

THE PELHAM

PATHWAY



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PELHAM 311



Do you have an issue the City needs to know about? Maybe it's just a question? Please use the Pelham 311 app to report your concerns or reach out to the City's Management Team.





DIGGING INTO DEVELOPMENT

BY: AINSLEY ALLISON

Pelham Central Park

The long-anticipated development near the Pelham Public Library, Pelham Park Middle School, and the Pelham Recreation Center has come to life. Pelham Central Park is set to transform the heart of our city with new food and beverage options for residents and visitors alike.

"We're all very excited to see this unique outdoor venue, centered around a public lawn, come to fruition," said developer John Benner. "It's another great example of what the public and private sectors can accomplish with good cooperation."

The Pelham City Council approved two economic development incentive agreements with anchor tenants Edgar's Bakery and Cafe and Waldo's Chicken and Beer. Edgar's plans to repurpose its existing location at 499 Southgate Drive to become an operations center that will supply certain items to its eleven locations statewide. The new bakery and cafe at Pelham Central Park, positioned directly beside the library, will be a retail and restaurant space.

"Edgar's had this plan for an operations center, and we wanted to keep them here in Pelham," said Economic Development Director Michael Simon.

"We worked out an incentive deal to keep approximately 111 jobs and the business in Pelham." The company plans to add 30 jobs over the next three years in addition to seasonal hiring.

While most people in the area are familiar with Edgar's, Waldo's Chicken and Beer may be less well-known. Located at the northern end of the development, this will be just the third franchise in Alabama. The chain has numerous locations around the southeast but only two in Alabama: one in Vestavia Hills and one in Dothan.



The restaurant is known for its chicken, which is cooked two ways: southern fried and rotisserie. Everything on the menu, including the sides, sauces, and dressings, is made from scratch daily. As for the beer, Waldo's stocks its bar with local and regional canned craft beer.

Developers inked a deal with Bullet Coffee, which will be built on the southern end of the development, directly in front of the library. Bullet Coffee is a locally owned, drive-thru coffee shop. The only other location is on Highway 280, and we are excited the owners chose Pelham for their first expansion," Simon said. The menu includes hot or iced classics, specialties, blended and non-coffee drinks, breakfast, and lunch.

The development is structured in two major phases. Phase one will focus on all civil site work, including installing utilities, stormwater management systems, parking lots, and roadways. The developer is handling this crucial groundwork, expected to take 120-180 days, barring any adverse weather conditions and any unexpected site challenges.

Upon completion or nearing the end of phase one, Edgar's, Waldo's, and Bullet will begin their respective development projects. Edgar's and Waldo's constructions are expected to take between 12-14 months, while Bullet could be completed within nine-12 months due to its smaller size.

The remaining two parcels of land within the development offer flexibility for future growth. The developer is open to either selling these parcels to end users for their own projects or constructing speculative space to attract potential tenants. The overarching goal is to bring more food or retail options to Pelham Central Park, enhancing its role as a community hub.

"This development is a testament to our commitment to improving the quality of life for our residents," Simon said. "Expect the City to provide regular updates on the development's progress."

Oak Mountain Trail

Construction of the new Jack's restaurant near Tractor Supply is progressing at an impressive pace. When our June issue was published, the company was just preparing to pour the slab. Now, it is just a couple of months away from opening.

The restaurant features the brand's design elements, including a welcoming dining area with a chimney, an outdoor porch, a convenient drive-thru, and ample parking.

Residential Development

Huntley Ridge, a Tower Homes residential development, is really taking shape. Since our last update in this magazine, all of the infrastructure in the first phase was completed, lots have been marked off, and some homes have been completed. This 112-lot subdivision features single-family, detached townhomes. The site is located at the corner of Huntley Parkway and Highway 11. Crews are still grading and installing drainage systems in other subdivision parts. Prices on these homes start in the \$300,000 range, according to the Tower Homes website.

Just north of Huntley Ridge, Tower Homes contractors are installing infrastructure for a third residential development. The planned townhomes will be offered as a rental product like the Huntley Park community that's just up the road. "The influx of hundreds of new residents will ultimately make Pelham more attractive to future developments, including retail, restaurants, and office space," Simon explained. The new development is expected to have 42 townhomes.





YOUR CITY AT WORK

A progress report on major capital projects happening around Pelham

BY: AINSLEY ALLISON

The City of Pelham is committed to creating a vibrant and sustainable community that meets the needs and aspirations of our residents. One of the key ways we achieve this goal is through strategic investments in capital projects. These projects are carefully planned and executed to enhance our city's infrastructure, public spaces, and overall quality of life.

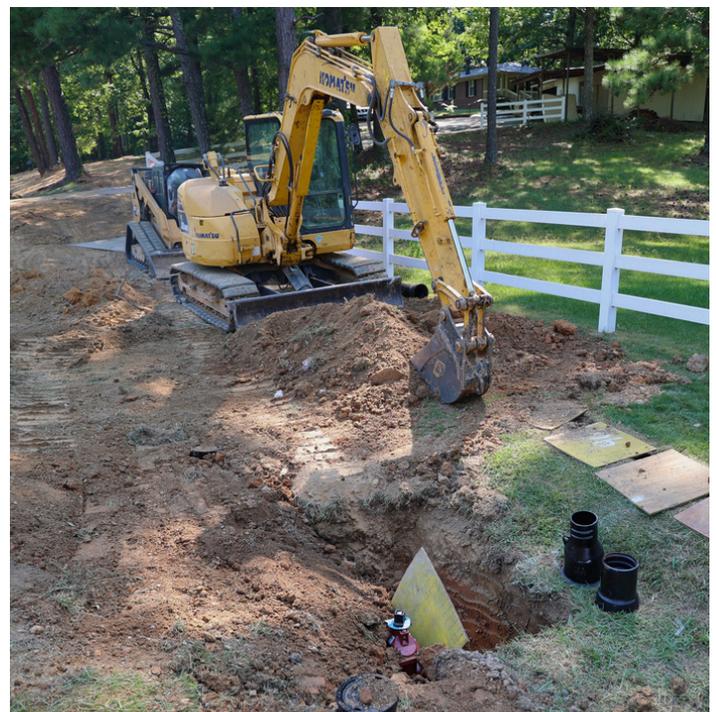
Annual Street Paving

Over the summer, 29,650 linear feet of road surface were repaved. The City Council increased funding for annual neighborhood street resurfacing to \$1.25 million, up from \$750,000 in previous years. The 2022 Citizen Satisfaction Survey found that street resurfacing is a top priority among residents, so the budget reflected that need. Streets are selected using evaluations on condition, usage, and street ratings. The tentative outlay is developed based on priority and upcoming utility work (water, sewer, and storm drains). The five-year paving plan can be found on the City's website. Look for it under City Projects in the Government Tab.

Water Main Replacement

Water and sewer infrastructure is fundamental in providing essential services that directly impact public health, environmental sustainability, and overall well-being.

Since 2022, the City has replaced nearly half of its water infrastructure. Three large projects were budgeted in FY2024. King Valley Rd Phase II, totaling \$275,000, was completed in June. The project on Aaron Road and Kristen Circle is almost complete and will wrap up in August; it had a budget of \$795,000. The largest project of the year is underway now on CR-25 and CR-361. Approximately two miles of miles of PVC pipe are being replaced, an investment of \$2.5 million. That project is slated to wrap up by January 2025.





Pelham Racquet Club

The renovation of the clubhouse at Pelham Racquet Club is complete. The new space offers an improved layout of the main floor and upgrades to the restrooms and locker rooms.

The renovations upstairs will allow the Racquet Club to expand the types of services offered. For example, you can now take yoga classes at the Pelham Racquet Club. Visit www.pelhamracquetclub.com for details. Later this fall, the second-floor space will be available for rent for events and gatherings, so stay tuned for that.

Visitors to the Pro Shop will notice an increase in inventory, including various tennis brands, clothing, sunscreen, sunglasses, chapstick, socks, hair accessories, logo apparel, and more. Be sure to stop in soon and check out the new look!



Ballantrae Golf Club

Construction is now complete, and patrons are enjoying the newly renovated clubhouse. New additions include an enclosed area called the Greenside Terrace that offers beautiful views of the 18th hole. The outdoor seating area was expanded and includes a firepit, and a new vestibule was constructed at the front entrance of the clubhouse.

The Greenside Terrace has already boosted rentals for events like baby showers, retirement parties, rehearsal dinners, and wedding receptions. The new space is projected to generate over \$100,000 in additional revenue for the facility. If you don't have an occasion to celebrate, you are still welcome to enjoy breakfast, lunch, and special evening events. Ballantrae is open to the public!



LEADERSHIP

Pelham Hires Assistant City Manager

Justin Smith recently joined the Pelham leadership team as the Assistant City Manager (ACM). Smith served as the Assistant to the Jefferson County Manager since October 2011, where he managed multiple cross-functional projects resulting in software selection, process and program efficiency improvement, increased public engagement, and significant financial savings. Smith also worked closely with the County Attorney's Office to help ensure county departments were performing their duties consistent with state and federal law, including ethics, open meetings, public records, public finance, employment, contracts, and Alabama Bid Laws.

Before he worked with the County Manager, Smith served as a public assistance specialist with the State of Alabama Emergency Management Agency and as a law clerk for the Senior Circuit for the Bessemer Division of the 10th Judicial Circuit.

As Pelham's ACM, Smith will take on several large projects in the City Manager's Office, including software selection and implementation, citywide training and development, large grant projects, strategic planning, and city board development. With Smith's experience and knowledge of Alabama law, he will also review contracts and answer some questions we are currently sending to the City Attorney. The City eliminated one-and-a-half full-time equivalent positions that were unfilled to fund the Assistant City Manager position.

"In the past five years, the City more than doubled its communication vehicles, quadrupled its average number of capital projects, added three dozen new programs in Parks & Recreation, applied for several national and state-wide grants, and received the largest Railroad Crossing Elimination grant in the country from the Federal Railway Administration," explained City Manager Gretchen DiFante. "In that same time, Pelham had \$80 million in new private development, and we are not slowing down. We've built an outstanding leadership team full of talented, experienced professionals with servant attitudes, and Justin will fit in perfectly. We are thrilled to have someone with Justin's experience and talent in Pelham," she added. After the first year of his employment, Smith will begin managing some smaller departments.

Smith, a Pelham High School graduate, said he enjoys bringing his four-year-old son to the increasing number of park activities in Pelham and has especially enjoyed the ice rink, new playground, and splash pad. "Pelham has come so far since I attended Pelham High School 25 years ago, and that growth is a testament to the organization and team. Everything is top-notch and something the City should be proud of," Smith said.

Smith holds a B.A. in Criminology from Auburn University and a Juris Doctorate from the Birmingham School of Law.



MOMENT

Figure Skating Coach Receives Appointment

Christian Newberry, Director of Skating at Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena, was recently appointed as a U.S. Figure Skating Association (USFSA) Technical Specialist. He traveled to Colorado Springs in mid-May for four days of training and testing. The process is intense, with less than half of the participants receiving a passing score.

Newberry was excited and humbled when he received his scores. "This is such a difficult position to achieve in the world of figure skating. To me, it's a recognition of my knowledge of figure skating at the highest competitive level."

A technical specialist is an official specifically trained and experienced in identifying a program's jumps, spins, and steps. The tech specialist also determines whether the execution is correct. The judges then grade these elements to provide the IJS score. As a technical specialist, Newberry will officiate at national qualifying events nationwide, judging the future champions of U.S. figure skating. Newberry is now one of only 148 technical specialists nationwide and the only one in Alabama.

According to Seth Greenberg, Executive Director of the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena, Newberry's achievement is a welcome boost to the figure skating program here in Pelham. "Christian's designation of technical specialist brings instant credibility to our figure skating program and elevates the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena to one of the premier training centers in the Southeast. It is a huge benefit to our competitive skaters to have an in-house resource available to help maximize points and enhance the quality of their individual skating programs. The change is obvious in the short time Christian has been with us. I am excited to see the continued growth and success his leadership brings."

Newberry aims to create a competitive figure skating program at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. "Having this credential means we can analyze our skaters in-house. We can hopefully attract more skaters to train here as well."

Newberry is a former British Men's Champion who has competed in the European Championships and World Championships. He assumed the role of Director of Skating at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena on January 1st. His son Graham is a skating coach at the PCC. He is a four-time British Men's Champion.



FRIENDLY FACES

MEET PELHAM'S CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

Pelham's Customer Service Team is a dedicated group of professionals committed to providing exceptional support and assistance to our community. Whether you're a resident or business owner, they are the first people you'll talk to because they are responsible for establishing water, sewer, and trash services. Our team is here to ensure your experience with Pelham is smooth, informative, and welcoming.

Describe a typical day in the life of a customer service representative.

We arrive promptly at 7:30 a.m. and hit the ground running, answering phone calls, processing paperwork, responding to emails, and attending to customers in the drive-thru window and the lobby. Our office closes at 4:00 p.m. daily.

Can you walk us through the process of setting up new water or solid waste services for a resident or business?

We require many forms of documentation to establish services with us. A new service application, a copy of the lease agreement or deed to the property, and a valid form of identification are needed. We also require commercial properties to obtain a VOC (Verification of Compliance) with the building department before we can process their request for services.

What are the most common types of inquiries or issues that customers contact you about?

The most common inquiries we receive daily are related to trash. We also receive many inquiries about starting and ending services with the city. We service water, sewer, and garbage to various locations throughout the city.



In what ways do you collaborate with other departments or agencies within the city to address customer needs or issues?

We work very closely with other departments in the city to assist our many customers. Most recently, we partnered with the Building Department to verify Business Licenses for the city when a homeowner is leasing their property to a tenant. We are also in constant contact with the Street Department to verify that clean-up work orders are scheduled after repairs are made by the Water Department on a water line.



How do you prioritize and manage incoming calls and requests during busy periods?

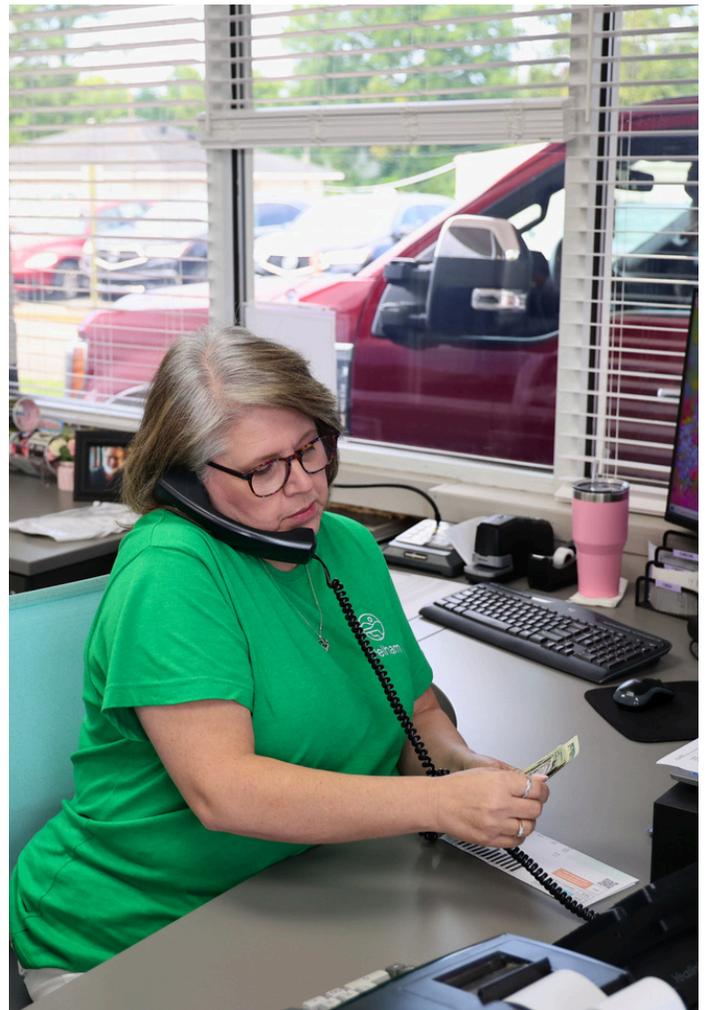
There are a lot of sticky notes and teamwork!! Our busiest time is usually during the lunch hours of the day. We work together to answer incoming phone calls and attend to customers in various ways to help everyone quickly. It is easy to get turned around during this time. We may end up at a coworker's desk, trying to multitask during what we consider our "rush hour."

How do you maintain a positive and helpful attitude when dealing with a high volume of calls or challenging situations?

We keep the air light and play music throughout the day, and we lean on each other for support. During difficult situations, we try to empathize with our customers and prioritize patience. That helps us maintain a positive attitude throughout the day.

What do you find most rewarding about working in customer service for Pelham Water Works?

Building relationships with our customers throughout the city. We enjoy seeing familiar faces each month.



STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

BY: LUCAS KALBA

High School Intern

Hi, my name is Lucas Kalba. I am currently a junior at Pelham High School. During the summer of 2024, I interned for our City Manager, Mrs. Gretchen DiFante. I was given this opportunity because Mrs. DiFante was a judge for the American Legion Oratorical Contest in which I competed. After I received 2nd place, Mrs. DiFante saw potential in me and suggested a summer internship. I was thrilled with the idea because I want to be a politician or lawyer one day. I knew this would be an outstanding experience.

My internship started on June 3rd with a Monday morning staff meeting. I was nervous at first because all the department managers were there. Eventually, I started speaking up and asking questions while getting to know them. Throughout the day and the summer, I went to many meetings with Mrs. DiFante, which exposed me to all of the aspects of local government. Another great part of the summer was shadowing in different departments. I attended municipal court on a trial docket day. This piqued my interest because I want to be a criminal lawyer. Some other highlights were touring the city parks, spending time at the library, witnessing the heroic efforts of the Fire Department, and even trying on turnout gear!

I learned about how much Pelham has to offer residents and visitors and what goes into maintaining this great city. I encourage others to attend City Council meetings to see how much local government matters and how it has a great impact on you as a citizen.

I want to end by thanking everyone in the City for what they do every day. I encourage other residents to do the same!



STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

BY: ANNA MCGOUGH

College Intern

Hi! My name is Anna McGough. I am a student at UAB majoring in Marketing. This summer, I had the pleasure of interning with the City of Pelham's Communications Office, and it was a memorable, learning-filled experience.

It was nerve-racking coming into my first office space of professionalism and marketing, but the people around me definitely helped calm the nerves. Everyone I met made the experience all the better. It was also nice to see my dad from time to time. He works for the Pelham Fire Department.

Seeing the work put into the City's marketing and communications amazed me. There are so many large and small details, from sending push notifications in the Pelham 311 app to producing visual assets to market programs and events. I saw firsthand the planning that goes into Pelham Parks & Recreation events and programs, was part of the behind-the-scenes communication team for the Pro Rodeo at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena, and generally had an inside look at everything that makes the City of Pelham so welcoming, fun, and exciting.

The biggest project I worked on was an analytical report on the City's website. Because it will be refreshed this fall, I was tasked with discovering if each button and page was relevant and useful.

The biggest lesson I learned is the amount of work, dedication, organization, and multitasking required for such a job. It was fascinating to witness how just two people ensure all communications channels (and there are a lot of them!) are up to date and with current events and other relevant news.

I will always cherish this opportunity to gain real-life experience, which is something that isn't always learned in the classroom. Thank you to everyone who helped along the way!



Celebrating 10 Years

BY: NICOLE KNIGHT

Pelham City Schools

Our community's vision for a city school system was realized when Pelham City Schools was established in 2014. In the first ten years as Pelham City Schools, the system has focused its energy and efforts on identifying opportunities for improvement, establishing high standards, and creating a positive impact guided by core commitments. Through ongoing planning and progress, the school system has been defined and transformed to inspire and empower students to achieve personal success. This mission is propelled by dedication to students' well-being and success in a school community where diversity, collaboration, accomplishments, and opportunities are embraced. The collective efforts of educators, board members, and a supportive community have created incredible momentum, making way for innovation and opportunities in the classroom and beyond.

At the recent Back to School Employee Institute meeting, Superintendent Chuck Ledbetter, along with former superintendent Scott Coefield and former board of education president Rick Rhoades, highlighted the system's decade-long journey and emphasized the lasting impact educators have on students' lives.

Beyond a focus on engaging learning experiences, high academic standards, and a wide variety of athletic, arts, and extracurricular programs that have resulted in many achievements, the first ten years of Pelham City Schools have been marked by a bond among Pelham students, teachers, and parents that goes beyond school walls and instills a sense of family among the community.

The Pelham Way is not just a tagline or a social media hashtag. It has evolved to encompass a culture in the school system that values others, sets sights on goals, cultivates resilience, and celebrates successes.

As Pelham City Schools enters its second decade, it stands on a strong foundation built by vision and dedication, and collective efforts of many and is poised to continue its mission to inspire, empower, and achieve for years to come.



Pelham Football and Cheer Serve Seniors

Pelham High School's football players and cheerleaders recently demonstrated their community spirit by participating in the monthly luncheon at the Pelham Senior Center. For the second year, the event brought community members of all ages together and highlighted the school system's focus on service and community connections. During the luncheon, students introduced themselves, served lunch, performed cheers, and assisted with door prize distribution. A highlight of the day was the football toss game, which paired students and coaches with seniors, creating a lively competition among the groups.

The event provided an opportunity for the seniors to meet the faces behind the Panthers' uniforms and encouraged them to support the team at games this fall. The collaborative efforts of the Pelham Senior Center and Parks & Recreation Center staff, along with the coordination of the school's coaches and the participation of the students, exemplify the community spirit that makes Pelham special.



PELHAM FIRST DAY

#PelhamFirstDay photos have been a tradition on social media over the past several years, and this year's first day of school photos reflect the excitement and energy of students and educators kicking off the new year. From the youngest students to the senior class, everyone embraced the day, setting a positive tone for the new school year. We look forward to the opportunities, achievements, and moments that will create lasting memories in the year ahead!





PELHAM CITY SCHOOLS ACADEMIC CALENDAR

2024

July

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

August

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

September

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

October

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

November

M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

December

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

2025

January

M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

February

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

March

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

April

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

May

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

June

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

- Schools / Offices Closed
- First & Last Day of School
- E-Learning Day (PHS Only)
- Teacher Workday/ Professional Development (No school for students)
- Parent-Teacher Conferences (No school for students)
- Early Release

JULY	
4	Independence Day
AUGUST	
2	Teacher Workday
5	Institute / Professional Development
6	Professional Development
7	Teacher Workday
8	First Day of School for Students
SEPTEMBER	
2	Labor Day
3	Professional Development
OCTOBER	
11	End of First 9 Weeks
14	Columbus Day
16	E-Learning Day for Testing (PHS Only)
NOVEMBER	
1	Parent-Teacher Conference Day
11	Veterans Day
25-29	Thanksgiving Break
DECEMBER	
20	End of Second 9 Weeks
23-Jan. 2	Winter Break
JANUARY	
3	Teacher Workday
6	Professional Development
7	Students Return to School
20	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
FEBRUARY	
17	Presidents Day
MARCH	
7	End of Third 9 Weeks
11	E-Learning Day for Testing (PHS Only)
24-28	Spring Break
APRIL	
18	Professional Development Day
MAY	
22	End of Fourth 9 Weeks
22	Last Day of School
22	Pelham High School Graduation
23	Teacher Workday
26	Memorial Day
JUNE	
19	Juneteenth Emancipation Day



EASING THE PAIN OF FOOD INSECURITY

BY: GINA WOMACK

Pelham students are several weeks into the new school year, and for many children, school attendance provides the security of at least one hot meal each weekday. Food insecurity is a real problem, even in suburban areas like Pelham. The Alabama Department of Public Health estimates one out of four children lack regular access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life. For families with low or no income, expenses like housing and medicine are usually covered first, leaving little for the food budget.

Vineyard Family Services (VFS) is working to ease the pain of food insecurity one backpack at a time. The faith-based non-profit organization's Backpack Buddies is a weekend feeding program for public school children considered at risk for food insecurity. Through the program, bags of food stuffed with nutritious and easy-to-prepare foods are discretely placed in the child's backpack on Friday afternoons. The bags contain about five pounds of food, drinks, and snacks to supplement meals on Saturdays and Sundays. According to Vineyard Family Services, 1,200 students at 41 schools across Shelby County are fed each week, with extra feeding during Christmas and Spring Break.

Stephanie Grissom, Chief Operations Officer for Vineyard Family Services, said several factors must be considered when determining a student's eligibility for the program.

"School professionals screen and assess students who meet the criteria for the program. Normally, we consider aspects such as whether the child receives free or reduced meals at school, whether the child lives with homelessness or if they're living in transitional housing, whether the child has a history of food insecurity, whether the child lives in a single-parent home, and if there is a current home crisis or adverse home conditions," said Grissom.



17% of adults and 23% of children face food insecurity.



1,200+ buddies served weekly in Shelby County



Teachers say Fridays are special because that's the day students receive their buddy bags. "I love giving the students their bags each week and seeing their little faces light up," said one teacher. "I get that extra time with them to check on them." Another teacher said, "The students will usually open up to me about personal situations at home due to the Backpack Buddies program."

The handwritten letters received from local students in the Backpack Buddies program are heartwarming and heartbreaking. One child wrote, "We don't have much money, so it helps us." Another child said, "Dear VFS, Thank you for supporting the Backpack Buddies program at my school. I can share some food with my sister, which makes me feel good. I hope to be a meteorologist and a storm chaser. Thank you again!" And yet another said, "It (the food) helps my family and me get through the weekend."

Vineyard Family Services relies on volunteers to fulfill the students' needs. Individuals and groups are invited to attend monthly "packing parties" at the Pelham office. The parties are held on the first Saturday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. All ages and abilities are welcome. Depending on the month, the packing tasks include Backpack Buddy bags, hygiene bags, Christmas stockings, and Valentine's and Easter bags.

Packing parties are held every first Saturday beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Pelham Office.

Vineyard Family Services encourages individuals, companies, and organizations to hold food and supply drives for the Backpack Buddies program. VFS prides itself on providing quality food brands, including familiar names like Kraft Macaroni & Cheese cups, Chef Boyardee Spaghetti O's, Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup, Rice-a-Roni cups, and more. Canned goods with pop-tops are required since many children are responsible for opening and preparing food. A complete list of the preferred food items, sizes, and specific details is available from VFS.

Vineyard Family Services offers many more services in addition to Backpack Buddies. With the motto, "We Care For the Whole Family," the organization focuses on the fact that healthy families make healthy communities.

To learn more about Vineyard Family Services and its programs, please visit their website at www.vfsdads.com.

Successful Season

BY: GINA WOMACK

Thanks to the efforts of the Pelham Garden Club, families of bluebirds are making their homes in Pelham City Park. In the second nesting season since the handcrafted bluebird houses were placed in various locations in the park in April 2023, bluebirds have raised their young in all six boxes. According to Pelham resident and Garden Club member Dennis Stanek, at least 20 eggs were hatched after the boxes were placed in 2023. Over the winter, Garden Club members eagerly anticipated what this spring's nesting season would bring. "This year, when we started checking the boxes, the bluebirds were already nesting," said Stanek.

In addition to Stanek, Kay McArdle is one of the Pelham Garden Club members who volunteers her time to monitor the nests. She keeps careful records and data on the bluebird families living in the houses. McArdle said the monitoring started in February of this year. She began keeping records on March 9th, and since then, 67 eggs have been laid, 48 babies have hatched, and all babies have fledged.

Talk of the bluebird project started in the fall of 2022 when the Pelham Garden Club formed. "We started brainstorming projects we could do in the park and around the city. I have some friends at church who were involved with the Bluebird Trail at Oak Mountain State Park, and they were responsible for monitoring the trail for many years. I presented the idea of a bluebird trail for Pelham City Park," said Stanek.





Club members were receptive to the idea, especially when faced with the fact that the bluebird population has decreased by 90 percent over the past 60 years in the eastern United States.

Garden Club founder Teresa Riddle, who passed away earlier this year, located some plans for making bluebird houses. The group purchased building supplies using funds from the Garden Club treasury and donations. The club does not collect dues, so money from projects comes entirely from donations. Stanek recalled the teamwork involved in the building of the houses. "We bought cedar and other materials with a couple hundred dollars. One woman in the club volunteered to cut up the lumber. Another guy volunteered to put them together. We agreed on a date to install the boxes in the park and decided where we would place them," Stanek explained that the bluebird boxes must be at least 100 yards apart. "We were careful not to place them in the middle of a grassy field or the woods. You'll notice the boxes are visible from the Pelham Greenway Trail." "The group got permission from Brian Cooper, Director of Pelham Parks & Recreation, before placing the bluebird boxes.

Bluebirds are cavity nesters, which gives them a better chance of successfully raising their young. The nests protect from predators and weather. Cavity nests also retain heat well, which is ideal for young chicks. "In the winter, bluebirds gather inside the houses to keep warm. Alabama has few frigid nights, so bluebirds generally do not migrate from the area. "They're year-round residents. Some bluebirds may shift a little to the south, or we may get some bluebirds from areas slightly north of us during the winter months, but there's not much movement," Stanek said.

Our local bluebird population faces many natural predators that attack nests, killing adults and their young. Raccoons, squirrels, snakes, wasps, and even fire ants present dangers to bluebirds. Another threat is the English sparrow, a cavity nester that is not native to this area and is considered an invasive species. "Other birds, such as chickadees, titmice, and wrens, will nest in the boxes. The only species we'll evict from the boxes are the English sparrow," said Stanek.

For this reason, maintaining nest boxes is a responsibility that involves volunteer commitment. "When we monitor the boxes, we're looking for evidence of predators, in addition to keeping records of nest building, eggs, and any other signs of bird activity," Stanek explained.

After the young have fledged, the Garden Club volunteers clean out the boxes to make room for the next family of bluebirds. "The boxes are designed so the door tilts down to allow us to look inside. Between the broods, we clean the boxes. After a few days, another family will generally move in. At the end of the mating season, we prep for winter."

Bluebirds can have up to three broods a year. The male bluebirds start looking for nesting places in late winter, and the female begins the first nest in mid-April. According to the Alabama Extension Service, the female will lay one light blue egg daily for four to five days. She will incubate the eggs for about 12 days, and then the young will remain in the nest for about 15 days after hatching. "I like to see them when I'm walking through the park," said Stanek. "You get to see the fledglings when they hatch. I saw some young birds fed by adults even though they were outside the home."

Kay McArdle said some of the bluebirds are very protective of their young. As she monitored boxes this year, she noted that bluebird moms in certain boxes quickly let you know they're on guard. "I've had females who will dive at me when I come near. One day, the mate started diving at me as well. It's like the mother told the father to help her protect the babies," she said with a laugh. McArdle, who walks her dog daily at the park, said the birds are especially wary when her dog is around. "When monitoring the boxes, I secure the dog away from the nests so the birds won't get too anxious."

When asked about plans for additional bluebird houses in different city areas, Dennis Stanek said the focus remains on Pelham City Park for now. "This is the initial phase; no concrete plans exist for other areas. We've discussed Coker Park since the open ground would provide bugs, which are the bluebirds' primary diet. Although we're past mating and egg-laying season this year, we still have some active boxes at City Park. It's a good time to start making plans for the future."

Adults interested in all aspects of gardening are invited to attend Pelham Garden Club meetings. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at the Pelham Public Library. There are no dues, and you do not have to be a Pelham resident to attend. Gardening experts present an informative program at each meeting. Follow the group on Facebook by searching for The Pelham Garden Club.

In October, the Pelham Garden Club will hold a special evening presentation to explain Pelham's new Bee City® designation. The public is invited to learn more about what it means to be a Bee City on October 8, 2024, in the Pelham City Hall Council Chambers from 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Make plans now to attend.



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Abundant natural areas and wildflower landscaping can help facilitate the movement of pollinators from one patch of habitat to another and increase the likelihood that they will have enough food and nesting sites to build healthy populations.

Source: Bee City USA





POLLINATOR GARDEN

Alabama State Parks plant first of its kind living classroom in Pelham at Oak Mountain State Park

BY: CHRISTIE AITKEN

Alabama State Parks Marketing and Promotions Manager

On a perfect summer day in the heart of Pelham, Alabama State Parks leaders and the Pelham community gathered for the first-ever Alabama State Parks Pollinator Festival. Excitement was in the air as park leaders welcomed guests to the park system's first Pollinator Garden and Story Trail.

As the second city in Alabama to achieve the prestigious Bee City USA designation, the Pelham community deeply understands the importance of pollinators, making it the perfect place for this vibrant celebration.

About the Garden

The new Pollinator Garden at Oak Mountain State Park, a project made possible by a generous \$25,000 grant from the Alabama Association of RC&D Councils, is not just a visual delight. With plans to create more gardens across the state, each with a unique charm, State Parks Director Greg Lein rightly points out that these gardens are aesthetically pleasing and play a crucial role in improving and enhancing pollinator habitats. They provide incredible ecological benefits for all Alabamians.

The Oak Mountain State Park Pollinator Garden is a living classroom, the first of its kind in an Alabama state park. It provides a haven for bees, birds, butterflies, and an expansive range of pollinators. Guests of all ages can learn about the vital role of Alabama pollinators throughout the year inside the garden experience.



Planting with Purpose

Coming alongside the Alabama State Parks' mission to acquire and preserve natural areas; develop, furnish, operate, and maintain recreational facilities; and extend the public's knowledge of the state's natural environment, the Alabama State Parks Pollinator Gardens are being strategically grown, planting memories, purposing natural spaces, and allowing experiential learning to thrive within each participating park.

Chief of the Natural Resources Section for Alabama State Parks, Tasha Simon, shared, "Healthy ecosystems depend on pollinators. In fact, at least 75 percent of all the flowering plants on earth are pollinated by insects and animals. These plants stabilize our soils, clean our air, supply oxygen, and support wildlife."

The Oak Mountain State Park garden, nestled in an area once ravaged by the impact of tornadic activity, now symbolizes resilience and renewal while offering a vital habitat for the pollinators of Alabama's ecosystems. It also provides a place of connection and learning for all who step into the garden's beauty – with a special focus on the growing minds of the young and young at heart.

A Story of Education, Conservation, and Connection

Storytelling fosters a deep connection between children and adults, and Oak Mountain's garden is one of six across Alabama State Parks that will feature a Story Trail.

As children and parents, students and teachers, or even whimsical adults follow the trail, blooming flowers will set the scene for experiential education and imagination to meet.

The chief of Interpretation and Education for Alabama State Parks, Renee Raney, described the educational opportunities, noting, "Each pollinator garden allows educators to utilize interactive learning tools through our on-site Teacher Toolkits." The park system works with schools across the state on field trips to experience these outdoor classrooms.

From Pelham, Alabama beginnings, Alabama State Parks will replicate the Pollinator Garden experience in 11 other parks, from Gulf State Park's sandy shores to Cheaha State Park's world-class views. Each RC&D grant-funded garden promises to enhance guests' park experiences and serve as a living classroom for all as park guests stay, play, and explore within the twelve participating parks.

It's Time to Explore

As each garden opens across the state, conservation, natural resources, and the vital importance of Alabama's pollinators are highlighted. Guests are encouraged to make plans to visit often to create memories and learning moments along the way.

Take advantage of the opportunity to see the beauty and intricate wonder of the Alabama State Parks Pollinator Gardens at Oak Mountain State Park and follow Alabama State Parks on social media to stay up to date on new locations.

This legacy of conservation and community speaks promise and life for generations to come. Plan your exploration online at Alapark.com today as you plant your feet in one of Alabama's state parks for the growth ahead.





ACTIVITY GUIDE

SEPT 7 | OCT 5 | NOV 2
10:30 A.M.

Storytelling with Music!

Get ready for music, stories, and fun! Our special guest, Ms. Russell from Hello Music Teacher, will bring a musical storytime to the library for children ages seven and under. Registration is required and begins two weeks before the event. Space is limited.

SEPTEMBER 22
4:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.

Salsa in the Park

Enjoy a night of music and dancing with your friends and family at Pelham City Park. Whether you are a Salsa pro or just a lover of great music, come experience and appreciate the rich culture of Latin American music, dance and food!

SEPT 7 | OCT 5 | NOV 2
7:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.

Pancake Breakfast

Ballantrae Golf Club offers a pancake breakfast the first Saturday of every month. It includes pancakes, scrambled eggs, two types of sausage, grits, tea, water or coffee. The cost for adults is \$10. For children five and under, it's \$6.

OCTOBER 1
6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

National Night Out

Engage with first responders, look at their police cars and fire trucks, and learn about specialty units within each organization. National Night Out is held at Pelham City Park across from Pelham Park Middle School. Look for the giant American Flag.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 19

4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Friendship Bracelet Making Workshop

Swifties! The Pelham Public Library is hosting an Eras Tour-inspired program, where you can listen to music and make your own friendship bracelets! This is for those in 6th-12th grades. Registration is required.



SEPT 12 | OCT 10 | NOV 14

10:00 A.M.

Pelham Garden Club

The Pelham Garden Club is open to adults interested in all areas of gardening. Each month, an expert speaker will cover an aspect of gardening. Meetings are held at the Pelham Public Library. No registration is required.



SEPTEMBER 28

1:00 P.M.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's Alabama Connections

By examining F. Scott Fitzgerald's Alabama connections and their influences on him, one can better comprehend the great man's writings, such as *The Great Gatsby*. This program will take place at the library and is presented by Mollie Smith-Waters courtesy of the Alabama Humanities Alliance Road Scholars Bureau. Free to the public.



THIRD MONDAYS

6:00 P.M. - 7:15 P.M.

STEM Family Night

STEM Family nights at the library are geared towards children aged 8-12 and their family members. Activities are meant to be completed and enjoyed as a team/family unit.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

OCTOBER 6, 13, 20
4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Music in the Park

Whether you are a jazz enthusiast or love country, Motown, or 80's rock, you're sure to find a great musical fit at Music in the Park. Bring your entire family, plus a chair or a blanket, grab a bite out of the food trucks, and enjoy a fall Sunday afternoon together.

- 10/6 - OPOV Band
- 10/13 - The Negotiators
- 10/20 - The Gore Brothers
Black Sedan Band

**The 10/20 concert coincides with another event, and the music begins at 4:00 p.m.*



OCTOBER 20
1:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Fall-O-Ween

At Pelham City Park, we'll have all the treats and no tricks. The family will enjoy bounce houses, trick or treating, carnival games, face painting, a costume parade, food trucks, and more. Dress up and bring a bag for candy!



OCTOBER 10
4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Wand-Making Class

Teen and tween wizards in 6th-12th grades will receive instruction on how to make their own wands! The class is at the Pelham Public Library. Registration is required. Visit www.pelhamlibraryal.gov.



NOVEMBER 13-22

Scarecrows in the Park

Everyone's invited to create a one-of-a-kind scarecrow for the competition. Individuals, families, civic groups, local clubs, businesses or organizations can participate for fun prizes and bragging rights. For more information and guidelines scan the QR code.



ACTIVITY GUIDE

NOVEMBER 11

1:00 P.M.

A History of the Iron Bowl Saturday

Every Saturday after Thanksgiving, the Alabama Crimson Tide and Auburn Tigers play to settle who gets bragging rights for the next 364 days. Regardless of which side of the rivalry you're on, this library program will leave you filled with facts, figures, and statistics to make you the most informed fan in the rivalry. Presented by Mark Everett Kelly courtesy of Alabama Humanities Alliance Road Scholars Speakers Bureau.

OCT 25 | NOV 29 | DEC 3, 4 | DEC 20
TIMES VARY

Pelham Racquet Club Social Events

There's always something happening at the Pelham Racquet Club, and our social season will be in full swing this fall. Mark your calendars! Times, prices and online registration are available at www.pelhamracquetclub.com.

DECEMBER 13

7:00 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.

Youth Game Night

Kick off Christmas break with a fun night with friends at the Pelham Rec Center. Children age eleven to 14 will have fun playing indoor kickball, basketball mini-games, volleyball, tailgate-styled games, e-sports, and more. Pizza and snacks will be provided. The cost is \$5. Register at www.pelhamalrecreation.gov.

DECEMBER 23

10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Christmas Camp

Let the kids spend a few hours at the Pelham Rec Center so that you can make sure that your Christmas list is checked twice. They will have fun playing basketball, kickball, games, holiday-themed crafts, and more. Lunch will be provided. This camp is for children ages seven to 12. Registration is open now at www.pelhamalrecreation.gov

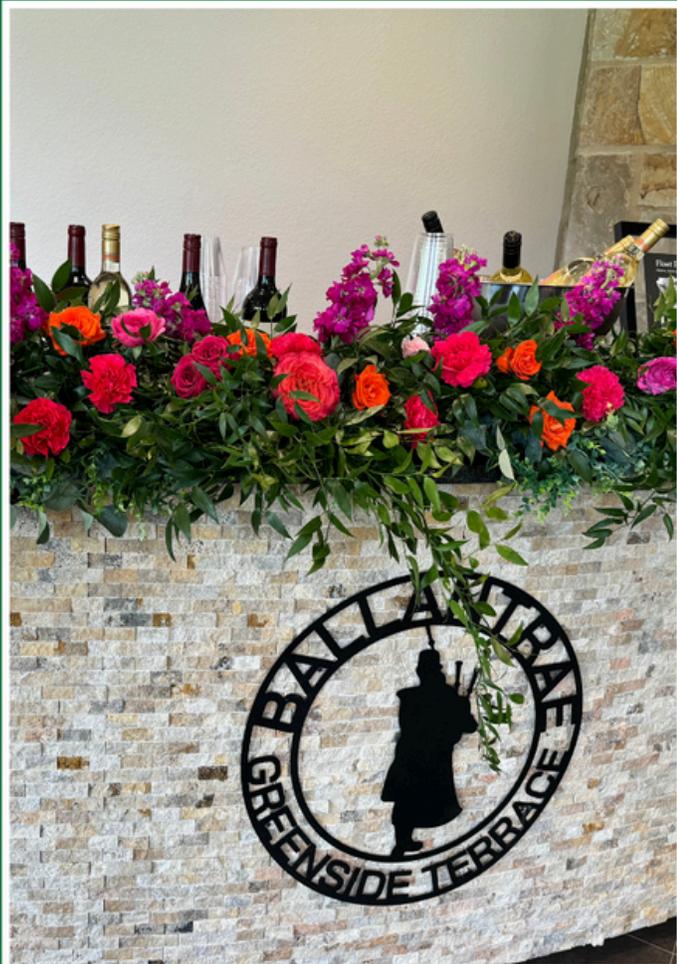


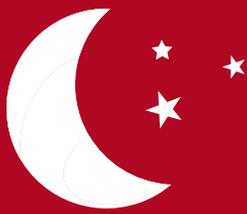


Ballantrae

Contact Event Manager Michelle Reis to book your special event at Ballantrae Golf Club!

email: mreis@pelhamalabama.gov
phone: 205.620.4653





PELHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1ST

6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

PELHAM CITY PARK



FUN FOR ALL!

- ★ Free hot dogs (while supplies last)
- ★ Police & fire equipment
- ★ Music
- ★ Kids' activities
- ★ Over 40 local organizations





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