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Inside *{local}* July '24

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SMOKING TIME

Meet local BBQ experts just in time for summer

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UNIQUE FINDS IN FOLEY

New management brings the "goods"

LOCAL FOCUS

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CORRECTION: In the June edition of Foley Local we incorrectly credited a photo of Nikki Walker (appearing on page 6). The photo was provided by Achieve Agency. To learn more about Achieve Agency visit: <https://achieveagency.org>



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Reserve Grand Champion of Foley BBQ and Blues, Hunt Blackledge. Photography provided

TRAILBLAZING ON THE GRILL

LINDA WILLIFORD

Summertime is the time to fire up the grill and start cooking some flavorful, tender, juicy meats. To master this process, there is a learning curve. Philip Wilson is one of the assistant managers responsible for sales in the grilling and outdoor living area at the Paris Ace Hardware store in Foley. He shares some of his tips for grilling. He helps customers with information on the most popular grills/smokers and gives them the ins and outs of the various models. Wilson says that you should learn your grill/smoker. "They are like any other tool, each having its own peculiarities." He says, "Don't be afraid to try new things."

Wilson says, "You need to experiment with different spices,

marinades, and cooking methods. Wilson likes to use a smoker. He says, "Learn how to cook by using indirect heat, as this can keep meat very tender." At his home, Wilson is considered the "outdoor cook." He uses a "smoker" from Orion. Also, he says to experiment with wood chips, spices, marinades, or brines, which can drastically change the flavor of your meats.

According to Wilson, an important part of grilling or smoking is food preparation. "My wife and I can spend up to two days preparing the meat before we cook it." He shared, "We smoke everything from wild game meat to fish. Even my blackened fish is a form of grilling as I do it over an open flame." Wilson said that grilling in the South is a social event, so don't be afraid to "test"

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< FROM PAGE 6

recipes with your guests.” He loves to get feedback from family and friends. “If I get it wrong, I want to know, and if I get it right, well, I want to know that too!” Wilson does not compete because he said, “It turns something I love into a job.”

Hunt Blackledge is a member of the Smokey Bee’s BBQ team. He and his wife started doing BBQ competitions in 2020. So far this year, Blackledge has won the Reserve Grand Champion at the BBQ and Blues Festival in Foley, the Grand Championships at Singer River Smoke-O-Rama in Athens, AL, Smoke on the Falls in Gadsden, AL, and High on the Hog Festival in Winchester, TN.

Blackledge says, “Have fun and play around with new recipes.” He suggests that people use social media and YouTube to improve their skills. “Consider any failures as only just learning opportunities,” Blackledge says that cooking at home, he often makes his own rubs. But on the competition trail, he uses blends of commercially available rubs and sauces. He says, “The recipes are very much secondary to the actual cooking process. Nailing down the texture and tenderness of a protein is the most important.”

Competition is a hobby for Blackledge, an anesthesiologist by profession. He says, “It is my escape from real life.” It gives Blackledge a chance to have a good time with his friends and takes his mind off the hospital.

Brian Johnson won his first competition in 2004 in Dickson County for the Hwy Patrol Department. He was out of competition for a short while but got back in the game in 2023. He and his team from the Paris Ace Hardware won this year’s People’s Choice award in the Foley BBQ and Blues Competition. They beat 35 teams of chefs and professionals. Johnson says, “I have a dual role. I am the Master Griller at Ace Hardware and do grilling demos for the store. But I am also with a team called the Grill Sergeants from Orange Beach, who represent the police department of Orange Beach.”

Johnson comes from a background of family competition grillers. At age 17, Johnson said that he learned how to grill a whole hog. He was told if he could grill a whole pig, the parts of the pig would be easy. Johnson said, “The secret to grilling is to cook “low and slow” and remember “time is your friend.”

There are many options of foods to grill, such as fruit, vegetables, breads, and even desserts. The grill can be just as versatile as the oven. Exposing foods to flames produces a nice char and elevates the flavor.

Grilling and smoking can be done any time of the year. Enjoy all year round. Anyone can master the technique and skills. So go ahead and fire up the grill, experiment, and have fun.



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Justin and wife Amy Champion, one of the larger vendors. Photography by Linda Williford

THE OLD, THE NEW AND EVERYTHING ELSE

LINDA WILLIFORD

Looking for a fun and adventuresome shopping experience? Foley Indoor Flea Market is the destination. They have the old, new, and everything in between. Peruse down the aisles and find that long-sought item you couldn't find anywhere else. The indoor flea market has a bakery area open from 9am-4pm on Wednesday to Friday. On weekends, street tacos are for sale in the bakery area on Saturday-Sunday from 9am-5pm. They even have a barber booth if you need a haircut while there.

"Some people claim they didn't know the flea market was here

because it sets back so far off Hwy.59," said the new manager, Kevin Labit. The new management has brought about many improvements. Labit said, "When I started in management here a year ago, we only had 10 vendors. Now, we have 30 vendors. It's a new day at the Foley Indoor Flea Market.

They have cleaned up the area and improved the market's lighting. They now have well-lighted displays of items of interest and fun wares for the whole family, including games, toys, jewelry, rocks and minerals and crystals, antique furniture, clothing, sports cards and memorabilia, music CDs and albums, and much more.

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Barber Wayne Johnson. Photography by Linda Williford

< FROM PAGE 12

One of their vendors caters to pet lovers with pet supplies, pet toys, and clothes for their pets. Labit said that there is a great opportunity for someone who is a pet groomer, which would complement the services available to the customers. A barber shop booth has recently opened at the flea market. Wayne Johnson, a well-known retired barber from Gulf Shores, has many years of experience and is ready for business.

Labit said they are working on new ideas for the flea market to make it even better. "We have plans to do car shows and arts and craft events." He added that they would like to add more food trucks for the outside space." Labit said that food trucks are free to set up anytime. They have a hot dog truck already set up for the outside space. Outside space is \$10 a day, first come, first serve. Indoor space is \$150 a month for a 10x10 space with electricity. One can get larger space if it is available. Contact Labit at 251-597-4394 for inside and outside space.

The new management is working to appeal to all customers looking for different or particular items, and services. During the summer, they want to be more of a tourist destination. Labit said, "We are trying to provide inside space for outside vendors during the summer months when the weather is so hot." During the winter or slow season, they usually have more locals and snowbirds. Labit said they are working on new signage, and hopefully, more people will see them. He said that under new management and the improvements, people will find the flea market a more pleasurable experience.

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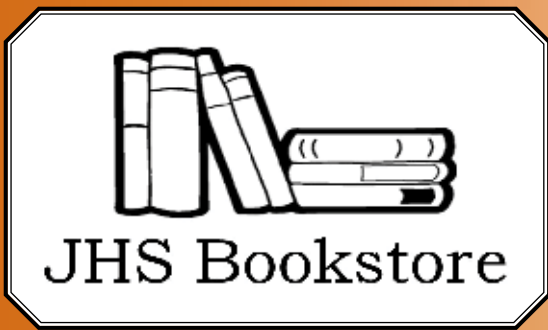
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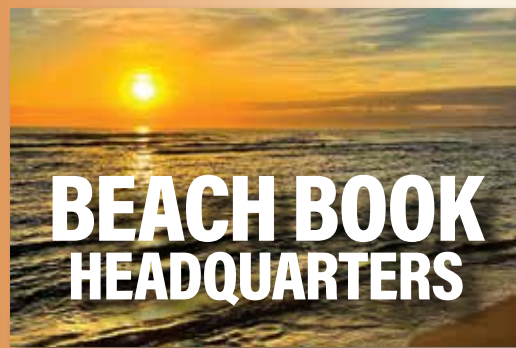
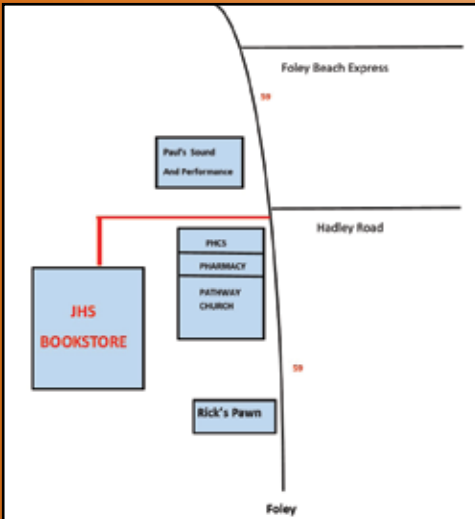
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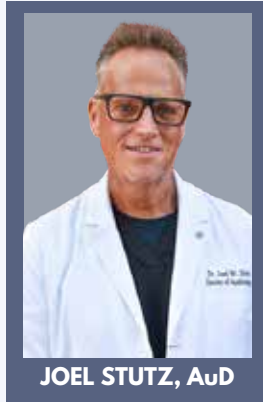


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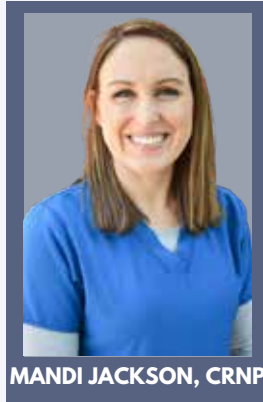
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