lights have several drawbacks, and as energy prices increase, the amount of electricity they use tops the list of reasons to ditch them.

The alternative is LED — light-emitting diode — holiday lights, which can save you around 90 percent on energy bills compared with traditional lights. These lights aren't new...they're common in digital alarm clocks and traffic lights. But the technology has just broken into the holiday lighting world in the last few years.

Manufacturers offer LED lights in strings of 25 to 150 bulbs in several colors and bulb shapes, including the popular icicle-style strings.

LED lights cost more than incandescents to buy, but they are safer and save more energy over their lifetime. The lights will burn for more than 100,000 hours indoors and usually are guaranteed up to five years. The epoxy-encased bulbs are virtually unbreakable and they don't get hot to the touch no matter how long they burn, eliminating the fire and combustion hazard plaguing incandescent holiday lights.

Still, you should follow safety rules when hanging LED lights for the holidays. Inspect the cords for defects before hanging, and only purchase lights with a label from a reputable testing lab, like Underwriters Laboratories. Don't use staples or nails on the wiring and keep all wires and cords away from walkways.

You can buy LED lights at most home improvement or general-purpose stores. Begin your safer, more energy-efficient holiday with a brand-new set of lights.