

A Publication of New Hope Telephone Cooperative

The

Communicator

Vol. 8, No. 12

December 2009



***O'Neal Family
Tradition***

New Coach at DAR

***The Christmas
Donkey***

is a member-owned corporation dedicated to providing communications technology to the residents and businesses of New Hope, Grant and Owens Cross Roads.

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The Communicator

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On the cover:

For more than 30 Christmases, the O'Neals on Clarence Brockway Road have decorated with thousands of lights. Everyone is invited to drive by and see now through New Year's.

Manager's Comments

Strength in numbers

NHTC works with other telcos to protect consumers



If you are reading this, you are most likely a member of New Hope Telephone Cooperative. As such, you understand the power of working together. After all, that's what the cooperative concept is all about, people working alongside one another to accomplish good things for the group.

Your cooperative is part of a larger group that has the same mission. We are members of the Alabama-Mississippi Telecommunications Association, a group of independent telcos (cooperatives and privately held companies). I currently serve on the Board of Directors.

Through workshops and conferences, our group helps its members gain new insights and ideas that will help us better serve our customers. Perhaps the most important function of the association, however, is its focus on legislative issues.

A great example occurred earlier this year. A bill came before the Alabama senate that everyone in the telecommunications community was closely watching. Before we knew it, an amendment had been added to the bill that would have put pressure on providers to substantially increase

rates in their rural exchanges. This was not the intention of the bill, but it would have been the outcome nonetheless.

Our association's legislative committee went to work in the Alabama senate, trying to convince lawmakers to oppose the amendment — amid fierce opposition from big companies with high-paid lobbyists. In the end, Sen. Lowell Barron (Rules Committee Chairman who serves a portion of Madison County), intervened on the Senate floor, promising to fight the bill unless language was inserted that would protect rural rates. An agreement was quickly reached to protect the people of Alabama from rate hikes.

As you can see, there is strength in numbers. In fact, our association is growing in strength. At the annual convention in October, independent telcos from the state of Florida were accepted into the group. Our association will be changing its name and working even harder to do what is best for consumers in the south-east portion of the country.

Speaking of strength in numbers, I hope you find plenty of family and friends to enjoy this holiday season with. Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!▲

Tom Wing

General Manager,
New Hope Telephone Cooperative

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

To allow our employees time with their families,
our office will be closed:
December 24 & 25 for Christmas
and January 1 for New Year's Day



FIBER UPDATE

A look at NHTC's program to build a Fiber Optic network in our communities

The unmatched bandwidth of fiber

By investing in optical fiber technology, New Hope Telephone Cooperative is building the network of the future. That's important, because no one knows for certain what the bandwidth needs of tomorrow will be.

Compare the way you use the Internet today to five years ago. Browsing a few Web pages and checking email were the main activities not too long ago. Today, users watch streaming video, upload their own videos, purchase and download songs and movies, and connect and play video games with people across the country.

All these activities require bandwidth. And nothing matches the bandwidth of optical fiber. Think of the network as a water hose. The current network is a garden hose. The coming fiber network will be a fire hose!

Consider this: *one bundle of fiber cable not much thicker than a pencil could carry all of the world's communications traffic at any given time.*

With the bandwidth demands of homeowners and business owners changing so quickly, fiber will prepare NHTC to meet the needs of this region well into the future.

Support our local Christmas Charities

There is still time to help families throughout our community that are struggling this holiday season.

Please consider donating a gift for an area child in need, food for the hungry or even a monetary donation to an area Christmas charity.

NHTC helps support three local charities. The WAFF Can-a-Thon helps stock area food banks, the Christmas Share Program provides Christmas gifts to children in the New Hope and Owens Cross Roads area and the Christmas Coalition gives Christmas gifts to boys and girls in Marshall County.

Remember, your donations help families in our very own community.



Merry Christmas

*With appreciation and gratitude
we extend our best wishes for a
wonderful Christmas season
and a prosperous New Year*



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A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Nestor the Donkey

Christmas is a season of memories. Everyone has a special Christmas in their past that holds great meaning for them. Some children remember the Christmas they received a prized toy. For new parents, it might be their baby's first Christmas. For Grant couple **John and Laura Hairrell**, Christmas 2008 brought a memory they will never forget.

Friends of the Hairrell's gave them two donkeys earlier that year, Elvis and Emily. But one morning, less than a week before Christmas, John spotted a third donkey in the barn.

Laura was at work at Peoples State Bank when John made the discovery. "John called me at work and asked 'How many donkeys do we have?'" recalls Laura. When she answered that they had two, John quickly corrected her. "No. We have three donkeys. Emily had a baby!" he informed his wife. No

one knew Emily was expecting. When Laura saw the newborn

so the name was fitting."

In the animated television special,

Nestor's long ears made him an outcast. No other donkeys liked him, and eventually his owner cast him out in the cold to freeze. His mother died trying to save him, leaving him all alone in the world. Later, a young couple on their way to take part in a census find the little donkey. They used him to carry an expecting Mary to a stable in Bethlehem where she delivered a child. In the end, the little donkey is revered as a hero and loved by all.

Sadly, the Hairrell's little Nestor became orphaned just like his namesake. On

Christmas Day 2008, Emily became very ill. "And just like in the story, Nestor's mother died," Laura adds.

Nestor wasn't even a week old at the time. "She was the size of a little lamb and had curly black hair," recalls Laura.

The newborn donkey would need



Family and friends of John and Laura Hairrell of Grant visit the couple often to play with their donkey, Nestor. She was named after the animated TV classic, *Nestor, the long-eared Christmas donkey*.

donkey she immediately knew what it would be named. She insisted on the name Nestor. "I knew it was a girl, but one of my all-time favorite Christmas stories is *Nestor, The Long-eared Christmas Donkey*," explains Laura. "This was our little Christmas miracle,

constant care in order to survive. Family and friends gathered bottles and a supplemental animal formula to feed Nestor. Taking care of her would become a round-the-clock job.

Because of Laura's work schedule, primary care for the donkey would become John's responsibility. "He fed her four times every day," says Laura. "He would get up before daylight for her first feeding, feed her at lunch and dinner every day, and feed her again at ten o'clock every evening."

All the care and attention given to Nestor helped her thrive. She also became very attached to John.

"Every time John drove up the road, Nestor would begin

braying," laughs Laura. "She would run along the fence to meet him."

The Hairrells were just as attached to Nestor. Laura would cuddle and play with Nestor while she was still tiny. She would also dress up their little donkey with bows or a bonnet.

"We aren't the only ones attached to her," says Laura. The entire community has become quite taken with the donkey. "Every kid in the neighborhood loves our Nestor," says Laura. "We love her, too. She's our little Christmas miracle." ▲

Editor's note: Special thanks to Jorene Martin. She contacted The Communicator with the story of this special donkey and provided some of the photos used.



Top left: John Hairrell gives Nestor a hug. Top right: Nestor wears a hat prepared by Laura. Bottom left: A very young Nestor. Bottom right: John looks on as a young friend helps with one of Nestor's many bottle feedings.

Merry Christmas
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A Family Christmas Tradition

Although the weather is cold, the holiday season is able to bring a special warmth to our hearts. Christmas often inspires us to give of ourselves and spread holiday cheer, which is exactly what **Bobby O'Neal** has been doing for the past 33 years with his spectacular yard display.

With an estimated 5,000 lights and decorations, O'Neal's yard is transformed each Christmas into a Winter Wonderland.

O'Neal says Christmas lights have always been a part of his Christmas celebration, but his collection of lights has multiplied since he began decorating he and his wife's own home. "We started out with only a few decorations," says O'Neal. "Then, I began to add something new every year."

Along with his large collection of store-bought decor, O'Neal has many

wooden pieces he created himself. These include lighted signs, a nativity scene and an American flag that boasts roughly 600 light bulbs. "I've done some woodworking in the past," explains O'Neal. "I just took those skills and started making decorations."

"I get many of my ideas from store displays and other decorations I see," he adds.

O'Neal's impressive display requires a lot of hard work. "I take off of work the first or second week in November and spend the entire week putting up the



221 Clarence Brockway Road in New Hope is transformed into a Winter Wonderland each Christmas season thanks to Bobby and Debbie O'Neal. The couple invite everyone to come out and enjoy the light displays through New Year's Day.

decorations,” he says.

O’Neal does not mind all the work involved in bringing his Christmas project to life. “I don’t see it as work,” he explains. “I enjoy it. I feel like a kid again.”

For O’Neal, the rewards of his yard display are well worth the cost. “I love to see the thrill and joy in kids’ faces when they come to see the lights,” he says.

He also feels a spiritual motivation to decorate every year. “I think the Lord has inspired me to do this,” says O’Neal. “He guides me to do the work.”

Though he handles most of the outdoors decor, both O’Neal and his wife of 34 years, **Deborah O’Neal**, have a flare for holiday decorating. “She handles the inside of the house,” he explains. “She enjoys setting up her Christmas villages.”

The O’Neals invite everyone to come and enjoy their display. “It brings me joy to see other people enjoying my work,” says O’Neal. “Deborah and I both like to sit outside and watch people look around.”

When the season is over, the difficult task of taking down the countless lights and decorations begins. “It takes two days to put everything back in storage,” he says. “After Christmas, my shed is packed to the ceiling with decorations until next year.”

After more than 30 years of extreme Christmas decorating, O’Neal does not plan on stopping any time soon. “As long as I can keep going, I will continue to put up my decorations,” he says. “After that, I hope my three godchildren will take over.”

Christmas may be the O’Neals’ specialty, but it is not the only holiday they get excited about. “Our family hosts a huge Easter egg hunt every year,” says O’Neal. “We invite everyone to come. Last year we had about one hundred people hunting. We hid about 2,000 eggs that my wife and friends filled with candy and prizes.”

The holidays are a special time for O’Neal because it allows him to give a bit of happiness to others. “Whether it is Christmas or Easter, I really just love to see the kids smile and the families in the community having a good time. We are all like one big family, really,” he says.

The O’Neals reside in New Hope, where Bobby O’Neal was born and raised. He is a 1971 graduate of New Hope High School, where he played the drums in the marching band.

“I still enjoy playing,” he says. O’Neal is a member of the Crossfire Classics, a classic country and rock band. “We like to play the old stuff,” he laughs. “Everyone loves old favorites like The Twist.”

He has been an employee at Redstone Arsenal for 28 years, working in the produce department of the commissary. ▲



Bobby O’Neal works on one of the wooden displays in his yard. O’Neal says he receives inspiration for the pieces he has designed from store displays and other light displays he has seen over the years.

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PATRIOTS HAVE NEW BASKETBALL COACH

A new face will be appearing on the Patriots' sidelines this basketball season. Daniel Bell is bringing experience and a passion for the game to his position as DAR's new head basketball coach.

Bell, a Huntsville native, has been involved with basketball since his days as a student at Grissom High School. After he graduated in 1973, Bell joined the basketball team at Walker Junior College, where he stayed for two years. He then played at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

After graduating in 1978, Bell joined Athletes in Action, an organization out of Vancouver, British Columbia, that uses basketball as a medium to spread the Christian faith. "Our team traveled all around the world playing different college and professional teams," says Bell. "We played in Barcelona, Versailles, and in other places across Europe." The team played

70 to 80 games a year and incorporated a Christian message into the halftime of each game.

After a two-year stint with Athletes in Action, Bell was called back to Walker Junior College — but this time to coach. The school's former coach had suffered a heart attack and was unable to continue coaching. He wanted Bell to lead his team. Under Bell's direction, the team earned a record of 29-4 and was ranked third in the nation.

His successful season at Walker led to a new position as assistant coach at Marshall University in West Virginia from 1983 until 1987. The team competed in the NCAA tournament three of the four years he spent there.

Bell was then hired as associate head coach at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, where he spent one year before returning to Northwestern State as head coach.

During his six years there, the team was the leading scoring team in the nation for two seasons and led the nation in three-pointers made for one season.

In 1994, Bell decided to try his hand at coaching high school basketball. He took a position as head coach at Episcopal High School, a private school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After coaching there for two seasons, Bell felt it was time to return to his roots.

Offered a coaching position at both Homewood High School and Bob Jones High School, Bell chose to return to his hometown of Huntsville to coach at Bob Jones. Before his arrival, the team had only experienced two winning seasons in the past 25 years. Bell set out to change that.

Over the next ten years, the team had seven winning seasons in a row, with 16 players signing to college teams. The team also played in the 6A

state championship game. "The boys played in front of the biggest crowd in the history of high school basketball at the time," he says. "There were 16,000 people at that game. It's something you never forget."

Following a decade at Bob Jones, Bell took an assistant coaching position at Hazel Green High School for two years. The team, which had never had a winning season, won 25 and 26 games during his two years there.

After spending the 2006 and 2007 seasons as assistant coach, Bell felt he needed to take the reigns once again. "I knew I wanted to head coach," he

recalls. Bell was hired at Bellgreen High School in Russellville. "I was not only the head coach, I coached every basketball team there!" he laughs.

Now, Bell is beginning a new chapter of his eventful life, as the head coach of the DAR Patriots.

"I'm excited about this season," he says. "They are young, but

they are an athletic and eager group of guys."

Bell has a very proactive coaching style that has served him well during his career. "I'm an up-tempo guy on offense and defense," he states. "I want my guys to play at the same level, no matter the score or circumstances. If you're working hard, winning and losing will take care of itself."

He also wants to show the team's versatility and keep the op-

ponents on their toes. "We will be running a variety of different offenses and defenses," Bell says. "I want to keep the other team wondering.

"I don't

just want to be a good 4A team," he adds. "I want to be a good basketball team."

Bell is enthusiastic about his future with the Patriots. "I hope this is a place I can coach at for a while," he says. "I like the people here."

Bell lives in Meridianville with his family. His wife, Diana, teaches at the University of Alabama in

Huntsville. "My wife is a smart girl, but she has no taste in men," jokes Bell.

Bell has three children. Zachary, 22, serves as a meteorologist in the U.S. Navy. Keegan, 21, is a Sophomore at UTC, and Bailee, 14, is a Freshman at DAR.▲

"I don't just want to be a good 4A team, I want to be a good basketball team."

Coach Daniel Bell

DAR Patriots 2009-10 Schedule

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	9B	JVG	JVB	VG	VB
12/1	SECTION	H			4:30	5:45	7:15
12/4	PLAINVIEW	H	5:45	4:30	4:30	5:45	7:15
12/8	SCOTTSBORO	H		4:30	4:30	5:45	7:15
12/11	NO JACKSON	A	3:30	4:30	5:30	6:30	8:00
12/15	GUNTERSVILLE	A	5:30	4:30	4:00	6:00	7:30
12/18	DOUGLAS	H	5:45	4:30	4:30	5:45	7:15
1/4	SECTION	A			5:30	6:30	8:00
1/5	NO JACKSON	H	5:45	4:30	4:30	5:45	7:15
1/8	GUNTERSVILLE	H	5:45	4:30	4:30	5:45	7:15
1/11	PLAINVIEW	A	5:00	4:00	4:30	6:00	7:30
1/12	BRINDLEE MT	A	3:30	4:30	5:15	6:00	8:00
1/15	SCOTTSBORO	A	4:00	4:30	5:15	6:00	7:30
1/26	BOAZ	H			4:30	5:45	7:15
1/29	MADISON CO	A		3:30	4:45	6:00	7:30

2009-10 Tournament Schedule

SCOTTSBORO TOURNEY

12/21 - 12/23 IN SCOTTSBORO
VARSITY BOYS
TIME: TO BE ANNOUNCED

FIRST BANK OF THE SOUTH TOURNEY

12/21 - 12/22 AT DAR
VARSITY GIRLS
TIME: TO BE ANNOUNCED

MARSHALL COUNTY TOURNEY

1/16 - 1/23
LOCATION AND TIME: TO BE ANNOUNCED

BOYS COACHES: DAN BELL AND MATT NELSON
GIRLS COACHES: JIMMY JONES AND BRANDON EDWARDS

Impacting children is Craig's life work

Sometimes life is not a fairy tale. When things do not happen the way we imagined, and we are faced with adversity or hardship, our fate is often determined by the way we react during those difficult times — by our determination and will to succeed, despite the odds.

1982 New Hope High School graduate Debbie Craig is a portrait of determination and strong will.

As a junior at New Hope High School in 1981, she and grade-school sweetheart, Audie Craig, decided to marry. The next year, as high school seniors, the couple had a baby boy and named him Joey.

Twenty-eight years later, Debbie and Audie are happily married. Their baby boy, Joey, is now grown with a three-year old son of his own, Jackson.

Debbie says she enjoyed attending NHHS. Some of her best memories are from her times spent as a member of the NHHS band. She played clarinet in the concert band during the winter, and was a member of the rifle corps in the marching band during the fall. Craig was also an active member of Students for Christ while in high school.

"New Hope High School is not just a school," Craig says. "It is a part of the community. There is no separation. We are all one group of people who lean on and support and encourage each other."

Craig says that at times things were difficult in high school, but she was determined to graduate, family in tow.

"It was tough," Debbie says, "but I could not allow myself to quit. I always made good grades in school and I didn't want to blow it right at the end."

Debbie reached her goal, graduating on time in the Top Ten of her 1982 senior class.

Most teen mothers do not fare as well as Craig. Only 40 percent graduate from high school. And 60 percent of all teen marriages end in divorce within five years. Forty percent of teen mothers will

go off in their heads when they learn new things," Craig adds. "And where else can you work, where you get hugs and 'I love you's' every day? It is wonderful."

Craig says she would not be where she is today without her husband.

"He gave me the confidence to succeed — to say 'you can do it,'" Debbie explains. "Without Audie's support, I would have never made it. We started out as friends in the eighth grade and he remains my best friend today."

Along the way Debbie and Audie had two more children: Steven, 24, and Leanna, a sophomore at NHHS.

"My family is the most important thing in my life," Craig says. "Friends may come and go, but family is forever."

The Craig's oldest son, Joey, is married to Brandy Craig, and son Steven is married to Jessica Craig.

"Jessica and Brandy are not my daughters-in-law, they are my daughters and I love them dearly," Craig says.

Sadly the stories of many families who begin as teens do not end as happily as the Craig's. Many do not have the resources required to support a family, or the ability to make a marriage work amidst such hardship.

And then there are people like Debbie Craig — those who stand tall; who stare boldly into the face of adversity and say, "I will not lose faith. I can do it." People like Craig do not change their dreams. They simply change the route by which those dreams are reached. Her story can serve as inspiration for all who face difficult decisions and tough times. She has truly defied the odds. ▲



Debbie Craig reads a story to children at her child care center, Jumping Jacks Preschool. Craig, a 1982 graduate of NHHS, is December's Alumni of the Month.

not be in a relationship by the time their child is born. Seventy percent will receive long-term financial assistance after the birth of their child. And sadly, more than forty percent will spend the rest of their lives living in abject poverty.

Proving once again that statistics do not control one's fate, Craig has continued to succeed in the professional world, just as she did as a student at NHHS.

Today she owns a successful business, Jumping Jacks Preschool, in Hampton Cove.

"I am very happy," Craig says. "I truly believe that I have been put on this earth to care for children. They teach me more than I teach them. They're honest. They're open. They tell it like it is."

"I just love to see that little light bulb

Uniting for a Cure

South Hampton Nursing and Rehabilitation Center teamed up with AseraCare Hospice this October to raise money for cancer research by selling and purchasing breast cancer awareness shirts.

AseraCare coordinates fundraisers all year long in preparation for the American Cancer Society's Annual Relay for Life in May. "We chose to sell the shirts in honor of breast cancer awareness month," says AseraCare Volunteer Coordinator, Brandy Tapscott.

When AseraCare volunteers and staff began wearing and selling their shirts, the employees of South Hampton Nursing Home decided they wanted to get involved.

Sheila Staggs, Human Resource Manager at South Hampton, has had a large role in connecting the two



organizations for the fundraiser. "It is a great cause," says Staggs, but she has more personal reasons for her involvement. Staggs is a 10-year survivor of breast cancer and a 9-year survivor of

cervical cancer.

More than 50 South Hampton staff members purchased shirts, along with several patients. All proceeds will be donated to cancer research.

The staff at Peoples State Bank wishes you & your family a joyful holiday season

Need extra funds for those holiday expenses? While in Grant, stop by and enjoy a cup of coffee with us! Talk to one of our friendly loan officers about a Christmas loan for the 2009 holiday season. Start saving now for next year — open a Christmas Club account today! You earn interest on your account throughout the year, plus the accounts are FDIC insured. Payments are usually mailed in November just before the holidays.



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Legislative Update

By Rep. Butch Taylor

Alabama House of Representatives, Dist. 22



Christmas is a time to think about the good things in our lives and reflect on the new year ahead. As 2009 draws to a close, we are certainly

thankful for our family, friends and health. And in this economy, no matter what situation you may find yourself in, it is not difficult to find someone else who is suffering more.

Alabama's lawmakers have much to be concerned about as we get ready for our budget hearings. We will have fewer dollars to do the work of the people. As a member of the committee that writes the education budget (and as a former teacher, coach and school board member), I am especially worried about the cuts we may have to make in order to balance the budget.

But I also know that, while Alabamians expect reasonable state services, you have told lawmakers time and again that you want to keep taxes low. A recent national report revealed that citizens of this state have the lowest state and local tax burden in the U.S. That is good news.

I'm also pleased that, even in this economy and with a low tax structure, we are still able to take care of local needs. Within the coming weeks I will be presenting community grants to our local fire departments to help them in their great work of protecting our communities.

With so many parades and other holiday events, I'm sure I'll see you somewhere in the community over the next few weeks. If not, I wish you and your family a very safe and happy Christmas — and a blessed and prosperous New Year to us all.▲



Welcome Center at Cathedral Caverns State Park in Grant

Cathedral Caverns part of 70-year celebration of state park system

Alabama State Parks celebrated their 70th year by hosting seven birthday parties at seven state parks in seven weeks.

The celebration began on October 9, 2009 at Cathedral Caverns State Park in Grant.

"We were chosen to kick-off the celebration because Cathedral Caverns is the youngest state park in Alabama," explains Park Manager Lamar Pendergrass. "We celebrated with birthday cake and ice cream and a special tour of the cave."

Cathedral Caverns became a part of the state park system in 1987. Extensive renovations kept the park closed to the public until 2000.

Originally known as the Bat Cave, Jay Gurley purchased it in 1955. Gurley changed the name to Cathedral Caverns after his wife remarked that a large room in the back full of stalactites and stalagmites looked like a cathedral.

The cavern boasts the world's largest

stalagmite, Goliath, and the world's largest cave opening. There is also a 'frozen' waterfall, shark's teeth, a caveman and more.

Other parks chosen for the seven park celebration were: Lakepoint Resort because it is the most newly renovated park; Wind Creek, the state's largest modern campground; Oak Mountain, the largest state park; Joe Wheeler, the historic park named after a Confederate general; DeSoto, better known as the "Home to Mother Nature;" Cheaha, which boasts Alabama's highest point; and Lake Guntersville, the "Crown Jewel" of Alabama State Parks.▲

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Community Events

Angel Food Ministry

Help cut grocery costs by participating in Angel Food ministry. A family of four can get about a week's worth of grocery items for \$25. Go to www.newhopeunitedmethodistchurch.org for more information on the program, dates, times, and menu.

December 4

Grant Chamber of Commerce Early Bird Breakfast

Beginning at 7:30 a.m. at Mimi's Country Tea Room. Sponsored by Linda Burlbough.

December 5

Grant Christmas Parade

The parade starts at 1:00 p.m. beginning at DAR and finishing at the old

VFW building in Grant off Main Street. Everyone is invited – build your own float.

Pancake Breakfast with Santa

From 7 to 10:30 a.m. at Owens Cross Roads School Cafeteria. \$5 per ticket. Sponsored by OCR PTO.

December 12

New Hope Christmas Parade

Parade begins at 1 p.m.

December 20

Christmas Program

Galilee Baptist presents *Once Upon a Holy Night* at 6 p.m. with refreshments following the program.

New Hope High School Teacher Spotlight



Margaret Duckett is the NHHS Spotlight Teacher of the Month for Dec. Duckett teaches 9 - 12th grade math.

"This is a good community with good kids," Duckett says. "I love teaching — watching the kids learn and catch on. My goal is to prepare them for whatever they decide to do when they leave here; college, tech school, work. My job is to get them ready."

She has been a teacher at NHHS since 1981. Before teaching at NHHS, Duckett taught in the Huntsville City School system for five years.

Duckett graduated from Butler High School in 1966. She attended Auburn University where she earned

a B.S. in Math in 1970.

"I believe teaching is the second most important job in the world," Duckett says. "The first is parenting."

Margaret is married to Ernie Duckett. Their son Carl Duckett, and wife Kasi have a 2 1/2-year-old daughter named Claire.

PASTOR'S NOTES



BY LARRY BISHOP, PASTOR
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
NEW HOPE

The year is just about over! Why haven't we accomplished our objectives? We have the desire, but desire alone is not enough. Stop and think about yourself.

When you fail you desire to succeed. When you're late, you usually have the desire to be on time. When you have put something off, you live with the desire to get it done.

Solomon wrote "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16: 1-3). Solomon admits that "orderly thinking" is unique to man, but it is not impossible. We are built with the ability to think and plan things out. This is the internal equipment that our Heavenly Father gives us.

So if we have the ability to think and plan, the inner desire to see it done, and the powerful will of God, then why don't we reach our goals? Consider three possible answers:

- Goals are unrealistic.
- Contradiction to God's will.
- Failed to get started (procrastination).

Take a few minutes and inventory your life. Were you able to lose that extra weight? Were you able to stop that needless habit? Did you clean out that closet? Have you found a place to worship?

The year is just about over! It is never too late to get started.

See you in church Sunday!



From the Community

SUGAR AND SPICE NUTS

(Lou Ann Poole)

- 2 cups pecan halves
- 1 egg white, unbeaten
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- Dash of salt

Pour unbeaten egg white over pecans in large mixing bowl. Mix well with spoon until all halves are coated. Mix sugar, cinnamon and salt, then sprinkle over mixture. Mix well again. Pour onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in preheated 300° oven for 30 minutes.

PECAN PIE BARS

(Teresa Ballard)

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine, cut up
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2-1/2 cups finely chopped pecans
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Combine flour, sugar and salt in large bowl; cut in 3/4 cup butter thoroughly with a pastry blender until mixture re-

sembles very fine crumbs. Press mixture evenly into a greased 13" x 9" pan using a piece of plastic wrap to press crumb mixture firmly into pan. Bake at 350° for 17 to 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Meanwhile, combine brown sugar, corn syrup and 1/2 cup butter in a saucepan. Bring to boil over medium heat, stirring gently. Remove from heat. Stir one-fourth of hot mixture into beaten eggs, then add to remaining hot mixture. Stir in pecans and vanilla. Pour filling over crust. Bake at 350° for about 35 minutes or until set. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Cut into bars.

WASSAIL

(Lou Ann Poole)

- 2 quarts apple juice
- 2 (32 oz.) cans pineapple juice
- 2 cups orange juice
- 3 Tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 2 tsp. cloves

Combine all ingredients and heat to a simmer. Ready to serve with your favorite dessert.

CHRISTMAS MORNING BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

(Syble Whitaker)

- 1 lb. mild sausage
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 2 slices bread, cut into cubes (crust too)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dry mustard

Fry sausage and drain grease. Place bread and sausage into a 10" x 13" baking dish. Blend all other ingredients. Pour over

sausage and bread cubes. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes. May be prepared and refrigerated uncooked overnight.

SUE'S CHEESE BALL

(Sue Whitaker)

- 2 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese
- 1/4 cup or 5 oz. can crushed pineapple, finely crushed
- 1/4 cup bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups pecans, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. seasoned salt, or more for taste

Whip cream cheese with fork until creamy. Put in all ingredients except 1 cup pecans. Mix and form ball, then roll in remaining pecans. Wrap in aluminum foil and refrigerate overnight. This step is important so the pepper and onion will not taste too strong.

The New Hope Historical Association will be participating in the Alabama Celebration of Small Towns and Downtowns in 2010. In conjunction with this celebration, NHHA will publish a cookbook as the organization's annual project.

Submit recipes for your favorite dish, family favorite, your grandmother's or aunt's time-honored dishes, or any recipe you want to share. All entries must be received by January 31, 2010. Recipes may be mailed to NHHA, PO Box 50, New Hope, AL 35760. Be sure to include your name and phone number on each recipe. This cookbook will be available in the spring of 2010 and you may indicate on your recipe if you would like to reserve a copy. Some recipes may be featured in The Communicator.

Snow Day



Mason Zayne Meadows.
Son of Jimmy & Donna
Meadows.

Izzy and Donnie
Medlen in
Gatlinburg, TN.



Kaylee
Yarbrough,
granddaughter of
Leslie Yarbrough.

In loving memory
of Dovie Martin.
Sent in by Leslie
Yarbrough.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS



Carlee & Caroline Largen enjoy a
snowy day. Photo submitted by
their mother, Amy Largen of New
Hope.

✝ Inspiration Corner

Know the Christmas story, do you? Did Mary walk, ride a donkey, or ride in a cart pulled by a donkey to get to Bethlehem? Were there 2, 5, or 7 "wise men"? How long after Jesus was born did the wise men arrive at the manger: the same night, the next day, or the following week? Give up? Fact is, we don't know how Mary traveled, how many wise men there were, or when they arrived. We do know that, besides walking, riding a donkey was one of the most common forms of transportation. After Teresa went into labor following a hay ride some twenty-two years ago, I can certainly see how riding a donkey, or in a wagon, could have helped Mary along. We know three gifts were given to Jesus by the wise men, but we have no record of their number. We know it

took days for the wise men to get there, so if the Christmas star appeared when Jesus was born, they probably missed the excitement.

I share this, not to cause a stir, but to create a hunger for truth. Some of us miss church because, like the Christmas story, we think we know truth, when in fact we only know what we have heard from someone else. To learn the real truth about Christmas and church, and to receive the Gift that God has for you, attend a church near you this Christmas season, and may Your Christmas be the greatest ever.



Michael Carpenter, Pastor
New Hope United Methodist
Church & Oak Bowery
United Methodist Church

"My Funny Valentine" is the photo theme for February. Send pictures matching the photo theme to: NHTC • Attn.: Communicator Photos • P.O. Box 452 • New Hope, Alabama 35760. You may prefer to e-mail your photo to communicator@nehp.net. Follow these guidelines for publication: (1) Photos must match theme. (2) **Photos must be high resolution.** The resolution offered by some printers is not high enough for publication. (3) Do not write on the back of photo. Include names of persons in photo, as well as, photographer, address and phone number on paper taped to back. (4) Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like your photo returned. (5) **The Deadline for February is December 20th.**

By submitting your photos: (1) you attest that you are the creator and owner of the photos, (2) you give New Hope Telephone permission to publish your material in *The Communicator*, (3) you agree to offer said photos without the expectation of payment from New Hope Telephone, and (4) you understand that photos are selected for publication in *The Communicator* at the sole discretion of New Hope Telephone, and that submission of your photo does not guarantee your photo will appear in the magazine.

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