

THE PELHAM

PATHWAY



Issue 14
MARCH 2025

Pelham's News Magazine

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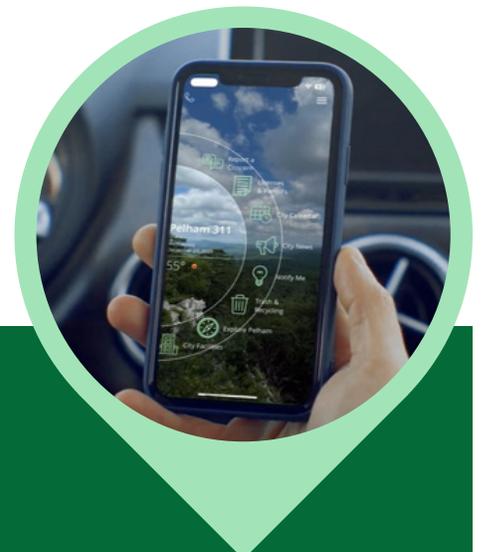
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THE PELHAM
PATHWAY



FEBRUARY
2025

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GROWTH BLUEPRINT

BY: AINSLEY ALLISON

Pelham continues to experience steady growth, with new commercial and residential developments taking shape throughout the city. City leaders remain committed to a balanced approach for both. The 2020 comprehensive plan, Plan Pelham, highlighted the need for commercial growth, and progress has been made with projects such as Campus 124, The Canopy, and new developments off Exit 242 and Huntley Parkway. The upcoming restaurants near the library will further contribute to this growth.

Residential growth has also been steady, with Pelham's population increasing at an average rate of 1.5% per year since 2017. The Canopy is the only multi-family development approved since the adoption of the 2020 plan, with other residential projects aligning with future land use recommendations. However, commercial developers continue to emphasize that additional residential growth is essential to attracting the types of retailers and businesses Pelham residents desire. That is why the City Council, after thoroughly reviewing every proposal, approved

zoning changes on Huntley Parkway for three new communities on Huntley Parkway and a 165-acre mixed-use development on CR-11.



New to Campus

This summer, Pelham will have a cutting-edge entertainment experience with the opening of Putter Up, a high-tech, immersive mini-golf concept at Campus 124. This isn't your typical windmill-and-clown-mouth putt-putt. Putter Up is a sophisticated, interactive game that blends competition, technology, and strategy, bringing a fresh take on an old favorite.

At Putter Up, players will navigate nine innovative holes, each designed to challenge more than just putting skills. Some holes incorporate trivia elements where correct answers add points, while others feature hoops and unique obstacles that keep the game engaging.

"Unlike traditional mini-golf, the experience is fully automated—each player scans their putter at every hole, and the system keeps track of their score," said owners Ken and Lela Turner. "A virtual caddy guides players through each challenge, while bright LED lighting and digital enhancements create an exciting, immersive atmosphere. It really keeps players engaged."

The Turners have built strategic partnerships with neighboring establishments to enhance the customer experience. "Because we're in Pelham's entertainment district, people can walk over to the Beer Hog, grab a drink and 'come here and play' kind of thing," Ken Turner explained. "Same with Valhalla Board Game Cafe and Half Shell Oyster House. We're teaming up with businesses here so that everyone benefits."

The Turners carefully considered multiple locations before choosing Pelham, but ultimately, the city's central location, growth, and strong community feel made it the perfect fit.

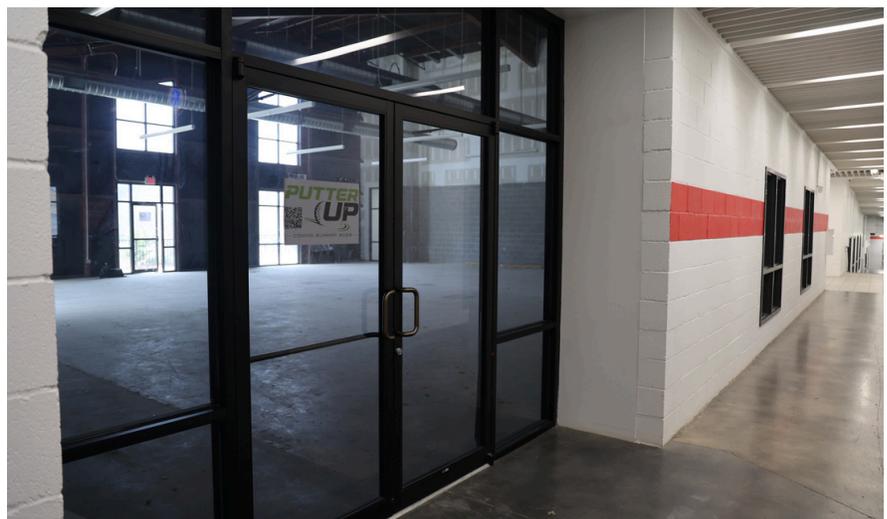
"We had another area in mind, but it wasn't big enough," Lela Turner said. "We're always riding through here because our kids play lacrosse in Alabaster, Helena, Pelham, Oak Mountain, and Hoover. This was right in the middle." Ken also knew it was the right spot when he drove past one day. "I was coming back from a men's group at the Pelham Public Library, and the parking lot here was full," he recalled. "That was a sign for me that this was a place people are already coming to."

Even before opening, the concept has generated tremendous buzz, with residents eager for more family-friendly entertainment options. The business is designed to be inclusive, featuring an accessible layout that accommodates wheelchair users. "Every hole is accessible for wheelchairs," Lela Turner explained.

"We even have a special putter designed for people who need it. We've got friends in the special needs community, and we want this to be a place where anyone and everyone can play."

The venue will feature a party room, perfect for birthdays, corporate events, and private celebrations. There's also a large patio out back, where they hope to offer live entertainment when the weather is nice.

Putter Up is targeting a June 2025 opening. Get ready because mini-golf in Pelham is about to get a serious upgrade.



Library Development

Residents and visitors are eagerly awaiting new dining options at the commercial development adjacent to the Pelham Public Library. Bullet Coffee is already under construction, while Waldo's Chicken & Beer recently received approval for its construction plans and is moving forward. Edgar's Bakery is also on track, with plans expected to be submitted any day now. Despite minor delays due to the holiday season, enthusiasm for the project remains high. These additions will bring new energy to the area and provide exciting new dining options for the community.

Highway 261 Widening

The long-awaited widening project on AL-261 is moving closer to clearing a major hurdle. City Manager Gretchen DiFante recently provided an update on the project's status, reporting that of the 69 properties (rights of way) needed for the project, ALDOT has acquired 68 parcels, with one remaining in negotiations. City leaders are hopeful that construction will begin within the next two years.

"I know it feels slow, but it is a very complicated project. We have to go through the process and make sure everything is done correctly and properly, but in the long term, it's going to be very beneficial to the community and to those neighborhoods along 261," said André Bittas, Pelham's Director of Development Services & Public Works.

A funding agreement was established in 2022 between Pelham, Hoover, Helena, Shelby County, and ALDOT to widen Alabama Highway 261. The plan includes expanding the road to five lanes from Bearden Road to U.S. Highway 31, with two lanes of travel in each direction and a designated center left-turn lane. The project also includes widening Valleydale Road to five lanes between U.S. 31 and Riverchase Parkway East.

Each municipality and Shelby County contributed \$675,000 to the project. With \$33.3 million in federal funds and \$4 million in state funds, the total cost is estimated at \$40 million.

Neighborhood Street Resurfacing

Recognizing that well-maintained roads are essential to quality of life, the City Council has committed to increasing funding for street resurfacing. This decision reflects the priorities of Pelham residents, as highlighted in the most recent citizen survey, which identified infrastructure improvements as a top concern. Eighteen neighborhood streets are scheduled for resurfacing between May and September, with a total project cost of \$1.25 million. You can learn more about the city's ongoing efforts to boost local roadways by visiting the City of Pelham website.

Summer Paving

Chandalar Drive & Office Park Circle

Dalton Drive

Hunters Trace

Huntmaster Lane

Red Fox Drive

Fox Hound Trail

Royal Chase Drive

Royal Place

Chase Drive

Willow Bend Road

Ryecroft Circle

Canyon Park Drive

Canyon Trail

Canyon Park Place

Canyon Park Circle

Cambrian Ridge Drive

Cambrian Ridge Trail

Tecumseh Lane

Curb Appeal

The entrance to a city is like the front yard of a home—it should have curb appeal and make a great first impression. That's why big improvements are coming to Pelham's northern gateway along US-31.

The Commercial Development Authority (CDA) recently purchased the property where a vacant Metro by T-Mobile building stands, and an abandoned snow cone hut was removed from a neighboring lot. Plans are underway to transform the entire area by tearing out asphalt and adding landscaping, including trees, lighting, and other beautification elements.

Pelham also just received permits from ALDOT to construct a new "Welcome to Pelham" gateway sign at the corner of US-31 and AL-261 near Walgreens. Designed with both natural and modern elements, the sign will reflect Pelham's brand and create a more inviting entrance to the city.

Another exciting addition is the Pelham City Park monument sign currently under construction at the corner of US-31 and Pelham Park Boulevard. This sign will incorporate natural materials along with digital boards to highlight the many exciting events happening at the park. Beyond enhancing aesthetics, these signage upgrades improve communication and engagement with residents and visitors while contributing to a cohesive, citywide wayfinding system.

New Park Pavilions

The City is investing in two new pavilions at the playground and splash pad. If you've spent time at Pelham City Park, you know it's one of the busiest spots in town—especially on sunny summer days!

Construction plans are in the works, and once the project kicks off, updates will be shared to keep everyone in the loop.

Greenway Trail

Pelham's Greenway Trail is set to expand once again as work begins on Phase IV, a critical link that will connect Pelham's Entertainment District across US-31. This phase will connect Campus 124 to Amphitheater Road, the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena and The Canopy, further enhancing pedestrian and bike-friendly access throughout the city.

The City Council recently approved a contract with Shelby County to complete the site grading for this portion of the trail.

The next step will be the bid and award process for the actual trail construction, and that is expected to take place later this spring.

The Greenway Trail, a six-and-a-half-mile system, has been developing in phases since 2020, providing a scenic and accessible path for outdoor enthusiasts. The final phase will connect Pelham City Park to Campus 124.

Additional Parking

The City of Pelham is taking another step toward improving accessibility and convenience at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. Plans are underway to pave a new parking lot west of the facility, providing approximately 260 additional spaces for visitors. This new parking area will greatly improve accessibility for skaters, coaches, and spectators needing entry to the west side of the building.

Work is expected to begin later this spring once the Birmingham Bulls hockey season wraps.



Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award



VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Mayor Gary Waters Receives the 2025 Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award

BY: GINA WOMACK

On the surface, the Shelby County Chamber's 44th Annual Investor's Meeting and luncheon seemed like countless others he's attended over the years. Mayor Gary Waters greeted old friends and sat with colleagues as they enjoyed good food and conversation. It did seem unusual to Mayor Waters when his wife, Lynn, decided to attend that day for some reason. "She seldom comes to these things," said the Mayor.

What started as an ordinary luncheon soon became apparent that something was different that day. Kirk Mancer, the Chamber's CEO, stood at the podium to present some awards. After honoring Bill Connor, the former CEO of AmFirst, with the Lifetime Investor Award, Mancer announced the following award would be the Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award, one of the Shelby Chamber's most prestigious honors.

The Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award was established in 2020 by the Shelby County Chamber and the Shelby County Mayor's Association. It was named after Shelby County's previous county manager, who, in his 32-year tenure, took Shelby County from financial crisis to the state leader in prosperity and fiscal management it is today.

The award was created to recognize an outstanding civic or business leader in Shelby County who has demonstrated the values by which Dudchock carried himself throughout his career. The award is not necessarily presented yearly and is subject to nominations received and reviewed.

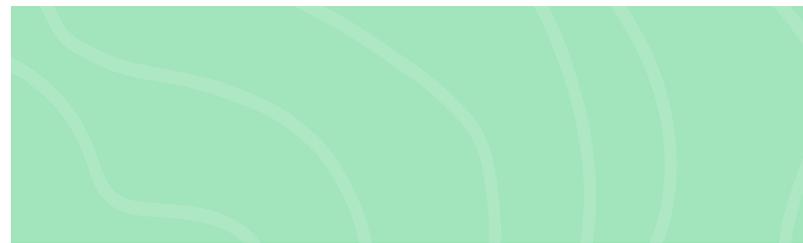
As Mancer began reading the nomination for the 2025 recipient, a wave of recognition spread across the faces of those in attendance. A man of great humility, Mayor Waters lowered his eyes as he realized his accomplishments were being read from the podium.





The City of Pelham's senior leadership team nominated Mayor Waters and presented a convincing narrative of his achievements and Pelham's success and growth during his 12 years in office. Mayor Waters has announced he will not seek reelection and plans to retire following the end of his term.

The nomination letter started by acknowledging his strong leadership. "Mayor Waters has been instrumental in transforming Pelham into one of the most professionally managed cities in the state. He has prioritized placing experienced professionals in key leadership positions, replacing roles that were once filled based on personal and familial connections. He has tirelessly advocated for consistency in applying the law and worked to ensure Pelham is respected as an ethical partner among developers, businesses, residents, surrounding cities and counties, and at the state and federal levels."



The letter highlighted several achievements under Mayor Waters' leadership, including more than \$200 million in new development projects and increased participation in citizen programs and activities.

Mayor Waters was a key player in the effort to bring Southern Professional Hockey League's Birmingham Bulls to their new home at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. The team is now enjoying its seventh successful season.

The Mayor has been a passionate advocate for railroad safety and accountability. In 2023, he led the effort that resulted in Pelham being awarded the nation's largest federal railroad crossing elimination grant. This achievement underscores his dedication to the safety and well-being of Pelham residents.

He played a pivotal role in bringing EMS transport by the Pelham Fire Department for the city, ensuring Pelham's emergency services could better meet the needs of its residents.

City Manager Gretchen DiFante praised Mayor Waters' leadership. "Mayor Waters is the most outstanding leader with whom I've had the pleasure to work. His ego never overshadows his intelligence and humility. The role of a first time city manager is not an easy one, and if Mayor Waters had not shown the support he did to turn this city around in support of professional management, we could not have had the success we've enjoyed. No matter how challenging the circumstances, he always knows how to say the right thing to lift others up."

Other City of Pelham department heads concur. Library Director Mary Campbell said Mayor Waters supports the staff and embraces new ideas. "Mayor Waters doesn't play favorites. We all know he has our back regardless of which department we run. He stands before us and takes the worst of the slings and arrows from those who always fight change."

André Bittas, Director of Development Services & Public Works, agreed with Campbell.

"He leads by example, he's trustworthy and honest, and he always has your back," Bittas said. He appreciates Mayor Waters' sense of humor, storytelling, love and passion for the people, and loyalty to Pelham and Shelby County.

Retiring City Clerk/Treasurer Tom Seale said he appreciates Mayor Waters' trust and friendship. "Mayor Waters' leadership style is respectful and exhibits integrity, open-mindedness, and fairness. He makes everyone feel valued and truly listens to people. I feel Mayor Waters respects my thoughts and opinions."

Before being elected mayor, Gary Waters had an exemplary career in public service as a firefighter. He began his career as the first paid firefighter in Pelham in 1977 and served as Fire Chief from 1984 to 2008. He expanded the city's fire services from two to five stations during this time. Under his leadership, the Pelham Fire Department grew to include 78 paid firefighters and fire medics. He also strongly advocated for expanding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) across the county and state, hosting annual EMS training events that attracted EMTs from all over Alabama.



“They gave this award to me, but it’s really for all the people who’ve helped me along the way. This is not about me but about our staff. I like to give credit to those who deserve credit.”

Mayor Waters advocates for firefighter health and safety. His passion for cancer awareness and benefits for fire service personnel eventually led to the Heart and Lung Bill legislation, which provides critical protections for Alabama’s firefighters.

His leadership in emergency response extended beyond Pelham. He deployed teams to the World Trade Center after 9/11 to assist with initial response efforts and to Hurricane Katrina for recovery operations.

Service is in Mayor Waters' blood. He is a proud veteran, having served in the United States Army for 24 years, both on active duty and in the National Guard.

He was a Commissioned Officer in the Infantry and retired in September 1998. He is an active member of the American Legion Post 555.

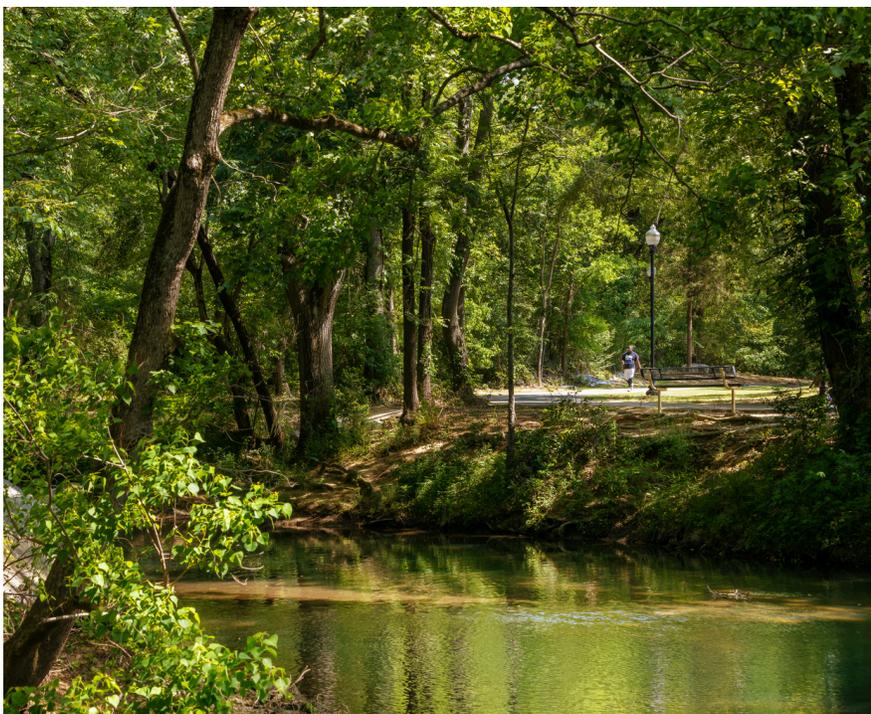
During his free time, Mayor Waters is deeply involved in the community. He often mows lawns for older people. He also volunteers at the National Cemetery, visits local nursing homes, or spends time with residents at the "Mayor's Table" at the ice arena, where he has been a loyal Bulls season ticket holder for seven years.

Mayor Waters loves history and is an avid reader and writer. In some ways, he is the unofficial keeper of the city’s history.

He pens journals full of memories and insights. If we’re lucky, maybe we’ll get to read them someday. Communication Manager Ainsley Allison said, "His respect for the written word is unmatched, and he has a rare ability to flip back through years of entries, finding the perfect passage to offer relevant advice, wisdom, or even a bit of humor."

When he was revealed as the 2025 Alex Dudchock Community Leadership Award recipient, Mayor Waters walked to the podium and expressed his appreciation for the award. "It means a lot to me. They gave this award to me, but it's really for all the people who've helped me along the way. I've been in and around Pelham for about 50 years. The list of people who've helped me achieve those things is long. This is not about me but about our staff. I like to give credit to those who deserve credit." His reaction was very fitting for a man of humility and few words.

To that sentiment, Library Director Mary Campbell said, "He will always point out the people responsible for the city’s successes while not taking credit for his hard work." That, folks, is the mark of a true leader. His impact reaches beyond Pelham, and our city will forever be grateful for his legacy. Thank you for everything, Mayor Waters!



Culinary Queen

CHRISTINA COFFEY, EXECUTIVE CHEF

BY: JENNI HODGES

Set one foot inside Chef Christina Coffey's kitchen, and I guarantee you it won't be long before you end up with a spoon, tasting new dishes she and her team have created. That happened to me when I spent the day with the new Executive Chef at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. I can tell you firsthand that you should not pass up the scratch-made brownie at any catering event, and the new BBQ sauce featuring whiskey from one of the facility's sponsors is fantastic! With over 20 years of experience in large-scale kitchens, Coffey can cook just about anything. But if you ask her, she'll tell you her favorite thing to cook is something new for the people she's feeding. "I am excited to bring new menu items," she explains, "and I try really, really hard to spoil our guests with food!"

A Culinary Homecoming

The talented chef who now calls Pelham home has quite a resume. Straight out of culinary school, Coffey was offered the position of Executive Chef at The Boeing Company in Huntsville, feeding a workforce of approximately 3,000. She's also led kitchens on college campuses, hospitals, and secondary education facilities catering to students with special needs. But for Chef Coffey, coming to the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena kitchen was more than a career move. "After cooking in Georgia, Tennessee, and Washington D.C., I was ready to come home. The complex has been very welcoming. It feels like home," Coffey said.





Chef Coffey joined the team in October of last year, and she's already loving the unique environment and the opportunities that come with it. Unlike the rigid menu she's followed in the past, Chef Coffey has the freedom to be creative. "I get to give guests exactly what they want instead of following a strict menu," she explained. "If an event has 50 guests and half prefer Italian while the other half loves Southern BBQ, we can craft a catering experience that satisfies everyone."

Her cooking style is deeply rooted in authenticity. "Cooking should come from the heart," she insisted. "My role here is to teach those in the kitchen that the meals we create are more than just food. The community trusts us to serve them the best quality food and experience when they book an event." More than anything, she wants the community to expand their idea of what's possible when it comes to catering. "We're not just a grilled chicken or chicken Alfredo facility. We can create authentic food here. Whether it's German, Middle Eastern, or Russian." Chef Coffey draws inspiration from her guests and is quick to take on the challenge of creating dishes people believe are impossible. "If they think it can't be done, I want to make it," she joked.

One of her proudest culinary moments was creating a special vegan, gluten-free French toast for a food critic with strict dietary preferences who loved the dish.

As Executive Chef, Coffey handles all aspects of food at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. That means while planning those specialty catering menus for events in the banquet hall, she's also cooking up exciting new offerings for the concession stands. If you've attended a Birmingham Bulls game recently, you've probably seen some of her creativity come to life. "People assume we just serve popcorn, pretzels, and hot dogs, but we offer so much more," she said. Her most recent additions include a brisket sandwich featuring that BBQ sauce I taste-tested and a cinnamon sugar-dusted warm pretzel with dipping icing. You can check out these and other items she's testing at the new Grab' n Go concession stand, another of Coffey's innovations, giving her an instant testing ground for the popularity of potential new menu options.

A Dedicated Team

The kitchen's success is a team effort, and Chef Coffey quickly acknowledged her team members, Sarah Luna and Mary Sheffield. They put in countless hours of hard work behind the scenes preparing food and proposing their ideas for menu offerings. "The facility is lucky to have these two," she boasted proudly. "My team is constantly learning—whether it's new recipes, safety and sanitation practices, or creative input for menus. They play a crucial role in both Bulls games and catering events." She emphasizes the dedication required in the kitchen. "People don't always realize the long hours and hard work that goes into preparing meals. The team works 12 to 13-hour shifts, adapts to last-minute changes, and stays to the very end to clean up. Then they return the next day with smiles, ready to do it all again." Those who pursue a career in cooking are often driven by a deep, personal passion for the craft, and the team in Chef Coffey's kitchen definitely possesses that passion.

Overcoming Adversity

If Chef Coffey recognizes that dedication in others, it's only because she embodies it herself. Early in her career, Coffey's dedication was put to the test when she was involved in a motorcycle accident. Her leg was severely broken, and she required a total reconstruction of her knee. While in the hospital, her doctors gave her a grim prognosis. To gain the ability to walk again, she needed extensive recovery time in a wheelchair. Even then, being on her feet for long hours in the kitchen was no longer an option. She would need to start thinking about a life without the demands of the kitchen. But her love for cooking was too strong to be so quickly pushed aside. With the support of her family, she began to weave her physical and career recovery together. Coffey loves to tell the heartwarming story of cooking with her daughter while in a wheelchair. "We would put a sheet pan across the armrest and wheel around the kitchen," she laughed. Gradually, Coffey worked her way to a cane and reclaimed her role in the kitchen. And not just any kitchen; Coffey took the Executive Chef position at the very hospital where doctors had told her she'd never work in a kitchen again.

While in the hospital, Coffey experienced something she already knew about the food service industry. "It is not just food," she said. "Food is tied to life, emotions, celebrations, deaths, holidays, health issues, and the healing process. Food is a major part of our lives, and I feel it is my honor and responsibility as a Chef to make the best cuisine possible when cooking for my guests and cooking for them as I would my loved ones."



Vision for Pelham

That philosophy is what Chef Christina wants to infuse into how she serves the community of Pelham. That food is about more than just sustenance—it's about connection. "My role here is about bringing people together with food and culture. When we share a meal, we break bread together, fostering community in a powerful way." Beyond concessions and catering, she's eager to implement programs that serve the broader community. Among her ideas are teaching heart-healthy meals to seniors and offering budget-friendly cooking classes for young people. "In just a few short months here, I've thought of several projects that we're going to be working on," she shared.

She hopes the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena will be known for its unique brand of food, fun, and relaxation. "I want the community to know they don't have to drive to Birmingham or Montgomery for fine dining or comfort food," she said. "It's right here in Pelham!"

She and her team plan to send tasting samples to local radio stations, senior centers, and City Hall to spread the word, and if anyone in the community wants to be more involved, Christina welcomes them with open arms. "People can reach out to me anytime at 256.206.1839. I'd love to hear what they want to see in our banquet hall or concessions."





**THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025
6:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M.
PELHAM CIVIC COMPLEX
& ICE ARENA**

All proceeds benefit the Pelham Public Library



**Scan to purchase tickets
\$40 in advance
\$50 at the door**



LOCAL LEGENDS

Pelham City Schools Introduces New Athletics Hall of Fame and Celebrates First Inductees



BY: NICOLE KNIGHT

Pelham City Schools launched the Pelham Athletics Hall of Fame with its inaugural induction ceremony at Pelham High School. The event honored 20 exceptional individuals whose contributions have shaped the history of Pelham athletics. Former athletes, coaches, and community leaders, along with their families and guests, came together for an evening of recognition, reflection, and celebration.

As inductees were honored for their excellence, perseverance, and the lasting impact of their achievements, the night became more than just a ceremony—it was a chance to reconnect, reflect on their time as Panthers, and celebrate the bonds within the Pelham community.

The inaugural class of the Pelham Athletics Hall of Fame inductees included Sean Anderson, Lane Bearden, Whitney Billings, Jeni Jones Chatman,

Parker Curry, Trevor Fitts, Bill Flowers, Hasaan Hawthorne, Bobby Hayes, Kim Kiel, Alex Reese, Rick Rhoades, Tammy Richardson, Sara Sandrik, Erica Braswell Speegle, Hunter Stovall, Dabo Swinney, Althea Thomas, Greg Vinson, and Tyler Watts. Their legacies, built on hard work, perseverance, and leadership, will continue to inspire future generations of Panthers.

This inaugural class is just the beginning. With a rich athletic history and many more deserving individuals, Pelham looks forward to growing the Hall of Fame each year and continuing to honor those who have shaped Panther athletics. No matter where life takes them, the honorees' contributions will always be a valued part of Pelham's story. It's always a great day to be a Panther!

CELEBRATING

EDUCATORS & SUPPORT STAFF

BY: NICOLE KNIGHT

Pelham City Schools recently recognized outstanding educators and staff members at its annual Teacher and Support Person of the Year celebration. The honorees, along with their guests and colleagues, were recognized at a special reception catered by the Pelham High School Culinary Program prior to formal recognition at the January Board of Education meeting. These individuals were chosen for their dedication, hard work, and the meaningful impact they have on their students, schools, and the community.

This year's Support Person of the Year honorees included Maria Guzman (Pelham Oaks Elementary), Tiffany Grimes (Pelham Ridge Elementary), Anita Britt (Pelham Park Middle), and Debbie Adams & Lisa Detwiller (Pelham High School). These individuals play a vital role in creating a supportive and welcoming school environment and help make Pelham schools an excellent place for students to thrive. Their dedication and willingness to go above and beyond have earned them the admiration of the entire school community.

The Teacher of the Year recipients were equally inspiring, with Jordan Salter (Pelham Ridge Elementary), Jackson Vaughan (Pelham Oaks Elementary & District Elementary Teacher of the Year), Trey Clark (Pelham Park Middle), and Katie Travis (Pelham High School & District Secondary Teacher of the Year) receiving the honors. These educators exemplify excellence in teaching, creating engaging learning environments, and making a lasting impact on their students. Whether through music, leadership, mentorship, or academic instruction, they embody what it means to be an outstanding educator.



PANTHER PRIDE



Outstanding Achievements

Pelham City Schools hosted a special in-person Panther Pride recognition at the January Board of Education meeting, honoring students and teachers for high-level achievements at the state, regional, and national levels. This event brings together individuals whose dedication, hard work, and talent make Pelham shine twice a year.

Before the board meeting, Pelham City Schools hosted the Superintendent's Art Show, highlighting artwork from students across all schools. Several families, students, teachers, and board members attended to celebrate Pelham students' creativity and artistic accomplishments. Following the art show, the district recognized students, educators, and board members for their outstanding achievements in academics, athletics, and the arts.



As part of Board Member Recognition Month, Superintendent Dr. Chuck Ledbetter and school principals took a moment to recognize Pelham's Board of Education members, expressing appreciation for their leadership and commitment to the district. Their dedication plays a vital role in supporting students, teachers, and schools, and the evening was an opportunity to thank them for their service.

Among the Panther Pride honorees was the Pelham High School Varsity Volleyball Team, which had an impressive season, finishing as 6A State Runner-Up after advancing to the state championship. Additionally, Camryn McMinn, Londyn Wynn, and Kylee Hester earned All-State Volleyball honors, and Coach Perry Robinson was named Shelby County Volleyball Coach of the Year.

In cross country, Emily Wester and Janelle Ramos were recognized for earning All-State honors, reflecting their hard work and dedication throughout the season.

The evening also highlighted academic and fine arts achievements. Mrs. Aubrey Pappanastos from Pelham Oaks Elementary was honored for earning National Board Certification, a distinguished recognition in the field of teaching.

The Pelham High School Band was recognized as the 6A State Runner-Up at the Alabama Marching Band Championship. Daniel Phillips and Michael Green were celebrated for earning spots in the All-State Orchestra. Theatre students Emme Self, Emily Ropog, Annastin Brantley, and Mary Beth Byrd also earned top placements in the Trumbauer State Theatre Festival.

Another standout recognition went to Edwin Hernandez, a Pelham High School senior who earned a highly competitive QuestBridge Scholarship to Stanford University.

The district also recognized Pelham Board of Education member Bob O'Neil, who was named an Alabama Association of School Boards Master School Board Member, an acknowledgment of his leadership and service to Pelham City Schools.

Pelham City Schools is proud to recognize these students, teachers, coaches, and leaders for their outstanding accomplishments. Their success reflects both the opportunities available in Pelham and the hard work and dedication they have put forth. Congratulations to all on a job well done!





SCHOOL'S ON ICE

BY: JENNI HODGES

The Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena was alive with smiles and laughter as busloads of kindergarteners from Pelham City Schools took to the ice on a frigid Thursday morning. Usually, an outing like this would only happen as a part of a field trip, but these children are actually fulfilling part of their PE curriculum by learning how to ice skate.

Seth Greenberg, Executive Director of the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena, was brainstorming ideas on how to grow the programs offered at his facility. Learn to Skate at the Pelham Skate School is one of those programs. Six-week sessions provide beginner instruction to people of all ages who want to learn to skate, whether aspiring figure skaters, hockey players, or someone who wants to skate recreationally. He realized bringing the Skate School to Pelham City Schools was the natural move. But, as with any good idea, this program didn't happen overnight. With so much to consider, such as transportation, funding, and logistics, a lot of people had to get on board with the idea.

"In the summer of 2023, I met with Gretchen," said Greenberg, speaking of Pelham City Manager Gretchen DiFante. "She asked me how we can grow skating in Pelham. I told her about a PE program I set up at my previous arena with the local elementary schools back in Wooster, Ohio."

The unique mix of indoor and outdoor recreational amenities is the core of Pelham's brand, and city leaders believe access to these amenities improves the community's overall well-being. This idea to expand access to ice skating through a partnership with the school system aligns with that belief, and it's something only Pelham can do. DiFante immediately started putting the pieces together to give momentum to the proposal so it would become a reality. She set up a meeting between Greenberg and Pelham City Schools Superintendent Dr. Chuck Ledbetter. "He loved it from the get-go," said Greenberg. "But an idea is just an idea until you find a way to implement it. There were still so many details to work out, and funding such a large program was one major factor."

School leaders worked together to apply for and received a community action grant from state Senator April Weaver and Representatives Kenneth Paschal and Arnold Mooney, members of the Shelby County legislative delegation. The grant helped to cover the costs associated with the program like school bus transportation and fees for ice time and skate rentals. Senator Weaver and Representatives Paschal and Mooney attended that Thursday's PE class, along with a whole host of school administrators who came together to see in action what was only an idea many months ago.

"As a legislative delegation, we are always happy to support activities like this in the Pelham school system," Senator Weaver says with a smile. "We're happy to be able to offer support to give children this opportunity that they might not otherwise have."

She pointed out that the unique recreational resources in Pelham, like an ice arena, are key elements in being able to plan such creative initiatives. "We think it's important to support the city and the things that they have here that are such wonderful resources," she says. "They benefit not just the city of Pelham, but the whole county and surrounding area." It's a life experience that some of these kids would not have had if this rink had not been here in Pelham," added Representative Mooney, pointing out that schools would have to travel to Huntsville, Montgomery, or even out of state to have a similar experience were it not for the resources we have locally in Pelham.

"Life experiences impact education," continued Rep. Mooney. "It's an opportunity to do something that tests you a little, stretches you a little, and makes you feel more confident about being in front of people." In the spirit of his own words, he confidently stepped out onto the ice to take in the excitement of all the kids circling around the rink. "It's just a wonderful thing to see and to see joy on the kids' faces and excitement," he said. "That's what's meaningful." Pelham Ridge Principal Khadir Jones is already noticing that some of that confidence is also rubbing off on the adults. "They're teaching us to persevere!" she says braggingly of her kids. "If they fall, they get right back up. What an amazing life lesson they're learning through these opportunities."

"It took a while to get off the ground, but here we are," says Greenberg. To date, over 237 children from Pelham Ridge and Pelham Oaks Elementary Schools have laced up their skates and learned some of the basics of skating from the world-renowned coaches of the Pelham Skate School.

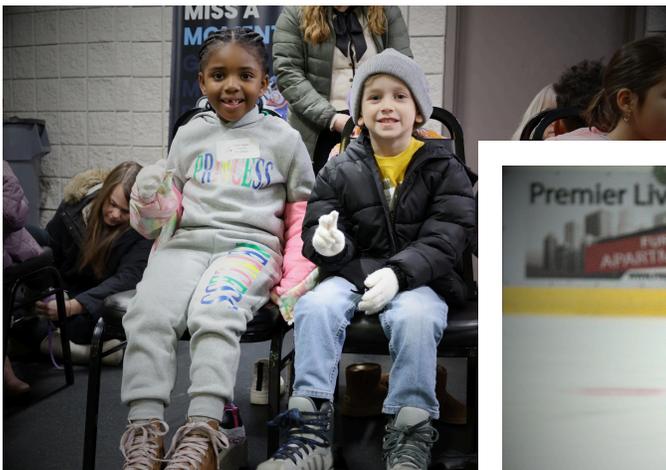
"We're so grateful to the city for the opportunity and for opening the doors of the civic complex," says Principal Jones. "This has been exposure some of our kids may not have had before. So, it's just opening new doors for them."

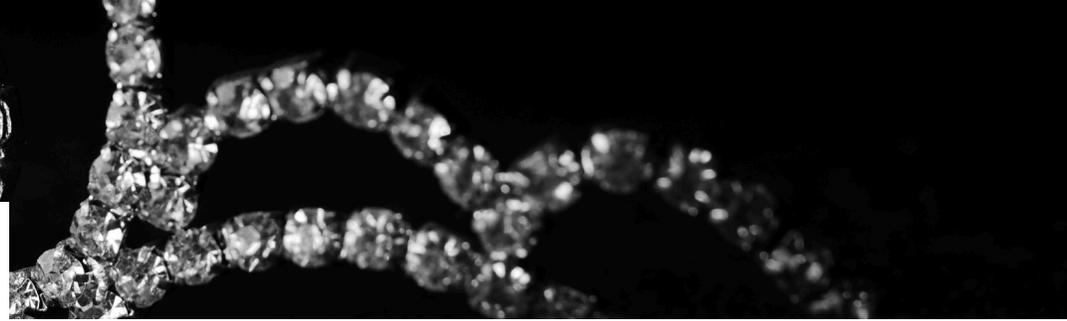
That sentiment is precisely what Seth Greenberg had hoped for when he pitched the idea that started this program in motion. "We view this as an opportunity to introduce young children to skating. Hopefully, they take to it and become our future hockey players and figure skaters" he said. "Anytime we have a young child skating at the complex, we view it as an opportunity to keep them involved in skating for years to come."

The Pelham Skate School is open to the public and offers classes for skaters at all levels from ages two and up. The 2025 Learn to Skate schedule has sessions starting March 3rd and April 28th. All sessions include eight weeks of instruction for \$160, which covers the cost of instruction, skate rental during sessions, and one free public session pass for each week of class so you can practice. Don't worry if you miss registering at the beginning of a new session. You can join at any time during the eight weeks, and prices will be automatically prorated at the time of registration.

2025 Learn To Skate Dates

- Session 2: March 3rd - April 26th
- Session 3: Apr 28th - June 28th
- Session 4: June 30th - August 23rd
- Session 5: August 25th - October 20th
- Session 6: October 21st - December 20th





CROWNING HER PURPOSE

Jada Winston's Path to Miss Alabama

BY: GINA WOMACK

It all started in 2010 on a stage at Pelham High School during the school system's annual Day of Pageants. An adorable kindergartener from Valley Elementary, dressed in a beautiful blue and white gown, beamed excitedly at her first competition. The glitz! The glamour! It was a little girl's dream come true. Five-year-old Jada Winston couldn't have known that day that the Mini Miss Panther pageant was just the beginning of a journey that would one day lead her to the Miss Alabama stage.

In February 2024, Jada entered her first Miss Alabama organization preliminary, the Miss University of North Alabama pageant. As a freshman at UNA, Jada was named the second runner-up, awarded Miss Congeniality, and placed in the top five for her community service initiative. The competition fueled her passion to fulfill her desire to keep striving for a spot in Miss Alabama. "I would say there are about 40 preliminary pageants for Miss Alabama. When I entered the Miss UNA pageant, it was for the 2024 cycle," Jada explained. She set a personal goal to be a contestant in the 2025 Miss Alabama pageant.

The goal became a reality in July 2024 when Jada won the title of Miss Iron City, a preliminary to the Miss Alabama pageant.

Since the competition occurred after the 2024 Miss Alabama pageant, her Miss Iron City title secured her a spot in the upcoming Miss Alabama pageant this June.

Jada said her motivation to compete is to glorify God in the process. Her faith is strong and a driving force in her life. "I feel like my relationship with Him has grown significantly over my time as Miss Iron City. I stay focused on the fact that I am serving Him through my community service initiative, Bread of Life. I genuinely want to be someone who can make an impact, so starting with Miss Iron City has been a great way to do more for my community. God tells us to be servants and to be in servitude to others, and that's me. Serving my community is the best way I can make that impact."



Contestants in Miss Alabama's preliminary pageants choose a community service initiative to raise awareness for causes they care about. For Jada, her choice was easy. She pours her time and energy into a cause dear to her heart: food insecurity. She calls her initiative "Bread of Life," a nod to a Bible verse where Jesus compares Himself to bread, which symbolizes life and sustenance.

"When I was younger, I would always tag along with my mom to different community service events. We volunteered with Vineyard Family Services' Backpack Buddies program," Jada recalled. At least once a month, packing parties are held where volunteers fill bags with food and snacks to distribute to children who might not otherwise have something to eat outside school hours. "The organization has done such great work right here in Pelham,"

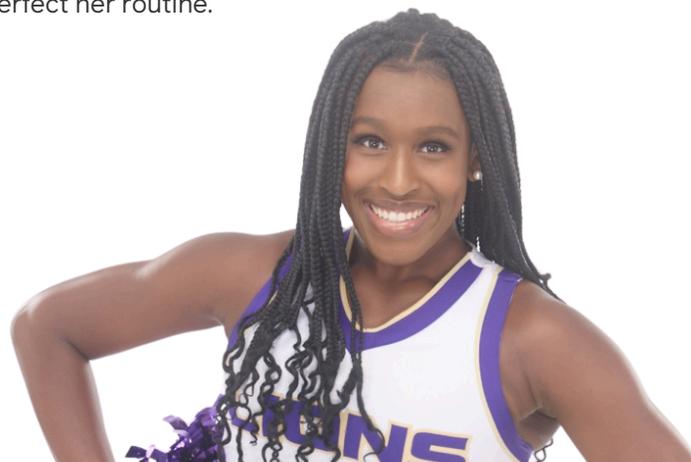
Jada also works with the Food Bank of Central Alabama, participating in food distribution events, and with Grace Klein Community (FeedBHM), a non-profit dedicated to providing relief to people in need. "Most of us don't realize 23 percent of people in Shelby County are food insecure. That's a big statistic for an area where you wouldn't suspect people are going to bed hungry. It's a hidden issue." She hopes to use her time as Miss Iron City to raise as much awareness as possible to help alleviate the problem.



While Jada's heart is rooted in service, her academic journey reflects the same sense of purpose. After graduating from Pelham High School in 2023, she enrolled at the University of North Alabama, where she felt an immediate connection. "It was almost like love at first sight. Everyone on campus was so kind, and it felt like a family among the students. You feel Christ on campus. The students walked the walk and talked the talk. I could see myself thriving and making the most of my college days. It's been a great experience." Jada is studying sports management and public relations, aspiring to work with a professional sports team one day.

She also saw a way to continue one of her lifelong passions: cheerleading. Growing up, Jada cheered for Pelham Parks & Recreation youth football, then continued through middle and high school. Her talent and dedication earned her a spot on the UNA Lions cheer team as a freshman.

Her success as a cheerleader inspired her talent routine for Miss Iron City, which she will perform at the Miss Alabama pageant. "I plan to combine cheerleading with a gymnastics dance. I'm adding technical aspects like jumps, tumbling, and other things. I want to engage the crowd and keep it exciting to watch." In preparation, Jada spends hours in the studio, working with choreographers to perfect her routine.



Jada knows the importance of setting a positive example, especially for young girls. Miss Alabama preliminaries often have "Rising Stars," a program where young girls are paired as "little sisters" to the titleholders. "It's a learning opportunity for them. They can glimpse the pageant world at a young age and accompany me during my appearances for Miss Iron City," she explained. Jada's little sisters, Pelham students and family friends, joined her in events like the Magic City Classic parade, the Pelham Christmas parade, the Veterans Day parade, and Fiesta Birmingham.

Reflecting on her journey, Jada said, "It's all about impacting people. Knowing I might be a light to someone is a blessing because that's what it's all about. Pageants are not for my glorification or anything I've done but to lift someone and bring them closer to God. Because at the end of the day, that's all that truly matters."

Jada credits her family for much of her success. "My parents are great. They're very supportive of everything I do, and they've given me a great life." She said her parents, Martina and Corey Winston, have taught her and her brother, Jordan, valuable lessons. "They teach us to put others first, encourage us to serve others, and not to be selfish or self-serving. They've taught us to focus on the bigger picture and not be small-minded."

Jada looks forward to meeting new friends through the Miss Alabama pageant, taking place June 25-27, with the finals on Saturday, June 28. "It's a true sisterhood. I've made friendships that will last a lifetime through pageants." She is inspired by Abbie Stockard, Miss Alabama 2024, recently crowned Miss America, and Ali Mims, the reigning Miss Alabama Teen. "It's pushing me to do more with my platform and initiatives. It's always good to have a bigger goal and a bigger dream that can be achieved, right? If you have the heart and drive to want to succeed, it's truly a dream."

The next few months will be a whirlwind for Jada Winston, but the little girl who first stepped on the stage as a kindergartner is ready for what God has in store. "The plan that He has in place is all that matters. It doesn't matter if I win the crown or not. The experience, the friendships, and the memories will make me happy I did it."





ACTIVITY GUIDE

MARCH 3 - APRIL 7
2:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Ballroom Dance Class

Active Adults 55+ can enjoy a new ballroom dance class at the Pelham Senior Center. The class will meet on Mondays for six weeks and focus on one ballroom dance. The cost is \$5 per person/per session, or you can receive a discount if you sign up for all six classes. Register at the Pelham Senior Center.

FRIDAYS IN MARCH
UNTIL 8:00 P.M.

Extended Hours at Ballantrae

Extended hours at Ballantrae Golf Club's Fireside Grill and Greenside Terrace return in March. Enjoy appetizers, dinner, drink specials, and more by the fire. Check Facebook or IG for details each week!

MARCH 29
9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

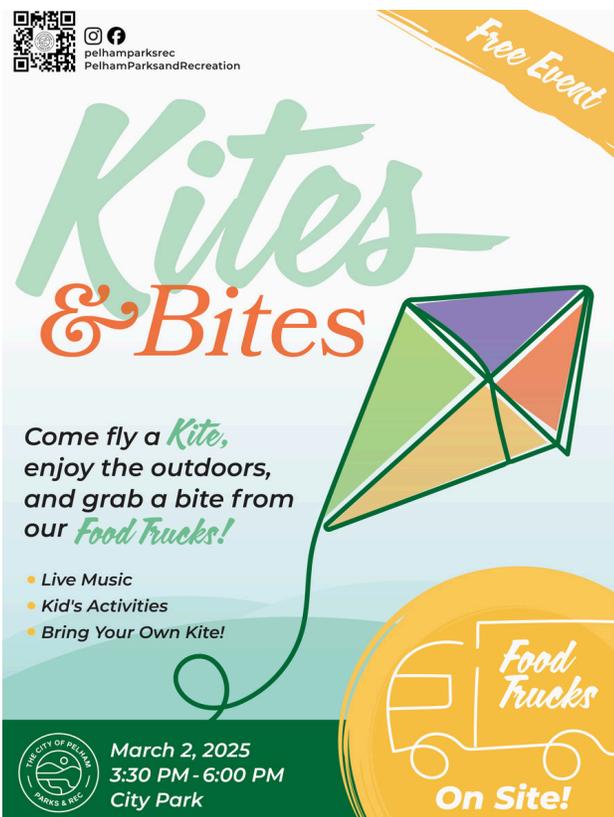
City of Pelham Spring Shredding & E-Recycling

The City of Pelham partners with Secure Shredding & Recycling to offer this bi-annual shredding and e-recycling event at Pelham City Hall. A list of accepted items is available at www.pelhamalabama.gov.

APRIL 2
5:30 P.M.

Read & Watch Book Club

This isn't your usual book club! The Pelham Public Library will host Read & Watch, where participants read a particular book and then gather to experience a live, virtual interview with today's bestselling authors. Join us as we chat with Jodi Picoult about her newest novel, "By Any Other Name."



APRIL 20 | APRIL 27
6:00 P.M.

STEM Family Night

The Science Lady from Dynamic Education Adventures will discuss the science of rockets in a fun and interactive way. Learn more about the Pelham Public Library's STEM Family Night by emailing our Tech Librarian: mcarden@pelhamalabama.gov

MAY 2-4

Magic City Ice Classic

Experience Alabama's premier competition event, hosted annually by the Birmingham Figure Skating Club at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. More than 200 skaters from all over the Southeast are expected to compete.



APRIL 3

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

4th Annual Health Expo

Take advantage of this special health expo at the Pelham Senior Center. Active Adults 55+ can learn more about health and wellness resources in our community. Free health screenings, including vision, blood pressure, balance, and more, are included.

APRIL 15

5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.

A Very Special Easter Egg Hunt

Children with disabilities and their siblings can hunt for Easter eggs in a fun and comfortable environment. The Easter Bunny will be available for visits, both close-up and from a distance. The event will be held at the Pelham Park Football Field. Register online on the Pelham Parks & Recreation website.

FRIDAYS 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Alternating Months
 Follow us on social media for tournament dates.
 Register Online using QR code below.

NBA2K MADDEN SUPER SMASHBROS. MARIO KART

E-SPORTS TOURNAMENT NIGHTS

Starting Friday March 14th

pelhamParksRec
 PelhamParksandRecreation

Players Age 8-13 | \$3 Per Registrant Max of 10 Participants
 Snacks & Drinks Provided





MARCH-APRIL

NEED A PICK ME UP?

TRY PICK-UP VOLLEYBALL

Drop-In Adult (16+) League

Must Pre-Register:
 Scan the QR Code or contact Will Mayhall at wmayhall@pelhamalabama.gov



Adults Age 16+ | **FREE** to Members \$10 for Non-Members
Mondays • 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m

pelhamParksRec
 PelhamParksandRecreation




DATES VARY

Youth Summer Sports Registration

It's time to register your child for summer/fall sports, including:

NHL Street Summer League
 Registration: March 31 - June 11

Youth Cheer
 Early Registration: April 1 - May 12
 Late Registration: May 13 - 19 (\$10 late fee)

Youth Tackle Football
 Early Registration: April 1 - May 20
 Late Registration: May 21 - 27 (\$10 late fee)

Youth Flag Football
 Registration (Dates TBA): May - June



9th Annual
PELHAM
PALOOZA

Local vendors

**FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES
& YOUTH SPORTS PARADE**

FOOD TRUCKS • LIVE MUSIC

**May 17th | FREE For All Ages
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**





PAWS *in the* PARK

  pelhamparkrec
PelhamParksandRecreation

Vendors, Entertainment,
Face Painters, Hula Hoop
Fun, Food Trucks & *more* 

Pelham City Park
Sunday, April 13
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Vaccinations &
Adoptions On-Site



SUMMER 2025

PELHAM CITY PARK

SPLASH PAD

OPENS MEMORIAL DAY



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STAY INFORMED



CITY WEBSITES

PELHAM 311 APP

SOCIAL MEDIA

E-NEWSLETTER