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Inside {local} June '25



6

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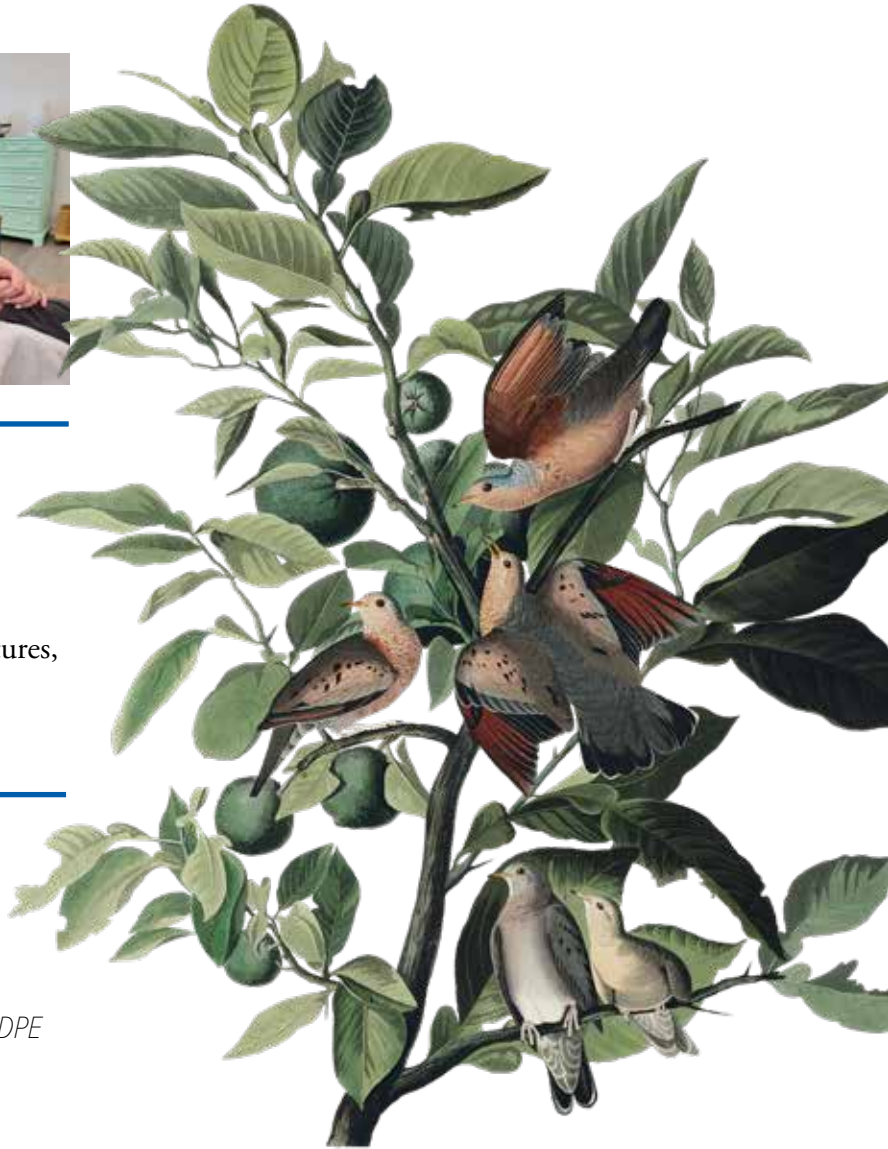
12

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LOCAL FOCUS FAITH & WORSHIP PAGE 13

ON THE COVER: Corey Kirkwood, Flight Instructor and DPE and Ashley Collier, Flight Instructor prepare for takeoff.
Photo by Linda Williford



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Corey Kirkwood, Flight Instructor and DPE. Photo by Linda Williford

BUZZING THE GULF COAST

BY LINDA WILLIFORD

Have you ever seen a small aircraft in the sky like a helicopter but smaller and wondered what it was? You were probably looking at a one-person (or two-person) ultralight airplane known as a gyrocopter (autogyro, or gyroplane). This aircraft was first invented in 1923 by Spanish engineer Juan de la Cierva. The gyrocopter came about 15 years before the helicopter. They are very popular in Europe, especially in Italy, Germany, and Spain. In Europe, they have many uses, including the military, police agencies, crop-dusting, and other commercial uses. They are becoming more popular in the U.S., primarily for recreational use by aircraft enthusiasts and hobbyists.

Corey Kirkwood, a certified flight instructor and designated

pilot examiner (DPE) by the Federal Aviation Administration, has many years of flying and teaching those interested in aviation how to fly gyrocopters and airplanes. However, he says that his main job is as a designated pilot examiner, providing certificates to pilots.

Kirkwood said that compared to an airplane, the structure of the gyrocopter has fewer moving parts and is more mechanically simple. The gyrocopter needs a runway to take off and land. Even though it is similar to a helicopter. A helicopter is powered and rotated by an engine and a gyrocopter uses an engine to start it but its rotors are powered by air flow (autorotation).

"Think of it like this," Kirkwood said. "When you were a kid, you would blow on your pinwheel, and it would spin."

According to Kirkwood, the gyrocopter takes \$50 an hour

NEXT PAGE >



Photo by Linda Williford

to operate as opposed to \$1000 an hour to operate a helicopter. They go about 200-300 miles at a time before needing refueling. Gyrocopter can take off and land at any public airport and, with permission, at any private airport.

Kirkwood said, "If you have an adequate runway on your property, you can even take off and land in your own backyard."

A fixed-base operator (FBO) is an organization which is granted the right by an airport to provide services such as fuel, hangars, tie-downs, parking, and aircraft rentals, etc. Lightning Aviation, owned and operated by Kirkwood, is a private company that runs the FBO at the Foley Airport on behalf of the City of Foley. Lightning Aviation does maintenance and repairs not only of gyrocopters but also of other airplanes.

Kirkwood added, "We are the leading flight training destination in the U.S., and Foley is the only maintenance and repair facility for gyrocopters."

Many of those interested in flying gyrocopters are 60-80 years old.

Kirkwood explained, "That's because during the 50, 60, 70's,

when these guys were younger, the market heavily advertised the gyrocopter to those who were interested in aviation." He continued, "They advertised the affordability to build and the ease to fly. These guys are now retired, and many still have an interest in aviation and want to fly."

The average cost of a new gyrocopter is between \$15,000 and \$120,000, depending on the diversity of the models and features available. For a used, older model, expect to pay between \$15,000 and \$40,000 on average. If you want to build one, a kit will generally start at \$10,000 and up, again depending on the model, design, and features.

Gyrocopter flying is great for entertainment and recreation. Kirkwood said, "You can fly over the corn fields, or along the countryside, and even go to the Grand Canyon."

For more information about gyrocopter flying, flight lessons, buying, or building one, contact Corey Kirkwood at 251-943-5214 or visit the airport at 510 North Airport Drive in Foley.



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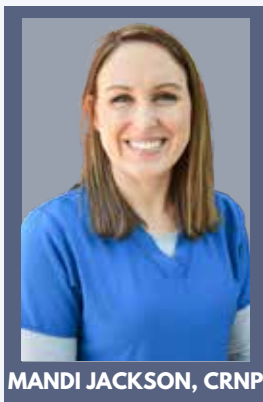
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Mandy Dixon, Certified Occupational Hand Therapist. Photo by Linda Williford

HANDS THAT HEAL

BY LINDA WILLIFORD

The need for a hand therapist is more common than one might think. Mandy Dixon, a certified occupational hand therapist, owns and operates Coastal Hand Therapy in Foley. Dixon says, “My patients have a variety of complex hand and upper extremity medical needs including hand injuries, fractures, carpal tunnel, finger dislocation, tennis elbow, and many more involving the hand/fingers, wrist, elbow, and shoulder.”

Hand therapy evolved from the need for a specialist with the knowledge and experience required to meet those challenging recoveries of the hand and upper extremity injuries, to help a person to return to their highest level of function.

A hand therapist is an occupational or physical therapist who, through advanced continuing education, clinical experience, and integration of knowledge in anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology, has become proficient in treating upper-extremity conditions resulting from trauma, disease, congenital or acquired deformity. A certified hand therapist is a therapist who has achieved advanced certification as a Certified Hand Therapist (CHT). To obtain this credential, a therapist must practice for a minimum of three years, accumulating at least 4,000 hours of treatment for hand and upper extremity disorders.

Dixon received her certification in hand therapy (CHT) in 2011. She is originally from the Mississippi Gulf Coast and graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a BS in

PAGE 14 >

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Meredith Watson, Mandy Dixon, and Jamie Sacco. Photo by Linda Williford

< FROM PAGE 12

Psychology (1998) and MS in Occupational Therapy (2001). She opened her Foley office in June 2024.

Dixon's office is an outpatient practice. She said her patients are generally referred to her through a primary care doctor, orthopedic physician, or chiropractor.

Dixon says, "My patients come to me after surgery or come to me to avoid surgery." She said, "The most common problems are wrist fractures, arthritis, and nerve compression." She added, "Many of my patients' visits are 30-day or 6-8-week sessions depending on their individual needs and their insurance company."

Mandy has two staff members who work with her. Jamie Sacco is the front office coordinator, and Meredith Watson is an occupational therapist.

Sacco is from Springfield, Illinois. In 2012, she attended Midwest Technical Institute and received her certification in Medical Assisting from the American Association of Medical Assistants.

She is currently furthering her education to include medical billing and coding. She will receive her credentials in Certified Professional Coding in the fall of 2025 from Devry University.

Dixon says, "Jamie is available to assist you in various aspects of your care, including but not limited to what we treat, and will assist you in what is needed from your physician to begin treatment, billing, and insurance questions."

Dixon said, "Meredith Watson is my part-time occupational therapist." Meredith grew up in the Baldwin County area. She graduated from the University of Alabama with a BS in Public Health (2017). She attended the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she received an MS in Occupational Therapy (2019).

For more information, visit their Facebook page at Coastal Hand Therapy or their website <https://brand.site/coastalhandtherapy>. The office is located at 317 S. McKenzie St. between Foley Fish Company/Portabella's and Papa Smoke. Coastal Hand Therapy has designated parking, including a handicapped parking space and a ramp to the front door.

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