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CIVIL RIGHTS NATIONAL MONUMENT

History will be a boon to Birmingham economy

Brent Leggs for AL.com

The creation of the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument earlier this year was a powerful moment for the city and a step forward in bringing Birmingham's nationally significant civil rights legacy to more people. But this new status wasn't just good news for boosters of the city's rich history.

As we have seen in preservation projects all over the country, the creation of a national monument offers an important mechanism for local economic development and revitalization. While the plans for renewing one of the area's most historically significant neighborhoods continue to take shape, we know from experience that anticipated and unforeseen benefits will follow.

Already, the neighborhood surrounding Kelly Ingram Park is experiencing momentum. The comprehensive planning underway and Birmingham Mayor William Bell's vision for the revitalization is designed to build on this progress. Together, the city of Birmingham, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service are laying the groundwork for a path to rehabilitating the historic A.G. Gaston Motel.

Based on experience, we expect this will help spur investment and redevelopment of other nearby community sites, such as the Masonic Temple and Gaston office building across from the motel. From there, the positive benefits of revitalization will continue to radiate outward, bringing more dollars, visitors and economic activity to more of downtown Birmingham.

We know this because we have seen it happen, all across America. Last year, according to the National Park Service, the National Park System set a new record with 331 million visits. These visitors spent an estimated $18.4 billion in communities where national parks, monuments and memorials are based or are within 60 miles. They also helped create 188,000 jobs, $12.0 billion in labor income and $34.9 billion in economic output.

Local hotels, bars and restaurants all saw huge gains, and contributed billions in economic activity to their communities, thanks to having nearby historic attractions on hand.

Here in Birmingham, the historic sites within the monument boundaries already draw thousands of visitors who want to learn about the Magic City's rich civil rights history. Federal investment in the interpretation, maintenance and preservation will be a long-term benefit to local tourism.

The Alabama Tourism Department estimates that 550,000 people visit the state each year to experience civil rights history sites in Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute welcomes about 150,000 visitors annually.

The tourism department also estimates that cultural tourism attracted $5.25 million to the state last year, including $4.8 million on lodging, $14.2 million on dining and $21.5 million on transportation. The recent national monument designation should only swell these numbers and bring more growth and opportunities to the downtown area - civil rights district and beyond.

Historic preservation isn't just about commemorating the important stories of our past: it is also a tremendous engine for economic growth and neighborhood revival.

As the city continues to commemorate its civil rights history at the new national monument, the enduring legacy of important places like the A. G. Gaston Motel and the 16th St. Baptist Church won't be the only benefit. The opportunities for local community investment and economic development here in Birmingham could also be monumental.

Leggs is a senior field officer of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and assistant clinical professor at the University of Maryland's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation.
Wingo to seek re-election to House seat

Ex-UA football player was first elected in 2014

State Rep. Rich Wingo announced Thursday that he intends to seek re-election to House District 62.

First elected in 2014, Wingo, R-Tuscaloosa, supported a forensic audit of state finances through his seat on the House Ways and Means General Fund Committee and succeeded in passing legislation preserving the religious freedom rights of faith-based adoption and child placement agencies.

Wingo, 60, also opposed the spread of casino-like gaming and sports betting in the state.

He was also appointed to serve on the Joint Legislative Task Force on Budget Reform, a committee of House and Senate members tasked with examining the structure and design of the state budgeting process and making recommendations for long-term reforms.

“During my first term in the Alabama House, I have let my bedrock conservative values and deep faith guide my actions in Montgomery,” Wingo said in a news release announcing his re-election bid. “And while my Republican colleagues and I have made important progress over the past four years in reforming the way our state government operates, the job is not yet finished, and I am determined to see it completed on my watch.”

Wingo was born in Elkhart, Indiana, and moved to Alabama in 1974 when legendary
coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant recruited him to play football at the University of Alabama. A linebacker for the Crimson Tide, Wingo was a part of what has become known as the "Goal Line Stand" during the Sugar Bowl, which led to the eventual defeat Penn State for the 1978 national championship.

Drafted by the Green Bay Packers in 1979, Wingo had a seven-year NFL career with the team and was awarded its Rookie of the Year, MVP and Man of the Year honors at various times. He later coached football at the University of Alabama from 1987 to 1989.

For 20 years, Wingo was president of AIG Baker, where he focused on commercial and shopping mall development, and he now works with Blackwater Resources in Birmingham, which recently made the lone bid on a city-owned parcel across from the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater with the intent of building a grocery store shopping center. He and his wife, Cheri, have two adult sons, Jake and Luke, and are members of First Baptist Church.
Put priority on infrastructure, education, leaders say

**ONLINE**

For more photos and video from the 2017 Chamber in Session: State of the State, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.

**By Ed Enoch**
Staff Writer

Alabama's House and Senate leaders say improving infrastructure and education reform will be critical to the state's future growth.


The impact of these issues will be far reaching, according to the lawmakers, who also discussed prison and healthcare reform.

“"If you are really wanting to compete with our neighbors, you have got to put money into infrastructure," Marsh said. "You can offer all the tax incentives you want to, but if you don't address education problem in this state and infrastructure, you aren't going to grow."

Efforts to increase the gasoline tax failed during the regular legislative session in the spring.

“The tax word is just something that we could not get past,” McCutcheon said of the session.

The state hasn't increased its tax of 18 cents per gallon since 1992, Marsh said. He suggested the rate be increased and changed to a percentage of the price of a gallon of gas instead of a fixed amount.

If the tax was set as a percentage, the state would have had billions more to spend on roads and bridges during the past 25 years, Marsh said. He estimated that state has about 400 bridges in need of replacement and several key road

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"You can offer all the tax incentives you want to, but if you don't address education problem in this state and infrastructure, you aren't going to grow."

Sen. Del Marsh, R-Anniston, president pro tempore of the Senate
arteries that need repairs. “We just don’t have the money to do it. We just have the money to sustain what we have,” Marsh said.

Unaddressed infrastructure issues and a lack of new funding put the state at a disadvantage as it competes with neighboring states in economic development and industrial recruitment, but it could also potentially put Alabama at a disadvantage if Congress passes a new federal infrastructure package and it doesn’t have matching funds available to secure federal support, Marsh and McCutcheon said.

“Tennessee has addressed theirs. Georgia has addressed theirs. Florida is a head of us, McCutcheon said. “The only ones left are Alabama and Mississippi ... We need money now. We need to be doing these infrastructure projects right now. Every year we go back, we get a year and a half, two years behind because it hard to catch up.”

Lawmakers have been working on a comprehensive education program with education officials. “If you look at a lot of problems in the state, it is related to education,” Marsh said.

Marsh hopes for a comprehensive approach that considers needs at every educational level and ways for K-12 and postsecondary education to work together.

“My hope is before the next quadrennium, the governor, whoever he or she maybe, will have a plan that all these entities of education have signed on and all agreed to a comprehensive plan that best serves that state. And that would help us with the budget process,” Marsh said.

The president pro tempore said he would continue to push the issue. “There is no single entity, I don’t care what you say, that affects more in this state than education,” Marsh said.

Marsh said education improvements could play a part in addressing the state’s issues with prison overcrowding and the strain on the budget caused by growing Medicaid costs.

Marsh estimated 60 percent of inmates in the state don’t have a high school education.

“Well, I think it is a direct correlation that you could end up in prison without a good education. The numbers prove these theories,” Marsh said. “When you look at overcrowding in prisons, one way you solve that perhaps is a better education.”

Overcrowding, inadequate staffing and aging facilities have led to two years of debate in the Legislature about building prisons, including failed proposals to borrow about $800 million to build new facilities. A federal judge ruled late last month that the department’s psychiatric care for inmates was so “horrendously inadequate” that it violated the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

While lawmakers have Medicaid costs “under control” for next year, Marsh said changes will have to be made to address its impact on the budget, which he estimated allocates about a third of its discretionary funds to the program.

“We have done what we can to address Medicaid, but the answer is not to continue to give more money,” Marsh said. “We have got to change and have more say as a state, in my opinion, (about) who is covered under Medicaid, who is not, and redraw some of the parameters. It will continue to be an issue.”

Efforts to improve education in the state could play a role, Marsh speculated.

“Part of Medicaid’s problem is poor education in health care. We have people with terrible health habits,” Marsh said. “Many of them are in poverty situations, or low income, uneducated and they don’t live a healthy life style and it is a huge cost to Medicaid system. So there again you solve the education system you have impact on health care, you have an impact on prisons.”

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Gov. Kay Ivey names Mental Health commissioner, makes other staff changes

By: Mike Cason

Gov. Kay Ivey today named Lynn Beshear of Montgomery as the state's Mental Health commissioner, accepted the resignations of two cabinet members and replaced her press secretary.

Beshear replaces Jim Perdue, who was fired as commissioner last week.

Ivey also announced the resignations of Commissioner of Senior Services Neal Morrison and Joanne Hale, Acting Secretary of the Office of Information Technology.

Ivey has also been notified that Emergency Management Director Art Faulkner will retire effective Sept. 5, the governor's office said.

The governor has found people to fill those three cabinet positions and will announce their names later.

Also, Eileen Jones said today she has been let go as press secretary for Ivey. The governor's office said Daniel Sparkman will be promoted to fill the position.

Jones, who was one of Ivey's first hires after Ivey was sworn in as governor in April, said, "It just wasn't a good fit."

"I really like politics," Jones said. "But it's much more fun covering it from the outside than working in it."

Jones was a State House reporter for WSFA in Montgomery for 18 years.

Ivey thanked staff members who have worked during the early days of her administration.

"I am thankful for the staff members who stayed on to help us make it through this quick transition," Ivey said in a press release. "I am also especially thankful to Eileen Jones for her willingness to join my administration early on to help us get our feet on the ground and off to an effective start; I wish her well in her future endeavors."

Beshear is a former nurse who has served on boards for Montgomery Academy, United Way, First United Methodist Church and other organizations, according to the governor's office. She serves on the board of Joint Public Charity Hospital, Montgomery Metro YMCA, and the AUM School of Liberal Arts Advisory Board. She is a founding member of Envision 2020 and serves as its executive director.

Beshear was named the Montgomery Advertiser Woman of Achievement in 1993, and received the Maury D. Smith Excellence in Professional Ethics Award in 2016.
Beshear is married to Dr. Bob Beshear, a retired pediatrician. She graduated from North Carolina Baptist Hospital School of Nursing and worked as a nurse at Duke University Medical Center.

"Through active participation in securing mental health services in the River Region, Lynn understands the complexities of the Department, and the importance of its work on behalf of the people of Alabama," Ivey said in a press release.

Beshear said she did not seek the job but said she was honored to have it.

"I am excited to work with Gov. Ivey, her Cabinet, the Legislature, and the professionals within the Department of Mental Health, to provide excellent services for Alabamians with mental illness, those who are developmentally delayed, and those who struggle with substance abuse," Beshear said.

Morrison, who had served as commissioner of senior services since November 2011, said he and Ivey have been friends since the 1980s and will remain so. He said the decision was not personal and he would help the administration any way he could.

"I do appreciate her calling me personally and talking to me this morning," Morrison said. "She has a direction she wants to go and she wants some folks to help her get that way. And like I said, we're going to be out here cheering for her and we're going to be out here helping her.

"We've got to quit squabbling and people quit getting upset in the state of Alabama. We've got some issues facing us that are monumental, and it's about time folks put aside any kind of petty difference and do what's best for the state of Alabama."
Most people watching Alabama's political landscape were not surprised last week when Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox announced he has his sights set on the governor's office. Fewer still were surprised when he said that if and when he officially announces his campaign he will run as a Democrat.

Maddox has an impressive record as mayor, but let's be honest, if he manages to pull it all off and get elected it will be a surprise to many. That's not because he's not qualified for the office. He is. It is not because he won't have enough financial backing. He will. It is because, while his Republican opponents will sprint from the starting line, Maddox will have to start the race with his shoelaces tied together.

It's not just that Maddox will be running as a Democrat in a decidedly Republican state. It's that his party's infrastructure has been decimated since the Republican takeover. The Democratic Party in Alabama is in shambles, with little leadership.

There are a few small Democratic pockets in the state. But Republicans hold both U.S. Senate seats and six of Alabama's seven seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. No Democrat has held a U.S. Senate seat since 1992, and that was Richard Shelby, who switched parties in 1994. Alabama has voted for the GOP presidential candidate in 10 straight elections. Jimmy Carter, in 1976, was the last Democratic presidential candidate to carry Alabama.

But we're wondering if Maddox can do for the Democrats what Guy Hunt did for the Republicans way back in 1986. With 56 percent of the vote, Guy Hunt became the first Republican to win the governor's race since Reconstruction. Many think that's when Alabama became, for a while, a two-party state. Though Alabama had a history of supporting the GOP in presidential elections, state and local elections had long been dominated by Democrats. Hunt's election, even if it was the result of Democratic infighting, changed all of that.

Since then, the Republicans have had a stranglehold on state politics. But in recent years, it is hard to imagine that they could have done more to convince voters that the Democrats deserve a chance. The speaker of the House, the chief justice of the state Supreme Court and the governor have all resigned or been forced out of office. The state is in a financial crisis. Education continues to lag. The prison system is dangerously close to a federal takeover. And many of the same names that have been prominent in scandals continue to show up on ballots, such as Roy Moore and Luther Strange in the upcoming U.S. Senate race.

Things are a mess and it seems each scandal gets more embarrassing. Maddox's words on that will resonate.

With the governor's race still a year off, it's looking like Maddox might just have a chance to get those shoes untied, join the pack and at minimum give the Democratic Party in Alabama a second wind.
ALABAMA POLITICS

For Dems, talk turns sunny

'I will not run away from Democratic values,' says Senate hopeful Doug Jones

John Sharp jsharp@al.com

Democrats haven't won an Alabama statewide office in more than a decade, and haven't held one of the two Senate seats since the Howell Heflin era.

Pundits and analysts consider the state to be a GOP super-fortress, where President Donald Trump won by a wider margin last year than Ronald Reagan did in the 1980s.

They believe the Senate race this summer will be decided in the Republican primary, scheduled for Aug. 15 with a runoff on Sept. 28, if needed.

"It would take a catastrophe of monumental proportions to make the November race anywhere near competitive," said William Stewart, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alabama and a longtime observer of state politics.

SEE DEMS, A4

Coming Wednesday

State Democrats believe health care is the issue that can propel their Senate nominee to Washington.
**DEMKS**

FROM A.

Democrats agree that the odds are long, but pledge that they're ready to work hard and say that their rank-and-file is fired up. At least that was the general reaction during a fundraiser Tuesday at an upscale restaurant and bar in downtown Mobile in support of Doug Jones' candidacy.

"It's about turning out the base," said Christian Smith of Mobile, president of the Bay Area Young Democrats.

Agreed Karlos Finley, a candidate for Mobile County circuit judge in 2018: "We have to work on getting the vote out and we need informed voters. We have to get folks out to the polls."

Declared Jones himself, "Everyone says, 'A Democrat can't win.' They have no clue what's going on in the state of Alabama."

**BACK TO ROOSEVELT**

Politico Magazine featured an article last October titled, "The Loneliness of the Alabama Democrat." It explored the frustrations of Democrats in the Mobile area who admitted to not knowing many Hillary Clinton supporters.

A month later, Trump trounced Clinton in Alabama, winning by a more than a 28 percent differential.

While Trump remains popular among Alabama Republican leaders, his overall approval rating seems to be struggling nationally. The Gallup daily tracker has Trump's approval rating below 40 percent, and a new NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll put Trump's disapproval rating at 51 percent.

And since Trump's inauguration, progressives and Democrats have become emboldened in combating the president's agenda.

Alabama's summer Senate showdown marks the first campaigning in the state in Trump's tenure. Ten Republicans and eight Democrats are angling for the seat formerly held by Jeff Sessions, who is now U.S. attorney general.

Among the Democrats, Jones might have the most name recognition. He is best known for successfully prosecuting Klansmen who bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963, killing four girls. The prosecution took place more than 40 years after the bombing, concluding with two convictions in 2001 and 2002.

Jones also has Clinton connections, having been appointed as U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama by President Bill Clinton in 1998.

During an interview with AL.com, Jones said that Democrats in Alabama need to embrace Democratic ideals that "go back to Roosevelt and Social Security."

"I'm a Democrat and I will not run away from Democratic values," Jones said. "I don't think government is bad. I don't care what people say. Government built our interstate systems, provides rural health care, provided our missile defense, and has provided help in education."

Jones said that he hopes his candidacy can begin a transformation for the party, enabling it to "field good candidates from top to bottom" on Alabama ballots in 2018. He said the recent corruption involving state Republicans proves "that a one-party state is a disaster."

"Democrats didn't do a real good job of it when we were in control and Republicans have made it even worse," Jones said, adding, "I think the people in this state are looking at themselves and are saying, 'We're tired of being embarrassed.'"

Jones said he's friends with former Vice President Joe Biden, and that he will reach out to Biden if he wins the Democratic primary. "I just won't shy away from that," said Jones, expressing hope that Biden would visit Alabama and make a campaign appearance on Jones' behalf. "If we are to have a viable two-party system in this state, we need folks like Joe who people know can come in and talk to the manufacturing worker who is out of a job."

"I CAN RUN CLOSE" Stewart, the political science professor, predicts Jones will be the nominee. He said it gives Democrats "a good choice," but that he's unlikely to win in the end.

All his Republican opponent in the general election needs to do is point out his association with and support for the Clintons and cite a few portions of the most recently adopted Democratic platform," Stewart said.

But Steve Flowers, an author whose weekly political column appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers, suggested that the GOP will provide an opening to Democrats if its Senate nominee is Roy Moore.

In the 2012 election for Alabama Supreme Court chief justice, Moore won by a relatively slim margin over Democrat Rob Vance, a Jefferson County circuit judge.

Moore, thus far, is polling among the top of GOP Senate hopefuls. "It has been shown that a Democrat can run close to Moore," Flowers said.

Flowers also said if Democrats nominate a black candidate — someone like Robert Kennedy Jr. of Prichard, who claims he's a "conservative Democrat" but who has little public profile — they could create particular energy among black voters. "If they nominate a white candidate, like Doug Jones, it won't excite the base," said Flowers, a former Republican state lawmaker. "If you have the African-American vote excited about the possibility of an African-American win, there could be a fluke that happens."

Still, he estimated the Democrats' chance of a victory at less than 5 percent.

**THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS**

**Sunday, July 2, 2017**
We can't afford potholes on the roads to progress

We don’t often think of it this way, but roads are an incredibly important part of our daily lives. They allow us to get to and from work, they are the literal pathways used for most of our children to receive an education and they connect us to the basic goods we consume every day. Simply put, roads are the arteries of commerce and are a fundamental factor in our quality of life.

It’s easy for us to take this luxury of an industrialized society for granted. That is, until our neighborhood suddenly has a dangerous pothole, a major city street is closed for repair or a stretch of interstate is down to one lane and slows traffic to a crawl. Those inconveniences remind us that an adequate transportation infrastructure — or lack thereof — can dramatically undermine the ability of a community to facilitate commerce and affect the way we go about our day.

In Alabama, there is little disagreement that we, as a state, can’t turn a blind eye to our aging and increasingly inadequate transportation system. Our metro areas have roads that severely lack capacity and, in turn, face the constant burden of heavy traffic congestion. Many rural areas, on the other hand, still deal with unpaved roads and have bridges that are too structurally deficient for school buses to cross. Both situations create major economic development hurdles that we can’t afford not to address.

Thankfully, Alabamians saw progress when ALDOT completed Interstate 22 in 2016. Through that project, we expect to see real economic growth. We still have work to do, though. We need sound public policy and responsible investment, because we can’t kick this can down the deteriorating road any longer.

Jim Page is the president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama in Tuscaloosa. He also serves as chairman of the Alliance for Alabama’s Infrastructure, a grassroots advocacy coalition that promotes financially responsible investment in Alabama’s transportation infrastructure.
A tipping point for Bham?

A NEW STUDY CONFIRMS WHAT HAS LONG BEEN SUSPECTED: FRAGMENTATION IS HOLDING BHAM’S ECONOMY BACK. SOME LOCAL HEAVYWEIGHTS BELIEVE THE TIME IS RIGHT TO FINALLY MAKE REGIONAL COOPERATION A REALITY.

BY TY WEST, STEPHANIE REBMAN AND DANNIAL BUDHWANI | STAFF

Gen. Charles Krulak’s lengthy career has taken him around the world. He’s served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has been a CEO for a major financial company. He serves on boards for a number of major companies and organization.

Krulak has significant experience solving highly complex problems involving numerous parties with often-competing interests. It’s through that lens that Krulak looks at the untapped potential of metro Birmingham, where he arrived to lead Birmingham-Southern College in 2011, and recognizes that Birmingham needs to finally take action on one of its longtime challenges: regional cooperation.

But it’s his experience in the military that gives him confidence that change is possible in Birmingham.

“Nobody is more parochial than the U.S. military. It’s been that way forever,” Krulak said. “But when push comes to shove, everybody takes that parochialism, puts it in the back seat and cooperation comes forward. Remarkable successes have come from that.”

If that type of cooperative mentality is good enough for the military, he sees no reason it can’t work in Birmingham.

A need for greater regional cooperation has been a talking point in Birmingham for decades, but actual progress has proven elusive.

Krulak and others believe a new report commissioned by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and conducted by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama provides the fact-based ammunition needed to make true regional cooperation more than just a pipe dream.

The report is part of a new campaign, called Together We Prosper, which aims to start a conversation – and ultimately spark action – to boost cooperation in the metro area.

Among other insights, the report found a clear divide between fragmented areas like Birmingham and regionally focused metros like Nashville, Charlotte and Denver on metrics ranging from job growth and population trends to inner-city poverty.

Perhaps the most telling statistic for Birmingham was its 0.24 percent growth in average annual employment since 2000 – a figure that pales in comparison to regional rivals like Nashville and Charlotte.

For Krulak and other leaders who are serving on a strategic advisory board for the initiative, that statistic shows the high stakes of a continued lack of cooperation.

“If this city and this county do not take action, we’re going to dwindle. We’re going to shrink. We’re not going to grow,” he said. “We are, at the end of the day, going to be a second or third city size-wise in the state of Alabama. That’s not a maybe. That’s a fact. That’s what the statistics say.”

But even with new statistics – and an accompanying public opinion poll – making the case against fragmentation, Krulak, Community Foundation CEO Chris Nanni and other leaders involved know making greater cooperation a reality won’t be easy.

Several efforts have floundered over the years, and a number of longtime hurdles persist. However, with Birmingham riding a wave of momentum and national publicity, many believe now is the time to finally tackle fragmentation.

A number of questions remain, including what increased regional cooperation would look like in Birmingham.

The Community Foundation and PARCA aren’t promoting a specific solution and, unlike past efforts, the initiative is not focused on consolidating all Jefferson County suburbs into one entity. It’s also not exploring a consolidation of any school systems. Instead, they are sharing examples of different strategies successful other metros have implemented in a bid to start a conversation about possibilities for Birmingham.

The other big question is who will be the champions that lead the charge. One thing is for certain: Birmingham’s business community will almost certainly need to play a critical role.

The evidence

For years, Birmingham business leaders have cited a lack of regional cooperation as a key impediment to growth.

But even with flat growth trends as job losses mounted in key industries – a trend that proved to be a catalyst for change in a number of other metro areas – Birmingham chose to maintain the status quo.

That status quo often includes fierce competition, with the dozens of local municipalities offering millions in incentives to poach companies or defend their turf from other intra metro competitors.

At the same time, other metro areas around the nation have established a more regional focus and reaped the rewards, according to the study.

Jay Grinney, who recently retired after more than a decade at the helm of HealthSouth Corp., has seen the difference a regional focus can make firsthand.

Prior to coming to Birmingham, Grinney lived in Nashville.

The Tennessee metro, which was once comparable to the Magic City, is now one of the hottest markets in the U.S., with job and employment growth figures that dwarf Birmingham’s recent totals.

Grinney believes Nashville’s regional focus is a key component of that growth. The difference was evident as soon as he arrived.
"Seeing that (cooperation) and all of the growth that was occurring in Nashville and then coming to Birmingham and being confronted with the fragmentation, not just between the city of Birmingham and Jefferson County, but with all of the municipalities and fiefdoms in our region was pretty stunning," Grinney said.

He views that contrast as one of the factors why Birmingham is lagging behind other regional metros.

"There are a lot of reasons we are not achieving our full potential, and one of those reasons, I believe, is because we don't have the type of cooperation within the community that other metros have had and benefited from," he said.

The numbers back up that sentiment.

Job growth in the unified metros studied by PARCA rose between 20 percent and 50 percent between 2000 and 2016. Job growth for fragmented areas ranged from a 12 percent decline to a 5 percent increase.

Aside from the research, the Community Foundation and PARCA also found evidence that local citizens are pining for more regional cooperation.

The poll found 84 percent of respondents would support local governments working together to support economic development across the region. Support was also high for various ideas about shared services and working together on legislation to benefit the region.

That's especially true among young professionals - a key demographic that Birmingham has traditionally struggled to attract and retain that will be critical to the area's future.

Business leaders - and young professionals themselves - have consistently said the reason for those struggles is a lack of sustained job growth.

That's one reason Krolak believes the stakes are so high.

"If the jobs aren't here. If they aren't good jobs, (our kids) aren't going to stay here," he said.

**The timing**

One reason why many believe the time is right for a renewed push for regional cooperation is what's happening in Birmingham.

The Magic City has been a subject of glowing reviews in a number of huge media outlets. The New York Times, National Geographic and Zagat are just a few of the entities that have lavished praise on Birmingham.

That international recognition, coupled the revival of downtown, has sparked a widespread energy and optimism in Birmingham that wasn't present a decade ago.

Grinney believes those recent wins create an environment for positive change.

"We have a lot of things that seem to be working and there really is some momentum, but we can't ignore the fact that we still lag behind other comparable cities throughout the Southeast," Grinney said.

But that success also has the potential to be an obstacle.

That's because many see the billion-dollar construction surge in the city center, new corporate headquarters under construction and positive headlines and get the impression that the region's economy is firing on all cylinders.

For that reason, Nanni said it's important to keep things in perspective. A number of cities around the South are undergoing similar downtown building booms - many that dwarf the size of Birmingham's.

"There is this momentum, but we don't want people to confuse this with long-term job growth," Nanni said. "A lot of cities are experiencing this momentum."

Nanni recalled a recent meeting with an economic development official from another area who was shocked at the growth Birmingham is experiencing in its city center because its overall long-term numbers are so poor.

Many of the projects happening in downtown Birmingham represent the move of
companies from other places within the metro area.

But while the recent pockets of success—both downtown and in specific municipalities—could prove challenging in making the case for greater cooperation, Nanni and PARCA's Tom Spencer, who conducted the study, believe it also presents opportunities.

Spencer said projects like Railroad Park, which became a reality thanks to cooperation between the city of Birmingham, Jefferson County and private donors, are examples of how cooperation has paid off.

"That helped catalyze Regions Field, another public-private partnership," he said.

There have been other, less-publicized examples of successful cooperation, as well. Maurice Mercer has experienced it from multiple perspectives—as both the owner of a small delivery service in Pelham and as a member of the Pelham City Council.

He noted how multiple cities combined efforts and resources to convince the Alabama Department of Transportation to make improvements to Alabama 261.

"Victories like that give him optimism that similar ideas can work on a larger scale— with the proper framework in place."

"I'm going to be optimistic," he said. "I think there's hope for other municipalities to work together for regional collaborative efforts. We have to be intentional about it. And then pull all the players together."

Hoover Mayor Frank Brocato sees a number of avenues for greater cooperation in the area that don't involve consolidation of governments, such as strategic partnerships for various government services.

He suggests using more of the "seamless borders" concept and not letting county or city lines halt a good deal on a municipal contract.

Spencer noted that there are a number of successful projects and initiatives that have transcended local borders and contributed to recent improvements in the area. But, as the study shows, many more and larger opportunities remain.

Grinney said he believes the momentum Birmingham is experiencing represents an open door for change if Birmingham can leverage it.

"People are aware that we do have a lot of potential, and I think the fact that things are advancing gives us some hope that we could even take it to the next level," Grinney said. "That's why I believe now is a good time as any to look at this."

But history has shown it won't be easy.

The hurdles

Birmingham has flirted with solutions to fragmentation on a number of occasions. That list includes the One Great City initiative in the late 1960s and early 1970s that involved a consolidation of several cities in Jefferson County— something advocates of the current cooperation push have been quick to note is not at the heart of this initiative.

It also involves MAPS, a plan shut down by voters in 1998 that would have funded a number of regionally focused capital projects.

Spencer said those false starts appear to be common, based on research into other metropolises that have successfully created a regional focus.

He said it often takes three to five tries before a regional push becomes a reality, those changes often follow catalytic events in a community.

Based on past efforts and the current landscape, Birmingham offers a number of hurdles.

One of those is the misconception about what cooperation could or should look like.

"People jump to conclusions that it's all about consolidation," Nanni said. "When people hear cooperation, that's what they're trained to hear."

In his early meetings and presentations of the research, Nanni stressed that the initiative isn't pushing a particular plan and that consolidation of governments or school systems is not the ultimate goal.

Of the four examples noted in the PARCA study, only one—Louville—focuses on a consolidation, and that was the consolidation of only that metro's largest city and its largest county.

Birmingham's history and lingering racial divides also pose a challenge.

Nanni noted that there is a lack of trust that often makes it difficult to change the status quo. Any effort to tweak existing models is often interpreted as a bid to seize power, rather than to cooperate across municipal borders.

"There's a reflexive defensiveness that you don't want to give up what you have or be threatened," Spencer said. "None of this is asking you to give up what you have."

Another challenge has been convincing elected officials that things, at least on a regional level, aren't going well as they may seem. Many local cities, of course, are performing well individually.

"Mayors were surprised that MSA job growth was zero," Nanni said. "They think things are going well."

Nanni said one goal is helping the various municipalities understand that their fate is ultimately tied to the entire region—not just their city or county.

Jeff McDowell, owner of McDowell Security Services, has experienced that challenge firsthand. One obstacle he said he sees regularly is the mindset—if you don't live in Birmingham, you aren't helping make it a better place to live and you shouldn't get a say-so in how it operates.

"Anytime there's any issue that goes in with Birmingham politics and there's a discussion, the first time someone weighs in who doesn't live in Birmingham, you hear, 'Well, you don't live in Birmingham, you shouldn't be talking in.'" McDowell said.

"But I have business in the city of Birmingham. I pay taxes to the city of Birmingham and I do have a say-so, whether I live there or not. The health of my business rises or falls based on what happens in Birmingham, so to say 'I don't have a say so,' I think is wrong."

So far, the group has made presentations to a number of elected officials and feel optimistic about many of the responses they've received.

That's especially true on the subject of intra-metro business poaching. "We had one county representative who said, 'If you could just solve that issue, it would be a great accomplishment,'" Nanni said.

Brocato is also a fan of finding a way to end the practice.

"We need to quit offering incentives to businesses that are just moving merely to offer those types of incentives. That's what Nanni would like to see to agree not to offer those types of incentives. Denver's Mile High Compact is an example of a similar effort that has paid dividends for that metro."

"I see no reason why cities should incentivize these businesses to move from one city in Jefferson County to another city in Jefferson County," he said.

"Instead, he would prefer to see incentives be used to recruit new companies from outside the metro area. That's something he believes should be done collectively, rather than as individual cities."

If there's a business the region is going after, let's all go after it collectively. I think we need to work together as a region to go after businesses," he said. "There are things that don't fit in Hoover, but might fit better in Bessemer. I'm for working together as a group on economic development to help the entire region."

Indicators from both public polling and the initiative's conversations with business leaders and public officials have shown support is out there for increased cooperation.

But history has shown that having widespread support among leaders for a plan and making it a reality are two different things.

To get across the finish line, whatever that line may be, Nanni said the business community will have to play a critical role.

The search for champions

A number of key players in the Birmingham business world have been calling for greater regional cooperation for years.

A group of influential leaders helped set the stage for the newest initiative with a series of meetings. Players included Grinney, Jeffrey Bayer and David Sher, among others.

Nanni said one thing that has become clear in early meetings is that politicians alone aren't going to make cooperation a reality.

It's going to take citizens, church leaders and business leaders, as well.

"It can't be left to the politicians," he said. "Lawmakers said they need the business community to put pressure on elected officials."

McDowell, whose security firm ranks as one of Birmingham's fastest-growing businesses, agrees with the assessment that business leaders need to set the tone, and the first step to doing that is setting up regular communication.

"If more business owners had the opportunity to get together, I believe we could work together to effect this change," he said. "And let the elected leaders know that this is the desired outcome we want for the good of our region and its residents. We all live here, we've all got a stake in this."

In other areas, including Charlotte, the business community has demanded and received change that has sparked growth.

That's what Nanni would like to see in Birmingham.

The million-dollar question is who will take charge and lead that effort.

"In addition to Grinney and Krulak, the strategic advisory board for the group also includes a number of influential leaders, including Dudik's Dave Gray, Trilions Communications Corp.'s Brian Hamilton and former Innovation Depot CEO Susan Maddock, among a host of others."

Nanni said the current goal with the presentations the group is making around the area is to identify potential champions and torchbearers who will buy in and lead the charge. That's why one of their main hopes is that people from across the area will read the report at togetherweprosper.org.

"One organization or point person is not going to carry this forward (alone)," Nanni said.

By the end of 2017, Nanni said the best-case scenario is for multiple groups to step forward and say "we've got to do something, and this is the model to follow.

From there, he'd like to see a campaign that advocates for an official plan.

For the future of Birmingham, he's hopeful it happens.

"We're talking about 10, 20 or 30 years from now. It's a slow moving avalanche where you don't notice it's happening," Nanni said.

"You look ahead 10 years and there's no job growth and people aren't coming back."

See Next Page
THE CASE FOR COOPERATION
A look at key stats from PARCA's study on the impact of fragmentation in metro Birmingham

FRAGMENTATION AND GROWTH
A look at employment growth in selected metros between 2007 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>2007 Growth</th>
<th>2015 Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City, OK</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacksonville, FL</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
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FRAGMENTATION AND GROWTH
A look at population growth in selected metros between 2010 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>2010 Growth</th>
<th>2015 Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City, OK</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville, FL</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

FRAGMENTATION AND GROWTH
A look at the central city poverty rates for selected metros

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Central City Poverty Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffersonville</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIRMINGHAM'S BIG ROLE
A look at the city of Birmingham's support for entities that play a regional role in the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRTA</td>
<td>$0.8M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bham Museum</td>
<td>$3.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum of Art</td>
<td>$3.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo</td>
<td>$2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloss Furnaces</td>
<td>$1M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POLLS AND PATTERNS
A look at key stats from a poll of local residents about fragmentation and cooperation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote economic development for the entire region?</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support legislation that benefits greater Jefferson County?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support public transit?</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you support local governments working cooperatively with other regional governments to ...
CONSOLIDATION CONCERNS
While the poll showed most residents were in favor of increased cooperation, the poll showed that concerns remain for many when the conversation turns to consolidation. That's one reason leaders of the initiative have tried to make it clear that cooperation – not consolidation – is the ultimate goal.

Percentage of residents who said they would support a merger between their city or town and Jefferson County:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White residents</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black residents</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Birmingham residents</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsize cities</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small cities</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of residents who said they would support a merger of their city with Jefferson County, by age group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tickets sold out for Alabama’s 2017 football opener

By: Staff

The University of Alabama’s first football game of the 2017 season is officially sold out.

UA will meet Florida State at 7 p.m. Central time Sept. 2 in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game. The match-up will be the first college football game played at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

Various preseason polls have ranked the Crimson Tide and the Seminoles as high as No. 1 and neither team is ranked lower than No. 4.

“We’re calling this game the GOAT, the Greatest Opener of All Time, because of the projected rankings, the dominance of these two programs and the fact that this is the toughest ticket I have seen in my 20 years in college football,” said Gary Stokan CEO and president of Peach Bowl Inc., in a news release.

“To possibly have No. 1 against No. 2 in the first game of the season is a credit to the programs that (UA coach) Nick Saban and (FSU coach) Jimbo Fisher have built and their willingness to play this game shows their desire to compete at the highest level,” Stokan said.

Stubhub.com, an online ticket broker, has seats for re-sale starting at around $450 and climbing to more than $1,000 for premium seats.

“We knew this was going to be a special game, but I’m not sure we fully expected it to reach historic levels like this,” said Percy Vaughn, chairman of the Peach Bowl.

Fans who don’t want to pay for high-priced tickets can still watch the game on ABC, which is televising the game nationally.

The nation’s longest-running kickoff game, the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game has now sold out nine of its 12 match-ups. The game averages 67,645 fans -- higher than the attendance of 35 bowl games last year -- and has an average payout of $4.7 million, which is higher than 27 bowl games last year. Television viewership is also traditionally strong, with more than 47.4 million viewers tuning in to the series since its inaugural game in 2008.

The teams will battle for The Old Leather Helmet Trophy. Traditionally, winners of The Old Leather Helmet don the helmet on the field after the game, starting with the head coach and then rotating from player to player as the team celebrates its victory.
Alabama, Auburn rank in top 10 nationally in revenue

By: Alex Byington

The fact that Alabama’s athletic department continues to rank among the most financially viable in the nation shouldn’t come as much of a surprise to anyone.

Now there’s just a number to the Crimson Tide’s monetary success.

Alabama’s record $164-million revenue from the 2015-16 fiscal year ranked fourth nationally among all NCAA public universities, and second in the Southeastern Conference, according to USA Today’s annual NCAA financial database released Thursday.

SEC West rival Texas A&M once again held the nation’s top spot with a total revenue topping out at a whopping $194.4 million, which was up nearly $2 million from the previous year, to go along with expenditures of just $137.1 million — which gave the Aggies a nation’s-leading $57.3-million profit from the 2016 fiscal year.

Texas came in at second nationally with $188-million in revenue, but also had the nation’s greatest total expenditures at $171.4 million. Ohio State was third with a revenue of $170.8 million, but managed a profit of just $4 million with expenditures of nearly $167 million, according to the USA Today database.

Across the state, Auburn ranked 10th nationally with a revenue at $140.1 million for the 2016 fiscal year, according to USA Today, to go along with its nearly $125 million expenditures.

Despite the uptick in revenue, Texas A&M fell in overall outside contributions from $92 million in fiscal year 2015 to $75.5 million this past year, but still led both the nation and the SEC in that category. That included donors contributing more than 2 ½-times more than Alabama between 2015-16.

In fact, the Tide’s $29.7 million contributions ranked just ninth in the SEC, approximately $6 million behind rival Auburn ($35.7 million) for third in the conference. Florida’s $43.1 million in contributions ranked second in the SEC, according to data compiled by USA Today.

Eleven of the 13 SEC public university programs subject to records requests posted revenue marks topping $100 million, with just Missouri ($97.3 million) and Mississippi State ($94.9 million) finishing just below that mark.
UA earns $1.7 million grant

Money will help Latino nursing students

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama's college of nursing received a $1.7 million federal grant to help Latino nurses pursue more advanced degrees with the goal of improving credentials and career opportunities while also improving healthcare outcomes in under-served communities.

The UA Capstone College of Nursing received the four-year grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration Nursing Workforce Diversity Program for the Bama-Latino Project. The program will provide financial support and mentorship to 80 Latino nurses with associate's degrees as they pursue a bachelor of science in nursing in UA's online RN-BSN mobility program. Academic resources along with financial hardships are among the barriers faced by Latinos pursuing nursing degrees, according to the grant's investigators.

"Our hope, our plan is they get their baccalaureate degree and it is a stepping stone and a jumping off point to continue their education," said Michelle Cheshire, coordinator for the RN mobility program and one of the grant's investigators.

The program will enroll 20 nurses a year beginning this fall. The nurses in the program will be drawn from across the nation and complete baccalaureate degree as Bama by Distance students, Cheshire said.

The year-long curriculum includes coursework focusing on community health, leadership and management, and dealing with patients with complex health issues. The program also includes a clinical component, likely in the communities where the nurses in the program live, Cheshire said.

The program is partnering with the National Association of Hispanic Nurses to provide professional mentors.

The program's goals are to help the Latino nurses earn more advanced degrees, but it is also about improving healthcare outcomes.

"It is going to help rural communities, it is certainly going to help those in under-served communities in Alabama but this is, of course, a nationwide thing," Cheshire said. "Our hope is these nurses will stay in their communities that are underserved."

A bachelor's degree opens opportunities to move into leadership and management roles, Cheshire said.

Latinos make up 17.3 percent of the current population, but currently less than 5 percent of U.S. nurses are Latino, said nursing professor Norma Cuellar, principal investigator for the grant.

Having nurses with whom patients can identify can improve healthcare outcomes.

"While we teach our students about cultural sensitivity, we know that many times when people are being cared for by someone who is not like them, there is a barrier that may impact health care outcomes. Sometimes it's communication, sometimes it's cultural. Both can pose a problem in delivering health care," Cuellar said in comments released by UA.

Cheshire hopes at the end of the grant, the program's success will encourage more funding through Health Resources and Services Administration.
Six named to UA business hall of fame

**Former athletic director Bill Battle among inductees**

Staff report

Former University of Alabama Director of Athletics Bill Battle is among the inductees into the University of Alabama’s Culverhouse College of Commerce’s Alabama Business Hall of Fame.

The other inductees include Charles E. Adair of Montgomery, Dr. James R. Andrews of Birmingham, Dorothy Davidson of Huntsville, UA System trustee emeritus John D. Johns of Birmingham and Don Logan of Birmingham. The 2017 class will be honored during a ceremony Nov. 9 in Birmingham.

**INDUCTEES**

*Continued from B1*

Licensing Association Hall of Fame. He is a founding member of the Crimson Tide Foundation Board and serves as president.

Davidson is the CEO and chairman of the board of directors of Davidson Technologies Inc.

Johns is executive chairman of Protective Life Corp. Johns serves on the corporate boards of Regions Financial Corp., Genuine Parts Co. and Southern Co. He recently retired from the UA System board of trustees.

Logan served as CEO of Southern Progress, CEO of Time Inc. and chairman of Time Warner Media and Communications. Logan and his family own the Birmingham Barons and Seek Publishing. In 2010, he and two partners acquired B.A.S.S., the world’s largest fishing organization.

The Hall of Fame was founded in 1973 by the college’s Board of Visitors to honor individuals in business who have brought lasting fame to the state of Alabama. Candidates must be retired for a minimum of three years or be 65 years of age or older if they are still active in their careers.

The Hall of Fame gallery located in Bidgood Hall and houses memorabilia related to the lives and careers of inductees.
The parents of a Texas woman who said she was raped while attending the University of Alabama have sued the alleged attacker, school officials and others, claiming the episode led to her suicide last year.

A federal wrongful death lawsuit filed over the weekend by Michael and Cynthia Rondini of Austin, Texas, claims the alleged assault and officials' subsequent mishandling of the allegations prompted Megan Rondini to kill herself.

The lawsuit says Rondini, then a 20-year-old junior who planned to go to medical school, met a man at a popular Tuscaloosa bar in July 2015. She was later sexually assaulted at his home, possibly after being drugged, the suit contends.

Police investigating the sexual assault were sympathetic toward the man and wrongly focused on Rondini's actions, which including taking a handgun and $3 for cab fare from his home, the lawsuit claims.

"Megan ultimately was treated as a crime suspect and her status as a victim of a sex crime was completely disregarded," the suit said. The young woman withdrew from Alabama and returned home to Texas, where her mental condition deteriorated, according to the complaint.

The man wasn't charged, and the lawsuit claims investigators and university officials mishandled her allegations. The suit contends Rondini afterward suffered depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, which her parents say led to her suicide.

The lawsuit names the man, but The Associated Press is not using his name since he was not charged with a crime. It also names Beth Howard, Title IX coordinator at Alabama; Cara Blake of the school's Women and Gender Resource Center; Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ron Abernathy; and two county officers, investigator Adam Jones and deputy Joshua Hastings.

In a statement, the university declined comment on specifics of the lawsuit but said school officials were "deeply saddened" by Rondini's death and are trying to raise community awareness and support victims of sexual assault.

A lawyer for the man named in the lawsuit denied that he had sexually assaulted her.

"The allegations against my client as set forth in this baseless lawsuit are simply false," the statement said.

Abernathy said the case was referred to a grand jury, which declined to issue an indictment. Letting grand jurors consider evidence rather than filing immediate charges is standard practice in cases with "very conflicting statements," Abernathy said.

The lawsuit was assigned to a federal magistrate judge Monday, but no hearing date was set. The complaint doesn't seek a specific amount of money. It asks for a court order requiring the sheriff's office to provide better training to officers and "to provide safe conditions to citizens around criminal investigations."
Family of Megan Rondini files wrongful death lawsuit

By: Stephanie Taylor

The parents of Megan Rondini have filed a federal wrongful death lawsuit against the Tuscaloosa man their daughter accused of rape, the Tuscaloosa County sheriff, two sheriff’s office deputies and two University of Alabama employees, alleging that all of them contributed to their daughter’s suicide.

Rondini hanged herself in February 2016, almost eight months after she alleged to police that T.J. Bunn Jr. raped her in his home. She was a UA student at the time. Investigators and prosecutors ultimately claimed they didn’t have enough evidence to charge Bunn.

The lawsuit, filed Sunday in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, claims that the law enforcement officers, a UA Title IX official and UA counselor’s “faulty practices” and “mishandling of the investigation” caused her death on Feb. 26, 2016, at the age of 21.

The Rondinis, who live in Texas, are seeking unspecified damages in the lawsuit, which was filed on their behalf by Birmingham attorney Leroy Maxwell.

Megan Rondini withdrew from school during the fall 2015 semester and moved back to Texas, where she sought medical, psychological and psychiatric treatment, according to the suit.

“As a direct and proximate result of defendants’ intentional, wanton, and wrongful conduct,” Maxwell wrote in the lawsuit, “defendants caused Megan extreme depression, anxiety, PTSD, fear, panic attacks, decline of cognitive functions and general well-being, weight loss, and feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, all of which directly led to Megan’s loss of life.

Megan Rondini filed a rape charge against Bunn in early July 2015, telling police that the alleged assault happened at his house in Cottondale after the two met at Innisfree, a bar in downtown Tuscaloosa across the street from ST Bunn Construction Co., which is owned by Bunn’s father and uncle. Bunn’s attorney issued a response to the lawsuit Monday afternoon:

“The allegations against my client as set forth in this baseless lawsuit are simply false,” said Tuscaloosa attorney Ivey Gilmore. “No sexual assault occurred. Law enforcement investigated this matter; the District Attorney’s Office reviewed the evidence; the evidence was even presented to a grand jury that found there was no justification for charges against my client. It is, perhaps, natural to want to find someone to blame when a young woman takes her life. But accusing law enforcement and those who counseled this young woman for her actions is misguided. Unfortunately, bringing this matter before the courts in this civil action will only prolong grief without changing the reality.”

The suit also names Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ron Abernathy and two sheriff’s office deputies. The suit claims that Abernathy didn’t ensure that deputies were properly trained to conduct sexual assault investigations.
Abernathy responded Monday, saying “Our officers are trained and very dedicated. There were conflicting statements by both parties involved in this case. Statements from the parties, witnesses and evidence was presented to the grand jury, and based on this information, the grand jury denied to indict or file charges. This is our judicial process. We, as law enforcement, are bound by the law of the state of Alabama and what is probable cause for any arrest.”

Also named in the suit are a Title IX employee at UA and a therapist at UA’s Women and Gender Resource Center. The suit claims that the women “deliberately and repeatedly denied services and mishandled accommodations with hostility” toward Rondini.

The university released a statement to The News on Monday afternoon, declining to comment on the lawsuit.

“The University of Alabama has been deeply saddened by the death of Megan Rondini, and we continue to offer our sympathy to her friends and family,” the statement read. “The university supports the staff and dedicated work of its Title IX office and the Women and Gender Resource Center, but will not otherwise comment on the substance of the lawsuit. The university remains committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. As part of its efforts, and specifically in regard to sexual assault, the university has been working closely with partners throughout the Tuscaloosa community to help raise awareness, prevent and support victims of sexual assault.”

According to the suit, Rondini met Bunn and his friend at Innisfree, where “upon information and belief, Megan became either intoxicated or drugged.” According to the version of events outlined in the lawsuit, Bunn drove Rondini to his home, locked her in his room and forced her to have sex, while “Megan told investigators that she repeatedly informed Defendant Bunn that she did not want to have sex with him and that she needed to rejoin her friends.” Rondini then called her parents, sought treatment at DCH Regional Medical Center and filed a report with police.

Maxwell claims that the officers did not conduct a thorough or professional investigation.

Rondini went home to Texas for the summer, according to the suit, where she was treated for a sexually transmitted disease and counseled by a licensed clinical social worker who recommended she get a dog to serve as an emotional support animal.

She returned to UA for the fall 2015 semester before withdrawing when she “became fearful that she would encounter Defendant Bunn on campus, that he was following her, and would attack her again or retaliate against her for reporting the rape,” according to the lawsuit.

“The combined trauma due to Megan’s treatment by the Tuscaloosa Sheriff’s Department, the reporting process with UA, the additional anxiety of trying and failing to receive counseling as a result of her rape, and the influential position of her assailant in the community ultimately made Megan feel unsafe on campus and that she could no longer remain at UA,” Maxwell wrote in the lawsuit.
RAPE RESPONSE

It took a dead woman to make Tuscaloosa do the right thing

John Archibald

There are times you wanna yell.

Enough!
Put petty interests aside and do right.
Because the world can’t take another tragedy. Alabama can’t. Tuscaloosa can’t. Our consciences can’t. We can’t accept another Megan Rondini. Or we’ll have to accept the blame. Not just for what happened to her, but for what happens to others like her. For what’s sure to happen to more and more women at the most vulnerable points of their lives.

Enough.

Rondini’s the woman who said she was raped while a student at the University of Alabama. Her story appeared in Buzzfeed last week, a gripping tale of betrayal by all the institutions that were supposedly there to protect her. The police failed her. The university failed her. DCH Regional Medical Center did not provide services she needed.

In the end Megan took her own life. She killed herself. A community pushed her away when it should have pulled her close.

You can say rape happens everywhere. and it sadly does. You can say there are two sides to the story, and there always are. You can blame the women for what they wear, or how much they had to drink, or where they happen to be, but live with your own complicity if you do. There must be change. For the women. For our souls. But it has been hard to come by in Tuscaloosa.

Danielle Fincher, a young doctor who worked at DCH while in medical school, spent two years in Tuscaloosa pushing the hospital to institute a SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner) program, which treats victims with sensitivity and provides the resources they need. She was met with resistance she couldn’t understand.

"The attitude was that if we don’t talk about it, it doesn’t exist," she said.
So she set out, through a university research project, to show how much it was needed. She collected data from 2010 to 2015, demonstrating, among other things, that only 6 percent of rape victims coming to the hospital in Tuscaloosa got the treatment recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. Just 22 women out of 400 got what they needed. She and other advocates came up with a plan for a nonprofit to house the program and provide all the care for rape victims and all the paperwork that would follow. It, like several other proposals over the last several decades, was ignored. Promises were made, but nothing happened.

"It was not a priority because it’s an ugly topic," Fincher said. "In my experience, they were not interested in being helpful.

Not until Megan Rondini. Maybe.

Last week, after the pressure of bad national press and a speech about Megan on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, the University and DCH sat to talk about finally making it happen. On Friday, in a joint press release, they said this:

"A community group that includes the University of Alabama, DCH Regional Medical Center, victim advocates, the Tuscaloosa District Attorney’s office, and area law enforcement is working together to establish a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program and a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) in Tuscaloosa County. Since last fall, the group has been working to implement the best model to have SANE-certified care for victims of sexual assault in the Tuscaloosa community. While this long-term solution is being implemented, DCH is training its staff in the SANE course curriculum."

Fincher remains skeptical. She will believe it when she sees it. There have been too many broken promises, and too little interest. I hope she’s wrong. Because it’s past time to yell enough!

It’s time to do the right thing, to stop revictimizing women and start respecting them. We’ll hope for the best, and believe it when we finally see it.

Archibald writes a regular opinion column for AL.com.
Accountant pleads guilty to fraud

Victims included group that supported UA band

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A Hoover man pleaded guilty to stealing $20,000 from a former fundraising group that supported the University of Alabama's Million Dollar Band. Randall Sho Woods, 33, pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud and one count of bank fraud, according to Acting U.S. Attorney Robert O. Posey and FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge David W. Arcey.

Woods was accused of stealing from two former employers and the Million Dollar Band Association, a nonprofit organization that supported the marching band.

A federal grand jury returned a 24-count indictment against him in April. He is accused of charging more than $30,000 on corporate credit card accounts for his personal expenses while an accountant at Ingram's Accounting & Financial Management Inc. and more than $150,000 from accounts at State Traditions, another company he worked for.

According to the indictment, Woods wrote checks totaling more than $28,000 to himself when he served as treasurer of the Million Dollar Band Association, a nonprofit organization external from the university that supported the band. It dissolved a couple of years ago to make way for the new "Friends of the Million Dollar Band Association."

Prosecutors said that, while at State Traditions, Woods stole money from the company's Pay-Pal account and forged the endorsement of one of State Traditions' owners on multiple checks.

Woods will be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Scott Coogler at a hearing scheduled for Oct. 12. The maximum penalty for wire fraud is 20 years in prison and a fine up to $250,000. The maximum sentence for bank fraud is 30 years.
UA increases parking fees

Students, staff and faculty will pay $20 to $30 more

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Parking permit prices for students, staff and faculty at the University of Alabama will increase 5-6 percent again for the upcoming academic year. The increases beginning this fall range from $20 to $30. The cost of the permits has increased about 25 to 30 percent since 2013, with the exception of motorcycle permits.

The funds will go toward maintenance and operating costs for the parking facilities, campus buses, student services and road paving, said Chris D'Esposito, transportation services director.

Perimeter and handicap permits will increase by $20 to a total of $220. Student commuter permits and green permits for faculty and staff will increase by $20 to $125. Student residential permits will increase by $20 to $325. Reserve permits will increase by $30 to $630. Rose Administration reserve permits for faculty and staff will increase by $30 to $550. Motorcycle permits will remain at $75 for the academic year.

The university has a series of parking-related projects planned and underway including the expansion of existing lots and building new decks.

UA is currently constructing a parking deck beside the new Tutwiler residence hall, which is scheduled to open in 2018. The residential deck will add more than 1,400 spaces.

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FEES

Continued from B1

The university is also currently expanding the parking lot across from the softball and outdoor swimming complexes off Campus Drive. The expanded lot will have around 1,600 spaces.

UA also plans to upgrade its gated facilities on campus. As part of the project, the Ferguson Student Center, Campus Drive and North Ten Hoor parking decks will be able to accept credit cards for payment. The upgrades are scheduled to be completed in late 2018.

D'Esposito said no major disruptions will occur with the construction projects.

“We try to reduce the impact as much as possible through communications,” he said. “Once a project is completed, hopefully, the progress made offsets the temporary inconvenience and improves the experience.”
Excellence should take precedence in academia

By: Larry Clayton

Who are intellectuals? Merriam-Webster defines intellectual as someone chiefly guided by the intellect rather than emotion or experience; people given to study and reflection, engaged in the creative use of the intellect.

One of our former governors, George Wallace, observed that intellectuals were pointy-headed college professors who can’t even park a bicycle straight. A former president, Herbert Hoover, noted that intellectuals demonstrate an “unbroken record of total abstinence from constructive joy over our whole national history.”

There are other equally entertaining views of intellectuals but this is a deadly serious business. Intellectuals dominate much of higher education and what they think and write and teach will be passed on to the generations coming into their own and eventually power.

A good example of how intellectuals work comes to us from Duke where the Divinity School basically ran out a moderate on their faculty for challenging diversity gurus in that school.

A faculty member, Paul Griffiths, challenged the activist agenda of a proposed seminar devoted to “constructions of identity, gender, and ethnicity, and traditions of violence and nonviolence.” For the intellectual community, these are code words for a highly subjective, often corrosive, and usually one-sided politically correct agenda.

Griffiths had the boldness to state that this seminar will be filled with “bromides [and] clichés” and furthermore the seminar speakers would reflect “illiberal roots and totalitarian tendencies.” Griffiths added that the seminar would be “definitively anti-intellectual.” And by intellectual he meant an open forum for discussion and debate.

Faced with the dean and a faculty member, one who upbraided him and the second who filed a complaint against him for “harassment,” Griffiths quit.

The politically correct intellectual community is exercising power over the character formation of your college-age children right here at the University of Alabama.

A national search has just concluded at UA with the hiring of a new “Vice President/Associate Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” to “establish a holistic and integrated vision that fosters a welcoming and supportive environment for students, faculty, staff, visitors and the community at large -- regardless of cultural differences, beliefs, values, ethnicity, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, gender identity, or religion.”
If that sounds like a politically correct society’s agenda, you are right. What about truth, honesty, Christian values, integrity, responsibility, true liberty, a competitive environment, critical thinking, and wrap it all within the principle of “excellence,” rather than “diversity?”

I have a son and a daughter, among three children, one of whom is a commercial jet pilot and the other a surgeon. They got to the flight cockpit and the operating room because of skill, tenacity and intelligence.

Do you want someone in the operating room or in the cockpit because of some other reason, related perhaps to “ethnicity, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, gender identity, or religion?” That is the very antithesis of what made this country what it is.

Intellectuals exercise a disproportionate influence on the American public since a lot of them staff the media, the think tanks, and the world of communication in general. By the way, intellectuals of the right, George Will, for example, seem to have lost their equilibrium as well when faced with a populist like President Trump.

How about if UA sponsors a new college, call it Alpha College. It will not be devoted to diversity, but instead to excellence. Alpha College will equip our students to live in a world where the values of an honest education are foundational.

What will Alpha College look like? That will be determined by people representing different interests -- business, education, religion, languages, the sciences, sports, etc., and a poet or two for spice -- all brought together by the university president and given their charge by him.

Engineers are well-organized people.

I bet he would do a bang-up job and push UA to the forefront of programs built on excellence and competition, rather than diversity and equality. And big changes in principles and policies coming out of Washington will support such a move.

Right now, the breath of freedom and life is being choked out of our universities, and those trying to warn us, like the proverbial canary in a coal mine -- Paul Griffiths of the Duke Divinity School, for instance -- are being gassed into submission or resignation.
TRANSIT TRANSITIONS

Officials: Solving the persistent problem of parking requires long-term culture shift

By ERICA TECHO

With a goal of reaching enrollment of 20,000 students by 2018 and 24,000 in the next five years, something will have to change on the University of Alabama at Birmingham campus.

Some of those changes already have been seen, including new educational facilities and student buildings, as Iron City Ink explored in the first two parts of this series. Also in the works to accommodate a growing student population are new dining and residence halls. But in order to keep a centralized feel on a campus that already sprawls across more than 93 city blocks, there must be give and take. One take will be parking.

UAB is working to provide more density within the campus’s core, according to James Fowler, director of Planning, Design and Construction. To do that, he said, the school must consider taking away surface parking lots around the core of campus.

“We want to consolidate some of that surface parking into parking decks, but that’s expensive, so we won’t be able to capture all of it,” Fowler said. “We want to migrate some of that surface parking out to the perimeter areas of campus, but again, we’re an urban campus, so even that is a challenge.”

Addressing parking issues also requires a need to increase transportation options. By making walking, cycling or public transit more appealing, the campus would be able to decrease a need for parking, Fowler said.

The school took some of its first steps toward changing movement around campus in 2013, when it established the Blazer Express transit system. That fleet of 12 buses replaced the campus’ ride and escort services, which it had outgrown. Before Blazer Express, the campus was an auto-oriented culture, Fowler said, but is currently shifting that mindset.

Blazer Express provides around 50,000 total rides each month, said Director of UAB Parking...
and Transportation Andre Davis, but numbers could be higher.

"Student passenger numbers have not been as expected to date, but we recently improved routes to make them more convenient," Davis said. "We feel student ridership will go up as word of those improvements continues to spread."

Since the bus system was implemented, there have been fewer personal vehicles driving around campus, which decreased traffic congestion, Davis said. More routes have also been added to the system in order to get students and employees to and from parking lots, which are increasingly moving to the edges of campus.

This perimeter parking is often seen as inconvenient, Davis said, but is necessary to accommodate the school's primary goal of providing an education.

"Our mission is to provide an education, not necessarily provide a parking lot," Davis said. "You don't want to build an academic building on the far edge of campus. That's not good for the university. It's easier to put the parking on the edge."

**MATTER OF CONVENIENCE**

Parking is a common complaint among UAB students, Davis said, but added that university data show there are an adequate number of parking spaces. According to UAB's website, the school operates more than 80 off-street facilities with 12,645 spaces. The issue for most students, however, comes down to convenience.

"It's not that bad," Davis said, in regard to parking and catching a bus from the lot to campus or walking to an academic building. "But that student who's running late for class doesn't see it that way."

Adair Premani, a junior information systems major from Hoover, sees it as a prevalent issue. "Something that is a constant gripe by me and many other students is parking," Premani said. "Parking is horrible."

And the problem is not that UAB is over-assigning lots or handing out too many parking permits, Premani said.

"They are not over-assigning, obviously, but there is still the issue of students who don't get [parking] tags but come to campus and park in the lots anyway," he said.

Instead of creating more bus stops, Premani said he sees building larger decks to accommodate more cars as a more effective solution.

Other students say they recognize parking decks are not always the best solution.

Nadia Harden, a sophomore and orientation leader, said she hadn't realized how "ridiculously expensive" decks are to construct.

"So balancing that and how long it takes to make a parking deck, I recognize why there's problem," Harden said, adding that she acknowledges the administration is taking steps toward making parking and transportation more convenient for students.

Hassan Sadruddin, a 20-year-old sophomore at UAB, said increased difficulty in finding parking is to be expected in a city. He sometimes chooses to walk to campus rather than drive, mainly because finding parking can take just as much time.

"I try to walk to campus when possible. It takes 20 minutes," he said. "If I drive, it takes five minutes, but then 15 minutes to park."

That time spent finding a place to park has meant Sainuddin was late for class or accepted a $20 ticket to avoid missing class. Those 15 minutes spent parking are also in part due to UAB's current "license to hunt" system. Commuting UAB students — both graduate and undergraduate — receive permits for lots starting with the number 1.5. There are more than a dozen commuter lots spread across campus, meaning students have to "hunt" — or drive around between the lots — to find a parking spot.

Growing numbers mean UAB has started to outgrow this "license to hunt" system, Davis said, and options for zoned lots are under consideration.

"We're looking to create a zone-based parking system where you still will like to look in different lots, but instead of looking in 20 different lots, you now have to look in those different lots," Davis said. "It cuts your hunt down considerably."

With the current system on campus, however, Davis said new students could help a culture shift. Encouraging incoming freshmen to utilize the bus system and perimeter lots is easier than changing the mindset of older students, Davis said.

"The way it is when they come in, that's what they're accustomed to," he said, adding that introducing students to a bus-oriented system can make those resources a habit in the future.

"You see all those UAB buses passing by," said junior Eli Usery. "Those buses are not used, that go out to those lots, and no one is really using them. So if students would realize that these resources are here, and have been here, and are not being taken advantage of, they would ease up the pressure on parking and transportation."

A cultural change that is ongoing around Birmingham could also reduce the overall demand for parking, Fowler said.

Downtown is becoming denser and more walkable, and as the need for cars to go between destinations decreases, so could the need for parking.

To lean into this change, Fowler said, UAB plans to "change the character of our streets." This includes increasing protection for pedestrians and making the area more attractive for pedestrians, cyclists and mass transit riders.

This fall, work on 10th Avenue South will reduce the number of automobile lanes on the road, giving more room for wide bike lanes. Zyp bikeshare stations scattered across campus also mean students can use those lanes even if they don't have a bike of their own. "We're hoping to have a really safe, comfortable, attractive network for walking and cycling," Fowler said.

Sadruddin said he has seen cycling grow in popularity around campus, and he recognized UAB signs to make it safer.

**BJCTA/MAX OPTIONS**

While Birmingham saw a shift in mass transit options, it opened up options to UAB students as well. Since the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority improved its fleet of MAX buses, Davis has said he has seen an increase in people riding MAX buses around campus.

"We've seen a 30 percent increase in ridership just on that route [the Magic City Connector], since we launched that," said BJCTA Executive Director Barbara Murdock. "And that's taking people up and down 20th [Avenue] North and 20th [Street] South from Five Points South to Uptown. We're currently working to provide similar service to the Lakeview district."

Increasing usage of public transit takes making the option "seductive," Murdock said. Riders need to see the option as "more than just getting on a bus," she said, and updates such as Wi-Fi on the buses, new designs and new routes are helping increase that appeal.

"Public transit ridership is down all over the country. Ours is down slightly, but not that bad, and that's because cost of gas and, someone told me, car dealers are almost giving cars away, so we have to compete with that," she said. "But there will always be a need for public transportation."

Millennials are also looking toward using fewer cars and moving to areas with greater walkability. As Birmingham and UAB move toward that direction, Murdock said she hopes the BJCTA buses will provide a good option to those individuals.

"Going from what once was a very auto-oriented downtown and auto-oriented campus, we are beginning to switch to a transit-oriented campus over night, but we have seen a lot of good, positive steps and our administration is very supportive and is excited about being a more multi-modal campus," Fowler said.

— Less Coonen and Jesse Chambers contributed to this report.
Visual artist returns to UAB for 2 exhibits

By JESSE CHAMBERS


The exhibit is noteworthy based on the quality of the work, alone. "Sandlin is an incredible painter, printmaker and illustrator," AEIVA curator John Fields said.

But there's another reason for the show to generate local interest. Although Sandlin was born in Northern Ireland in 1956, he moved to Alabama with his family in 1972 and later earned his art degree at UAB.

And Sandlin, who's lived in New York's East Village since 1980, has drawn skillfully on the rich, turbulent histories of Ireland and Alabama for the philosophical underpinnings of his large body of work.

His detailed books, drawings and paintings — heavily influenced by comics — present narrative imagery and semi-autobiographical tales of morality, redemption and American exceptionalism. "I make goofy, cartoony paintings and kind of social satire, and I like the fact of floating between the comic world and art world," he said.

Sandlin and his family moved to Alabama in 1972 "to get away from the troubles in Belfast," he said, referring to the ongoing violence between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

His dad was American and grew up in Cullman County, where the family relocated.

Sandlin was one of only a dozen art majors when he started at UAB in 1975, he told UAB Magazine in 2010, but he found a mentor in John Dillon, who taught printmaking from 1972-97.

"He was a great teacher," Sandlin said.

The UAB campus was much smaller then. "We all lived in apartments in the neighborhood," Sandlin said. "It was easy to live close by, cheaply, walk over to school."

Sandlin and some of his friends formed their own art group, called Rockus. "We made our own fun and ... our own scene," he said.

Sandlin now teaches printmaking, book arts and illustration at the School of Visual Arts. He's exhibited in the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia, and has published comics and illustrations.

He takes note of big changes at UAB. "It definitely seems way bigger ... but certainly [AEIVA] is really impressive," he said. "So from what I see, the changes are hopefully for the better."
UAB DOCTORS WORKING ON KEY BREAST CANCER TRIAL

The University of Alabama at Birmingham’s part in nationwide clinical trials and research for breast cancer treatment is helping uncover new treatments and results.

Doctors at UAB, in conjunction with other university and researchers, have discovered that adding the drug pembrolizumab, in combination with chemotherapy and other standard therapies, displays positive outcomes for women in early-stage breast cancer.

According to Dr. Andres Forero, who is head of the UAB breast cancer program, pembrolizumab was developed by Merck Pharmaceuticals and was initially created to treat melanoma. Pembrolizumab allows the immune systems to engage the cancer cells themselves and becomes a form of immunotherapy. When the patients receive chemo, plus the drug, the patients are three times more likely to go into remission than those who receive basic chemotherapy.

The endpoint of the trial is to get an increased proportion of patients will have pathological complete remission, or at the time of the surgery no cancer cells will be found.

"Using new drugs in combination with the old treatments, trying to improve the rate of remission, because we know if we achieve that, then the prognosis in the long term will be very good," he said.
Summer Program Brings Drone Education to Deaf High School Students in the South

By: Betsy Lillian

Last week, the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) hosted “Droids and Drones,” a free program offering deaf and hard-of-hearing high school students the opportunity to learn more about unmanned aircraft systems.

According to the university, 27 students from across the South attended the program, which was offered via the Rochester Institute of Technology National Technical Institute for the Deaf and supported by UAH’s Systems Management and Production Center.

UAH says the program, focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), helped the students “explore a range of career options and opportunities in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and robotic technology.” In addition, the students learned how to build and fly a 3D-printed UAV via a Raspberry Pi-based laptop.

“Campers are introduced to the 3D printing and drone technologies, learning about various of careers in UAV/robotics; discovering what types of careers fit their interests; and participating in hands-on demonstrations in robotic engineering, drone technology and aviation physics,” says Steven Forney, a SMAP research associate who serves as an instructor for 3D printing and drones and who is also deaf.

Forney adds, “They are taking their own Pi-Top laptops and 3D-printed mini drone with them when the event is over. And this brings their knowledge of STEM careers closer to home. They will even be able to educate other deaf and hard-of-hearing students about STEM careers.”
Vietnam-era draftee served in Redstone laboratory

By: Skip Vaughn

Dennis Warren was among the hundreds of draftees gathered at the U.S. Army Reception Center in Jacksonville, Florida, in April 1968.

The guy directly in front of Warren in line for physicals sat down at the induction Soldier’s desk and was told that the next person in line, meaning him, would be going into the Marine Corps.

“The guy asked, ‘Is there something I can do to get out of this?’” Warren recalled. “And the Soldier said, ‘If you can get someone in the line in back of you to volunteer in your place, you don’t have to go.’

“He turned around and looked at us. The most pathetic look on his face you ever saw. He stood up and he asked all 50 of us in line to go in his place, and begged them literally. No one would. He was literally crying. I’m not saying our hearts didn’t go out to him, but nobody would take his place.”

Next stop for Warren and the other draftees was the bus station and the long quiet ride to Fort Benning, Georgia, for eight weeks of basic training. An avid reader, Warren knew what to expect because he had visited a bookstore the day before the bus trip. The then 23-year-old was there with his wife and mother-in-law. Warren’s mother-in-law suggested he get the paperback book on the shelf that told draftees everything that would happen from the time they were inducted to the time they went to Vietnam.

“It was written by former draftees,” Warren said. He keeps the book as a valued memento in his home in southeast Huntsville because he says it saved his life.

First, he learned not to fear the tear gas chamber during basic training. Second, he learned to have a good answer when asked what he did as a civilian because that would determine his military occupational specialty. “Above all you don’t want it to be 11 Bravo – 11 Bravo is ‘one each infantryman,’” Warren said. And third, he learned to decline an invitation to go to officer candidate school because second lieutenants had a high casualty rate in Vietnam.

Warren, who had earned a physics degree from Samford University and had worked for NASA contractors at Marshall Space Flight Center and at Cape Kennedy, recalled what happened when he got asked about what he did in the civilian world.

“When that time came and I went into that room, you would’ve thought I was Albert Einstein,” he said laughing.

The Birmingham native received a science and engineering specialty and got assigned as a physical scientist assistant for the Army at Redstone Arsenal. He spent his two-year commitment in uniform at McMorrow laboratory building 5400.

Ironically, after he graduated from Samford in 1966, he had worked on post at Marshall Space Flight Center from June 1966 to January 1968. He moved to Florida, where his wife was from, in
January 1968 and started working at Cape Kennedy on the Apollo project assisting and verifying the software for the lunar module simulator. Then he got drafted.

“I went from an air-conditioned office doing engineering work to jogging in formation at 5 a.m. in the morning,” he said.

Warren, 71, went on to spend 47 years with various contractors in the defense industry in Huntsville. He entered retirement in 2013, finishing as a weapon system analyst for Technology Services Inc. in support of the Missile Defense Agency.

He graduated from Ensley High School in Birmingham in 1962. After getting his bachelor’s from Samford, he got three degrees from the University of Alabama in Huntsville: a master’s in physics in 1973, a bachelor’s in business administration in 1977 and a master’s in administrative science in 1980.

He and his wife of 49 years, Linda, have three daughters and a son and four grandchildren. Krista Mumaw works in marketing in Atlanta; Kara works in art restoration at Biltmore Mansion in Asheville, North Carolina; Kendra Jeffreys is an administrator for the missionary group Missions for the World; and their son, Kevin, is a mechanic at a car dealership in Huntsville.

Warren shared his thoughts on this nation’s commemoration of 50 years since the Vietnam War.

“The overwhelming feeling I have is that at the time Vietnam Soldiers were not respected. That always seemed wrong to me,” he said. “They didn’t ask to go to Vietnam. They just did their duty even though they were scared, they were frightened. And I would hope this commemoration would grant them some of the respect that they deserved that they didn’t have in those days.”

Editor’s note: This is the 126th in a series of articles about Vietnam veterans as the United States commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.
Former UAB AD Brian Mackin named Conference USA deputy commissioner

By: Kevin Scarbinsky

Former UAB Athletics Director Brian Mackin, who resigned that position in the wake of the university's 2014 decision to shut down its football program, is returning to intercollegiate athletics as the Blazers prepare to return to the football field this fall. Mackin has been named deputy commissioner of Conference USA.

UAB is an original member of C-USA so Mackin will work with his alma mater and former employer in a different capacity. He'll be a member of the conference's senior staff and work with C-USA Commissioner Judy MacLeod, who was promoted to that position Oct. 26, 2015.

As deputy commissioner, Mackin will have direct oversight of the league's business and human resources functions as well as its multimedia and communications departments. He'll also be the league's liaison to its athletics directors, who include his successor at UAB, Mark Ingram.

Mackin will work in the C-USA office in Irving, Texas, and will start his new job Aug. 1.

"I am excited to be back in the industry I have tremendous passion for," Mackin said, "and hope to add value to the C-USA staff and the 14 programs in the conference."

Mackin, a former UAB baseball player, joined the school's athletics administration in 2002. He was promoted to AD in 2007, a job he held until his resignation.

During his UAB tenure, Mackin hired football coach Bill Clark, who took the Blazers to their best season in a decade in his first year in 2014 and is leading the program's return. He also hired former basketball coach Jerod Haase, whose 2015 team won the C-USA Tournament and upset No. 3 seed Iowa State in the NCAA Tournament and whose 2016 team won the regular-season conference title.

As part of his severance agreement, Mackin served UAB in a new role as "Special Assistant for Athletics" from Dec. 1, 2014, to Feb. 28, 2015. His stated duties in that role were "transitioning coaching staff and student-athletes affected by the decision to eliminate football, rifle and bowling and such other duties as reasonably assigned by the President or Vice President of Financial Affairs."

Mackin's severance also included a confidentiality clause that prohibited him from speaking about the UAB administration's decision to eliminate football, rifle and bowling. The school reinstated those sports in June of 2015.

After leaving UAB, Mackin worked in the private sector as vice president for corporate and institutional banking at PNC Financial Services Group in its Birmingham office.

See next page
AL.com asked UAB for a response from Clark and Ingram to Mackin going to work for C-USA. UAB's chief communications officer, Anne Buckley, provided this statement: "UAB and UAB Athletics wish Mr. Mackin well in his future endeavors."
As recruiting posters go, it doesn't get much better than this: Auburn center Austin Wiley flashing a V for victory sign while riding a camel in front of the Pyramids in Egypt.

Wiley is in Cairo playing for Team USA in the U19 World Cup. The Americans smoked Iran 108-48 in their first game of the tournament Saturday. Wiley started and finished with five points and eight rebounds in 15 minutes. His plus-33 plus-minus rating was tied for second on the team.

Auburn basketball wisely put that memorable tourist snapshot of its sophomore center on its official Twitter page but left out the perfect caption:

"Auburn basketball: Going places."

That's been the idea ever since the Tigers hired Bruce Pearl in what looked like perfect timing for both of them, but three years after starting over together, their marriage hasn't translated into a single postseason trip.

It's always felt like just a matter of time, and the time should be now.

The college basketball off-season doesn't always generate a lot of buzz in the most rabid college football state in the country, but like Alabama, Auburn is doing its best to make some noise this summer.

Wiley is playing for his second gold medal, and if incoming freshman forward Chuma Okeke hadn't suffered a bone bruise on his knee during tryouts, Auburn might have two players on Team USA. Okeke made the cut to the final 16 before getting hurt.

The good news: Pearl said his injury isn't serious, and Okeke's performance at Team USA training camp showed he's only going to add to the most talented roster Pearl's coached at Auburn.

One mock NBA Draft for 2018 has Wiley and sophomore swingman Mustapha Heron as top-25 picks next year. It's a long way from mock draft to draft night, but for a program that hasn't had a single player selected in 16 years, it's progress.

"Having two guys on the board right now is great credibility and visibility for our program," Pearl said. "Our job is to get them there."

Jon Rothstein of CBS Sports, a respected national college basketball analyst, tweeted the other day that sophomore Jared Harper is the "best returning point guard in the SEC." Harper had an up-and-down freshman season, but it's a sign of the improved talent level on the Plains that he'll be pushed for playing time by incoming freshman Davion Mitchell.

Pearl continues to do his part to increase Auburn's profile. He spent time at the U19 Team USA training camp in Colorado Springs to support Wiley and Okeke. He also spent NBA Draft night in an Atlanta studio doing analysis for NBA TV.

He cited the importance of "visibility and credibility" as the reasons behind those appearances.

From Colorado Springs to Cairo, Auburn basketball is more visible than it's been in ages, but the real credibility will come when the Tigers combine a strong non-conference run like last year's 11-2 mark with a strong SEC season and a run to the postseason.

If not this Auburn team, who? If not now, when?
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
UA leads nation in first-team CoSIDA Academic All-Americans

Alabama athletics once again led the nation in first-team Academic All-America honors as selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA), totaling seven during the 2016-17 academic year. The Crimson Tide also garnered three second-team accolades to tally 10 honors over the past season, giving Alabama double-digit Academic All-Americans for the fourth year in a row.

This year, the Tide had more student-athletes earn first-team recognition than all but three other NCAA Division I schools had total honors. Alabama and Minnesota (11) were the only schools to earn double-digit Academic All-America honors in 2016-17, with the Gophers earning three first-team, three second-team and five third-team certificates.

Alabama has earned Academic All-America honors a Division I-best 77 times over the last eight seasons and an extraordinary 45 times over the last four.

The first-team All-Americans are Connor Oslin, Anton McKee, Pavel Romanov and Luke Kaliszak in swimming; Mackenzie Brannan and Keely McNeer in gymnastics; Alex Gholston in women’s track.
22 minor NCAA violations reported

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

The University of Alabama athletic department self-reported 22 NCAA violations considered to be Level III or Level IV violations for the 2016-17 academic year.

The Alabama football reported nine such violations, the most of any program. Gymnastics and men's golf each reported two. No other team or department reported more than one.

In one instance, an assistant coach for the football team had impermissible off-campus contact with a recruit. The coach was prohibited from off-campus recruiting for 30 days and was suspended for a game. He also received a letter of admonishment and rules education.

In another instance, a football player was suspended for the first four games of the season after selling multiple pieces of "institutional issued items and participation awards." The student-athlete was also required to repay $820 to a charity of his choice.

A member of the football staff who was not a coach provided instruction to a player.

Complete list of secondary violations, page C7

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.

See next page
Corrective Actions Taken
1. Letter of admonishment to involved staff member.
2. Rules education provided to staff member.
3. 30 day prohibition of off-campus recruiting activity for involved staff member.
4. One-game suspension for involved staff member.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules education was provided to the Women's Soccer Staff.
2. A letter of admonishment was issued to the Assistant Coach.

The Soccer Staff will be precluded from sending the prosp
1. Recruiting materials for a period of two weeks once it otherwise becomes permissible to send such recruiting materials (September 15, 2018).

LIFE SKILLS
Bylaw: 12.5.2.1
Summary: Institutional staff member posted a picture of student-athletes on Instagram, tagging a commercial entity.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Education was provided to the institutional staff member.
2. No Further Action from Conference or NCAA.

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY
Bylaw: 13.4.1
Summary: Assistant coach sent an email to student-athlete prior to the first permissible date to send electronic correspondence.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Education was provided to involved staff member.
2. Letter of admonishment for involved staff member.
3. The institution will be prohibited from sending recruiting materials to the involved prospect for a period of 60 days following the first permissible date.

MEN'S TRACK
Bylaw: 13.10.2.1
Summary: Men's basketball player practiced prior to signing NCAA Drug Testing Consent Form.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Student-athlete required to sign form.
2. Rules education for all sports on required beginning of the year forms.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Bylaw: 13.7.3
Summary: Male practice players participated with the women's basketball team without first signing the NCAA Drug Testing Consent Form identified by Bylaw 12.7.3.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Women's basketball staff was reminded about the institutional and NCAA policies regarding the use of male practice players.

ATHLETICS COMMUNICATIONS
Bylaw: 13.10.2.4
Summary: A member of the Athletics Communications staff inadvertently sent a link to a collection of prospective student-athlete photos publicizing a visit to campus to the sport's media distribution list.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules education was provided to the staff member on the Publicity of a Prospective Student-Athlete's visit.
2. The link to the online collection of photos was killed to prevent access to the photographs.

SOCCER
Bylaw: 13.4.1
Summary: Head Coach mistakenly responded to a text message sent by the father of a prospective student-athlete prior to September 1st of the junior year in high school.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules education was provided to the Men's Golf Staff.
2. A letter of admonishment was issued to the Assistant Coach.
3. The Assistant Coach has been prohibited from recruiting off-campus for 30 days.
4. The Men's Golf Staff will only be allowed to have one off-campus contact with the PSA following July 1 after the completion of his junior year.
5. The Men's Golf Staff will be prohibited from making off-campus contact with the PSA until 30 days following the first permissible date for in-person off-campus contact.
6. The Assistant Coach is prohibited from making any off-campus recruiting contacts until October 20, 2016.
7. The Men's Golf Staff will be prohibited from making on-campus contact with the PSA until October 26, 2016.

BASEBALL
Bylaw: 13.4.1
Summary: Assistant Baseball Coach inadvertently responded to a text message sent by the father of a prospective student-athlete prior to September 1st of his junior year in high school.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules education was provided to the Baseball Staff.
2. A letter of admonishment was issued to Assistant Coach.
3. The Baseball Staff will be precluded from sending prospective student-athlete recruiting materials for a period of 60 days once it otherwise becomes permissible to send such recruiting materials.

WOMEN'S SOCCER
Bylaw: 13.01.2; 13.1.2.1
Summary: Members of football coaching staff permitted an impermissible recruit to be present during an off-campus contact.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Letter of admonishment for involved staff members.
2. Additional rules education provided to involved staff members.

MEN'S BASKETBALL
Bylaw: 12.7.3
Summary: Men's basketball player practiced prior to signing NCAA Drug Testing Consent Form.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Education provided to the student-athlete.
2. Education provided to the entire football team.

SOCCER
Bylaw: 13.01.2; 13.1.2.1
Summary: Head Coach mistakenly responded to a text message sent by the father of a prospective student-athlete.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules education provided to staff.
2. Rules education provided to staff.
3. 30 day prohibition of off-campus recruiting activity for involved staff member.
4. One-game suspension for involved staff member.

BASEBALL
Bylaw: 13.4.1
Summary: Golf coach mistakenly responded to a text message sent by the father of a prospective student-athlete prior to September 1st of the junior year in high school.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Golf coach mistakenly responded to a text message sent by the father of a prospective student-athlete prior to September 1st of the junior year in high school.
2. The institution issued a cease and desist letter to the Fit Factory.
3. The institution provided rules education to the specific SA, and will provide additional rules education to all student-athletes at the University of Alabama regarding impermissible promotional activities.

FOOTBALL
Bylaw: 13.3.1.1.2
Summary: Head Coach inadvertently used a wrong number for a coach and called prospective student-athlete prior to September 1st of his senior year.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Rules Education will be provided to the football staff on 13.1.3.1.2 and the timing of phone calls to prospective student-athletes.
2. The University will prohibit the coaching staff from calling the PSA for a two-week period beginning September 1-14, 2016.

FOOTBALL
Bylaw: 15.11.2.4
Summary: Current student-athlete sold multiple pieces of institutional issued items.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Required student-athlete must pay the value of the meal of five family members to the involved recruit for a period of 90 days following the first permissible date.
2. The Men's Golf Staff will be prohibited from providing additional recruiting materials (including questionnaires and general correspondence, but not including a camp brochure or OFFICIAL PSAs) to a direct twitter message received for participation.

MEN'S TENNIS
Bylaw: 13.1.3.1.1
Summary: Assistant coach called a prospect prior to the first permissible calling date.

Corrective Actions Taken
1. Assistant coach called a prospect prior to the first permissible calling date.
2. The institution declared the student-athlete ineligible and prohibited the coaching staff from providing additional recruiting materials (including questionnaires and general correspondence, but not including a camp brochure or OFFICIAL PSAs).
UA women’s golf players on scholars list

The University of Alabama’s women’s golf team had four athletes named to the Women’s Golf Coaches Association All-American Scholars list on Wednesday.

For an athlete to be named to the list, she must have a minimum of a 3.50 GPA, and compete in at least half of the team’s tournaments.

Junior Lakareber Abe was named to the list of the third consecutive year. Sophomore Cheyenne Knight was named for the second consecutive year, while freshman Kristen Gillman and sophomore Lauren Stephenson made the selection for the first time in their collegiate careers.

Since the creation of the list in 1985, Alabama has had 65 women golfers named to the list. Thirty-five have came since 2005 when head coach Mic Potter took over.
Emma Talley likely has many wins ahead

By: Ian Thompson

It might not have been the way she envisioned her first win as a professional, but former University of Alabama standout golfer Emma Talley will take the “W” just the same.

Last Sunday she captured the Symetra Tour’s Island Resort Championship without hitting a shot in what would have been the third and final round as bad weather washed away the final round and left the most likable Talley as the champion on this tour that is a level below the LPGA Tour.

Indeed, the top 10 on the Volvik Race for the Card money list get LPGA cards for 2018 at the conclusion of this season after the Symetra Tour Championship in early October. Talley, who hails from Princeton, Kentucky, and now works on her game at Shoal Creek in Birmingham, when not on the road, as part of their Tour Hopefuls program, is now fourth on the money list with $43,618 banked so far, with her win worth $22,500.

Thus, she has every chance of realizing her goal of playing the LPGA Tour full-time next year.

She has enjoyed success at every level of the game, highlighted by winning the 2013 U.S. Women’s Amateur Championship and the 2015 NCAA individual national title. Among the many of her other accolades includes being part of the 2014 U.S. Curtis Cup win and low amateur at the 2014 Women’s British Open.

Back to her recent pro win, where she shot 9-under-par 135 for the two rounds played. Her win was her sixth top 10 of the season and her third top 10 in a row.

It was especially sweet as her mother, Jennifer, has been undergoing some ongoing health issues, and Emma had originally scheduled not to play last week. Both mother, who is doing much better, according a story on the Symetra Tour’s official website, and daughter are glad she did tee it up.

And to show the esteem Talley is already held in, Golf Channel analyst Kay Cockerill noted, after Talley won the NCAA Individual title, “She has the experience of playing in six major championships.

“She is a quality person, and an even better person off the course than on. A lot of people say that she has never met a stranger. Naturally outgoing, loves to interact with people. She really has a lot to give.”

I concur. It was been my joy to interview Talley a number of times and she is always unfailingly humble and polite. I believe this will be the first of many professional wins for her.

See next page
U.S. Girls Junior Championship qualifier

Michaela Morard of Huntsville, who won the Girls State Junior on Thursday, kept up her hot streak as she fired a four-under-par 68 for medalist honors in the U.S. Girls Junior Championship qualifier hosted by Wynlakes Golf & CC in Montgomery on Friday. She will be joined by two other Alabama natives, Ally Williams, 16, of Athens and Virginia Green of Point Clear, who both shot rounds of 70 to claim the other qualifying spots.

Abbey Daniel of Covington, Louisiana, and Jordan Susce of Birmingham were tied at 71, with Daniel winning a playoff for the first alternate position.

Morard, Williams and Green will play in this national championship at Boone Valley Golf Club in Augusta, Missouri, on July 24-29.

Morard, who will be entering the 10th grade at Randolph School, verbally committed to play for the University of Alabama’s golf team as an eight-grader. She won the Girls State Junior at Valley Hill CC in her hometown shooting 11-under-par for the three rounds. It was her second Girls State Junior title as she won it as a 13-year-old in 2015. Ally Williams’ older sister, Micheala, who now plays for the University of Tennessee, won it by a shot from Morard last year.

Green, who will be attending Vanderbilt starting next month, is the sister of Alex Green, who is on the UA men’s golf team.

And Susce will be a freshman at the University of Louisville.

Hole-in-one

Congrats to Prentiss Lawson who recently had a hole-in-one on No. 10 at The Links at Tuscaloosa, with the hole measuring 100 yards. Witnesses were Paul Prickett, Rachel Prickett and Alan Roberts.
SPORTS DIGEST

ALABAMA BASEBALL
Chandler Taylor 2nd in College Home Run Derby

TUSCALOOSA — Alabama baseball sophomore Chandler Taylor finished second in the College Home Run Derby on Saturday evening.

Taylor began the Derby with an opening-round score of 17, ranking second to start the night and advancing himself to the event’s second round. He followed that up with a 16 in the second to set his two-round total at 33, securing a spot in the finals of the 2017 College Home Run Derby. Taylor, with 33 total points, was paired in the finals against Niko Hulsizer of Morehead State, who finished the first two rounds of the Derby with 37 homers.

In the finals, Hulsizer totaled 17 points to set the bar for the finals of the event. After getting in a groove and placing himself in range, down 16 to 17, Taylor lined a two-point ball to right to end the competition. The Montgomery, Ala., native finished second as the Tide’s first ever contest in the eight-year old event.

Taylor was the Crimson Tide leader in home runs with 16, the most by an Alabama baseball player since Clay Jones' 17 in 2010. Taylor’s homers also placed him among league leaders for the regular season, ranking third in that category. In SEC play, Taylor led everyday starters with a team-leading 10 home runs. His numbers against SEC opposition ranked fourth.
MAKING IT OFFICIAL

Alabama welcomes addition of Tevin Mack to men's basketball team

Staff report

University of Alabama men's basketball head coach Avery Johnson officially announced on Friday the addition of guard/forward Tevin Mack to the Crimson Tide men's basketball program. Mack, who is enrolled and taking classes during the summer, played his freshman and sophomore seasons at Texas and will sit out the 2017-18 season due to NCAA transfer rules.

"We are very excited to welcome Tevin to the Alabama men's basketball family," head coach Avery Johnson said. "Tevin is a versatile player offensively who can really score the basketball. He will have to sit out this season per NCAA rules, but he is the type of player that will impact our program the day he becomes eligible. In the meantime, he will be able to practice and that will give him an opportunity to learn our system."

As a sophomore this past season, Mack led the Longhorns with 14.8 points and 31.3 minutes per game, while also adding 4.8 rebounds. Over the 15 games he played a year ago, the 6-7, 220-pound guard/forward connected on 45.0 percent (70-of-155) from the floor, including a team-high 39.1 percent (34-of-87) from behind the arc. He reached double figures in 11 games and scored 18 points or more on eight different occasions.

Alabama fans are familiar with Mack, as he accounted for 11 points - all coming in the second half - and seven rebounds against the Crimson Tide last December in Austin, Texas. That contest

See BASKETBALL, C7
BASKETBALL

Continued from C1

his collegiate career. Later in the season, Mack set career-highs in scoring (27 points) and field goals made (10), and tied his career best with four made three-pointers against Oklahoma State on Jan 4.

As a freshman in 2015-16, the Columbia, S.C., native averaged 5.1 points and 2.0 rebounds across 33 games. In 48 career games, he has 16 double-figure contests and has topped the 20-point mark three times.

At the time of his signing he was ranked by ESPN No. 5 on its list of “Best Available Transfers” in the nation.

Mack attended Dreher High School in Columbia, S.C., before suiting up for the Longhorns. Coming out of high school, he was ranked the No. 11 small forward in the nation by 247Sports, which also ranked him 76th overall in the country.
Let's start at the very beginning...
No, this isn't a summer stock rehearsal for "The Sound of Music," despite the lyrics. It's a recognition that July has arrived which, at least in Alabama, means college football is transitioning from the "offseason" to the "preseason." If you believe the actual date is July 4, sharing time with our nation's birthday, or that the offseason ends at an equinox defined by the precise moment that Nick Saban steps into the lobby at SEC Media Days in about 10 days, that's fine as well. But in general terms, July means it is time to start giving the season some serious thought.

That means starting at the beginning. So - is the Alabama-Florida State game the greatest season opener of all time? It's the first question of the season and it is just like opening the front door and stepping into a pit of quicksand.

For one thing, there is the problem of what "great" means. For another, there is the difficulty of judging any game before it has been played and placed in an historical context. Both those issues must be considered. For

See HURT, C4
instance, any opener before the 1958 Alabama-LSU game, which people mention primarily because it was Paul “Bear” Bryant’s return, must be discarded. That game would get far more credit if Alabama had won, but the 13-3 loss to an LSU team that went on to win the national championship was at least an encouraging omen. Before that, the games are starting to slip from living memory of all but a few. They also tended not to be memorable - Alabama had a long tradition of opening with cupcakes, although the 110-0 win over Marion Institute in 1922 was at least a historical footnote.

What defined greatness after that? If that means a surprising victory - either by outcome or level of domination against a good opponent - Alabama hasn’t had too many chances in the last 60 years. The Crimson Tide is often favored in games, opener or not, so it rarely “upsets” anyone.

Two openers do stand out. The first, and a hard one to top, was the 1971 win at Southern California. That game that had surprise, both in the tactics (wishbone) and the outcome. It ignited a decade of Crimson Tide greatness that few could have guessed at the time, unless they were Bear Bryant himself, and it also carried some of the cultural echoes of the 1970 USC game as well. The other was the 2008 opener against Clemson in which Nick Saban, at the start of Year Two at Alabama, served notice on college football that he was not here to joke around.

There have been other Alabama wins, either in exciting fashion or against big-name opponents: 1985 at Georgia was a classic, and there were victories over Nebraska in 1978, Ohio State in 1986, Michigan in 2012 and USC last year. Beyond that, the “memorable” openers tend to be precisely the games that Alabama fans would least like to remember. The worst, probably, was the 2000 game at UCLA, in which Crimson Tide hopes were swallowed as though the San Andreas fault had opened up in Pasadena.

Then there was the 1984 loss to Boston College that helped Doug Flutie win a Heisman and might have cost Kerry Goode a chance to win one himself some day.

This year’s opener - an even match, a pair of teams who have been dominant in southern football over the past 30 years - promises to be great and, for the loser, could still be survivable. If nothing else, it is worth nine weeks of great anticipation.

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