

LAGNIAPPE

WEEKLY

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MARDI GRAS 2015

We look at the people who provide the sounds of the season, as we profile the city's brass bands.

Also all of the area parade schedules, routes and entertainment options.

By Chelsea Wallace

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WEEKLY

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On the Cover: Sounds of Mardi Gras
By Laura Rasmussen

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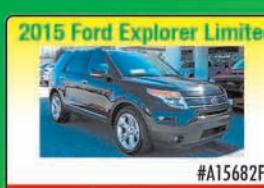
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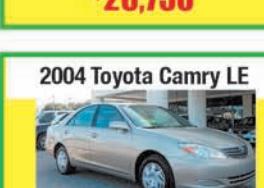
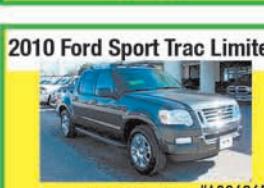
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GOING POSTAL

A "counter" view on gay marriage

Allow me to take a counter opinion to the issue of gay marriage. In a column by Jeff Poor he mentioned that maybe it was time for conservatives to drop the issue of same-sex marriage, and I suggest that there has never been a more critical time to continue to oppose the issue. As a conservative, I realize that our country was founded on the basis of Christianity as the backbone and guiding set of moral responsibilities for citizens. The bible directly addresses and sets forth as rule concerning those who live and promote the efforts of the LGBT lifestyle. Romans 1:22 says, professing themselves to be wise they became as fools, the bible goes on in the following verses to address what is referred to the unnatural use of the body, men with men and women with women. In Lev. 18 the bible refers to that lifestyle as an abomination and equals it to lying with the beast and animals.

Now I also realize that in order to further justify the LGBT stance, we as Christians are often referred to as the Roy Moore look-alikes of the world. And in the same article Mr. Poor suggested that Dean Young lost his bid for political office to Bradley Byrne due to his association with such. I am confident that Mr. Poor knows

the real reason that Dean Young lost to Bradley Byrne, however falsely associating the reason to Roy Moore sure makes for interesting reading.

Also Mr. Poor refers to the 14th amendment to the constitution the Equal Protection Clause, and states as fact that this clause protects his stance and validates their right, and I state that is does the exact opposite. The 14th amendment (Equal Protection Clause) specifically states that each State should adopt its own policies of equal protection and does not mention the Federal level concerning this matter, other than to state that all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of such, and that law making is left to the States.

I also found interesting the article by Jennifer McDonald, the "TAO of JEN" commentary, on the same subject quickly referring to marriage as a "fundamental American institution" and how it had been rocked by the recent ruling of issuance of marriage license to the aforementioned group, and she goes on to say how happy she is and how this is long overdue. I am surprised that she referenced marriage as an American Institution, noting that anyone who has studied American history and is aware of the moral basis for which American was founded, would know that institution was meant to be

between a man and a woman. As far as dragging Alabamians screaming and kicking back into darkness, I would suggest that the darkness will be that which is referred to in Matt. 25:30 and those who walk in the light as he is in the light, need not worry about the "darkness". If the author has been up and down this road a thousand times, with her so-called open mind, looking for any logical reason one would have to oppose gay marriage, and has never heard not even "one" logical reason, then I would suggest she consider re-defining logic to herself. The bible is full of reasons why this is considered wrong and immoral in the sight of God. She also states that her clients don't want to "change the world", they just want to live, well then quit trying to change the world, and just go live.

In closing Jennifer McDonald asks everyone to keep the faith, and I agree with her. Let's keep the faith that the country was founded on, and let's keep up the common sense desire to remain a Godly country, and hope that God will continue to bless and keep us and our great country.

Melvin Hall
Saraland, AL

Use Civic Center property to straighten I-10

The article regarding the status of the Mobile Civic Center complex was interesting. I have thought for quite some time that the complex needs to be torn down.

My thinking concerning the demolition of that property is that it would then be available to the city, county, state and federal highway officials to modify the interstate to eliminate the almost 90 degree turn at the Wallace tunnel.

The bottleneck and the traffic backups that occur because of that sharp turn with the lower speed limit could be reduced or perhaps eliminated if the severe curve was straightened out. Everyone that travels the interstate across the bay would benefit from an improved route. New bridge and wider highways included.

The Mardi Gras Associations could all utilize our grand Convention Center and also the Cruise Terminal for their balls and many other events could be held at these locations as well.

Sincerely,
Nancy Patterson
Mobile, AL

POLICE DISPATCH

Weekend standoff leaves gunman dead, authorities unsure how

A standoff with Mobile police over the weekend left a 20-year-old suspect dead, and at one point involved a female hostage, though she was later released unharmed.

According to the Mobile Police Department, officers responded to report of a gunshot victim at the 2500 block of Fairway Drive in Midtown just before 2 p.m., Sunday. Authorities said suspect Brandon Lee Davis shot a 35-year-old male in the face and in both arms and fired shots at arriving patrol officers as they arrived on the scene.

MPD officers say Lee then briefly took a female hostage inside of another residence on Fairway Drive, but released her before barricading himself inside the residence. The standoff, which lasted several hours, initially caused police personnel to block off several streets in the area.

Shortly after 6 p.m., officers tried to enter the home, where they found Davis deceased. Initial investigation showed no signs of gun-

shot wounds or other trauma to the suspect's body. The Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences conducted an autopsy on Davis, which also identified no trauma-related injuries that could have caused Davis' death. A toxicology report is currently pending.

According to the Mobile County Sheriff's Department's criminal database, Davis has a criminal record dating back to 2012 that includes arrests for drug possession, assault, domestic violence and burglary.

Authorities say skull found belonged to man missing since 2011

On the evening of Feb. 1, a local hunter found a human skull in the woods of Highway 98 near Hillmoor Road. According to authorities, the property is currently leased for hunting by the individual who discovered the skull.

After contacting the Mobile County Sheriff's Office, the skull was turned over to the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences who were able to identify it, to a degree of certainty, as that of Jeffrey Holloman, who has been missing since 2011.

A spokesperson for the MCSO said tissue samples recovered from the gums are currently being analyzed for DNA, which would provide a 100 percent match. In the meantime, authorities say Holloman's family are proceeding with funeral arrangements as if the discovery is final.

As of Feb. 10, no other skeletal remains had been found in the area where the skull was originally discovered.

Holloman was last seen in the Wilmer area on Aug. 5, 2011. A father of two, his family members have maintained a Facebook group called "Missing Person. Jeffrey Holloman" since his absence was first reported.

Authorities say there is still more forensic testing to be done, and no details as to the cause or time of Holloman's death have been released at this time. However, a fund has been set up through Trustmark Bank to help cover Holloman's funeral arrangements.

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FEB 12



SUNNY

61° 25°

CHANCE OF RAIN

0%

WIND:
NNW AT 17 MPH

FRI

FEB 13



SUNNY

53° 31°

CHANCE OF RAIN

0%

WIND:
N AT 7 MPH

SAT

FEB 14



SUNNY

62° 27°

CHANCE OF RAIN

0%

WIND:
WNW AT 15 MPH

SUN

FEB 15



SUNNY

47° 33°

CHANCE OF RAIN

0%

WIND:
N AT 11 MPH

MON

FEB 16



PARTLY CLOUDY

57° 46°

CHANCE OF RAIN

0%

WIND:
SE AT 11 MPH

TUE

FEB 17



AM SHOWERS

69° 47°

CHANCE OF RAIN

40%

WIND:
SSW AT 14 MPH

WED

FEB 18



AM SHOWERS

58° 40°

CHANCE OF RAIN

40%

WIND:
N AT 12 MPH

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Fairhope council donates more than \$300,000 to city's schools

BY DALE LIESCH/REPORTER | dale@lagniappemobile.com

The Fairhope City Council Monday evening approved a \$344,852 donation to the Baldwin County Board of Education for use in the city's five public schools.

This year marks the third year the city has donated to the schools, giving a total of more than \$1 million to Fairhope students, BOE member Cecil Christenberry, who represents the Fairhope area, told the councilors.

"I want to thank the City Council for your proactive approach to education," Christenberry said. "You guys get it."

The council also extended the time for which the schools could use the money, from the end of the fiscal year to Dec. 31, 2015. The council also extended the deadline schools had to spend funds left over from last year, from the end of the last fiscal year in September to May 31 of this year. The move that was discussed during a council work session.

Councilwoman Diana Brewer, a member of the city's Education Advisory Committee, told fellow councilors four of five schools still had between \$5,000 and as much as \$32,000 left over from last year's allocation. She said there are stipulations put on the donated money and all funds must go to meet certain pre-approved metrics. The committee voted to extend the deadline to allow the schools to spend the money on the pre-approved metrics.

"We approved (the allocation) in April and the fiscal year ended in September," Brewer said. "Schools didn't have enough time to spend the money."

Some of last year's money will go to pay for professional development for teachers at Fairhope High School in October, Brewer said.

Fairhope schools already have plans for the 2015 allotment, which have all been approved by the Education Advisory Committee. For instance, J. Larry Newton School asked the city for \$83,475 for a reading workshop. FHS wants \$148,942 for an advanced placement and international baccalaureate program. Fairhope Middle School is asking for \$18,935 to help improve language arts and standardized test scores. Fairhope Intermediate School wants \$57,735 to help improve reading scores by 2 percent in the ACT aspire test and Fairhope Elementary School wants \$35,765 to improve reading and math proficiency.

The council also voted to reappoint Julia Summerlin, Bob Riggs and Jim Kellen to new three-year terms on the Education Advisory Committee.

Beach maintenance plan

The council discussed a beach maintenance plan at its work session Monday for its bay beach parks at Magnolia Beach and Bluff Park and North Beach Park at the municipal pier.

Scott Douglas, with South Coast Engineers, suggested the council look into adopting a beach maintenance plan to help combat erosion issues at both spots. One of the advantages to having a beach maintenance program, Douglas said, is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will help rebuild damaged public facilities that are part of a program.

The council discussed a 2014 emergency repair project for Magnolia Beach, which placed

3,300 cubic yards of sand at the north end of the beach. An organized plan would help mitigate some of that work, Douglas said.

"We need to get ahead of it," he said. "We need to do 500 feet a year, instead of 5,000 feet every 10 years."

Council President Jack Burrell said the council would have to consider how much a plan like that would cost, which is unknown at this time. Burrell then considered the possibility of partnering with Daphne or the county for similar work and sharing the cost.

To burn, or not to burn

The council was split on the issue of whether to subject Knoll Park to a prescribed burn. The issue wasn't up for a vote Monday, but it was discussed, during the work session.

Burrell and Brewer favored the move to burn some of the pine trees at the city park, while councilmen Rich Mueller and Kevin Boone disagreed. Burrell also hinted that Mayor Tim Kant was also against the idea. Kant wasn't present at the meeting.

Burrell said a maintenance plan for the park calls for a burning and it needs to be done soon.

"Every longleaf expert in this country says you should burn," Burrell said.

Boone disagreed, arguing the area was a three-and-a-half acre park and not a "pine plantation."

"Burning a park downtown is not a good idea," he said.

Mueller said the burning is designed not to help the trees, but the understory in a forest.

"You can't do it all at one time," Mueller said. "... the wildlife has to be able to migrate."

Councilman Michael Ford appears to be the swing vote on the issue, which Burrell said he'd like to bring up for a vote in the future.

Tennis courts

The council also discussed the addition of six city tennis courts, during Monday's work session. No vote was taken, but councilors debated the merits and cost effectiveness of hard courts and soft courts.

Burrell said members of the Fairhope Tennis Association had requested a green clay or rubico surface be installed on at least two of the six new courts because they are easier on the body. The money for the new courts was budgeted in fiscal year 2015, Burrell said, and putting the project out for bid would solve the price issue. He said if the bids came back too high on the clay courts the city wouldn't move forward with them.

Another issue with clay courts is maintenance. Ford argued clay courts would be harder to maintain than asphalt.

During the meeting, the council approved new rules for the municipal tennis courts. The new rules are as follows: Please limit your time to one hour if others are waiting; no skates, skateboards, or bicycles allowed on courts; turn lights off when finished; private lessons, or clinics allowed with permission of city; proper shoes and attire required at all times and pets must be leashed and picked up after.

Administration looking at new ideas for WAVE transit

BY DALE LIESCH/REPORTER | dale@lagniappemobile.com

Although she has a 47-minute commute to work in the mornings, Ellen Carter claims she's in a better mood than most when she gets to her office on Dauphin Street downtown.

The Chickasaw resident hasn't found some miracle morning coffee, but argues that taking WAVE transit from Chickasaw every morning puts the pep in her step.

"Driving is work," she said. "It's work. That's why they pay people to do it."

Instead of fighting traffic, Carter said she pulls out her iPod, reads, or answers emails and leaves the driving to someone else.

Although she has a vehicle and a driver's license, Carter said she takes public transportation, or rides a bike most places because it's "economically and environmentally the right thing to do."

"The thing about riding the bus is it just requires a little more planning and time," she said.

Economically, Carter said taking the bus has helped her save money. For instance, she said she used to spend \$30 to \$50 a week on gas, but now spends only \$40 a month on a bus pass. Since using the bus as her primary mode of transportation, Carter said she takes fewer unnecessary trips.

Riding the bus does have its disadvantages, she said. For one, WAVE doesn't run on Sundays, "which really stinks," she said.

Some routes don't run late enough, like the bus that takes passengers to the University of South Alabama on the Spring Hill route. The bus is in the garage by 6:25 on weeknights, according to the WAVE website, and doesn't make it to 6 p.m. on Saturdays.

"It doesn't run late enough," Carter said. "I sometimes have to get a ride, or drive my car when I know I'm going to be out there later. Sometimes I have to call a cab to get home."

Carter said the bus is the best way to get to events downtown, like Mardi Gras parades, or MoonPie Over Mobile. The problem is service on several downtown routes ends too early. In those cases Carter reserves a cab.

The Dauphin Street bus route ends just before 10 p.m., while the Airport route, which also takes riders downtown from Providence Hospital, finishes up before 7 p.m. on weekdays and doesn't serve downtown on Saturdays.

In addition to some later routes, Carter said she thinks the Dauphin Island Parkway bus should start offering Saturday service. She also thinks there should be a bus route to Dauphin Island. Right now, the DIP bus travels to just south of B.C. Rain High School.

"We need a second bus that'll go all the way to Dauphin Island and back, so people from Mobile can go to the beach. We need to think like a big city. We need to let people get to recreation."

Carter also suggested service for Schillinger Road. Currently, she said, the neighborhood bus will take riders there, but it has to be scheduled a day in advance.

In addition, Carter said she would like to see WAVE become part of a smartphone application that monitors where buses are in their routes.

"They don't have that for WAVE and we really need it," she said.

Some of Carter's suggestions for WAVE



Photo/Dan Anderson

SARPC, riders offer suggestions to the WAVE transit system

transit mirror recommendations the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission laid out in its 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. For instance, buses currently run every hour, but Carter said she thinks WAVE would be more popular if buses ran every 30 minutes.

"If you had a bus headed to the mall every 30 minutes you'd see more riders," Carter said.

SARPC recommended 30-minute service on fixed routes as part of a third phase for public transportation improvements for the years 2019 to 2024. This along with an additional flex route is estimated to cost more than \$6 million a year.

Other SARPC recommendations included immediate consolidation of routes through Plateau, Prichard and Highway 45, which would be cost neutral. SARPC also recommended a route that would run from Bel Air Mall to Mobile Regional Airport, as well as other route changes.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson's Chief of Staff Colby Cooper said the administration would take the SARPC recommendations under consideration.

"We have to be thoughtful in how we do this," Cooper said. "We have to take a good, hard look at the best ways to serve the citizens of Mobile."

Last year, reports indicated the city footed about 60 percent of the \$10 million bill for WAVE, which is operated by McDonald Transit. At the time, officials with the administration said they would make recommendations to try and save money. Cooper said Monday afternoon no recommendations have been made and the administration is still studying other cities of similar size and how they handle transit systems.

Carter said bus routes serve Prichard and Chickasaw, but neither municipality pays for the service. She said she'd like to see that change. Cooper said Mobile has not approached those municipalities about paying for service.

WAVE had a little more than 1 million riders in 2013, according to numbers provided by the transit system. Carter said in her experience the Chickasaw bus at 7 a.m. is always full, heading to the mall, but there do seem to be obvious peaks. Carter blames limited service for other buses not being as full.

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AEA says kids at non-failing schools using AAA scholarship funds

BY ALYSON STOKES/REPORTER | alyson@lagniappemobile.com

Last week, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) named more than 50 schools across the state to be “failing schools,” as defined by the Alabama Accountability Act (AAA) of 2013 — a law that was ultimately declared unconstitutional last year and still awaits a final ruling from the United States Supreme Court.

Montgomery Circuit Judge Gene Reese last May ruled the AAA unconstitutional for what he and plaintiffs, including the Alabama Education Association (AEA) alleged were procedural violations, as the law was originally called the Local Control School Flexibility Act of 2013 and intended during its early origins to give school boards more flexibility when dealing with education regulations.

However, on the day of the vote, Senate Republicans changed the bill to include a \$3,500 tax credit for families transferring a child from a failing school system as defined by the law.

According to Jesse McDaniel, UniServ Director of the AEA in Mobile, the AEA actually supported the original bill, but when legislators emerged from behind closed doors, there were noticeable changes to the law.

“They had a totally different bill,” he said, noting the bill was rushed through the legislature without debate and passed in a matter of hours, ultimately adding on the private school voucher at the end.

“It’s a complicated law ... they didn’t consult educators when they wrote the law, but some of the things don’t make a lot of sense,” he said.

The law also earmarked up to \$25 million annually from the Education Trust Fund (ETF) to be used for tax credits to corporations donating scholarships aimed at helping students transfer from failing schools, and this is where the AEA sees a problem with the law as public school tax money comes out of the ETF budget every year and is thus reducing the amount of money for public schools, McDaniel said.

“Basically, people or corporations can donate money to a non-profit and get a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on their taxes, meaning rather than paying state tax, they can just donate,” he said. “It’s hitting public schools in that respect, and it’s hitting the state again when the parents claim the tax credit. It’s like a double whammy.”

Under the law, failing schools are “labeled as persistently low-performing by the State Department of Education” or having scored in the bottom 6 percent on standardized state reading and math assessments three or more times during the last six years.

For Mobile County, Augusta Evans School, Jeremiah A. Denton Middle School, Booker T. Washington Middle School, Mae Eanes Middle School, Mobile County Training Middle School and CL Scarborough Middle School are all named as failing schools.

“Unfortunately, we will never be able to eliminate failing schools under the law because the law defines failing schools in the bottom 6 percent on certain test scores,” he said. “There will always be a bottom 6 percent no matter how well the school performs,” McDaniel said.

According to a memorandum sent by State Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice to city and county superintendents, the determinations were based on the 2013 scores from the Alabama Reading and Math Test+ (ARMT+), Alabama Alternative Assessment and the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) as the state continues to transition to the new ACT Aspire and ACT suite of assessments and accompanying accountability system.

Additionally, “eligibility for tax credit remains for a student who transferred under a previously designated school until the highest grade in which a student would have otherwise remained at that school,” the memorandum reads.

While a lot of the focus has been placed on failing schools, McDaniel said now, two years later, people are starting to see that students who are not in failing schools are ending up with the scholarships originally purposed to help low-income parents who want to enroll their children in private school.

“There should be a lot of scrutiny on this scholarship portion of this law because it is being abused,” he said. “More than half of the scholarship and tax credits have not gone to kids in failing schools. They’ve gone to kids who have never set foot in a failing school.”

According to the Alabama Department of Revenue, only \$12.4 million in donations to AAA scholarship granting organizations was verified in 2014 compared to double at \$24.8 million in 2013. Five percent of funds according to the law that are donated to non-profit organizations can be kept for administrative costs, McDaniel said. He added that the largest scholarship organization chaired by former Gov. Bob Riley, the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund (AOSF) received \$17 million last year and could thus put aside \$850,000 aside for said administrative costs.

However, the AOSF last fall released an audit to show that neither Riley, other board members nor his immediate family members had been paid from the funds.

The AOSF also reported giving scholarships last year to 1,474 students from AAA defined failing schools. Under the law, once students in failing schools are awarded scholarships, students not zoned for failing public schools may also be awarded scholarships.

According to McDaniel, lawmakers put a lot of focus on the “failing schools,” part of the law, but what he said a lot of people have failed to recognize the scholarship portion of the AAA that ultimately allows nonprofit organizations to accept donations from private individuals and corporations.

Ideally, those nonprofits would then turn around and give those scholarships to children in failing schools who wish to transfer; however, that is not always the case, McDaniel said.

“Any unused funds after Sept. 15 can be given to any child,” McDaniel said. “It doesn’t have to be a child in a failing school ... they are giving scholarships to children who have never set foot in one of those failing schools. That is the reason why AEA has opposed this law from the very beginning.”

Further, McDaniel said the scholarship portion of the AAA has been the main expense and cost that has come to the state under the law and has not been for the benefit of children in failing schools, as lawmakers had originally suggested.

AEA President Anita Gibson in conjunction with state Sen. Quinton Ross (D-Montgomery) and Lowndes County School Superintendent Daniel Boyd filed the lawsuit challenging the AAA.

“We have challenged this law from day one in the court system,” McDaniel said.

The AEA sued in August 2013 immediately after the AAA was passed, and while the initial lawsuit was successful in Montgomery circuit court, it has since been appealed in the Supreme Court and is awaiting a final ruling, he said.

If the lawsuit is won by the AEA, McDaniel confirmed the AAA scholarship program would have to stop. He said oral arguments have already been heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on the matter and said a ruling on the issue is expected any day now. Further, he said he doesn’t expect the court to keep the law in place as is. “I don’t think that would happen now that people have learned about the law,” he said.

Furthermore, all institutions named as a failing school are required by the AAA to notify parents of their transfer options by Feb. 13. The deadline for parents to return a student transfer form to their local school system for the 2015-2016 school year is May 1.



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Chief: 'work to be done' despite drop in crime rate

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

Police Chief James Barber addressed City Council members last week to tout a 9.3 percent drop in the Port City's crime rate, but he told Lagniappe that positive indicator doesn't mean Mobile is "anywhere near where it needs to be" in terms of crime reduction.

"I don't focus a lot on stats, but it's always great to see them go down," Barber said. "We're going to have to track crime over time to see if the trend is going down, then we'll know."

Barber said it was remarkable 2014 didn't see an increase in crime, especially in terms of property crimes, because the MPD doesn't have a good measuring point historically.

In 2013, the MPD conducted an internal investigation after it was revealed at least 108 property crimes were reported in the first three months of 2013 — that numbers that were collected from the department's first precinct. After the investigation, it was concluded a single officer, who is no longer employed with the MPD, had misreported the majority of at least the property crimes.

Those reporting errors caused what appeared to be a 10 percent statistical jump in 2013's crime numbers, but Barber said that was a reflection of adjusting from the intentionally deflated numbers.

"I always urge caution when looking at year-to-year data," Barber said. "Of course, you want to track it, but it doesn't give you a true picture of crime. That's how you see how effective your programs are, and how effective the department is being."

In last year's numbers, violent crime (robbery, murder, assault and rape) saw a 1.9 percent drop from a year before. However, the rates of murder and rape both increased in Mobile by 14.8 and 55.2 percent respectively.

There were 31 reported homicides in Mobile in 2014, and reported rapes more than doubled from the previous year — up to 135 where only 87 cases were documented in 2013. While those figures are alarming at first, Barber said the increase in reported rapes is due, at least in part, to a change in how the department defines rape.

"Before that category only included the forcible vaginal rape of a female," Barber said. "Now, that definition has been expanded to include male victims that have been molested and other types of sexual assault."

As for nonviolent crime, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft all saw reductions of at least 9 percent, though there were still more than 2,500 burglaries reported in Mobile's four precincts last year.

The statistics, which are collected internally by the department, are used as a part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report — a report used to get a snapshot of crime across the country. Nationally, violent crime fell 4.6 percent and property crime is down 7.5 percent.

Barber said working with other departments to create the UCR helps to give a more accurate picture of crime stats across the country because individual states use different factors to categorize certain crimes.

In Mobile, Barber said the department conducted an internal audit and review, and worked with the FBI's Criminal Information Center and the FBI to make sure they reported information effectively and accurately. Barber said extra steps were taken because of the MPD's history of misreporting crime numbers.

"We've set up some more internal checks and balances. Now, if any report is changed, it has to

be cleared by the precinct captain and the related commander of field operations, and it has to go through a records supervisor who's an independent auditor," he said. "However, as far as lying on an actual police report, that is very difficult to detect, unless you're calling the victims of crime back after the fact."

However, Barber said the MPD has been doing just that since the 2013 incident, and will continue the practice over the summer of 2015 as another way to audit and verify the findings of its crime statistics and "make sure (the department) is delivering on its promise to the citizens."

As for the numbers released in February, Barber said he doesn't attribute the 9.4 percent drop in crime to any single change in tactic, but rather to more efficient uses of the department's manpower and limited resources.

According to Barber, about 10 percent of Mobile's geographic area reports 80 percent of the city's criminal activity. Though he didn't specific exactly what area he was referring to, Mobile's first predict — which encompasses part of downtown area and extends southward to the end of Rangeline road — saw the most crimes per capita in 2014 report.

Barber said selective focusing on these problem areas has helped keep crime down, as well as a focus on repeat offender or career criminals, which Barber said are behind roughly 60 to 80 percent of the crime in Mobile.

"The state keeps releasing career criminals because they're non-violent, so we've began trying to find ways to prosecute them under federal crimes," Barber said. "We're trying to actively go after certain offenders that are committing the most crime in our community."

Barber said part of that relies on communication with Alabama's Parole Board, who Barber regularly reaches out to give input on repeat offenders who could be released back into community and to keep tabs on which criminals could be arriving back on the streets.

Another slight variable in this year's crime stats was caused by the elimination of the MPD's 5th predict, which was effectively closed in June of 2014. Barber said that change was made in hopes of making the department more efficient and to cut back on operating expenses.

According to the stats recorded before June, the 5th precinct had recorded three homicides, eight rapes, 10 robberies and 14 assaults before it was absorbed into both the 2nd and 4th precincts.

Overall, Barber said he was pleased with the dip in crime rates, but said the city still has a lot of work to do — a sentiment Mayor Sandy Stimpson seems to share. In a prepared statement, Stimpson said the MPD was seeing a complete transformation "under Barber's leadership."

"This is a giant step on the path to becoming the safest city in America by 2020, but there is still more work to be done," Stimpson said. "I will continue to provide the department with the tools and resources to protect our citizens from harm."

Stimpson — who promised during his 2013 campaign to make Mobile the "safest, most business- and family-friendly city in America by 2020" — said regardless of how his administration measures that progress, the public is going to looking at crime statistics.

"As we go forward, the hope is that these statistic we're looking at will start going down, and that's what's got to happen," he said. "If we effectively continue to implement the programs we have in place now, they will go down."



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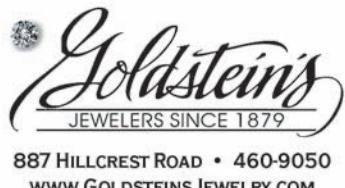
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County officials optimistic about \$7 million surplus from 2014

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

Mobile County Commissioners said they were "encouraged" by an end of year financial report showing the county, for the most part, stayed under budget in 2014 and revenues continued their gradual upward trend.

Finance Director Michelle Herman briefed commissioners during their conference meeting Feb. 5, where she highlighted, amongst other positives, leftover "undesignated funds" from last year putting the county \$7.6 million in the black.

"An uptick in sales taxes is one of the major reasons that we actually finished the year on a positive note," Herman said. "We're still seeing large variances with monthly collections, which gives us a little trouble accurately figuring out which direction sales taxes are going in, but over all, for the two years we have seen total increases of around 3 to 4 percent in sales tax collection."

The year-end report shows the county took in more than \$54 million in sales taxes last year — a 4 percent increase from 2013's collections. That number was about \$4 million higher than what the county has expected and included in its FY 2014 budget.

"We really can't accurately say why the fluctuation is happening. We don't have the raw data," Herman said. "There are some changes we expect, for instance, when Mardi Gras hits — we expect a fluctuation. As for changes throughout the year, it's just collections, and we don't have the data to analyze it."

One such "unexplained" fluctuation was in Sept. of 2014, when the county saw a staggering 13.8 percent increase from figures at the same time period in 2013.

Herman also said property taxes, the county's major source of revenue, have remained level over the past few years. According to the report, Mobile County saw a slight increase in revenue from property taxes on motor vehicles, but a near 30 percent in revenue from taxes on real property.

Though collections were a factor in the \$7 million surplus, Herman said at least 46 percent of that figure came from a one-time sale of fixed assets, most of which were county-owned properties. Those one-time revenues totaled about \$3.7 million, which included a more than \$1 million in transfers from the Treasury Department that have been accumulating for the last decade.

The other key factor behind the good fiscal year was the county succeeding in an effort not to exceed its budgeted expenditures, which only came out to \$123 million last year, as opposed to the more than \$130 million that was originally budgeted.

According to the report, the county's expenditures for personnel, operational, utilities, debt service and appropriations were less than originally expected. Personnel costs came in at around \$1.4 million under budget, which Herman said was mostly due to the county's change in insurance policies in April of 2014.

"We didn't have to spend nearly as much on our payouts to the old insurance program as we expected, because we received some significant credits," Herman said. "But, the departments, overall, stayed well within their budgets. We



Photo/Jason Johnson

Mobile County is encouraged by year-end numbers.

had hardly anybody go over budget, and of those who did, most went over by very small amounts."

Interestingly, the county's planned expenditures for appropriations were only \$47 under budget, which in government finance, is about as close as it gets.

Even though a majority of surplus was due to one-time revenues, Herman said it's beneficial to see that type of a carryover into the next year. Another portion of the report said the county didn't have to use its transfer from the county's tobacco tax in its general fund expenditures, which mean that money can be used for things economic development moving forward.

These numbers are very good to see, and should could continue as long as sales taxes can hold out," Herman said. "At some point, we certainly expect property taxes to start moving up again, but we don't have a way of knowing when that'll be. I hope its not in the too-distant future."

Commission President Connie Hudson said the numbers were some of the best financial news the county has received since she became a member of the commission in 2010.

"I'm encouraged, and I think everyone else should be as well," Hudson said. "It's too soon to get really excited about it, but this shows a trend moving up toward increased sales tax revenue, and I hope it continues to climb."

Hudson and District 1 Commissioner Merceria Ludgood praised the county's departments for staying under budget, and said the advanced raises and "salary adjustments" employees will receive this month wouldn't have been possible without those efforts.

However, Ludgood also offered a word of cautious optimism — reminding the commissioners and staff the county was still "digging itself out of a hole" from 2008's Great Recession.

"I too thank those departments that worked so hard with us to keep spending down. I know that couldn't have been easy when you're already feeling like you're operating with less than you need," Ludgood said. "We're seeing a great trend, but I think we need to remember that we still aren't back to our 2008 levels."

A full copy of 2014 report is available at lagniappemobile.com.

Circuit judge takes leave of absence

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

Mobile County Circuit Court Judge Joseph "Rusty" Johnston began an extended leave of absence from the bench last week, according to multiple courthouse sources.

"Yes, Judge Johnston is on leave and that's all I can say," a court clerk in Johnston's office told Lagniappe on Feb. 4.

While no one would say on the record why Johnston took leave, lawyers who spoke with Lagniappe on condition of anonymity also said Johnston has earned a reputation over the past couple years for starting court late or suddenly canceling or rescheduling hearings, a situation particularly problematic for cases involving expert witnesses flown in from out of town to testify.

While Johnston has long been one of the Mobile bench's more outspoken and colorful jurists, his rift with defense attorneys Donald and Jonathan Friedlander also drew recent media attention. It began during a criminal case against Rudolph Lemetrick Agnew, who was charged with first-degree assault and second-degree possession of marijuana after wreck he was involved in three years prior left a Mobile police motorcycle officer with significant injuries.

During that case, Johnston abruptly declared a mistrial based on the "lawyers' conduct," which prompted defense attorneys Donald and Jonathan Friedlander to file a bar complaint against Johnston and ask him to recuse himself from the pending retrial.

Johnston followed with an eight-page response accusing the Friedlanders of "sub-par and inef-

fective assistance" and included several other scathing comments.

Lagniappe attempted to determine whether the matter made its way before Alabama's Judicial Inquiry Commission, however the JIC can't confirm or deny the receipt of any complaint.

Jenny Garrett, executive director of the commission, said the provisions that set up the JIC in 1973 established that all proceedings are confidential.

"Alabama's supreme court has subsequently ruled that confidentiality is restricted only to the commission and its staff," Garrett said of the organization's general procedures. She added that neither the original parties filing a JIC complaint or the subject of the complaint would be prevented from discussing a pending investigation.

Jonathan Friedlander declined to comment on this report, and multiple calls to Johnston and other members of the circuit court staff were not returned.

Lagniappe attempted to confirm the length of Johnston's absence with circuit court clerks, but has been unable to do so at this time. However, Judge Charles Graddick told other media outlets last week Johnston would be on "medical leave" until May 15. In the meantime, his docket will be handled by retired judge Jim Wood.

Johnston was appointed by Gov. Fob James in 1997, becoming the first Republican to ever hold a circuit or district judgeship in Mobile County. He was subsequently reelected in 1998, 2000 and 2006, according to the court's website.

Council reallocates funds for tech upgrades

BY DALE LIESCH/REPORTER | dale@lagniappemobile.com

The Mobile City Council voted 6-0 Tuesday morning to transfer about \$1.75 million in unspent capital bond funds to be used for various technology improvements, ahead of the implementation of a new software system. Councilman John Williams had to leave before the vote took place.

The money comes from funds not spent as part of a larger, \$6.5 million allocation related to a radio system. Executive Director of Finance Paul Wesch told councilors, during a pre-conference meeting. Of the \$1.75 million, about \$1.2 million will go toward hardware upgrades, while about \$557,000 will be put into an administrative services account for new equipment.

The administration plans to use a portion of the money on a new telephone switch to control the city's entire phone system, said Sue Farni, city information technology director. The plan is to move the 20-year-old switch and other technology to a building near the Copeland-Cox Tennis Center and out of a flood zone.

"We're trying to get it done before hurricane season starts," Farni said.

In addition, the IT department would like to bury aerial cables related to 9-1-1 service to protect it from storms, Farni said.

Councilman Fred Richardson questioned transferring so much money to IT when there were needs elsewhere in the city. For instance, he mentioned complaints he had received over a failure to pick up some city garbage on Monday. He blamed the failure on broken-down garbage trucks.

"IT is working now," he said. "Police, fire and garbage are core services and we have trucks out there that aren't running. That's far more important than IT."

Bill Harkins, executive director of Public Works, told councilors that workers consistently have to make up garbage routes, due to trucks breaking down.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson acknowledged that the city motor pool is in "deplorable" shape and it has been since before he took office. He added that IT plays a huge role in emergency response.

"It is tied together," he said. "I don't argue that something should be done about the vehicles ... But I think it's a crucial need ... to make sure IT service is supported."

City Attorney Ricardo Woods also explained to councilors that simply sitting on leftover bond money could result in penalties from the federal government.

"You don't want to hold up spending on bond funds because the IRS will start to ask questions," Woods said. "You don't want to continually say you don't want to spend bond money due to district needs."

During the meeting, Stimpson recognized British Counsel General Jeremy Pilmore-Bedford, who was in town for the rededication of British Park on Tuesday for the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Bowyer in the War of 1812. Councilman John Williams presented Pilmore-Bedford with a lapel pin and keychain featuring the city's seal.

Stimpson also recognized city employee Dexter Johnston, from the parks and recreation department, as employee of the month. Stimpson also recognized Mobile Police Department officer Raymond Williams as officer of the month.

In other business, the city authorized a performance contract worth \$75,000 with the Friends of the Mobile Animal Shelter to be used for a new kennel to house cats for adoption.

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Court stops issuing all marriage licenses

BY JASON JOHNSON/REPORTER | jason@lagniappemobile.com

After a nearly eight-hour standstill, Mobile County Probate Judge Don Davis issued “disappointing” news to several same-sex couples and supporters at the probate court house Feb. 9.

Monday was suppose to mark the end of a 14-day stay on United States Judge Ginny Grande’s Jan. 23 ruling in Searcy v. Strange, the case that effectively overturned a ban on same-sex marriage in Alabama.

However, only four days after, Davis spent the majority of the day Monday behind closed doors with legal counsel determining the most appropriate course of action.

The confusion wasn’t just local, as a majority of probate courts in counties across the state chose either to only accept marriage applications, refuse to facilitate same-sex marriages or put a freeze on their marriage divisions altogether.

Attorneys for Cari Searcy attributed a lot of the confusion to a last-minute order issued by Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore Feb. 8 that once again urged Alabama’s probate judges not to perform same-sex marriages in defiance of Grande’s ruling.

Moore’s unprovoked order suggested the Alabama Department of Public Health’s redrafting of state marriage licenses to include same sex options was in “contradiction to the public statements of Gov. Robert Bentley to uphold the Alabama Constitution.” Moore also went on to say “should any probate judge fail to follow the Constitution and statutes of Alabama as stated, it would be the responsibility of Gov. Bentley to ensure the execution of the law.”

Bentley was quick to respond, releasing a statement through his press office saying though he was disappointed in the ruling, he would not take any action against probate judges who facilitated marriages for people of the same-sex, as it would “only serve to further complicate the issue.”

“The issue of same-sex marriage will be finally decided by the U.S. Supreme Court later this year,” his statement read. “I have great respect for the legal process, and the protections that the law provides for our people.”

Despite the governor’s frankness, and rulings by both the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court denying the state’s multiple requests for a longer stay, the conflict between Moore’s order and Grande’s ruling left Davis unclear as how to proceed for quite some time.

The result was multiple same-sex couples waiting anxiously for the “marriage license” window to open up on Monday, with no word from probate staff until 2:30 p.m., around eight hours after the first couples arrived at the courthouse.

In a prepared statement, Davis said the “marriage license section of the court’s recording division would remain closed pending further instructions” from either the U.S. Supreme Court or Alabama’s Supreme Court.

Davis performed his regular court duties throughout the most of the day, but in his prepared statement said his personal counsel had advised him to avoid the awarding of marriage licenses because of what he referred to as “unprecedented conflicts of law between the federal and state courts.”



Photo/Dan Anderson

Robert Povilat and Milton Persinger waited for two days to get a marriage license in Mobile.

Attorneys David Kennedy and Christine Hernandez said they were disappointed other large counties in Alabama — like Madison, Montgomery and Jefferson — seemed to be handling the change much smoother than Mobile County.

Kennedy said following the Supreme Court’s denial of a permanent stay, same-sex marriage became the law of the land in Alabama. He also said the Supremacy Clause of the U. S. Constitution was written with this exact type of conflict in mind.

“Sometimes good politics and a correct interpretation of the law don’t mix,” Kennedy said. “And, some people are sore losers.”

The probate court’s failure to operate the marriage license window provoked a contempt of court request in Searcy V. Strange — the case that started all of the same-sex discussion in Alabama. However, Grande was quick to deny that request, saying “actions Davis or others who fail to follow the (U.S.) Constitution could be initiated by persons who are harmed by their failure to follow the law. However, no such action is before the court at this time.”

That ruling, which was filed shortly after 3 p.m., essentially paved the way for lawsuits from those denied the chance to marry Monday, and one such lawsuit has already been filed by Hernandez and Kennedy.

Hedgepeth v. Probate Court of Mobile County compiles around 12 to 15 plaintiffs who were denied a chance to marry, though the complaints will be filed collectively, Hernandez said it is not a class action lawsuit. Kennedy said he and Hernandez are open to adding new clients to the case, including heterosexual couples that were denied licenses.

According to Hernandez, around 12 heterosexual couples were prevented from obtaining marriage licenses on Monday

because of Davis’ decision to shut down the issuance of licenses all together.

“We will be seeking individual damages from the state ... we’ve been entrenched with trying to resolve this issue civilly and peacefully, and it does not appear it is going to be resolved. I think they’ve (probate court) taken a position of silence,” she said.

Further, Hernandez said in asking for civil contempt, there could be fines and “the very real possibility that somebody could go to jail.”

So far, the state has filed no response to the new lawsuit, but Davis, two of his ranking staff members, Bentley, Moore and Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange are named as defendants in the case and expected to receive subpoenas soon.

As of 5 p.m. Monday, only nine of Alabama’s 67 counties were marrying all couples as expected. Many counties, like Mobile, have refused marriage licenses from all couples, while other, like Baldwin County, are accepting applications but not awarding same-sex marriages licenses pending further developments.

However, Hernandez and Kennedy said there is no legal argument preventing the state from having to recognize same sex marriages performed in other states. They also said marriages performed in other counties would be recognized as well, though they were quick to say “every resident should have the right to get married where they live.”

“Alabamians need to be able to transact their business in Alabama, and the same goes for Mobile County residents in Mobile,” Kennedy said.

On Tuesday, Feb. 10, Mark Erwin, Davis chief of staff spoke publicly and said marriage licenses would not be issued in Mobile until a clarification is received from federal court or Alabama’s Supreme Court.

Grande has also scheduled a hearing at 1 p.m., Feb. 12, for a contempt of court charge added to Strawser v. Strange, a second case the determined the two Alabama amendments defining marriage as exclusively between “one man and one woman” violated the U.S. Constitution.

Similar to the contempt charge Grande denied in Searcy v. Strange, Thursday’s hearing will focus on whether Davis’ decision to freeze the issuance of marriage licenses violated a court order requiring the probate office to abide by any ruling derived from the Searcy case.

As an original defendant in the lawsuit, Davis was dismissed from Searcy v. Strange with the understanding he would abide by whatever ruling Grande reached.

Because Searcy and her partner were already married in California, and James Strawser and his partner are still waiting to receive a marriage license from the Mobile County Probate Court, Kennedy said their case would be a “more appropriate vehicle” to pursue a contempt charge against Davis.

Kennedy also said the outcome of Thursday’s hearing could likely resolve the issue Davis has had with conflicting orders from state and federal courts.



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Moore's edict didn't do anything — except push his agenda

BY ROB HOLBERT/MANAGING EDITOR | rholbert@lagniappemobile.com

Well, you have to hand it to Alabama's Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore. When he sets out to make the state look like it's run by a bunch of half-witted goobers, he generally succeeds in spades.

Late Sunday, Moore issued an edict that as grand poobah of the state's judicial system he was telling probate court judges they'd better not start marrying gay couples the next morning even though the federal courts had struck down the state's laws against same-sex marriage.

Of course Moore's had a two-week-long stay in the federal ruling within which to issue his decree, but chose the dramatic 11th-hour route as same sex couples around the state were no doubt hoping to make Feb. 9 their wedding day. So what transpired was mass confusion, with some probate court judges going ahead and marrying gay couples and others refusing to marry anyone, straight, gay or related.

Moore claimed to issue his decree in order to stop the "confusion and disarray in the administration of the law..." but it appears he has played the biggest role in causing exactly that.

At Moore's urging, many of the state's probate judges — including those in Mobile and Baldwin Counties — kept the windows shut and sent same-sex and shotgun-wedding couples alike looking for something else to do with their rice. (Or bubbles, or whatever is politically correct to throw or blow at a just-married couple these days.) But there were some probate judges who gave Wild Bill Moore the finger and started marrying gay couples Monday morning anyway. You could just feel the fabric of society unraveling as they did. At least Moore could. Most of the rest of us probably didn't notice any particular change.

As someone whose own views on this matter have changed over time, I understand same-sex marriage is a hot-button issue for many people. Some feel it's the last stop before people start having sex with mini horses and ... oh, wait. I guess what I mean is there are many folks who feel if the marriage buffet is widened to include people of the same sex, some may become confused and arbitrarily marry someone of their own gender.

True, it's not an easy subject to explain to children. We recently had a cover story about this very issue with the same-sex couple whose lawsuit led us to the point where we now rest. While eating dinner with my 12- and 10-year-old at Dew Drop a couple of weeks ago, they were looking at the picture on the cover of Lagniappe of the two women and asking if they were getting married.

They were a little giggly, but I explained it wasn't that big a deal anymore and how it was very likely to be rather common soon. By the time the chili dogs arrived they'd moved on to other matters. These two pre-teens seemed to get the idea much easier than our state's chief justice.

It seems to me Moore has abused his position in this case. He's let his personal religious beliefs get in the way of interpreting the law and simultaneously birthed a legion of lawsuits that will be lost by those attempting to stop same-sex marriage from happening in Alabama.

I won't make yet another Wallace-at-the-school-house-door comparison, but Moore's order does pander to the portion of our society unaccepting of most any change. And it panders simply for his self-aggrandizement. Roy Moore didn't stop gay marriage in Alabama, as I'm sure some people think. It's

happened. Same-sex couples got married in Alabama Monday.

But when it comes time for re-election or running for whatever political office he seeks next, Moore is going to be out there claiming he stood up against same-sex marriage, when all he really did was claim it as his own wedge issue in upcoming political races.

Not that we've ever given much of a damn about what the rest of the country thinks about us, but much like as in past civil rights struggles, everyone else is watching and thinking "You can always count on those yokels in Alabama to make asses out of themselves."

When Moore issued his decree Sunday there are a couple of things he knew: 37 of our 50 states — including Alabama — have allowed same-sex marriage. He also knows the U.S. Supreme Court is gearing up to rule on the issue this spring, and it's widely believed they will once and for all legalize gay marriage in the United States. Doing otherwise would be akin to trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube.

What do you do with all the people who've been legally married in the interim? Just say, "Um, sorry folks, but remember that thing we said about you being married? That might have been a bit premature. If it's not too much trouble would you please hand over your wedding bands and return

your wedding gifts."

So heading into making this stand, Roy Moore knew he was tilting at windmills. But he's counting on there being more people out there applauding his moves than there are hanging their heads in embarrassment.

If you think Roy's last-second move was based in his keen reading of the law rather than him trying to be a political Kanye West, consider the statement he included as part of it.

"It's an aberration of our institution in Alabama. It violated Alabama law. I don't like to say anybody shouldn't be happy, but nobody is stopping them from living together. Nobody is stopping them from leaving their wills to each other and doing anything they want to do with relation to each other. It is about the institution of marriage, and when that institution is destroyed it is the basic building block of our society."

I'm sure some reading this might agree with Moore's attitudes about same-sex marriage, but in making that statement he is clearly stepping outside the bounds of what he ought to be doing as Supreme Court justice and striding up to the pulpit to deliver what sounds a lot more like a sermon.

At the end of the day Moore didn't do anything except embarrass the state — again — in the name of his political desires.

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Mo and NOLA wish each other a Happy Mardi Gras!

BY ASHLEY TRICE/EDITOR | ashleytoland@agniappemobile.com



Photo/Facebook via Mayor Sandy Stimpson

Mobile is proud of her fancy new Mardi Gras billboards, but NOLA is not impressed.

Mobile picked up the phone and called her haughty, younger but much-higher-profile sister New Orleans. The two had had a bitter sibling rivalry since their shared founding father left Mobile to settle New Orleans. Mobile has been in therapy ever since, feeling like her father loved her less than her more glamorous sis. You know, typical daddy issues.

"Hello, NOLA. Happy Mardi Gras," Mobile said.

"Ugh," New Orleans said, sighing. "I'm just ready for it to be over. I can't stand all these tourists puking Hurricanes and Hand Grenades on my streets. Two words: Amateur Hour."

"Yuck," Mobile said. "That sounds awful."

"Oh that's right. I suppose you wouldn't know anything about that, since your little Mardi Gras is so 'family friendly,'" New Orleans said mockingly.

"People puke in my streets occasionally. I mean it's not the cesspool of human biological waste you are accustomed to, but our people still have a good time," Mobile said, realizing she was actually getting defensive that enough people were not puking in her streets. "Rein it in, Mo," she said to herself. "Rein it in."

"Oh, I am sure they have a sweet little time over there, Mo," New Orleans said. "In fact, I have always told people, if you want a more calm, sedate, less exhilarating, more boring Mardi Gras, head over to my sister's."

"That's funny. I always say if you want a more murdery Mardi Gras, head over to my sister's," Mobile said.

The two cities laughed, but neither of them found the other particularly amusing.

"Speaking of Carnival," Mobile said. "I wanted to see if you had heard about the new billboards my mayor put up finally settling the debate once and for all, declaring me the 'birthplace of Mardi Gras.'"

"Ha! This is just pathetic," New Orleans said. "First of all, just because y'all threw some billboards up saying that, doesn't make it true. There are still conflicting versions of history on this. But second and more importantly, who cares? When you ask people around this country what city they associate with Mardi Gras they sure as hell aren't saying Mobile, Alabama. But if you just have to cling to this 'you were first' thing, fine, you can have it. We'll just take the only Mardi Gras that matters."

Mobile took a deep breath. "She's just trying to push your buttons. Don't fall for it. Just change the subject. You don't hate your sister. You don't hate your sister."

"Well, I guess you did hear another thing we have blazed the trail on for you guys. Our

same-sex couples are now able to tie the knot," Mobile boasted.

"Well, of course. Who didn't hear about that since your buffoon chief justice embarrassed your entire state once again? And now it's so messed up your own probate court isn't even issuing marriage licenses to anyone — gay or straight. Sounds like you guys really have things figured out. I can see why you would be so proud," New Orleans said.

"Well, obviously, matters of great historic significance are going to have a few bumps along the road," Mobile said meekly.

"Yeah, I'd say so. With Wallace and now that bozo Moore, I would characterize them more as boils on the butt of your state history."

"Well, you know, I mean I can't really argue with you there, but certainly you aren't acting like your politicos are any better. How's the pen treating Ray?"

"Oh I'm sure he's just getting ready to show that 10-minute tag girl of yours the ropes when she joins him," New Orleans said, giving it right back to her.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. But let me remind you she hasn't even been convicted of anything yet," Mobile said defensively.

"Well I'm sure Ray would say he was targeted for prosecution and wrongly convicted," New Orleans said.

"Yeah, don't they all," Mobile sighed. "Can you hold on a second? I think I may be getting a Snapchat."

"A what?" New Orleans asked.

"Some social media thing the youngsters all use and now even my mayor. Hence why I have to be on it now," Mobile complained. "And I am sure some 20-something-year-old in his office is doing it for him. But alas, I have to follow it anyway."

"Wait, isn't that what the kids use to send dirty messages and nude photos to each other," New Orleans asked.

"Well, that's what I thought too, but they say it's evolved and has news and stuff now. Sandy thought it would make us look more transparent," Mobile said.

"Well, I'd say so," New Orleans giggled.

"Not that kind of transparency," Mobile said. "Gross!"

"Well, look girl, I've got to go. I hope y'all have the most precious little Mardi Gras ever," New Orleans said.

"And may the puke outside the Tropical Isle flow like the mighty Mississippi," Mobile offered, as she slammed the phone down.

Happy Mardi Gras y'all!

Black and white prosperity is incredibly intertwined

BY KEN ROBINSON/CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Photo/Imdb.com

"Selma" reignites a discussion on King's dream and what still needs to be done.

recently had the opportunity to view the much-talked-about move "Selma." It definitely lived up to the many glowing reviews it has received. The artful and moving way it depicts the struggle for black voting rights that found its epicenter in Selma, Ala., makes clear why Martin Luther King described the events in Selma as, "the shining moment in the conscience of man." Tragedy was truly turned into triumph.

As the movie ends, it does so with the profound and powerful words of King being spoken in Montgomery, the termination point of the Selma march. A small number had made the majority of the 50-mile journey with King from Selma to Montgomery (the group's size was limited by court order). However, standing on the steps of the state capitol to deliver his eagerly awaited oration, King looked out over a crowd that numbered in the tens of thousands.

George Wallace, peering out at the crowd through his blinds remarked that day, "My God, it looks like an army." King's words to his foot soldiers of peace did not disappoint.

Not only did he speak to the rightness of blacks obtaining the vote, King spoke to the core fount from which such injustice sprang — racial segregation. Yet, racial segregation at its root, noted King, was about economic exploitation, a tool to maximize the profits of rich whites at the expense of poor whites and blacks in the South.

"Segregation of the races," King observed in his speech, "was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the Southern masses divided and Southern labor the cheapest in the land. . . . If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the Southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow."

This was nothing new for King, in many of his sermons and public speeches he often broached the subject of the utter economic despair many Southern whites toiled under, and how their economic liberation was tied up in black equality.

Whether it was the Populist movement of the 19th century when black and white farmers began to come together and form an economic and political block to thwart the economic dominance of the white aristocracy, or a nascent inter-racial labor movement being formed out of the depths of work in the mines and mills of

northern Alabama, the appeals to racial superiority and the inherent inferiority of the black man, always allowed rich whites to bring their poorer brethren back into the fold.

As King so eloquently put it, "And when his [the poor white man's] wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man."

When I look at many of the political struggles to advance progressive reforms in our state, whether it be for Medicaid expansion, increased education funding, tax reform, etc..., I'm always mindful of King's words and how he often expressed the power that lay in blacks and whites in the South realizing their prosperity is so incredibly intertwined. When it comes to the government giving a handout or a hand up we instinctively couch such debates, even if just mentally or perceptually, in terms of black and white. Thinking the former will achieve some sort of advantage, and the latter put at a disadvantage.

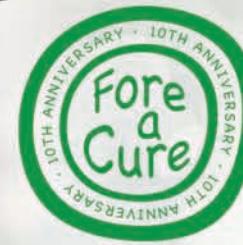
But in actuality, progressive reforms and programs are designed to lift all, and in most Southern states, because there is generally a numerically white majority, many more whites will often benefit. Unfortunately though, generations of antagonistic thinking has led to a lack of understanding.

On March 21, 1965, the grand orator articulated a profound and lingering dilemma. He declared, "They segregated Southern money from the poor whites. . . . They segregated Southern minds from honest thinking. . . . And they segregated the Negro from everything. That's what happened when the Negro and white masses of the South threatened to unite and build a great society: a society of justice where none would prey upon the weakness of others; a society of plenty where greed and poverty would be done away; a society of brotherhood where every man would respect the dignity and worth of human personality."

On Feb. 22, the movie "Selma" may or may not receive an Academy Award for Best Picture. But I believe one thing it deserves credit for is reigniting "A Call to Conscience," a discussion and plan of action about how we, the inheritors of the fruits of those who labored for freedom and equality, can create that society of brotherhood and justice that King so passionately believed possible.

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The broadcast news has outlived its usefulness

BY JEFF POOR/COLUMNIST | jeffreypoor@gmail.com

Last week's revelation that NBC's "Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams may have embellished, if not simply fabricated, the details of a 2003 helicopter incident in Iraq may have been the death knell for a news format that dates back to the middle of the last century.

For decades, ABC's "World News," "CBS Evening News" and "Nightly News" were the dominant source of national and international news in America. Those shows took the place of newspapers and radio as a source of up-to-date information.

At its peak, "CBS Evening News," with Walter Cronkite at the helm, pulled in an average of 27 to 29 million viewers. By comparison, Cronkite's audience was nine times the size of Bill O'Reilly's top-rated cable news program, "The O'Reilly Factor," which has an audience of around 3 million on any given weeknight.

In 2015, the broadcast network news viewership is still much higher than any cable news programming, with NBC and ABC averaging around 9 million viewer nightly and CBS around 8 million. The difference, however, is that the audience for cable news is growing, even with the erratic ebbs and flows of the news cycle. Meanwhile, the audience numbers for network news has been in a downward spiral.

You can trace that decline, which began with 1980 launch of CNN. Around that time, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather were the trio in Americans' homes and still riding the wave of broadcast news' dominance. Slowly, however, each year the number of those households watching those broadcast has gotten smaller.

Part of the reason is the rise of cable. There are more choices for viewers every night at 6 p.m. besides ABC, CBS and NBC. Then along came even more competition with the launches of Fox News and MSNBC in 1996. With three choices of 24-hour news broadcasting, no longer was the audience captive, nor was it required to be in front of a television at a set time.

Perhaps the biggest blow to any single giant source for the news was the rise of the Internet. It did take a while for people to trust the Internet — but now everyone has a place to go to find out whatever they want about anything whenever they want.

With all these new pressures, the three major networks never innovated. Not only did they stick to a general business model of 50-60 years, over the years as the number of younger viewers dissipated, rather than think of ways to bring back the younger viewers, they doubled down on efforts to lure older viewers.

The beginning of the end came in 2004, when then-CBS anchor Dan Rather got caught up in a controversy involving then-President George W. Bush's National Guard service. As it turned out, documents that called into question Bush's service and alleged he gained an undue benefit because of his family's influence, were fraudulent.

The country was in the midst of a presidential election campaign between the incumbent



Photo/nbcnews.com

Did Brian Williams' fabrication mark the beginning of the end for all evening newscasts?

Bush and then-Sen. John Kerry. Many saw Rather's efforts as nothing more than an attempt to influence the outcome of that contest.

While the report aired on "60 Minutes" and not his "Evening News" broadcast, the damage was done. A storied institution could no longer be trusted and it confirmed for a lot of people what they had claimed all along — major news outlets have a political bias. For the next 10 years, broadcast news had continued to exist — but with new faces, however none of them have been the answer.

Scott Pelley, Dan Muir and Brian Williams reading hours-old news from a teleprompter with a fluff piece or two thrown in the mix isn't the draw. Do you remember the last time you sat through an entire broadcast of a NBC, CBS or ABC evening news program? Me neither.

Opinion journalism on cable has been on the rise because by 6 p.m. ET, everyone interested already knows the day's events. Thus the impact of what is shown on broadcast news on the day-to-day political landscape had dwindled. Even in a busy news cycle — be it an election, a natural disaster, a major court decision or some sort of foreign conflict, people are programmed to tune into a cable news channel.

There may be a time in the not-so-distant future when those three broadcasts cease to exist. Budgets have been downsized and the return on investment isn't there for the corporations that own the broadcast networks. It's just not cost effective to produce a half-hour nightly national news broadcast as it once was.

One of the models that might replace it would be how FOX broadcasting handles its news programming. Aside from its Sunday morning public affairs program, FOX affiliates have expanded local news, which includes national news and it allows those affiliate to pick and choose what national and international news they wish to include.

Brian Williams hasn't helped the cause.

Williams' actions will also turn away viewers and advertisers. It also exposes another flaw with the old broadcast news model where programming is built around a personality. The problem with that model is you'll never be able to create another Walter Cronkite.

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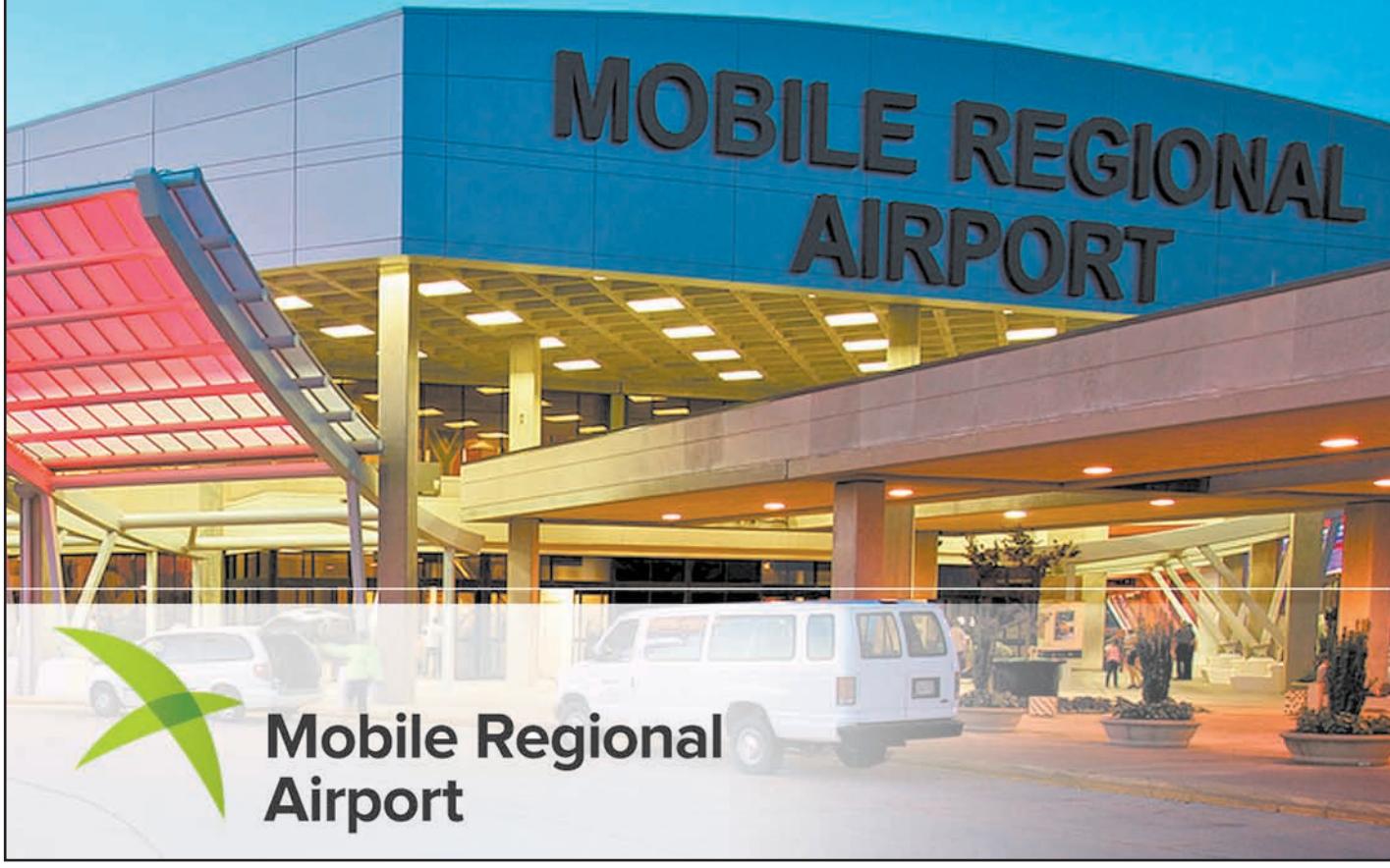
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114 year old Crystal Ice Company changing hands

BY RON SIVAK/COLUMNIST | ron@elminfo.com

Newly up for sale for \$175,000 is the historic Crystal Ice Company located at 800 Monroe St. The 114 year-old, 8,660-square-foot property includes a warehouse and manufacturing space and sits across from a new Crystal Ice Co. plant built by Mobile's Quinlivan family, which has run the business for generations.

Built at the turn of the 20th century, the Crystal Ice Co. has a storied history.

"Shortly after American troops embarked in Mobile to battle Spanish colonialists for sinking our battleship in Havana harbor and before we sent the 167th Alabama Army infantry division over to France to fight the Germans in WWI, the Quinlivan family opened this ice house in downtown Mobile," selling agent John Peebles with NAI Mobile said.

With industrial processes changing, a third generation of family now produces ice in a new plant across the street from their grandfather's old property where the business began. No longer needed, the historic old plant has two giant wells where massive blocks of ice were frozen and then run through massive cutters that produced millions of ice cubes for a wide swath of Mobile citizenry.

"Mr. Quinlivan believes that it is time for this unique facility to launch a new creative vendor for downtown Mobile's needs. He's still pumping out the ice across the street, but we need somebody new and visionary to continue to serve the city," Peebles said.

Commercial real estate moves

Pratt Thomas with the Merrill P. Thomas Company represented Z Wireless, an independent Verizon dealer, in the lease of 1,800-square-foot retail space at McGowin Park. Z Wireless will join Costco, Field and Stream, Dicks, Ashley Furniture and Home Goods among others in the development. Buff Teague with JLL represented the landlord. According to reports, construction at McGowin Park is ahead of schedule.

Autosurance, an independent insurance agency, has leased 1,120-square-foot office space at 940 Schillinger Road N. in the Aaron's Rental Shopping Center. Pratt Thomas handled the transaction.

Lenny's Sub shop has leased the for-

mer Los Tacos building in Hillcrest Square Shopping Center at 1175 Hillcrest Road. The restaurant will be relocating soon from its current spot at 257 Azalea Road store to the new location. Pratt Thomas managed the transaction for both landlord and tenant.

Plans by local Lenny's franchise owners, Steven and Chad Brady, are to expand aggressively into the central Gulf Coast market. Current stores are located in Pascagoula, Mobile and Baldwin County.

Demolition of Civic Center a fraction of cost versus maintaining

According to sources familiar with the project, it is estimated the demolition of the 51-year-old Mobile Civic Center would cost in the ballpark of \$500K to tear down. Comparing that to ongoing maintenance costs estimated by experts to run roughly \$1.8 million annually to keep open, the rationale behind Mayor Stimpson's decision to shutter the underutilized multi-purpose "money pit" in 14 months is brought into fuller focus.

Local sources are currently giving the CC a 12-to-18-month window to find suitable investors to remain intact. Extending that line of reasoning, the clock is ticking towards a possible demolition date of late 2016 by the properties' decision-makers if ink isn't signed on some kind of new deal by fresh speculators.

Ideas currently bandied about for redevelopment include a multi-use residential/retail center similar to the Wharf in Orange Beach. One insider expressed agreement that a high-end shopping center would dovetail nicely with Mobile's growing downtown business district as well as close proximity to a fully operational Airbus plant projected to employ thousands. An off ramp respite for frustrated motorists battling rush hour traffic on an increasingly congested I-10 Bayway was also an upside mentioned regarding the shopping center notion.

To date, no local developers are known to have committed to considering development options of the CC. Also well known is the fact a plenitude of large out-of-town developers has been vigorously contacted by the city, the result of which remains unknown.

"The city is looking for \$150 to \$200 mil-

lion dollar expenditure from whoever chooses to invest in repurposing the property. My thoughts are that the better option would be for a massive company — similar to RSA — to take a good, hard look at it," Cameron Weavil, vice-president of the Weavil Company said.

Huntington Ingalls employees honored at STEM conference

Huntington Ingalls Industries (NYSE: HII) recently announced in a news release that 10 employees from its Ingalls and Newport News shipbuilding divisions were lauded for achievements in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields during the 29th annual Black Engineer of the Year Award (BEYA) STEM Global Competitiveness Conference.

"HII is a proud sponsor of the BEYA Conference because of its extensive support for STEM in schools and in the workplace. We're proud of our hard-working engineers who lead our company in STEM innovation, so we celebrate and congratulate them on this achievement." Bill Ermatinger, HII's corporate vice president and chief human resources officer said.

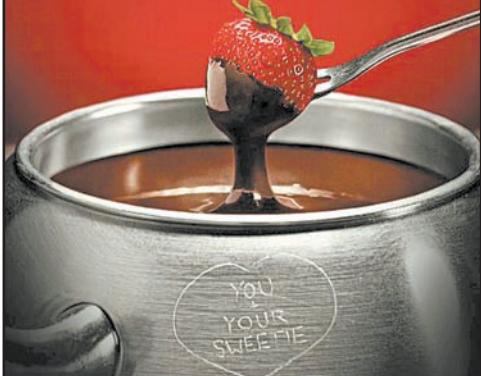
The awards were presented Feb. 7 at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, D.C. and two of those recognized work at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula.

HII's BEYA winners from Ingalls were:

Derrick Scott, an engineering manager for Ingalls' planning yard, overseeing the life-cycle engineering of the Spruance-class (DD 963) destroyers, Ticonderoga-class (CG 47) guided-missile cruisers and San Antonio-class (LPD 17) amphibious transport docks. Scott received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Auburn University and has worked at Ingalls for 27 years.

Dannon Butts, a quality engineering manager at Ingalls. During his 13 years with the shipyard, Butts has served in roles of increasing responsibility in the operations and quality departments. Currently, he leads a team that acts as a liaison between Ingalls' functional areas and the company's customers to improve quality performance. He holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in industrial engineering from Mississippi State University.

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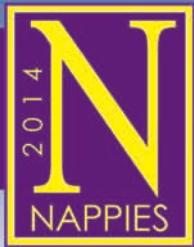
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The secret's out, Bob's Downtown is darn good

BY ANDY MACDONALD/CUISINE EDITOR | fatmansqueeze@comcast.com

Welcome, parade goers! Every year at this time I get excited not only about the floats and revelry that takes place in our streets, but also the many fine restaurants I get to introduce to out-of-towners and locals who only reach the LoDa area during Mardi Gras. There is certainly an ebb and flow to local eateries, but by and large our downtown area has a heavy concentration of good restaurants not found in any other part of our city.

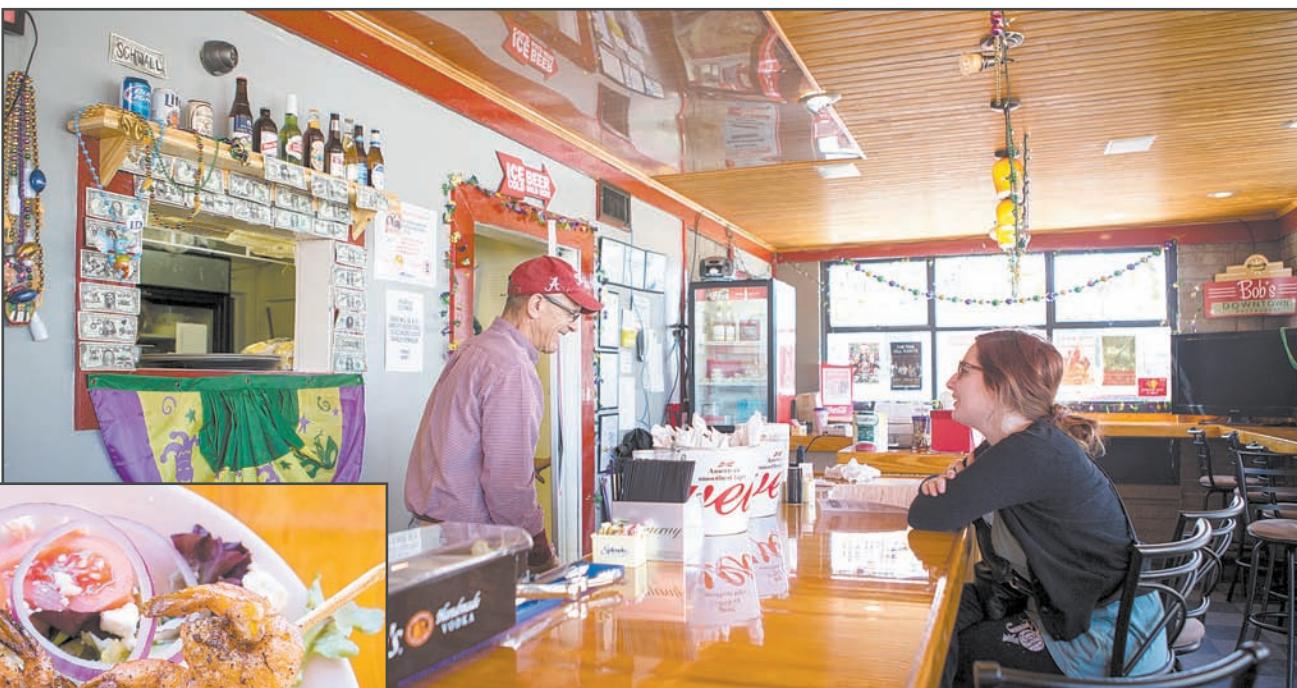
There is a newer restaurant on St. Francis in need of my attention that opened this past year known as Bob's Downtown. It's the smaller diner style building that has carried more than a few names over the past few years, most notably the less-than-appetizing moniker Fingers.

It's been a while since Mr. Bubble has been on a review, so I thought it would be perfect to meet him just blocks from his office. Rob was feeling a bit undernourished so he came along too. Though our trio is a little closer to the Three Amigos than the Three Musketeers in terms of suaveness, we managed to belly up to the lunch counter and tried our best not to disturb the other guests with our blue humor and big mouths as we sat three in a row. This is no place for secrets.

The white board boasted three or four daily specials which all sounded worth the calories. It was exactly what I look for in a diner. Rob and I each began the day with a cup of gumbo (\$3.99). Immediately Rob was impressed. The roux was more of a peanut butter color and left any chance of charred burning flavor elsewhere. My first take was there was too much rice for the amount of gumbo, but it didn't take long for it to grow on me. This is probably in the top 10 gumbos around here. And there are a lot of gumbos around here. Nicely done.

Bubble went straight for the fried green tomatoes (\$6.99). When it comes to frying tomatoes I am all about the cornmeal. I don't need the doughy flour. Give me gritty golden cornmeal and make it extra crispy. These tomatoes were just that. Served with a side of remoulade (good, but not as good as my dad's) sauce, the only thing this dish needed was a pinch of salt to make it perfect.

Rob was all about the regular menu and helped himself to a Bon Secour oyster basket (\$12.99). He let me try one oyster and I was impressed. That cornmeal batter is the way to go. It made



▲ Photos/Dan Anderson

Bob's Downtown has Andy singing thier praises.

me sad he beat me to the punch, but my rule is we all order something different. This came with crinkle cut fries, yellow cornmeal jalapeno hushpuppies and slaw that was neither heavy on the mayo nor the vinegar, but leaned toward

vinegar. Of course Rob is a bit of a health nut so he added a side salad (\$1.99) with bleu cheese dressing.

I can't remember all of the daily specials, but they all sounded fantastic. Each came with a choice of two veggies and one bread item. Bubble finally settled on German sausage with homemade sauerkraut (\$6.95). As if that wasn't enough for the price he also received a side salad with ranch, turnips and a rosemary biscuit. Of course, he found no fault in any of it, and bread fan that he is, praised the biscuit.

I have to mention my good friend and restaurateur David Rasp. Rasp and I are fans of gizzards and livers. We both feel like there aren't enough restaurants in the greater Mobile region that serve these delicacies. There is one more joining the ranks. I am happy to report on that fateful Thursday morning I was served a plate of chicken livers (\$5.95).

These came with rice and gravy (substituting mashed potatoes

was frowned upon) and I ordered turnips and a side salad. For my bread I chose hushpuppies, perfect for dipping into my greens with a little pepper sauce. That is one heck of a meal for under \$10! I shall return with Rasp for a liver visit. No word if they have gizzards on any other daily special.

I couldn't leave here without at least trying the shrimp. A 12-piece shrimp basket (\$9.99) should do the trick for the evening's dinner. I didn't mind that the shrimp were smallish because the price was nice. Of course the basket included the same slaw, fries and hushpuppies I'd tried earlier with Rob.

So here is the skinny. Bob's Downtown has the potential to be the incarnation that makes it in this location. It is very small, but folks were steadily pouring in and out. I would call this a local's spot, and if you are visiting and are looking for that sort of thing Bob's will suffice. Lunch counters are cool, and there are a couple of tables outside for the warmer days. But in the cooler months expect to be packed in tight. Remember when I said this was no place for secrets?

Open Sunday through Thursday 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. as well as Friday and Saturday 7 a.m. until 10 p.m., this is a place you'll want to check out.

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Get into the spirit with Dunkin's heart-shaped donuts

BY ANDY MACDONALD/CUISINE EDITOR | fatmansqueeze@comcast.com

remember when Dunkin' Donuts was only a dream for Mobileans. Fans of the chain couldn't wait for them to grace the Port City. Now we have three too choose from in Mobile alone! Whether it's Schillinger Road, Michigan Avenue, or Airport Boulevard, the doughnut giant is ready to sweeten your Valentine's Day with some killer specials.

Though they are known for their flavorful coffee and wonderful doughnuts the fine folks at Double D have some holiday specials that are out of this world. Two heart-shaped doughnuts temporarily top the list of sweet treats, and you can see why. One is filled with brownie batter flavored butter cream and topped with chocolate icing and heart-shaped sprinkles. The second is filled with cookie dough flavored buttercream and is topped with chocolate chips. You can get these now, but they will be available throughout the month of February.

The coffee lovers will be impressed with the latest white chocolate and raspberry coffee and/or latte. The flavors were made for each other. And for a nice romantic touch they are adding red, pink and white heart sprinkles to top off the lattes.

Cammie's Old Dutch expands to grocery stores

After a hard day of yard work the kids needed a treat, and I had to look no further than the Old Dutch Ice Cream Parlor. The place is going gangbusters with king cake ice cream flying out the door. We sampled a cup of the latest salted caramel moon pie ice cream and were blown away.

So where is one to go when the Old Shell Road and Florida Street hotspot runs out of your favorite flavor or if you happen to be a little far away? Now you can find Old Dutch in select grocery stores! What started as a test run of peppermint ice cream has turned into a regular stock of five flavors.

Cain's Grocery in Fairhope and Foley are your new Baldwin County connections. Mobileans can find the good stuff at B & H on Halls Mill Road. Save the pistachio for me.

Valentine's at Grand Hotel a mystery

Point Clear's Grand Hotel is the place to go for a Valentine's



Photo/www.dunkindonuts.com

Nothing quite says "I love you" like a donut.

dinner that is a bit out of the ordinary, or shall we say mysterious. There is still room for you and your sweetheart to make reservations for the Dinner Mystery Package.

Check into your deluxe room with that special someone and get ready for the hilarious mystery theater performance of "When Cletus Met Elisabeth" in the Grand Ballroom. It's a play about a socialite who hosts a Valentine's party with a few unexpected guests. The only mystery is whether it ends in love or disaster.

The dinner consists of shrimp cocktail pipettes, roasted tomato soup with grilled cheese croutons, a roasted winter vegetable salad with Alabama goat cheese and Satsuma vinaigrette. The entrée is medallions of beef with roasted fingerling potatoes, succotash, and a dessert called "Cupid's Chocolate Symphony."

I've never been disappointed at the Grand. Book it today before time runs out. The package for two includes room, dinner and the play for \$345. Where to go for a Valentine's without the hassle of Mardi Gras? Mystery solved.

Hurricane Grill and Wings opens

Airport Boulevard has a new wing restaurant now open and slinging the yardbird. Hurricane Grill and Wings is a chain with locations that span from the less likely areas to experience a hurricane like Arizona to the guaranteed places such as Florida. Our location is at the fairly safe 7721 Airport Blvd. near Hobby Lobby at Schillinger Road.

The menu is heavy on the wing flavors with 36 variations and counting for your flappers, drumettes and boneless. You'll also find conch fritters and Manhattan-style conch chowder, burgers, tons of appetizers and even a steak or two. Our Orange Beach friends already know this menu by heart from visiting the Perdido Beach Boulevard location. Open Sunday through Thursday 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday until 11 p.m., this one sounds worth a try.

Aerofest announces inclusion of LA Gumbo Festival

Aerofest is quickly approaching and the music lineup they're promising is huge! Now get ready for the big food announcement. Bob Baumhower is teaming up with the iconic John Folse for the third edition of the Wind Creek Casino LA Gumbo Festival.

Chefs from LA (Louisiana) to L.A. (Lower Alabama) are going head-to-head to see who has the roux and all the good stuff for a \$5,000 cash prize.

"Our two regions have a shared history that dates back to the 1700s and we have a lot in common. Not the least of which is our love of gumbo. Our aim with this festival is to pay homage to the Gulf Coast's signature dish in all its attendant forms," says Baumhower.

Another highlight will be Chef Folse, Baumhower and Baumhower's head Chef Steve Zucker manning the "big pot" that holds nearly 4,000 pounds of gumbo, and it's not just for show.

If you think you have the winning recipe visit www.AeroFest.org. The registration fee is only \$100, but be prepared to commit to 15 gallons of your best original gumbo.

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Sangria makes a festive old-world punch for Mardi Gras

BY W.T. BANKHEAD/CONTRIBUTING WRITER | elixirs@agniappemobile.com



Photo/ www.thespanishfood.es

Sangria adds an exotic punch to the Mardi Gras season

It's hard to fathom that a word that once meant "blood" — Sangria — is now a popular drink around the world. Back in the day, when I was a junior at George Washington University, my roommates and I decided to pool our meager resources and throw an absolutely fabulous soiree, in honor of Armistice Day.

The name of the holiday has of course changed, but the original sounded not only more inviting, but stylishly vintage. We wanted an elegant affair for the lowest possible cost.

My apartment was an ideal setting, in that it was spacious and my furniture quite minimal, by necessity, not choice. The building had been scheduled for demolition, so I had no hesitation in painting the ugly wood floors a high gloss black enamel. I painted the walls in pastels of the period, too. It was very "New York loft."

But we suffered from that classic cliché: champagne taste, beer budget. We decided to forego a bartender or any mixed drinks and simply serve a substantive sangria punch.

For hundreds of years, sangria has been the traditional red wine across Europe. Claret, the British term for Bordeaux French wine, would have been the base. Bordeaux is customarily a blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon, and cabernet franc. For flavor, fruit and brandy would be added to the red wine punch.

One example, Claret Cup Punch from the 1700s and 1800s, would be the drink of choice at Jane Austen type parties. Even further back in history, in the middle ages, a similar drink concoction, "hipocras," is well documented.

Wine was more prevalent, and although people bathed in water, it was frequently unsafe to drink. Milk was for infants. Even toddlers were safer with a little wine in what they were drinking, because it killed the bacteria.

Most people made wine and would add fruit or spices to give it a better flavor. When the Romans invaded the area we call Spain around 200 BC, they planted vineyards. The Romans concluded that varieties of red grapes produced the best wine. Soon a wine shipping trade began, with Spanish wines supplying much of Rome's wine consumption. Red grapes thrived in the area, and a variety of punches were invented, like sangria.

Spaniards of all classes enjoyed the drink,

made mostly from Rioja and other reds in the area. There is also a white sangria, called "Sangria Blanco." Spanish sparkling white wine, the Cava, is similar to champagne.

"Zurra" is a sangria made in southern Spain, mostly from nectarines or peaches. At Christmas my sister served a delicious white sangria made with raspberries and watermelon — it's very adaptable to any type of entertaining and celebratory occasions.

Sangria recipes vary both in restaurants and by the individual. You'll also find an infinite number of recipes online. Usually it's a mixture of wine, brandy and fresh fruits served on ice. My parents let us try some as kids in Madrid, and I've been a fan ever since. Fueled by sangria, they took us at midnight (quite exotic, given my age) to a nightclub where there were flamenco dancers. For sangria you can use reds like Lagrein, Bardolino, Beaujolais Nouveau, Gamay, Lambrusco, Grignolino, Freisa and Dolcetto. It's best chilled overnight, and goes with almost everything. History was made in the United States when sangria was brought to New York for the 1964 World's Fair. Sangria became an overnight sensation, and was considered quite chic at fashionable cocktail parties. Normally sangria consists of wine, a sweetener like honey or orange juice, brandy, chopped red apples, oranges, lemons or virtually any fruit of your choosing. Before serving it you may wish to add seltzer, 7-Up or Sprite. Strain the fruit and pour over ice. A thin slice of orange and apple on the side of the glass makes a nice garnish. It's good for up to a few days refrigerated.

White wine may be substituted for red to make sangria blanca, or in Paraguay and Argentina it's known as "cleric." Sangria is fun to make and open to any number of interpretations. There are no rules, which should be the case in many more situations. You can even remove the fruit and warm it on the stove, adding cinnamon sticks and cloves. Then get a mug and have some hot mulled wine.

"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth."

Oscar Wilde

Laissez les bon temps roulez!

#SoMOBILE



America's Original Mardi Gras is finally here, and visitors are seeing what Mobilians have known all along: that this city is special, different and, like *Lagniappe* says, a little bit funky. Let's show the world those things that are uniquely 'Mobile'. The more we show, the more they'll know.

Share the Mardi Gras moments that make you think, "that's so Mobile" on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter using #SoMOBILE. Be sure to follow and "like" Visit Mobile Bay to see your photos!



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Beads, Brass and Bon Temps

BY CHELSEA WALLACE

Tis the season of purple, gold and green beads hanging from the oak trees or glittering on the streets, moonpies raining down to people screaming "Throw Me Something Mister" and king cake being devoured morning, noon and night, just watch out for the baby!

For many here in the South, Mardi Gras beats out holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving as their favorite season of celebration. No matter what picture comes to mind for this weeks-long party season, it would never be complete without the music.

The sounds of brass bands combined with clapping hands, cheering crowds and dancing feet truly exemplify all that Mardi Gras has come to be: spirited, carefree delight. Most Mobilians attend a parade or two or venture out to luxurious balls, and this time of year, these musicians can be found in either venue.

Second-line bands earned their name in quite a literal fashion. As the members of the parades made up the "first line" of the procession, celebrants and revelers who followed behind and danced to the music became the second line. After some time, formal bands formed from these celebrants and gave birth to the tradition of the second-line band Southerners everywhere recognize today.

Playing with anywhere from three to 10 members, depending on the occasion, these bands value high-quality and traditional tunes that pay homage to the century of history that came before.

Mobile plays host to a small community of these second-line brass bands, creating a magnetic group of musicians who are just as likely to sing their neighbors' praises as they would their own. The Excelsior Band, the Blow House Brass Band and Bay City Brass bring to mind feelings of excitement and anticipation for listeners everywhere with their passion for music and dedication to this city's traditions.

In the beginning

As the true birthplace of Mardi Gras, Mobile has even more history to offer than just the beginning of this pre-Lenten festival: the oldest second-line band still active today. The Excelsior Band, founded in 1883 (one year before the oldest New Orleans second-line band), still plays around town frequently. For these musicians, Mardi Gras means more than just parades.

"Mardi Gras creates a commonality of fun for people in Mobile and surrounding areas. It provides an open invitation to first time and repeat visitors," Hosea London, the current bandleader, said.

London first joined the Excelsior Band nearly 40 years ago as a trumpet player before stepping up as leader in 2001. Now, in addition to adding that unmistakable trumpet flair to the band's sound, he oversees the business side of the Excelsior Band, including booking gigs.

In 2013, the Alabama Council on the Arts recognized the Excelsior Band with the Alabama Folk Heritage Award, which became one of the band's defining moments for London.

"We were honored with a plaque and a reception, so that was a moment for us. At least to that point, nothing like that had ever been done [for us]," London said.

Mardi Gras isn't the only time the members of the Excelsior Band get to strut their stuff. The band performs year-round, playing

their lively tunes for conventions, parties, weddings and funerals. In all, London estimates that the band plays at least 150 times per year, and sometimes as many as 300.

"The whole year, we're doing conventions all over town, because when people come they usually want a Mardi Gras theme. We do a lot of weddings since people like that second-line parade from the church to the reception hall. It's a really big attraction," London said. "A lot of them are not always local people. They come and they want to do that second-line."

Despite the hundreds of performances throughout the year, London confirmed that Mardi Gras may just be his favorite of them all.

"It's almost like the parade is on the outside of the barricades. We're inside the barricades, but we're looking out at all the people looking at us. Even though you're in the parade, it's like you have a parade, too," London explained.

Though thoughts of second-line brass bands and Mardi Gras in general often bring New Orleans to mind, London says that Mobile has more than a little something special over the Crescent City. The Excelsior Band prides themselves on maintaining the Dixieland-style jazz that their founding members played over a century ago, giving them a sound unique even here in Mobile.

"Mobile has a rich history of Mardi Gras, and really a rich history for musicians period. We've really kept the Dixieland-style music in our sound. A lot of the bands [in New Orleans] are mixing an R&B type of sound into their music. I'll tell you, we stay with the standards because it works. Some of the same tunes I was playing 39 years ago, we still do. And people still request it and that's what they want to hear," London said.

Playing crowd favorites like "Margie," "Hello Dolly" and "When the Saints Go Marching In," the Excelsior Band and other second-line brass bands continue to capture the hearts and fascination of all who hear them. In a society where attention can divert faster than the length of a world tour for contemporary artists, what about the Dixieland jazz sound keeps it relevant and even beloved?

"I think it just goes back to standards. If you listen to music over a period of time, any artist can go back and do classic songs, record it and sell it. People like having a base that they know they can come back to. We see generations of people, including children and grandchildren, mommas and daddies, everybody enjoys listening to it," London said.

An ongoing tradition

If the Excelsior Band represents the rich history that pervades Mobile, then the Blow House Brass Band exemplifies the new life and energy that keeps the city growing and thriving.

Founded in 2007 by a group of then-high school students, Blow House is preparing for its ninth year of high intensity Mardi Gras madness.

Different from Excelsior who keeps up a busy performance schedule year-round, Blow House Brass concentrates their efforts almost exclusively for the Mardi Gras season. In just three weeks, the band has around 20 gigs booked.

"It's all this month, right now. It's always go, go, go. Even on a slow day, on Joe Cain Sunday, we'll play at a gentleman's house for

lunch, we'll play at a parade, then play downtown at Moe's for a reception, and that's kind of our day off," Landry explained. "After that, we rest our feet. We put on a lot of miles during Mardi Gras."

The founding members of the band faced challenges along the way to their current standing as a core group of the tight-knit brass community. Chief among them was simply members dispersing for college. Despite some of the founding members leaving Mobile for school, the Blow House Band lived on with old members and new.

"We had to bring in some new blood, younger people and people in Mobile to fill in spots. There's a lot of logistics that go into it, but it's something that all the original members make an effort to be here, especially right around Mardi Gras," Landry explained.

When asked what memory jumped out as the most incredible in the near-decade since the band's founding, Landry simply cited the supporters who have given them the drive to keep making their music.

"The coolest part for me, that I didn't anticipate going in, was how people would respond to what, at that point, a bunch of high school kids were doing. Seeing a hundred thousand people at a MOT parade, cheering for you and screaming on the other side of the barricades. Nothing I anticipated really matched that," Landry said.

And for Landry, founding and playing with the other members of Blow House Brass has changed so much, even his fundamental views of Mardi Gras itself.

"Growing up, of course I enjoyed watching the floats and hearing the bands but it was just that: watching from the outside. Now the band is a fixture. People expect to see Blow House every year now. That shift to becoming a part of the experience for other people has been so much fun for me and the guys in Blow House," Landry explained.

The respect that Landry and Blow House have for the other brass players in town is evident in his tone and kind words toward the other bands. He recalls how both Bay City Brass and Excelsior helped them get started nine years ago. Last year, Blow House Brass played with the Excelsior Band for the first time, a memorable day for the Blow House band leader.

"I grew up watching Charles [Hall] play tuba for years and years. Then to end up doing it myself, and to play with him, was so cool. You can even tell [how much they influenced us] by what we wear. They did the black suits and we wear tux parts, so we really modeled ourselves after what they do and definitely respect the history they have," Landry recalled.

Good times will keep on rollin'

In the end, giving spectators and party-goers a good time is the ultimate goal for Blow House Brass and, really, every brass band in the city.

"It's all about the party. It's such exciting music, that really hasn't changed. Having live music and having several musicians playing at your event - I don't see how that's not exciting. For us, we bring a lot of energy to what we do, and that's the feedback we get. It makes it a party for them," Landry said.

A community has formed around these musicians, bound to



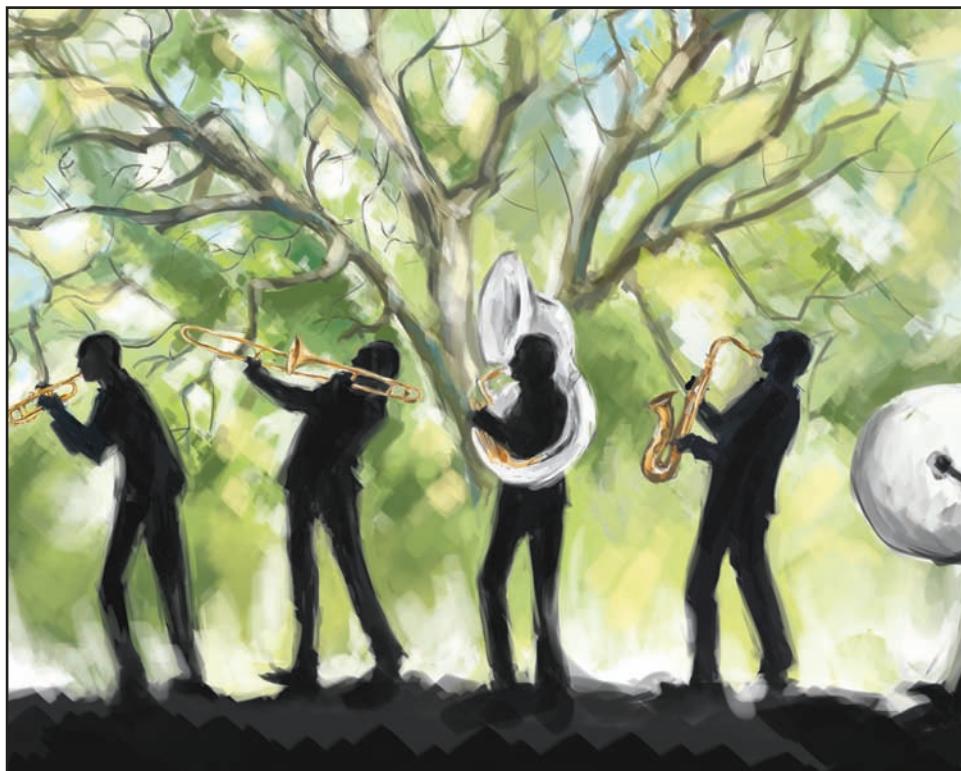
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"I think it's cool that we all know each other. When I get a call about something and maybe it's a gig that we can't do or we're booked, I give the guys in the other bands a call and try to hook them up," Landry said.

And the feeling is definitely mutual from the other bands in the area.

"The most life-changing experience has been the thousands of people that I have met and the respect and honor that they bestow upon the Excelsior Band, not only in Mobile but throughout the Southeast and beyond," London explained.

This community has become even more apparent in recent weeks. In late December, Bay City Brass bandleader Marcus Johnson passed away after 17 years of leading the band. Carlos Johnson, Marcus' brother, has taken over the majority of the managerial duties for the Bay City Brass Band.

For Carlos Johnson, Mardi Gras in Mobile is all about family and the bond of community that brings celebrants together. Focusing on this less wild, more communal experience gives Mobile's festivities a different experience than going somewhere like New Orleans.

And this camaraderie that the bands share with each other and with the city itself helps them to continue on without their long-standing leader this year. Carlos Johnson confirmed that

Bay City Brass will be performing as scheduled, including their weekly Sunday brunch performances at the Grand Hotel.

"I've been a musician 20-something years. I've played about eight different instruments, and my brother was like that, too. It's too ingrained in us to stop," Johnson said.

Johnson recalled how Marcus changed the way brass bands were viewed in Mobile, opening up new opportunities not just for Bay City Brass, but the other bands in the city, as well.

"I think that before he started Bay City Brass, a band like us would play one time a year. He created a whole market for more than just us. He pushed to get people to hire a band like us through the year. We played once a year, and that was at Mardi Gras, and no one wanted to hear it unless it was Mardi Gras. He opened a whole new market and people started playing year-round," Johnson explained. "He was really a Mardi Gras icon."

Wherever you celebrate this Mardi Gras season, you're sure to experience some or all of these talented and passionate musicians serenading you. And years down the road, when you recount all the crazy stories of this Mardi Gras with family and friends, you'll be sure to remember the music that made you dance and the excitement it inspired in you.

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Rumors aside, new Harper Lee book is a gift

BY KEVIN LEE/ARTS EDITOR | klee@lagniappemobile.com

As you've likely heard, Harper Lee's book "Go Set a Watchmen" is set for release this summer. It's the 88-year-old's first published work since the Pulitzer-winning "To Kill a Mockingbird" in 1960 and was the top-rated order on Amazon.com the day after the news.

What's at the center of the recent storm is whether the infirmed author knowingly agreed to the publication. Reports are conflicted.

On one side are the publisher HarperCollins and Lee's attorney, Tonja Carter. Their portrait is of a surprised and elated author who has uncovered lost treasure.

"I hadn't realized it had survived, so was surprised and delighted when my dear friend and lawyer Tonja Carter discovered it," a statement from the publisher read. "After much thought and hesitation I shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication. I am humbled and amazed that this will now be published after all these years."

Though set after "Mockingbird," "Watchman" was its predecessor, turned down when Lee was a struggling New York City writer in the 1950s. Literary agent Maurice Crain told her to concentrate on the collection's passages recollecting her youth in small-town Alabama.

Lee sweated through the revisions and new novel that became "Mockingbird." It eventually sold 40 million copies globally and was translated into 40 languages.

As expected, doubts surround this latest news. Most orbit Lee's physical and mental state following a 2007 stroke that reportedly left her nearly deaf and blind.

Then there's the absence of older sister, Alice Lee. One of Alabama's longest-practicing lawyers until she retired near age 100, Alice was chief representative for the famous younger sister — Nelle as she's known to friends — for most of the last half-century.

In a letter dated May 12, 2011, Alice Lee said her sister "can't see and can't hear and will sign anything put before her by anyone in whom she has confidence."

Alice was also a mentor to Tonja Carter, the law partner who took up the flag for Nelle when Alice stepped aside. Carter restricted contact with the author who now resides in assisted living.

Following Alice's death last year at 103, small-town gossip grew about Nelle's behavior at Alice's graveside service. Others maintain Carter found the "Watchman" manuscript amidst Alice's secured belongings and made publication decisions unilaterally.

"I'm shocked and skeptical and I've already ordered the book," Mobilian Tom Mason said. He curated exhibits on Harper Lee and Truman Capote in Monroeville's museum and has an established relationship with family and friends of both authors from six months of research and sorting through artifacts and memorabilia. Carter's father-in-law, a cousin to Capote, donated portions of those exhibits.

Carter's role in a 2013 Lee lawsuit against the Monroeville museum for unauthorized profiteering divided local loyalties and damaged one of her business ventures. She has refused media requests.

One of Alabama's most esteemed historians, Wayne Flynt is sure of the author's mental acuity. He and his wife have regular visits with Lee.

"Does she understand what's going on? If you make her hear, she can understand what's going



▲ Photo/wikipedia.com

Despite rumors, much-anticipated Lee book will be a gift to literature.

on," Flynt said to NPR. "Can she give informed consent? Absolutely, she can give informed consent. She knows what she likes, who she likes, what she doesn't like. Mainly, she doesn't like people to disturb her and interrupt her privacy and probe in her personal business."

That certainly fits with Lee's longtime role as Monroeville's version of J.D. Salinger or Thomas Pynchon. Though generally friendly with townsfolk, she has been known to grow prickly.

"No one was in the room with the lawyer and [Lee] at the time any of these negotiations or signings went on," Flynt said. "And so, until someone shows me some evidence and not some rumor, I have no reason to doubt the lawyer's concern about what is best for Harper Lee."

In 2009, it was reported Lee still earned \$9,249 daily in "Mockingbird" royalties. Within the last few years, she filed a lawsuit against former agent Sam Pinkus who was alleged to have cheated Lee from "Mockingbird" royalties. Pinkus was ordered to repay monies in the settlement.

Looking at the media coverage this publication announcement generated on the web, the influence of "Mockingbird" is obvious. The globe has apparently descended upon little Monroeville.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the new book will be putting to rest even older whispering: that Capote — famously an inspiration for the character Dill in "Mockingbird" — was the chief force behind that novel. Those are preposterous.

"We have one handwritten letter from 1959 to Truman's aunt where he said: 'Yes, it is true that Nelle Lee is publishing a book. I liked it very much. She has real talent,'" Mason said about an artifact used in the museum.

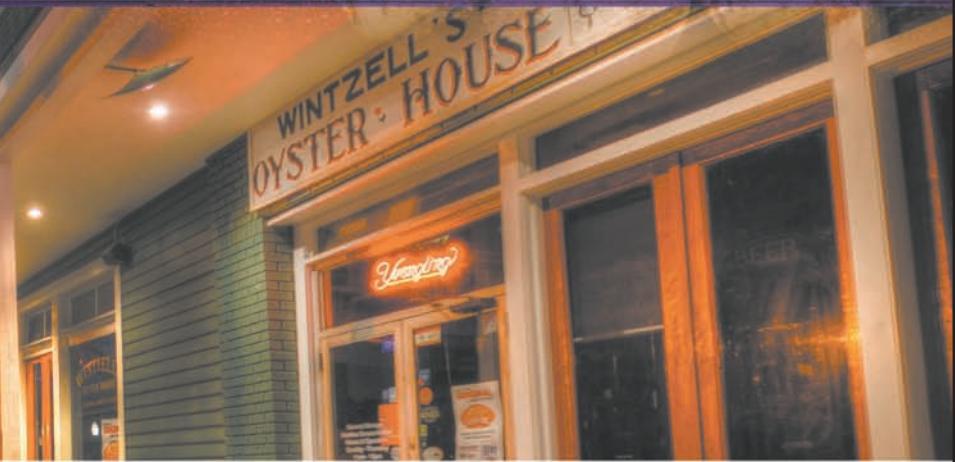
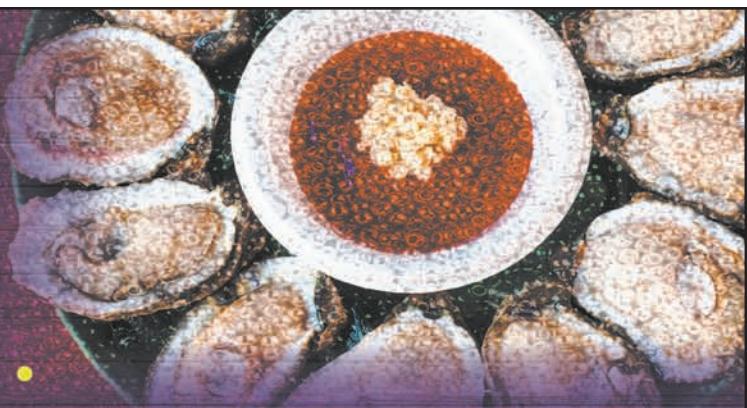
It's rather that Lee's assistance with Capote's own blockbuster "In Cold Blood" was never properly acknowledged by her childhood pal. Also, the difference in their voices is stark and self-evident.

A brilliant author, Capote never won a Pulitzer and it gnawed at him. Combined with his lack of production after "In Cold Blood," his chemical issues and sizable ego, it's hard to believe he wouldn't have claimed credit for "Mockingbird" had it been merited.

If anything, "Watchman" is likely to reveal the effect of Crain and editor Tay Hohoff as "Mockingbird" was over two years in painstaking development. Craftsmanship and contrast, perhaps with many of the same incidences and memories will be at the fore.

In that regard, it's a gift to generations of future writers eager to learn. It's a prism of perseverance.

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Free entrance boosts museum attendance

BY KEVIN LEE/ARTS EDITOR | klee@agniappemobile.com

It's always good when a gamble pays off, especially if it prompts learning. Maybe there's a lesson in it somewhere.

New figures for the first quarter of fiscal year 2014-2015 show attendance at the History Museum of Mobile in the Old City Hall on S. Royal Street has risen 40 percent. Two factors are at play in the positive trend.

One is the Ark of India exhibit showcasing the work and travels of Mobile artist Roderick D. MacKenzie. The mixture of masterpieces and artifacts has wowed visitors both illustrious and average since premiering in October 2014.

The second factor is the waiving of entrance fees as decreed by Mayor Sandy Stimpson last fall. It makes the site the most affordable attraction in town.

"When Mayor Stimpson announced we would be a free museum, we were very pleased and excited about what his decision meant for the future of the History Museum," Museum Director David Alsobrook said in a press release. "We were also optimistic about how his decision would affect our attendance. While these figures surpass our initial expectations, they also confirm what individual visitors have been telling the staff for months: free admission is bringing in more out-of-town visitors, and more taxpayers from throughout south Alabama. We're thrilled with the results."

Other local attractions aren't far above the zero dollar range. The USS Alabama costs \$15 for entrance. The Gulf Coast Exploreum is \$13.50. The Mobile Museum of Art is \$10 except for Thursdays when fees are waived. The Mobile Carnival Museum is only \$5, the only one cheaper than the History Museum's previous standard. The GulfQuest Maritime Museum rumored to be opening in 2015 has floated out an entrance fee of \$18.

The History Museum of Mobile is open Tuesday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The exhibits in place for February include Preserving a Culture: West African Art in the Deep South containing the work of Israel Lewis, III. Lewis is a descendant of the last living survivor of the Clotilda tragedy, Cudjoe Lewis.

The elder was among the slaves illegally shipped to Mobile in 1860 who settled in the Plateau area that became known as Africatown. Family knowledge of Tarkar art and handiwork has been passed down through generations as legacy.

Ark of India runs through September 2015. Upcoming exhibitions and events include "What's at Stake?" featuring local artists' depictions of the Mobile Delta for the fifth anniversary of the 2010 oil spill, Colonial Day at Fort Conde in March and a slate of speakers like filmmaker Margaret Brown and author Watt Key.

Opera brings children's show to area schools

Mobile Opera has announced a line-up of educational programming designed to turn on young tastes to the sounds of regal voices through fanciful and beloved tales. Their most recent traveling show is well remembered by anyone who can say "Fe-fi-fo-fum."

"Jack and the Beanstalk" is by John Davies and based upon the operettas of Sir Arthur Sullivan. It's designed for K - 5 school performances and has a bit of a twist from the traditional fairy tale.

After falling while in pursuit of Jack, the Giant bumps his head and forgets he is supposed to be "bad." He looks at the ill his bullying has created and realizes all people should be given consideration, regardless of size.

The work is performed by Mobile Opera resident artists soprano Tjaden O'Dowd Cox, baritone Andre Chiang and tenor Benjamin Folsom. They are accompanied on piano by Mobile Opera Director of Education and Community Outreach Stacy Driskell.

Schools left on the performance schedule are:

Feb. 12

9 a.m. – Taylor-White Elementary
2 p.m. – Burroughs Elementary

Feb. 13

9 a.m. – J.E. Turner Elementary

The program is funded by The Sybil Smith Charitable Trust and the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Art museum offers new workshops

The Mobile Museum of Art continues its outreach with a new series of workshops for spring 2015. These are designed for adults eager to learn or refine their artistic pursuits in a variety of media.

On Tuesdays March 2 – 24, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., Roy Hoffman will lead Inspired By Art, a writing class leading participants through exercises in using visual artwork as inspiration for literary flights of fancy. Journeys into the galleries will be a mainstay and Hoffman will bring in poems and stories with art at their heart.

On Tuesdays, March 10 through April 14, 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., Rachel Wright will teach Sculpture on the Cutting Edge of Fashion, a class for making wearable art out of recycled materials. This DIY discourse is a great way to learn about dyeing or bleaching fabric, and varied techniques for fabricating unique art garments, including draping on a dressform, appliquéd, reverse appliquéd and dimensional appliquéd.

On Tuesdays, March 3 – April 21, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Ron Thomson will teach Figuratively Speaking: Drawing and Painting the Human Form. The course is self-descriptive.

On Thursdays, Susie Bowman will teach Hand Building with Clay. This will run in a pair successive series, the first March 12 – April 16 and the second April 23 – May 28, both 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. She will also teach a pair of successive series workshops on wheel throwing in Fairhope using the same dates, but running 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Class fees vary by subject, running \$120 to \$200, depending on specific class and museum membership.

For more information on registration, fees and schedules, go to mobilemuseumofart.com.

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Annual M.O.O.R.E. event is a ball for all

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@lagniappemobile.com**Band: 6th annual M.O.O.R.E.****Masquerade Ball****Date: Feb. 13-14, 4 p.m. until****Venue: Azalea Manor, 751 Dauphin St.,
www.azaleamanormobile.com****Tickets: \$10 per day/\$20 for the
weekend/\$110 for VIP
available at Azalea Manor or online**

Mobile's mystic societies reign supreme for the duration of Mardi Gras. For several weeks, masked revelers roll through the streets of downtown Mobile on the backs of papier-mâché monstrosities tossing moonpies and trinkets towards the outstretched arms of the masses.

The masked denizens of debauchery also hold elaborate balls dedicated to excess and celebration. In the past, some have cited these festive events as discriminatory.

In 2008, filmmaker Margaret Brown took on this aspect of Mardi Gras in the film "The Order of Myths." However, Brown is not the only person who feels that some Mardi Gras societies sometime frown upon certain individuals attending their events.

For six years, the M.O.O.R.E. (Mystic Order of Revolutionary Enlightenment) Masquerade Ball has offered an open and eclectic alternative to traditional Mardi Gras balls. M.O.O.R.E.'s goal is to offer an alternative to the traditional Mardi Gras scene with an inundation of local music and art presented in the beautiful confines of Azalea Manor. Seth Maness (Poet Tree Entertainment), Dustin Rudzinsky (Port City Media) and Will Isherwood (Prime Suspect Productions) serve at the nucleus of this event. One of the catalysts was the trio's collective experience at traditional Mardi Gras balls.

"The first ball that I went to, some friends of mine, who would typically not be allowed at the event, came with us," Maness said. "I just saw the reaction on everybody's face, and it felt like some kind of game, where they were keeping up appearances. Really, they only wanted certain people there. So, I felt like the M.O.O.R.E. could be something for everybody and anybody."

"One of the things these Mardi Gras balls also don't have is original music," Rudzinsky added. "You don't see that. You see cover bands. People like to go see a band where they can sing along to every song. That's all well and good, but Mobile has a rich music and art scene that must be celebrated as well. This fills that gap."

Maness, Rudzinsky and Isherwood are extremely accomplished and dynamic members of the local music scene. Maness is the bar manager at Soul Kitchen, where he is responsible for a variety of aspects of daily business. He is also the brain behind the monthly Elements hip-hop showcase. Isherwood's career boasts production stints with bands such as Kung-Fu Mama and Dumpstaphunk as well as at many venues and festivals. Rudzinsky is an experienced videographer and the producer of the television show "Just Live Music," which had a run on WEAR and WKRG.



Photo/ MOORE Masquerade Ball

The M.O.O.R.E. Ball at Azalea Manor aims to be more inclusive, while also bringing a variety of great original music to the mix.

From booking to production, M.O.O.R.E. is a cooperative effort, which is nothing new to this trio.

"We started the Deep South Music Festival," Isherwood said. "We've been working together for a long time. We've all done various work both here and nationally, but we've always had this focus on our local scene and local community and trying to make something happen where we get the same people that we've worked with for 20 years now together in one place to all share the same feeling."

Music will be a major aspect of the ball. M.O.O.R.E. has established a reputation for bringing some of the best regional and local acts, including at least one from beyond the Southeast, but it prides itself on being traditionally untraditional. This year, locals will dominate the lineup. Phunk Blue Moon will be the event's first repeat performer. The live-instrument hip-hop powerhouse captures the revelry of Mardi Gras, even after Ash Wednesday. Eric Erdman is also scheduled to perform, and he will bring many of his friends from his recent album release party at Soul Kitchen.

Zach DePolo, Ashlea Penquite and Jordan Kimsey will join forces for their music project Whiskey in the Weed. Off-beat singer/songwriter Leland Clay will perform his truly unique repertoire of homemade sounds. The Captains of Industry will perform, featuring guitarist Corky Hughes, keyboardist Chris Spies and drummer John Milham. Spies will hang around to perform with his Chris Spies Trio. Finally, the lovely and talented Melody Duncan will be on hand to lend her violin skills to the mix.

While the musical aspect of the two-day event will be appealing, the organizers plan on inundating those in attendance with a sensory overload. The Azalea Manor will be painted in electric

light, courtesy of Isherwood's and Rudzinsky's video projection mapping skills.

Video projection mapping gives people the chance to bend and shape a variety of light-driven visual designs on a variety of surfaces. Video mapping often accents modern concert performances and Isherwood and Rudzinsky plan on surrounding M.O.O.R.E.'s attendees with the new art form.

A plethora of local visual artists will also be on hand to display their artwork, with organizers opening their arms to a number of artists from a variety of backgrounds and mediums.

"It was an open invitation," Maness said. "It's not just artists that we know personally, it's people who knew about the function and wanted to be a part of it, which goes back to us wanting to have everyone involved and participating."

In addition to the art and music, the trio is hoping the VIP package will be appealing to those seeking access to the Azalea Manor's bathrooms, parking facilities, bar deals and catering — with some amenities available through Fat Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the trio has a bright vision for the future of M.O.O.R.E. Rudzinsky would like to see the event become Mobile's premiere Mardi Gras ball. Maness wants to add nationally touring acts on the lineup. The trio also has aspirations of incorporating attendees into the "People's Parade" on Joe Cain Day. However, they must first focus on the present, and they cannot wait for revelers to experience what M.O.O.R.E. has to offer in 2015.

"There will be a lot of randomness brought to the mix by the patrons and artists themselves," Isherwood said. "Expect the unexpected."

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Body movin' with Beats Antique

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@lagniappemobile.com



Hangout Fest 2015 (May 15-17) is just three months away, and thousands are making plans to return to the white beaches of Gulf Shores to enjoy a weekend of music. Each year, Hangout Fest organizers book a healthy sampling of modern exotic music. In the past, bands like Gogol Bordello and Balkan Beat Box had hips moving with their gypsy-infused tunes. For this year's installment, Beats Antique will highlight unconventional talent to provide an unforgettable set sure to invoke rhythmic moving.

Comprised of Zoe Jakes, David Satori and Tommy "Sidecar" Cappel, the trio mingles electronic and "live" instruments with a variety of genres ranging from gypsy jazz and Middle Eastern to flamenco. Their set is often accented by the expert gyrations of Jakes, an accomplished choreographer who maintains a busy schedule both with Beats Antique and her solo career. Satori and Cappel keep sets fresh with keen ears and a reputation to effortlessly improvise.

Currently, the band is touring in support of their latest effort "A Thousand Faces: Act II." Those who choose to experience Beats Antique among the other acts in Hangout's diverse lineup should expect to be on their feet and mesmerized for their entire set.

General admission weekend passes for Hangout Music Fest 2015 are on sale now. VIP and travel packages are available as well.



▲ Photo/beatsantique.com

Beats Antique will bring their body movin' music to the Hangout Music Festival, May 15-17 in Gulf Shores.

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BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@agniappemobile.com



Band: The Flaming Lips, Spaceface

Date: Thursday, Feb. 19, doors at 7:30 p.m.

Venue: Soul Kitchen, 219 Dauphin St., www.soulkitchenmobile.com

Tickets: (possible sell-out) \$49 in advance/\$55 day-of available at Soul Kitchen, online, Mellow Mushroom (WeMo/MiMo) and by calling 1-866-468-7630

As one of rock 'n' roll's most prolific and enigmatic bands, The Flaming Lips provide audiences with more of a four-dimensional experience than a typical watch-and-listen performance. The history of this Oklahoma-based band begins in 1993 with their hit "She Don't Use Jelly," a track that became a mainstream hit, propelling them from relative obscurity into the MTV masses. However, their eclectic live performances and growing repertoire have since helped them gather a cult following that continues to fuel their career.

Along the way, the band released the movie "Christmas on Mars" and have given their fans a ton of impressive merchandise ranging from giant gummy skulls to the legendary (and elusive) Strobo Trip toy. In 2012, the band even broke a Guinness World Record for the most live concerts in 24 hours, executing a whirlwind overnight tour beginning in Memphis, ending in New Orleans, and including several stops in Mississippi in between.

As the years have passed, The Flaming Lips' stage show has grown more extravagant. Front man Wayne Coyne may be mock-bleeding one minute and traversing over the crowd in a giant, transparent inflatable bubble the next. The band is also known for recruiting fans to don various costumes and join them on stage.



Photo/ flaminglips.com by: George Salsbury | Flaming Lips

Capps continues Joe Cain Day tradition

Band: Grayson Capps

Date: Sunday, Feb. 15, 5 p.m.

Venue: Callaghan's Irish Social Club, 916 Charleston St., www.callaghansirishsocialclub.com

Tickets: \$10 at the door

While elsewhere, Fat Tuesday is regarded as the apex of the Mardi Gras season, locals often think of Joe Cain Day as the most revered day of the feast. The celebration is often so big that it seeps out of the streets of LoDa into the Oakleigh Garden District, where Callaghan's traditionally plays host to a multitude of locals and visitors alike.

Grayson Capps recognized how special Joe Cain Day was. In fact, the occasion inspired him to pen the song "Ol' Slac" and call his backing band "The Lost Cause Minstrels." More recently, Capps has spent his Sunday afternoons at The Frog Pond at Blue Moon Farm. But Joe Cain Day pulls him from the backwoods of Baldwin County to the old streets of the OGD for a celebratory performance that would be considered "professional playtime" by any standard of measure.



Photo/ graysoncapps.com | Grayson Capps

Fat Lu's Day promises to be a boatload of fun

Band: LuLu's Mardi Gras 16th anniversary boat parade and celebration

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 11 a.m.

Venue: Lucy Buffett's LuLu's, 200 E. 25th Ave., www.lulubuffett.com

Tickets: Free

While the streets of downtown Mobile will be filled with mystics and revelers, LuLu Buffett will once again offer an excellent South Baldwin County alternative. Each year, Buffett designates Fat Tuesday to celebrate her landmark restaurant's role as a Gulf Coast haven for Parrotheads and Trop Rockers. The day-long party gives new meaning to the term "Mardi Gras float," with an extensive Mardi Gras boat parade that cruises past the deck on the Intracoastal Canal.

George Porter & His Runnin' Pardners will once again help the crowd celebrate. Porter is an icon in the history of funk. As a founding member of The Meters, his unmatched bass skills echoed through the '70s and beyond. Now, Porter keeps a full tour schedule with a talented backing band lending support.

When the sun sets, Mobile's The Deluxe Trio will take the stage and ease the crowd into the evening. With their classic Americana sound, The Deluxe Trio is a Mobile favorite with an impressive repertoire of original cuts and crowd favorites. The band should provide a perfect opportunity to ease into Ash Wednesday.



Photo/ georgeporterjr.com | George Porter and his Runnin' Pardners

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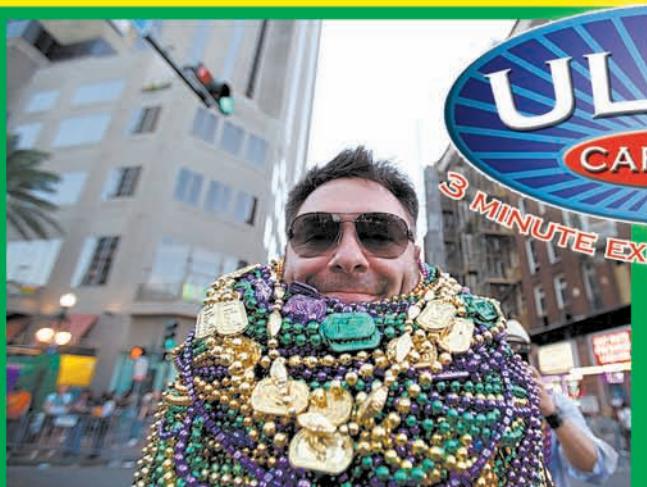
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FEBRUARY 12 - FEBRUARY 18

THUR. FEB 12

BLUEGILL—Al & Kathy, 6p
Blues Tavern—61/49, 8:30p
Cockeyed Charlie's—Karaoke w/ Brandon
Felix's—Grits N Pieces
Flora Bama—Mark Sherrill, Chris Newbury, Mickey Springston, 5p// Larry T Wilson & Jon Cook, 9p
Garage—The Red Field
GlenLakes Golf Club—Bill Whyte and Brent Burns, 5p
Legacy—Jon Cowart, 7p
Lulu's—Adam Holt, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Emily Stuckey, 5p
R-Life Live—Grant Dunaway
Traders—The Lizards, 7p
Veets—The Family Jewels, 8p

FRI. FEB 13

Beau Rivage—Creedence Clearwater Revisited
Bill's by the Beach—Barstool Surfers, 7p
Blind Mule—Forbidden Fruit, 10p
BLUEGILL—Dale Drinkard, 11a// Jon Cowart, 6p
Blues Tavern—Smokin' Toasters, 9p
Cockeyed Charlie's—Philo
Felix's—Jimmy Lumpkin Duo
Flora Bama—J. Hawkins & James Daniel, 1p// LeaAnne Creswell, John Joiner, Darrel Roberts, 4p/// Jack Robertson Show, 5:30p/// Destiny Brown, 6p/// Cary Morin, 8p/// Nick & The Overols, 8p/// Hart Break Hill, 10p
Garage—Infant Richard and the Delta Stones
Hard Rock (Center Bar)—Perkins Road
Hard Rock (Live)—Michael McDonald, 8p
IP Casino—Dwight Yoakam, 8p

Legacy—Shea White and the Elements, 9p
Lulu's—Edward David Anderson, 4p
Main Street Cigar Lounge—GTO Cigar Event, 6p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Soulphonics, 5p
Moe's BBQ (Daphne)—The Budz, 8p
Record Bar—John Law Band
R-Life Live—Grant Dunaway
Royal Knight—Karaoke w/ Gary
Tamara's Downtown—Jim Andrews
Tropics—Halfway Show Band
Soul Kitchen—Corey Smith// Strung Like a Horse, 9p
Veets—Sucker Punch, 8p
Windmill Market—Rebecca Barry Duo, 6p

SAT. FEB 14

Bill's by the Beach—Lisa Zanghi, 9p
Blind Mule—Comedy Whatever, 10p
BLUEGILL—Tim Kinsey, 6p
Blues Tavern—Midnight Ramblers, 9p
Callaghan's—Jefferson Street Parade Band
Cockeyed Charlie's—Ben and Friends
Felix's—Rebecca and Friends
Flora Bama—LeaAnne Creswell, John Joiner, Darrel Roberts, 2p// Cowboy Johnson, 4p/// Jack Robertson Show, 5:30p/// Big Muddy, 9:30p/// Hart Break Hill, 10p
Garage—The Tommy Morse Band
Hard Rock (Center Bar)—Perkins Road
Legacy—Soulshine, 7p
Lulu's—Cool Rayz, 2p
Main Street Cigar Lounge—Rock Bottom, 8p

Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Harrison McInnis Trio, 5p
Moe's BBQ (Daphne)—
Old 27 Grill—Chad Austin Parker, 12p// Rodger Wood Duo, 6:30p
R-Life Live—Brett LaGrave
Top of the Bay—Framing The Red
Tropics—Pell Avenue (Robbie Sellers and Emily Stuckey)
Soul Kitchen—The Molly Ringwalds, 9p
Veets—The Family Jewels, 8p

SUN. FEB 15

BLUEGILL—Dale Drinkard, 11a// Songwriters night, 6p
Blues Tavern—Johnny No, 5p
Callaghan's—Grayson, 5p
Felix's—Brandon Bailey
Flora Bama—Johnny Barbato & Luther Wamble, 12p// Beachbillies, 3p// Perdido Brothers, 4p/// Tyler Mac Band, 8p/// Albert Simpson, 8p
Garage—Crowned Jewelz
Lulu's—Greg Brown, 1p// Greg Brown, 5p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Sweet Jimmy Carter
Picklefish—Bayou Rhythm, 12p
Pinzones—Ross Newell, 5p
Pirates Cove—Mardi Gras Parade and Ball ft. Big Muddy, 3p
R-Life Live—David Chastang
Tamara's Downtown—Jermaine English
Veets—Grits N' Pieces// The Family Jewels

MON. FEB 16

Blues Tavern—61/49
Butch Cassidy's—Sarah Perey
Callaghan's—The Heard
Felix's—Tim Kinsey
Flora Bama—Cathy Pace, 4p//

Smokin' Elvis', 8p
Garage—Fat Man Squeeze
Lulu's—Brent Burns, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Blanton Callen, 5p
R-Life Live—David Chastang
Veets—Grits N' Pieces

TUE. FEB 17

(MARDI GRAS DAY)
Bill's by the Beach—Joshua Ward, 10a
BLUEGILL—Tim Kinsey, 6p
Butch Cassidy's—Jerry Powell
Felix's—Lee Yankie
Flora Bama—Rusty Tabor, 12p// Cowboy Johnson, 1p// Rebecca Barry Mardi Gras Band, 3p/// Perdido Brothers, 5p/// Big Muddy, 7:30p/// Brian Hill, 9p
Garage—Mother Mojo
Lulu's—George Porter and his Runnin' Padners, 11a// The Deluxe Trio, 4p
Moe's BBQ (Mobile)—Ben Jernigan and Friends
R-Life Live—Brett LaGrave
Shipp's Harbor Grill—Brent Burns, 4:30p
Veets—Grits N' Pieces// The Family Jewels

WED. FEB 18

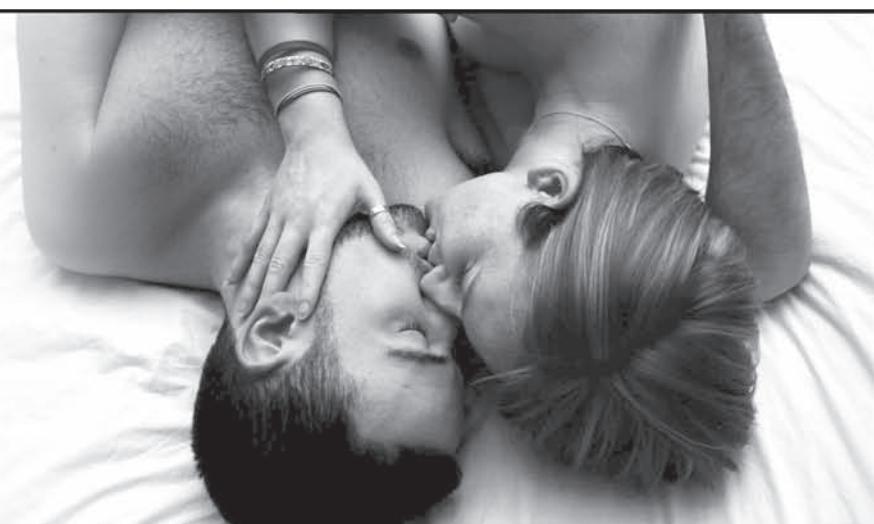
BLUEGILL—Ross +1, 6p
Callaghan's—Deluxe Trio
Cockeyed Charlie's—Jonesy & Gambino
Felix's—Tim & Holli
Flora Bama—Tophat & Jackie, 11a// Neil Dover, 3p// SMokin' Elvis', 7p
Legacy—Rock Bottom Duo, 7p
Lulu's—Webb Dalton, 4p
R-Life Live—Brett LaGrave
Shipp's Harbor Grill—Brent Burns, 4:30p

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Mobile Rapper at Home Using Social Media to Promote Songs

BY JODY KAMINS HARPER

A cemetery may be an odd place to meet the living, but that's where I first saw musical artist Sutton Steele, a video camera focused on him as he walked among the graves of PineCrest Cemetery. He was rapping words about inflicted abuse, unknown fathers, loss and lies and ultimately, testimony of survival. Despite the heaviness of his lyrics, he was unusually positive and exuded a boyish gratitude for all that had happened in that year.

Standing near a huge grave (carved for an individual named Certain, a name suddenly striking me as darkly witty,) I asked him what he was filming for, and the story of his childhood and his unfolding music career came to light, like morning sunlight sifting past the shade of an ancient oak tree.

In 2012, Steele had been given an interim recording contract with TRL Records in Atlanta, recording two songs there and three in New York City. (His first album which included these songs was titled "All of A Sutton.") While in Manhattan, he was asked to open for Chantelle during a Fame Fashion Week performance and show. Nicki Minaj and Cee Lo Green were just a few of music industry's favorites he got exposure to at the event.

"It was my first time ever on a red carpet, and I was star struck," Steele, now 20 years old, admits. Though he didn't find the "Adam Lambert" look the stylist put on him to be quite his own, he rolled with the costuming and coiffing and took in the experience, vowing that in the near future, he'd make it back to that mountaintop experience once again.

On March 7, at the Soul Kitchen, he looks forward to performing as a guest artist with "Tha Boyce."

His album "For You" is being released the first week of February and is free to download from such sites as Mixcon-

nect.com, NoiseTrade, YouTube, VUBE, BandCamp and SoundCloud.

"The one thing that has changed for me since my first album is that everything in social media has grown for me," he notes. "In 2015, social media is what is propelling musicians forward."

With websites like Noisetrade, "you can download the album as many times as you want, and if you choose, you can give a tip, 100 percent of which goes to the artist," he explains.

His Twitter page is now at 12,000 followers, he says, and this sort of audience is greatly appreciated by Steele. "It's humbling to see that people are interested in me."

He recently played a show at the Handle Bar in the Palafox area of Pensacola, and though it may be a humble start locally, he garnered enthusiastic attention. "It was not the Staples Center," he said, grinning, "but I treated it like it was! I climbed up on the speakers and rocked it!"

Despite physical abuse by his stepfather and witnessing other types of abuse laid upon his mother, he believes his experiences, bad as they were, made him stronger. This is the impetus that makes him want to reach out to others when they are suffering. Music became a refuge for him. "The mental and verbal abuse that happened to my Mom, the physical abuse and the times I had to hide my bruises on my arms, the times I had to sleep outside. It was the environment I was raised in," he says. In those times, "I'd put headphones on and get lost in the music."

His most current album, "From Me" features a song called "Here For You", a more polished musical production than his first recording efforts. This song combines his own rap lyrics with a melodic beat and a simply spun video full of the sights

of downtown Mobile, from glimpses of a stairwell leading to the Cathedral of The Immaculate Conception's crypt to sky views of the city, with the RSA and Van Antwerp buildings in the background. Even a few scenes of Mobile's riverfront float behind his music. It is already available on YouTube.

Produced at Blue Magic Studios in Mobile by Justin Barnhill and Ron G, along with special guest producer Gene Amac and engineer Dustin Jordan, the album "For You" is sure to please rap and R&B listeners or those who are interested in hearing this local musician as he matures in his craft.

"Lyrically, these are the best of my writing so far. This is my art, and it is my craft. It is who I am as a person." Steele has an edgier approach now, after hearing feedback on his first songs, including one, "Sticks and Stones," in which he sang out against bullying. But he has added personally meaningful details, like his grandmother's voice incorporated into the last song on the album, called simply "To You."

He enjoyed collaborating with several area rap artists, including Jizzle Rogers and Danny Capone on a song titled "No Type Remix", Solo Dolo and Flexx Stunting on the track "First Time" and Mobile rapper Scotty on the song "Speak My Word."

He has been invited to perform "Sticks and Stones" on WALA in the past and looks forward to the possibility of another chance to perform on local television for all to enjoy. As for his social media approach to marketing his work, he says, "It's my goal to get it into everyone's hands, everyone's ears, as fast as possible.

As for getting beyond the sticks and stones of his past and into the gleaming light of stardom, Steele says, "I've never had it easy, I've had to work hard...and I'm ready for it."

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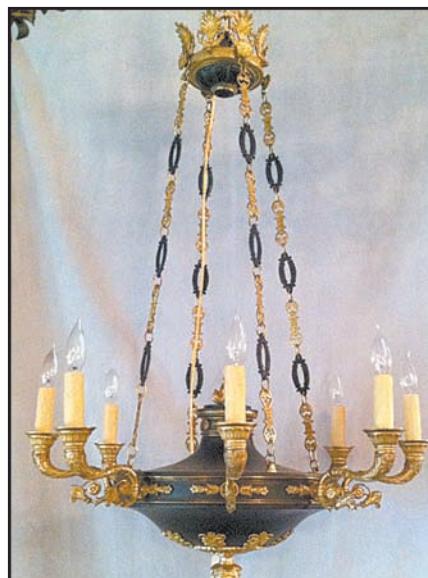
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Artists' Ball will go 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

BY STEPHEN CENTANNI/MUSIC EDITOR | scentanni@agniappemobile.com

The Mardi Gras season is a colorful celebration where art and life mingle on the streets of Mobile. The Azalea City's collection of artists (both aural and visual) recognizes this as well and continues to make contributions to this holiday season. Devlin Wilson has established a reputation for making Mardi Gras balls an artistic experience with his eclectic décor. For the Mobile Museum of Art's "The Art & Design of Mardi Gras" installation, Jillian Crochet was one of the artists who created a queen's gown made of Mardi Gras throws, which was highlighted by an elegant corset made of Mardi Gras cups.

Art does not stop at the visual, and Portal Studio is a local artistic institution that recognizes this. With each event they hold, Portal always includes a band that matches the artistic ideology of the evening. With the mingling of sonic and visual art in mind, Portal Studio (163 N. Lawrence St.) will be holding their first annual "Artist's Ball" on Fri., Feb. 13 at 6 p.m. with a parade by Lunatix & Co. at 9 p.m. Those wanting to attend are encouraged to come in costume. In addition to projection art, body painting and displays by Portal Artists, those in attendance can expect an unforgettable performance from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.

While 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

classify their sound as "Psychedelic Surf Rock," their music definitely exists in an undiscovered aural realm. This musical communal will be performing tracks off of their latest release "Patchwork of Light."

"Dance, Dance Claire" is the album's opening track and sets the tone for the album with its combination of jangling guitar, brash trombone and reggae-infused beat. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea also mixes elements of old school country into their unique style with tracks such as "Watching Cigarettes Burn" and "Street Kids." Portal made the perfect choice in musical entertainment for their first Artist's Ball.

Country coming to town

Over the years, country artist Corey Smith has maintained an extremely dedicated local following. Smith is joining forces with 95 KSJ to bring a little country to Mobile's Mardi Gras celebration. On Fri., Feb. 13, Smith will take the stage at the Soul Kitchen for an evening of country sounds in LoDa. Smith will be performing tracks off of his latest release "Maysville in the Meantime." Strung Like a Horse will be the show's opener. Tickets are on sale now (\$18 adv. /\$22 day-of) at Soul Kitchen, their website, Mellow Mushroom (WeMo/MiMo) and by calling 1-866-468-7630.



Photo: coreysmith.com

Country Artist Corey Smith will be at the Soul Kitchen on Friday, Feb. 13. Like A Horse will open.

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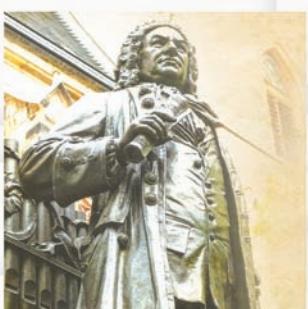
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DISNEY JUNIOR LIVE - MARCH 19: 4:00PM
DISNEY JUNIOR LIVE - MARCH 19: 7:00PM
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESENTS
42ND STREET - APRIL 9: 7:30PM

MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER
DISCOVER THE DINOSAURS
MARCH 7: 9:00AM - 9:00PM
MARCH 8: 10:00AM - 7:00PM

GULF COAST BOAT SHOW
MARCH 13: 2 NOON - 8:00PM
MARCH 14: 10:00AM - 8:00PM
MARCH 15: 10:00AM - 5:00PM

3RD ANNUAL GREATER MOBILE HOME & GARDEN SHOW
MARCH 27: 2:00PM - 7:00PM
MARCH 28: 10:00AM - 7:00PM
MARCH 29: 11:00AM - 5:00PM

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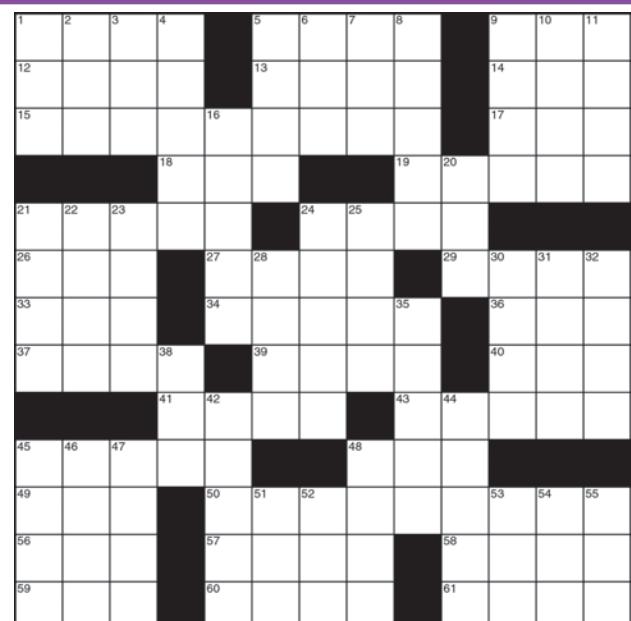
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- Buzzkill
- Buggy for Brits
- Furbys, once
- Dog tag info
- Pro ____
- Pitching star
- Chowhounds have big ones
- Virtual citizen of PC gaming
- It's tapped
- Better or best
- Bakery supply
- Marathon
- Dominate, in sports lingo
- Printer's amount
- Unrespected writer
- "The best is ___ to come!"
- Campaign creators
- Freight weight
- Metallurgist's materials
- Jets or Sharks, e.g.
- Be outstanding?
- Is worthwhile
- Enough, and then some
- Bridges in Hollywood
- Itinerary part
- Cause of inflation?
- Covetously
- Ozone hazard, for short
- Jack and Jill's burden
- Stead
- Congressional vote
- Pound the keys
- Check

DOWN

- Chain letters?
- Sound at the door
- Hi-fi component
- Nerdy types
- Goody two-shoes
- Snitch
- Did lunch, say
- Stone worker
- Allegro, in music
- Battery fluid
- Showroom model
- Aquarium beauty
- "That's disgusting!"
- It has its ups and downs
- Still-life piece
- Add to the pot
- Buddhist priests
- A comet, to the superstitious
- Wired
- Straddling, maybe
- Hooded garment
- Baby bouncer?



- Dame Marsh of mystery
- Cloak-and-dagger sort
- Masterful
- Stake drivers
- Delicate, in a way
- Board game or magazine
- Bicolor sea predator
- Beneath contempt
- Dissenter's word
- Big shot
- Canine command
- "Malcolm X" director
- Music to the cook's ears

Answers on page 56

a wise man once said

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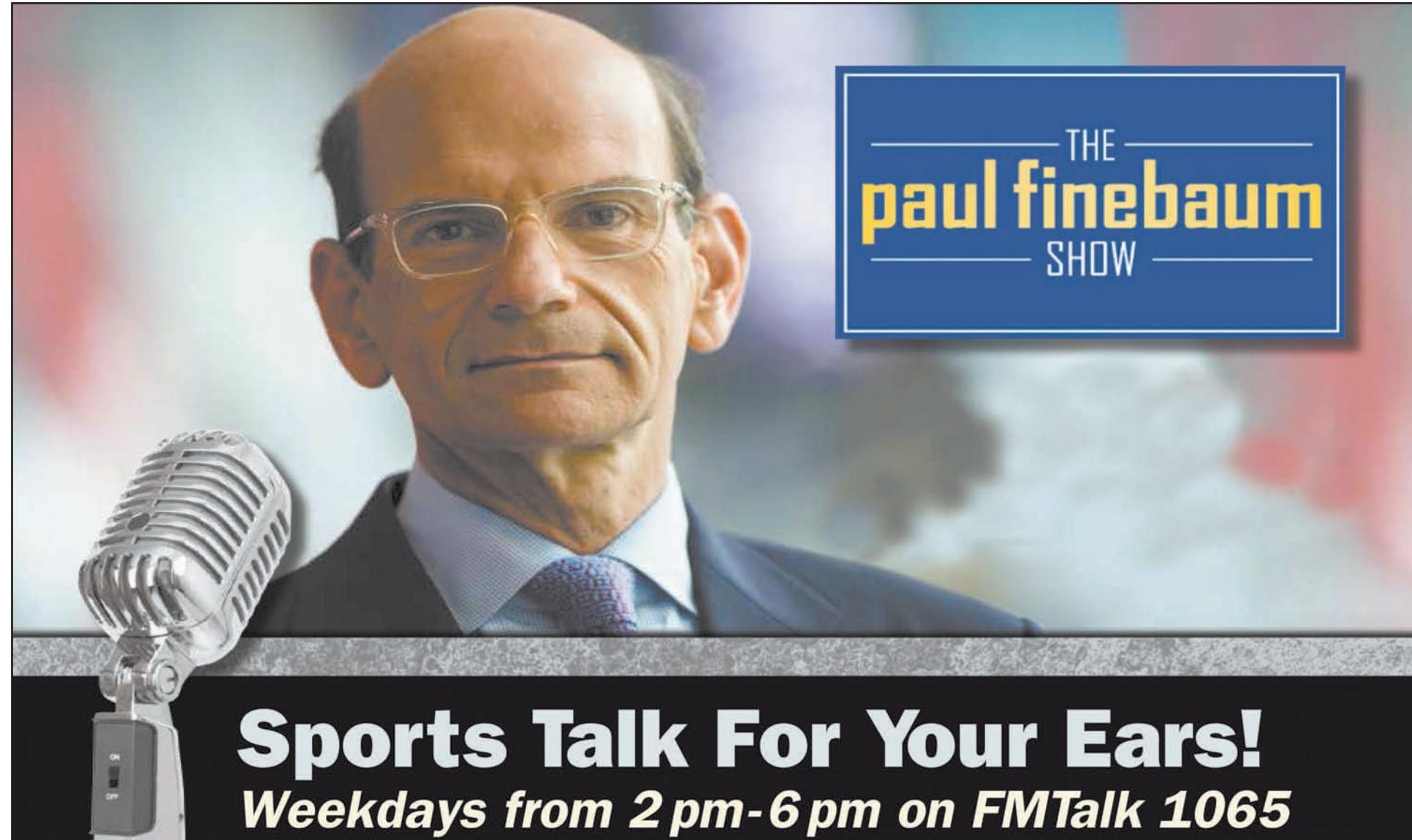
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**WHEN: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17; 10 A.M. TO 12 P.M.
WHERE: ALABAMA ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC, 3610 SPRINGHILL
MEMORIAL DRIVE N**

After many years of requesting to have the world famous Express Clydesdales come down and be a part of Mardi Gras, we finally booked them for this year! They are going to be in the Infant Mystics Parade Feb 16th at 7:00 p.m. and then on Feb 17th we are having a meet and greet with the Clydesdales at Alabama Orthopedic Clinic from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., people can get their pictures taken with the horses and take wagon rides and purchase Clydesdale memorabilia. All donations and proceeds go to Children's Miracle Network. Alabama Orthopedic Clinic is located at 3610 Springhill Memorial Drive N. For more information call 251-476-8210.



Photo/Courtesy of Champion Express Clydesdales

February 12

Love Your Heart Health Fair

In observance of Heart Month, heart care specialists will offer free information, blood pressure checks, free cholesterol screenings (from 7:30 - 10 a.m. only, also must fast after midnight for the cholesterol screening), body fat assessments, and a tour of Springhill Athletic Club. Springhill Medical Center is located at 3715 Dauphin St. For more information call 251-460-5447.

Government Street Forum

Join the Government Street Presbyterian Church for lunch and a speaker every Thursday through March 26. The speaker will be Casi Callaway, executive director, Mobile Baykeeper. The lunch and forum is held in the church's Fellowship Hall at the Jackson Street entrance on Government and Jackson streets. Lunch is served at noon and costs \$10, which includes tea, coffee and dessert. There is no charge to attend the forum. For information, call the church office at 251-432-1749.

Thursdays at the Museum

Every Thursday from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. the Mobile Museum of Art, 4850 Museum Drive, offers free admission to all visitors. Join MMA each week to experience the museum in new and exciting ways throughout the year. No reservations are necessary.

February 13

Luncheon with novelist Jonathan Odell
Page and Palette will host Southern writer Jonathan Odell, author of the critically acclaimed historical novel "The Healing," for a Read It & Eat luncheon on Feb. 13th. Odell will talk about his new book "Miss Hazel and the Rosa Parks League" at a free event at Page and Palette beginning at 12 p.m. This event is open to the public and lunch will be available for \$10 by contacting the bookstore in advance. For more information, contact Page and Palette at 251.928.5295 or www.pageandpalette.com.

Friday Farm Day

Seasons in the Sun is hosting Friday Farm Days, they will offer a variety of fresh locally grown products, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. They will also have an Introduction to Gardening class from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. This class is \$25 per person, and you will receive a discount on lunch if you choose to stay for lunch. Seasons In the Sun is located at 13006 Jenkins Pit Rd. Spanish Fort. For more information call 251-423-4381.

February 14

Ark of India
"Ark of India: An Alabama Artist Explores Southern Asia" is an exhibit about personal discovery and exploration. It is an account of late 19th and early 20th century India as seen by Alabama artist Roderick D. MacKenzie, using his paintings, drawings, sculptures and most importantly, photographs and writings. The exhibition is organized by the History Museum of Mobile at 111 S. Royal St. and is on view until Sept. 1, 2015. Admission is free.

February 15

Mingle & Make Workshop

This Valentine's Day workshop will be a little different from our last, offering two different sessions for two different groups. The first session will take place from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is open for couples. Each couple will pay \$70 to receive 8 tickets. They then use those tickets to choose from 7 different crafts! The single person class starts at 6 p.m. and will last till 9 p.m. so that afterwards you can head out on the town to enjoy some drinks. Each individual will pay \$40 to receive 5 tickets. They will then use those tickets to choose from the 7 crafts. This will be a great way for singles to meet other individuals in the neighborhood! Everyone is also invited to enjoy our Valentine's day FREE photo booth and cupcakes. Paint the Town is located at 412 Dauphin St. For more information visit 251-408-9590.

Anti-Valentine's Day Party Teen Time

Before you head out to the Mardi Gras parades, join us for games, prizes and snacks. Kick back with an oldie but goodie film, "10 Things I Hate about You." The film runs 98 minutes and is rated PG-13. For more information, call the Ben May Main Library Children's Department at 251-208-7086.

Rabies Clinic

The Mobile County Health Department provides low cost rabies shots for cats, dogs and ferrets during weekend clinics. Here's a list of the rabies clinics planned for Saturdays during February. This weekend's rabies clinic is at Pet Supplies Plus, 803 Hillcrest Rd. 1:30 p.m. -4 p.m. The cost of the rabies vaccine is \$8. For more information call 251-690-8823.

February 15

Joe Cain Classic

The fun will begin at 8 a.m. in downtown Mobile. The Joe Cain Classic is much

more than a 5k run, it's a great family event featuring a one-mile walk/run and a quarter mile "Moon Pie" dash for kids of all ages. Stick around after the race for a Mardi Gras block party, refreshments, music and a visit from Joe Cain's widows. Most importantly, the race is an opportunity to provide financial assistance to the challenged athletic program. Visit bayarearunner.com for more information.

Open Studio

Come enjoy complimentary mimosas as artists work at the Cathedral Square Gallery, 612 Dauphin St. There will also be works by more than 60 area artists on display. For more information call 251-694-0278.

February 16

Master Gardener Lunch and Learn

Nita Crandall of the Gulf Coast Herb Society will discuss delightful Tuscan herbs. Bring a friend and a lunch. Drinks are provided. The lunch will be held at the Jon Archer Center, 1070 Schillinger Road, N., and will start at noon.

Ballroom Dance

The Moonlight Chasse Ballroom Dance Society hosts dance classes with professional instructors at 7 p.m., followed by dancing from 7:30 to 10 p.m. Admission is \$10. There will be a cash bar and no need to bring a partner. Beginners are welcome. Fitzpen Place, 11247 State Highway 31, Spanish Fort. For more information, email Cassie Fishbein at Cassief13@aol.com.

Teen Tech Tutor Program

The Baldwin County Library Cooperative (BCLC) recently implemented a Teen Tech Tutor program at the Robertsdale Library, 18301 Pennsylvania St., Robertsdale. This program is designed to match high school age students with strong technological skills with adults and seniors who are unfamiliar with basic laptop computer technology. The program is available Monday through Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and is free of charge. An appointment is required and can be made by calling the library at 251-970-4010.

February 17

Champion Express Clydesdales

After many years of requesting to have the world famous Express Clydesdales come down and be a part of Mardi Gras, we finally booked them for this year! They are going to be in the Infant Mystics Parade Feb 16th at 7:00 p.m. and then on Feb 17th

we are having a meet and greet with the Clydesdales at Alabama Orthopedic Clinic from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., people can get their pictures taken with the horses and take wagon rides and purchase Clydesdale memorabilia. All donations and proceeds go to Children's Miracle Network. Alabama Orthopedic Clinic is located at 3610 Springhill Memorial Drive N. For more information call 251-476-8210.

Tea for Two

The Fairhope Museum of History will host "Tea for Two" at 2 p.m. The speaker will be Donnie Barrett, Museum Director, will give the history of Mardi Gras as well as information about Mobile's exhibit "The Art & Design of Mardi Gras." Each Tuesday afternoon at 2 p.m., the Museum hosts a 'tea' where guests enjoy a cup of delicious Baldwin County tea, cookies and a lecture on an interesting aspect of Fairhope history. These very popular afternoon events are sponsored by the Friends of the Museum group. For more information on the upcoming "Tea for Two" programs, call the Fairhope Museum of History at 929-1471.

February 18

Church Revival

Join West Side United Methodist Church and Rev. Robert Neil McDavid on Ash Wednesday for a Church Revival. Guest Singer groups will include The Douglas Family and Four Old Hearts. The revival will start at 6 p.m. with refreshments. West Side United Methodist Church is located at 269 Mohawk St. For more information call 251-478-3721.

Bend & Brew

Join Fairhope Brewing every Wednesday night starting at 6 p.m. for Hoppy Yoga. The taproom is transformed into a yoga studio with Soul Shine Yoga leading the session. It's only \$5 to participate in the class and then you can stick around for beer specials as well as light snacks provided by Pretty Mean Sweets. Fairhope Brewing is located at 914 Nichols Ave., Fairhope.

Tour Space 301

Tours of the Main Gallery and Fabrication Hall are every Wednesday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Centre for the Living Arts/Space 301, 301 Conti St. Tours included with the price of admission. Call 251-208-5671 or visit www.centreforthelivingarts.com for more information.

SEND YOUR EVENTS TO EVENTS@LAGNIAPPEMOBILE.COM



2015 MARDI GRAS SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, FEB. 12

1 p.m.
- Order of Impalas (kids)
(St. Ignatius Catholic School)
6:30 p.m. - Mystic Stripers Society
(Mobile, Route A)

FRIDAY, FEB. 13

6:30 p.m.
- Crewe of Columbus (Mobile, Route A)
6:30 p.m.
- Mystical Order of Mirams

(Orange Beach)
6:45 p.m. - Maids of Jubilee (Fairhope)

Noon - Krewe of Goats Parade (Prichard)
Noon - Mystic Revelers (Bay Minette)
2 p.m.
- Krewe of Mullet Mates (Mullet Point)
5:30 p.m. - Mystics of Pleasure (Orange Beach)
6 p.m.
- Mystics of Time (Mobile, Route A)
6:45 p.m. - Shadow Barons (Daphne)

SUNDAY, FEB. 15 (JOE CAIN DAY)

2:29 p.m. - Loyal Order of the Firetruck (Daphne)
2:30 p.m. - Joe Cain Procession (Mobile, Route A)
5 p.m. - Le Krewe de Bienville (Mobile, Route A)

MONDAY, FEB. 16 (LUNDI GRAS)

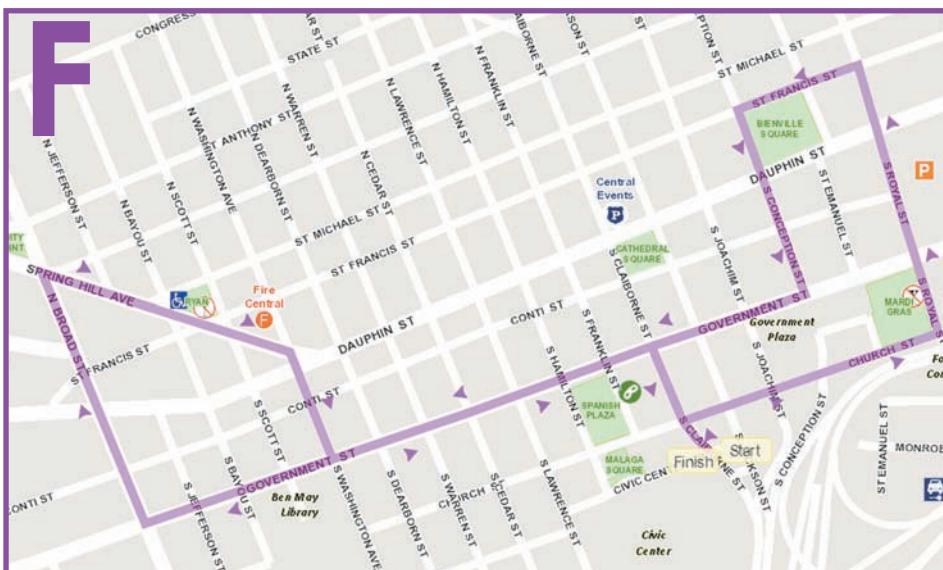
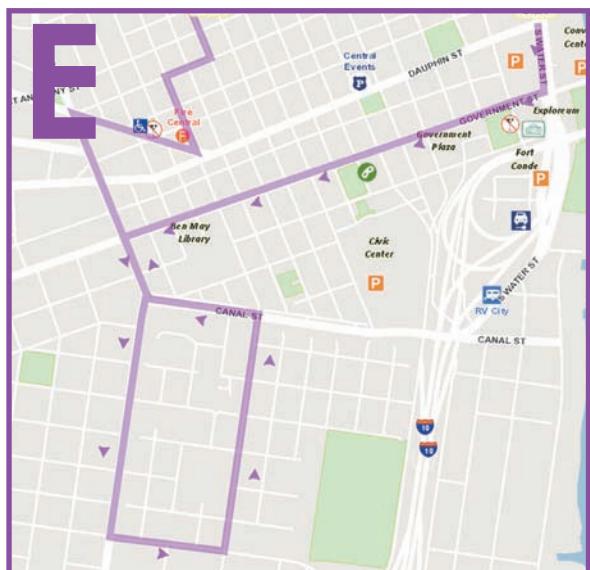
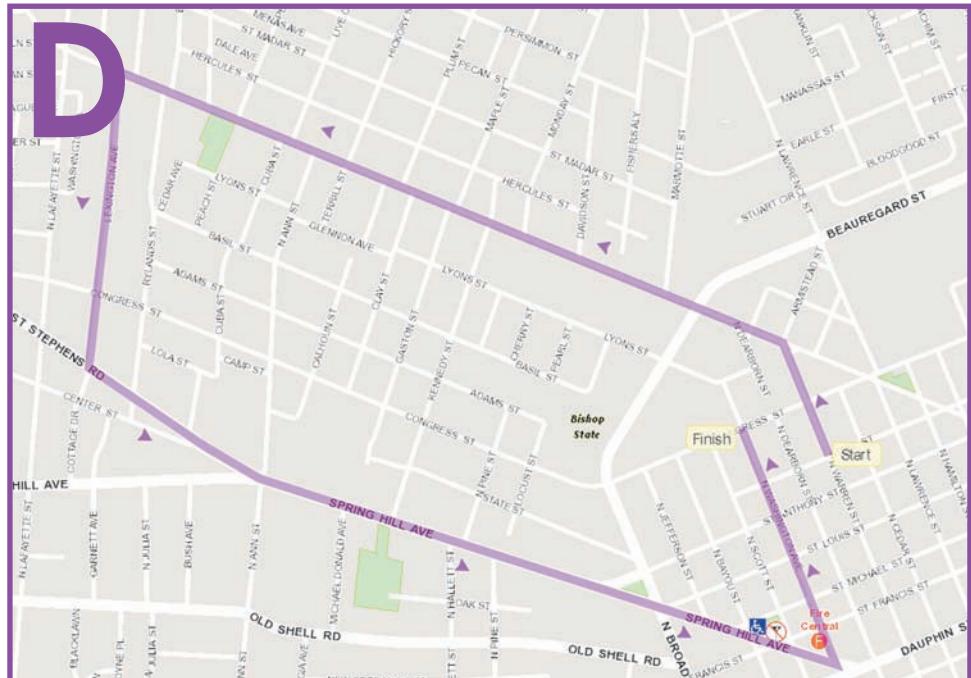
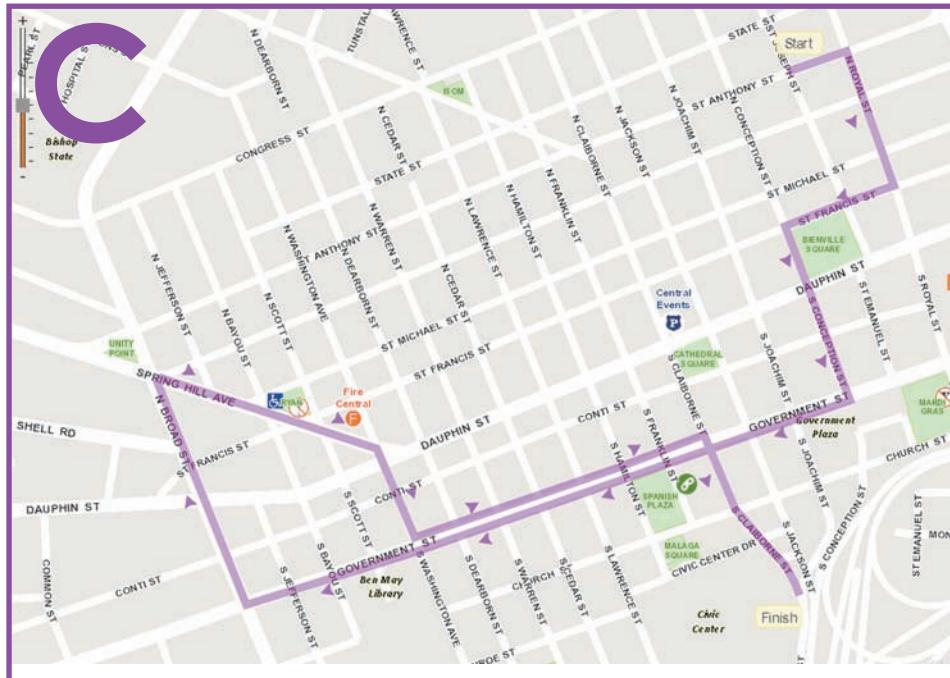
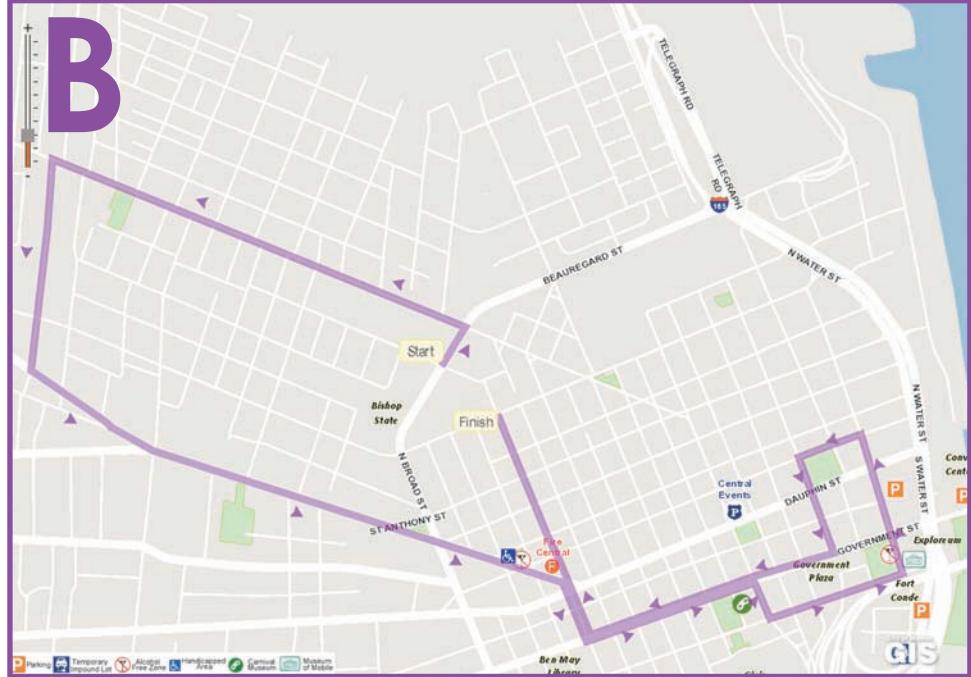
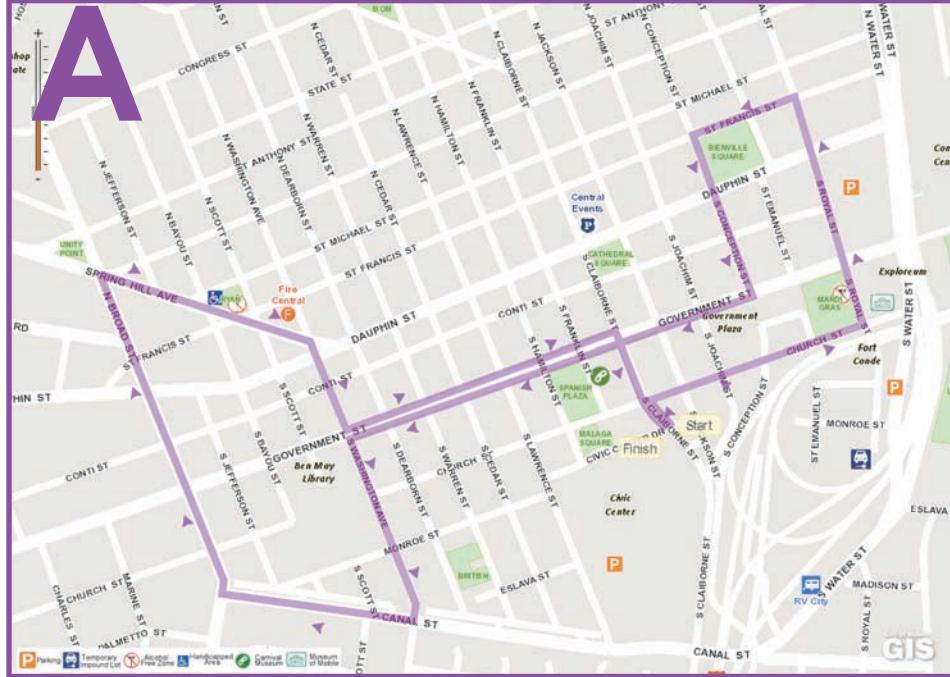
Noon - King Felix III, Floral parade (Mobile, Route A)

1 p.m. - Prichard Mardi Gras Association Parade (Prichard)
3 p.m. - MLK Business and Civic Organization, MLK Monday Mystics, Northside Merchants (Mobile, Route D)
6:45 p.m.
- Order of Mystic Magnolias (Fairhope)
7 p.m. - Infant Mystics, Order of Doves (Mobile, Route F)

TUESDAY, FEB. 1 (FAT TUESDAY)

10 a.m.
- Gulf Shores Mardi Gras

Association (Gulf Shores)
10:30 a.m. - Order of Athena (Mobile, Route A)
12:30 p.m. - Knights of Revelry, King Felix III, Comic Cowboys (Mobile, Route A)
2 p.m. - Orange Beach Parade (Orange Beach)
2 p.m.
- MAMGA Mammoth Parade (Mobile, Route B)
6 p.m.
- Order of Myths (Mobile, Route C)



Mobile Parade Routes
All roll on Route A, unless otherwise specified.



Online fundraising effort helps Mobile boxer compete for U.S. Olympic berth

BY J. MARK BRYANT/SPORTS WRITER | sports@lagniappemobile.com

Alocal boxer used a unique approach to pay for his bid to earn a spot on the U.S. Olympic boxing squad. Keon Burroughs started an online account at www.GoFundMe.com to help cover his expenses to the 2015 Elite Nationals Tournament in Spokane, Washington, in January.

Burroughs, a 21-year-old boxer who has an Alabama Golden Glove title on his résumé, started off well in the 165-pound middleweight division. He defeated Emmanuel Guajardo of Tucson, Arizona, in a 2-1 decision. His next match, though, ended with a 3-0 loss to Christopher Thompson of Flint, Michigan.

The eventual winner was Chordelle Booker of Brooklyn, New York. The Gold Medal secured him a berth in the Olympic trials.

"I didn't make it out of the quarterfinals yesterday," Burroughs wrote on his website. "My coach told me it was one of my best fights, but we'll get back to the drawing board on Monday."

"There [are] still 3 more Olympic qualifying tournaments left this year, but for now we're going to enjoy the finals. God bless and thank you to all that support me!"

Burroughs has been fighting for almost eight years with the Southside Boxing Academy, which is located just off Dauphin Island Parkway at 1580 Tampa Drive. The coaches are John Edwards and John Robinson. For more information on the boxing teams, gym membership and self-defense classes, call 251-229-2152 or visit www.SouthsideBoxingAcademy.net.

Prep teams head to The Hank

The 18th annual BayBears High School Baseball Tournament will feature 24 local squads at Hank Aaron Stadium. The games will take place during the week of Feb. 16.

Officials with the Class AA minor league club point out the tourney gives local prep players a chance to perform at a professional baseball stadium.

"The Mobile BayBears are proud to provide an opportunity for young student athletes to cherish and remember forever," a news release stated.

Six of the high schools will serve as host sites for the initial three days, before play shifts to The Hank. The host sites, with the corresponding participants, include Alma Bryant (Faith, Satsuma, McGill-Toolen), Bayside (Murphy, Robertsdale, Theodore), Gulf Shores (Daphne, Davidson, Foley), St. Luke's (Cottage Hill, Spanish Fort, Vigor), Saraland (Baldwin County, Jackson, Mary G. Montgomery) and UMS-Wright (Baker, Citronelle, Fairhope).

After the schools are finished playing at the host sites, the overall records will be compiled and the teams will be seeded No. 1 through No. 24. The top two seeds will compete for the championship on Monday, Feb. 23, at 5:30 p.m. The other 22 seeds will each play a game at The Hank from Thursday, Feb. 19, through Saturday, Feb. 21.

For a schedule of game times, visit www.MobileBayBears.com or call 251-479-BEAR (2327).

Early recognition for USA

Players for the softball and baseball teams at the University of



Photo/Southside Boxing Academy

Local boxer Keon Burroughs (right) has been fighting for almost eight years.

South Alabama have been recognized going into the 2015 season.

The members of the Lady Jags' softball team have been voted to the All-Sun Belt Conference preseason team. Included are senior pitcher Farish Beard, senior outfielder Blair Johnson and junior outfielder Stephanie Pilkington. USA was picked to finish second in the league, behind defending champion Louisiana-Lafayette.

Beard, from Fairhope, has been named to the Top 50 "watch list" for the Collegiate Player of the Year. She finished last season as a Top 25 finalist, after posting a 1.23 earned run average that ranked sixth in the nation. Johnson was second on the team with 48 hits, while Pilkington hit .292 while leading the Lady Jags in hits and triples.

For the baseball team, seniors Cole Gleason and Kevin Hill were named to the All-SBC preseason squad. Hill led the league in strikeouts per game at 10.17. Gleason is an outfielder who hit .333 with 12 doubles and 33 runs batted in. USA was selected to come in seventh behind last year's winner, Louisiana-Lafayette, in the team poll.

The Jaguars open their season Friday, Feb. 13, when they face New Orleans in the first of a three-game series. The USA women, meanwhile, host Butler, Evansville, Lipscomb and Oklahoma State in the Mardi Gras Invitational starting the same day. For game times, visit www.USAJaguars.com.

Leadership series to feature Bone Collectors

The Outdoor Channel's celebrity spokesperson Michael Waddell and his "Bone Collector" team will be in Mobile on Thursday, Feb. 26, for the 2015 Mobile Leadership Series.

Waddell will be joined by Nick Mundt, Travis "T-Bone" Turner and Edwin Waddell. The event is set for 7 p.m. at The Grounds, located at 1035 Cody Road N. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m.

The night will start with a hunting and outdoor sporting exposition that is set to showcase some of the latest products from local vendors in the outdoor industry. Individual tickets are \$100, and include admission to the expo, dinner catered by Kraver's Seafood Restaurant and the "Bone Collector" speakers. Special VIP meet-and-greet packages are also available.

The "Bone Collector" television show premiered in 2009, and documents the culture of the hunter. It is known for displaying "the brotherhood of sportsmen that have true passion for the game, the land and the lifestyle." The show covers bow, muzzle-loader, shotgun and rifle hunts.

Proceeds will go to support future Mobile Leadership Series speakers and Mobile Christian School. The Mobile Leadership Series said its goal is "to recognize that strong families and strong education are critical to the community." For more information, call 251-661-1649 or visit www.MobileLeadershipSeries.com.

Conservation to be discussed

The Alabama Conservation Advisory Board will conduct its first meeting of 2015 on Saturday, Feb. 28, in Montgomery. The gathering will be at the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries' auditorium at 1445 Federal Drive.

The board assists in formulating policies for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It examines all rules and regulations, and makes recommendations for changes or amendments. This includes hunting seasons and bag limits.

Those wishing to address the board must register from 8 to 8:30 a.m. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m.

The board is comprised of 10 members, including Bill Hatley of Gulf Shores and Dr. Bob Shipp of Mobile. For additional information, call the commissioner's office at 334-242-3486.

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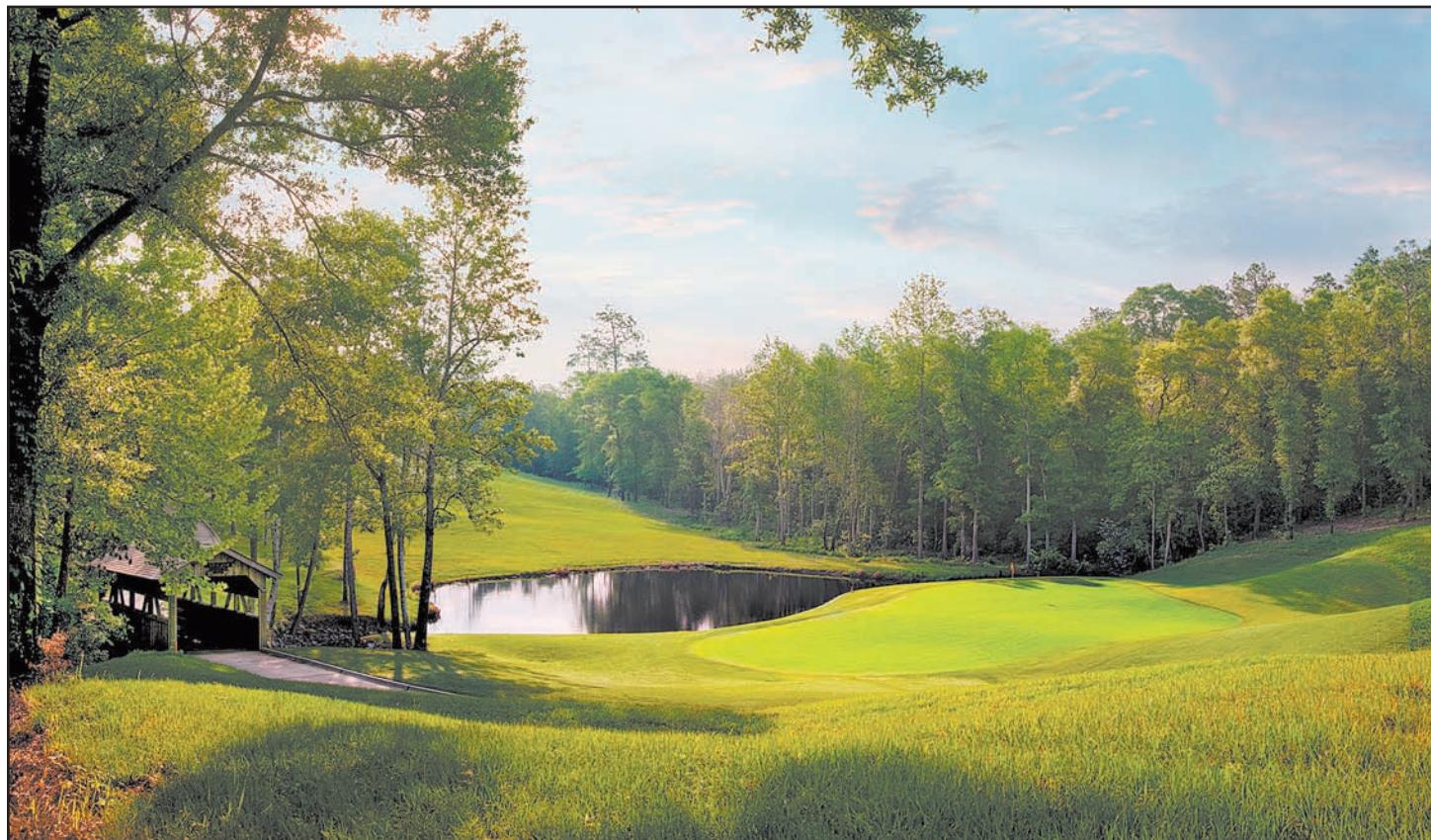
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LPGA not returning to Mobile's Magnolia Grove in 2015 for Airbus Classic

BY J. MARK BRYANT/SPORTS WRITER | sports@agniappemobile.com



 Photos courtesy of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail

Without a title sponsor, the LPGA will not return to Magnolia Grove in 2015.

Ever since the 2015 LPGA tournament schedule was released in November, the future for the annual stop in Mobile has been in question. The answer has finally arrived, and it was a disappointing one for local golf fans.

John Cannon, the chairman of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Foundation, officially confirmed that the event tentatively planned for the Magnolia Grove course will not take place in May.

“Despite efforts on all sides and a tentative date selected, the Airbus LPGA Classic will not be held in 2015,” Cannon confirmed in a news release. “The Crossings Course at RTJ Magnolia Grove in Mobile and other facilities were reserved in preparation for the May event and our team was prepared to make the tournament a success.

“However, without a title sponsor and less than four months to

prepare, hosting this event in 2015 is not possible. We welcome the opportunity to discuss a 2016 LPGA event in Mobile with Airbus or any other potential title sponsors.”

The RTJ Golf Trail will still host one LPGA event this year. Prattville’s Yokahama Tire LPGA Classic is set for August 27-30 at the Capital Hill Golf Club. It was moved from its original September start, in order to avoid conflicts with several college football openers.

A new PGA Tour event is also planned for Alabama’s RTJ Golf Trail. The Barbasol Championship will be played at the Grand National course in Opelika. It will be on July 16-19, the same dates as the British Open.

Jessica Korda captured last year’s tournament title in Mobile. Cannon remains hopeful she and other LPGA stars will display their skills again in the future for local fans.

“Over the years, Mobile has been a great supporter of the LPGA and the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail,” Cannon said. “We appreciate your past support and thank you. The RTJ team would love nothing more than to hold more professional events in Mobile, while showcasing a great city, renowned hospitality and wonderful fans.”

“In the meantime, we welcome the public every day to RTJ Magnolia Grove and its world-class golf courses.”

The entire RTJ Golf Trail has 26 courses at 11 sites across Alabama. The idea of the courses came from Dr. David Bronner, CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama, who wanted to bring visitors and investors to Alabama while making the state a better place to live. In addition to Magnolia Grove, another course is the Lakewood Golf Club at the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort in Point Clear.

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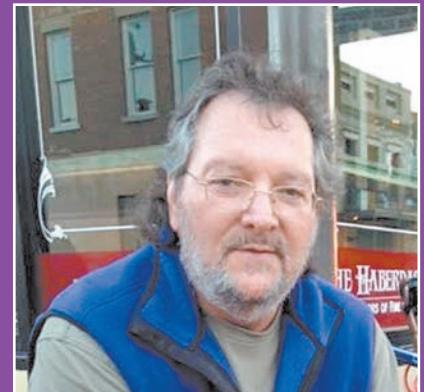
ASKED DOWNTOWN



"Nothing"
-Joshua (right)
"Tears, for what I can't remember and what I am afraid I missed."
-Walter (left)



"My girlfriend wanted to cook me dinner because I always cook, she was trying so hard but she ended up catching the stove on fire. It was bad."
-Jason Condon



"Judge Roy Moore from the Alabama Supreme Court"
-Glynn Wilson

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Pisces: You are too old to go all Madonna

BY DR. ZODIAC/ASTROLOGY GUY | booxie@lagniappemobile.com

Pisces (2/19 - 3/20) — Inspired by Madonna's appearance at the Grammy's, you take your old ass out for a night on the town to prove you've still got "it." Attempting to break the ice with single members of the younger crowd, you find it hard to deflect attention from your knotted up T-shirt, Jordache and LA Gear ensemble. Eventually, you "like, totally" accept a drink offer from a wallflower, but you are immediately called home by the babysitter, who informs you your youngest has pooped the couch.

Aries (3/21 - 4/19) — In an attempt to sympathize with the wrongfully convicted, you confess to a crime you did not commit. Getting to know your cellmate, you discover he's concocted a similar scheme — not for compassionate reasons, but simply to escape his nagging wife. Weeks later, he realizes the error of his ways after the prison's largest and most imposing inmate, Big Moses, insists he become his newest spouse. Turns out he got his nickname because he's been known to part even the strongest of men like the Red Sea.

Taurus (4/20 - 5/20) — Your new diet gets more intense, after a family member finds you passed out in a bowl of mashed potatoes and gravy. From then on, you'll be forced to eat nothing, but raw carrots, raw celery and beef broth. The new dietary restrictions are the newest craze called the annoying French diet. You will spend a solid week on the diet before giving into despair. You'll spend the next week binging on Thin Mints and Tag-Alongs. You never were a good dieter.

Gemini (5/21 - 6/21) — You'll become consumed by the computer-generated antics of the video game. You'll stop eating regularly and, instead, become obsessed with the fake fried onion treats, normally enjoyed by children much younger than yourself. You'll begin to neglect your dog, which only wants, but a small kibble of your affection. You'll also stop showering and instead will begin cleaning yourself by standing naked in your kitchen, slapping yourself with a soapy sponge. On the bright side, your thumbs will become very strong.

Cancer (6/21 - 7/22) — You will decide to part ways with your significant other over the food adultery scandal. That means you'll take a case of Bagel Bites out of the freezer and hit the road. Your lover can have all the oyster on the half-shell, lump crab cakes, beef brisket, signature burgers and schnitzel, all you want is a nice grilled cheese and a glass of chocolate milk. You commit yourself to finding someone who appreciates childhood comfort foods. You'll be moving on.

Leo (7/23 - 8/23) — You've been watching Lifetime movies lately, but don't tell anyone! Dr. Z loves them too, but they're so goofy and cheesy and heavy on Rob Lowe. You'll keep telling yourself "just one more," but the previews for the next one have you setting the recorder. A cameo by Nancy Grace in the latest thriller will be what you need to help break this awful addiction. An old lover gets in touch with you suggesting dinner and drinks. Do it, but excuse yourself after dinner and just leave. Free meal and revenge.

Virgo (8/24 - 9/22) — After hearing Matthew McConaughey drove his Lincoln right up to the

front entrance of the Royal Scam, felt up the owner and demanded a Bread Pudding Scam (Thanks, Nick Cage), you'll start spending more time at the downtown restaurant in hopes of rubbing elbows with other celebs. But to your dismay, you won't be the only one in search of glitz and glamour. Local news stations will surround the building, and you'll be forced into a hostage standoff. Your lucky charms this month are Wrangler jeans, cowboy hats and Marlboro Reds. Alright, alright, alright.

Libra (9/23 - 10/22) — Never one to procrastinate, dear Libra, you're already thinking about what to give up for Lent. Dr. Z suggests you give up marriage. It's just not for you. At least the one you're currently in isn't. Think about the benefits of shacking with people you kind of know, or randomly going home with total strangers. Hey, at least nobody's going to be bitching about the carpet not getting vacuumed. But you may get herpes. It's probably a worthwhile trade. A friend will give you a parrot as a gift. You are then allowed to slash that friend's tires.

Scorpio (10/23 - 11/21) — Things get freaky in your neighborhood when the odd couple across the street start leaving their curtains open at night. Let's just say you'll see a few things that can't be unseen. For instance, she's larger than him, and one night she's carrying him around dressed as a baby and nursing him. Another time they run around the house naked shooting each other with Nerf guns. On the plus side, you can cancel cable. Give an old friend a call. In two minutes you'll remember why you haven't called in a while.

Sagittarius (11/21 - 12/22) — After camping out in front of the Mobile County Probate Courthouse for several days to support friends of yours who have chosen an "alternate lifestyle," you'll abandon all hope of continuing your diet when the cravings start to creep up on you. What begins with a Snickers bar from the machines in the lobby eventually develops into regular trips the Mardi Gras vendors for chicken sticks, cheese fries, and of course, deep fried Oreos. While others celebrate an overdue equality, you'll mourn the loss of several of your favorite pairs of jeans.

Capricorn (12/22 - 1/19) — You'll be overserved this weekend, but somehow keep it together for the first time in a while. You won't call your exes with hopeful desperation, you won't foolishly choose to drive home at 3 a.m. and you will certainly not remove your pants at Cathedral Square. Even the terrible, yet unintended, consequences of mixing clear and dark liquors will somehow pass right by you this Saturday evening. Yes, all together the stars suggest you're in for a weekend free from partial nudity, jail and regret.

Aquarius (1/20 - 2/18) — As an Alabamian, you're treated like a foreigner at a meet-and-greet opening at a national professional development conference. "What's that like?" They ask, genuinely curious about your natural Southernness. Rather than serve as a welcoming ambassador, you choose to reinforce their biases and regale them with tales of Waffle Houses, Dollar Generals, football, Jesus and the use of incest to instill family values. The networking was successful, but going forward, you resolve to contact them using only snail mail.



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FROM PAGE 48



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BOEM Announces Public Meetings for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales 241 and 247 in the Central Planning Area and Proposed Lease Sale 226 in the Eastern Planning Area of the Gulf of Mexico

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) will hold public meetings in Louisiana, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. These meetings will provide BOEM an opportunity to solicit comments from Federal, State, and Tribal governments and from interested citizens and organizations. Comments will be used to prepare the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas Lease Sales 241 and 247 in the Central Planning Area and proposed Lease Sale 226 in the Eastern Planning Area (EPA) off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The proposed CPA and EPA lease sales are a part of the current 2012-2017 Five-Year Program.

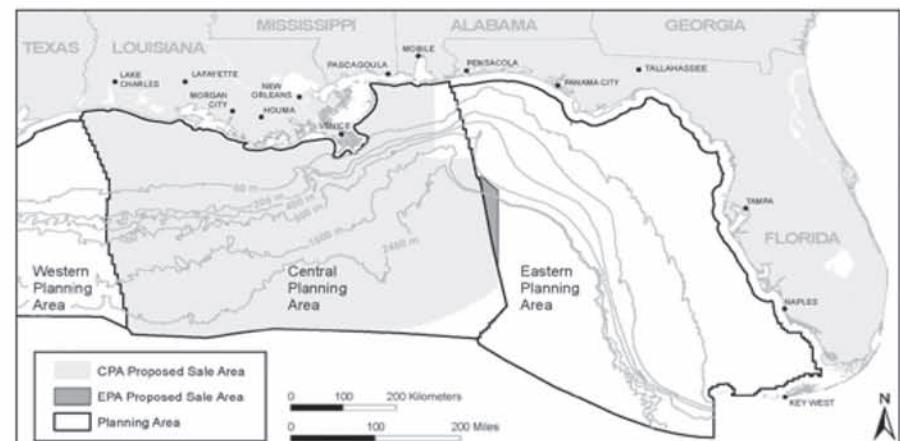
The public meetings are scheduled as follows:

New Orleans, Louisiana: Monday, February 23, 2015, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123, one meeting beginning at 1:00 p.m. CST;

Panama City, Florida: Tuesday, February 24, 2015, Wyndham Bay Point Resort, 4114 Jan Cooley Drive, Panama City Beach, Florida, 32408, one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST;

Mobile, Alabama: Wednesday, February 25, 2015, Hilton Garden Inn Mobile West, 828 West I-65 Service Road South, Mobile, Alabama 36609, one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST; and

Gulfport, Mississippi: Thursday, February 26, 2015, Courtyard by Marriott, Gulfport Beachfront, 1600 East Beach Boulevard, Gulfport, Mississippi 39501, one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST.



If you cannot attend the public meetings for the Draft Supplemental EIS for proposed CPA Lease Sales 241 and 247 and proposed EPA Lease Sale 226, you may submit written comments within 45 days following the publication date of the Notice of Availability of the CPA 241 and 247 and, EPA 226 Draft Supplemental EIS in the *Federal Register* in one of the following ways:

1. In an envelope labeled "Comments on the Draft CPA 241/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS" and mailed (or hand delivered) to Mr. Gary D. Goeke, Chief, Environmental Assessment Section, Office of Environment (GM 623E), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394;
2. Through the regulations.gov web portal: Navigate to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for "Oil and Gas Lease Sales: Gulf of Mexico, Outer Continental Shelf; Central Planning Area Lease Sales 241 and 247 and, Eastern Planning Area Lease Sale 226". (Note: It is important to include the quotation marks in your search terms.) Click on the "Comment Now!" button to the right of the document link. Enter your information and comment, then click "Submit"; or
3. BOEM email address: cpa241-epa226@boem.gov.

If you have questions, please call Mr. Gary D. Goeke at 504-736-3233.



Alright, alright, alright, it's the McConau-gras

BY BOOZIE BEER NUES/SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

f Mardi Gras wasn't enough to keep this gossip gal busy, there have also been celebrity sightings and people riding around on motorcycles naked. Oh yes, this is the most wonderful time of the year. And I have so much, we need to just get right on into it. So go ahead and dig in!

Alright, Alright, Alright

The biggest news to come across Boozie's gossip wire in quite some time was that the oh-so-dreamy and Oscar-award winning actor Matthew McConaughey was apparently in town on the evening of Monday, Feb. 9. According to our Royal Street spies, he went into the Royal Scam and had a Ketel One vodka and tonic. The spies confirmed he was "even more beautiful in person," and he was kind of "scruffy" looking — but in a good way — and was also carrying a giant buck knife on his jeans, which seems kind of weird but "he is a Southern boy," as my spy reminded.

He can really do no wrong, except for those overdramatic Lincoln commercials, which actually bring me so much joy and laughter (unintentionally I am sure), I can't even fault him for those.

Bruce Willis did start filming a new movie in town the same day, but there had been no mention of McConaughey being a part of it. And he told our spies at the Scam, he was "just passing through," so we don't really know the why but he is welcome here anytime. We hear the glass he drank out of will be placed in the History Museum of Mobile for viewing. OK, not really. But perhaps you may be lucky enough to drink out of the same exact one if you knock enough Ketel One and tonics back at the Scam yourself. I am sure many of you are willing to give it a try!

Pop up Prancing

On Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 92Zew's "Beer, Bands and Bingo" at Moe's Original Barbecue downtown, my spies said they were treated to a surprise performance by the Prancing Elites, as they were filming for an episode of their upcoming reality TV series "The Prancing Elite Project" for the Oxygen Network. You can see the trailer for it on oxygen.com. My spy said the place was packed and went crazy when they came in and started their routine. "It was off the hook and a little surreal," one spy said. They

also hung around after the performance for pics and autographs. Gotta love the Elites!

Eat my short-ribs!

Speaking of Moe's, they got a mention on the long-running, hit animated FOX series, "The Simpsons." Moe, the bartender comes into what appears to be a city meeting of some sort and tells the audience about Moe's BBQ and that it's even in Tuscaloosa, Ala. (one of their locations). He is wearing a sign that says, "This is a real place" and then there is a trio who sings about it. We have no word on what the connection is or how that happened, but it's pretty cool! I'm sure Homer is a fan of their ribs.

All kinds of characters prancing around LoDa, OGD

Last Tuesday night, Feb. 3, the same night the Prancing Elites were popping up downtown, we hear they were joined by Pirates, Indians, Mistresses and Skeletons, as various members of the Joe Cain Marching Society held their annual pub crawl. A brass band accompanied the group and definitely had some folks from out of town wondering what in the world was going on. One visitor from France was greeted by one of the Indians of the Wild Mauvillians and given one of their highly coveted, signature oyster shell necklaces. Just another glorious night in the Port City, folks!

We also hear the following Sunday, Feb. 8, the Mauvillians were spotted parading from Callaghans to Joe Cain's house in the OGD. A toast was given to Joe Cain and traditional songs were sung. We even hear one little cowboy was chasing after them, though we did confirm no one was injured.

Osiris ball is out of this world

My spy from the first all-inclusive Mardi Gras society, The Order of Osiris, filed the following report from their ball last weekend:

On Friday, Feb. 6, 2015 the Order of Osiris had guests looking towards the stars as they took "A Journey Through Space." The crowd was welcomed by emcee Darwin Singleton who happily welcomed "husbands and wives, husbands and husbands, and wives and wives" to the ball, as many in the crowd were obviously thrilled with the recent ruling that same sex couples would soon be able to marry in Alabama.

King Howard and King Mel opened the ball for guests and both regally walked around the main dance floor to greet them. No one in the crowd can say these two kings were anything but festive as they were seen during the tableaux dancing and partying with the other members, even engaging in a line dance with "Marvin the Martian" towards the end of the show!

The kings were followed by the emblems of the organization who brought the crowd to its feet! From the beginning of Horus' "Age of Aquarius" (which is one of this spy's favorite songs) to a saucy Isis that had both men and women gazing at her, to the titular Osiris whose dancing and breathtaking costume had the crowd awed, it could be seen that the members of this famous dysfunctional family had come to party, and party they did.

After the emblems guests were treated to a magical journey through space beginning with Luke Skywalker saving Princess Leia who was aptly first seen crouched before an exaggerated R2D2 pleading "Help Me Obi Wan Kenobi, you're my only hope!" Perfection!

In a tableaux riddled with upbeat music, dancing and a sensational light show guests were treated to Elton John spinning in the dance floor, Aliens from Area 51 donning serapes and sombreros and being chased by border patrol off stage, astronauts defying gravity, Saturn "putting a ring on it" and the Jetsons complete with their beloved robot maid Rosie, to name but a few. The journey ended with the ball captain, Princess Leia, proudly crowning new monarchs King Judson the 34th and King Peter the 34th.

Guests stayed and partied with the members until the ball closed for a fantastic evening!

The art of motorcycle MAN-tenance

On Sunday night, Feb. 8, a 60-year-old man took off his clothes some time after midnight and rode around downtown on his motorcycle. We hear some folks at Veet's were able to get photos and videos, though I am not sure why they would want to. Ewwwww!

Well kids, we're in the homestretch now. Rest up because it's going to full on from the MOTs to the OOMs. I can't wait! Just remember, whether rain or shine, dramatic or scandalous or some plain ol' McConaughey lovin', I will be there. Ciao!

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