

# Alabama CURRENTS

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A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority



**CJET**  
ACADEMY

— *The City of Dothan* —

Creating Workforce Solutions for  
Local Residents and Businesses

See Page 7

### It is better to give than to receive

**D**uring the stress and commotion of the holidays, we sometimes forget what the season is all about. As long as I can remember, I have loved giving. Don't get me wrong, I've always loved receiving gifts, who doesn't? But my biggest gift has always been watching others be blessed and doing little thoughtful things that people don't expect.

One thing I think people tend to forget during the holiday season is that it doesn't take a lot to make others happy. Simple, thoughtful actions can make all the difference. A lot of people are under a big amount of self-created stress. People have the deep seated need for others to like and appreciate them, sometimes to the point that they put far too much pressure on something that should remain simple and fun. The holidays are truly not about what gift you give or if everything is perfect. It's about family. It's about tradition. It's about love, generosity, and caring.

Giving doesn't necessarily have to be monetary in nature. There are a ton of ways to give to those all around you. Here are a few things I encourage you to do next time you are out and about this holiday season:

- Smile at a stranger.
- Hold the door open for someone.
- If you see someone drop something, help them pick it up.
- Start a conversation – but don't brag (the holidays can be very lonely for some).
- Send out real, paper Christmas cards. Everyone loves receiving mail.
- Bring over a plate of cookies or other goodies to an elderly neighbor or someone you know is without family.
- Let someone else have the better parking spot.
- Compliment someone on something others might not notice (their smile, their hair, etc.).
- Do something completely anonymous for someone.
- Offer to bring a dish to the holiday dinner.
- Better than bringing a dish? Offer to help clean up without being asked.
- If you feel as blessed as I do, then pass it on to someone else. There are a multitude of ways you can make someone else's life a little more comfortable. Whether it's through initiatives such as Operation Christmas Child (a project of the Samaritan's Purse organization), United Way, a food bank in your area, Salvation Army or through your own church, pass your good fortune and blessings on to others.

Helping others will bring not only a smile to someone else's face, but to your own as well. The secret is to always count your blessings; it truly does make life easier.

So during this holiday season, as well as throughout the coming year, let's all remember the old adage, "It's better to give than to receive."

My holiday wish for you is that you are thankful for all the blessings you have and may many more come your way. And may you experience the blessing that life has to offer when you find the good in every situation.

*Lisa Miller*

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing

## Apply for the 2015 Scholarship Program

Will you be graduating from high school in the spring of 2015? Do you receive your electricity from a public power utility in Alabama? Then if your answer to these questions is "yes," you could be eligible to receive a scholarship from the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Member cities/utilities.

Since 1992, AMEA and its Members (Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley-Riviera Utilities, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee) have provided scholarships to area high school seniors through the AMEA Scholarship Program. Scholarships, totaling approximately \$82,500, were awarded in the 2014 program.

Each year, AMEA and its Members make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships. To be eligible for either of AMEA's scholarships, a student's family must receive electric service from a Member's electric utility and the student must attend an Alabama college or university.

Applications are currently available from school counselors in these Member cities, or you can go online to the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program.

Applications are reviewed and winners are selected by an independent panel of Montgomery area college guidance personnel.

**Application deadline is Monday, Feb. 2, 2015.**



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

## MISSION STATEMENT

AMEA's mission is to provide for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power, enabling them to preserve and enhance the benefits of municipal utility ownership for their citizens and the electric customers they serve. We strive to offer services that our Members need and can adapt to provide the best value for their communities and customers.

# Alabama CURRENTS

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## On the Cover



Shown (L to R) are Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz, Permetheus Thomas and Alabama House Representative Paul Lee.

At the recent press conference to announce the launch of CJET, Permetheus Thomas expressed the importance of the program to the residents of Dothan and the surrounding area.

"This is a break, a break for men and women just like me," Thomas said.

Having completed some training at the Aviation Technical College in Ozark, Thomas said he plans to apply for the program in hopes of beginning a career that will keep him in the Dothan area. CJET Academy is a pre-employment training program that allows selected applicants to complete a free course in aircraft structural assembly and receive a job offer from Commercial Jet upon graduation. Graduates will start out at \$14 per hour.

## EPA shutting down coal

Over the past several years, you, our Members' customers, have read my concerns about the impacts to your electric bill as a result of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations.

There has been a political partnership between EPA and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club to shut down coal generation across the country in large part to support the global warming debate. Tens of millions of dollars have been used by these environmental groups to file lawsuits against coal generation as well as to elect political leaders who support their cause.

As you have heard recently, there is a new EPA regulation in the final stages of review, called the carbon rule. Although this is possibly the most expensive rule, there are many other regulations promulgated over the last few years to make the retrofit of coal plants so expensive the plant owners will be required to close or retire them due to the cost of implementing the emission controls. In effect, it is more cost effective to close them than implement the new rules.

As a result of these many regulations, coal plants are being closed all over the country. These new coal rules address water at the plant, mercury, ash, and other air pollutants, just to name a few.

If you did an Internet search of coal plant closings, you would be surprised to see the magnitude of the lost generation. It has been estimated that one third of all coal plants in the country will be retired by 2017. This is before the impact of the carbon rule, which could shut down the rest. Both the Tennessee Valley Authority and Alabama Power Company have announced closures.

What is most troubling is that EPA and Sierra Club actions will not impact global warming in any significant way. China, India and the rest of the developing world are opening a new coal plant every day. Coal generation is growing across the planet.

Why is this a concern? Coal has historically been our most stable, affordable and abundant fuel source. It is arguable that coal has built American industry. And as I have said in the past, America is the Saudi Arabia of coal.

Natural gas will replace coal which historically has been the most unstable and volatile in price. Also, the new plants which will replace the coal plants, will cost much more to construct.

In addition to these concerns, I am worried about reliability during extreme weather such as another Polar Vortex or extreme heat in the summer. Will we have enough electric



generation to serve our customers during these events?

We remain concerned about the impact of these regulations on our Members' customers in terms of affordability and reliability. These rules will significantly impact our nation's electricity providers and consumers, jobs in communities that have existing coal-based power plants, and on the economy as a whole, pushing costs in the wrong direction.

As you can see, the challenges before the electric industry are significant. However, please know that AMEA will continue to stay on top of these challenges as we work to keep your electric rates as low as possible. We have a responsibility to continue to deliver reliable, economical energy, in a fiscally-responsible and environmentally-friendly manner. That's our commitment to you.

As we enter the holiday season and look to the New Year, we have high hopes for continued improvement in the economy in 2015. Best wishes for a bright 2015 and we pray that it will bring you peace, joy and happiness.

*Fred Clark*

AMEA President & CEO

## Christmas Tree Safety



As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.



### PICKING THE TREE

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.



### PLACING THE TREE

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.



### LIGHTING THE TREE

- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of LED strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

### After Christmas

Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

### FACTS

- One of every three home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical failures.
- Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes roughly one in every six of the fires.



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## It's the most wonderful time of the year

As I write this column, I can just hear the late Andy Williams singing it. And to many, it very well may be the most wonderful time of the year. It makes me want to take my wife to a log cabin in the woods, build a big fire in the fireplace, heat the apple cider, and get ready for the holidays.

Well, as Perry Como would sing, "Dream along with me." But I am so happy that God gave us four seasons and I truly do love fall and winter. That is, until it gets really cold and icy like it did last winter. And I really do love spring and summer until it gets so hot that I simply can't enjoy being outdoors. You know, I can just about hear our homes' heating and cooling systems thinking the same thing because when it is spring or fall, they get lots of rest. But when it is summer or winter, it just about works them to death. And as you know, the more that they have to work...the higher the utility bill will be.

As we get ready to celebrate our first holiday of this wonderful season, it might be good to list those things for which we are thankful. One thing for which I am thankful is reliable and affordable electricity, which allows our family to have many amenities in our home including cooling in the summer and heating in the winter. Actually I believe that electricity is one of the most important inventions ever.

With that thought in mind, I am going to have a contest and offer you a challenge. I challenge you to make a list of all the ways that you can use electricity in a house. I promise that you will be surprised by the number of items that you will think of for your list. Gosh, even a residential gas furnace uses electricity. In order to make this contest a little more exciting, the person or family that has the most qualified number of items will receive a nice gift card before Christmas. You will enjoy doing this. So make your list, and then call my office at (501) 653-7931 before Nov. 20. When you call, please leave your name, phone number including area code, and the number of items on your list. I will then contact those with the highest numbers to review their list and determine the appropriate winner.

Now with your permission, I would like to give you some possible Christmas gift ideas that are related to energy efficiency. We like to call these ideas, gifts that can last a lifetime, because some of them will save money on the utility bill every month for the life of the house. There are numerous possibilities in all price ranges. For example, a \$25 gift to purchase 10 tubes of caulking or door weather-stripping,



might save a few dollars every month on the utility bill after being applied to help keep unwanted hot and cold air from entering the house. A \$100 gift would purchase several new LED light bulbs which require less electricity, generate less heat, and last much longer than other type bulbs. On the other hand, a \$500 gift might pay to purchase additional cellulose attic insulation which might save lots of dollars every month and make the house more comfortable. Perhaps the adult children might even go together and get mom and dad, who usually say that they don't need anything, a much needed new heating and cooling system. Well, I think you get the idea. There are endless possibilities. Perhaps giving an energy-efficient gift might be one of the most needed and appreciated gifts ever.

As I complete this column, let me wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas.

Now listen closely, and see if you can hear Bing Crosby singing, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas". Wow, I think I heard him! See you next year.

*Doug Rye, an Arkansas architect, is known as the 'King of Caulk and Talk' and 'America's Energy Expert.' Doug has helped thousands of homeowners save money on their power bills. He hosts the popular "Home Remedies" radio talk program, which has been on the air for 15 years in 14 states. Doug speaks annually at American Institute of Architects meetings to hundreds of other architects on energy efficiency. He conducts over 150 energy-saving seminars per year all across the U.S. Have a question for Doug? Contact him at (501) 653-7931, or [www.dougrye.com](http://www.dougrye.com).*

### Naughty or Nice Holiday Safety List

As you make your lists and check them twice, here is one to keep your holiday celebrations safe and nice.

#### Naughty

- Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it with another extension cord. Use an extension cord that is long enough to meet your needs.
- Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords. Use the appropriate hardware to avoid damaging the wire insulation.
- Never run an extension cord under a rug or positioned so that it is pinched by furniture.
- Do not connect more than three incandescent holiday light strings together.
- Never decorate a tree that is in contact with a power line.

#### Nice

- Water your Christmas tree daily to keep it hydrated and reduce your risk of fire.
- Keep all decorations, including Christmas trees, at least three feet away from heating equipment or an open flame, such as a candle or fireplace.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations and heating equipment before leaving home or going to bed.
- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.
- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) receptacles (or portable GFCIs) to prevent electric shock.
- Always follow manufacturers' instructions and use products as they were intended regarding indoor or outdoor use.

[www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org)

## Serving veterans on Veterans Day and always

Every day — but particularly on Veterans Day — Social Security salutes those who have put their lives on the line for our freedom.

Members of the United States armed forces receive expedited processing of their Social Security disability applications. The expedited process is available for any military service member who alleges he or she became disabled during active duty on or after Oct. 1, 2001, regardless of where the disability occurred — at home or in the line of duty. Expedited processing is also available to veterans who have a compensation rating of 100 percent Permanent and Total (P&T) disability, regardless of when the disability occurred. Some dependent children and spouses of military personnel may also be eligible to receive benefits.

Visit our website designed specifically for our wounded veterans, [www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors), where you will find answers to a number of commonly asked questions, as well as other useful information about disability benefits available under the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. Our website includes a fact sheet on the subject, Disability Benefits For Wounded Warriors.

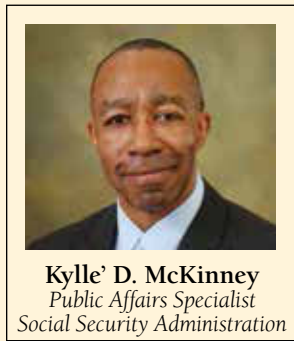
You'll also find a webinar, "Social Security for Wounded Warriors," that explains the expedited disability process available to wounded warriors. The one-hour video is an introduction to disability benefits for veterans and active duty military personnel. If you would like more detailed information about the disability process, you can watch our seven-part video series "Social Security Disability Claims Process" at [www.socialsecurity.gov/socialmedia/webinars](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/socialmedia/webinars).

On the Wounded Warriors webpage, you'll find links to the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense websites. Please keep in mind that the requirements for disability benefits available through Social Security are different from those of the Department of Veterans Affairs and require a separate application.

Military service members are covered for the same Social Security survivors, disability, and retirement benefits as everyone else. Although the expedited service is relatively new, military personnel have been covered under Social Security since 1957, and people who were in the service prior to that may be able to get special credit for some of their service.

Read our publication, Military Service And Social Security, to learn more. It's available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs). Also, navigate to [www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/woundedwarriors).

Thank you to our nation's brave veterans. We salute you on Veterans Day and every day.



## Using less energy in the kitchen on Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a great time of year to bring friends and families together. It also means spending time in the kitchen to prepare the traditional Thanksgiving feast. If you're like many people, you're always looking for good tips on how to put together a cozy winter meal while keeping energy bills reasonable. Energy costs in the kitchen can add up to 15 percent of total home energy use, so it's worth a bit of effort to learn how to use less energy in the kitchen.

Here are some tips to help keep your energy costs down:

- Keep the oven door closed. While you may want to check on the progress of a dish you've got cooking in your oven, use the light instead. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, delaying the progress of your dish and, more importantly, costing you more money to get that pot roast perfectly cooked.
- Check your oven temperature. A free-standing oven thermometer is a great way to check out how hot your oven really gets. Many ovens vary slightly from the dial you're setting your cooking temperature at — by testing your oven temperature at several settings (325, 350, 375 and 400°F), you can find out if your oven runs hot or cool, and factor an extra 25°F or so into your cooking, if necessary. Always check your free-standing oven thermometer to verify the temperature so that you're not needlessly cranking up the heat on an already hot oven.
- Turn down the heat. Spending all day in the kitchen? If you've got the oven running and soup on the stove, you can probably turn the heat down a bit. The heat from your oven, not to mention dinner guests, should keep your home warmer than usual, and your furnace won't have to work as hard.
- Clean your burners. If you've got an electric range, one great way to keep your stovetop cooking efficiently is to keep the reflectors under your burners grime-free. They can be a pain to clean, but regular maintenance can go a long way. You can also invest in some better reflectors that can decrease your stovetop cooking times, which will save you energy (and money) over time.

For more energy-efficient tips for keeping your energy bills low without changing your holiday celebrations, visit [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov), or [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Energy Efficiency.

WATTS NEW IN  
**Dothan**

## Creating workforce solutions for local residents and businesses

By Cassandra Milton

When Commercial Jet expressed the need to hire 60 trained aircraft structural assemblers, Dothan's leaders quickly seized the initiative to transform a challenge into a progressive solution. CJET Academy, a free aircraft pre-employment training program, was developed through a partnership between Commercial Jet, the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce, Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), and the City of Dothan.

"Many entities and individuals assisted with the development of this project, including the Alabama local legislative delegation, as we would not have been able to put this academy in place without their assistance," said Matt Parker, President, Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce.

According to Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz, CJET Academy exemplifies Dothan's commitment to economic development. "We are dedicated to helping our local companies grow their business by taking the lead in efforts to create a strong local economy," said Schmitz.

Along with meeting Commercial Jet's hiring needs, the academy also supports local residents by providing an opportunity for them to establish life-long careers. "An important role of economic development is that of connector," said Schmitz. "We have a business who wants to hire and local people who need jobs. I'm very proud of the work that has been done to connect these two groups and provide the necessary training so that both will succeed."

CJET Academy will be taught by AIDT and Commercial Jet personnel. The first training program is scheduled to run from Oct. 22 until Dec. 19. The value of the program is estimated to be between \$2,500 to \$3,000 per student, which includes manuals, training equipment, and tools. With expenses being paid through state and private funds, there is no cost to trainees for the program. Graduates of the CJET Academy will start out at \$14 an hour.

"AIDT has been supporting Commercial Jet through recruiting, screening and training since they arrived in Dothan in 2012," said AIDT Training Manager Kevin Taylor. "This program provides us another avenue to train and educate Alabama citizens for the jobs created by Commercial Jet."

"With Aircraft MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) business expanding, this is an excellent time to join the commercial aviation industry," said David M. Sandri, President, Commercial Jet Services, LLC.

Cassandra Milton is community relations specialist for the City of Dothan.



Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz announces the launch of CJET Academy, a pre-employment training program that allows selected applicants to complete a free course in aircraft structural assembly and receive a job offer from Commercial Jet upon graduation.

# Helping schools is top priority in Fairhope

By D. Fran Morley



The City of Fairhope has a long history of providing funding and in-kind support to the five Fairhope public schools. Thanks to funding available through the Fairhope Utilities, the City of Fairhope has given Fairhope Schools \$350,000 a year for the past two years; another donation has been approved in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The City's Education Advisory Committee assesses requests from the city's five schools based on how proposed programs impact a number of set criteria, including graduation rate, ACT scores, math and reading scores in all grades, student-teacher ratio, and spending per pupil.

"We have done many other projects for the schools over the years and continue to do so," said Scott Sligh, Electric Superintendent. "A big project this year involved three days' work completely re-wiring two computer lab classes at Fairhope Elementary School. This was done at the request of the principal to make the lab more user-friendly for the teachers."

Some of the City's in-kind work is maintenance-related, Sligh said.

"We've removed hazardous and dead trees, hauled sand for a playground, volunteered to auger holes for playground equipment, and repaired and upgraded lighting at playing fields. And we do other things, such as take a bucket truck to Fairhope High School every year to take a senior class picture, light the Fairhope Pirates pirate ship at football games, and work with the booster clubs to support their electrical needs in their fundraisers."

In addition, employees of Fairhope Electric have presented an electric safety program, "Power Town" to students at Fairhope Intermediate School and talked with high school students about electric work as a career choice.

"Supporting our schools is very important to the City of Fairhope," said Mayor Tim Kant. "Whether that's cheering on our students in the classroom, on the field, or on the stage or helping improve learning conditions at the schools. I'm happy that the City can provide resources that help make Fairhope schools first class."

*D. Fran Morley is a contributing writer for the City of Fairhope.*



*Pictured are Fairhope Public Utilities' employees Justin Rogers, Chas McMahon and Ben Patterson working in a computer lab at Fairhope Elementary School.*



# WATTS NEW IN Sylacauga

## IKO shingle plant opens in Sylacauga

By Christa Jennings



**A** new manufacturing plant has opened in Sylacauga, creating new jobs for the area with more jobs expected to be available in the future.

IKO Industries announced that its newest production facility began producing and shipping product this summer, but the company held its grand opening on Oct. 29.

The grand opening celebration included a ribbon-cutting ceremony and gave area dignitaries and IKO customers the opportunity to tour the plant. The Sylacauga manufacturing facility produces 3-tab and architectural laminated roofing shingles.

“We’re tremendously excited to see the plant open for business,” said Derek Fee, IKO’s corporate communications manager. “It represents our first manufacturing facility in the U.S. Southeast and will provide us with a base of operations to better serve the customer base that we’ve built in that area of the country, which has been serviced from a production standpoint for the past several years from Kankakee, Ill.”

The plant includes more than 300,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehouse space. As of October, the local company had already provided 50 manufacturing jobs, with more positions expected to be added as capabilities are expanded in the future.

Fee explained that the plant’s principal production will be residential roofing products, or asphalt shingles. As of early October, limited production had already begun at the plant, which was still ramping up its capacity at that time, he said.

The Sylacauga facility has been described as a high-performance and state-of-the-art plant. This new location allowed IKO to expand its reach to serve the country’s southeast markets.

A collaborative effort encompassing expertise from both inside and outside IKO’s own operations, the manufacturing hub will provide an opportunity for future growth as IKO works to become a nation-wide producer and distributor in the roofing industry.

Keith Lowe, vice-president of sales in the United States, stated in a press release, “IKO has made a substantial investment of capital and knowledge in the Sylacauga plant. We’ve put into it our best practices, processes, technology and learning from all our operations – not just manufacturing, but quality assurance, as well as research and development. Sylacauga is both the culmination of our past experience and our starting point to pioneer and drive future innovation.”

The Sylacauga facility is one of more than 30 plants IKO operates in North America and Europe.

Fee said, “We’re tremendously grateful for the warm welcome we’ve received from the community, as well as Sylacauga’s civic leaders, and we look forward to being a part of the business community there for many years to come.”

IKO Industries is a North American pioneer in the manufacturing of both residential and commercial asphalt shingles and other related roofing materials.

The company is a world-wide leader in not only the roofing industry, but also the waterproofing and insulation industry for residential and commercial markets alike. Established in 1951, IKO is a family-owned business.

The IKO Sylacauga plant is located at 1708 Sylacauga-Fayetteville Highway.

*Christa Jennings is the senior staff reporter for The Coosa County News in Rockford.*



## City of LaFayette reaping the benefits of energy-efficient streetlights

By Chris Busby

The City of LaFayette is already seeing the benefits from 30 newly-installed LED (light-emitting diode) streetlights. From energy savings to improved visibility, the lights have been a welcome addition for both city administrators and residents.

The LED lights were purchased by the City through a program called the LED Street Lighting Project, which is administered by WRATT (Waste Reduction and Technology Transfer Foundation). LaFayette's grant from WRATT was funded through the ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission). The purpose of the grant is to allow the city to provide better, more efficient lighting and to increase visibility while saving money.

In total, 30, 400W high-pressure sodium (HPS) lights were replaced with 140W low-powered LED lights. Not all the city's streetlights were replaced, as the project focused mainly around the downtown square.

LaFayette has about 650 streetlights, so the new LED lights are just a fraction, but it's a good start and because of the many advantages, city leaders hope to continue to replace the HPS lights in the years to come.

"Of course, the new lights have allowed us to save on energy bills and reduce our environmental footprint," LaFayette City Clerk Louis T. Davidson said, "but they have also really improved the lighting in the city. It's a more natural light that creates a broader illumination rather than the spotlight effect of the old lights. Not only have I noticed the difference, but several citizens have commented on how much they like the new lights."

LaFayette Electric Superintendent Randy Norred has also seen benefit in several areas thanks to the lights. First, the amount of energy consumed is substantially less, about 33 percent, with the new lights.

"The old ones were pulling about 4½ to 5 amps compared to about 1½ for the new ones," Norred said.

Additionally, because the LED lights have a lifetime of about 10 years, about three times longer than HPS lights, the need to replace or service is less frequent leading to lower maintenance costs. Changing parts is much more simplified with the new lights.

LED lights also have quick turn on and off capabilities. Unlike HPS lights, which have to heat up, LED lights come

to full brightness instantly, and have no problems restarting after a power failure or accidental turn off.

Norred echoes Davidson's statements about the illumination of the new lights. He said it's more uniform and produces less glare.

"On a foggy or overcast night, the HPS lights look like a small fire in the sky. These new lights aren't like that. They cast a wide pattern and produce better clarity," he said.

*Chris Busby is a staff writer for The LaFayette Sun.*



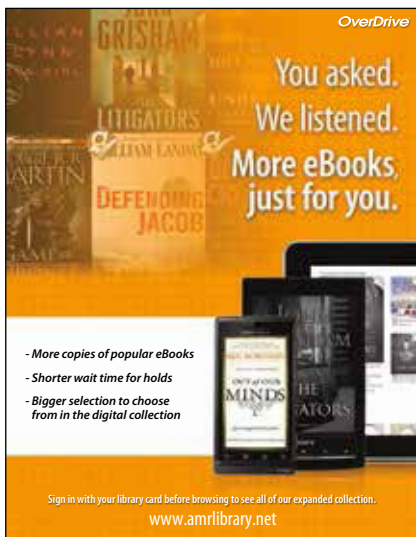
*A City of LaFayette Electric Department employee installs one of the city's new LED cobrahead lights on a fixture in downtown.*

# ★ WATTS NEW IN Alexander City

## Adelia M. Russell Library offers more eBooks

By Amy Huff

The Adelia M. Russell Library in Alexander City offers free access to thousands of eBooks and audio books through the shared collection of Camellia Net (<http://camellia.lib.overdrive.com>). Now library patrons have access to even more titles through a program called Overdrive Advantage.



With Overdrive Advantage, the library has purchased additional eBooks and audio books exclusively for its patrons. Coupled with the shared collection, the Advantage program provides access to even more popular titles, with additional copies or popular materials.

To gain access to Advantage titles, Adelia M. Russell Library cardholders should simply sign in to the website, [www.amrlibrary.net](http://www.amrlibrary.net), with their library card upon arrival. Once signed in, the Advantage titles become visible along with the shared collection. Patrons can easily browse for titles to borrow and enjoy on Windows and Mac computers, or on mobile devices like iPhone, iPad, Android, Blackberry, and Windows Phone. Users can read eBooks on the go with Kindle, Sony Reader, Nook and more. Once the lending period ends, titles will automatically expire and return to the collection. There are no late fees.

For more information about eBooks and audio books from the library, contact us at (256) 329-6796, [www.amrlibrary.net](http://www.amrlibrary.net), or stop by and speak with one of our staff members.

*Amy Huff is the director of the Adelia M. Russell Library in Alexander City.*

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE IN ALEXANDER CITY:  
Day Time (256) 409-2080,  
After Hours/Holidays – Call Police Dept. (256) 234-3421  
Please do not call 911

# ★ WATTS NEW IN Piedmont

## Piedmont shows support

By Ben Singleton

Piedmont Power and Light employees showed their support for local cancer survivors and people currently battling cancer during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October by wearing pink hard hats.

“This is just a small way of showing our support for ones that are currently battling cancer or have had cancer in the past”, said Electric Supervisor Phillip Johnson. “We all know someone who has been touched by cancer.”

There was an evening of activities held on Oct. 4 to help raise money for Venecia Butler’s Cancer Foundation including music provided by a local band playing, a womanless beauty pageant, the release of about 300 sky lanterns, and the Second Annual CRAP 5K Run. Butler’s foundation provides goodie bags for cancer patients as they are undergoing treatments. She is currently battling cancer for the fifth time.

The Second Annual Piedmont Polar Plunge is scheduled for Jan. 3, 2015 at Piedmont Aquatic Center. The proceeds from this will also go to Butler’s Cancer Foundation.

“We are proud to help Venecia’s foundation because she helps so many cancer patients in the community”, said Mayor Bill Baker. “She is an inspiration to all of us.”

*Ben Singleton is communication technician for the City of Piedmont.*



The participants in the Second Annual CRAP 5K Run released about 300 sky lanterns. (Photo courtesy of Kim McFry).



Piedmont Power and Light employees in their pink hard hats. Shown (L to R) are Jonathan Lemons, Corey Horton, Greg Henderson, Phillip Johnson, Derrick Harbour.

# ★ WATTS NEW IN Opelika

## Opelika Power Services celebrates one-year anniversary

By Jan Gunter

**M**aking a difference in our community is how the whole idea of building a fiber to the premise network began in 2010. And, with over 500 miles of fiber to the premise (FTTP) now in place to every residence and business within the city limits, Opelika became the first city in the State of Alabama to offer true Smart Grid services. This enables Opelika Power Services (OPS) to offer video (TV), voice (telephone) and data services (ultra high-speed Internet) to anyone residing in the City of Opelika.

The month of October marked the one-year anniversary of OPS offering FTTP to our residents. And as our first year became reality, so did the milestone of success.

It was recently announced that OPS won the Readers Choice Award for “Best Cable Provider” in Opelika by *The Opelika-Auburn News*, which gives the public the opportunity to vote for their favorite businesses in east Alabama.

“Winning the Readers Choice Award our first year in service is a very big deal to us,” said June Owens, OPS Marketing and Communications Manager. “Having our customers take the time and effort to vote for us means a lot to our entire staff.”

Christopher Griffin, a Marketing Consultant with the OA News, describes how the awards are achieved.

“Voting consists of digital ballots on Oanow.com as well as print ballots in *The Opelika-Auburn News*. There are over 100 categories for our readers to vote for their favorites. Once completed, both digital and print ballots are submitted to the newspaper where they are carefully counted before the winners are announced.

“There are six categories, including Best People, Best Entertainment, Best Services, Best Shopping, Best Automotive Care, and Best Eating and Drinking. Every year, we receive numerous ballots and we tally the community’s votes. Opelika Power Services won ‘Best Cable Company/TV Service’ with over 400 votes.”

The OA News has produced the Reader’s Choice Awards for nearly two decades.

Mrs. Owens attributes this outstanding first-year recognition to the customer care service that OPS carried over from their 100 years of being Opelika’s hometown power company to their expanded services offered through the fiber technology (Video, Voice, and Data Services).

“Opelika now has one of the most advanced, high-tech fiber optic systems in the world,” said Mrs. Owens. “It is a new smart system with the same reliable, local customer service Opelika residents and businesses have always depended on from your hometown power company. We have always placed emphasis on customer care. Not only do we offer state-of-the-art technology, but our corporate headquarters is just around the corner from your home and business.”

She goes on to say, “We have a local presence, with a local telephone number customers can call. Our customers can call us 24/7 with any question or issue, and someone is always there to answer their call. We are your family, friends and neighbors, and we care because if something affects you, it affects us, too.”

Another local benefit offered by the OPS TV service is the local channel on OPS Channel 5, provided by CNTV-Opelika, which showcases local events like the Opelika Bulldogs football games, Opelika Recreation games, the Opelika Christmas Parade, and various other community events, and personalities, like the recent “Tommie Agee Roast”. This channel is a great way for family members, friends and out-of-town relatives who cannot attend these events, to still see and be a part of those memorable moments. No one else in Opelika offers this hometown option.

All in all, it’s been a great first year of services to the community. There’s still a great deal to do, though; but as we continue to develop and expand our capabilities we expect our power, video, voice and data services to only get better as we grow.

*Jan Gunter is community relations specialist for the City of Opelika.*



*Opelika Power Services (OPS) employees and City of Opelika administration and department heads recently accepted the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge in a typically unique fashion. It all started when Jessica Pitts, an OPS employee, challenged the entire OPS team to the Ice Bucket Challenge for ALS. To show unity within the City, OPS asked for other departments and employees to join in. Mayor Gary Fuller and Mike Hilyer, Public Works Director, who had already been challenged, were joined by City Administrator Joey Motley, City Attorney Guy Gunter, and Opelika City Council President Eddie Smith, along with other city officials and city council members for the “cold splash” provided by the Public Works Department. Mayor Fuller then went on record, challenging Mayor Bill Ham and the City of Auburn.*

WATTS NEW AT  
**Utilities Board  
 of Tuskegee**  
**“Our Common History”  
 talks held in Tuskegee**

By Deborah Gray

This fall at the Tuskegee History Center, a series of public programs of author talks reflecting on Macon County’s unique and important history began in September and continues through November. From the land to the skies, program subjects focus on: the origin and development of the Tuskegee National Forest; the life and work of John A. Kenney, MD; the history and role of the Black Church in 19th century Alabama; seldom presented Tuskegee Airmen history; and Booker T. Washington personal reflections by his great-granddaughter; and contemporary perspectives by a Tuskegee University archivist.

Author talk presentations are followed by book signings, and have included award-winning author Linda Kenney Miller, who penned the novel “Beacon on the Hill”, and talked about her grandfather’s groundbreaking work in Negro history and medicine including the founding of the first full service hospital for Negroes in Tuskegee; noted historian Richard Bailey, Alabama Humanities Foundation Road Scholar on the Black Church in 19th century Alabama, including the significance of Tuskegee’s own Butler Chapel AME Zion Church; Maxwell Air Force Base’s Joe Caver, senior archivist and historian, traced the steps of the Tuskegee Airmen in photographs from training and deployment to combat.

Upcoming November programs are:

- “Rockin’ the Character of Booker T. Washington” by Robin Banks, educator and great granddaughter of Booker T. Washington, who has written a new book for youth audiences which will be presented on Thursday, Nov. 6 at 4 p.m.;
- “Booker T. Washington: The Man and Myth Revisited” by Dana Chandler, Tuskegee University archivist, using newly-discovered documents, will present the latest perspectives on Washington’s development of Tuskegee and Macon County at 12 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 14, the 99th anniversary of Washington’s death.
- “Our Common History” is sponsored by the Tuskegee History Center, Tuskegee University Department of History and Political Science, the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University, with support from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. All “Our Common History” programs are free and open to the public.

The Tuskegee History Center, also known as the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, preserves, protects and promotes the history of Tuskegee and Macon County. For more information, see [www.tuskegeecenter.org](http://www.tuskegeecenter.org), or call (334) 724-0800.

*Deborah Gray is the managing director of the Tuskegee History Center.*

WATTS NEW AT  
**Riviera Utilities**

*Crews at Riviera Utilities  
 wear pink hard hats  
 during Breast Cancer  
 Awareness Month*

By Miles McDaniel

During October, Riviera Utilities crews wore pink hard hats to show their support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

“This is the first time Riviera Utilities employees have worn pink hard hats, challenging the ‘rugged’ image of the utility business, supporting family, friends, colleagues, and customers who have been and could be affected by breast cancer,” said Tom DeBell, General Manager, Riviera Utilities. “At Riviera Utilities, the majority of our field employees wear a hard hat on a daily basis for personal protection, and we are proud of their commitment to wear a pink hard hat during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to help raise awareness of this disease and the importance of screening. As part of our community, we believe it’s important to support others going through difficult times and bring awareness to such a devastating disease.”

The “multiplier effect” continues, as passers-by to Riviera Utilities job sites see the pink hard hats and when employees take the pink hard hats home each night, they are seen by spouses, daughters, sisters, friends and neighbors.

So next year, grab some pink and join us and help show your support by spreading the word about Breast Cancer Awareness.

*Miles McDaniel is manager of public affairs for Riviera Utilities.*



# WATTS NEW IN **Lanett**

## *Seasonal activities are abundant in Lanett*

By Wayne Clark



**W**hen the month of November arrives, there are Veterans Day programs taking place on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of that month, and Thanksgiving on the month's final Thursday. In December there's got to be a parade, a community tree lighting, caroling and a joyous celebration of the Christmas season.

Of course, there were fall activities, which started in the month of October.

The Lanett Recreation Department hosted its annual Fall Festival on Oct. 25 in downtown Lanett. A big turnout was on hand. There was free popcorn and candy, and lots of Halloween fun for all. There were drawings for prizes, a cake walk, face painting and a costume contest for ages five and under, 6-9, 10-13 and 14 and older. The large number of children present enjoyed rides on a miniature train and jumping up and down on some giant inflatables.

The Chambers County Farm-City Committee's Annual Farm-City Tour began and ended at the Chambers County Development Authority (CCDA) office in Lanett on Oct. 31. A bus for the tour was provided by the Shawmut Nazarene Church, and breakfast was provided by the Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce.

Morning stops included a visit to EAMC-Lanier Hospital in Valley and at Knauf Insulation's Lanett plant. The reopening of Knauf was one of the CCDA's major success stories in 2013. Following lunch, the afternoon portion of the tour included a stop at auto supplier Wooshin USA, located in the Chambers County Industrial Park off Exit 70 on I-85.

The bus tour group was told how Wooshin's skilled labor force makes use of high-tech robots to manufacture thousands of parts each day. These parts go into the new Hyundais being turned out at Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama in Montgomery and Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia in nearby West Point.

The final stop of the day was at the Rankin Dairy Farm, a short distance from Wooshin and five other auto suppliers in the industrial park.

A Veterans Day program planned for Veterans' Park, located on First Street in Lanett, will have a service to mark

the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I. The program will take place on the afternoon of Nov. 11.

The cities of Lanett, Valley, and LaFayette, as well as Chambers County, will observe Farm-City Week, Nov. 23-29. The main goal of the week is to deepen the understanding of the relationship between rural farmers and urban workers. Farm-City Week has been nationally observed since 1955.

In addition to the Farm-City Tour, other activities to take part this year include third grade tours of county farms on Nov. 5 and 6; Family Day at the Slay family farm in the White Plains community on Nov. 15; and the annual Farm-City Banquet, which will be held in the Chambers County Farmers' Federation building in LaFayette on Nov. 20.

The Lanett Recreation Department has had a busy fall season of youth football, soccer and cheerleading.

"We have flag football for boys in the first and second grade, and tackle football for those in grades three through six," said Ronnie Tucker, Director, City of Lanett Recreation Department. "We play our games on the practice field next to Lanett High School. We will have youth basketball after that. We always have a big turnout for that, and some of our teams have won Alabama Recreation & Parks Association state championships.

The Recreation Department offers Taekwondo classes taught by Suzie Dragotta of Dragotta's Martial Arts, Valley, and it has an after-school program at W.O. Lance Elementary School.

Lanett youth get some valuable training in the computer lab at the L.B. Sykes Community Center. Up to 24 youth at a time can be enrolled in classed taught by Adrienne Branch. The six-week course is taught to them at no charge. Adult computer classes are also offered.

"Basketball is the sport that gets the most participation," Tucker added. "Our 12 and under teams have won state titles several times. We had a team win in 2012. We are looking forward to hosting the state tournament next year."

Wayne Clark is the news editor of *The Valley Times-News* in Lanett.

# Places to Go & Things to Do

## Alexander City

**Wednesdays in November and December.** Story time from 10:30 a.m. until 12 p.m. Mamie's Place Children's Library, Alexander City. Weekly story time begins at 10:30. All children welcome. For details, call (256) 234-4644.

**Senior Activity Center.** See all the senior activities planned for the months of November and December at <http://www.acpr.me/senior-activity-center.php>.

**Nov. 9, 2-3 p.m., Alexander City Veteran's Day Services.** Charles E Bailey Sportplex. Join the Mayor and city leaders at Veteran's Memorial Park as they honor our past and present veterans.

**Nov. 13 and Dec. 11, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., RECYCLE Electronics.** Public Works Department, behind Darwin Dobbs. Electronics recycling event every second Thursday. CE&E Solutions will be accepting electronics for recycling and they are ADEM certified. Contact Sabrina Wood at (334) 429-8832 or Amanda Thomas at (256) 409-2020. Sponsored by the city of Alexander City and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership.

**Nov. 16, 1-4 p.m., Annual Holiday Open House.** Hosted by the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce. Local businesses open their doors to showcase the season's most festive decorations, gifts and one-of-a-kind sales. Bring the kids to visit with Santa and enjoy the tree lighting ceremony. Call (256) 234-3461 for more information.

**Nov. 22, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., MainStreet Thanksgiving Farmer's Market.** Fall produce, baked goods, jams, jellies, relishes, ribbon-cane syrup, Heritage pork products, smoked meats from Fire Truck BBQ.

**Nov. 22, 2 p.m., Children's Pumpkin Roll and Pumpkin Bowling.** Strand Park.

**Nov. 22, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Chair-ish Alexander City Raffle.** Local artists' decorated chairs on display at Broad Street Plaza.

**Dec. 1, Hometown Christmas Parade.** Presented by the Alexander City Chamber of Commerce. Join the fun as east Alabama's largest parades winds through downtown with elaborate floats, dancers, bands, Santa Claus and more. Call (256) 234-3461 for more information.

## Fairhope

**Nov. 6-9, Fairhope Film Festival.** This fall, the Fairhope Film Festival returns with a full schedule of world-class cinema. Forty-four feature films and 20 short films will be shown at four Fairhope venues over the four days of the festival. In addition, there are other events planned, including moderated panels with filmmakers and industry insiders, a red carpet awards ceremony, and parties brimming with Southern hospitality. For more information visit <http://fairhopefilmfestival.org>.

**Nov. 8, 10 a.m., Veteran's Day Parade.** The City of Fairhope will honor its military veterans with a Veterans Day Parade. The parade will begin and end at the Fairhope Civic Center.

**Nov. 13, 5:30 p.m., Fairhope's Lighting of the Trees.**

Downtown Fairhope. Join us as we turn on over one million lights in downtown Fairhope. The festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. and lights come on at 6 p.m. Artwork for the event is by Libby McKibbin McCawley. The artwork will be on display at Lyon's Share. For information, contact (251) 929-1466.

**Nov. 21, 5-8 p.m., Downtown Fairhope Holiday Stroll.**

Join us in downtown Fairhope for food and drink as you stroll to fulfill your holiday wish list. Downtown Fairhope Business Association Executive Director Alex Robinson invites everyone to begin their night at the Fairhope Welcome Center for complementary hot chocolate and a re-useable shopping tote courtesy of DFBA. Shops and restaurants will have extended hours from 5 until 8 p.m.

**Nov. 22, 1-5 p.m., Fairhope's 55th Annual Christmas Open House.**

Live entertainment and refreshments throughout town. This Fairhope tradition grows every year.

**Nov. 22, 6:30 p.m., Downtown Fairhope Business Association 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Movie in the Streets.**

The Downtown Business Association will host an outdoor movie at the intersection of Section Street and Fairhope Avenue. Those who plan to attend can bring lawn chairs and blankets from home. Children are invited to wear their holiday pajamas. DFBA "Movie in the Streets" is a family friendly event. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed. Admission is free. For additional information, call (251) 929-1466.

**Dec. 5, 7 p.m., Fairhope's Magical Christmas Parade.**

Downtown Fairhope. The Fairhope Magical Christmas Parade begins at the intersection of Morphy and Section Streets and continues down Section and Oak Streets.

**Dec. 6 and 13, City of Fairhope Santa Saturdays.** Santa will be in front of the Fairhope Museum of History in downtown Fairhope from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. for children to visit. Parents may bring cameras to take pictures.

**Dec. 31, 8:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m., Fairhope's New Year's Eve Family Celebration.** Downtown Fairhope. Bring your family and ring in the New Year in downtown Fairhope with fireworks and a ball drop at midnight.

## Opelika

**Nov. 7 and Dec. 5, First Friday.** Downtown Opelika. Shop late, eat local. Shops open until 8 p.m. Entertainment on street corners for everyone's enjoyment

**Nov. 9, 12-5 p.m., Holiday Open House.** Downtown Opelika. There will be door prizes, Christmas items for sale, snacks, drinks, live music and free gift wrapping.

*Continued on Page 16*

# Alabama Municipal Electric Authority

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## Places to Go & Things to Do

*Continued from Page 15*

**Nov. 11, Veterans Day Activities in Opelika.** 8 a.m., Veterans Day Breakfast at Irish Bred Pub; 10 a.m., services at the Veterans Memorial Monument celebrating “Bennie Adkins Day” with very special guest speaker CSM (Ret.) Bennie Adkins, Medal of Honor recipient; and 11 a.m., reception in Bennie Adkins’ honor at the Museum of East Alabama (light refreshments served).

**Dec. 4 and 5, 5-8 p.m., Rocky Brook Rocket Reindeer Express.** Municipal Park. Children 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and under. Train rides only \$1. Come take a ride through the lights. Enjoy food, hot chocolate, face painting, entertainment and pictures with Santa.

**Dec. 6, 11 a.m., Opelika’s Annual Christmas Parade.** Sponsored by the Opelika Chamber of Commerce. This year’s theme is Christmas Wishes.

**Dec. 9, 4-6 p.m., Christmas Reception.** Opelika Chamber of Commerce.

**Dec. 10-14, Victorian Front Porch Christmas Tour.** Dec. 10-12 and Dec. 14, Driving Tour, 5-10 p.m.; Dec. 13, Walking Tour, 6-9 p.m. The front porches of the North Opelika historic neighborhood are adorned in Victorian Christmas splendor with Old World Santas, angels, toys, teddy bears, carousel horses, sleighs and Victorian ladies and gentlemen. Admission to this spectacular production is free. The tour begins at the Heritage House on the corner of North 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

**Dec. 11, 5-9 p.m., Collinwood Neighborhood Luminaries.** One of Opelika’s older neighborhoods, located just off of 10<sup>th</sup> Street (which turns into Oak Bowery Road) has a beautiful pathway of luminaries lining their neighborhood streets to a live Nativity scene at the end of the tour.

**Dec. 12, 6-9 p.m., Christmas in a Railroad Town.**

Downtown Opelika. Whether you’re a child or simply a child at heart, there will be activities for everyone at this great family-fun night out. Visit with friends and enjoy a variety of food vendors located along Railroad Avenue, or go inside and enjoy one of the exquisite restaurants located in the downtown area. Bring the kids to write letters to Santa, enjoy pony rides, caroling, entertainment and other new activities. There will also be live entertainment throughout the event, S’mores to enjoy, a craft village for kids, and a fire truck for children to see and explore.

**Dec. 18, 2 p.m., “Be a Santa to a Senior” Wrapping Party.** Opelika Sportsplex. Come help wrap gifts.

**Dec. 27, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Christmas Tree Recycling.** Opelika Chamber of Commerce parking lot.

**PLEASE NOTE:** For a more complete roster of some of these events, please visit the City of Opelika’s website, [www.opelika.org](http://www.opelika.org).

### *Sylacauga*

**Nov. 5, 12 p.m., SouthFirst Bank Lecture Series.** Harry I. Brown Auditorium at the Comer Library. Dolores Hydock “Soldiers in Greasepaint: Entertaining with the USO.”

**Nov. 13, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Adult Poetry Workshop.** Harry I. Brown Auditorium at the Comer Library. Co-sponsored by Sylacauga Arts Council and B. B. Comer Memorial Library. “Memory, Myth and Metaphor: How to Write a Poem.”

**Nov. 13, Local Artist Expo.** Comer Museum.

**Dec. 3, 12 p.m., “The Songs of Christmas,” Chris Phillips.** Harry I. Brown Auditorium at the Comer Library.

At Comer Museum, November’s feature is Local Artist Expo with reception Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. December: Old Fashioned Christmas – Reception Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.