

# TIMES-JOURNAL

**FOOTBALL FRIDAY**  
7 teams enter region play tonight  
**Page B1**

**INSIDE TODAY** Prepare for what Hurricane Irma can do » PAGE 4

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# Prepare for hurricane season

## Hurricane Irma could change direction

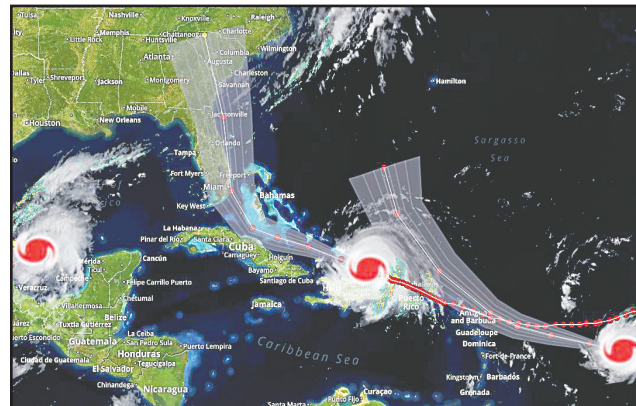
By **Kayla Beaty**  
kbeaty@times-journal.com

Hurricane season is upon us and authorities are urging citizens to be prepared for the conditions it may bring.

DeKalb County Emergency Management Agency Assistant Director Michael Posey said Hurricane Irma's current status shows her possible path as going up the East Coast.

"Right now, Irma is still out in the Atlantic off of the Bahamas, just west of Puerto Rico," Posey said. "The latest tracks are showing the hurricane to go up along the East Coast to probably make landfall twice, possibly once or twice in Florida and once in Georgia and South Carolina."

Posey said Irma's unpredictable path shows Alabama only seeing remnants from the storm. He said a change in direction is possible, but if Hurricane Irma is pushed into the gulf, there is a possibility Alabama would



See Irma on Page A2



# Mongo's Opus

Local team to compete in Nashville Red Bull Flugtag competition

Bradley Roberts | Times-Journal

Pictured are Robert McCurdy and Anna McCurdy.

Story and Photos By **Bradley Roberts**  
broberts@times-journal.com

A local, ragtag team guided by their fearless leader, "Mongo," will launch a 24-foot wide "err craft" off a 30-foot ramp across Nashville's Cumberland River on Sept. 23.

The group is competing in the annual Red Bull Flugtag competition at Nashville's Riverfront Park. The free event is open to the public, and it begins at 11 a.m.

Flugtag means "flying day" in German, and this particular competition revolves around each team of competitors' ability to design a human-powered aircraft that will be judged on distance, creativity, showmanship, innovation and uniqueness of design.

The craft has to fly, though, and you don't get more than one heat to make sure it does. There's one shot at greatness, and then the craft is collected by dredge, drug over to a junk barge and then shipped off to "Flugtag Heaven."

Fort Payne native Anna McCurdy had grown up watching the competition. So, when McCurdy, who has since relocated to Chattanooga, saw that Red Bull would be continuing this year's contest in Nashville, there was no other option. She had to do this.

See Mongo on Page A5

## BOARD OF EDUCATION Board approves budget

Local money holds steady

By **Kelsey Daenen**  
kdaenen@times-journal.com


The DeKalb County Board of Education approved the fiscal year 2018 budget on Thursday.

Chief school financial officer Anthony Cooper presented an overview of the budget to the board. He said the amount of federal dollars increased since the last budget

**Budget**

Fiscal Year 2018 Budget:

Total budget:	\$88 million range
State:	\$58 million at 65 percent
Federal:	\$13 million at 14 percent
Local:	16.5 million at 19 percent
Other (extra curricular, etc.):	\$882,000 at 1 percent



Jason Barnett

See BOE on Page A2



Local couple celebrates 68 years of marriage.

## Marriage milestone

Couple celebrated 68 years of marriage

By **Kayla Beaty**  
kbeaty@times-journal.com

A local couple, Verlon and Mary Ruth Stiefel, recently celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary at Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Verlon and Mary Ruth's daughter, Sarah Kirby, said DeKalb County Commission President Ricky Harcrow presented the couple with a resolution to recognize their union. Kirby said the couple also received a special invitation from Montgomery.

"Ricky Harcrow came and presented a resolution to them," Kirby said. "They got a plaque and an invitation from the governor's office to come and celebrate

See Marriage on Page A2

### Funeral services

- ▶ Heather Nicole Smith
- ▶ Ed Rochester

See Page A3

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### Inside

- Classified.....A7
- Comics.....A8
- Dear Abby.....A6
- Deaths.....A3
- Sports.....B1
- Viewpoints.....A4

### Today's weather



**Morgan**  
Sponsored by Dr. Rob  
Draw the Weather — See Page A3

**74** High  
**53** Low  
Today will be sunny.

**DeSoto Country Club**  
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Fort Payne

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From Page A1 **Mongo: 'You had to have an initial drawing and you had to fill out the application'**



This year's flugtag competition in Nashville will be Sept. 23 at 11 a.m. at Nashville's Riverfront Park.

"My brother, Bob, and I used to watch it, and we always talked about it like, 'Hey, that would be fun to do,'" Anna McCurdy said. "It was sort of just one of those bucket list things. My friend, Jason [Curtsinger] and Rhona [Lynn] and I sat around, and we talked about what we would do and what it would look like."

She said she filled out the application. They would have to present their preliminary plans to Red Bull. There were about 100 total applicants.

"It's [Anna's] birthday weekend, and so she started researching it," said Tiffanie Baker, Anna's cousin and science teacher at Fort Payne Middle School. "To even do this, you had to have an initial drawing and you had to fill out the application with your design plan, and once you get that they'll have to look at it and approve it."

Bob McCurdy helped with that initial drawing and design. "I thought it was kind of shot in the dark, but it's worth a try," Bob McCurdy said. "Anna kind of coordinated everything, and I've been helping with the concepts."

Curtsinger is a geotechnical engineer and Bob McCurdy a journeyman/lineman. So, they had enough general knowledge to create this craft.

The team was rounded out by Baker, who is related to the McCurdys.

But, Bob and Anna knew there was a piece that would be essential to project.

They had to have their father's help.

"She told me she was interested in it, and asked me if I'd help," Robert McCurdy said. "I told her, 'If you can get selected, then I'll help,' thinking there's no way she'd ever get selected out of the group."

They were one of 43 teams selected for the competition.

**MONGO'S OPUS**

Robert McCurdy has flown planes his entire adult life.

He's a self-proclaimed "aviation nut," and before he could even read, he was tearing out the aviation section of his encyclopedia, mesmerized by the words and photos on the page. McCurdy went on to become a fighter pilot in the U.S. Marines, and he ended up working for Delta as a commercial pilot for 33

years.

In the Marines, he was given a call sign with every flight — there were quite a few flights. Robert McCurdy flew F-4 and A-4 fighter bomber planes, as well as OV-10 and C-117s. He served six and a half years on active duty and another six on reserve.

"When I was on active duty, my call sign was, 'POSS,' which was my father's," Robert McCurdy said. "When I got into the reserves, the squadron was called the 'Rebels,' and we had our individual call signs."

He said all of the pilots wanted "spicy" call signs. This was where he was given the nickname and eventual call sign, "MONGO."

"I guess there was some resemblance to the guy in 'Blazing Saddles,'" Robert McCurdy said. "He was best known as the guy who knocked out a horse. So, that was my call sign in the reserves."

Years later, Robert McCurdy flew with the Sky Warriors in Atlanta, and he took his children to watch. They each heard people on the tarmac refer to their father as "Mongo."

So, as a way to pay

tribute and honor their father and "fearless leader" the team chose the name, "Mongo's Opus."

"We thought it would be cool to honor my dad," Anna McCurdy said. "He's the aviation specialist and our head engineer."

**FANCY DON'T LET ME DOWN**

The glider-style aircraft is being constructed in Robert's hangar at Isbell Field Airport in Fort Payne. The team cleaned out the space, and as soon as their application was approved, they went to work.

As part of the competition, you can get up to five sponsors. In Fort Payne, Builders Supply has provided all of the building materials, and there have been monetary donations from the local Experimental Aviation Association Chapter 890. Lookout Mountain Hang Gliding is also a sponsor. The team has a Kick-starter online where you can donate, as well — just go to kickstarter.com and search "Mongo's Opus."

The money raised will help them pay for supplies and pay for the trip to Nashville, too.

There are specifications

outlined by Red Bull for the competition, but for the most part the design of the craft is entirely up to its team. Mongo's "err craft" is about 24-feet wide from end-to-end of each wing. The wings are constructed of small 1-by-4 wooden boards, screwed together and secured with adhesive tape.

The inside of the wings are made out of pink, lightweight foam sheets, which can be purchased at any hardware store. The wings will be shrink wrapped by clear-plastic that will be painted and feature logos from each of the group's sponsors.

But, laying across the back of Mongo's Opus will be gigantic acoustic guitar. The guitar plays into one Red Bull's competition requirements.

"It was kind of Jason's idea that it would be good to honor Nashville," Anna McCurdy said. "So, it will be shaped like a giant guitar."

The group will also be dressed like Country music greats as part of their one-minute performance to the crowd before they take flight.

"My dad will be Charlie Daniels, Jason is Johnny Cash, Rhona will be Dolly Parton and

Tiffanie will be Minnie Pearl," Anna McCurdy said. "Bob will be Willie Nelson, and I'll be Reba and I'll be piloting."

She said she gave the craft the alternative name "Fancy" as an homage to Reba McEntire. She said they will play that song, as well as a few others paying tribute to Nashville.

"When you get to the platform and you're in full costume, you have one-minute worth of music and 30 seconds of that is just a fun skit to entertain the crowd, and the last 30 seconds is running up to the platform and pushing me off," Anna McCurdy said.

Anna McCurdy said the craft will undergo minor tweaks between now and competition time. But there are no guarantees Mongo's Opus, or any of the other teams, will break the 258-foot distance record.

Either way, the experience will be worth it.

"This is just basically our way of honoring Nashville, and then my dad and his career — or possibly embarrassing him, I guess," Anna said with a smile.



Pictured from left to right are Mongo's Opus flugtag team members, Jason Curtsinger, Robert McCurdy, Anna McCurdy, Tiffanie Baker and Bob McCurdy. The last team member, Rhona Lynn, was not present.