Alabama CURRENTS

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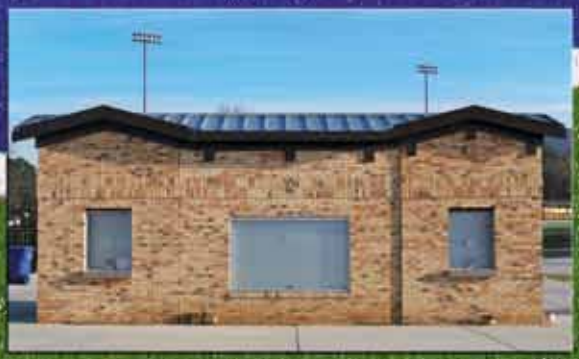
Piedmont High School Field of Champions – A Community's Vision Becomes Reality

See Page 3



Happy 10th Birthday, *Alabama Currents*! That's right, it's time to blow out the candles and celebrate 10 years of production for *Alabama Currents* magazine…your magazine.

Responding to the accountability that municipally-owned electric utilities feel to their customers, at the request of its members, the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) published the first issue of *Currents* magazine in March 2002. With a circulation of approximately 94,000, this publication informs AMEA Member cities' power customers of member services, histories and industry news defining public power and its advantages and bettering citizens' understanding of their electric utility.

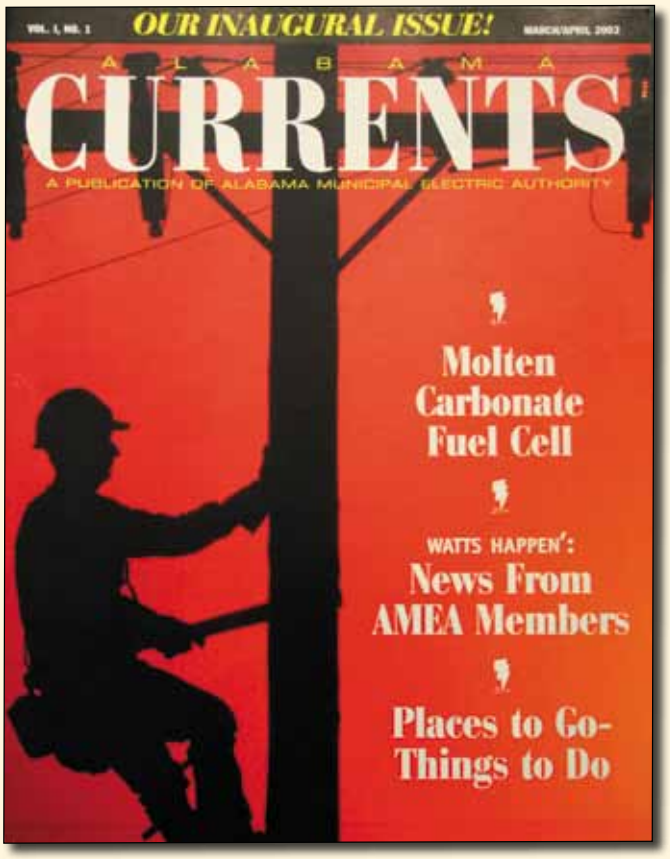
Alabama Currents, produced six times a year, is mailed to customers of our 11 Members, including Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Riviera Utilities, Sylacauga and Tuskegee. This is one of the many benefits of being a public power customer.

Throughout the past 10 years, we have continued to work very hard to provide you with useful information in *Alabama Currents*. This is your publication and we want it to be a great source of information.

Over the past several years, AMEA has made significant enhancements to *Alabama Currents*, all with the goal of helping you be better informed about energy efficiency, energy industry news and trends, and safety.

We put a lot of thought and effort into the types of information that will be most beneficial to you as a consumer. We know that during these challenging times in the electric industry, there is always a need for more information on making wise-energy usage decisions. We definitely recognize that helping you manage your energy costs is at the top of your list.

AMEA has worked diligently to feature energy-efficiency information, including the "Be a Wise Energy User" standing feature, the addition of energy-efficiency columnist Doug Rye, and energy efficiency/weatherization information from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. Energy-efficiency topics have included the efficient use of compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), tune-up of heating/cooling unit, routine maintenance of water heaters, adding insulation, ENERGY STAR®, and much more. All of these articles will continue to be a major part of your publication.



We also recognize that there would not be a magazine if it weren't for those individuals at your city/utility who contribute articles and stories to each publication. Whether it's articles about your utility or articles on tourism, economic and community development within your city, these public power employees provide a very valuable service to *Alabama Currents*. They work hard to serve as the "ears and eyes" of their communities.

These contributing writers wear many hats at your public power system and providing articles in *Alabama Currents* is just one of those hats. These men and women work tirelessly to continue to shine a light in your hometown. On behalf of AMEA and *Alabama Currents*, I take off my hat to these public servants and salute their efforts.

We hope you continue to enjoy *Alabama Currents* for many years to come.

Lisa Miller

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing

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P.O. Box 5220
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5220

804 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

www.amea.com

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Alabama Currents is published six times per year by the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA), and is mailed to the retail electric customers of AMEA Member cities.

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

Renovations at the Piedmont High School Field of Champions were completed just in time for the 2011 football season. The renovations include artificial turf, new scoreboard, upgraded seating, new concessions stand, and new locker rooms for baseball and soccer, and game night locker room for football.

The new stadium took the work of a community to pull it all off, said Matt Akin, Piedmont School Superintendent. Workers from the city of Piedmont and the county all donated hundreds of hours of in-kind work towards the project, saving the schools approximately $750,000. The county completed much of the grading work for the renovations, and the city completed the electrical rough-ins and the concrete-form building, as well as all of the installation of sewer and water lines.

With a seating capacity of 1,600 in the new home grandstands, the total seating capacity at the Field of Champions is now 3,500. But the most impressive aspect about the new athletic complex is how it all ties together. The brick towers on the front of the gym lobby matches the towers along the entrance into the stadium, and the towers on the back of the grandstands, which, when completed, will match the towers on the baseball and softball press boxes.

(Excerpts printed with permission from The Piedmont Journal. Photos courtesy of Doug Borden)

In My Opinion

The mission of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) 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 ownership for their citizens and the electric customers they serve.

This is a mission we take quite seriously. So when stringent and unrealistic federal rules or regulations threaten that mission, it causes us great concern.

Such is the case with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) aggressive regulatory efforts to shut down coal-fired electric generation. Over the past several years, I have shared with you my concerns about EPA's relentless, unrealistic and costly regulations which impact electric generation. EPA's proposed rules would significantly impact customers and the overall U.S. economy as a result of higher costs for electricity and reduced reliability. Ultimately, you, the customer, will bear these significant costs.

So here we go again. On Dec. 21, 2011, EPA released its final rule requiring maximum achievable control technology for mercury and other hazardous air pollutants from power plants. The rule, called the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (known in the electricity industry as the "utility MACT rule"), will impose additional significant costs to consumers

The rule will go into effect when it is published in the Federal Register, which is expected to occur in March. Under the new federal rules, companies have three years to comply or shut down with the option of a one-year extension to avoid brownouts and a fifth year if it is deemed a plant is critical to the power grid. That means that most coal-fired power plants will have until early 2016 to install baghouses, scrubbers, or other equipment to reduce their emissions.

Public power utilities own approximately 200 coal-fired units with an aggregate generating capacity of 31 gigawatts, according to Mark Crisson, President and CEO, American Public Power Association (APPA) in a Dec. 9 letter to President Obama. Based on a survey of its members, APPA has determined that public power utilities will need 77 months, or about six and a half years, to comply with the final rule, he said.

"While APPA appreciates that the Administration provided modest opportunities for additional time to comply with the rule, we are also disappointed that the rule does not appear to utilize other authorities available under the Clean Air Act that would provide additional time for compliance and lessen the cost to consumers and the potential impact on reliability," the association said.

The utility MACT rule "is expected to be the most expensive rule the agency has ever imposed on our nation's power sector," the Energy and Commerce Committee said on its website.

In its comments on the proposed rule, APPA noted that it had "stressed the need to take into account public power's concerns that enough time be provided for our communities to engage in the processes necessary for us to comply with the rule." This includes the time needed to plan, hold public meetings and hearings, finance, permit, construct and install pollution control devices, and coordinate and sequence the necessary regional activities, the association said.

Here are some main points of concern:

- It is one of the most expensive rules that EPA has ever proposed.
- It would take one of our nation's most abundant energy resources – coal – off the table as a source of energy for new power plants.
- EPA is moving too fast, and in its rush included numerous data and methodological errors.
- EPA underestimates the costs of the rule. Significant emissions reductions are already being achieved under current regulations.

The time frame allowed for compliance does not square with actual industry experience for how long it takes to site, permit and install environmental controls.

However, we are encouraged that in a Jan. 24 letter to EPA, members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee requested that the agency estimate the total cost of the EPA's utility MACT rule.

"The President's Executive Order 13563 requires that EPA make available to the public the assessment of the costs anticipated from the regulatory action, such as the direct cost to businesses and others in complying with the regulation, as well as the underlying analysis," the lawmakers said in a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson. A document EPA

published in December, called the "Regulatory Impact Analysis for the Final Mercury and Air Toxics Standards," does not provide a total cost of the regulation, the committee members said. The analysis provides "only a share of those costs assigned to three select years from costs that are amortized over 30 to 40 years."

Also, "because it is our understanding that EPA in its utility MACT cost estimate assumed that the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR) would already be in effect, we request that you provide an assessment of the impact of the recent court decision to stay implementation of CSAPR on the cost estimate," the lawmakers said in their letter. NOTE: I shared my concerns with you about the impact of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule in my September/October article.

The utility MACT rule "is expected to be the most expensive rule the agency has ever imposed on our nation's power sector," the Energy and Commerce Committee said on its website. EPA's estimates "do not provide the total 'sticker price' of the rule, but only a share of those costs assigned to three select years: $9.4 billion in 2015, $8.6 billion in 2020, and $7.4 billion in 2030. EPA documentation states that annualized estimates assume utilities would take 30 to 40 years to pay off compliance costs."

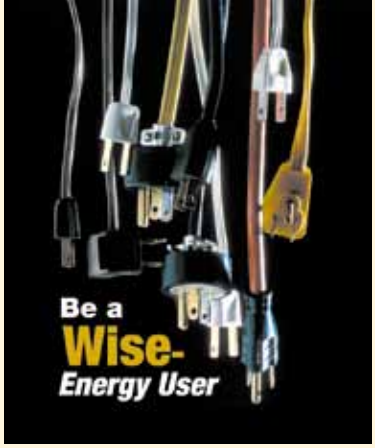
As I have said before, EPA has an important and valuable role in America. We all want to maintain a clean environment, and we also want a healthy economy, which relies on reliable electricity at costs that people and businesses can afford. The proposed Utility MACT rule along with the other proposed EPA rules will threaten reliability and drive up costs.

Customers and communities in the Southeast have been struggling with the economic recession and unacceptably high unemployment rates. This unprecedented and ill-timed transformation of the nation's electricity infrastructure will only impede the U.S. economic recovery, reduce our ability to create jobs and add to the economic burdens of our customers.

We have already communicated our concerns about these far-reaching regulations to Alabama's Congressional delegation. I will be in Washington, D.C., in March to speak to our Congressional members, as well as meet with APPA on these issues

We are hopeful that the U.S. Congress and EPA will take a realistic look at the enormous impact of all the regulations they are considering and how those regulations affect families and businesses. In a time of high unemployment, we should be pursuing sensible policies that create jobs, not eliminate jobs. It is important that we aim for a balanced approach between protecting the environment and the impact of potential costs to you, the customer

Fred D. Clark, Jr.
AMEA President & CEO



Include an energy check to your spring cleaning list

Warm weather has a way of making things grow: flowers, grass, and your to-do list. So what's one more task? While you're scrubbing and inspecting your home this spring, check for energy-efficiency around the house. Making a few energy-related repairs could help lower your electric bill all year long.

While you're cleaning the windows, check for loose or leaky panes, and identify single-paned windows. These energy no-no's allow cool air to escape from your home during the summer and steal heated air during the winter. That can raise your utility bill no matter the season. Replacing old, inefficient windows now is an investment that will pay for itself in energy savings.

Light bulbs looking dim? Wipe them down to remove excess dust and trash those incandescent bulbs. Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) come in almost every size and mimic the glow of incandescents while using less energy. CFLs also last up to 10 times longer.

Replace your dirty air filters. Dusty filters make your air conditioning system work harder.

Open the windows. If it's not warm enough yet to turn off the heat and enjoy the fresh air, install a programmable thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature so you use less energy to heat your home when no one is there. The device can save you up to $100 a year on heating and cooling bills.

Vacuum under and behind the refrigerator to remove dust buildup that decreases efficiency. If you use an extra fridge or freezer in a basement or storage room, turn it off when not in use. If you use it year round, keep it stocked or fill gaps with extra jugs of water or trays of ice so it will operate more efficiently.

Before you scrub major appliances like refrigerators, ovens and washers, check to see if the model is ENERGY STAR®-certified. If not, consider upgrading – ENERGY STAR models use loads less energy and are worth the purchase price, even if your older, less-efficient appliance is still in working order.

For more energy-efficiency tips, visit www.amea.com, Energy Efficiency.

Happy Springtime

I hope that you have had a good two months since I wished you a Happy New Year. During these last two months, I have conducted 17 seminars about energy efficiency. Those presentations included two high schools, a builder's home show in Fort Smith, AR, a home and garden home show in St. Louis, MO, and the Alabama Better Living Expo in Montgomery, AL. So I have had the privilege of helping folks of many ages and walks of life. There seems to be as much interest in energy efficiency as ever before. However, the adults in these meetings seem to want to know who to believe, as many of them have asked others what they should do in certain cases on both new and existing houses. They say that they get different answers depending on whom they ask. I get these same questions every day when folks call me at the office. Basically they just want to know the best, honest, and feasible answer. That seems to be a reasonable request to me, so why is it so difficult to obtain?

Well let me try to explain it this way. There were several hundred booths total at the home shows and expo. With a few exceptions, the company that leased the booth had something or a service that they wanted to show you with hopes that you might want to buy it. To be successful, the person at that particular booth must convince the shopper that his or her product is the best bargain of all. If that company is showing windows, they must convince you that their window is the best one for you. You may go down the aisle a few feet and find another window company that tells you that their window is the one for you. At a large home show, there may be 10 different booths showing windows and all have similar stories. Well if you think that you need new windows, how do you decide which to buy or do you even really need new windows anyway? It can be very confusing. The best answer to your problem with comfort or high utility bills may not be new windows at all. I am not picking on window companies and I love home shows, but the truth is that there are a lot of companies that make good, efficient windows. And there are plenty of houses in Alabama that would benefit by installing new energy efficient windows, but it is not the answer for most homes.

What I am trying to say is that just about everyone has something that they want to sell. If you go to the next aisle and talk to the insulation folks, they will probably try to convince you that their type insulation is a better buy than that kind at another booth and on and on with many products like, flooring, heating and air, appliances, etc. Most of these folks are just good hard working folks that are proud of their company and are trying to pay their bills just like you and me. This is the American way and it is good that we have lots of choices.

I often ask callers why they called me with their question. Their answer is always, "Because you are a third party and you don't sell anything…we trust you." They are right and I take that trust seriously.

In the last three days, I have had five office calls and two live radio calls that started like this, "Hi, Mr. Rye. We need your opinion. We went to a meeting last night and…" I immediately interrupt them and say, "You got a free dinner and were told that you would save a whole lot on your utility bills if you would let them install a certain radiant barrier product on the top of your attic insulation." It is usually quiet for a few seconds, and then they say, "Yes, how did you know?" Well it is because I have heard that many, many times. I then ask the caller a number of questions about their house. Here is an example of question and answer from one.

1. What is the size of your attic? About 1,500 square feet.
2. Was the cost to do this work about $3,000? Actually $2,800.
3. How much attic insulation do you have? About 12 inches.
4. Is the ductwork in the attic? Yes.
5. Is your house all electric? Yes.
6. How much are your electric bills? They go from about $90 to $160 per month.

It is my opinion that this house is operating well and I would not suggest that you spend $3,000 to save a few dollars per month. Space does not allow me to give more examples, but it has been my experience that this type of application is rarely feasible. It is my opinion that there are some houses that would benefit from the use of a radiant barrier, but the barrier should be installed on or in the sloped roof rafters so that the heat rays never heat the attic or ductwork to begin with.

As always, call if you want my opinion and remember that I don't have a dog in this hunt. I am just trying to help you.

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.

WATTS NEW IN

Lanett

Light Department employees are asset to city

By Jennie Gunnells

The City of Lanett has an outstanding Light Department that is quick to restore power when the lights go out. These guys are on call on weekends, holidays, and during inclement weather. They keep the lights on in Lanett. They perform their work with good customer skills and are all good at their jobs.

During the Christmas season, Lanett is the first in the area to have the Christmas lights up and on as well as get the Christmas tree up in downtown Lanett.

David DeLee is the Utility Superintendent. He has a long career with the City of Lanett. DeLee began in the Water Department as a water distribution worker. He transferred to the Light Department and became a meter reader. His career has taken him from apprentice lineman to lineman to Light Foreman and finally to Utility Superintendent in December 2007. On Jan. 23, 2012, DeLee celebrated 21 years with the City of Lanett.

DeLee is a big Alabama fan and loves to attend Alabama football games in his spare time. Since Alabama is ranked #1 in football, he is on cloud nine. He and his wife, Cindy, have a daughter, Faith.

Allen Summers is the Light Foreman and has been employed with the City for over 11 years. He began his career as an apprentice lineman, moved up to lineman and then to Light Foreman. Summers is married with two children.

Kirk Lauderdale began his career as a temporary grass cutter in the Street Department. He went to a fulltime Laborer III job, moved to the Water Department as a water distribution worker, then transferred to the Light Department as an apprentice lineman. Lauderdale recently received his Commercial Driver's License (CDL). He has been employed with the City for three and a half years. He is married with children.

John Ellis is a lineman and has been employed with the City since Oct. 21, 1975. Ellis does his work with a smile. He has the longest continuous service of any employee at the City of Lanett, with 36 years.

Todd Smallwood is a lineman and has been employed for over 15 years. He is married to a teacher and they have two children.

Lamar Oliver began his career as a Laborer III in the Street Department and moved to the Water Department as a water distribution worker. He then transferred to the Light Department as an apprentice lineman. Oliver has been working with the City of Lanett for three and a half years. He is married with children.

If you happen to run into any of these City of Lanett Light Department employees, be sure and thank them for doing such a good job of keeping the lights on in Lanett. We are proud of their track record for keeping the lights on and for getting them back on quickly when they happen to go out.

Lanett Light Department employees are (L to R): Allen Summers, Light Foreman; David DeLee, Utility Superintendent; Kirk Lauderdale, Apprentice Lineman; John Ellis, Lineman; Todd Smallwood, Lineman; and Lamar Oliver, Apprentice Lineman.

WATTS NEW IN

Dothan

Dothan Utilities provides new service for locate requests

By Cassandra Milton

Dothan Utilities has joined the Alabama Line Locate Center (Alabama One Call). All locates concerning the Dothan Utilities office will now need to be directed to Alabama One Call at 1-800-292-8525.

Alabama One Call is a toll-free statewide service through which excavators can have underground utilities located. As its name suggests, excavators can with one call request that any underground water pipes, sewage pipes, gas lines, electrical lines and telephone wires be located on their property.

Dothan Utilities has joined Alabama One Call to better serve the public. By state law, anyone engaging in excavation activities is required to notify the underground facility owners prior to the start of excavation. Alabama One Call helps streamline this process by providing a "one call" service allowing excavators to notify Dothan Utilities quickly and efficiently.

The Alabama locate law is designed to safeguard against injury and possible loss of life due to excavation or demolition and to protect underground facilities from costly damage and the interruption of utility or other service to the general public.

As always, the City of Dothan is constantly searching for ways to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public. Dothan Utilities' partnership with Alabama One Call is one more example of those continuous efforts.

WATTS NEW IN
Sylacauga

Hatchett Creek Hydro- Electric Plant 1910 – 1911 (Photo LeBron Holland). This dam and electric plant, built by John Ogletree, Sr. and Peter Vardaman, was the first municipal hydro-electric plant in Alabama.

Electrifying story of Sylacauga, Alabama

By Darol W. Russell

Among the first to use hydro-power in Alabama were the small towns of Sylacauga and Goodwater. The following is an article by John B. Scott Jr., which was published by *The Montgomery Advertiser* on August 12, 1973.

"The head waters of Hatchet Creek rise in the Talladega mountains and the creek officially begins where its east and west forks come together near Bull's Gap in Clay County. Steadily gaining strength from innumerable springs and branches, the creek then flows southwesterly for approximately forty miles through Clay and Coosa Counties before emptying into the backwaters of Lake Mitchell. During its course, Hatchet falls over 400 feet in elevation and is laced with numerous stretches of white water as it flows over rocky shoals and ledges of granite. For much of the way the creek is hemmed in with steep hills, heavily forested with second growth hardwood and pine. For long stretches, the roar of rapids and the unbroken walls of green, give to Hatchet a wilderness character unique among Alabama's waterways.

Hatchet has not always been so detached from man's ordinary, workday endeavors. When the earliest settlers moved into the area in the 1830's they immediately recognized Hatchet and its swift flowing tributaries as prime sources of power. Rough stone dams were thrown across the creek at strategic spots and mills were constructed for grinding corn, ginning cotton, sawing lumber and weaving cloth. Old time residents estimate there were once as many as 30 water powered mills along the main course of the creek and a number of others on its tributaries. With the advent of electricity and modern transportation, the water powered mills on Hatchet became obsolete and were abandoned one by one. All of the mill dams have now long since been swept away by spring floods and only the moss covered stone foundations of the mills, overgrown with trees and wild grapevines, remain to commemorate the days when Hatchet was the industrial artery of Coosa and Clay counties."

Through good times and bad, the creek was the common thread that wove the scattered farms into a community. It powered the two mills upon which everyone depended for flour, lumber and other necessities. And in addition, many of the pleasant things in life such as swimming, fishing and church picnics were centered on its banks.

One factor which contributed greatly to the long-time isolation of many of the communities along Hatchet Creek was simply the difficulty of bridging the creek. For many years, the Central of Georgia railroad terminated at Goodwater largely because of the engineering problems involved in extending the line across the creek. When the present trestle was built around 1910 it was the highest railroad bridge in the United States. The trestle was considered of such strategic importance during World War II that sentries were posted on both banks of the creek 24 hours a day to guard against German saboteurs. The trestle is still impressive today, particularly when you come floating around a quiet bend in the creek and suddenly, with a roar, there appears a freight train hurdling high above the tops of the trees.

As transportation improved, there was less dependence on the small water powered mills and around the turn of the century they began slipping into a steady decline. However, the swift flowing waters of Hatchet Creek were soon harnessed for a new use. Around 1905 the towns of Sylacauga and Goodwater both built municipal hydroelectric plants on the creek.

The Goodwater dam and generator were constructed

City of Sylacauga Electric Department, 1952

a short distance below where U.S. Highway 280 now crosses the creek. Although the generating equipment was fairly reliable, its output was just barely enough to accommodate the ordinary needs of the town. Accordingly, whenever there was a night basketball game at the high school or some other community gathering after dark all of the residence of Goodwater would turn out the electric lights in their homes to insure there would be enough "juice" to keep the meeting properly illuminated.

The dam and generator constructed by the City of Sylacauga was located a short distance downstream from where U.S. 231 now crosses the creek near Rockford. The generator for the plant was shipped by rail to Sylacauga and then hauled to the sight over dirt roads. In the Old Hickory Restaurant* in Sylacauga there was a large photograph taken on the main street of Sylacauga showing the oversized wagons drawn by long teams of oxen setting for Hatchet Creek with the original generator auxiliary equipment.

With the construction of large and more efficient power plants on the Coosa and Tallapoosa, both the Sylacauga and the Goodwater installations became obsolete and were abandoned in the 1920's. The Sylacauga dam was later breached by dynamite and the sight has now been effectively power reclaimed by the forest. The Goodwater power house is also gone, but the dam remains intact and creates the only impoundment which exists on Hatchet at the present time.

* The Old Hickory Restaurant has closed since the article was first published.

Appreciation and credit respectfully to John B. Scott Jr. and *The Montgomery Advisor.* Article originally published August 12, 1973.

Additional historical information provided by the Isabel Anderson Comer Museum and Arts Center, Sylacauga.

Photos provided by Photographer Don Smith, Home of Photography, Sylacauga.

WATTS NEW IN **Opelika**

Opelika Parks and Recreation honored at ARPA Conference

By Laura Leigh Pierce

The Alabama Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) recently recognized Opelika Parks and Recreation for several awards at the 65th Annual State Conference in Auburn.

After looking at several applications from parks and recreation departments across the state of Alabama, ARPA selected Opelika Parks and Recreation for awards in three different categories.

Camp Good Grief won the award for the 2011 Innovative Program of the Year. This is the second consecutive year that Opelika has won this award.

Camp Good Grief is a one-day camp for children, ages 6-17, who have experienced a death-related loss. Opelika Parks and Recreation directs this program through a partnership with Hospice Advantage EAMC, and Jenny Filush directs it.

"The neat thing about Camp Good Grief is that it is all volunteer-led," said Valeri White, Sportsplex Adult Activity Director and Camp Good Grief Volunteer Coordinator. "It's amazing to see the amount of people who come together to heal the hearts of our area's kids."

Opelika Parks and Recreation staff member, Ben White, won the award for the 2011 Outstanding New Professional of the Year. Ben is the director of the Denson Drive Recreation Center and the Tumbling Program housed within that facility. However, White's involvement does not end there.

The Opelika Sportsplex Director, Tim Gore, said that when White was given a leadership role, he took advantage of it. He took his tumbling program and the Denson Drive Recreation Center to a new level. He also established a new Christmas event, the Rocky Brook Rocket Reindeer Express.

"He sets the standard by which all of us should work," said Gore.

Opelika Parks and Recreation also won the award for 2011 Agency of the Year. The Public Relations and Special Activities Coordinator for the department, Laura Pierce, said that several factors went into the selection process for this award.

"The department's accomplishments throughout 2011, special programs, special events, facilities and numerous services to the community were taken into account," said Pierce. "Our senior programs, special events, therapeutic programs and opportunities for community growth and involvement gave our department plenty to be proud of."

Sam Bailey, Director of the Opelika Parks and Recreation Department, pointed out that the Agency of the Year Award is one of the premier awards given by ARPA. According to Bailey, the award is truly a staff award, and without an exceptional and motivated staff, this award is impossible to obtain.

Pictured (L-R): Laura Leigh Pierce, Parks & Recreation Director; Sam Bailey, Adult Activity Director; Valeri White, Camp Good Grief Director; Jenny Filush; and Ben White, Denson Drive Recreation Center Director.

WATTS NEW AT
Riviera Utilities

AN INTERESTING LOOK AT OUR FUTURE

By David Horton

This article could have easily started out with…. "Once Upon A Time" and ended with…. "I Did It My Way." The other day, I visited with Riviera Utilities' customer, Ed Benson of Foley. Benson has been in business for over 38 years and is the owner of Benson Appliance Center on Alabama Highway 59, which is fairly close to the center of our city. The reason for my visit to see Benson was to discuss his ownership of a new Nissan Leaf (an electric car) and several new robotic-looking GE battery charging units that have become a part of his store front. I could tell he was proud of his investment and I wanted to know more about the movement, by some people, toward everything being green. In other words, I was just plain curious to find out more about electric cars. Not only that, as an electric utility employee, I wanted to know more about the future of our industry and the role that these automobiles may play in our ability to continue providing reliable electricity.

Following our introductions to each other, Benson shared a brief history of his business and then began to explain the circumstances of choice and the fun he is having by owning one of the first Nissan Leaf electric cars in the region.

"I really like my car and I am promoting the use of electric cars because I feel this country will have major problems with providing liquid fuel in the future," he said. "You can also get a $7,500 tax break right now, too. These cars will work beautifully as a second car for some people and be a great first car for a lot of others. It will depend on how much they have to use it and how far they travel in a vehicle during a day's time. You would have to get used to the fact that the car can only serve you up to 100 miles per charge. I know that the engineers in the car companies are working to improve the miles per day an electric vehicle can travel," Benson continued.

Benson mentioned that according to the automobile dealership where he bought the vehicle, he is the first person to take delivery of a Leaf in this region. Also, according to Benson, GE said he was the first to install their charging stations in the region as well.

"I own three charging stations. I have two here at the store and one at my home. Not only that, anyone with an electric car can feel free to charge their car right here in front of my store at no cost to them," Benson said.

At first, I must admit that I was a little skeptical about the electric car and its capabilities until I drove it. Benson and I took the car for a spin and I was quite surprised. It had amazing speed and was unbelievably quiet. The car had great steering and if you didn't know any better, you could have believed you were in a regular automobile, until you look at the dash. A person would have to get used to the design of the dash and what each gauge represents when you are cruising down the road. Ratings are shown in kilowatt hours, battery charge remaining and power rating during acceleration. That was a new thought process and challenging for me to comprehend. Stranger than anything else for me, the Nissan Leaf has an 80 kW AC synchronous motor with a 24 kWh lithium-ion battery and has a 3.3 kW onboard charger. Other features include zero tailpipe emissions, no gas used, speeds up to 90 mph, and a 70 to 100 mile range which depends on topography of the land, weather, number of folks in the car and speeds while driving. I just can't get used to the fact that it is all battery propelled.

Another interesting statistic is the fact that the electric motors convert 75 percent of the chemical energy

Ed Benson is shown plugging a GE battery charging unit into his Nissan Leaf in front of his business in Foley.

from the batteries to power the wheels. Internal combustion engines only convert 20 percent of the energy stored in gasoline.

I love the idea that the electric car does not have an exhaust pipe and doesn't pollute the air we breathe. It does make me nervous and I would have trouble with piece of mind when I think that I may run out of battery charge before I get where I want to go and return without a means of charging the battery. But, as long as you stay local and have a purpose for the vehicle such as deliveries and service repair, the electric car could be a plus.

Benson indicated that he was contemplating purchasing an electric truck in the near future to help make all of his local deliveries. For Benson and his business, the fully electric vehicle may be the best choice for him. He can make deliveries locally and never have to purchase any gas. Not only that, at the end of the day, all Benson has to do is plug in his car to the GE battery charger at home or store and the next morning he is ready to go. Actually, it takes about six and one half hours to charge a fully discharged vehicle with the GE chargers.

Needless to say, whether or not to purchase an electric vehicle is certainly up to the individual. There are a lot of questions to be answered. As electric cars are improved, I'm sure that there will be an additional amount on the range in miles that the vehicle will be able to travel.

Other questions include, how well do the batteries operate in extreme hot and cold weather? Are there going to be opportunities to charge the car on trips? Where am I going to get my next charge? There is a lot of research needed to be done by an individual before going out and purchasing an electric car. Some vehicles comparatively have better range because they use a gasoline engine to charge the batteries. There are a lot of pros and cons in owning an electric vehicle. You can't help but admire the direction Benson has chosen to serve his community.

None the less, it takes electricity to operate the vehicle and the future of our industry remains the same. More and more demand is being put on electric utilities to maintain their power grid. It is evident that in our society today, we just can't live without electricity. It is such a vital part of our everyday life. Can you imagine what our quality of life would be like without it? We are Riviera Utilities…serving you proudly each and every day.

WATTS NEW IN
Piedmont

Piedmont Power and Light receives new truck

By Ben Singleton

Piedmont Power and Light (PP&L) employees recently welcomed a new piece of equipment to their fleet. PP&L has put into service a new Altec DM47 Model Digger Derrick Truck. This new truck replaces the 1995 Altec D945 Model Digger Derrick.

The new truck allows PP&L to set poles easier. The new truck can also serve as an extra bucket truck, if needed, and it has new hydraulic quick connects for power tools.

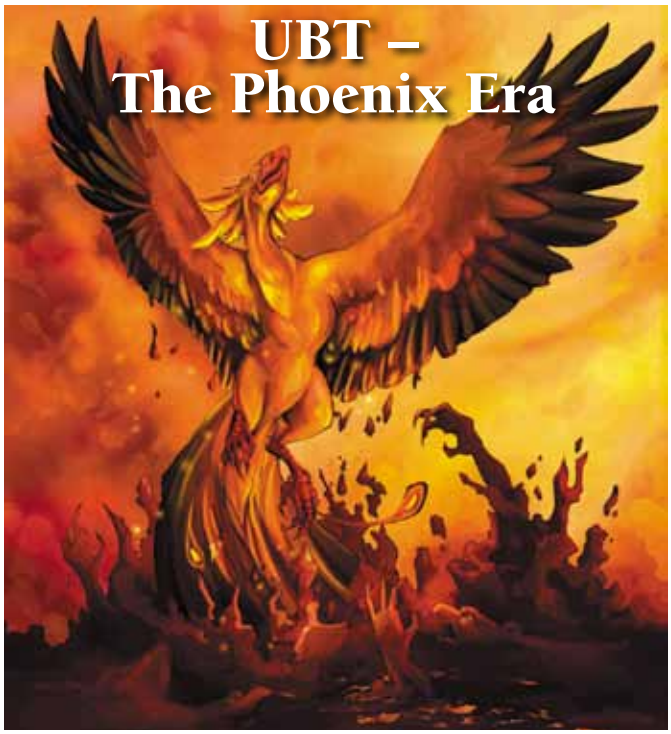
PP&L employees are responsible for providing power to over 2,000 customers and having good quality equipment makes the job a little easier.

"I would like to thank Piedmont city officials for providing us with great equipment", said Phillip Johnson, Supervisor, PP&L.

Piedmont Power & Light employees stand in front of the new Altec DM47 Model Digger Derrick Truck.

WATTS NEW AT

Utilities Board of Tuskegee



Since ancient times, the Phoenix has been a symbol of vision, new beginnings and rebirth. According to folklore, this large mythical bird is consumed by fire and miraculously rises from the ashes, stronger and better able to thrive.

By Karin Hopkins

A $20 million bond sale transaction in early February 2012 was spoken for well ahead of the actual deposit into the Utilities Board of Tuskegee (UBT) bank account. The UBT board appropriated the funds to two priority projects that will deplete the entire $20 million. Having the financial resources for those projects is a huge relief. And there is another side to this story that also has UBT officials smiling. They secured the funds at a low interest rate of 4.1 percent.

Going to the bond market in today's economic environment was a nail biter. Since UBT is based in Alabama, ramifications from the Jefferson County bankruptcy and related changes in the bond rating industry were discussed. One major change involves bond insurance. That option is now closed to Alabama counties, cities and other special purpose borrowers throughout this state. In the past, bond insurers acted as co-signers, sometimes masking borrower's financial blemishes. With no bond insurer on its team, UBT was out on a limb by itself. However, after scrutinizing UBT's finances, leadership and future projections, bond-rating companies in New York declared UBT to be financially strong. Standard & Poor's Rating Services gave UBT an "A" credit rating. Moody's Investors Service awarded UBT an "A2" rating. The high credit ratings means UBT is a safe risk for investors, which qualifies UBT for the low interest rate.

This is a victory for UBT as a business, all UBT customers and the community at-large.

As a business, the bond-raters' evaluation means that the UBT board and management are making the right fiscal and operational decisions. Bond-raters dissected UBT's cash reserves, fund balance, debt service coverage and other criteria, to assess financial strength. UBT passed with flying colors.

According to UBT Chief Financial Officer, Gerald Long, this news comes at a really good time. "Interest rates are at historic lows. As a result, the Utilities Board is able to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest costs by restructuring our existing indebtedness. In addition, we are able to borrow new monies to fund the cost of modifications at the South Wastewater Treatment Plant without increasing our annual debt service or increasing sewer rates to pay for these modifications."

UBT will spend approximately $10 million to retire a debt initially engendered in 1997 at 5.5 percent interest. The lower interest rate allows UBT to keep costs where they are for residential and business customers. The other $10 million dollars will be used to comply with a consent decree affecting the South Wastewater Treatment Plant. This facility discharges into the Calebee Creek, which was legal when the facility was built in the 1970's. Federal and state regulations have changed and the South Plant is now in violation of environmental laws.

The UBT board considered the options and decided to close the South Plant. The plan is to consolidate all wastewater operations at the North Wastewater Treatment Plant, which has already undergone equipment upgrades. This requires major underground construction to re-route all incoming flow from the communities served by the South Plant. The improvements will stave off expensive fines and penalties, which were an impending nightmare for the UBT board.

"Faced with $10 million in mandated improvements to the South Plant, our deepest concern was how to pay the costs," said UBT Chairman Willie "Bill" Anderson. "We did not want our customers to dig deeper in their pockets so we moved in another direction and the board's decision paid off."

The community can use the bond ratings to measure how far UBT has advanced in 10 years. Placed in receivership for unacceptable business practices, 2002 was a low point in UBT history. Fast forward to 2012 and the contrast is startling. Like the mythical phoenix, UBT has risen from the ashes of a forced takeover by the court system and has entered a new era highlighted by dependable service delivery to customers, industry respect and financial stability.

National experts, who gave UBT investment grade credit ratings not once but twice, have commended the current UBT board for exceptional leadership. The UBT board executed perfect timing by going to the bond market at a time when interest rates were so low and the UBT financial profile was so strong.

WATTS NEW IN
Alexander City

Piney Woods area receives extensive damage

By Tracy Kendrick

On January 23, the Piney Woods area in Alexander City received extensive damage from strong winds that passed through the area in the morning. There was damage to the entire point. Many cabins in the area were damaged and some beyond repair. Trees were blown down and snapped.

The strong winds also knocked down power lines. Before the lines could be repaired, the trees had to be cleared from the roads. It took several hours in some areas, due to the road blockage, before the Alexander City Light Department could survey the lines. Once paths cleared, they were able to do what was necessary to get power restored to as many in the area as possible. There were several cabins that we were unable to restore because of the damage to their services.

The cabins in this area are owned by Russell Lands. Most of the residents have been long-time tenants. While several of the cabins are being repaired, a few received too much damage and are beyond repair. The company has chosen not to rebuild the cabins. This decision has forced some tenants to be left without their longtime lake retreat.

After the catastrophic weather event on last April, Alexander City and Alabama are well aware of the dangers of Mother Nature. Severe weather can hit any time and in any place. We need to always stay alert when weather watches are posted and act when warnings are present. With severe weather season upon us, pay attention to the weather forecast. Always be prepared.

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

March 16-18 is a busy weekend in Fairhope

By D. Fran Morley

The Fairhope Arts & Crafts Festival, scheduled for March 16-18, has come a long way from its beginnings 60 years ago.

"The original Arts & Crafts was much different from today," said Kathie Barton, communications director for the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce. "It started as displays by artists in store windows. But it quickly became more and grew into the festival that we know and love today. Spring on the Eastern Shore just couldn't be nicer, especially in Fairhope where thousands of beautiful flowers, including azaleas, burst into bloom just in time for Arts & Crafts and the Outdoor Art Show."

More than 230 exhibitors from throughout the nation will bring their best works to show and sell at the prestigious juried shows that take place on the streets of downtown. Visitors can expect to enjoy live, local entertainment throughout the event and fun festival food in the Arts & Crafts food court.

This year is the 40th anniversary of the annual Outdoor Art Show, hosted by the Eastern Shore Art Association. That event adds another 130 exhibits, with works from prestigious international and regional artists plus exciting newcomers. This year, a children's area offers kids of all ages hands-on art fun.

"We always look forward to this show," said Kate Fisher, director of the Eastern Shore Art Center. "It provides fine-art opportunities to this area's dealers, collectors, interior designers, and art enthusiasts."

Last year, the combined events attracted more than 250,000 visitors to the area, Barton said. "Alabama Tourism picked Arts & Crafts as one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast for March, Southeast Tourism Society named it as one of their Top 20 Events, and Sunshine Artist magazine placed it in the Top 26 of the 100 Predominantly Classic and Contemporary Craft Shows in the nation."

Other activities that weekend include the Spring Fever Chase, a 10K/2 Mile Fun Run/Walk, held on Saturday morning and a train show held on Saturday and Sunday at the Fairhope K-1 Center on Church Street.

The art shows are open each day from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Admission is free. For more information on the events being held that weekend, call (251) 929-1466.

Places to Go & Things to Do

Alexander City

March 3, BFL Fishing Tournaments. Wind Creek State Park. For more information, call (256) 329-0845.

March 12, W.A.T.T. Fishing Tournaments. Wind Creek State Park. For more information, call (256) 329-0845.

March 11, ACPR 50+ Friday Night Dance. Senior Activity Center. Dance starts at 5:30 p.m. with a $5 cover charge. For further details, call (256) 329-2910.

March 17, **ACPR 50+ St. Patrick's Day Bingo Night.** Senior Activity Center. Begins at 5:30 p.m. Bring $3 wrapped bingo prize. Call (256) 329-2910 for more information.

March 18 and 19, **Lake Martin Area Rodeo.** Benefiting Tallapoosa County Relay for Life and Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Gates open at 4 p.m. and rodeo begins at 7 p.m. Adults $10; kids, 4-12, $5, and 3 & under, free. For more information, call (256) 329-6736, Ext 27.

March 19, Fishers of Men Fishing Tournaments. Wind Creek State Park. For more information, call (256) 329-0845.

March 24 and 25, ACPR 50+ Bellingrath Gardens and Home Tour. Overnight trip. For more information, call (256) 329-2910.

March 26, Tallassee Rotary Club Fishing Tournaments. Wind Creek State Park. Call (256) 329-0845 for more information.

March 31, ACPR 50+ Monthly Luncheon. Senior Activity Center. Bring $2 and a side dish. Luncheon begins at 11 a.m. For more information, call (256) 329-2910.

April 2, 6-8 p.m., Antique Car Cruise In. Arby's. Car enthusiasts cruise into Arby's parking lot the first Saturday of the month, April through October. Enjoy the era of classic cars and classic music. Call (256) 234-7154 for more information.

April 2, AL Bass Federation Fishing Tournaments. Wind Creek State Park. For more information, call (256) 329-0845.

April 9, 6 a.m., Community Wide Yard Sale. Charles E. Bailey, Jr. Sportplex. Merchandise may be brought on Friday night and set up. Tables are $10 and must be reserved. All proceeds from table rental will go to Relay for Life for Tallapoosa County. For more information, call (256) 329-6736, Ext 27.

April 11-15, Spring Brea Day Camp will be open with fun events planned daily for children kindergarten through 6th grade. For more information, call (256) 329-6736, Ext. 27.

April 15, ACPR 50+ Spring Fishing Day. Park pond from dawn to dusk with a hot dog cookout. Call (256) 329-2910 for further details.

April 16, Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Charles E. Bailey, Jr. Sportplex. The Easter Bunny will be there, prize eggs, train rides, face painting and other events for the kids. The train rides will start at 9 a.m. and the egg hunt will begin at 10 a.m. For more information, call (256) 329-6736, Ext 27.

April 30, ACPR Spring Beauty & Charm Pageant. From ages 0-10 girls, 16-18 girls and 0-4 boys. For more information, call (256) 329-2910, or e-mail acprpageant@gmail.com for questions/information.

Dothan

March 17, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 29th Annual Spring Farm Day, Landmark Park. Visitors can get a glimpse into what rural life was like a century ago. The day's activities will include demonstrations of old-fashioned skills and crafts like plowing with mules and horses, shearing sheep, blacksmithing, and more. Volunteers dressed in 1890s attire will invite visitors to the historic dwellings to observe the household pursuits of times past. They will quilt, sew by hand and with a treadle-powered sewing machine, cook on a wood stove and on the open hearth, wash clothes and make soap, demonstrate home crafts and games, and relate their own memories of farm life. Other activities include music, a quilt display and children's activities. A crowd favorite will be the 26th Annual Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention. Contestants will compete in four age categories, and acoustical musicians can gather in the Fiddlers' Corner for jam sessions during the day. The 5th Annual Alabama State Horse and Mule Plowing Contest will serve as Alabama's official plowing competition. Plowers will be judged in a variety of areas, including depth of furrow, straightness of furrow and cleanliness of sidewall. Admission is $8 for adults, $6 for senior citizens and active military, $4 for children, and free for children ages 3 and under. Park members are admitted free. Landmark Park is a 135-acre historical and natural science park located on U.S. Highway 431 North in Dothan. For more information, contact the park at (334) 794-3452

Fairhope

March 10, March Fantasy Doll and Toy Show and Sale. 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Fairhope Civic Center Auditorium. Sponsored by the Eastern Shore Doll Study Club of Alabama. Admission is $2 for adults; $1 for children (ages 6-12). For more information, contact Ruth Ann Brett, (251) 980-5958.

March 31, 9 a.m., Annual State of the City Address. Fairhope Civic Center. For details, call (251) 929-1466.

April 7, 14, 21 & 28, 10 a.m., Saturday Walking Tours. Begin at Fairhope Welcome Center. For information, call (251) 929-1466.

April 22, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., 42nd Annual Earth Day. Fairhope Municipal Pier and Park. For information, visit www.earthdaymobilebay.org.

April 27, 6:30 p.m., Hoot Scoot, 5k & 1 Mile Run. Begins at the Fairhope Public Library. For information, visit www.fairhopelibrary.org.

April 29, 1-4 p.m., Fairhope's Annual Historic Homes Tour. For information, call (251) 929-1466.

Lanett

March 15, 2 p.m. (EST), Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail Launch. Alligator Creek Nature Trail, near West Point Lake, Lanett. The Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce (GVACC) will host a ribbon-cutting and launch for the Chambers County portion of the new Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail. Chambers County is one of nine east-central Alabama counties included in the trail, which offers 34 approved sites in 3.5 million woodland acres. This is one of three approved birding sites in Chambers County for the trail. For more information, please contact GVACC, (334) 642-1411.

Opelika

March 3, City-Wide Cleanup (Keep Opelika Beautiful). Time TBA.

March 17, St. Patrick's Day Celebration. Outdoors in historic downtown Opelika. Activities for children during the day. Music and entertainment in the evening. Contact info@opelikamainstreet.org for more information.

March 31, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Garden in the Park. Opelika Municipal Park. Arts and crafts style event hosted each year by Keep Opelika Beautiful.

April 5, 7:30 p.m., Great Flashlight Egg Hunt. Moore Stadium. Grades 3rd through 5th. Bring a flashlight and a basket and hunt for eggs and prizes in the dark.

April 7, 10-11 a.m., Easter on the Square. Egg-tivities begin at 10 a.m. Easter Parade 10:45 a.m. Giant egg hunt for children, 2nd grade and under begins at 11 a.m.

April 20, 6-11 p.m., 13th Bi-Annual On The Tracks. A Food and Wine Event. Outdoors in historic downtown Opelika. Wine tastings, local restaurants, live music, late night shopping and more. For more information, visit www.onthetracks.org.

April 21, Camp Good Grief. Time TBA

Piedmont

April 7, 7 p.m., Annual Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt. Sponsored by Piedmont Parks and Recreation Department and H&R Block. Piedmont Sports Complex. For more information, please contact the Piedmont Parks and Recreation Department, (256) 447-3367.

April 22, 20th Annual Cheaha Challenge Century Ride. The bike ride is known as "The Toughest Ride in the South." This ride allows the rider the option to ride 26, 44, 66, 88, or the full 102 miles. The Cheaha Challenge will start at Piedmont Civic Center, travel to the top of Cheaha Mountain and then return to the Piedmont Civic Center. For more information or to register for the race, log onto www.neabc.org or www.cheahacallenge.com.

April 28, 3rd Annual Terrapin Tri-County Adventure Race. The race consists of a 10K run on the Pinhoti National Recreational Hiking Trail, 1.5 miles of paddling on Terrapin Creek Canoe Trail and a 33.8 miles bike course on the Chief Ladiga Bike Trail. The race format will consist of three team members, one member completing each venue, or an individual completing the whole race. For more information or to register for the race, visit www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com/events.

Sylacauga

The Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will host The Photographic History of Sylacauga and Talladega schools during the month of March. A reception will be held on March 15, 6:30-8 p.m.

April 7, Taste of Sylacauga. J. Craig Community Center .Time to TBA.

April 10-21, 4th Annual Sylacauga Marble Festival. A Chamber of Commerce reception for sculptors and sponsors will be held April 12, 6 p.m.

April 14, "Marble Mania" Scavenger Hunt. Awards will be presented on April 16 at the Blue Bell Park.

April 16, Nemak 5K Run and 1 Mile Fun Run. Starting at 9 a.m. at the Blue Bell Park.

April 28, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.Annual Oak Grove Heritage Homecoming Festival. Featuring handmade crafts with music and other activities.

April 28, Sylabration Recovery Event. Sylacauga Legion Stadium. Featuring bands, food, etc. Time TBA.

The Isabel Anderson Comer Museum will host a marble sculpture exhibition as part of the Sylacauga Marble Festival. Three sculptors will take part in the exhibit. A reception will be held on April 19, 6:30-8 p.m.

Tuskegee

March 8, 7:30 a.m., Tuskegee Area Chamber of Commerce Eggs & Issues. Guest speaker will be Alabama Senator Billy Beasley. Kellogg Conference Center, Tuskegee. For more information, please contact (334) 727-6619 or info@TuskegeeAreaChamber.org.

March 22, 5 p.m., Tuskegee Area Chamber of Commerce Empowerment Seminar. Tuskegee Municipal Complex. For more information, please contact (334) 727-6619 or info@TuskegeeAreaChamber.org.

April 21, George Washington Carver Festival. Downtown Tuskegee Square.

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WATTS NEW IN
Luverne

Mayor Sport named Citizen of the Year

By Michael Rodgers
The Luverne Journal

Throughout his life, Luverne Mayor Joe Rex Sport has earned many accolades and honors. He recently added another after being named the Crenshaw County Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year.

Hundreds of friends, family and local businessmen packed Luverne's Dei Center to pay tribute to Sport.

Sport and his wife Barbara have been married 49 years and have three sons and two daughters — Kayle, Gary, Tom, Derri and Scott — and each of the sons spoke about their father.

Gary Sport told the audience that his father entered the Army and spent 16 months in Korea, where he was present at the peace talks at the end of the conflict.

"There are also many things that mean a lot to him," said Gary, who added that Sport has been a member of Patsburg Baptist Church for over 50 years.

He continues to serve Patsburg Baptist as a deacon, lay speaker and Sunday School teacher.

"We're proud of him," Gary said. "He's proud of where he's from and proud of who he is."

Tom Sport spoke about his father's contributions to education.

In addition to teaching at Chapel Hill Elementary, he became principal at Highland Home and then Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Education.

Later, he was appointed Superintendent, where he served from 1971 to 1988 and was instrumental in integrating the county school system.

"He didn't shy away from the task," Tom said.

With such a strong educational background, Tom said that a love of learning was ingrained in all the children.

"Education was always important," he said. "He passed on to us that education never stops."

"He's also the smartest man I know — ask him sometime, and listen to him," Tom added. "But being a Sport, you'd better have time to listen. I'm proud to call him my dad."

Luverne Mayor Joe Rex Sport thanks the Crenshaw County Chamber of Commerce for naming him Citizen of the Year. (Photo courtesy of Michael Rodgers, The Luverne Journal)

His son Scott touched on Sport's involvement in the City of Luverne.

"He spent 14 years on the city council and then 10 years as mayor," Scott said. "He's also a Renaissance Man. He's a clockmaker, a gunsmith, shade tree mechanic and a lot of stuff not mentioned in the program."

"He also sets the standard I look for — he loves God, loves his family, loves the county and loves the city," Scott added.

Sport then took the podium and spoke about how he's always tried to be an ambassador for Luverne.

One interesting way that has shown itself is through an English couple that passed through Luverne in 1997 and has become a close friend of Sport's and returned every year since.

"I love the motto 'Friendliest City in the South,' and I carry it with me," Sport said. "I've enjoyed serving as mayor, and I've tried to make the city more attractive."

"I'm appreciative of the honor the chamber has bestowed on me," he added. "I'm very honored and humbled."