

*From Mayor Ashley Curry*

## Happy New Year!

I don't know about you, but I am absolutely amazed at how quickly 2025 came and went. I have previously shared a popular quotation from Mark Twain, in which he said, "Now is the accepted time to make your annual good resolutions." I think he is also credited with saying, "New Year's resolutions come in one year and out the other."

The City Council and staff also have a few resolutions for 2026:

- Completion of the Highway 31 pedestrian bridge connecting Wald Park and the Library in the Forest. This was conceived over 20 years ago and appears to (finally) be coming to fruition.
- Completion of the lane-widening and sidewalks on Massey Road.
- Continued development of businesses on Highway 31 South, along with the beginning of improvements for the southern gateway to the City, including median work, landscaping and drainage projects in and around the Sybil Temple replica.
- Completion of the Veterans Memorial at Altadena Valley Park. For more information, to make a donation or to purchase a brick to in honor or memory of a veteran, visit <https://bit.ly/vh-veteransmemorial>.

In a sermon a few years ago, Dr. Bill Brunson, Senior Minister at Vestavia Hills Methodist Church, asked the congregation, "Will the direction you are taking get you to your intended destination?" He, of course, was speaking from a spiritual perspective, but that same question could be asked of our city and our future.

As I ask this question of the vision we have for Vestavia Hills, I think we would all agree that we intend for Vestavia Hills to be a "Life Above," providing an elevated quality-of-life. The question then becomes, are we going in the direction that will lead to our intended goal? I am fully satisfied that we are heading in the right direction. We have a dedicated City Council, an exemplary City Manager and a superb City staff that work daily to improve Vestavia Hills.

During the first quarter of each year, the Council and City staff engage in a multi-day strategic planning session to chart the course for our city. I have no doubt that this year's session will include presentations about the projects planned for Liberty Park, including an east side police facility, maintenance facility and branch library.

In closing, if you are making a New Year's resolution for this year, may I suggest a resolution to volunteer some of your time or talent to the groups that contribute so much to the quality of life that we enjoy in Vestavia Hills. There are opportunities for all age groups with our senior's programs, library, schools, Parks and Recreation, civic clubs and churches, just to name a few.

I wish all of you a happy and prosperous new year!

## Here We Grow Again!

As eastern Vestavia Hills continues to grow, so does our commitment to keeping the community safe. The Vestavia Hills Fire Department has been awarded a federal SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant, bringing 12 new firefighters to the department beginning in March 2026.

The grant will cover a portion of these firefighters' salaries over the next three years, allowing the City to responsibly and gradually absorb the cost while strengthening emergency response. This significant achievement was made possible through the leadership and efforts of Battalion Chief Scott Whitworth (pictured), who played a key role in securing the funding.

Growth isn't limited to staffing alone. Station 4 in Liberty Park is also set for a major expansion.

Renovations are scheduled to begin in April 2026, with completion expected by April 2027. As part of this project, the department will add an engine company at the Liberty Park station, increasing daily staffing there by three additional firefighters.

Together, these investments ensure faster response times, improved coverage and a safer future for our growing community.



From City Manager Jeff Downes  
An Exceptional Event!

Saturday, March 7, 2026, will be a landmark day for Vestavia Hills!

For the first time ever, our city has the honor of hosting the Exceptional Foundation Chili Cook-Off – one of the largest, most beloved charity events in the region. The celebration will take place in the Urban Center parking area in Liberty Park, where an estimated 14,000 attendees will gather to enjoy great food, lively entertainment and the warm hospitality that defines our community.

The Chili Cook-Off isn't just any event, it is The Exceptional Foundation's biggest annual fundraiser, recognized as Best Community Event by *Mountain Brook Magazine* and Best Annual Charity Event by *About Town Magazine*. With live music, a kids' zone and unlimited chili tasting, every ticket sold directly supports the transformative programs offered by The Exceptional Foundation.



This year's momentum builds on the success of the 2025 Chili Cook-Off, which featured 140 cook teams and attracted more than 14,000 visitors.

Proceeds from the event provide critical funding for programs that foster friendships, healthy living, life skills and community involvement for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.



Whether you're a foodie, someone who loves a great family outing, a supporter of meaningful causes or just looking for a reason to revisit the Liberty Park area, this event has something for everyone. Vestavia Hills strives to be the most lovable city in Alabama, and what better way to deepen our connection to one another than by coming together for what will be the largest annual event our city has ever hosted?

I encourage you to buy a ticket, form a cook team or sponsor this remarkable community celebration and noble cause. Tickets and details are available at <https://exceptionalfoundation.instagift.com>.

I love Vestavia Hills and hope everyone enjoys this amazing event as much as me!

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Photos by Daniel McAllister Photography  
IG: @danielmmcallister / FB: @danielmcallisterphotography

Community Calendar	January	February	March
	1 <b>Municipal Offices Closed</b> , New Year's Day <i>Sanitation holiday. Trash collection may require up to 48 hours.</i>	2 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.	2 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.
	5 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.	5 <b>Design Review Board</b> , Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.	5 <b>Design Review Board</b> , Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
	6 <b>Design Review Board</b> , Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.	9 <b>Senior Citizens Association Luncheon</b> , Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.	9 <b>Senior Citizens Association Luncheon</b> , Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
	8 <b>Planning and Zoning Commission</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.	10 <b>Chamber Luncheon</b> , Vestavia Hills Methodist Church, 11:30 a.m.	10 <b>Chamber Luncheon</b> , Mountaintop Church, 11:30 a.m.
	12 <b>Senior Citizens Association Luncheon</b> , Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.	12 <b>Planning and Zoning Commission</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.	12 <b>Planning and Zoning Commission</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
	13 <b>Chamber Luncheon</b> , Vestavia Hills Civic Center, 11:30 a.m.	16 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.	16 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.
	15 <b>Board of Zoning Adjustment</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.	17 <b>Parks and Recreation Board</b> , Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.	17 <b>Parks and Recreation Board</b> , Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.
	19 <b>Municipal Offices Closed</b> , Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19 <b>Board of Zoning Adjustment</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.	19 <b>Board of Zoning Adjustment</b> , Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
	20 <b>Parks and Recreation Board</b> , Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.		23-27 Vestavia Hills City Schools Spring Break
	21 <b>City Council Meeting</b> , Council Chamber, 5:30 p.m.		

For additional event dates or to subscribe to the City calendar, visit [vhal.org/calendar](http://vhal.org/calendar).



# Vestavia Belles

WELCOME THE CLASS OF 2026 BELLES!



Margaret Morgan  
Backstrom



Makena Bernal



Caroline Bishop



Ella Booth



Londyn Chandler



Trinity Clark



Sarah Louis  
Collins



Leia Comfort



Amelia Cranfield



Claire Cummings



Sumner Daffron



Catherine Davis



Elizabeth  
DeGweck



Anna Leigh  
DeRieux



Olivia Ellis



Ashlen Faust



Reese Friloux



Kathryn Fulton



Genevieve  
Gammill



Carleigh  
Gasparetto



Shazi Glover



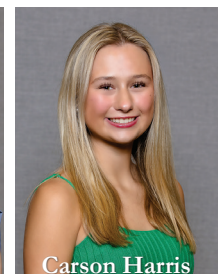
Addison Goetz



Ruth Graham



Gia Hallman



Carson Harris



Campbell Horne



Hadley Huner



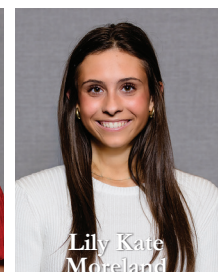
Jennie Kennedy



Bailey Mason



Julianna Mize



Lily Kate  
Moreland



Katelyn Morse



Ansley Padgett



Julia Parker



Mary Christian  
Peters



Sayla Prescott



Ella Kate  
Ramsey



## Vestavia Hills City Schools Hall of Fame

The Vestavia Hills City Schools Hall of Fame will add four new inductees this year to its list of legendary educators.

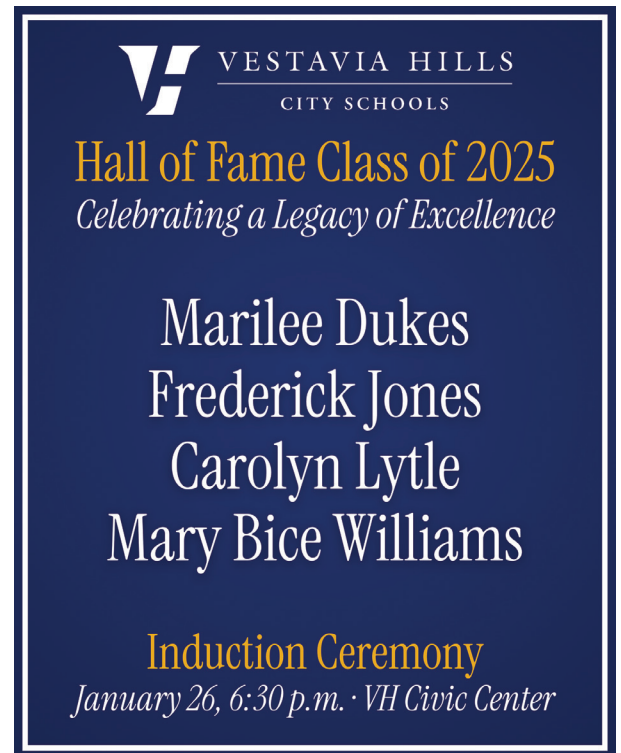
Inductees in the Hall of Fame's Class of 2025 include, in alphabetical order:

- **Marilee Dukes**, an English teacher and Debate Team coach at Vestavia Hills High School from 1983 to 2007
- **Frederick Jones**, a social studies teacher at Louis Pizitz Middle School from 1970 to 1989 who will be inducted posthumously
- **Carolyn Lytle**, a third grade teacher and reading coach at Vestavia Hills Elementary West from 1988 to 2008
- **Mary Bice Williams**, a fourth grade teacher at Vestavia Hills Elementary East and Vestavia Hills Elementary Central from 1970 to 1997 who will be inducted posthumously

This year's inductees were chosen from a field of nominees submitted earlier this year by alumni, current and former school employees, and the community at large. The Class of 2025 will be the sixth group of educators inducted into the VHCS Hall of Fame. A full list of previous inductees as well as nomination information is available at [vhcs.us/halloffame](http://vhcs.us/halloffame).

"This year's inductees into the VHCS Hall of Fame continue our tradition of honoring outstanding educators who have influenced the lives of so many in our community. Each of them served the school system with distinction and their commitment to excellence is unmatched," said Todd Freeman, Ed.D., Vestavia Hills City Schools superintendent.

Inductees will be honored at a special Hall of Fame ceremony on Monday, Jan. 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the Vestavia Hills Civic Center. The event is free and open to the public.



## You're Invited: "I Am Vestavia" Cultural Festival

Vestavia Hills City Schools is excited to learn about, celebrate, and honor the wonderful cultural diversity that makes our community so special. This year's "I Am Vestavia Week: A Celebration of Our Cultural Diversity" will take place January 20-23. Throughout the week, our schools will shine a spotlight on the many cultures represented in our district, with both school teams and district leaders working together to create meaningful celebrations.



**I AM VESTAVIA WEEK**  
VESTAVIA HILLS CITY SCHOOLS

On Tuesday, January 20, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., we will gather for our second-annual community festival at the Vestavia Hills Civic Center. The evening will feature cultural booths, lively performances from students and community artists, engaging showcases and an inspiring presentation that highlights the richness of our community. The festival village and performances will take place from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., followed by the ceremony from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.

This event is free and open to the public. We invite you to join us for this special community event!



## Celebrating Outstanding Educators

Vestavia Hills City Schools has announced its 2025-26 Teachers of the Year – a distinguished group of educators chosen by their peers for their dedication to student success.

Each year, faculty and staff at schools across the district select one teacher who exemplifies excellence in the classroom and demonstrates unwavering commitment to supporting students. This year's honorees represent the highest standards of teaching within Vestavia Hills.

Leading this year's cohort are two outstanding educators.

**Katie Smith**, a fifth grade teacher at Vestavia Hills Elementary East, has been named **Elementary Teacher of the Year**, while **Hannah Peterson**, a health science teacher at Vestavia Hills High School, earned **Secondary Teacher of the Year** honors. Both Smith and Peterson will advance as candidates for the prestigious 2026 Alabama Teacher of the Year award, which will be announced in May.



**Katie Smith**  
Elementary Teacher of the Year



**Hannah Peterson**  
Secondary Teacher of the Year

Additional 2025-26 Teachers of the Year include:

- **Stacy Freeman**, English teacher, Liberty Park Middle School
- **Peyton James**, biology teacher, Vestavia Hills High School Freshman Campus
- **Joy McPherson**, third grade teacher, Vestavia Hills Elementary Liberty Park
- **Angie Olvey**, science teacher, Louis Pizitz Middle School
- **Lori Pfost**, special education teacher, Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights
- **Kate Smith**, kindergarten teacher, Vestavia Hills Elementary Dolly Ridge
- **Sarah Woodroof**, fifth grade teacher, Vestavia Hills Elementary West

The district congratulates all honorees for their tireless work in shaping the minds and futures of Vestavia Hills students.

## Staying Safe on Scooters & Electric Bikes



### Avoid Damp Roads

Wet roads will make the small tires lose traction faster than a vehicle would. Avoid riding on damp roads or during a rainstorm.

### Stay Off Sidewalks

Sidewalks are intended for pedestrians and pets only. Therefore, scooters and bikes not allowed on City sidewalks.



### ... And Busy Roads



When riding in the street, you're going to be mingling with vehicles much larger and faster than you. If there is a bike lane, stay in it. If you are passing a row of parked cars, be careful of any driver who may be opening their car door or backing out of a parking space.

### Watch Out for Grates

Unlike cars that can ride over sewer grates with ease, electric bikes and scooters have smaller tires that can get caught in the spaces. If it gets caught, you could very well end up flying over the handlebars!

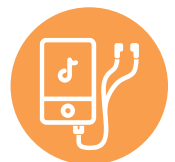


### Wear a Helmet

Invest in a good helmet, keep it with your scooter or bike and wear it every time you ride! Be sure to wear shoes too!

### Stay Aware

As always, stay aware of your surroundings; put your phone in your pocket and don't wear earbuds. Practice the art of watching the ground in front of you while looking ahead of you ... It's a delicate balance!



### Know the Law



Because Alabama law classifies electric bikes and scooters as motor vehicles, the following laws apply:

- Scooters may not be ridden on sidewalks.
- Riding on public street requires a tag and a valid driver's license (typically a Class M).
- Riders must wear both a helmet and shoes.
- The scooter must have functioning brakes.
- If you're riding on the street, all traffic laws apply.

Parents: Note that the law holds parents responsible if minors operate scooters without proper safety gear or in violation of traffic laws.



For more information, call 205.978.0166 or visit [www.vhparksandrec.com](http://www.vhparksandrec.com)

## NEW PROGRAMS

**Beginner Pickleball Clinic:** January 6, 13, 20 & 27, 9-10am. New to pickleball? This beginner-friendly clinic covers the basics in a fun, welcoming environment. Register online, space is limited! Participants should bring their own equipment; tennis shoes are strongly encouraged. Fees are \$35 for all lessons or \$10 per week.

**Cardio & Balance:** Every Thursday, 9am.

This new exercise class for adults 55+ focuses on gentle cardio and balance exercises to improve strength and stability. This class is FREE FOR CIVIC CENTER MEMBERS and begins January 22.

**Line Dancing Class:** Every Wednesday, 1:30-2:30pm. Have fun learning the basics of line dancing in this new class at the Civic Center. This class is FREE FOR CIVIC CENTER MEMBERS and begins February 4.

## YOUTH SPORTS REGISTRATION

>To register for Rec Sports Programs, visit <https://bit.ly/vhpr-registration>.

**Baseball:** Dec. 15- Jan. 31. Fees: \$230 per player, depending on age; \$675 per team

**Miracle League:** Dec. 17-Jan. 18. Fees: \$30

**Softball:** Nov. 30-Jan. 18. Fees: \$200 (resident)/\$275 (non-resident)

## ADULT SPORTS REGISTRATION

>To register for Rec Sports Programs, visit <https://bit.ly/vhpr-registration>.

**Rec & Competitive Basketball:** Jan. 5-Feb. 11. Fees: TBD

**Men's 35+ Basketball:** Jan. 5-Feb. 11. Fees: TBD

**Soccer:** Jan. 5-Feb. 11. Fees: \$2000 per team

## SENIOR PROGRAMS

**Bingocize:** January 6, 15, 22, 27, 10:30am. Bingocize is a 10-week program at New Merkel House that combines exercise and health information with the familiar game of Bingo. Each session usually lasts 45-60 minutes.

**Senior Luncheon:** January 12, 12pm. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Civic Center with entertainment by the Trussville T-Squares! Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

**Lunch Bunch & Trip: Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame:** January 15, 9am. Enjoy a fun day out with a visit to the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame, followed by lunch at The Fish Market Downtown. Meet at the Civic Center at 9am; transportation provided.

**Crochet Nook:** January 15 & 29, 10:30am. Love fiber arts? Bring your current projects or come to New Merkel House for inspiration from our volunteer instructor, Ms. Myra. All skill levels are welcome, from beginners to advanced crocheters.

**Line Dance Social:** January 23, 1-3pm. Join us for a fun afternoon of line dancing and socializing at the Hoover Senior Center! Tickets are \$5 each, and space is limited — buy your ticket ASAP.

**Birthday & Bingo:** January 26, 10:30am. Join us at New Merkel House to celebrate all January birthdays! Enjoy delicious cake, warm company and plenty of fun with spirited bingo games.

**ASO Coffee Concert: Epic Melodies:** January 30, 9am. Join us for a trip to the Alys Stephens Center to see the Alabama Symphony Orchestra perform "Epic Melodies: Tchaikovsky & Brahms," followed by lunch at the Paw Paw Patch after the concert. Meet at the Civic Center at 9am; transportation provided.

**Bingocize:** February 5, 12, 26, 10:30am. Bingocize is a 10-week program at New Merkel House that combines exercise and health information with the familiar game of Bingo. Each session usually lasts 45-60 minutes.

**Mahjong Camp:** February 9, 11, 13, 10am-12pm. Join us on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to learn mahjong rules, strategies and techniques in a fun, welcoming environment. Whether you're new or need a refresher, you'll leave ready to play! Camp cost: \$150.

**Senior Luncheon:** February 9, 12pm. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Civic Center with entertainment by the Tradewind Band! Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

**Lunch Bunch & Trip: Montgomery, AL:** February 10, 7am. Tour the state capital, followed by lunch at Panny George's Kitchen. Meet at the Civic Center at 7am; transportation provided.

**Mardi Gras Master Games Celebration:** February 17, 10am-1pm. Celebrate Fat Tuesday with us while learning about the upcoming Masters Games! Enjoy games, prizes, lunch and music with DJ Russ.

**Crochet Nook:** February 19, 10:30am. Love fiber arts? Bring your current projects or come to New Merkel House for inspiration from our volunteer instructor, Ms. Myra. All skill levels are welcome, from beginners to advanced crocheters.

**ASO Coffee Concert: Echoes of a Nation:** February 20, 9am. Join us for a trip to the Alys Stephens Center to see the Alabama Symphony Orchestra perform "Echoes of a Nation," followed by lunch at Niki's West. Meet at the Civic Center at 9am; transportation provided.

**Birthday & Bingo:** February 23, 10:30am. Join us at New Merkel House to celebrate all February birthdays! Enjoy delicious cake, warm company and plenty of fun with spirited bingo games.

**Bingocize:** March 5, 10, 17, 31, 10:30am. Bingocize is a 10-week program at New Merkel House that combines exercise and health information with the familiar game of Bingo. Each session usually lasts 45-60 minutes.

**Crochet Nook:** March 5 & 19, 10:30am. Love fiber arts? Bring your current projects or come to New Merkel House for inspiration from our volunteer instructor, Ms. Myra. All skill levels are welcome, from beginners to advanced crocheters.

**Senior Luncheon:** March 9, 12pm. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Civic Center with entertainment by the Kool Kats! Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

**St. Patrick's Day Party:** March 17, 10:30am. Join us for a festive party featuring fun games, themed snacks, and plenty of Irish-inspired cheer. Don't forget to wear green and get ready for some fun!

**ASO Coffee Concert: A Farewell to London:** March 20, 9am. Join us for a trip to the Alys Stephens Center to see the Alabama Symphony Orchestra perform "A Farewell to London," followed by lunch at Irondale Cafe. Meet at the Civic Center at 9am; transportation provided.

**Trip to World of Coca-Cola & Georgia Aquarium:** March 24, 7am. Get ready for an exciting day in Atlanta! Enjoy a guided tour of the World of Coca-Cola, grab lunch at Coastline Café, then explore the Georgia Aquarium. Cost is \$85 per person (lunch not included). **Reservations and payment are due no later than February 23, so don't miss out!**

**Birthday & Bingo:** March 30, 10:30am. Join us at New Merkel House to celebrate all March birthdays! Enjoy delicious cake, warm company and plenty of fun with spirited bingo games.



# Only Rain in the Storm Drain!

*What happens when debris  
enters storm drains?*

- It is **ILLEGAL!** Violators who put leaves, clippings or other materials in the storm drains are subject to fines or, when warranted, additional enforcement by the City.
- Clogged storm drains may result in **flooding**, creating safety hazards and causing property damage.
- Rotting leaves cause **algae blooms in water bodies**, harming plants and animals and reducing water quality.
- Debris clogging storm drains can be a breeding ground for **rodents and insects**.
- Cleaning out clogged storm drains **costs taxpayers money!**

## WELLNESS CLASSES

*featuring Cultivate Wellness*



### Nutrition for Your Best Energy

January 8, 6:30 pm

### Cholesterol Management & Heart Disease Prevention

January 15, 6:30 pm

### Childhood Nutrition & Family Wellness

January 24, 12:00 pm

### Nutrition for an Endurance Event

January 29, 6:30 pm



[vestavialibrary.org](http://vestavialibrary.org)

# Vestavia Hills DOGWOOD FESTIVAL

*Mark Your Calendar!*

The Vestavia Hills Dogwood Festival – held annually throughout the months of March and April – celebrates all of the incredible things Vestavia Hills has to offer!

**THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE DURING THE DOGWOOD FESTIVAL!**



**SCAN FOR DETAILED EVENT INFO**

or visit

[https://bit.ly/Dogwood\\_Fest](https://bit.ly/Dogwood_Fest)

**CONNECT ON SOCIAL!**

 [VHDogwoodFestival](https://www.facebook.com/VHDogwoodFestival)

 [vh\\_dogwood\\_festival](https://www.instagram.com/vh_dogwood_festival)



## A Greener Future for Everyone!

**Arbor Week in Alabama:**  
Last full week of February

**Arbor Day:**  
April 24, 2026

**Arbor Day is celebrated to:**

- Recognize the value trees provide to communities: cleaning the air and water; providing shade; cooling urban areas; reducing stress and supporting wildlife
- Learn about trees
- Plant trees
- Promote health and well-being
- Mitigate global warming



TREE CITY USA

A stylized illustration of a tree being planted. In the foreground, a small green seedling with three leaves is growing out of a hole in the ground. A shovel with a black handle and a grey blade is stuck in the soil next to the hole. A red-handled tool is partially visible on the left. In the background, a large, mature green tree with a brown trunk stands against a light blue sky. The ground is a mix of green and yellow, suggesting grass and soil.

**COMMUNITY NEWS**  
1032 Montgomery Highway  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216

Presort  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boaz, AL  
Permit No. 17

A photograph of Sean Dietrich, a man with a full brown beard and curly hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a dark blue button-down shirt. He is holding a black microphone with a green band around it and appears to be speaking. The background is dark and out of focus.

# SEAN DIETRICH

**MARCH 24**  
**10:30 AM**

Tickets \$25  
On sale Feb 2

[vestavialibrary.org](http://vestavialibrary.org)