JULY 10, 2014

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Tuscaloosan gets state labor post

Fitzgerald Washington to succeed veteran Tom Surtees

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

Tuscaloosa business and community leader Fitzgerald Washington was named Alabama labor commissioner Wednesday by Gov. Robert Bentley.

Washington's appointment is effective Aug. 4. He succeeds Tom Surtees, who announced his retirement June 24 after serving in the gubernatorial cabinets of both Bentley and Bob Riley.

Bentley, in announcing the appointment of his fellow Tuscaloosan, said in a statement that "Fitzgerald Washington has a strong business background with a wealth of knowledge and experience and is uniquely qualified to serve as labor commissioner. I am honored he is joining us to lead this important state agency.

"Fitzgerald will play a fundamental role as we work to provide See Post | 4A
The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, July 10, 2014

POST

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employment opportunities for Alabamians looking for a job. I appreciate his willingness to serve in my administration, and I know he will be an honest and dedicated labor commissioner.”

Washington said in a phone interview Wednesday afternoon that he has “a boots-on-the-ground philosophy” and plans to be a frequent visitor at the state’s 45 career centers “to talk to Alabamians about the centers’ programs to make sure their needs are being met, whether it is job training or retraining.”

He said the labor department’s history has been one of helping people find jobs and prepare for jobs in the new and expanding industries.

Dozens of new industries are coming to the state, he said, so the state must make sure Alabamians have the skills and training needed for success.

The Alabama Department of Labor has about 1,000 employees. About half of them work in the career centers, and about half work out of Montgomery.

The department administers unemployment compensation, employment services and workers compensation. It also gathers labor market information and is responsible for inspecting mines, boilers and elevators and assuring their safe operation.

Washington said he shares the governor’s goal of job creation and making sure Alabama reaches full employment.

In April, Washington was one of Bentley’s first appointees to the new Alabama Workforce Council, a group of business and industry leaders who advise the chancellor of the state’s two-year colleges and the state superintendent of education on policies and programs affecting workforce development.

Earlier, Bentley had nominated Washington as a trustee for Alabama State University in Montgomery. The state Senate’s confirmations committee, however, blocked the nomination from going to the full Senate for a vote in early April after some Democratic senators with ties to ASU threatened to shut down the Senate if the nomination advanced.

Washington is well-known in the Tuscaloosa business community. He served as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama in 2013 and in 2012. He led efforts to start the chamber’s Minority Business Council, which works to foster growth and competitiveness of minority-owned businesses in West Alabama.

Washington has worked for the Buffalo Rock Co., a Pepsi bottler and distributor, for 15 years. He started there as its human resource coordinator in 1999 and then handled the Birmingham-based company’s multicultural marketing initiatives in the three states where it has operations — Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

He returned to Tuscaloosa in 2002 after being promoted to Buffalo Rock’s general sales manager with responsibility for maximizing brand portfolio for the company’s retail sector.

During his career, Washington also developed a hiring and retention process for the company’s Tuscaloosa distribution center.

He also has handled human resource management, marketing strategies, operations management and strategic development.

Washington was born and raised in Tuscaloosa. He is a graduate of Druid High School and earned a management and supervision degree in 1987 from Shelton State Community College, and he worked in a variety of sales and senior management positions before joining Buffalo Rock in 1999.

He and his wife, Peggy, have a daughter, Carla, and a son, Fitzgerald.

In addition to his service with the Chamber of Commerce, Washington also has been active with the Druid City Business League, Black Warrior Council of the Boy Scouts, BB&T Bank advisory board, the board of visitors for the University of Alabama College of Continuing Studies and the DCH Health Systems Foundation board of directors.

He also has served on the Shelton State Community College board and as the Stillman College UNCF chairman from 2006 to 2008.

Washington, a graduate of Leadership Tuscaloosa, was recognized as a notable alumnus of Shelton State Community College and as a Mover and Shaper by Business Alabama Spotlight on Tuscaloosa County in 2013.
Lee Garrison: I'm serving one term:

Tuscaloosa City BOE chairman says the next four years are critical for the system's future

By: Jamon Smith

Lee Garrison, a former Tuscaloosa city councilman whom city voters elected chairman of the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education in August, says he is through with politics.

Garrison has said several times during recent school board and committee meetings that his four-year term is the “first and only” time he will serve on the school board.

When asked about his remarks, Garrison said he never intended to run for more than one term as board chairman and that he hadn’t planned to run last year because he was ready to step out of the political limelight.

He said he changed his mind in 2013 when he realized some important education issues were in the pipeline during the next four years and that he wanted them to succeed.

“I intended to run and serve one term,” Garrison said. “I believe this is the most important four years out of the next 30 years of our school system with the tax referendum and the demographic study.

“This takes a lot of energy, and I’m going to give that, but I’ve been in public service for 16 and a half years and it’ll be 20 years by the end of this term. That’s almost half my life. I’m 39 now. I’ve enjoyed serving the community, but I want to give my church, my family and my work 100 percent of my time for however long the good Lord allows me to be here.”

Garrison was elected to the school board Aug. 27 after an extremely close, arduous and expensive race. He previously served on the Tuscaloosa City Council for 16 years but decided not to run for re-election so he could seek the school board chairmanship.

Garrison said being on the school board is a tough job.

“It’s totally different work than the City Council,” he said. “You’re dealing with people’s children in this job, and there’s nothing more important to people. It’s definitely a challenging job, but it’s rewarding as well. It’s a lot of time. There’s a lot to read and a lot to understand.
"There is a learning curve to it. ... I would say that I did not fully understand the amount of information we have to digest in a short amount of time in order to feel confident enough to vote on it. It's such a short window, and that's sometimes very stressful. We get the information Friday, and we vote on it Tuesday."

Though some people assumed Garrison's election to the school board chairmanship was a move to climb further up the political ladder, he said he planned to end his political career upon the completion of his fourth term on the City Council.

"I was going to the house (home) before this," he said. "Then I saw that this referendum was coming up and the concerns about the school system, and I believed I could take it to the next level."

Garrison has publicly expressed concern about the 2016 referendum to renew the 6-mill ad valorem tax for school construction.

In a joint meeting of the school board and City Council on Jan. 31, 2013, Garrison said he was in favor of renewing the tax because he believed it to be critical to the sustainability of the city schools as well as Tuscaloosa's city and county governments.

On Wednesday, he reiterated that support.

"I want a successful referendum with the entire community's support on renewing the property tax that the referendum is," he said. "(The referendum provides)

$12.5 million to our (city school) system annually, which pays for 180 teacher units locally. That's almost

25 percent of our teacher units.

"That's a key piece of information our voters need to know. Also, they need to know that it's a renewal, not a tax increase."
Since he was sworn in on Nov. 4, Garrison said he believes that he’s gotten a good grasp of what his role is and what the system’s needs are.

Though his transition from the City Council to the school board hasn’t been easy, Garrison said he’s optimistic about the future.

“Yeah, it’s long nights, but I signed up for it. I’ll give it all I got. But this will be one term. This takes a lot out of you — time, energy and emotion.”
NEW BOARD CHAIRMAN

Birmingham-Southern College's board of trustees has elected a new chairman to help guide the elite liberal arts school.

Birmingham-Southern alumnus and lawyer Bruce Rogers will lead the board, the college announced. Rogers is a partner at the law firm of Bainbridge, Mims, Rogers & Smith LLP in Birmingham.

He is a 1980 graduate of Birmingham-Southern and earned his law degree at Vanderbilt University in 1983.

Rogers has been a member of the board of trustees for 12 years. He succeeds Wayne Killian Jr., who has served as chairman since 2011.

Rogers' role — along with other board members and BSC's president, Gen. Charles Krulak — will be to ensure that the college continues to thrive while maintaining its premier academic standing, Birmingham-Southern said in a statement.

"I am so grateful to have received the highest-quality education here," Rogers said in a statement. "This board works closely with the president on behalf of the most committed faculty, staff, students and alumni — all in service of our college."

Evan Belanger
Venita King saw her brother wooed as a college football recruit while growing up and that strategy stuck in her mind.

Now as the assistant vice president of enrollment management and director of admissions, King is taking that approach to help attract students to Alabama A&M University.

As university officials expressed cautious optimism last week about upping enrollment in the fall, King recalled her brother, Michael Cisby, playing football at Alabama A&M as a teammate of future Pro Football Hall of Famer John Stallworth.

"I remember how the coaches treated him," King said. "They visited our home. They stayed connected with him. They got to know the people who knew him.

"We thought we have to change our approach as well."

The result has been statewide bus tours the past two years with President Andrew Hugine Jr. as well as what King described as a more aggressive approach in north Alabama high schools.

Alabama A&M has also adopted a new marketing slogan: "Start here, go anywhere." And at last week's board of trustees meeting, officials unveiled a new marketing video.

"We have to take the university to the community more to give them a better view of who we are and what we have to offer," King said. "We also have gone out and talked to schools locally. We wanted to enhance our presence and the opinion of Alabama A&M in north Alabama.

"I charged my recruiters that I want to blanket north Alabama, I want to blanket Madison County, I want to re-introduce our university. When we adopted the slogan, 'Start here, go anywhere,' I think that is the thing that started skyrocketing the approach we're retaking as opposed to that normal approach we had been."

Alabama A&M is looking for a second straight year of increases in enrollment after having a preliminary fall enrollment of 5,024 last year. The university has seen an increase of 224 enrollment fees paid to date over last year, and orientation participation has seen a spike of 233 students to date over last year.

"Our expectations are that we're going to bring in a solid class," King said. "Our numbers should improve."

"We wanted to enhance our presence and the opinion of Alabama A&M in north Alabama."

Venita King, director of admissions at Alabama A&M University
Auctioning Bryant's historic hats

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

When Joanie Baer walked into the community thrift shop in Bluffton, S.C., earlier this year, the staff couldn't believe what she donated.

Baer, the ex-wife of actor Max Baer, who is known best from his character Jethro on the television show "The Beverly Hillbillies," plopped down two hats once owned by University of Alabama football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant.

The hats, a herringbone tweed and a houndstooth, are now available for purchase through auction with a $500 reserve. To view the auction or place a bid, go to www.leland.com and search lots "946" and "947."

Joanne said the hats were given to Max in the 1960s by Bryant when the couple were guests of the legendary coach on vacation at Point Clear.

"Everyone loved the character Jethro that Max played, especially Southerners. Paul 'Bear' Bryant was definitely a southerner," Joanne said. "He invited us down to Point Clear, Alabama, in 1966 or 1967. He and Max would play golf together. Max liked to wear hats like this, and I liked to wear hats, too. (Bryant) gave them or sent them to (Max).

Legendary Alabama football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant leans against the goalpost donning one of his signature hats. Two of the late Crimson Tide coach's hats are now available through auction.

OWN A PIECE OF HISTORY

- Description: A herringbone tweed hat (right) and a houndstooth hat (top).
- History: Owner Joanie Baer said the hats were given to her ex-husband, Max, in the 1960s and may have been worn by Bryant.
- How to get them: The hats are available for purchase through auction with a $500 reserve. To bid, go to www.leland.com and search lots "946" and "947."

I don't know if he wore them, or if he just had a whole bunch of them and gave one or two to Max.

"When I moved I had a whole bunch of hats and they happened to be in there with all the rest of them. That's how I happened to have them. We would go to Point Clear, Alabama, and play golf with (Bryant), and he entertained us down there."

She said she never thought of attempting to sell them for profit, and instead donated them to God's Good Thrift Store, which receives all of the proceeds generated by the auction.

"I didn't care about the money," Joanne said. "I'm too old to care about any of that kind of stuff. As I was packing up to move, I had a lot of stuff, and I know they have a men's section, so that's why I gave them."

The hats have been worn, although Joanne is unclear if Bryant actually wore them.

"He always wore a hat, so I wouldn't be surprised if he wore these."
Court’s Hobby Lobby ruling ‘not a shock’

SUPREME COURT: ALABAMA LAW PROFESSOR DISCUSSES RULING.

Carol McPhail  mcphall@al.com

As soon as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Hobby Lobby, observers began to analyze the 5-4 decision. AL.com reached out to Paul Horwitz, professor of law at the University of Alabama School of Law, for a quick explainer. Horwitz teaches law and religion, constitutional law and legal profession.

Here are his thoughts:

Q: Is this ruling a surprise?
  The ruling was not a surprise. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) is a powerful statute, passed by an overwhelming majority of Congress and strongly worded to place a thumb on the side of government accommodation of religion.

The underlying issues may have been controversial, and there were some difficult issues involved. The statute requires much more than a mere balancing of interests. It puts the government to a high burden of justification. Given that the government failed to accommodate other employers, the outcome here was not a shock.

Q: What’s the upshot? How would you explain the ruling to the average citizen?
  The Court held that the owners of closely held corporations — not necessarily all corporations, but those corporations in which there is substantial identity between a small set of owners and the company — have a sincere objection to providing coverage for particular contraceptive services, no matter what objections they might have to them, rather than either regulating insurers more directly or subsidizing and providing health care services itself under a single-payer model.

Q: Is the ruling a victory for religious freedom in the workplace?
  It would be a misnomer to call it a victory for religious freedom in the workplace, even if — as I tend to — you think the majority reached the right decision.

Many supporters of the government’s position argued strenuously and not without reason, that an exemption for employers in this case would necessarily involve imposing a burden on the provision of reproductive health care for female employees, which might well be a burden on their own religious views.

Remember, though, that the crux of the majority’s ruling is that the government has already shown that it is possible to accommodate the employers’ objections while still providing full access to these services for female employees.

Whether that turns out to be as easy as the Court suggests is something we’ll have to wait and see; but if it’s right, then it ought to be possible to recognize that there are genuine and sincere objections on the part of some employers to being conscripted into directly subsidizing services they believe to be strongly objectionable on religious grounds — without depriving women in the workplace of access to health care services that they, also sincerely, believe are vital to their own personal and religious choices.
UA professor honored for his work in Ecuador

New species of tree named after botanist

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Colleagues of University of Alabama botanist John Clark have honored him a few times by naming new plant species after him, but the latest carries additional significance.

Prominent botanist Scott Mori named the tree found in western Ecuador the Gustavia johnclarkii after Clark, an assistant biology professor at UA and a curator and director at the University of Alabama Herbarium. Clark collected plant samples during a trip to the rain forest in the mid-1990s and has made frequent trips to the region.

"In the past, my role has been to help document biodiversity. I dispersed the information to lots of institutions," Clark said.

Mori, in the fall 2013 article describing the tree, said the honor was for Clark's contributions and noted Clark was one of the first to collect specimens in the area. The honor is special because of the recognition.

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PROFESSOR

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by Mori and the tree's ties to Clark's past.

"That was particularly an honor," Clark said, comparing Mori to famed entomologist Edward O. Wilson.

"Scott Mori is that person for botany. He is a living legend," Clark said.

Clark began studying the trees as a Peace Corps volunteer after college.

"It is a species that I climbed a lot," he said.

Clark studied forestry and natural resources in college. It was a skill set the Peace Corps was looking for in recruits. He was originally scheduled to travel to Nepal, but plans were changed to Ecuador because he had lived in the southern region of the country as an exchange student and could speak Spanish. The Peace Corps trip nearly 20 years ago took him to West Ecuador, where he eventually took over the task of outreach and education and promoting biodiversity in the local communities. He also worked with the national herbarium of Ecuador.

"The area where it came from inspired me to study tropical plants and biodiversity," Clark said.

On a recent trip with UA students, Clark estimated the group found as many as five new species, possibly 10. Clark takes a group of UA students to Ecuador every other summer for a field biology course.

"That's what's so exciting working in this area," he said.

But Clark said the area is also critically endangered.

"It is through the process of documenting biodiversity that we understand the significance," he said.

Clark's passion for field work had its roots in a childhood in the outdoors of Maine.

That experience and exploring and foraging developed into an interest in identifying local plants that turned into the evolution of plants.

"I like being outside. What really drew me to nature was recognizing the diversity around me," he said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Former Alabama receiver Tyrone Prothro getting a helping hand with bills from fans

By: Jason Morton

On Sept. 10, 2005, a fourth-down pass thrown into the Tuscaloosa air came down to forever etch the name Tyrone Prothro into the memories of Crimson Tide football fans.

It was near the end of the second quarter against the University of Southern Mississippi when the explosive wide receiver went up, wrapped his arms around Golden Eagles cornerback Jasper Faulk and caught quarterback Brodie Croyle's 42-yard pass behind the helmet of the defender.

Faulk and Prothro landed together at about the 2-yard-line and, tumbling together headlong into the end zone, Prothro's grip on the football never ceased. Now known simply as "The Catch," the play is considered one of the greatest receptions in the history of the game.

But 21 days later, another fourth-down pass sailed through the Tuscaloosa sky and came down to shatter a dream.

With Alabama leading 31-3 over the Urban Meyer-coached University of Florida, then ranked No. 5 in the nation, Prothro again leaped into the air to snag a Croyle pass in the end zone.

But a bump from the defender knocked him slightly off balance, and the explosive star that had become an offensive favorite for a weary and beleaguered fan base fell to the ground with a horrific ankle injury that forced many to turn away from their televisions.

Inside Bryant-Denny Stadium, where fans had grown as loud as longtime fans could remember, the crowd fell into a hush. The silence was haunting.

He sustained a double compound fracture and the football career of Tyrone Prothro was over.

Giving back

Prothro, now 30, has found happiness in fatherhood through his 8-month-old son, London Tyree, and in a budding career with the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. on McFarland Boulevard.

But through the quirks of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's rules governing student-athletes, Prothro has been unable to earn a steady income from the indelible images he left upon the college football landscape.

This led to the revelation last month, while testifying in an antitrust trial against the NCAA brought by former UCLA basketball player Ed O'Bannon over the use of college athletes' names, images and likenesses, that he was about $10,000 in debt with student loans procured during his time as a University of Alabama student.

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Prothro's calm and positive demeanor captivated the court, said attorney Chris Hellums of Birmingham-based, Pittman, Dutton & Hellums, who represented Prothro in the case.

Hellums said Prothro's participation in the lawsuit was for not only himself, but to help future athletes profit from and have some control over his or her own likeness and image.

"What is most remarkable about Tyrone, both as a person and a client, is his humility and his positive outlook," Hellums said. "I believe this is what made him such a compelling witness at trial and what has endeared him to Alabama fans everywhere."

And that's what led Shannon Riley, the founder and CEO of One Stop Environmental, a waste and hazardous material removal company in Birmingham, stepped in to set up a fund to assist the former Crimson Tide star to alleviate these debts.

"I wanted to help him be able to leave school without any of that debt hanging over him," Riley said of Prothro, who graduated in August 2008 with a bachelor's degree in human environmental sciences.

She said One Stop Environmental would match the contributions up to $5,000 in order to ensure his loan debt is covered.

Any donations above that likely would be directed toward Prothro's future medical expenses. The double compound fracture he sustained on the field has resulted in 10 surgeries, the last of which — in July 2010 — was the final one the University of Alabama said it would cover.

On Thursday, Riley said there have been some inquiries made to her on how to contribute, but she was unsure of an exact total. But she said it was rewarding to know Prothro still holds a place in the hearts of Alabama and college football fans.

"It's certainly been fun and exciting to see how many people thought highly of him and enjoyed him as an athlete, just like I did," she said.

**Thinking back, looking forward**

Prothro said he harbors no ill-will against the university and has no regrets about his playing days at Alabama.

But Prothro takes particular issue with anyone — fan, commentator or otherwise — who questions then-coach Mike Shula's decision to have him on the field when the game's outcome was most certainly decided.

Prothro's injury came with less than nine minutes left to play in the game, but he said most people were not aware of all the full situation at the time.
"That was the starting offense's last play of the game," Prothro said on Thursday in an interview with The Tuscaloosa News. "We called timeout before the play ... and that one play, that was our last play of the game."

The plan was to heave the ball toward the end zone on fourth down and "if we get it, it's icing on the cake," Prothro said. "If don't we don't, then they have to come out and play at least one more series with our starting defense."

Prothro places no blame on Shula's decision and is reluctant to even blame the Florida defender who bumped him during that fateful play.

Rather, he takes solace in the idea there is a larger reason — maybe not one he or anyone else can see or understand right now — for what happened to him and is hopeful his son can eclipse the talents he once displayed at the Capstone and, before that, at Cleburne County High School in Heflin.

"You can never question God's will, and I believe things truly do happen for a reason," Prothro said. "I'd hoped to achieve more and accomplished more, but I still appreciate all the love I get from the fans to this day. People still remember me, to this day, and that was 10 years ago.

"At this point, I'm just living everyday life and enjoying life and enjoying my son growing up. Hopefully, he'll be better than me."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.

**Prothro Fund**

To assist former Crimson Tide star and new father Tyrone Prothro pay off his estimated $10,000 in student loans, contributors can send checks made out to the "Tyrone Prothro Student Loan Fund" directly to One Stop Environmental at 4800 Division Ave., Birmingham, AL 35222, or they can be dropped off at any location of Regions Bank.

Any amount over the $10,000 is expected to be used for Prothro's future medical needs. The injury he sustained on Oct. 1, 2005, has led to 10 surgeries and the University of Alabama has informed the former athlete that it will not pay for anymore.
Birmingham is getting its annual influx of highly educated young medical pros. How do we keep them?

BY ALAN ALEXANDER
salexander@bizjournals.com
205-443-5905. @WennieHealthTech

On a recent Monday afternoon, a critical piece of Birmingham’s future gathered at Avondale Brewing Co. for drinks. But it wasn’t a meeting of corporate powerbrokers or public officials.
— It was a group of many new Birmingham residents, in more ways than one. That’s where Cody DUCKETT and the other incoming medical residents for Baptist Health System gathered for a introductory mixer. If Birmingham wants to keep its positive momentum, reverse its traditionally modest growth and move into the upper echelon of Southern metros, it needs to hold on to people like DUCKETT — who recently arrived in Birmingham after graduating from the Medical College of Georgia-Augusta.

Birmingham is in a constant battle to keep highly educated young professionals like him in town. It’s a battle the metro has often lost over the years to cities like Nashville, Atlanta, Austin and others.

But the annual influx of new medical residents to Baptist, the University of Alabama at Birmingham and other local hospitals that will take place over the next few weeks gives the Magic City a chance to hook a coveted group of highly educated individuals with tremendous earning potential.

The stakes are high. The metro’s leaders are betting that health care can be a strong area for growth in the decades to come. Millions of dollars in downtown multifamily projects are in the works, with young physicians representing a key target market. Birmingham, like many areas, is also facing a shortage of general practitioners.

In the weeks to come, hundreds of new residents like DUCKETT will get their start in Birmingham. But how long will they stay after their residencies are complete? And what can Birmingham do to keep them?

THE PAY SCALE
How first-year pay compares for local residency programs

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TOP SPECIALTIES
The most common specialties for residents at UAB

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UAB finds high-powered partner for genomics

Two of Alabama’s strongest economic engines are teaming up to capitalize on the fast-growing, potential-rich field of genomics.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine and the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology are teaming to form the Center for Genomic Medicine.

The center will study human DNA to better understand the onset and progression of diseases. It’s a field that could pay huge economic dividends down the road if groundbreaking new research is able to be commercialized successfully into spinoff companies.

The center won’t have a physical location and will depend entirely between the virtual and physical correspondence of the two organizations.

“We want to work with the best people we can and UAB is significant because of their remarkable medical school and the innovative things they are accomplishing,” said Richard Myers, president of HudsonAlpha. “Birmingham is a prominent medical hub that does research in a variety of fields and I wouldn’t have come back to Alabama without a partnership like that.”

Dr. Bruce Korf, chair of the Department of Genomics in the UAB School of Medicine, said the partnership will be mutually beneficial.

“This center offers opportunities neither of us could accomplish without each other.”

Both Myers and Korf expect to joint-recruit new employees as well as designating existing staff to work specifically in the Center. Korf says UAB will hire 25 to 30 new employees.

Although most communication will be over the phone, Skype or email, physical meetings will occur every few weeks. HudsonAlpha also plans to build dormitories on part of its 150 acre facility to house UAB faculty staying for prolonged visits.

“Both of us have put a lot of skin in the game,” Myers said. “This has been 6 months in the works and it will continue to expand what we’re doing in the fields of genomics and medicine.”
Strangers donate kidneys as nation's largest transplant chain continues at UAB

By: Mike Oliver

Paula Kok agreed to give her kidney to anyone, anyone who needed it.

She just wanted to help someone.

In December, the 46-year-old Helena resident set in motion a record-breaking donor chain by giving her kidney to a stranger.

On May 23, the chain got its 20th and 21st link when a married couple from Brookwood in Tuscaloosa County went to UAB Hospital and swapped kidneys with two Birmingham brothers.

"We are now at 21 patients (receiving kidneys) and 42 operations," said Dr. Jayme Locke, surgical director of the Incompatible Kidney Transplant Program at UAB. "We are the nation's largest ongoing single site chain. So, for us, this is a milestone."

More transplants are scheduled the week of July 7.

Alabama has more than 3,700 candidates on the kidney transplant waiting list, the second largest in the country.

The chain, kicked off by Kok, works this way:

Kok is called a nondirected donor, that is someone willing to donate a kidney but doesn't have an intended recipient. That original donor's kidney is transplanted into the kidney of a patient who had a willing donor but the kidney wasn't a match. In turn, that incompatible donor gives his or her kidney to another patient, likely a stranger, who matches.

So it's a pay-it-forward system that helps pair donors with recipients more quickly.

A dramatic example of this is how Thomas "Wayne" Freeman of Brookwood became the latest recipient. His wife, Stephanie, 39, agreed to give a kidney but it didn't match her husband.
At the same time Joseph Brown, 27, of Birmingham, needed a kidney. The one his mother donated to him nine years ago was failing. His younger brother, Amari, 25, agreed to donate a kidney but he didn't match his brother.

So it was time for the Freemans to meet the Browns.

On May 23, the Browns and Freemans were in the hospital. They hadn't met yet. Stephanie's kidney was removed and transplanted into Joseph. And Amari's kidney was transplanted in Wayne.

The next day, they all met each other.

Both families appreciated the donors' -- Amari and Stephanie's sacrifice to make it happen.

"This has opened up a new door for me," Wayne Freeman said. "I have to admit, I was getting pretty down in the dumps. I felt like a prisoner in my house (tied to dialysis)."

Joseph, who tutors children with problems staying in school, marvels at how it worked out.

"It's pretty cool -- amazing really that it worked out," said Joseph. He said his brother was intent on donating a kidney, even after a serious car accident last year put him in intensive care.

Stephanie said it's been a moving experience.

"Joe received my kidney; Wayne received Amari's kidney -- I think it went something like that throughout the chain," she said. "It's a ripple effect."

Locke said the timely mixing and matching of kidneys provides for better quality of life and even extends life. Without the chain, a person in need of a kidney sits on a waiting list waiting for someone who matches to die. And depending on blood group, may have to wait many years.

"While on dialysis, there's a significant mortality rate that comes from that," she said. "Close to 15 percent of patients will die on the waiting list."

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For those in the chain, the initial thanks goes out to Kok.

Kok said she had a friend who donated a kidney to his father and said it was the best thing he's ever done. Also when her husband, a cancer patient, at one point needed bone marrow and there was no family match.

"It was a terrible feeling," said Kok, whose husband is now on an experimental trial drug and is doing well.

"I just look at it that I donated one, and someone else donated one," she said. "I didn't do anything different than anyone in the chain did."

Others disagree.

"To say we are thankful for her is an understatement," said Stephanie Freeman. "That one person could be so selfless. She had no idea where her kidney was going -- that to me is sacrifice."
Summer of ’54: the worst in 131 years

There is hardly anyone around anymore, who remembers the summer of 1954, although it was memorable. By some measures, the summer 60 years ago was the ‘worst’ summer in at least the past 131 years.

It was also the end of a four-year stretch of summers that, in some ways, helped to change the face of Alabama for the past 60 years. More on that later. First, the numbers.

In an 1883-2013 reconstruction of summer daily high temperatures within 50 miles of Alabama’s four biggest cities, the summer of 1954 was the hottest in that 131-year record. The summer of 1954 edges out 1902 by one tenth of a degree, with an average high temperature of 95.8 degrees. No other year is really close, although the summer of 1952 touched an average high of 95.03. (The 131-year average is 91.1, and no summer since 1954 has hit an average high of more than 93.5.)

That makes the summer of 1954 a few degrees warmer than normal, but how bad was it?

The average weather station in Alabama registers 73 days a year with temperatures of 90 degrees or warmer, ranging from only 45 days a year in Valley Head to 95 days a year in Brewton.

In 1954, looking at the entire state, the average weather station recorded 117 days with a high temperature of at least 90. Strung together, that’s almost four months. By comparison, 1994 saw an average of only 33 days of 90 degrees or higher temperatures.

Some days during the summer of 1954 were scorchers. The July 1, 1954, edition of The Huntsville Times, in addition to reporting on the French withdrawal from Indochina, noted:

June Cracks All Records With 104 Degrees For City

An all-time record for June heat was set here yesterday at 3 p.m. when the thermometer hit 104 degrees at the local TVA sub-station.

Readings for the period of 2 through 4 p.m. were 101, 104 and 102 degrees. July started off today to bid fair for a crack at past records ...

On July 1, 1954, the temperature at Huntsville’s TVA sub-station hit 106. (Official temperatures at the Huntsville airport were slightly cooler: 98 on June 30 and 1:02 pm July 1.) That doesn’t mean the airport was a cool place to hang out. The official weather record at the old Huntsville airport recorded 18 days in June, July and August 1954 with a high temperature of 100 degrees or higher, with an official high of 105 on three consecutive days (15-17) in August.

The rest of the state was just as toasty. Birmingham saw 11 days with highs of 100 or more, Muscle Shoals 18, Montgomery 20, and Tuscaloosa a wilting 28 summer days with a high temperature of at least 100 degrees, including eight consecutive days in August.

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The official high temperature for the year was 108, reached three times: June 28 in Greenville and Selma and Aug. 16 in Belle Mina. The official record high in Alabama’s recorded history is 112 degrees on Sept. 5, 1925, in Centerville.

Did you know that when it gets hot and dry, rattlesnakes come out of the mountains?

A newspaper story from Aug. 15, 1954, noted:

Drought Bringing Out Rattlesnakes

Timber rattlesnakes appear to be on the move in this area now, evidently in search of water due to the drought.

Which brings us to how the string of hot, dry summers in the early 1950s changed the face of Alabama. The four-summer stretch from 1951 through 1954 was the hottest four-consecutive-summer period in the 131-year record.

It was also a period during which many farmers across Alabama were forced to get out of the farming business, a trend that continued for many years and turned Alabama from an agricultural powerhouse into something very different.

The average high temperature during that four-summer span was a blistering 94.4 (1951 was 94, 1952 was 95, 1953 was 92.9 and 1954 was 95.8).

The second worst four consecutive summers (that did not include the years 1951 to 1954) was 1899-1902 at a mere 92.8 degrees.

The hottest similar stretch since 1954 was mild by comparison - 91.7 in the summers of 2008 through 2011.

The six coolest summers, all under 88 degrees, have occurred since the first such summer in 1967, with 2013 (last summer) being one of them.

But hot summers are usually also dry summers, and that is what happened in the 1950s. Summer 1954 tied 1902 as the driest summer in 120 years, with only eight inches of rainfall in three months. If we look at NOAA’s Palmer drought index, it shows the summers from 1951 through 1957 all in varying degrees of drought. That is the longest unbroken string of drought summers since 1895.

The impact was significant.

The Huntsville Times, Aug. 16, 1954:

Farm Situation Near Its Worst
Crops and pastures are nearing their worst conditions of the season, County Agent Loyd H. Little estimated today ...

It has been four weeks since anything like a general rain has fallen in the county. In the last three weeks, only .07 of an inch of rain has fallen at the Huntsville sub-station.

Facing increased competition from farms in western states that benefited from billions of dollars in federally-subsidized irrigation projects and with almost no irrigation to help Alabama farmers deal with the drought, the state’s farmland began to go fallow or to be used for other purposes.

Although agriculture (largely poultry) is still the state’s largest industry, Alabama lost millions of acres of harvested cropland between 1950 and today, which is a big enough change to quite literally change the face of the state.

Fortunately, this summer to date seems to be neither generally dry nor unusually hot. Let’s hope it stays that way.
UAH alumnus takes reins of Alabama Power Company

s president and CEO of Alabama Power Company (APC), Mark Crosswhite ('94, BA, History) quickly discovered there is "no average day on the job." And that is a good thing, says the UAH alumnus. "I'm going somewhere different most days."

One of his key roles is to be an advocate for the company. "We serve 1.4 million customers from Gadsden to Mobile and have offices and employees throughout that area," he says. "Most days, I am meeting with employees, community and civic leaders, and customers."

A native of Decatur, Ala., and graduate of Decatur High School, Crosswhite says his decision to attend UAH was easy. "UAH enjoyed and still does enjoy a great reputation," he says. "While here, I was inducted into the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society, received the History Department Award of Merit, and was consistently on the dean's list. I was also a recipient of the Frances C. Roberts Scholarship and William Penn Nichols Memorial Scholarship.

After graduating magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in history in 1994, Crosswhite earned a law degree from the University of Alabama. "I expected that I would be practicing law my entire career," he says. Instead, as president and CEO, Crosswhite is now responsible for Alabama Power Company's overall strategic direction and performance.

"We focus on five key areas," he says. "First, safety: nothing is more important than the safety of the public and our employees. Second, customer service. Our business strategy is to keep customers at the center of everything we do. Third, employees. I'm determined that we treat all of our employees fairly and with respect. Fourth, economic development. We work closely with the state and local economic development organizations to attract new businesses and retain those that we have. And fifth, community service. We have a long history of supporting the community."

Crosswhite credits his degree in history with helping him maintain such a "broad perspective" as CEO. "It helps

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me organize information and communicate to different audiences and consider the "big picture" as we set corporate strategy and direction," he says.

He also praises UAH history professors Dr. Carolyn White and Dr. Johanna Shields for their guidance during his time on campus. "Dr. White influenced me greatly - I signed up for every class of hers that I could," he says. "I also enjoyed classes that Dr. Shields taught."

And both, in turn, remember Crosswhile as a studious student with a bright future.

"It goes without saying that Mark was very intelligent," says Dr. Shields. "It was clear that he would be a successful adult, and I remember thinking that a law degree was just right for him. It's wonderful that he has achieved such a position of distinction, but it isn't surprising."

Dr. White agrees. "Mark never made less than an A in any history course I taught," she says. "I am not surprised that he has had such a distinguished legal and business career, for he was an outstanding student."

But while Crosswhile's liberal arts degree has helped him excel as a CEO, he is the first one to point out that it's not the only factor when it comes to career success. Just as important, he says, is passion for what you are doing.

"You must be true to yourself," he says. "STEM backgrounds are typically more lucrative and immediately marketable, but if your passion is history, or English, or music, you must decide whether you would enjoy spending your life pursuing a different career."

Also helpful, he continues, is a mentor. "I've been fortunate to have a number of great mentors who taught me much about APC, legal practice, and life," says Crosswhile, listing Charles McCrae, former president and CEO of APC; Rod Mundy, former counsel at APC and a former law partner; and Jerry Stewart, former senior vice president and chief production officer at APC among them.

"They were always available to provide wise counsel and friendship."

That's something Crosswhile values greatly, and why he makes sure to spend quality time with his family - wife Jane and sons Will and Jim - despite his busy schedule. "I try to always make time for the most important people in my life, or anyone else's, and that's family and friends," he says, adding that he still loves to read about history when he has the time.

Otherwise, he's hard at work, helping guide APC through what he refers to as "a great transformation" in the energy industry. "We are working to develop and retain a full portfolio of energy resources, ranging from traditional sources to renewables," he says. "It is an exciting time to be involved in energy."
Drake’s bad decisions are adding up

There are criminals in our society. I don’t think Kevan Drake is one of them. There are rebels and sociopaths and maybe a few creaking anarchists left over from the Emma Goldman days. I don’t think Drake is one of those, either.

Drake is a young man who makes some bad decisions. As an old man who also makes bad decisions, I can understand that malady without excusing it. Also worth noting: I am not trying to function as part of a 100-man football team, which requires adhering to some pretty strict rules. Drake is a unique talent at running back, blessed with off-the-line explosion that wouldn’t have been out of place among the July 4th fireworks on the river. But Drake’s promising career has moved ahead by fits and starts, seemingly hampered as much by his own off-the-field issues as the crowded Crimson Tide backfield.

Nick Saban has described those Drake issues as “nothing big,” but as an accumulation of minor frustrations in terms of fulfilling his responsibilities.

The popular question among Alabama fans at the end of last season was “Where’s Drake?” But while nothing has been released officially, logic suggests the same question — “Where’s Drake?” — had been asked by Saban and his staff, too, in relation to team meetings, or classes, or mandatory study halls.

His last brush with Saban’s authority came just before A-Day, when he and Altee Tenpenny were held out of spring practice for a day for what Saban described as “not doing what they were supposed to do” academically.

The latest incident, while non-academic, fits squarely into the “not doing what he was supposed to do” category. According to the official version of events, Drake crossed a yellow-tape police barrier into a crime scene investigation, even after being told he could not go into a parking lot and retrieve his car.

Again, I understand inconvenience, impatience and immaturity can lead to poor choices, but this is something you just don’t do. Law enforcement was examining the scene of a shooting incident. Their work could possibly lead to saving someone’s life, if they arrested a shooter. That’s infinitely more important than getting your car and going home, and the adult thing to do is hold tight until the police get done. But of all Drake’s talents, holding tight hasn’t been one that he has displayed.

Taken individually, Drake’s transgressions, known and assumed, don’t seem to make him a menace to society. But Saban, when he gathers information and decides what to do, isn’t simply going to take things individually.

Drake has been in the doghouse for so long, it seems, that he should have just purchased a dog condominium and saved on rent. He seems certain to stay there, and lose depth-chart traction at the most crowded-with-talent position on the team. But I am less certain that Saban is actually going to evict him.

If it were only a petulant moment that led to Drake’s arrest, permanent banishment would seem like more punishment than would fit the crime. But there are two factors that no one can determine except Saban.

First, just how much Drake frustration can he bear? Second, how much of a statement does he want to make about the slippage in “attention to detail” that caught up with Alabama last season?

I don’t think Drake is a criminal, or a rebel. But will he be an example? That decision rests with Alabama’s head coach.
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

UA releases list of secondary NCAA violations

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The University of Alabama women's basketball program lost a scholarship for the 2014-15 season for exceeding the NCAA scholarship limit last season by granting a mid-year grant-in-aid to a player, according to a document released by UA on Thursday.

Alabama released a list of 23 violations — actually covering 20 incidents, with two breaking multiple NCAA rules — from July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014. There were four rules violations in football, track and field and swimming, three in gymnastics, two each in men's golf, men's basketball and women's basketball and one each in baseball and rowing. The violations are all Level III and Level IV under NCAA bylaws, which were previously termed "secondary violations."

The women's basketball violation of NCAA bylaw 15.5.5.2 occurred when UA "inadvertently exceeded" the limit of 15 players on scholarship. Both the coaching staff and the UA compliance office, which signed off on allowing the mid-year scholarship, received letters of reprimand. UA will be allowed just 14 scholarship players in the 2014-15 season.

No student-athletes, coaches or administrators were mentioned by names in the document.

Two other violations with serious consequences detailed in the document had already been reported: former UA football player Ha Ha Clinton-Dix being declared ineligible for two games for receiving a loan from a member of the strength and conditioning coaching staff, with the coach being placed on leave and subsequently resigning; and head swimming and diving coach Dennis Pursley being suspended for two meets for loaning money to a student-athlete.

The swimming and diving violations also included sanctions for exceeding allowable mandatory practice time, resulting in a reduction of practice time by two hours per week (to 18 hours per week) for the spring and fall of 2014, and off-campus, in-person and written correspondence between a currently-enrolled student-athlete and a prospect. Pursley and an assistant coach...
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA NCAA LEVEL III AND IV VIOLATIONS
(Reported July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014)

The Tuscaloosa News
Friday, July 4, 2014

Actions taken:

Rules education for entire track and cross-country staff prohibited from calling or recruiting mail during this period.

Rules education for the involved coaches.

Prohibited all forms of contact with involved prospects for 30 days.

Prohibited head coach from making any contact with involved prospects for 30 days.

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Prohibited assistant coaches from making any contact with involved prospects for 30 days.

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Tide players named to award watch lists

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

With the opening of fall camp less than a month away, college football was in the air Monday morning with the beginning of preseason award watch lists releases.

A total of eight University of Alabama players made the cut for various lists Monday, headlined by four selections to the Maxwell Award watch list. The Maxwell Award is given annually to the college player of the year. Quarterback AJ McCarron won the honor last year.

Junior running back T.J. Yeldon, junior wide receiver Amari Cooper, junior quarterback Jacob Coker and sophomore running back Derrick Henry were UA's representatives among the 76 players selected.

Yeldon ran for 1,235 yards and 14 touchdowns in 2013, averaging six yards a carry. In an injury-slowed season, Cooper led the team with 45 receptions for 736 yards and four touchdowns.

Jacob Coker backed up Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston at Florida State in 2013 and Derrick Henry averaged 10.9 yards a carry with three rushing touchdowns in limited action.

Junior safety Landon Collins was one of three Tide defenders named to the 76-player list for the Bednarik Award, which is presented to the defensive player of the year. Collins was second on the team in tackles last year with 70.

Senior linebacker Trey DePriest and sophomore defensive lineman A'Shawn Robinson also made the cut. DePriest was third on the team with 65 tackles, while Robinson led the team in sacks as a freshman with 5½.

Senior wide receiver and punt and kick returner Christion Jones was one of 47 players selected to the Paul Hornung Award watch list. The Hornung Award goes to the most versatile player in major college football.

Jones made 36 catches for 349 yards and two touchdowns as a wide receiver and totaled 952 yards and three touchdowns in punt and kick returns.

Auburn had three players selected to watch lists, including safety Roberson Therezie (Paul Hornung Award) and wide receiver Sammie Coates and quarterback Nick Marshall for the Maxwell Award.

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Survey: Rapes not investigated at 2 in 5 colleges

WASHINGTON | A survey of colleges and universities finds a lack of coordination between many campuses and local law enforcement in handling sexual assaults, and that many schools have gone years without investigating such cases.

About 40 percent of colleges and universities reported not having conducted a sexual assault investigation in the past five years, including 6 percent of the nation's largest public institutions. More than 20 percent of large, private schools conducted fewer investigations than the number of incidents reported to the Education Department.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., a former prosecutor whose office conducted the survey, said parents and taxpayers should be concerned about the number of investigations.

"On first blush, a parent would think that's good, they don't have a problem with sexual assault on their campus, but it's not good, it's very bad because that means they are either in denial or incompetent," McCaskill said.

Federal law requires every institution that knows about a sexual violence incident to investigate, she noted. She said schools should investigate even if the end result is that the victim isn't participating and there's no corroboration. Under some estimates, 1 in 5 college females is assaulted.

The prevalence of sexual assaults on college campuses took on new focus in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky case at Penn State and after a high-profile battle on Capitol Hill about military sexual assault led college campus assault victims to demand the same attention.

Meanwhile, the Education Department and a White House task force on campus sexual assault have taken a series of steps to draw attention to the treatment of sexual assault victims and force campuses to address the problem.

In Congress, McCaskill is part of a group of senators exploring ways to address the issue legislatively. She said the survey was needed so they had a better grasp of how campuses handle such cases.

McCaskill said the senators are looking at ways to empower victims, simplify laws and rules colleges and universities follow and find ways that campuses and local authorities can better coordinate.

She chairs a subcommittee with jurisdiction over Title IX, which prohibits gender discrimination at institutions receiving federal funds.

Ada Meloy, general counsel of the American Council on Education, which represents college presidents, said if victims want to maintain confidentiality, it is "extremely difficult to conduct an investigation."

She said many college officials want to work more with local authorities, but local authorities are hesitant to take such cases because they are difficult to successfully prosecute.

Meloy said her organization is disappointed by the report and says it fails to describe how hard colleges and universities are working to address the problem under a complex and confusing set of federal guidelines and laws.