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Months after Jo Bonner left Congress, campaign fund continued to dole out cash

Brendan Kirby
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Jo Bonner left Congress in August 2013, but for nearly a year, Jo Bonner for Congress lived on.

Bonner, a Republican who was serving in his sixth term in the House of Representatives, had more than $125,000 in his campaign account when he announced in May 2013 that he would resign from office to take a job with the University of Alabama System. Since then, the campaign slowly spent that money, spending cash on bills, plane trips, tickets and restaurant meals.

Bonner finally retired the account for good on July 15 with a $1,375 donation to the Alabama School of Mathematics & Science, a publicly funded boarding school in his district that invited him to serve on its foundation board of directors.

"We did not have a tremendous amount in the campaign to begin with," Bonner said. "We followed the law to the T. and made the decision to shut down the campaign."

Congressional campaign accounts can remain active for years. Even a congressman's death is not enough to end a campaign fund. The law allows the campaign's treasurer to continue making contributions.

Former members of Congress, according to experts, often convert their campaign funds to less restrictive political action committees. Substantial war chests can kick-start future campaigns or increase the value of former office holders who become lobbyists.

Bonner, who serves as vice chancellor for government relations and economic development for the university system, said neither scenario applied to him.

"Since I was making the transition out of elected office and into higher education, I didn't see any reason to keep it operating," he said.

Few restrictions on leftover cash

Congress in the 1980s tightened the rules governing how members of Congress can spend leftover campaign donations after they leave office, but the law still allows plenty of latitude. Those 1980s reforms prohibited politicians from converting their federal campaign funds to personal cash.

"That, in fact, is the only constraint on how campaign funds can be spent," said Paul S. Ryan, the senior legal counsel for the Washington-based Campaign Legal Center. "Everything else is fair game."

The law lists several permissible categories of expenses, including contributions to other candidates or political parties, charitable donations and expenses associated with winding down a campaign.

Ryan said it is not a comprehensive list. Anything reasonably connected to a former congressman's political activities is legal, he said.

The practice has drawn fire from good-government advocates. Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Government, a government watchdog group, highlighted questionable campaign spending by key members of Congress in a 2012 report, "No Strings Attached: How Former Members Spend Their Excess Campaign Funds."

Those expenditures included two dozen airline tickets and a $525 Valentine's Day hotel bill by a Florida congressman; $345 in gifts to other members of Congress by a U.S. representative from California who had died; and a $1,000 lifetime membership to the Capitol Hill Club by a New York State congressman weeks before he left office.

Melanie Sloan, the watchdog group's executive director, said some expenses obviously are reasonable, such as honoring pre-existing contracts with vendors. But she said spending on items like meals, hotel rooms and plane tickets by a congressman who no longer is seeking office should raise red flags.

The Campaign Legal Center filed a complaint over a vehicle that a New York congressman had purchased for his wife with campaign funds. He said the group was able to demonstrate that the wife was using the vehicle as her personal car, and the congressman ended up paying a fine.

But improper spending is hard to prove, Sloan said, and departing congressmen rarely receive scrutiny.

"Often, I think people use money for that without having any legitimate campaign purpose," she said. "My experience is that those campaigns have a lot of questionable expenses. They feel like it's a slush fund they can use. The hard part is nobody ever questions it."

Sloan said her group advocates tightening the restrictions on the use of leftover campaign funds and requiring campaign funds to be closed out within two years of congressmen leaving office.

Bonner's final expenditures

A review of Bonner's final campaign finance report indicates that he spent most of his campaign money paying off bills related to his past election activities and winding down his campaign. For instance, he spent $15,417 paying off bills related to his past election activities and winding down his campaign. For instance, he spent $15,417 paying off bills related to prior campaign events.

His longtime political consultant, Randy Hinaman, received $14,841, and his fundraiser, Tom Hammond & Associates, received $10,500. Bonner also paid $9,350 to a Washington company that provided computer and software services to his campaign.

Bonner said he had no idea he would not complete his term when he re-signed contracts with those firms to prepare for the 2014 election.

"I did not want to leave Congress owing any of the vendors we had used for years," he said.

Bonner also spent $1,361 on AT&T bills and another $570 to reimburse himself for a utility bill. He spent $1,575 on moving expenses related to closing down his campaign offices.

The report also lists $9,421 for meals at 15 restaurants, both in his district and the Washington area. They run from a low of $44 at The Hamilton in Washington to a high of $2,556 at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Midtown Mobile. Bonner's report also lists $1,304 for lodging at the Capitol Skyline Hotel in Washington and $3,908 for lodging/meals at The Homestead in Hot Springs, Va.

Bonner said most of the restaurant expenses were for political activities he engaged in while he still was an active candidate; the roster of dates listed on the campaign reports usually are after when the expenses actually were incurred.

Some of the restaurant meals that took place after Bonner had announced he was leaving office were to reward longtime campaign workers, he said. He recalled one meal in Washington for his D.C. campaign finance committee and one in Mobile for his local finance committee.

The same is true, Bonner said, for the $3,856 in expenses from stores like Claude Moore Jewelers, the Silver Gallery and the House and Senate gift shops for items labeled "gifts." Bonner said he used
gifts to thank volunteers. He said he wanted to recognize people who helped him raise some $6 million in campaign donations over the years.

"Campaigns, unfortunately, are expensive," he said. "Man of the people in my six elections were generous not only opening their wallets but their homes and hearts. I never saw that campaign account as my money."

Other gifts were meant for fundraising events planned while Bonner still intended to run for another term. He recalled buying items to give to golfers at a tournament planned for the Marriott Grand Hotel in Point Clear.

"We had already bought those," he said. "It's not like we could turn them in."

Bonner said the $1,375 donation to the Alabama School of Math & Science came about because of his admiration for the school's performance. It selects the brightest incoming high school sophomores from across Alabama.

"It's a great institution that does outstanding work for students all across our state," he said.

After leaving Congress, Bonner joined the board of directors of the school's foundation, which is responsible for maintaining the building on Dauphin Street and raising money for the school.

Federal law prohibits organizations from paying the salaries of ex-congressmen with donations they come from the retired official's campaign account. But that does not apply to Bonner since board members receive no compensation.

"We're supportive of the congressman, and he [represented] this area, and the school serves students from all over the state," said John Hoyle, the school's vice president.

Records show that Bonner also made a $500 donation in February to the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress and a $600 donation in June to the Chowder & Marching Club, a networking and mentoring group founded by a group of Republican congressmen after World War II.
Alabama leads U.S. in Advanced Placement gains

Scores of students are earning college credits in high school

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY Alabama is leading the nation in improvements on Advanced Placement tests used to qualify high school students for college credits, officials said Wednesday.

Over the last six years Alabama students have shown an increase of 136 percent in the number of Advanced Placement exams passed in mathematics, science and English. The national increase over the same period of time was 49 percent.

"It's good to be No. 1 in something other than football," said Gov. Robert Bentley, who joined State School Superintendent Tommy Bice in announcing the results.

The program has saved Alabama parents more than $36 million in tuition costs.

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The number of qualifying scores on exams taken in Alabama increased from 4,037 in 2008 to 9,534 this year.

The College Board released similar findings earlier this month about the state's improvement in Advanced Placement testing.

The new report tracks results of the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program in Alabama, which began in 2008 with the goal of improving scores. It was funded with $13.2 million in public and private grants.

The program provides teacher training and support stipends for teachers and students. It will be in 118 schools in 54 districts this school year, an increase of 21 schools over last year.

Bice said the goal is to have the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program in 200 schools by 2020. He said the program has helped students who might not have a strong advocate for education at home to realize their potential.

"When you believe in kids and set high expectations for them regardless of their background, you're seeing what the results can be," Bice said.

The program has saved Alabama parents more than $36 million in tuition costs by helping students earn college credits at a cost lower than the price on a typical university campus.
Local leaders cite cooperation

Mayors, county commission chairman tout progress at annual chamber luncheon

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

For this year's State of the Community luncheon, the mayors of Northport and Tuscaloosa joined with Tuscaloosa County Commission Chairman Hardy McCollum to highlight the accomplishments and explain the challenges faced by each government.

But McCollum and mayors Bobby Herndon of Northport and Walt Maddox of Tuscaloosa touted the cooperative nature of each government and told those gathered Wednesday at the Tuscaloosa River Market that much of the area's success comes from a willingness to work together.

Maddox told the audience for the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama's Chamber in Session luncheon that this spirit of cooperation was no more evident than after the tornado of April 27, 2011.

"The one thing I saw very clearly is that this community can step up to any challenge that's put before it," Maddox said.

That spirit of cooperation is going SEE CHAMBER | 3B

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox speaks Wednesday at the annual State of the Community event at the River Market.
CHAMBER

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to prove crucial in the coming months as attention gets drawn to the renewal vote for the ad valorem tax for school construction before it expires in 2016.

The loss of the tax would create ripple effects throughout the community, from economic development to — eventually — the government’s ability to provide services to its constituents.

“That will be the most important vote in the history of this city,” Maddox said. “It’s absolutely imperative that everyone in this room get behind the renewals of that property tax to make sure our community continues to move forward.”

Herndon began by highlighting Northport’s accomplishments. The city is in the best financial situation of its history, with reserves for the General Fund and the Water and Sewer funds at their respective goals, sales taxes on the rise and the steady issuance of home building permits, he said.

And while new commercial projects have been announced for Northport — it was just announced that the city is getting a second Waffle House in front of Lowe’s on McFarland Boulevard, for example — Herndon said he’s not opposed to highlighting the benefits of the larger city to the south.

Herndon told the audience that if a prospective commercial developer can’t find anything worthwhile in Northport, he’ll escort them to Tuscaloosa for a look.

“If you can’t build here, I’m going to show you Tuscaloosa,” Herndon said. “So I drive them across the bridge, and sometimes we’ll drive around Tuscaloosa for a couple of hours.

“Even though we’re in competition — don’t get me wrong — that don’t mean I can’t clap for Mayor Maddox and the city of Tuscaloosa when they get something awesome, or they can’t clap for Northport when Northport gets something awesome. That’s the kind of people we are. That’s the kind of relationships we have.”

Like Maddox and Herndon, McCollum also spoke of the challenges facing the County Commission in maintaining its financial stability during the economic downturn.

For example, the county government lacks the ability to adopt or impose taxes without the approval of the state Legislature. So, for McCollum, one way to grow the county’s coffers is through spending cuts.

Another is to boost the job market and economic base, something that he and Maddox have been working to do with the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, among others.

But improving the quality of life in the area isn’t just about jobs, McCollum said, referring to the shared funding with the city of Tuscaloosa of $7.55 million in upgrades to Bowers and Munny Sokol parks. Together, the two governments approved the funding in October.

Also, the county has recently joined with the cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport and other interested organizations to identify the top road projects needed for this area in order to deliver a unified message to state leaders.

“We have come together as a community, prioritized our top five needs and we’re speaking together with one voice,” McCollum said. “There’s a lot of things we do in this community that we do and we do together.”

The economic and commercial benefits of this level of governmental cooperation was not lost on the organizers of the luncheon.

“We are very blessed,” said Jordan Plaster, chairman of the chamber’s board of directors, “to live here in West Alabama.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Jennifer Wilson hired for tourism post

By Patrick Rupinski
Business Editor

Jennifer Wilson has been hired as manager of tourism development for the Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports Commission, a city-funded organization that promotes Tuscaloosa as a destination for sporting events, meetings, reunions and leisure tourism.

She will start the $55,000-a-year job on Tuesday.

Wilson will help promote the city as a travel destination and develop relationships with tourism-related stakeholders in the Tuscaloosa market, said Gina Simpson, TTS CEO. Those stakeholders include hoteliers, restaurateurs and operators of local attractions and events. Wilson will work as a liaison with the stakeholders, Simpson said.

The commission's director of tourism will concentrate on selling Tuscaloosa as a destination for conventions, meetings, gatherings and leisure travel while Wilson will focus on product development, Simpson said.

In the past, TTS has focused heavily on marketing the area. Research shows that attracting visitors depends more on what the destination has to offer, Simpson said. TTS's new strategy is to further develop Tuscaloosa into a premier location for residents and visitors alike, she said.

Wilson's new position is part of an internal restructuring of TTS, she said. Some of Wilson's duties previously were handled by the assistant director of tourism, a position that was eliminated when it became vacant through attrition.

Wilson will work with the stakeholders, providing them with information on what travelers and conventions want so they can develop those things while also letting the local community know what resources are there for their enjoyment.

"Wilson's 12 years of experience in the tourism industry within our market is exactly what we were looking for in a candidate," Simpson said. "Her previous work at both the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau ties directly into her responsibilities and allows her to hit the ground running. I am excited to see how Tuscaloosa's tourism industry changes and grows under her guidance."

Wilson began her career in tourism at Mercedes-Benz U.S. International as a plant tour and museum guide. She then worked as director of sales at the former Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau and worked for the Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau as national sales manager. She also worked as director of sales at the Westervelt Warner Museum of American Art and Lodge.

Most recently, she worked with her husband in their business, Green Acres Landscaping Service.

Wilson studied communications at the University of Alabama and has been active in the community.

She was the 2011 chairwoman of the Women in Business Council.
ADEM hosts hearing today on Shepherd Bend Mine

Jasper firm wants to renew permit allowing discharge of treated sewage

Staff report

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management will hold a public hearing on reissuance of a wastewater discharge permit for the proposed Shepherd Bend Mine today at the Sumiton Campus of Bevill State Community College.

The public hearing where people may make oral and written comments will be at 6 p.m. in the Tom Bevill Building Exhibit Hall, Building 1400 on the community college campus, located at 101 State St. in Sumiton.

The comments during the meeting must address issues that have an impact on the ability of the applicant, Shepherd Bend LLC, to meet environmental laws, rules and regulations.

Written comments must be received by 5 p.m. Friday. Written comments should be sent to Russell A. Kelly, chief of the Permits and Services Division ADEM, P. O. Box 30130-1463 Montgomery, AL 36110-2059.

The Jasper-based company applied for reissuance of the permit in 2013 for proposed discharges of treated drainage into tributaries of the Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River. The proposed site is in Walker County, south of Cordova, off Reeds Ferry Road.

The proposed surface mine has drawn criticism from environmental and community organizations along with students and faculty of the University of Alabama System campuses for its potential effect on water quality in the Birmingham area.

Critics fear the discharges from the proposed mine adjacent to an intake for the Birmingham Water Works Board could lead to decreased water quality and increased rates for customers of the utility.

The opponents of the mine have lobbied ADEM and the University of Alabama, which owns the land and mineral rights, for rejection of the project.
Doesn't take a math expert to see Bice's raise doesn't add up

We live in a state where our eighth-graders rank 50th nationally in math performance. But even we can figure out when something doesn't add up.

The state Legislature voted against raising teacher salaries earlier this year, plus Alabama students continue to perform near the bottom of national rankings. Yet, that equals a big raise for the man who leads K-12 education, Tommy Bice?

The Alabama State Board of Education granted that raise before checking his work. As in, no formal review of Bice's performance was conducted before the board calculated his 26 percent raise, from $198,000 to $250,000.

We don't seek to weaken the state's ability to retain high-performing administrators, and we don't mean to judge Bice's performance. But the state board should be clear and transparent with its expectations for Bice.

We welcome the recent measures of educational improvement, such as the growth of Advanced Placement success and the system's increased graduation rate.

We hope for future success, and we hope Bice is the one to deliver it. In fact, if he can lead Alabama's system out of the bottom 10 in performance nationally, we'd lead the charge for his salary to be doubled.
Charges against Barron dismissed

State prosecutors drop accusations of ethics, campaign finance violations after court rulings

By Kim Chandler  
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | A judge on Tuesday dismissed charges against former Senate leader Lowell Barron at the request of state prosecutors, ending a case the defense said never should have been filed.

DeKalb County Circuit Judge Randall Cole threw out campaign finance and ethics charges against Barron and former campaign aide Jill Johnson after the attorney general's office sought dismissal based on a string of adverse court rulings.

Barron, 72, said he was thankful for the decision. “I’m grateful to the court system of Alabama and for the judicial process, which has restored my good name and put an end to this case,” Barron said in a statement. “Now I’m going to get back to doing what I do best these days — spending time with my grandchildren.”

Prosecutors accused Barron of misusing $52,000 in campaign funds from his unsuccessful 2010 re-election bid to help Johnson pay off a home loan from Barron and also her credit card bills.

Cole had ruled that the attorney general's office couldn’t present evidence about whether the defendants had a romantic relationship.

Cole also ruled that Barron’s defense could present evidence about how other candidates used their campaign funds.

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BARRON

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The attorney general’s office, in earlier court filings, said the decision prevented them from showing motive in the case and would be fatal to the prosecution.

Barron has said the bonuses paid to Johnson were similar to those given by other candidates, including Attorney General Luther Strange, to key campaign staff.

The state Supreme Court earlier this month declined to review Cole’s decisions, leading to the move by prosecutors to seek a dismissal.

“We believe it’s something that should have never been brought to start with,” Barron’s attorney Joe Espy said of the charges against the former senator.

Barron, a Democrat, served 28 years in the Senate. He lost re-election in 2010 when Republicans took control of both houses of the Alabama Legislature.

The pharmacist from Fyffe was for years among the most influential members of the Alabama Legislature. He served as Senate president pro temp and chairman of the Rules Committee.
City/UA corridor studied
Early plan for University Boulevard more pedestrian friendly

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Improved pedestrian and bicycling options and slower traffic are the highlights of a preliminary plan for revamping the University Boulevard corridor between downtown Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama.

The plans were unveiled Thursday by the consultant and architects for a task force formed about a year ago to study ways to better connect downtown and the university. The study is jointly funded by the city and the university.

"This is your best chance to have a great corridor in Tuscaloosa," said Jeff Speck, the Washington D.C.-based planner who was brought on as consultant for the plan.

Speck is the author of "Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time," a book that's been heralded in planning circles as a practical approach to revitalizing urban areas.

He outlined the UA/Downtown See Corridor | 9A

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Tuscaloosa Connectivity Plan, which relies heavily on the addition of bicycle paths on University Boulevard and other parts of downtown. The bike paths would shrink the size of the current traffic lanes, slowing vehicular traffic and creating a more pedestrian-friendly area.

Some options outlined by Speck and Allen Maxwell, manager of the civil and environmental engineering department of Almon Associates of Tuscaloosa, would require no more than re-striping current streets. This would work for areas of University Boulevard between Queen City Avenue and the Strip where the street width and existing rights-of-way already are ample.

Other options include re-striping as well as some level of construction, such as the installation of bike tracks — two-way bicycle paths on the sides of streets protected from cars and pedestrians by a small median and a vegetative buffer.

"These are the kinds of things that mint cyclists," Speck said. "People see these and then they go and dig the bike out of the basement."

But the ideal plan for University Boulevard between Queen City and Gene Stallings Avenue would also be the most expensive, with a two-lane street, buried utility lines, expanded sidewalks, additional trees and bicycle paths on either side.

"It's very important that you move forward on this important corridor with something that causes it to thrive," Speck said.

The proposal also outlined options for improving traffic on campus and downtown through the implementation of altered striping on Hackberry Lane, McCovey Drive, Marr's Spring Road and University Boulevard as well as the expansion or alteration of the median on Greensboro Avenue.

With Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and South, many motorists no longer rely on Greensboro Avenue to get through downtown Tuscaloosa. Rather, it's used to get to certain destinations.

By reducing it from four lanes to two, expanding the median by adding a central bicycle path and making parking on either side parallel instead of diagonal, motorists would be required to go slower and pedestrian traffic would increase, Speck said.

"We're very excited about this," Speck said. "It's not cheap, but it can be had principally for the cost of replacing the median."

While the plan seemed to excite members of the task force and the few residents who gathered at City Hall to see it unveiled, some had concerns about costs and the potential effect on the downtown historic districts.

College Park resident Mickey Ursic was among those who questioned the addition of parallel parking in areas along University Boulevard that touches two nationally registered historic districts.

"I know it's inconvenient that we are there, but we are the essence of historic Tuscaloosa," Ursic said.

Others, like recent college graduate Victoria Sherwood, 22, said creating safe paths for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the campus and along its borders would eventually lead to a culture of walking and cycling.

The proposal will now be fine-tuned before cost estimates are prepared, but no timeline was given on if — or when — the changes could come about. Councilman Matt Calderone, who chairs the task force, said non-traditional funding sources — such as isolated tax zones or tax increment financing — would be essential.

"We need to start thinking of creative funding solutions to make these kinds of projects possible," the first-term councilman said. "Nothing is off the table, and I think we're getting ahead of it."
Board OKs RV park on Hargrove

Location will house 101 vehicles during UA football season

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa landowner Benton Chambliss got permission Monday night from the city's Zoning Board of Adjustment to temporarily use his 11.18-acre tract off Hargrove Road for a recreational vehicle park.

Chambliss' plans for a 101-space park still require review by the city's planning and engineering departments, and he will be required to abide by all applicable laws and municipal codes.

The 4-1 zoning board's vote gave Chambliss final approval from an oversight body to move forward with a plan to make money off his land, something he had failed to obtain seven times previously from the Tuscaloosa City Council.

Since at least 2011, seven proposals for student-based or traditional apartments had either been denied by the City Council or withdrawn before the council voted.

"We were never able to get that passed by the City Council, and it's come down to either a mobile home park or an RV park," Chambliss told the five members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Chambliss was granted a temporary variance to use the tract as a lot for See RVs | 7A
recreational vehicles for two years. After that, Chambless said he should know whether the RV park was profitable enough to continue and, if so, would begin the process to make it a permanent one for Crimson Tide football fans.

He told the Zoning Board of Adjustment that he is targeting University of Alabama football fans and would operate the park only during the three-month college football regular season.

"Once the season's over," Chambless said, "that's it."

As of now, he's planning no significant utility upgrades or site development. That, he said, would depend largely on the success of the park, though with UA's home football schedule starting in less than two weeks, Chambless said he's not expecting much success this year.

The City Council's previous denials of proposals for the property were based largely on opposition from nearby property owners, much of which came from members of either the Forest Lake Homeowners Association or Forest Lake Neighborhood Association.

On Monday, Chambless and his family got the support of these groups that, until now, had opposed every proposed development.

"We've got something we can endorse and wanted to be here in person to do that," said Robert Parsons, president of the Forest Lake Homeowners Association, which is composed of the households that border the neighborhood's namesake. "We also wish the Chamblasses the best of luck."

Parsons was joined in supporting the project by George Harris, president of the Forest Lake Neighborhood Association, who told the Zoning Board of Adjustment that he has "found nobody who is opposed to this use of the property."

Two Tuscaloosa residents took to the podium to question certain aspects of the proposal, such as the 101 spaces and who would clean up the site once the RV owners had left, but neither outright objected to its use as a space for traveling football fans.

Before Chambless began seeking approval for the development of apartments, he had obtained permission to use the site that had been a mobile home park until 2008 as a similar RV park, but plans for this project fell through.

The most recent rejection of an apartment complex for the land that has been in the Chambless family for decades was the denial of plans by 908 Development Group to convert the tract at the intersection of Hargrove Road and Second Avenue East to an R-4 zone, which would allow the construction of multifamily housing.

The company, based in Tampa, Fla., wanted to build a $32 million, 228-unit traditional apartment complex featuring 472 bedrooms, but nearby residents argued that it would be too big and overburden an already cramped road network in the area despite the project's target of traditional apartment users, not just college students.

This marked the second rejection of plans by 908 Development for the construction of apartments on the lot commonly known as the Arlington site. The first denial came in November 2011, when a standing-room only crowd in the council chambers convinced the council to deny the rezoning of the lot for the construction of The Standard at Tuscaloosa, a $30 million, 205-unit complex with 646 bedrooms.

By July 2013, the plans had been reduced to a $20 million, 473-bedroom student housing complex by Aspen Heights, a Texas-based developer, but it was withdrawn after Forest Lake residents again vowed to argue against the plans before the City Council.

Another attempt was made by Tuscaloosa developer Stan Pate, under a company he named Dead Reckoning. It came soon thereafter to propose a similar development that he said would have contained between 650 and 850 bedrooms.

He, too, withdrew his petition before the City Council had a chance to vote on it, saying his efforts were being thwarted by a growing liberalism in City Hall.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Tuscaloosa Amp wins education award

Staff report

The Tuscaloosa Amphitheater won the Venue Education Award at the 2014 Venue-Connect Annual Conference & Trade Show in Portland, Ore., late last month.

The award, given for venues demonstrating active student involvement, educational opportunities and leadership, was given to the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater largely based on its internship program created with the University of Alabama.

Interns work with artists, patrons and vendors in a variety of positions at the amphitheater. More than 45 UA students have benefited, "receiving real-world experience and job placement assistance after graduation," according to the award.

Outgoing amphitheater director Wendy Riggs accepted the award: "These educational programs allow us to shape the future of our industry and learn from the students we work with."

The conference and trade show is hosted each year by the International Association of Venue Managers, honoring exceptional venues, from arenas and convention centers to concert halls, performing arts centers, amphitheaters and more, and the professionals who run them. For more information, visit www.iavm.org.
UA team to examine restless leg syndrome

Participants sought for eight-week study of troubling disorder

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

University of Alabama researchers are looking for participants for a pilot study on whether meditation can help patients with restless leg syndrome reduce the severity of the disorder's symptoms.

The meditation treatments have been adapted to a variety of chronic illnesses, according to Norma Cuel- lar, a professor of nursing.

“We just want to see if it will help with RLS,” she said.

The eight-week study is being conducted by UA's Capstone College of Nursing, the department of psychology and the Center of Mental Health and Aging.

The disorder, also known as Willis-Ekbom disease, is a sleep and movement disorder characterized by discomfort that leaves sufferers with an irresistible urge to move their limbs, Cuellar said.

Cuellar said the descriptions by patients of the symptoms are diverse. Some describe the sensations

RESTLESS LEG SYNDROME PILOT STUDY

People interested in participating in a study on whether meditation can help patients with restless leg syndrome should email nursing professor Norma Cuellar at ncueellar@ua.edu or call her office at 205-348-8368.

Norma Cuellar, professor of nursing at the University of Alabama, is part of the team coordinating an eight-week study of restless leg syndrome, also known as Willis-Ekbom disease.
STUDY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

as electrical impulses, or worms crawling inside their legs, or other uncomfortable sensations. Cuellar estimated the disorder affects 8 to 10 percent of the country’s population.

"Everybody has a different description. That’s why it is so hard to diagnose," Cuellar said.

There are two types of RLS, she said. One is associated with chronic health conditions and the other with genetic predisposition, Cuellar said.

The RLS linked to genetics often manifests in childhood, Cuellar said. Sometimes, students are misdiagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, she said. The RLS associated with chronic health concerns typically begins with the chronic conditions.

One of the stigmas of the disorder is disbelief that it is an actual disease versus nerves or a condition of the mind.

“It’s not just nervousness,” Cuellar said.

People with RLS worry about the onset of the symptoms during the day, she said. The anxiety over the symptoms can affect their health.

The study plans to have about 24 participants. The control group will have 12, and the active group will have the remaining 12, Cuellar said.

The study is focusing on mindfulness-based stress reduction strategies meant to help the patients relax. The meditation done at the appropriate time could help the RLS patients relax, Cuellar said.

The participants, who will be compensated for their time, will attend two-hour classes once a week to focus on the meditation process and learn about RLS. The classes include stretches and exercise routines. The participants will also be asked to practice the meditation techniques outside of class.

The researchers will collect information about the participants sleep, stress and anxiety levels before the study, at the midpoint and at the end of the eight-week trial, Cuellar said. Participants will wear monitoring equipment for five nights at home to allow the researchers to collect data.

The trial, currently being funded by the Capstone College of Nursing and UA’s Research Grants Committee, is a pilot for a larger study the researchers hope to fund with National Institutes of Health grants. Cuellar has had previous funding from NIH for research with treatments and causes of RLS.

The researchers working on the grant are Cuellar, psychology professor Beverly Thorn, assistant psychology professor Natalie Dautovich, clinical research psychologist Josh Eyer and Dr. James Geyer, who is an active research collaborator with the Sleep Research Project in the department of Psychology.

“We are all collaborating and looking at improving health outcomes for RLS,” Cuellar said.

People interested in participating should email Cuellar at aucuellar@ua.edu or call her office at 205-348-8368. Cuellar said email is the preferred form of communication.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
UA campus gets a new look

New, improved facilities greet college students as they return

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Buildings shrouded last fall in scaffolding were open this week as University of Alabama students returned to campus for the 2014 fall semester.

The university has substantially completed work on a renovation and expansion of the Ferguson Student Center, a new $32 million student activity center, a $62.8 million residence hall and a new location for the Fresh Food Co. UA also completed work this summer on Sidney McDonald Hall, the new $13.3 administrative building for the UA system.

UA is also wrapping up work on a new $4.65 million facility for the women’s rowing team at Manderson Landing.

The university added about 75,000 square feet to the Ferguson Center. The $45.1 million addition and renovation to the student center was approved in 2011, and work began in 2013.

The project added out the food court on the second floor, expanded the SUPe Store on the first floor, expanded the Career Center and added new offices and a new main entrance on the south side of the building.

The SUPe Store increased its floor space from 26,000 square feet to 44,000 square feet.

On the second floor, more seating space was added in 

A 40-foot climbing wall is one of the main features in UA’s new student activity center.

See next page
the food court, which was expanded into the space formerly occupied by the Fresh Food Co., and the help desk that previously sat inside the west entrance was moved.

"It really just opens up the space so much more," said Steve Hood, interim vice president for Student Affairs.

UA Dining Services added Auntie Anne's pretzels, Panda Express and Wendy's restaurants in Ferguson as part of the renovations. The Fresh Food Co., which previously occupied the space, moved to a new $15.6-million free-standing building near the Rogers Library for Science and Engineering.

The center's Chick-fil-A store and Union Market were expanded. The center's food options still include Subway and Topio's, though Burger King was removed in favor of Wendy's.

"Really what we are finding is national brands are the way to go," said A.J. DeFalco, district manager for Dining Services.

The Ferguson's new southwest entrance was still blocked off by chain-link fences as classes resumed Wednesday but was open by the end of the week. Workers were finishing the installation of sod and other final touches.

"It will really be a dramatic change for us," Hood said of the new entrance from the promenade.

The entrance, with a large university seal set in the floor of the foyer, leads onto the second floor and a series of new offices that house the Student Government Association, the Office of the Dean of Students, Fraternity and Sorority Life and the Blackburn Institute.

The south side of the building is also home to the "great hall," a gathering space with large fire places and windows looking out onto a colonnaded porch.

It's meant to be a comfortable space for students to gather, Hood said.

The Career Center on the third floor overlooks the great hall. The move and expansion makes the office more visible and welcoming, according to executive director Travis Railsback.

The office increased its interview rooms from 11 to 18. The office had roughly 6,000 students through the office last year for one-on-one meetings and 16,000 for group sessions, Railsback said. The office was host to about 4,000 interviews between students and potential employers.

The new Student Activity Center at the Presidential Village opened about two weeks before students returned on Wednesday.

"Right out of the chute we are getting about 1,500 a day," said George Brown, executive director of university recreation.

It's about 5,000 a day across all of the center's various platforms from weights and cardiovascular exercise equipment, to basketball courts and climbing walls, Brown said.

The new center on the north side of campus opened Aug. 4. The adjacent $62.8-million second phase of the Presidential Village residential community also opened in time for the start of the fall semester.
While construction is substantially complete on the activity center, workers are still finishing construction of dining options, including a Fuel Smoothie Bar, grab-and-go convenience vending, a deli and a Starbucks Coffee on the first floor.

While the new facility was built with the intent of serving the Presidential Village and other residential communities on the north side of campus, the center is open to all with a recreation membership. The center adds about 85,000 square feet of recreation space the university's capacity.

Brown said complaints about crowding at the recreation center on the east side of campus also contributed to the decision to build the new center.

On the first floor and second floors are a series of rooms and spaces devoted to strength and cardiovascular training. The university spent about $1 million on weight and fitness equipment for the new building. The new center has helped ease crowding at the recreation center.

"It’s not so much we realigned where users go... We have grown new users," Brown said.

The second floor has three multipurpose courts, with one enclosed to serve as an indoor soccer field. The center also houses offices for the Housing and Residential Communities, and the Women's Rowing Team.

The bottom floor is a FEMA-rated storm shelter capable of housing roughly 3,200 people, Brown said. The large bare concrete room can be used for other functions in fair weather as long as it can be cleared quickly in case of emergency, he said.

Just inside glass doors of the entrance to the activity center is a new climbing wall — a feature meant as an impressive introduction to the new center.

"We intentionally and very purposefully wanted it to be a wow factor," Brown said of the wall which rises almost to the skylight of the building.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
UA seeks donations for Tide scholarship

Staff report

The University of Alabama’s College of Arts and Sciences Ambassadors will conduct a two-week campaign to promote the Rising Tide Scholarship, which will provide aid to students facing a variety of challenges.

The ambassadors kicked off the campaign, which will include on-campus events, social media promotions and spirit nights at participating Tuscaloosa restaurants, on Monday at the Ferguson Center plaza.

The goal is to have the college’s 8,500 students donate $1 to the scholarship fund and to build shared community support for the scholarship.

The ambassadors are also asking faculty and alumni to consider matching a contribution by a student, class or honor society. The goal is to raise $25,000 to endow the scholarship, which was inspired by student Marcita Cole’s response to a social media poll about what students would do as dean of the college for a day.

The ambassadors are using an “elephant bank” made of wood and Plexiglas around campus to help solicit the $1 donations. Students can also make donations by swiping their ACTion cards at the donation centers set up near the elephant or by donating online by visiting the College of Arts and Sciences website, clicking “Give to A&S” and “Give Now,” and selecting the “Rising Tide Endowed Scholarship” account.

As part of the drive, some area restaurants will donate a portion of their proceeds to the fund. Participating restaurants include:

- The Midtown Village location of Dickey’s Barbecue Pit from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday.
- Jason’s Deli from 5 to 9 p.m. Wednesday.
- McAlister’s Deli on 15th Street from 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday.
- Bob’s Victory Grille from 5 to 9 p.m. Sept. 1.
- Jim ‘N Nick’s Bar-B-Q from 5 to 9 p.m. Sept. 2.
- Buffalo Wild Wings from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sept. 3 with copy of the campaign flier.
- Panda Express from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sept. 4 with a copy of flier.

For more information, including fliers for Buffalo Wild Wings and Panda Express, visit A&S Student Services on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/astuservices) and Twitter (@AS_StuServices).
How you'll know when discrimination is over

After years of racial tension in its Greek life community — tension that came to a point in 2013 — the University of Alabama took a small step forward this month.

"Every young woman identifying herself as African-American received a bid," said Deborah M. Lane, associate vice president for university relations at UA, through a statement.

Lane acknowledged that the results of this year's bid process were positive, if incomplete. "They do indicate that we are making progress," she said. "We have not reached our destination, but we will continue to move forward with resolve, energy and enthusiasm."

Thousands of sorority participants became pledges as Alabama held its annual Bid Day, Saturday. (Vasha Hunt/vhunt@al.com)

So what does that "destination" look like? If the NFL offers an example, it is when a proportionate number of African-American women are denied bids to UA sororities.

In early 2004, a groundbreaking paper written by University of Pennsylvania academic Janice Fanning Madden was published in the Journal of Sports Economics. Through her work, Madden showed that African-American head coaches in the NFL were substantially more successful than their white colleagues in games played between the 1990 and 2002 seasons.

The important implication of this work was not that African-Americans make for better NFL coaches. Instead, Madden showed that African-American coaches were held to a much higher standard by NFL teams throughout the hiring process.

Back in Tuscaloosa, it's likely that all 21 of the African-American women who accepted bids were stellar candidates. All 16 Panhellenic sororities at Alabama offered bids to African-American women, the school reports, but the women accepted bids from just 10 of the sororities. Statistically speaking, demand for these women among the sororities was greater than supply.

UA's Panhellenic sororities should aspire to a "destination," as the school's administration refers to it, where there are more African-American candidates than bids available. When the school's sororities are accepting African-American women at a rate comparable to that of white applicants, it will represent the best evidence that UA's bid process is fair with regard to race.
The worst shines brighter than the best

After the University of Alabama successfully and peacefully admitted black students Vivian Malone and James Hood on June 11, 1963, Dean of Men John Blackburn walked home that day feeling pretty good. The carefully choreographed event went off without a hitch, and UA avoided the kind of chaos that exploded at the University of Mississippi the year before.

Blackburn's takeaway was that University of Alabama officials had successfully integrated the school and prevented the day's events from becoming a three-ring circus. He believed that was how history would remember the day that the university was integrated.

Unfortunately for the university, that was not the case. George Wallace had used the event to gain national prominence.

The image the nation took away was Wallace defiantly blocking the door to Foster Auditorium, and the day the university was successfully integrated instead became known for the "stand in the schoolhouse door."

It is a lesson that no one at the University of Alabama or in the state of Alabama should ever forget. People and institutions are rarely judged by the best that they do. It is often their failures that are remembered.

The university's sororities took an important step forward last year when they accepted some black members. This year, sororities took in 190 minority girls as new members, and 21 of them were black.

That might not seem like a tremendous number out of more than 2,000 new sorority members. But considering that only about 200 girls participating failed to get bids, it seems likely that a high percentage of minority girls who sought membership received a bid.

For those who have called for the integration of UA's Greek system, this is progress. It might seem like great progress to some or far too little to others, but if the goal is integrating the Greek system it is definitely a step forward.

But will that be the takeaway from the 2014 sorority rush? It easily could have been. That has become entirely questionable now.

A message sent out through a photo messaging application that included a caption with a racial slur became public. As a result, a member of Chi Omega sorority has been expelled from the university chapter. Oddly, the message implied that Chi Omega hadn't accepted any black members, which wasn't the case. It had, in fact, accepted two new black members.

It is also unclear whether the message was an ill-advised, juvenile attempt at a joke or a racist revel; the intent is entirely lost. But that really doesn't matter. The perception is that it was another example of endemic racism at the Capstone. That might seem harsh, but it is the university's historical burden to bear.

That's something for everyone associated with the University of Alabama to consider. One remark by one person can tarnish the reputation of a sorority, a Greek system, a university, a state. We are only as good as our worst moment.
DRUGS ARE EVERYWHERE

Ana Rodriguez
arostriguez@al.com

In the spring of 2011, Suzanne Norris sat inside a Tuscaloosa Starbucks thumbing through a scrapbook honoring her son, Tripp. Around her, the city was in ruins. An EF-4 tornado had ripped a black hole through its heart, and people everywhere were picking up the pieces.

Suzanne wanted one thing: She wanted the bird — a small, clay whistle her son had always worn around his neck tied with a piece of string.

“Have you seen it?” she asked Tripp’s friend, who sat across the table.

Somehow, she thought, having the bird might ease the pain. Suzanne had lost her 22-year-old son just months before — not to the storm that had taken 52 others.

Tripp died while battling a storm of his own, one that had raged inside him since high school. He died of a lethal combination of alcohol and street heroin during his senior year at the University of Alabama.

The beginning

When Rick and Suzanne Norris discuss their son, Ricky David Norris III, their eyes fill with life.

“He was a very creative boy,” said Suzanne while sitting outside her Vestavia Hills home. “He was a writer. He loved to write songs, poetry.”

A poster board cutout of The Crimson White student newspaper tribute published after Tripp’s death stood behind Rick, who’d grab it every once in a while as he talked about his son.

“He was a unique guy who was able to span all types of social groups,” said Rick. “He had friends across the board.”

Tripp grew up playing sports, said Rick. At 15, he discovered his passion for storytelling, combined it with his love for music and shared his talent as part of several different bands.

Tripp, who had always been sensitive and connected to the pulse of everyday life according to Suzanne, always kept a notebook within reach just in case inspiration came knocking.

“He felt things so differently” said Suzanne. “He saw the world differently. He was truly empathetic.”

Signs of trouble

It was those very qualities, agreed Tripp’s parents, that might have spurred him down a darker path. By the time high school rolled around, normal teenage angst magnified inside their sensitive son.

His face began to crease with wrinkles, but his secrets remained buried.

It wasn’t until after his death that Rick and Suzanne learned their son had struggled so much during his years at Vestavia Hills High School.

“I know now that he was a functioning alcoholic,” said Rick. “He’d sip vodka before class in the mornings.”

Things only worsened after Tripp graduated and enrolled at the University of Montevallo. Miles from home and with the newfound independence of a college freshman, Tripp slipped into a dependence from which he couldn’t pull himself out.

He went home to his parents and asked for help over Labor Day weekend.

“He’d gotten really strung out on drugs,” said Rick, all of which was compounded with post-traumatic stress brought on by the sudden deaths of some of his friends.

Looking ahead

Tripp got the help he

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"We thought we were doing everything right. This can happen to anyone."

Suzanne Norris  
Mother of Ricky David Norris III

needed, stayed out of school for a little more than a year and concentrated on his well-being.  
When he enrolled at the University of Alabama, things looked brighter.  
At UA, the English major made a name for himself.  
"He was a genius — a tremendous writer and
performer," said his best friend of nine years, Carter Glascock, in a Crimson White interview.

Johnny Hicks, who played in a band with Tripp since they were both 16, said Tripp didn't shy away from the spotlight.

"He was always the front man," Hicks told the CW. "He commanded attention, and people would come out to see our band just to watch Tripp perform."

Tripp excelled in school, impressed his teachers and seemed to be on a better path.

Still, his parents maintained close communication with him and never shied away from asking the tough questions. Suzanne would make the trip to Tuscaloosa at least once a month, and Rick made it a point to talk to him on the phone every day. Tripp made regular trips home for his mom's warm casseroles and his dad's dirty jokes.

What Rick and Suzanne learned, however, is that things aren't always as good as they appear.

"Just because you get the, 'Yes, everything is fine,' answer, doesn't mean that it is," Suzanne said.

Feb. 25, 2011

When the phone rang in the middle of the night, Rick and Suzanne braced themselves for what they thought would be news about Suzanne's brother. Suzanne had spent the day at her brother's bedside in hospice care — the nurses didn't think he'd make it through the night.

But the person on the line had another message: Tripp had been taken to the hospital.

By the time they arrived, their son was already gone — taken by $20 worth of street heroin and the alcohol that had flowed through his body.

Life without Tripp

Months after losing her son, Suzanne left that Tuscaloosa Starbucks with a heavy heart.

Destruction was everywhere. Tripp's former home was swept up by the tornado. She thought Tripp's ceramic bird would never be found.

Before she'd even made it down the street that day, however, Tripp's friend called. One of his other buddies had found the
bird that same day under a couch.

"God does answer prayers," Suzanne said.

She had a little part of her son back — a message that he was still with her.

Three years, hours of reflection and many tears later, Suzanne and Rick Norris speak of their son's death openly.

"My biggest fear is that Tripp will be forgotten," Suzanne said.

Together, Tripp's parents have ensured that the entirety of Tripp's story is told. No longer, said Rick, can parents live behind a misguided notion that their children are immune to the ever-present threats of alcohol and drugs.

"My perception of heroin was that it was shot up in the back of dark alleys," Rick said. "That it was a dirty drug that didn't belong in our community and wouldn't affect our children."

After Tripp's death, Rick and Suzanne learned that it wasn't the first time their son had used heroin. Each time, said his friends, he would try to hide it, ashamed of the behavior.

Tripp had been clean for almost a year before that February night.

The autopsy revealed the extent of Tripp's struggle. At 22, he already had extensive liver damage. Puncture wounds where heroin streamed into his bloodstream were found in the crevices of the lower-half of his body, visible proof of just how far he went to hide his problem.

This week, Rick and Suzanne did their part to make sure other parents don't face the same fate. They shared their journey — openly and honestly — during the first "Help the Hills" event at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church.

Tripp's story, they believe, is all too common in places like Vestavia Hills among well-to-do families and successful kids.

"It's an epidemic," Rick said. "Drugs are everywhere."

Since Tripp's death, more than 150 people have died of heroin overdoses across the Birmingham area — from Birmingham to Mountain Brook and in almost every affluent suburb surrounding the city.

Rick and Suzanne said they don't have all the answers, but they hope to open the eyes of other parents.

"We thought we were doing everything right," Suzanne said. "This can happen to anyone."
Are layoffs on horizon at UAB Medicine?

UAB Medicine employees were informed in June that there would be no raises in January and layoffs were not off the table. Now this week comes news that UAB Medicine is working with a consultant on a comprehensive review to reduce expenses in the light of changes in the health care industry. Despite further rumors of impending layoffs, there is no timetable for any decisions, officials say.

READ THE FULL STORY . 3
UAB Medicine reviewing expense reductions

**WHAT'S THE PLAN? THEY'RE WORKING WITH CONSULTANT ON COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW; NO TIMETABLE FOR DECISIONS.**

William Thornton  

UAB Medicine is working with a consultant as it conducts a comprehensive review to reduce expenses in the light of changes in the health care industry. Despite rumors of impending layoffs, there is no timetable for any decisions as a result of the review, UAB Medicine COO Reid Jones said. Officials are working with Navigant Consulting, the same firm UAB worked with on a similar initiative in 2009.

This also comes after employees were informed in June that there would be no raises in January and layoffs were not off the table.

What's the immediate effect? As he stated in May, Jones said "the review of our overall staffing levels includes 400 open positions. It is unlikely all of those will be filled."

There are 13,000 full time and 3,300 part time employees at UAB Medicine, which includes the state's largest hospital, UAB Hospital.

**Feeling the squeeze**

Health care industries are being squeezed by various factors nationwide, including less education funding, flat grant funding from the National Institutes of Health and more regulations to reduce waste. Hospitals are also being paid by the federal government in different ways as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Like many hospital systems, UAB faces shrinking Medicare money and low Medicaid reimbursements. Those government programs account for more than 50 percent of revenues at hospitals, according to the Alabama Hospital Association.

Jones said UAB Medicine's review is no different than strategies implemented at other academic medical centers, such as Vanderbilt, Cleveland Clinic and Massachusetts General Hospital.

"UAB has had a track record of good financial performance, but operational changes are necessary to adapt to the changing landscape," Jones said. "UAB Medicine is conducting a comprehensive review of all entities within the organization to increase alignment, optimize efficiency, and emphasize quality outcomes and the patient and family experience."

Included in the review will be expense reduction, growth strategies and ways to increase revenue, Jones said.

"Once our review is complete, we will determine the appropriate supplies, services, contracts and workforce to deliver the highest standard of care, and we will make thoughtful decisions that allow UAB to remain a strong and vibrant resource for Alabama and beyond," he said.
UAB harnesses technology to connect with patients, reduce readmission rates

By: Ian Hoppe

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- The University of Alabama at Birmingham Medicine has just launched a new program that leverages technology to educate patients on their health condition and lower readmission rates.

Readmission rates, as you may or may not be aware, are a constant concern for any medical system as they could represent a lack of post-discharge planning, care coordination among providers, or a shortage of local primary care.

The Birmingham area had readmission rates below the national average as of 2010 when this Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study was released.

Check out this interactive map to compare Birmingham's readmission rates to other places in the country.

UAB has collaborated with Emmi Solutions to launch the program. Emmi is a worldwide healthcare communications company that seeks to more intimately connect a doctor to his patients through technology and catch potential problems before they start.

"Beyond delivering recovery instructions, our call campaigns track patient feedback and facilitate targeted outreach, enabling UAB's care staff to utilize their resources efficiently, reaching out to patients at risk for readmission who require intervention the most." said said Devin Gross, CEO of Emmi Solutions.

Apart from personalized, automated phone calls that keep in touch with the patients and compile data on their status, the program also offers a suite of multimedia visualizations to patients.

These visualizations are available on any computer or mobile device and carefully explain the patient's condition to them in terms that they can understand. The hope is that this kind of ongoing, interactive education with patients will facilitate more productive, proactive conversations between patients and doctors and encourage followup appointments. It also might keep them off of internet medical scare-sites.

"We are focused on extending communication beyond the four walls of the hospital, to not only share valuable instructions but also monitor patient care," said UAB Hospital Chief Quality Officer Benjamin Taylor, M.D., MPH. "Being a part of our patients' path to wellness doesn't end when they leave our hospital."
Community food bank: Many hungry kids live above poverty line, study says

When assessing child hunger, sometimes you have to look beyond a parent's paycheck. More than 75,000 of Alabama's food-insecure children live in households whose income is above the federal poverty line, making them ineligible for nutrition programs like free or reduced school meals, according to Feedingamerica.org's Map the Meal Gap study.

"There's a pocket of people who are working their tails off, but kids are still hungry," said Mary Michael Kelley, executive director of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. Assistance for those families can be found in a backpack.

The Weekenders Backpack Program is one of the many ways organizations are helping to keep Alabama's children healthy and happy.

"It's a need that grew from teachers," said Amanda Storey, the food bank's director of community food programs and initiatives. "Kids were coming to school hungry. Teachers noticed that need and began making extra sandwiches at home. And cafeteria workers also notice children who rush lines. They witness this need."

With their help, the backpack program provides sustenance.

School counselors identify chronically hungry children, who are then given backpacks of food on weekends and holidays. "The program is discreet," Kelley said. "We don't want the names of the children — it's all anonymous."

The backpacks are assembled by volunteers each week and delivered to partner schools. The University of Alabama at Birmingham's dietetic group ensures the meals are nutritionally appropriate. During the most recent school year, the program supported 1,100 students at 25 sites in three counties.

Well-nourished kids make better students. "Teachers say attention spans are better, behavior improves, they aren't falling asleep on their desks — they show up more refreshed," Kelley said.

Of course, when school ends for summer vacation, some students still need assistance. The food bank addressed that need by taking food directly to students in their neighborhoods.

"It's not hard to feed a kid," Kelley said. "You just have to have the food and then show up."
GET READY TO WRAP

Michael Huebner • mhuebner@al.com

Long swaths of colorful fabric will soon be stretched over two UAB buildings as the final stages of “Magic Chromacity” unfold under the direction of Brooklyn artist Amanda Browder.

The project, which began in April, was designed for UAB’s cultural corridor and commissioned by the UAB Department of Art and Art History, the College of Arts and Sciences and the two institutions the fabric will adorn: the Alys Stephens Center and Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Art.

It has been a community venture, with recycled and donated fabric from Brooklyn and Birmingham being cut, folded and stretched by volunteers. Desert Island Supply Company, ArtPlay, Bottletree, Forstall Art Center, Alabama Art Supply, Birmingham Museum of Art and Bib & Tucker Sew-Op have all had a hand in it.

With “Magic Chromacity,” Browder has orchestrated “a physical installation that connects to both our sense of spectacle and our feeling of the familiar,” she said in a statement. “Although the forms are abstract, the use of bright colors and familiar materials creates a perceptual accessibility that welcomes a quick response. The transitory aspect of the installation, a feature more commonly associated with the performing arts, reminds us that memory is a primary basis of community culture.”

Browder has made two visits to Birmingham to oversee the initial stages. “Magic Chromacity” will remain on display until Sept. 6.

Here is the schedule of events:

- Aug. 27. Installation completed.
- Aug. 28, 6 p.m. Free public lecture by Amanda Browder, AEIVA, 1221 Tenth Ave. South.
- Aug. 29, 5-7:30 p.m. Opening reception, AEIVA.
- Aug. 29 through Sept. 5. “Magic Chromacity” on display with illumination each night.
'OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD'

When there was trouble with a heart transplant, Dr. Jim Caulfield knew why. UAB Hospital would call him in to study the heart tissue and determine if the patient was rejecting the transplant.

"His beeper would go off, and he'd rush to the hospital," said his son, John. "He loved it."

Caulfield was a giant in the field of heart disease research in the 1960s, one of the earliest physicians working to perfect balloon angioplasty, a method of mechanically opening up blocked arteries. Fellow doctors nicknamed him "the balloon man."

UAB recruited him in 1984 to strengthen cardiovascular research and teaching. He taught a generation of doctors in pathology — the study of diseases — until his retirement in 2004.

Caulfield died on Aug. 16. He was 87.

"He was out to save the world through his research," his daughter Ann, said. "He thought that's what he was here for."

In recent years, despite poor health, Caulfield continued to attend weekly pathology meetings.

CAULFIELD:
UAB HEART DOCTOR NICKNAmed "BALLOON MAN" PERFECTED BALLOON ANGIOPLASTY.

...even when he had to be brought in by wheelchair. "His mind was brilliant until the end," said Dr. Silvio Litovsky, who took over Caulfield's teaching duties when he retired. Caulfield never retired from giving advice.

"He always wore khaki pants, a navy blazer and a straw hat," said Dr. Ona Faye-Petersen, a pediatric perinatal pathologist. "He'd always sit in the back of conferences and, every once in a while, would offer a comment on the history and evolution of pathology and incorporation of future research."

What he said often revealed that he was one of the pioneers of pathology in America.

"He'd sort out problems," said Dr. Bruce Alexander, professor and vice chair of the department of pathology. "His opinion was highly sought after."

After serving as a physician in the Marine Corps during the Korean War, Caulfield taught at Harvard University and did research at the Rockefeller Institute. In 1959, he was recruited to Massachusetts General
Hospital, where he used an electron microscope to study the effects on the heart during diabetic kidney disease.

"Electron microscopy was just coming on the scene and Dr. Caulfield was one of the primary people using it," said Paul Norton, who was a laboratory technician for Caulfield from 1963-73 at Massachusetts General. "It was a brand-new thing. Almost anything you looked at was new. The heart muscle was just beginning to be understood."

Caulfield studied heart disease, kidney disease and related skin lesions through the electron microscope and published dozens of influential medical journal articles that are still cited today, Norton said.

"He kind of discovered the collagen network in the heart," said Dr. Peter Anderson, a UAB professor of pathology. "He was always thinking of things differently. The heart looks like a muscle, but it's got a scaffolding. It's surrounded by tissue that releases molecules that control the heart."

The book "Keen Minds to Explore the Dark Continents of Disease," a 2011 history of the pathology work of Massachusetts General Hospital, noted that Caulfield "defined the major cause of cardiogenic shock and the secondary myocardial lesions induced by this syndrome."

At the Shriners Hospital pediatric burn center, he studied tissue damage and tissue repair. "He was able to prolong the life of severely burned patients," said his daughter Ann. "He was really proud of the work he did for those kids in the burn unit."

In 1971, he became a pathologist at the Atherosclerosis Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He left Massachusetts General in 1975 and became chairman of pathology at the University of South Carolina before ending his career at UAB.

"He worked with engineers to create a machine to biopsy muscle tissue," said his other daughter Clare. "You would put tissue in and it would evaluate how healthy the tissue was. He was so hard-working. He was such a dedicated person."

Caulfield's wife of more than 60 years, Virginia, died last year. Caulfield cared for her for years when she was in poor health, the Rev. Kevin Bazzel said at his funeral on Thursday at the Cathedral of St. Paul. "Dr. Caulfield was very loving and very deliberate in his care for his wife," Bazzel said. "He really experienced life. He was always asking 'What more could I learn, what more could I do, to benefit another?"
UN Panel: Global Warming Human-Caused, Dangerous

Global warming is here, human-caused and probably already dangerous — and it's increasingly likely that the heating trend could be irreversible, a draft of a new international science report says.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on Monday sent governments a final draft of its synthesis report, which combines three earlier, gigantic documents by the Nobel Prize-winning group. There is little in the report that wasn't in the other more-detailed versions, but the language is more stark and the report attempts to connect the different scientific disciplines studying problems caused by the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas.

The 127-page draft, obtained by The Associated Press, paints a harsh warning of what's causing global warming and what it will do to humans and the environment. It also describes what can be done about it.

"Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems," the report says. The final report will be issued after governments and scientists go over the draft line by line in an October conference in Copenhagen.

Depending on circumstances and values, "currently observed impacts might already be considered dangerous," the report says. It mentions extreme weather and rising sea levels, such as heat waves, flooding and droughts. It even raises, as an earlier report did, the idea that climate change will worsen violent conflicts and refugee problems and could hinder efforts to grow more food. And ocean acidification, which comes from the added carbon absorbed by oceans, will harm marine life, it says.

Without changes in greenhouse gas emissions, "climate change risks are likely to be high or very high by the end of the 21st century," the report says.

In 2009, countries across the globe set a goal of limiting global warming to about another 2 degrees Fahrenheit above current levels. But the report says that it is looking more likely that the world will shoot past that point. Limiting warming to that much is possible but would require dramatic and immediate cuts in carbon dioxide pollution.

The report says if the world continues to spew greenhouse gases at its accelerating rate, it's likely that by mid-century temperatures will increase by about another 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) compared to temperatures from 1986 to 2005. And by the end of the century, that scenario will bring temperatures that are about 6.7 degrees warmer (3.7 degrees Celsius).
"The report tells us once again what we know with a greater degree of certainty: that climate change is real, it is caused by us, and it is already causing substantial damage to us and our environment," Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann wrote in an email. "If there is one take home point of this report it is this: We have to act now."

John Christy of the University of Alabama, Huntsville, is in the tiny minority of scientists who are skeptical of mainstream science's claim that global warming is a major problem. He says people will do OK: "Humans are clever. We shall adapt to whatever happens."

While projections show that the world will warm and climate will change, there's still a level of uncertainty about how much, and that makes the problem all about how much risk we accept, said MIT climate scientist Kerry Emanuel.

If it's soon and only a little risk, he said, that's not too bad, but when you look at the risk curve the other end of it is "very frightening."

The report used the word risk 351 times in just 127 pages.

- AP
SIFTING THROUGH THE DATA

UAH STUDY: RESEARCHERS CAN DO MORE THAN EVER WITH TORNADO DATA.

Kevin Knupp, UAH professor of atmospheric science and director of UAH's new Severe Weather Institute, Radar and Lightning Laboratories.
Tornado research by the University of Alabama in Huntsville is featured on the cover of one of the nation's top weather journals.

The Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society has published research led by UAH atmospheric professor Kevin Knupp and could lead to additional funding for the school to continue studying tornadoes.

The research focused on the deadly tornado outbreak on April 27, 2011, that killed 238 people in Alabama.

Knupp and others at UAH were in the field that day collecting high-tech data that played an integral role in the research.

"The motivation for doing this was really two-fold," Knupp said. "The first, a weather disaster of that magnitude really should have a place in the journals — the documentation of the event.

"The second component really is to provide this preliminary analysis that will indicate that there is some good data here that would justify a more detailed analysis and there is several components that we highlighted in the article we felt would be well-worth pursuing if we had additional funding."

Knupp said the research has provided new understanding about tornadoes and what factors play into making them even more dangerous. That includes gravity waves — or the movement of the air across the surface of the earth — as well as topography and surface roughness.

"Now the takeaway for the general public, we have the capabilities to do the research and we're actively doing research on tornadoes to better understand how they form and what factors control their intensity," Knupp said. "We believe that there are external controls, such as gravity waves, that might influence storms. The topography certainly plays a role, and just surface roughness or friction and, more specifically, horizontal variations in surface roughness are very likely to play a role in serving as the spark to light the fire to initiate a tornado."

Knupp also spelled out ideas on what made that day three years ago even more dangerous than was already anticipated.

"It was recognized by the Storm Prediction Center it would be a potentially big tornado day. We were under high risk. We had all of the basic ingredients in place for such a high risk day."

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Even though it was a high-risk day, the way that it evolved was rather interesting because we had three waves of activity in northern Alabama. The first two, I think, set the stage for the final episode of really devastating tornadoes that were produced by supercells in the afternoon and evening hours. And that mechanism was the initial activity laid down a cool air mass over northern Alabama.

"There was a point where you had a transition from the cool, moist air to the warm moist air from the south that correlated with the formation of tornadoes. When storms cross that zone of contrast, they produce tornadoes. So there is a very high correlation between that horizontal contrast in temperature and where tornadoes formed. And because that boundary was parallel to storm motions, storms as they moved along stayed close to that source of rotation. I think of it as a source of rotation at low levels. I think that explains, at least partially explains, why so many tornadoes were long-tracked and large and intense."

While the article wasn't available to the public until Friday evening, UAH highlighted some key findings:

- Roughly 90 percent of the supercell thunderstorms that day produced tornadoes, compared to the normal rate of about 25 percent. While some factors leading to tornado formation are known — and the known parameters that warn of potential violent weather were unusually high on April 27 — it is not clear what combination of weather features that day turned so many storm cells into tornado producers.
- While the cause/effect relationships might be debated, it seems likely that several factors external to the storms — including topography, gravity waves in the atmosphere, and the presence of a thermal boundary — each interacted with different storm cells during the day at times when tornadoes were created or when existing tornadoes intensified.
- A weather balloon launched at UAH received detailed temperature readings from the surface into the upper atmosphere, and it found a temperature profile that contradicts what weather models had predicted for storms of that type. This could change the scientific understanding of the large-scale physics at work in major, violent storm systems.

Knupp said he is preparing a large-scale grant proposal to seek additional tornado research funding. The article in the AMS journal is "good advertising," Knupp said, as well as expected opening of the SWIRLL building in a few weeks.

SWIRLL — Severe Weather Institute, Radar & Lightning Laboratory — was conceived soon after the 2011 tornado outbreaks. Knupp has been named director of SWIRLL.

Ultimately, Knupp said he envisions a broad field study of tornadoes in North Alabama that would include experts from across the country and the participation of other universities devoted to weather and tornado research.

The proposal also includes expanding the research beyond the April 27 event using data collected in storms since then, Knupp said.
Wildfire Prediction Sees Improvements In Modeling

A single battle with a large wildfire can easily burn $1 million a day in firefighting costs alone. National and state costs combined have exploded to nearly $3.5 billion annually, and firefighting costs are not the end of the story. In an environment of global heating and prevailing droughts, firefighting costs are just the beginning of a nightmarish reality. From homeowners to housing developers, forest fighters to forestry management teams, and from state to federal government agencies, everyone stands anxiously in need of improved wildfire prediction. Fortunately, improvements in modeling wildfire behavior are now being made by a dedicated team at the University of Alabama Huntsville.

Current Wildfire Prediction Is Poor, While Fire Incidents Are Rising

The total number of acres burned annually in the U.S. is rising due to increasing effects of climate change. The average size of each fire is continuing to increase, and with this comes an increase in the number of U.S. Forest Service firefighters on call. The costs to battle this increase in wildfires are rising higher and higher, and exacting a terrible toll on human life and property, as well as wildlife and wilderness terrain. And, unfortunately, all of this is coming at a time when answers to global warming are slow and confidence in current reliability of wildfire prediction is low.

“If a fire began in the forest, where would the perimeter be in two hours, four hours or six hours?” asks Dr. Shankar Mahalingam, dean of the UAH College of Engineering, and professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. He continues, “That currently is about the range of prediction ability that we have with operational fire behavior models, for low intensity fires. If we can better understand scientifically how wildland fires behave, we’ll have a better chance to accurately predict the spatial and temporal evolution of high intensity wildfires.”

Envisioning Wildfire Forecasting As Accurate As Weather Forecasting

Dr. Mahalingam is studying how wildfire propagates. He foresees a future of accurate wildfire prediction through physically based computational models. He and his team’s wildfire modeling and prediction efforts were recently published by the University of Alabama Huntsville. Dr. Mahalingam says he believes the day will come when wildfire behavior will be forecasted just as accurately as computer models now forecast tomorrow’s weather.

“My vision is that, just like you have fairly reasonable weather predictions today for what is going to happen tomorrow that have evolved to be very accurate compared to where they started out in the 1940s and ’50s, we can have that with fires,” Dr. Mahalingam says. “We look at the weather forecast every day to tell us how to prepare for tomorrow, and that is because we can predict the weather with a large degree of confidence.”

Dr. Mahalingam says the “pure experience” of firefighters and forest managers is guiding current wildfire prediction efforts. He and his collaborator, UAH Mechanical and Aerospace

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Using Computers To Model The Fluid Dynamics Of Fire

"In a computer model we are using very small volumes of space, on the order of one cubic millimeter on one end to a cubic meter on the other end," Dr. Mahalingam says. "We model these on a grid as a region of space. Fire is a process in which the energy release will drive the airflow around it and the resulting fluid dynamics will in turn drive the fire." A necessary precondition to sustaining fire on the leading edge is continual warming. This heat releases the chemicals in the fuels that are needed for combustion.

"I was studying marginal burning behavior, which I call a fire transition phenomena," Dr. Mahalingam says. "Fire is losing heat through radiative and convective heat transfer and it is gaining heat as energy is produced as a result of combustion, so it is an energy balance problem."

While at the University of California Riverside, Dr. Mahalingam studied marginal burning in close association with the U.S. Forest Service. "When they go out and do these prescribed fires, sometimes on day one the fuels don't ignite easily and spread, but they can come back there on day two and it will light and spread," he says. "This situation is termed marginal burning. I began to study why the prescribed fire spreads. Under what conditions does it spread and when does it not spread?"

The Most Sensitive Variables For Prediction of Wildfire Spread Are Wind And Moisture

Wildfire fuel is provided mostly by undergrowth, so Dr. Mahalingam's research focused on three prevalent species of shrub or small tree in southern California. He studied the chamise bush; the manzanita, which can grow as a bush or small tree; and the scrub oak, a small tree. Each fuel type was modeled through an annual seasonal cycle, seeking marginal burning impacts. The team experimented with fuel type and moisture content, wind, relative humidity, and ground slope as impacting variables.

"We found that one of the most sensitive elements that is required for fire to spread is wind and the other is moisture," Dr. Mahalingam says. Rising temperatures in California occur with the seasonal Santa Anna winds. This flammable environment combines to both dry the fuel, facilitating ignition, and fan the flames to sustain combustion.

In 2010, Dr. Mahalingam came to the University of Alabama in Huntsville, continuing his work in collaboration with Dr. Shotorban. Even though U.S. wildfires are associated mostly with the western region, in 2013 Alabama experienced 1,284 wildfires, including some large springtime blazes. Almost 26 thousand acres, or roughly 40 square miles of land were burned in one year alone. There has been a similar significant increase of wildfires in every region of the country.

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Comparing Controlled Burnings With Computer Model Wildfire Predictions

The UAH scientists are specifically studying the interaction of fires in shrubs near each other. This interaction can result in energy hot spots in a blazing wildfire. They are determining how proximity and wind can influence shrub combustion factors. Shrubs burned in controlled settings are then being compared to computer-modeled shrub fires to assess the quality of the wildfire prediction.

“We light the shrub, then figure out how much time it takes to burn out,” Dr. Mahalingam says. “We calculate how much mass is consumed so that we can then replicate that in our model. We are also interested in the details of the fire, like the vortices created.”

Working To Predict Rates And Areas Of Fire Spread Days In Advance

The quest for reliable, scientific, computerized wildfire prediction is driving Dr. Mahalingam. “My hope is that the time period of fire prediction can be extended to several day and nighttime cycles ahead,” he says. “You have to include the nighttime cycles separately because they present a very different set of atmospheric circumstances for the fire. I want us to be able to predict fire behavior with a high degree of confidence.”

The researchers believe when we understand better the scientific factors behind fire behavior, we’ll have a better chance for accurate wildfire prediction. Several of the keys are assessing fuel distribution, combustion factors and intense energy production regions. When these assessments can be made, Dr. Mahalingam’s team believes the rate and area of a fire’s spread can be predicted days in advance.

Associated Technological Advancements May Be Anticipated

Whole new markets could emerge from technological progress in wildfire prediction. Many new improvements may be anticipated, from new tools to assist the firefighters, to advanced logistical services planning for staging crews and equipment, and in forest management’s ability to assess potential threats, as well as governmental agencies’ budgetary planning for firefighting costs.

Even developers of residential subdivisions may anticipate accumulated wildfire prediction data influencing their future designs. Lending institutions and property insurers will certainly take interest in this data, as well. But, with families and properties sitting on the burning edge of real and terrible danger, it is future homeowners and buyers who will likely be the ones benefiting the earliest and the most from improved wildfire prediction. For all of us, this improvement can not come soon enough, and will be very welcome when it arrives.
Arts Council to welcome creator of hit series 'Mike and Molly' during theatre symposium at UAH

By: Amethyst Holmes

The Arts Council will host the second annual Lee Deal Theatre Symposium at the University of Alabama in Huntsville Saturday, Sept. 6 from 1 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Presented in part by The Arts Council and UAH Theatre with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the symposium is named after, Lee Deal, a former UAH student and an actor in the local theatre community for nearly three decades.

The day will feature three workshops including a Q&A session with the creator of "Mike and Molly," Mark Roberts. Along with his credits as an executive producer and head writer for Two and a Half Men for seven seasons and executive consultant for early episodes of The Big Bang Theory, Roberts is also as a playwright and actor.

Bill Billions of Hollywood Huntsville will draw from his experience in the Hollywood film and TV industry to lead a workshop on auditioning for commercial, film and voiceover work across the Southeast. David Harwell, UAH professor and theatre director, will lead a session on how to find low budget solutions to costly set design issues. Julie Crawford, executive director of The American Association of Community Theatre will lead this year's plenary session.

The workshop schedule allows participants to attend up to three sessions and a plenary session. Registration is $20. Visit artshuntsville.org for more information.
Who uses Facebook? 6 personality traits that Alabama researcher says define its users

By: Paul Gattis

So who uses Facebook? Is it someone more outgoing or someone who keeps to themselves?

And why, exactly, do people who use Facebook expend the effort to maintain an active profile on the world's most-used social media website?

A researcher at the University of Alabama in Huntsville has been studying those questions and more. Pavica Sheldon is an assistant professor in the Communications Arts department at UAH and has done several studies on Facebook use by college students.

In findings released Wednesday by the school, Sheldon delved deep into the personality traits that tend to define Facebook users.

1. Shy people spend more time on Facebook than those who are outgoing, even if the shy people don't post as many updates or photos. Facebook is frequently used to combat loneliness, according to Sheldon.

2. Even if they don't spend as much time on Facebook, more outgoing people have a greater presence on the website. Extroverts, narcissists and people who desire to maintain tight control on their image are the most frequent Facebook posters.

3. "Narcissists like fame, they like to be seen," Sheldon said in the announcement of her findings. "What I found out is that my research supports the 'rich get richer' hypothesis," Dr. Sheldon says. "Those users who are richer in their offline relationships will also benefit more from their use of Facebook. The more extroverted you are, the more you will benefit."

4. As might be expected, Sheldon said, if you take a lot of selfies, you're probably posting a lot of pictures to Facebook. "Posting pictures gives (narcissists and those focused on image control) more control over how they are being presented," Sheldon says.

5. While Facebook might be ideal to maintain relationships with people you seldom see and to share an abundance of photos, it's a lousy dating site, Sheldon said. "They are not meeting new people much," she said. "It's mostly people they already know."

6. When it comes to sharing personal information, women are more likely to share than men. "The same thing that happens in person happens on Facebook," she said.

Sheldon is continuing her study of Facebook, researching the effectiveness of the social media site vs. text messaging when universities send crisis alert messages to students.
Amy Bishop's bid to overturn life sentence continues

Brian Lawson  blawson@al.com

The long-running court saga of University of Alabama in Huntsville shooter Amy Bishop is not over.

The Madison County District Attorney's office has been given a 60-day extension to respond to Bishop's bid for a new trial, which was filed last month.

Bishop, 49, pleaded guilty in 2012 to killing three people and attempting to kill three others during a UAH biology faculty meeting in February 2010.

On July 25, Madison County Circuit Judge Alan Mann had ordered the state to reply within 30 days to Bishop's petition, which seeks to have her capital murder conviction and life sentence overturned.

In the months before the shooting, Bishop, a Harvard-trained biologist and mother of four, was not granted a tenured position on the biology faculty.

Her appeals of that decision had also run out. Prosecutors said she was angry about the rejection and that led to the shooting.

Madison County Assistant District Attorney Tim Gann outlined the case against Bishop at her plea hearing in September 2012.

"During a faculty meeting, the defendant stood up with a 9mm pistol and opened fire," Gann said. "She shot Gopi Podila, Stephanie Monticciolo, Adrienne Johnson, Maria (Ragland) Davis, Luis Cruz-Vera and Joseph Leahy."

Podila, Johnson and Ragland Davis died at the shooting, Cruz-Vera sustained minor injuries, and Monticciolo and Leahy were seriously injured.

Bishop attempted to fire more shots, but her gun jammed, according to testimony. She was shoved outside and faculty members barred the door inside the Shelby Center on the UAH campus.

Bishop fled, stashing her gun and jacket in a bathroom, borrowed a phone and called her husband for a ride and was waiting on a loading dock off a building side entrance when she was apprehended, prosecutors said.

The case drew national attention, and it later emerged Bishop had fatally shot her brother in 1986. The shooting was originally ruled an accident, but she was later indicted for the slaying.

In seeking an extension from the court's 30-day deadline to respond to Bishop's filing, Madison County Assistant DA Shauna Barnett noted it includes multiple claims and "sub-claims" and is more than 40 pages long.

"Due to the nature of the charges, the nature of the Petitioner's claims, and the extensive length of the record in this case that must be reviewed thoroughly before the State can begin to make a legally sound and well-reasoned response to the court in this matter, the State would request additional time to respond," Barnett's filing argues.

Mann has appointed Huntsville attorney Cecilia Pope to represent Bishop.

The judge Monday agreed to a 60-day extension for the state to respond.

In her handwritten court filing last month, Bishop asked that her conviction and sentence be overturned. The filing argues that she is schizophrenic and did not receive a proper psychiatric evaluation, that the court misinformed of her rights during and that her attorneys did not adequately represent her.

Bishop also argued the "fatal flaw" in the state's case against her was that she lacked the "requisite intent to kill" her colleagues during the Feb. 12, 2010, meeting.

Bishop was facing the death penalty and scheduled for a September 2012 trial when prosecutors learned some family members of victims in the case did not want to see her executed.

At that point, a plea deal was offered that would save her from a possible death sentence. Bishop entered the guilty plea on Sept. 11, 2012, to capital murder and attempted murder, and received a life sentence without possibility of parole. The plea agreement included her waiving her right to appeal.

Bishop is currently in the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka.
Auburn starts beer brewing program

(The Florence) Times Daily

FLORENCE | It's not often a graduate-level course at a major university kicks off its first semester with a trip to a well-known microbrewery outside Denver.

Then again, this is the first time Auburn University has offered a study program centered around brewing beer.

Conversations about the Brewing Science and Operations program began about four years ago as craft beer enthusiasts pushed for changes to laws regarding the sale of craft beer and home brewing in Alabama.

Program Director Martin O'Neill said his department received more than 300 expressions of interest in the new distance learning program without one ounce of advertising. O’Neill is the head of Auburn’s department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Hospitality Management in the College of Human Sciences.

“We have accepted 20 for a class we only wanted to accept 10 for,” O’Neill said.

One of those 20 is Michelle Jones, co-owner of Florence’s first microbrewery, Singin’ River Brewing Co.

Rob and Michelle Jones opened the microbrewery late last year and began brewing beer in February.

Auburn plans to offer the Brewing Science program every year and eventually create a full master’s brewer’s program in the next two or three years.

O’Neill said the program consists of six classes over three semesters. When completed, participants will receive a graduate certificate and be eligible to sit for the Institute of Brewing and Distilling’s General Certificate/Diploma of Brewing examinations.

Jones said she wants to become more knowledgeable about the brewing aspect of the business, which is basically handled by her husband and brewmaster, George Grantinetti. Jones said she’s more involved in the financial aspect of the brewery.

“I just wanted to add some input,” she said.

Jones said the course begins with the basics of brewing, such as materials, the various processes and the biology and chemistry of brewing.

O’Neill said the program is science-and-materials-based. It will also touch on agronomy, chemistry, engi-
neering and the business of brewing.

Along with traditional online PowerPoint presentations, O'Neill said Auburn is using a high-definition video production crew to bring the subject matter alive. The course began Aug. 18 and continues through the fall, spring and summer semesters. It will conclude in August 2015.

Jones said the kickoff took place in Longmont, Colo., at the Oskar Blues Brewery, which was founded by former Florence resident DaleKatechis.

There was a tour of the brewery and farms that provide materials for the brewery as well as several opportunities to network with the Oskar Blues crew.

O'Neill said out of the 20 course participants, a third are from Alabama. He said the Alabama Brewers Guild has provided input, as have Alabama craft microbreweries such as Good People and Cahaba, of Birmingham, and Back 40, of Gadsden.

"We're interviewing people about what they do, why they do it and how they do it," O'Neill said.

When the seeds for the program were planted, Alabama only had about four or five microbreweries, O'Neill said. By the end of this year, the state will have more than 40.

"The industry in this state has been phenomenal," O'Neill said, adding that there hasn't been one day where he hasn't received an email offering assistance. The Alabama Brewers Guild has been absolutely incredible."

He said Alabama microbreweries provide more than just good beer. They also provide jobs, not only to the microbreweries' employees, but to the people who grow the ingredients, and those who work in distribution, marketing promotion and retail sales.

O'Neill said the course requires at least one residency weekend at Oskar Blues Brewery in Longmont or Brevard, N.C. Since she owns a brewery, Jones will be able to take her residency at Singin' River.

O'Neill said Auburn plans to offer the Brewing Science program every year and eventually create a full master brewer's program in the next two or three years.

Rob Jones accompanied his wife on the trip to Longmont.
Law students getting ‘huge advantage’

Kelsey Stein  kstein@al.com

A new partnership will enable students at Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law to prepare themselves to enter a field that is being transformed by technological advances.

The eDiscovery Institute & Review Center is the result of a partnership between the law school and a company called cicayda, which focuses on legal technology and services.

During the discovery phase of litigation, attorneys on each side of a case request evidence from the other side, from documents to depositions to physical evidence. Attorneys are increasingly collecting this information through eDiscovery, an electronic exchange.

The eDiscovery Institute & Review Center at Cumberland features a state-of-the-art review facility on campus, an expert project management staff and top security, according to cicayda.

The Cumberland law school and cicayda will collaborate to create new courses and certificate programs focusing on technology, information governance, compliance, project management and eDiscovery.

Both Henry C. Strickland, the dean of the law school, and Roe Frazer, co-founder and CEO of cicayda and a Cumberland alumnus, expressed excitement about what the partnership offers for law students.

"It provides an unprecedented opportunity to bring cutting-edge legal technology into our law school," Strickland said. "It will provide our graduates employment and experience with fast-changing 21st century legal systems, and it will provide our students and faculty unmatched opportunities to engage with and understand the role of technology in our legal system."
Stillman gets $2M gift from donor

Staff report

An anonymous donor has committed to giving Stillman College $2 million, the largest single gift in the private school's history.

"Stillman has been very fortunate to secure the commitment of this $2 million contribution from a supporter who has a storied history of giving to the college," Dennis Driver, chairman of Stillman's board of trustees, said in a statement released Tuesday.

The gift was announced Tuesday by Stillman. The gift will be used for the long-term stability of the college, according to the release. The college will receive the $2 million during the fall semester.

It will help pay certain financial obligations, Driver said.

Driver also challenged his fellow trustees and Stillman's alumni to find opportunities to support the college.

"This gift will allow us to make a significant impact on our financial responsibilities and provide increased opportunities for our students. Our ability to do this supports the Stillman mission of providing an enriching educational environment for our current and future students. We hope that this donation will serve as an incentive for our alumni and the community to support Stillman at an unprecedented level," Stillman President Peter Millet said in the release.
NEW-LOOK BLAZERS

UAB: IT STARTS WITH NEWLY NAMED QB CODY CLEMENTS AND AN UPTEMPO OFFENSE.

Solomon Crenshaw Jr.  screnshawjr@al.com

The music that frequently blares over the loud speaker during UAB football practices sends a clear message to Bill Clark’s first football team on the Southside: Hurry up! The 2014 Blazer offense that will be unveiled at 11 a.m. Saturday against Troy at Legion Field will be markedly different from the one displayed last season under Garrick McGee. Here’s how:

1. FORMATION

Gone is the multiple pro-style offense that featured two running backs, a tight end and two wide receivers. In its place, new offensive coordinator Bryant Vincent will deploy a single running back with three receivers and a tight end.

2. PACE OF PLAY

“I want to play a fast tempo,” says Vincent. “We want to be able to line up, snap the ball and really play fast and put pressure on defenses. We want to be able to stretch the field vertically and horizontally. We also want to be able to have a power running game.”

3. QUARTERBACK

McGee’s team often had its quarterback under center. Expect junior Cody Clements, named the starter over redshirt freshman Jeremiah Briscoe, to frequently line up in the shotgun, with occasional snaps under center.

“We want our guy to be a dual-threat guy,” said Vincent. “We want them being able to make good decisions when things break down.”

4. TIGHT END

Senior tight end Kennard Backman says that the new offense uses him as sort of a hybrid wideout. “Last year, I found myself being more of a traditional tight end,” he said. “Now I’m being flexed out a bit more. Going here, there. It’s a little different but I’m adjusting.

5. OFFENSIVE LINE

Clark says the offensive line has made huge improvement from the unit that was decimated by injuries last season and in the spring. The Blazers brought in eight offensive linemen during the off season to add depth.

“It’s not necessarily where we want to be but we’ve created enough and practiced enough to go out there with a good first unit,” the head coach says. “I think the worry is the next six, seven, eight. How good is your backup?”

6. RUNNING BACK

Jordan Howard ran for 881 yards and 2 TDs as a sophomore backup to Darrin Reaves, who skipped his senior year to pursue the NFL. Howard is a big pro-style back (6-1, 228) in contrast to the smaller (5-10, 210) Reaves. But he excelled in a spread offense at Gardendale High, where he rushed for 1,388 yards and 21 TDs as a senior.

7. WIDE RECEIVER

Repeatedly, coaches and players have talked about having an abundance of playmakers this season. And the change in scheme will get seniors J.J. Nelson (who has averaged an amazing 20 yards per catch during his college career) and transfer Maudreycus Humphrey and sophomore Jamari Staples (team’s second-leading receiver last season with 31 catches, and eight starts) on the field at the same time.

That trio is bolstered by juniors Nyiaikki Height and Darius Powell, and sophomore Rodarius Houston.
No ticket is hotter than the Iron Bowl this season. The average price for the Nov. 29 Auburn-Alabama rivalry in Tuscaloosa is $618, making it the priciest game across the country this fall, according to ticket reseller Vivid Seats. The minimum price for a ticket on the market is $275, according to figures reported by Forbes.

Second on the list of the top 25 most expensive games of the 2014 college football season is Michigan at Notre Dame on Sept. 6. The average ticket price for that rivalry game is $577. Alabama’s trip to LSU on Nov. 8 is third at $559, according to Forbes.

Auburn’s last-second victory on a 109-yard return of a missed field goal last season set the stage for the revenge game in Tuscaloosa in 2014. The last five Iron Bowl winners have gone on to play for the national championship, and last season a trip to the SEC Championship was on the line for the first time in Iron Bowl history. Auburn won 34-28.

A ticket to an Alabama game is the most in-demand ticket on the reseller’s market, according to StubHub. Auburn ranks ninth nationally.

The SEC, meanwhile, is leading the five major conferences in average ticket price on the secondary market at $129, according to TiqIQ.com.

The average price of an Alabama ticket is $165.76, according to TiqIQ, and Auburn is set at $126.17. The rivals rank seventh and 19th in the nation, respectively.

The formula Forbes used combines face value and resale value.

Brandon Marcello
WHERE ARE YOU, SEMINOLE FANS?

So far, the public isn’t buying Jameis Winston and all that Florida State talent. What does that mean? Tickets should not be a problem. Forbes, using TiqIQ, finds that FSU’s secondary market average does not place the Noles in the top 25 most expensive schools for the 2014-15 college football season. Not only is the Seminoles average of $105.95 not among the Top 25 this season, it’s easily the cheapest ticket of any preseason No. 1 since at least 2011, when TiqIQ started keeping track of data. We can only assume part of the reason for the reduced ticket average are games against The Citadel as well as some ACC perceived clunkers such as Wake Forest and Virginia. Hard to get excited about NC State, Syracuse and Boston College, too. But Oklahoma State, Clemson, Notre Dame, Louisville and in-state rival Miami, that’s a different story. A Citadels ticket is available on StubHub can be had for as low as $38. Florida State versus Miami tickets have an average price of $227.79 at Sun Life Stadium this season. The only game on Florida State’s schedule with a current average price above $200 is Notre Dame. It has an average price of $230.41, 122 percent above Florida State’s season average, but just 3.2 percent above the average game this season at Notre Dame Stadium.

KICKOFF CLASSIC WON’T COME CHEAP

It’s only Alabama vs. West Virginia in the Aug. 30 Chick-Fil-A Kickoff Classic in Atlanta, so tickets should be plentiful, right? If you know anything about Mountaineer fans, you know they’re rabid and travel like crazy. So what can you expect for an Alabama-West Virginia ticket? At an average price of $192 on the secondary market, the game is the most expensive edition of the Chick-Fil-A Kickoff Classic over the last four years, according to Forbes. Over the last decade, the Georgia Dome is almost like a home game on the Alabama football schedule. The undercard matchup is actually the first game, as Boise State will face off against Ole Miss on Aug. 29. With an average price of $112, it’s the least expensive kickoff classic over the last four years.

MANZIEL WAS MONEY

This is probably a no-brainer, but without Johnny Manziel, Texas A&M football tickets have an average price of $185.07 for now, which isn’t bad but that is down 10 percent from last season’s $194.32 average. This year, the Aggies enter the season ranked ninth in the Top 25 most expensive ticket averages on the secondary market.
Tide closing in on five-star recruits for 2015

The University of Alabama signed six five-star players in the class of 2014, which is considered the best ever in the history of Rivals.com. Alabama is halfway there in the 2015 class with three five-stars. Alabama also has the No. 1 class in the country, and it will take a lot from another school to knock the Crimson Tide off the throne.

Alabama remains in contention for several elite prospects with only a few spots remaining in the class. The Crimson Tide added commitment No. 21 on Friday in Joshua McMillon, a four-star linebacker from Whitehaven High School in Memphis, Tenn.

"Alabama has always been at the top of the charts," McMillon said. "I went down for their engineering camp in eighth grade, and talked to some of the peers down there. Talking with Nick Saban, Billy Napier, and my linebacker coach, Coach (Kevin) Steele, it’s overall a great atmosphere down there. They have high expectations coming in, looking for me to make it as a true freshman, because they need it at the middle linebacker position."

Byron Cowart, a five-star defensive end from Armwood High School in Seffner, Fla., will announce his decision Sept. 28. Cowart announced his four finalists as Alabama, Florida, Florida State and Oregon.

"I think I know where I want to go and it will take some of the spotlight off of me I guess you could say," Cowart told Rivals.com. "If I am already committed I can just focus on being a regular high school football player. I won’t take any visits before my commitment date because I have been to most of the schools on my finalists list besides Oregon. I still may take a visit to Oregon down the road (after a commitment), I just need to talk with my mom about that.”

Many expect Cowart to stay in-state and select the Florida Gators. He visited Alabama in the spring.

"At the end of the day when you say Alabama, you think business and winning," he said. "I don’t really know how they are with my major, but the area it’s in is nice. I know they are pushing academics more on their guys. It’s just something about that NFL-type atmosphere where I can focus on school and football and just get ready for the next level. They are all guys that are about work when it comes to football and their track record speaks for itself."

Daron Payne, a five-star defensive tackle from Shades Valley High School, is taking his time with the recruiting process. Payne is considering an announcement in January at the Under Armour All-America game. His top three schools are Alabama, Auburn and Mississippi State.

"Bama is still recruiting me the hardest," Payne said. "Auburn has stepped it up, though. I talk to Coach Cristobal (Alabama offensive line coach) every day. He is just asking me what’s going on. He is always trying to see how many plates of food I had for dinner. They aren’t putting any pressure on me at all to commit. They are telling me to take my time with it."

Darrell Williams, a four-star linebacker and Auburn commitment from Hoover High School, still has a lot of interest in Alabama. Williams spoke with TideSports.com after his team’s 24-21 loss to Miami-Central on Saturday. He said he will take an official visit to Alabama and much more. Join us online for the in-depth interview.
Refs want to hit pause on up-tempo

The Associated Press

PHOENIX | The quarterback throws toward the sideline, where a receiver hauls the pass in, gets two feet down and flips the ball to the official.

What follows is a chaotic dance between an up-tempo offense and the defense trying to stop it.

Offensive players stream off the field, crossing paths with their replacements. The defense makes substitutions, players scramble to get into position.

Caught in the middle are the officials, who have to find a balance between spotting the ball quickly for the offense and allowing the defense time to set up — something that’s increasingly been a problem since fast-paced offenses have cropped up more frequently in college football.

"From the officiating standpoint, we kind of got caught up in this thing and allowed ourselves to sort of get overwhelmed by it," NCAA coordinator of officials Rogers Redding said. "Too much rushing around, hurrying and trying to be speedy about getting the ball in play and it sort of put the defense at a disadvantage."

Now, the officials are taking the pace back. Normalizing ideas they’ve discussed among themselves over the past few seasons, the officials have added pace-of-play procedures in the football officiating mechanics manual.

It’s not specific rules, but more of an outline on how to appease the up-tempo offenses while keeping the defenses relatively happy.

"It’s not revolutionary, but it sort of calls attention to the need for the officials not to make the ball ready for play until all the officials are in position," said Redding, a referee in the SEC from 1994-2004. "That may mean cleaning up the sideline before, but having the umpire sort of crispily jog but don’t sprint, hustle but don’t hurry in getting the ball ready for play."

The officials had control of a game’s pace when college football had a 25-second clock. They stopped the clock at the end of a play and started it again before the next one through an orchestration of hand signals to the clock operator.

Switching to a running 40-second play clock in 2008 changed everything.

Under the new system, the play clock for the next play starts immediately after the previous one ends.

That put the pace of a game into the hands of the offense; the faster they lined up to the ball, the faster they could snap it.

As is usually the case, it didn’t take teams long to figure a way to use the new rule to their advantage. By playing at a 2-minute-drill pace the entire game, they realized they could wear opposing defenses down and limit their ability to make substitutions.

Once a few teams had success with it, more piled on, some running up to 100 plays a game.

With coaches and players screaming in their ears to spot the ball quickly, the officials found themselves rushing — and putting defenses at a disadvantage in the process.

"There was a sense of urgency because it was something new to us, especially the teams that wanted to go at that last pace," said Gerald Austin, coordinator of officials for Conference USA. "Across the country, we pretty much said, wait a minute, there’s no obligation to speed up how we get the ball spotted during the normal portion of the game."

The officials are trying to do what the NCAA has been unable to do so far.

With defenses backpedaling to keep up with the up-tempo offenses, the NCAA looked into the possibility of prohibiting teams from snapping the ball until at least 10 seconds had run off the 40-second play clock.

Supporters of the rule, like Arkansas’ Bret Bielema and Alabama’s Nick Saban, argued it was needed to allow teams to substitute for fatigued players and prevent injuries.

Coaches of fast-paced offenses vehemently opposed the proposed rule and the NCAA shelved it, but will likely have more discussions about pace of play in the coming years.

"It is a trend in the game that a lot of people on the offensive side of the ball love, but if you’re on the defensive side, you’re concerned about it," Redding said. "I really believe the pace of play debate is going to continue for some time."

How the officials handle the game isn’t the only thing that has changed with the increase in up-tempo offenses.

The officials themselves have changed.

Used to be, officiating crews had a few older guys who had trouble keeping up with fleet receivers and a beefy guy in the middle — usually a former offensive or defensive lineman — working as the umpire. They would run a bit, then walk before the season, but that would be it.

Over the past decade or so, officials have spent much more time on their conditioning, running and working out year-round so they’ll be ready for the rigors of the new fast-paced game. The annual camps they attend often have a trainer or doctor on site to talk about conditioning and nutrition, and overall fitness is also something conferences now look at when hiring new officials.

"You very seldom see an official at the college level anymore who appears to be out of shape," said Austin, a former NFL official. "Even those who appear to be big and bulky, they’re in shape and ready to go for a full 60 minutes."

They need to be at this pace.
More schools mix beer, football inside stadiums

The Associated Press

Walk through the tailgate area at a college football stadium, and beer drinking is as common a sight as fans adorned in jerseys of their favorite players.

A growing number of schools are bringing the party inside, opening taps in concourses that traditionally have been alcohol-free zones.

North Texas, SMU and Troy University will begin beer sales to the general public this season. They’re among 21 on-campus football stadiums where any fan of legal age can grab a brew. That’s more than twice as many as five years ago.

Most schools continue to keep alcohol restricted to premium seating areas, if they allow it at all. But offering alcohol is increasingly attractive for some campuses, especially for cash-strapped athletic departments outside the Power 5 conferences. Those schools, especially, are looking for ways to keep fans coming to their stadiums instead of sitting in front of their HD TVs at home or at sports bars.

They’re also encouraged by the schools that were among the first to sell alcohol and didn’t report an increase in bad behavior from students and other fans.

"Every institution is looking at how they can increase revenue streams, and alcohol is one of those," said Jeff Schemmell, president of the consulting firm College Sports Solutions LLC. "Everything is on the table."

There are 11 municipal stadiums where FBS teams are tenants and alcohol is available to the general public.

The municipality usually keeps most, if not all, of the alcohol proceeds. The NCAA does not sell alcohol to the general public at its championship events. Schools and conferences are allowed to make their own policies.

Troy athletic director John Hartwell estimated beer would bring his Alabama school about $200,000 in commissions this season. According to its contract with concessionaire Sodexo, Troy will receive 43 percent of gross beer sales at its 30,000-seat stadium, or better than $2 for every $5 beer.

"That’s more impactful to a bottom line for a Troy than it is for a Texas or West Virginia or institutions similar to that," said Hartwell, whose program runs on a $20 million budget. Alcohol proceeds will be used to pay debt on a $25 million expansion of Troy’s football facilities.

The Big 12’s West Virginia, with a budget of more than $80 million, began beer sales in 2011 in part to counter a problem with drunken fans coming and going from tailgate parties during games. Fans no longer are allowed to re-enter the stadium once they leave.

Beer sales have produced no fewer than $516,000 each of the last three years for West Virginia, and campus police report alcohol-related incidents at Mountaineer Field have declined sharply.

Troy football season ticket holder Brian Ross, who also attends the Trojans’ road games, said he sees worse behavior at stadiums where alcohol isn’t sold. Troy is among five Sun Belt Conference schools selling beer this fall.

Still, just a handful of college stadiums are giving students and fans the chance to buy a brew. Most remain opposed to it. The Southeastern Conference and the 23-school California State University system, for example, have policies banning alcohol from general seating areas.