

# THE ALABAMA LION

The Alabama Lion is published for Alabama Lions Sight Conservation Association, Inc. 700 S. 18th Street Birmingham, AL 35233

*A newsletter for members of Alabama Lions Clubs*

*August 2019*

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**From the Lion's Den of Council Chair Lion Linda A. Starr 2019-2020**

#### Greetings Lions of Alabama!

It is indeed an honor for me to be able to serve the more than 3000 Lions in 129 communities in our great state of Alabama together with our 2019-20 District Governors as your MD Council Chair.

We are all a part of Multiple District 34 Alabama Lions. Each district is a sub part of Alabama Lions. We are looking to attract new members to allow us to accomplish more service and to retain the over 3000 that we have enrolled. Let's all of us do our part, working with our DG Teams to accomplish the membership, service and leadership goals they have established for us this year. Let's hop on the Lions train and support our districts 100 percent this year. Can I get a Roarrrrr Lions?

I was born and raised in Chambers County Alabama. I attended elementary and junior high at Edward Bell School in Camp Hill, Alabama, and completed high school at Lafayette High School in Lafayette, Alabama. From there, I attended and graduated from Alabama A. & M. University, Normal, AL with a Bachelor of Science (1977) and a Master of Education (1991) in Home Economics Education (now Family Consumer Sciences) with honors and a Minor in Early Childhood Education.

I live in the Howell's Crossroads Community, Centre, Alabama, with my husband, Lanny Starr, Sr who is a Lion. and my granddaughter, Shaliyah Glass. As a blended family, my husband and I have five children and eight grands. We also have a chosen 3-year-old great grandson that has adopted our granddaughter as his God mother.

I attend St. Mark United Methodist Church where I serve as Sunday School Secretary and Church Financial Secretary. I am retired after working 32 years with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Auburn University) in Cherokee County as County Extension



Coordinator. During my career with the Extension, I worked with the 4-H youth program and adult programs in the areas of Family and Consumer Sciences.

I am elated to be involved as a Lion for 8 years in the Centre Lions Club (in which I am a Melvin Jones Fellow, have served as a Director, club 2nd and 1st Vice President, President, Leo Club Advisor (present), and numerous committee chairs), District Cabinet Secretary, 2nd and 1st Vice District Governor and recently

District Governor 34 A (2018-19), 4-H Entrepreneurship Community Club Leader (in which I organized after retiring), Cherokee County 4-H club Volunteer Leader, Chamber of Commerce activities, Gideon's Auxiliary President, Cherokee County Extended Families for Kids Volunteer Coordinator, School Advisory committee, Group Leader for Travel Group Soar/Goodyear Retirees, Gadsden State Recruitment and Selection Committee, Cherokee Youth Leadership Advisory Board, County Extension Advisory Board, Cherokee County 4-H Advisory Board, Cherokee

County Museum Board, and Family Resource Center Board. I am a substitute teacher in the Cherokee County School system and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Lambda Eta Omega Chapter in Gadsden, Alabama.

Since retiring, I enjoy being at home working on my computer, traveling with family and friends, and being involved with my Lions clubs and the many other volunteer activities, helping and serving others.

I look forward to working with each of you and I want you to know that I appreciate all you do for your communities, your clubs, your districts, and our great MD 34 Lions of Alabama. WE SERVE!



Council Chair 2019-20 Lion Linda A. Starr, Centre Lions Club holding on to the Lion's tail.



Lions representing MD34 in International Lions parade in Milan, Italy. From left, are, DG 34C Lion Yvonne Burroughs, DG 34B Lion Bubba Bingham, CC Lion Linda A. Starr, Lion Alexandria Conniff, Lion Cynthia Brunson, Lion Lanny Starr, Lion Douglas Delisle, Lion Christine Jernigan, and Lion Charles Jernigan. Not shown on this picture but part of Alabama delegation: PIP Lion Frank Moore, PID Lion Jerome Thompson, Lion John Brunson, Lion Mark Pierson, DG Lion Larry & Donna Bagley.

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# VISIONS

Barry Elliott



## ALS Executive Director's Report

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started." Mark Twain

The Lions are under way as they get started on the Lions year 2019-2020. We congratulate each district governor of MD34 as they began their exciting year and anticipate a great year of service. Alabama Lions Sight is making plans to conduct vision screenings of 6th, 8th, and 10th grades in the public schools in Birmingham City, Walker County and Jasper City, Dallas County and possibly Butler county in Alabama. Community funding has enabled ALS to already begin screening in Birmingham City Schools. The Lions are providing a great service for the children in these county and city schools. Hopefully, as we continue our quest to be included in the state funding, we will be able to expand across Alabama to include every public school. Lions, if you can arrange for me to speak to your representative or senator, please let me know.

Later today, I have the privilege to present to a committee at the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors in Washington D.C. The Lions Mobile Eye Clinic is completing a six-month collaboration project with the Alabama Department of Public Health. The goal was to bring vision care to the department of public health in rural Alabama. Our partnership included four counties: Perry, Lowndes, Hale and Pickens. The Mobile Eye Clinic (MEC) visited each county once a month for six months. The ADPH loaned ALS a fundus camera to take images of the eye to manage diabetic retinopathy. Because of this partnership with the ADPH this year, these same counties saw an increase of 62%



The Selma Lions Club welcomed Barry Elliott as its guest on June 11. He installed our officers and gave us an update on the Lions Sight Program. We are always pleased to have him visit. Mr. Elliott was presented a check for \$1,000 for Alabama Lions Sight.

patient encounters over the same time period of last year. The MEC saw 188 patients and collected 62 fundus images and are managing their diabetic condition along with 13 people with glaucoma. There were 17 patients referred for cataract surgery. The Lions are preserving the sight of many people in Alabama!

It has been a pleasure to complete my first year as director of Alabama Lions Sight. Each day brings new opportunities to make a difference in the preservation of sight. Recently I was speaking with Dr. Daum and I asked how the day

went. He made the statement that they didn't see as many patients that day as we would prefer but two of the patients were people who had a glaucoma pressure that read over 30. That meant that on this day, because of Lions, we saved the sight of two people, which if it had gone undetected, they would have lost their sight.

Early detection and preservation of sight along with access to where it is sparse or nonexistent is what the Lions are providing for the underprivileged and underserved residents of Alabama. Thank you for your service!

### JOB OPENING Vision Screener needed for District C

If interested please contact  
Lion Paula Gardner  
at 205-325-8519 or paula@alsca.org or Executive Director Barry Elliott at 205- 296-5786 or barrymiell@yahoo.com.

### PATIENTS SEEN IN THE LIONS EYE CLINIC

- 4,625 patients seen year-to-date
- 300 were seen in the month of May
- 300 were seen in the month of June



Fort Payne Lions Club President Mike McElhaney presented check to ALS Director Barry.





# DISTRICT 34-A

DG  
Larry  
Bagley



## In and Around the District

### Hello District 34-A Lions,

I am so excited to start our year as your District Governor and I will do my best to serve you. We have an exciting year ahead of us with a lot of opportunities. We will be moving forward with the many tasks of the North American Membership Initiative (NAMI). You may not be familiar with the term NAMI, but you will hear it frequently in the coming months and learn how exciting and important it is to our district. District 34A was selected as one of nine districts in the United States and Canada to participate in the pilot program, which is an honor for our District and for each of you. This program will be developed by District 34A and the other selected districts and will serve as a guide for us to rebuild clubs, add new members, develop new and exciting services and develop a training program that will be interesting, informative and top rate. Ask me what you can do to help make NAMI a success. If you already have suggestions, please send them to me.

Thus far, our District has completed two successful summits, the Ground Hog Summit in February and the Leadership Summit in June and both were well attended. Thank you to all who played a part in making the summits successful and to those who attended. I would also like to commend all of you who have stepped up to be Region and Zone chairs. Zone sessions are underway and have been going well. I will be calling on the chairs frequently to be the 'Lion Express' (voices of the District) to deliver our message to all our Lions. Also, I would like to say a big thank you to our club leaders. You are at ground zero, where the action happens.

Kudos to all who participated with PCC Ron Seybold in building the wheelchair ramps in and out of our district. This service project is desperately needed and is a very rewarding and sometimes an emotional experience for the Lions who build the ramps.

When I attended the International Convention in Milan, I was energized and gained a new perspective of just how massive our Lions organization really is and how we serve with diversity around the world. It was estimated that there were 30,000+ attendees at the convention. It is easy to get caught up in our own club and district, but I realized we are serving in so many different capacities and in so many countries around the world. That is truly phenomenal. It is a privilege to serve with such a wonderful group of Lion friends.

As we start our year, I would like to ask each of you to visit our website at [AlabamaLions34A.com](http://AlabamaLions34A.com). Many district communications and activities will be reported there. On our District 34A website, one of the things you will find is the district calendar with many club events, services and activities. If your club is not yet listed, complete the activity form on the website. Our district secretary, Judy Rew, will make sure it is posted. You can post information one year in advance. For example, if you have upcoming events anytime from July 2019 through June 2020, post it now and it will appear on the calendar. This is our year to promote Service Thru Technology. Let the District website be your first step by letting others in the district know what exciting activities you are doing. Consider reaching out past your club. Come to a cabinet meeting, visit other clubs, or attend a District and/or a State Convention. You will find that you have a network of 1.4 million other Lions that are waiting to meet you. The next District 34A cabinet meeting will be in Hayden on Saturday, October 12, 2019. Make your plans now to attend.

In conclusion, if you have not contributed to Campaign 100 or LCIF, I would ask each club to consider what they can give, small or large. Every dollar counts no matter the amount.

I am honored to Serve you and looking forward to a great year in Service.

**Larry Bagley**  
District Governor



From left, DG Larry Bagley, DG Bubba Bingham and DG Yvonne Burroughs at the International Convention in Milan, Italy - It was estimated that 30,000+ attended.



Pictured, left, shows just a small portion of the massive attendance at the International Convention event in Milan, Italy. One of the main speakers was previous Prime Minister Tony Blair.





DG Floyd  
"Bubba"  
Bingham

# DISTRICT 34-B



## In and Around the District

Let me introduce myself to my fellow Lions. I'm Floyd "Bubba" Bingham, your District Governor by title: Your cheerleader and servant by example! I'm married (39 years), two adult children and 3 grand boys who call me "Pop".

For the past two years I have been preparing for my year of dedicated sacrifice as District Governor. I'm probably still not totally prepared but I'm "better prepared" than I was two years ago. I've been a club president, zone chair, 2nd VDG, and a 1st VDG. I've been to the DGE seminar in Oak Brook, IL and Milan, Italy. I've visited the Lions International HQ and visited the gravesite of Melvin Jones, our organizations founder; check those boxes too. I've visited most clubs in District 34B and plan to visit the rest of them this year. I've made many friends during my visits and learned a lot about Lionism. I've had the good pleasure of installing new officers, inducting new members and the awesome privilege of pinning Lions with over 50 years of SERVICE.

I've learned a few things along the path to the DG seat. Our membership over the past few years has taken a downward trend. It's not unique to District 34B. In talking to Lions from around the world we all share

that problem. However, my goals for the next year includes increasing membership by encouraging recruitment of more and younger members, slowing attrition by creating more enthusiasm within the clubs and starting a new club or "3". If each club will diligently seek and induct just 1 new member every two months our district membership would grow by 252 members by the end of this Lion year!

More members equals more service! Service? That's what we do! Our SERVICE literally changes the lives of our less fortunate neighbors. Yes, WE CHANGE LIVES!

Actor Denzel Washington once stated in a commencement speech at Pennsylvania University, "To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did". WE, as Lion leaders, must set goals. Ask yourself, "What is it we're not doing in our clubs?" Why do we keep losing good members? Why can't we recruit more members? We don't plan to fail! But do we fail to plan? Let's begin now with a promise to ourselves to "Just Ask" our friends, neighbors, co-workers to join us in membership. It only takes a few hours each month to make life better for our disadvantaged.

My heart swells with gratitude

when I see a shut-in cry tears of joy when we Lions finish the installation of a wheelchair ramp. I enjoy the hugs and handshakes of those we deliver food to, who otherwise might go hungry! I feel a sense of compassion when I deliver a box of diabetic supplies to a school or a box of toys to Children's Hospital Pediatric Cancer unit. The expression of "Thanks" on the faces of the children and their parents lets me know I've fulfilled my duty as a Lion to SERVE.

Fellow Lions, my brothers and sisters in SERVICE, I'm committed to YOU, to do whatever I can to assuage the loneliness of the elderly, relieve the pains of the hungry and to improve the vision of the vision impaired to help make our communities a better place to live.

I can't meet these goals alone. I humbly solicit your help. Please join me and my District Governor team in a renewed commitment to Lionism. "Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much".

I look forward with committed enthusiasm to meeting each of you during my visits. I look forward learning of your stories of SERVICE. I look forward to your invitations to SERVE in your activities.

**We are Lions: WE SERVE!**  
**Bubba Bingham**



**Lion Don Vives (Auburn Lions Club) receives his 55 years of service pin**



**DG Bingham greets International President, Jung-Yol Choi**



**Alabama delegation lined up to march in Lions Parade, 102nd International Convention, Milan, Italy.**





# DISTRICT 34-C

DG  
Yvonne  
Burroughs



## In and Around the District

Hello Lions of District 34C. We are starting our New Year-2019-2020. I am excited, honored and a bit apprehensive to be serving you as your District Governor. It is a challenging responsibility and it is my goal to continue the progress already made by our past District Governors. For the past two years, I have been mentored by the best, PDG Claudia Wigglesworth and IPDG Andy Marshall. It has been my great pleasure to serve under their guidance and I will continue to rely on them for their wisdom and expertise. At the end of the 2018-2019 year, we had a net membership growth of 38.

In May, a new club was chartered in Troy, thanks to the hard work of IPDG Andy Marshall and PDG Claudia Wigglesworth, GMT Coordinator for 2018-2019. They were aided in their efforts by 1st Vice District Governor Pete Crews, 2nd Vice District Governor Charlie Wigglesworth, PCC George Head, District 34B, and DG Bubba Bingham, District 34B. I also loaned a helping hand. I visited the new club in June and they are excited about being a part of the Lions Clubs International. There are 3 members that are optometrists, so you know vision will be one of the priorities. The Troy Club's Charter Night will be on August 27, 2019 in Troy.

At the end of 2018-2019, it was a pleasure and honor to install officers at Orange Beach, Satsuma, Saraland and Eight Mile Lions Clubs.

I stepped down as vision screener for District 34C at the end June. It was a bittersweet ending to a wonderful and rewarding job. I would like to thank all the Lions Clubs for their dedication to eliminating vision problems in their communities and for the kindness that you showed me. My hope is that you will continue to make a difference in people's lives by helping to improve their vision. Remember Alabama Lions Sight when you are making your budgets.

The District Cabinet for the new year is as follows: 1st Vice District Governor, Pete Crews, Headland Lions Club; 2nd Vice District Governor, Charlie Wigglesworth, Daleville Lions Club; GMT Coordinator, IPDG Andy Marshall, Headland Lions Club; GLT Coordinator, PDG Claudia Wigglesworth, Daleville Lions Club; GST Coordinator, PCC Linda Ziglar, Gulf Shores Lions Club; LCIF Coordinator, Glen Elmore, Thomasville Lions Club; Cabinet Secretary, Lion Gwendolyn James, Eight Mile Lions Club; Cabinet Treasurer, Lion Cheryl



**DG Yvonne and International President Dr. Jung-Yul Choi**

Mack, Eight Mile Lions Club; Zone Chairs- Lion Sarah (Rindy) Vaughn, York Lions Club; Lion Randy Nalley, Thomasville Lions Club; Lion Todd Denison, Mobile Lions Club; Lion Gerald (Gerry) Laska, Citronelle Lions Club; Lion Iris Ethridge, Orange Beach Lions Club; PDG Daniel Harris, Gulf Shores Lions Club; Lion Robert (Shane) Hadley, Atmore Lions Club; Lion Dr. Alexandra Conniff, Eufaula Lions Club; Lion Larry Bryant, Montgomery Dixie Lions Club; Lion Wanda Scroggins, Covington VIP Lions Club, and Lion Doug Allgood, Enterprise Lions Club.

The 10th Annual ALHSLF was held the weekend of June 21, 2019. It was an amazing experience for the high school students and the volunteers. The weekend was packed with activities and inspirational speakers. And to celebrate the 10th Anniversary, Troy awarded \$1,000 scholarships to all the students who attended, if they make Troy University their choice of universities when they graduate.

The York Lions Club will be

celebrating 80 years in August. We want to congratulate them for their many years of service to their community and the state and look forward to many more years of service. The York Club is the home of PIP Aubrey Green.

Dedicated Thomasville Lions, Randy Nalley and Lou Wallace worked with Bynum Duren of the Alabama Dept. of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) to build a ramp in Sweetwater, AL when the call went out. Thanks Lion Randy and Lion Lou for your hard work.

The 102nd Lions Clubs International Convention was held in Milan, Italy, July 5-July 9, 2019. Many Alabama Lions made the trip. The District Governors of Alabama were installed into our positions along with 700+ DGs from around the world-a totally memorable experience.

I am ready to serve and I hope you are too. We have the POWER to Make a Difference.

**DG Yvonne Burroughs  
District 34-C**



**DG's Bubba, Larry and Yvonne in Milan**



**Lion Lou Wallace, Bynum Duren (ADRS), Lion Randy Nalley.**

### DATES TO REMEMBER

- August 3, 2019 District 34-C Cabinet Meeting
- August 10, 2019 TIPP Conference





Atmore Lions Club serves dinner at Camp Smile in Mobile, AL. June 28, 2019. Camp Smile is a camp for children with disabilities. Shown are counselors and participants along with Lions Bub Gideons, Allison Brown, Shane Hadley, Brandy Giger, Dawn Turner (Ross Terry, not in photo)



The winner of our Ashford Lions Club's recent fund raiser for Childhood Diabetes. The winner of the drawing received a 3-day, 2-night stay at a condo in Panama City. Pictured in the photo, from left, are Lion Anita Robson and condo stay winner Ashford People's South Bank Vice-President/Manager Ricky Dixon. Lion Robson and her husband Edward own the condo and donated the stay to assist with our fund raiser; the condo stay raised \$1,420.00. The Club also held a spring cleaning yard sale that day, which raised an additional \$517.00. These funds will allow our Club to assist with Childhood Diabetes needs in our community.



At a recent Lions Club meeting on June 11, Sara Banks and Scott Rehraver of the Saughatchee district of the Boy Scouts of America vâsited us. This district serves 15 counties in Alabama and Georgia. The Auburn Lions Club presented a donation to the organization. Pictured are Sara Banks, Bill McCrary of the Auburn Lions Club and Scott Rehraver.





# 10th Anniversary of the Alabama Lions High School Leadership Forum held recently

The 10th Anniversary of The Alabama Lions High School Leadership Forum was held June 21-23, 2019 on the campus of Troy University. I want to give a BIG THANK YOU to all who volunteered to 'Serve' as the University once again opened their campus to over 220 high school student delegates, more than 40 Alabama Lions, and some 30 area college students who served as Group Leaders during our three day event.

Led by Lion William Filmore, Executive Director of the Forum, 'Acting Assistant Executive Director' Corey Busk, and Keynote Speaker Justin Jones-Fosu, our delegates were challenged to discover "Your Why Matters Now" and how "What you do Now Matters" in their future endeavors. Additional guest speakers were State Representative Lion Will Dismukes, area TV News Anchor Ben Stanfield, Youth Pastor Will Spivey, and Dr. John Kline of Troy University.

During the Sunday morning closing ceremony, Dr. Kline passed along a special message from Troy Chancellor Dr. Jack Hawkins that any student delegate attending the Forum this year, and who enrolls at Troy would receive a \$1,000 Scholarship - indeed a Great Anniversary gift celebrating

our 10 year Partnership with Troy University and Alabama Lions!

Thank You to the Lions Clubs who sponsor student delegates each year, and to all who support the Forum Fundraiser - remember the opportunity is there once again to be the one person who will receive two Auburn - Alabama football game tickets along with a Friday night hotel room prior to game day in Auburn. The drawing will be held in October, but tickets must be sold in order to have a drawing! Please help us by selling tickets - contact any ALHSLF Board member to obtain tickets!

On a personal note, it has been my pleasure to Serve as ALHSLF Chair for the past two years. I now join the four others who have Served in this position as we provide assistance to our new Chair, Lion Tracy Thompson of the Prattville Lions Club as she Leads the Forum on to a Bigger and Better future.

Again, on behalf of the ALHSLF Board, Thank You for all you do as We Serve in this effort to make a positive influence on the lives of the young people of Alabama. The success of the Forum depends on your continued support - keep updated via our website: [www.alhslf.org](http://www.alhslf.org).

**PCC George Head**  
Past Chair, ALHSLF



**PCC George Head**



## SAVE THE DATE

**Saturday, September 14, 2019, 6:30 PM**

*The Gulf Shores Lions Club proudly presents*

## Dinner in the Dark & Casino Night



*A delightful evening filled with scrumptious food, refreshments, a variety of casino games and fantastic prizes!!!!*

*Proceeds to help two great non-profit organizations:*

***The Miracle League & Leader Dogs for the Blind***

**PLEASE PLAN TO JOIN US. THANK YOU!!!**

## ATTENTION ALL LIONS CLUBS

**Let all the Lions of Alabama know what your club is doing in the near future. E-Mail, fax or call Doris at 205-933-9288, fax 205-933-9215,**

**E-mail: [lionsofalabama@bellsouth.net](mailto:lionsofalabama@bellsouth.net), and indicate it is for the newsletter. We cannot use clippings from local newspapers. When you send photos they must be in JPEG format, and everyone in the photo needs to be identified. These articles will be used on a first come first serve as space is limited.**





Photo by Justin Blowers

All of the riders line up at the starting line for the 17th Annual Boll Weevil 100 bike ride. These stories and pictures are courtesy of *The Southeast Sun*.

# Retreat by the Lake houses Boll Weevil 100 participants

By Cassie Gibbs

cgibbs@southeastsun.com

Fort Rucker's Wounded Warrior Retreat by the Lake on Lake Tholocco became a home away from home for several participants of the Boll Weevil 100 recently.

Sgt. Maj. David Walters, Staff Sgt. David Cochran and Specialist David Howell were three of the nine people from the Warrior Transition Battalion who attended the event.

They stayed in the ADA-compliant lake cabin on Fort Rucker, the only facility of its kind found in all 75 Army installations.

"This (cabin) is well thought out," Walters said. "That doesn't stop (some soldiers) from bringing their family down. This really invites them to come instead of excluding them."

WTB group members said they plan to tell others about the facility, which was brought to life by the Wiregrass Wounded Veterans Committee. This committee has raised about half the funds for its next project to bring even more to wounded and disabled veterans: an estimated \$35,000 handicap-accessible floating dock.

The soldiers enjoyed their stay at the cabin and their time at the Boll Weevil 100, which Walters called a great "team-building" event for WTB soldiers.

"It's a partnership (between organizations) that I've witnessed for five years, and the value that it brings to the soldiers is team building, being out there," he said.

Cochran, a first-time attendee, said this



Photo by Justin Blowers

Staff Sgt. David Cochran and Spc. David Howell are presented Quilts of Valor. Pictured, from left, are VFW 6683 Auxiliary President Nancy Rathburn, Sharon Hurd, Cochran, Quilts of Valor Alabama State Coordinator Jacquelyn McKinstry, Howell and Ann Maynard.



Photo by Cassie Gibbs

Pictured, in back, are Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant Wanda Thompson, left, and Occupational Therapist Cleo Dellasandro. Pictured, front row, from left, are Sgt. Maj. David Walters, Staff Sgt. David Cochran and Specialist David Howell. and other similar events allow him to make new connections.

"When you come to events like this, the different people you meet and the connections you make... they'll give you more information about different events from new running events to new biking events," he said, stating these events also help him find new places to visit with his family. "When I come to communities like this... it's a new place for me to find out about, and it's not far from my own home."

Howell, another soldier who attended the event for the first time, said the event also helps the soldiers in the unit heal.

"It helps us get out of the barracks, and it helps us heal a lot quicker than what we do just sitting in the barracks," he said.

These soldiers were joined by two women who regularly help soldiers either transition back into the military or out of the military. Occupational Therapist Cleo Dellasandro and Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant Wanda Thompson each served over 20 years in the military themselves.

They perform intake interviews with WTB soldiers to better help them in their transition process. This process includes setting personal goals to go back to college or find a job, especially if a soldier is transitioning out of the military.

These women also travel with the soldiers participating in the Boll Weevil 100 for

# Boll Weevil 100 for 100

By Justin Blowers

jblowers@southeastsun.com

Before the Boll Weevil Centennial, there was the Boll Weevil 100 bike ride sponsored by the Enterprise Lions Club.

The 17<sup>th</sup> annual ride and fifth annual run were held on Saturday, May 4.

The idea for the ride sprouted 17 years ago from then Enterprise Lion Ron Moates. Moates had shopped the idea around a couple of cities in the Wiregrass, but it was Enterprise that bit, according to Enterprise Lions Treasurer Chuck Seitz.

It was Moates that came up with the original plan used to run the first Boll Weevil 100 in 2002.

"When he said it's going to be a 100 mile course for the longest one, my first thought was, 'What hotel is 50 miles out?'" Seitz said. "I didn't think anybody could do 100 miles on a bicycle

support.

"I think (the event) is a wonderful thing they are doing," Dellasandro said. "Not all communities are like this. They're very supportive of veterans and wounded warriors, but this is probably one of the best ones I've ever seen."

"This is my fifth year coming (to this event), and every year, it gets better and better," Thompson said. "This is a very military-friendly community, very supportive. I look forward to coming every year."

Walters, Cochran and Howell stayed in the ADA-compliant lake cabin, the only facility of its kind found in all 75 Army installations. Every person from the WTB was thankful for the great facility.

"We were not expecting this," Dellasandro said. "We were thinking it was just going to be one of the cabins. We found out that it was actually one for wounded warriors."

"This (cabin) is well thought out," Walters said. "That doesn't stop (some soldiers) from bringing their family down. This really invites them to come instead of excluding them."

WTB group members said they plan to tell others about the facility, which was brought to life by the Wiregrass Wounded Veterans Committee. This committee has raised about half the funds for its next project to bring even more to wounded and disabled veterans: an estimated \$35,000 handicap-accessible floating dock.

The soldiers also thanked the local communities for supporting the military and holding events like the Boll Weevil 100.



Photo by Justin Blowers

The Enterprise High School Wildcat Battalion JRTOC cadets help work registration for the event. Pictured, back, from left, are Chamon Harris and Dillon Sanders. Pictured, front, from left, are Aaron Hussey, Michael Arse, Micah Smith and Zack Pomranky.

in a day."

In 2014, the group expanded the event into a run as well. It started out as a 5k run, but Seitz said it was scrapped after the first year.

"We did a 5k, but people were wanting to do more and people were wanting to do less," Seitz said. "So we ended up with a 3k and a 10k."

In 2009, the Lions Club was contacted by Ride to Recovery Southeast Founder Jim Bush, according to Alabama Lions Historian Conrad Stempel. The Ride to Recovery Southeast is an event that uses cycling as part of the treatment process of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury and physical rehabilitation.

"He (Ride 2 Recovery representative Jim Bush) asked if we would allow some wounded warriors to come and take part in the Boll Weevil 100," Stempel said. "He asked if they could do it for free and we said yes. Then he asked if we would pay for their food and lodging and we said yes. We had probably 20 or 25 that year that came."

Stempel said the Enterprise Lions Club had three weeks to raise enough funds to pay for all the expenses. The organization raised enough funds and were even able to buy half a bicycle with the money raised as well.

Originally, the Boll Weevil 100 hosted Warrior Transition Units from Fort Benning, Fort Campbell, Fort Gordon, Fort Jackson and Fort Stewart.

Today, only the WTU from Fort Benning attends as the number of WTUs and Wounded Warriors in the pipeline has decreased, according to Stempel. Stempel said it was the first year that led to the creation of the Wiregrass Wounded Veterans Committee.

"We realized that first year that this was way beyond what the Lions Club could handle and also have a bike ride," Stempel said. "So we started asking for help and the Lions Club empowered this committee."

Since its formation, the WWVC has donated the Wounded Warrior Retreat Cabin on Fort Rucker, helped fund the Wounded Warrior Travel Trailer and are currently raising funds to build a boat/fishing dock at the cabin.

The Enterprise Lions Club, WWVC and VFW Post 6683 also honor the members of the WTUs that come down to participate every year.

The Lions Club and VFW hand out coins to the members while the WWVC donates to the WTUs.

Most years there is also a Quilts of Valor award ceremony for some of the members of the WTUs as well.

These are normally done at the pre-event dinner, which takes place the Friday before the ride/run. However, this year, it was hosted at the VFW Post 6683 after the ride/run.

The Fort Benning WTU members honored this year were: Staff Sgt. David Cochran, Spc. David Howell, Sgt. Maj. David Walters, Jermeka Johnson, Capt. Kayleigh Andreason, Master Sgt. Brian Pearce, Sgt. 1st Class Carl Varner, Cleo Della Sandro and Wanda Thompson.

Cochran and Howell were awarded Quilts of Valor this year and the WWVC donated \$2,000 to the Fort Benning WTU as well.

The proceeds of the event go to Alabama Lions Sight, which provides free vision testing and eye care to those who need it.

As the years go by, the Boll Weevil 100 receives more and more recognition. Seitz said it's gotten to the point where it's an event that even out of town and state visitors look forward to.

"I do registration so I see everybody that comes in," Seitz said. "And I've seen a lot of people have gotten gray hairs in 17 years and are bringing their kids and grandkids. It feels pretty good to know something is enduring and wanted."