

# DOTHAN EAGLE

dothaneagle.com

*"For I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan."* — Genesis 37:17

\$1.50

**Today:** Mostly cloudy  
30% chance of rain



High 74°  
Low 61°

2 Sections, 22 Pages  
**WITNESS TARGETED**

Arrest made after victim said he was threatened over his testimony

Page 2A



## WALMART REVERSAL

Retailer says it will find roles for disabled greeters **7A**

## Williams takes part in Combine



**1B**

# Residents near landfill: Move dump away

BY LANCE GRIFFIN  
lgriffin@dothaneagle.com

Several residents who live near Dothan's city landfill fought passionately Thursday night to prevent the city from expanding it at the current site off

Burkett Road. Residents who have lived near the landfill for several years complained of significant health issues they believe are related to contaminants from it. They said odors from it affect their quality of life and told

representatives of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management that it was time another part of Dothan dealt with the city dump.

"I regret moving there," said the Rev. James Brown, pastor of New Bethel

Church of God in Christ, who said he lives less than two blocks from the landfill. "I've stopped drinking water from the faucet. I buy drinking water."

A little more than 20 residents attended the public hearing held at the Dothan

Civic Center by ADEM. The purpose of the hearing was to gather public comments as part of the city's application with ADEM to expand the landfill. The city has been attempting to expand the landfill at its current site for more than

five years, but protests from nearby residents, civil complaints, procedural errors with the application process and other hurdles have kept it from happening. Meanwhile, the city

See **DUMP**, Page 3A

# 'WE LOST A FRIEND'



JAY HARE/DOTHAN EAGLE

Kenneth Grantham (right) kisses his daughter, Reese Grantham, during a remembrance ceremony honoring his father, Coffee County Sheriff Neil Grantham, who was shot and killed in the line of duty in 1979.

## Gathering remembers slain Coffee County sheriff

BY JEREMY WISE  
jwise@dothaneagle.com

ELBA — Kenneth Grantham choked back tears as he described the events of March 1, 1979.

"I lost my daddy, and I lost

my best friend — all at the same time," he told a crowd gathered at Elba United Methodist Church.

Friends, family and law enforcement officials from the Wiregrass gathered Friday to remember former Coffee

County Sheriff C.F. "Neil" Grantham, who was killed in front of the former Coffee County Jail on Putnam Street. The church's bells rang at about 6:40 a.m., about the time Billy Joe Magwood fired the shots that felled the two-term sheriff.

Organizers originally wanted the event to occur in front of the old jail, but Friday morning's rains forced the event to the church's fellowship hall — still in view of the place where

See **SHERIFF**, Page 2A

## Ford gets 15-year sentence

Ex-educator also must register as a sex offender

From staff reports

A former Northview teaching assistant and travel softball coach convicted of federal sex crime charges has been sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Jason Ford, 42, pleaded guilty in November



to attempting to produce child pornography. He was arrested in Dothan in May after authorities said they developed information that Ford posed as an assistant softball coach for two universities to gain contact with teenage girls who played softball. According to documents associated with the case, Ford would contact the girls and tell them they were being considered for athletic scholarships, then turn the conversations to a sexual nature.

Ultimately, Ford made contact online with an undercover agent he believed to be a 15-year-old softball player. Ford was arrested

See **FORD**, Page 3A

## Out with Momo, in with Dr. Seuss

One click. Two clicks. Three clicks. Four.

How many Momo articles have you read so far? If you've read any lately, you'll know that the hyped "Momo challenge" was really a puffed-up internet hoax. Much like the over-the-top Tide pod and condom snorting experiments of yesteryear, the unconfirmed sightings of Momo, an evil-ish

character that would interrupt YouTube videos and tell your toddler to kill you, painted Facebook feeds across the nation.

As overreactive in nature, See **CHALK TALK**, Page 3A



Sable Riley  
Chalk Talk



JAY HARE/DOTHAN EAGLE

Children at Hidden Lake Elementary School hold a character parade at the school on Friday in recognition of Read Across America Week.

## Hidden Lake Elementary

# Students celebrate Read Across America

BY SABLE RILEY  
sriley@dothaneagle.com

More than 100 kindergarten through fifth-grade students at Hidden Lake Elementary School participated in a character parade Friday, culminating a week of activities celebrating Read Across America Week.

Students dressed up as wizards, the Cat in the Hat,

Little Red Riding Hood, a giant fly, Indians, pirates and other characters from their favorite books. They stomped the halls of Hidden Lake with beaming smiles after a brief rain shower kept them inside.

See **READ**, Page 2A



# Officials visit civil rights sites across state

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM — Dozens of members of Congress are making a week-long civil rights pilgrimage through Alabama, visiting spots that were instrumental in the fight for racial equality under the law decades ago.

The mostly Democratic group made its first stop Friday at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, where four black girls died

in a Ku Klux Klan bombing in 1963.

Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, who was once beaten by Alabama troopers while trying to march for voting rights, walked slowly up the church's stone steps.

Delegation members applauded a handful of civil rights veterans as they stood in the sanctuary and then watched a play depicting the lives of the bombing victims. Lewis posed for a photo with the

young cast members.

"Thank you. You made me cry. You made me laugh," Lewis told them.

Alabama Democratic Sen. Doug Jones, a former U.S. attorney who prosecuted two of the three KKK members convicted in the church bombing years later, discussed those cases — and the changes in Alabama since — after the performance.

"You can never close those chapters. We have

to understand and learn in today's world," Jones said. The internet has contributed to a new rise in hate groups, he said.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, making his 15th trip with the group, used the stop in Birmingham to say Democrats next week would bring to the floor a bill to guarantee voting rights and make other changes long favored by Democrats.

"Voting is at the heart

of our democracy," said Hoyer.

GOP Rep. Bradley Byrne, who is challenging Jones next year, called voting rights a bipartisan issue and said a larger share of Republicans than Democrats supported key civil rights legislation in the 1960s.

Later in the day, the group visited a new memorial to thousands of lynching victims in Montgomery, where then-Gov.

George C. Wallace once vowed "segregation forever."

Lawmakers walked somberly through the memorial, which features brown, coffin-sized monuments inscribed with the names of lynching victims.

The group plans on participating in weekend civil rights commemorations in Selma.

The annual civil rights trip is sponsored by the Faith and Politics Institute.



Dothan's city landfill reached capacity several years ago. City officials want to expand the landfill at its current site, but nearby residents oppose the plan.

## Dump

From Page 1A

has been forced to haul its garbage to a landfill in Campbellton at a cost of around \$1 million per year.

About 10 residents spoke at the public hearing, and some boiled over in anger toward the city for deciding to pursue an expansion at the site. One resident who lives close to the landfill said all people involved in the decision-making process deserve life in prison without the possibility of parole. Another cited a higher power than the prison system, indicating the wrath of God may be visited on them as judgment for the expansion decision.

Residents told stories of packs of coyotes roaming from the landfill to their property, of buzzards too numerous to count, and of odors so strong that they took away appetites and made it impossible to dry laundry on the clothesline.

### Regulation doubted

The law requires the regular testing of soil and water around the landfill, and previous tests have been reported within allowed limits. Residents who live near the landfill, however, do not trust the test results and accused ADEM of not caring about the neighborhood's well-being.

"Pollution is pollution, and liars are liars," said Gladys Johnson, who lives near the landfill.

The pleas from the residents ranged from what is fair to what is legal. Some residents called on ADEM to deny the permit application from the city of Dothan because the nearby neighborhoods have suffered long enough. They cited statistics that indicate 89 percent of the population within 1 mile of the landfill is black.

Others spoke about technical issues with the application and the landfill itself. Florida environmental lawyer David Ludder, who represents



A loader compacts trash at the Dothan landfill in 2013.

resents some of the residents who live close to the landfill, said the application should be denied because the Dothan City Commission has not officially approved applying for a landfill expansion permit since 2014. Since then, he said, the specifics of the application have changed. Therefore, Ludder argued ADEM can't approve a permit application since the application itself is not valid without city approval.

Further, Ludder said, ADEM's requirement that refuse at the landfill be covered with 6 inches of dirt is inadequate to prevent odors and flying debris.

"Whoever signs this permit does so knowingly and willingly," he said. "Six inches of dirt cover over the waste will not prohibit air pollution, and ADEM is tasked with preventing air pollution. To sign a permit knowing this, in my opinion, would strip that person from qualified immunity and be liable for damages."

### Plea to officials

Ludder concluded his comments by addressing city officials present at the meeting.

"Please consider moving this landfill somewhere else. It can be put somewhere else where the burden is

shared among new people instead of the same people," he said.

No one representing the city spoke at the public meeting. When the decision was made several years ago to expand the landfill at its current site, the city considered three options. The first was expanding at the current site. The second was acquiring land elsewhere and constructing a landfill. The third was hauling garbage out of the county.

The first option was considerably cheaper. Commissioners who voted to expand at the current site said at the time that it was fairest to the largest number of taxpayers.

ADEM will continue to receive public comments through 5 p.m. Thursday. Residents who did not attend the meeting and would like add comments to the record can do so by submitting them in writing to Russell A. Kelly; Chief, Permits and Services Division; Alabama Department of Environmental Management; P.O. Box 301463; Montgomery, AL 36130-1463. Comments should include the writer's name, should reference permit No. 35-06, and should have technically substantial information applicable to the proposed permit.

ADEM will rule later on the permit application.

## Chalk Talk

From Page 1A

ture as everyone is, parents learned a lesson they had probably been teaching their kids all week: Don't believe everything you see or read on the internet. Although, the scare might have done some good in having parents better monitor videos their children are watching.

"Yes. Some are red. And some are blue. Some are old. And some are new. Some are sad. And some are glad. And some are very, very bad."

Children, meanwhile, spent this week engrossed in books for Dr. Seuss week. Technology is nice and all, but books can engage kids in a way that videos cannot, even at very young ages. I remember getting picture books before I could read all that well and making up stories about what the characters were doing and thinking. Dr. Seuss books are wonderful tools for inspiring little ones' imaginations. Kids have the remarkable ability to find fascination and humor in anything.

"From there to here, from here to there, Funny things are everywhere."

### Kudos to kiddos

Rehobeth Elementary School fourth-grader Lauren McKnight was invited to the Capitol in Montgomery to be recognized by Gov. Kay Ivey for her community service as an ambassador for the Wiregrass Angel House.

Beverlye Magnet, Montana Magnet and Selma

Street schools were recognized as CLAS schools of distinction for Alabama's School Board District 2.

The CLAS Banner School program was created in 2001 to recognize schools in Alabama that showcase outstanding programs and service to students. Each school was nominated for the award by its superintendent, with 160 school programs nominated statewide.

Beverlye Magnet School was named as the 2018 CLAS Banner School.

### Medicine berry

For the first week in five weeks, the outbreak of the flu in Alabama is waning. Hurrah!

If you've gone through the season unscathed so far and are looking for prevention, I've heard black elderberry is a great supplement to ward off the virus and alleviate symptoms.

Not much is known about the mysterious medicine berry, but WebMD says, "Elderberry seems to have activity against viruses including the flu, and might reduce inflammation."

At drugstores, the medicine is called sambucol.

### Upcoming

» March 11, is a holiday for Dothan City School students.

» March 19 at 6 p.m. — Mandatory cheerleader tryout interest meeting at the Northview Convocation Center for incoming Dothan City junior and senior high school students.

Chalk Talk, an education notebook compiled by education beat reporter Sable Riley, appears each weekend in the Dothan Eagle and at DothanEagle.com.

## Mayor faults school security

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Authorities say a security failure occurred before a shooting that injured a student at an Alabama high school this week.

Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange told a news conference Thursday that guns found at Lee High

School after a shooting came in through unsecured doors.

The school has metal detectors, but that didn't matter. Strange says the system should have had better security in place.

A student was shot in the arm inside the school Tuesday. Police charged a 17-year-old student.

## Ford

From Page 1A

after he sent the agent money in exchange for a sexually explicit video.

U.S. District Judge Beth Bloom of the Southern District of Florida pronounced the sentence Friday. The case was adjudicated there because the agent portraying the teen

was located near Miami.

Ford will be on supervised release for 20 years once his prison sentence ends. He also must register as a sex offender.

Bloom granted Ford's request to serve his term at a federal facility near Dothan. Ford must also undergo substance-abuse treatment and will be restricted from possessing a computer.

Ford has the right to

appeal.

Fajardo Orshan, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, commended the investigation by FBI agents in Miami; Jacksonville, Florida; Mobile; and Columbia, South Carolina. She also thanked the Dothan Police Department for its assistance.

The case was prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney M. Catherine Koontz.

News in a click.  
dothaneagle.com

**\$500 MILLION**  
INVESTED IN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS  
**14,000 NEW JOBS.**

Better roads.  
More Jobs.  
Brighter Future.

Alliance for Alabama's Infrastructure  
OUR ROADS. OUR FUTURE. OUR RESPONSIBILITY.