



DISTINGUISHED  
YOUNG WOMEN  
SCHOLARSHIP | LEADERSHIP | TALENT

COVINGTON COUNTY



**GRACE SHELLHOUSE**  
*Distinguished Young Woman of  
Covington County for 2023*

# defining moments



COVINGTON COUNTY

*“Energy and persistence  
conquer all things.”*

-Benjamin Franklin-



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# defining moments



COVINGTON COUNTY

LBW Community College Dixon Center  
Saturday, July 15, 2023

SATURDAY AFTERNOON - 2:00 P.M.

## Opening Number and Introductions

**Welcome**

**Little Sisters**

**Distinguished Darlings**

**Fitness**

*Participants 11-20*

**Talent**

*Participants 1-10*

**Self-Expression**

*Participants 11-20*

SATURDAY EVENING - 6:00 P.M.

## Opening Number and Introductions

**Welcome**

**Interview with Grace Shellhouse**

*DYW of Covington County for 2023*

**Fitness**

*Participants 1-10*

**Talent**

*Participants 11-20*

**Performance by Grace Shellhouse**

*DYW of Covington County 2023*

**Self-Expression**

*Participants 1-10*

**Performance by Isabella Kipp**

*DYW of Covington County 2023 Talent Winner*

**Performance by Peyton Prett Ray**

*DYW of Covington County 2016 Participant*

**Intermission**

**Farewell and Presentation of Awards**

**Announcement of Distinguished Young Woman of  
Covington County for 2024**

## EMCEES & PROGRAM STAFF

Parrish King, Katie King ..... Emcees  
Jerry Wishum ..... Technical Director  
Becky Spurlin Garner ..... Choreographer  
Vicki Popwell ..... Official Photographer

**SPECIAL THANKS TO** Kristy Beasley, Tori Norris, Amy Reynolds, John Reid McGlamory, Emory Garner, Callen Woodard, Amy Payton, Tripp Jones, Adrianna Carpenter, Nancy Hammett, Fadra Chance, Jan Breedlove, David Bryant and Blake Barton for volunteering their time to help make this year's program an excellent experience for the participants.

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 1 *Kylie Waters*



**High School:** Opp High School

**College Preference:** Lurleen B. Wallace Community College

**Career Goals:** Sonographer

**Talent:** Baton Twirling

**Activities:** Opp High School Varsity Majorette, Peer Helpers, Opp High School Ambassador

**Achievements:**

## 2 *Cape Merrell*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Georgia Institute of Technology

**Career Goals:** Aerospace Engineering

**Talent:** Comedic Song

**Activities:** Andalusia High School Cheerleader Volleyball, Basketball, Anchor Club, Student Government Association, Usher Club, Covington Youth Leadership

**Achievements:** SGA President, City of Andalusia Ambassador, Highest Chemistry Average, Alabama Youth Tour Delegate, Highest Geometry Average, Anchor Club Treasurer, National Youth Leadership Council Member, Covington County Youth Leadership President, Basketball Defensive Player of the Year, Cheer Captain

## 3 *Ainsley Ricks*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** University of Alabama at Birmingham

**Career Goals:** Neonatologist

**Talent:** Modern Dance

**Activities:** ADTC Dancer, Andalusia High School Cheerleader

**Achievements:**

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 4 *Caroline Reeves*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Osteopathic Medicine

**Talent:** Color guard/Jazz Routine

**Activities:** AHS Girls Varsity Golf Team, AHS Color Guard, Diamond Dolls, Key Club, Usher Club, Anchor Club, Sub-Deb Social Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, SGA Representative, Carolina Baptist Youth Group

**Achievements:** 8th and 11th Grade DAR Youth Good Citizenship Award Recipient, Alabama Rural Electric Association Youth Tour 3rd Alternate, National Honors Society, All A Honor Roll 9th-11th grade, AHSAA 4A Girls All-Star Golf Team, Andalusia Area Wiregrass Female FCA Athlete of the Year, Andalusia High School Student of the Month, AHS Girls Golf Team Captain, AHS Color Guard Co-Captain, Sub-Deb Social Club Vice President

## 5 *Gracie Grissom*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant

**Talent:** Jazz Dance

**Activities:** Color guard, Yearbook, Covington County Youth Leadership Member, Girl Talk Ministries, Usher Club, Spanish Club, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), National Honor Society, Student Government Association (SGA), Key Club

**Achievements:** Yearbook Co-editor, DAR Good Citizen, All A's All years of school, SGA Class Representative, Veteran's Essay Contest Winner, FCCLA Secretary, Dual Enrollment Student

## 6 *Aubrey Pittman*



**High School:** Straughn High School

**College Preference:** Troy University or Auburn University at Montgomery

**Career Goals:** Business

**Talent:** Singing

**Activities:** Children's Church, Choir, VBS Co-Director, Operation Christmas Child Co-Director, CEC Youth Tour Winner, Basketball, Track, Cross Country

**Achievements:** • All A's, Citizenship Award, Hustle Award, State Race in Track, Children's Committee, Sandra Ralls Award

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 8 *Madison Castleberry*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** University of South Alabama

**Career Goals:** Dermatologist

**Talent:** Rifle Routine

**Activities:** Tennis Team, Color guard (rifle and flag), Band (trumpet), Anchor club, Usher club, Spanish club

**Achievements:** National Honors Society

## 9 *Sam Lawton*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Nurse Anesthetist

**Talent:** Modern Dance

**Activities:** Dance, Marching Band, Concert Band, Usher Club, Anchor Club, FCCLA, Spanish Club, National Honors Society, Child Care

**Achievements:** Highest Honors English 10 Average 2022, Outstanding Junior Anchor 2022-23, Usher Club Vice President 2022-23

## 10 *Alyssa Richardson*



**High School:** Straughn High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Aesthetic Nursing

**Talent:** Speed Painting

**Activities:** Working, SGA Diplomat

**Achievements:** Principal Academic Achievement, Honor Society, Outstanding Academic Excellence, Principle Academic Excellence

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 11 *Katie Kennedy*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Residential and Commercial Development and Real Estate Sales

**Talent:** Balance Beam Routine

**Activities:** Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Golf, Varsity Cheerleading, Andalusia High School Usher Club Treasurer, Andalusia High School Anchor Club, Andalusia High School Diamond Doll, Andalusia High School Marching Band Andette, Andalusia High School Key Club, Varsity Cross Country, Student Government Association Representative

**Achievements:** National Honors Society Member, All A Honor Roll, Meredith Miracles Volunteer Award, AHS Varsity Volleyball Defensive Specialist Award, AHS Varsity Softball Manager Award

## 12 *Ivy Rogers*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Dermatologist

**Talent:** Ballet/Jazz Dance

**Activities:** Senior Company Dancer at Andalusia Ballet, Majorette in the Andalusia High School Band, Lead Singer in Andalusia First Baptist Church Worship Team, Peer Helper Club Member and Officer, Anchor Club Member, Usher Club Member and Officer, Spanish Club Member, Speech and Debate Team Member and Officer, SGA Representative: Class Artist

**Achievements:** • 1st Runner up to Andalusia High School's PowerSouth Youth Tour essay contest, Member of the Andalusia High School ACT score of 30+ club, Recipient of Meredith's Miracles Miracle Maker award for 2021, 2022, and 2023., All As, National Honor Society Member, Top Ten average for AHS class of 2024, CollegeBoard Rural and Small Town Scholar National Recognition Nominee, Andalusia City Ambassador

## 13 *Casey Bulger*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Pediatrician

**Talent:** Baton and Knife Twirling

**Activities:** • Dance, Baton, Fishing, Hunting, Kayaking

**Achievements:** National Honors Society

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 14 *Madison Webb*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Lurleen B. Wallace Community College

**Career Goals:** Landscape Architect

**Talent:** Rifle Routine

**Activities:** •Varsity basketball, Color guard, Tennis, Cross Country, Usher club

**Achievements:** AASSP Outstanding Student, Meredith's Miracles Miracle Maker Award

## 15 *Isabella Burgess*



**High School:** Opp High School

**College Preference:** University of Alabama at Birmingham

**Career Goals:** Sports Medicine Physician

**Talent:** Dance

**Activities:** Ballet, Contemporary, Jazz

**Achievements:** Beta Club, Mu Alpha Theta, Senior Company Member of The Academy at Andalusia Ballet

## 16 *Anna Martin*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** United States Air Force Academy

**Career Goals:** Fighter Pilot

**Talent:** Musical Kata

**Activities:** Concert Bank, Color guard, Usher Club, Peer Helper, Key Club, Cross Country, Isshinryu Karate, Jiu Jitsu, Archery

**Achievements:** National Honor Society, Highest Average English Composition - 2nd Semester, Top 10 Junior, All A Honor Roll, Miracle Maker



# PARTICIPANTS

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## 17 *Liz Ann Jackson*



**High School:** Opp High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Pharmacist

**Talent:** Singing

**Activities:** • Future Business Leaders of America, Operation Christmas Child Student Relations Team Member, Opp High School Junior and Senior Ambassador, Opp High School Peer Helper, Opp High School Diamond Dolls, Beta Club, Mu Alpha Theta, Southside Baptist Church Praise and Worship Team Member, Student Government Freshman and Sophomore Vice President and Overall Treasurer, Love Like Lexi Student Leader

**Achievements:** • Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizenship Award, LBW Community College Freshman Honors Award, Alabama Girls State Delegate, Hugh O'Brian (HOBY) Youth Leadership Conference, Covington County Youth Leaders, Top 10 Finalist for Power South Youth Tour, Top 3 Academic Opp High School Juniors, 4x National Champion Cheerleader, 3x State Champion Cheerleader, All A Honor Roll (9th, 10th, and 11th grade)

## 18 *Ava Tomberlin*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** Auburn University

**Career Goals:** Pediatrician

**Talent:** Baton Twirling

**Activities:** Twirling the baton, Running, Shopping, Swimming, Playing Corn hole, Reading my Bible, Going to the Beach

**Achievements:** City of Andalusia Ambassador, Covington County Youth Leadership Program, Alabama Rural Electric Association Youth Tour, Hugh O'brian Youth Leadership (HOBY), Daughters of the American Revolution Citizenship Award(DAR), Girl's State Representative for Andalusia High School, National Honor Society, Class of 2024 Class President, Student Government Association Vice President, Principal's Student Advisory Committee for Andalusia High School

## 19 *Emmy Mixson*



**High School:** Andalusia High School

**College Preference:** University of Alabama

**Career Goals:** Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Counselor

**Talent:** Flag Routine

**Activities:** Andalusia High School Color guard, First Baptist Youth Member, Speech and Debate Club President, Andalusia High School Spanish Club Member, Memolusia Yearbook Staff, Andalusia High School Peer Helper Treasurer, Andalusia High School Usher Club, Full Tummy Project Volunteer, Andalusia High School Concert Band, Andalusia High School Class Representative

**Achievements:** College Board National Rural and Small Town Recognition Award, Covington County Youth Leadership Team, SGA Parliamentarian, HOBY Youth Leadership Camp, National Youth Leadership Forum at Harding University, DAR Good Citizen 2021, PowerSouth Youth Tour Essay Finalist, National Honors Society Member, All A Honor Roll, Highest Precalculus Average Award 2022-23

# PARTICIPANTS

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## 20 Summer Killough



**High School:** Straughn High School

**College Preference:** University of Alabama

**Career Goals:** Elementary Education

**Talent:** Speed Painting

**Activities:** Church, Riding ATV's, Painting, Crafting

**Achievements:** National High School Honors Society, Phi Theta Kappa

## LITTLE SISTERS

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Caroline Meyerhoff

Anna Beth Jackson

Alyson Richburg

Brittan Bennett

Lily Jo Elmore

Annie Park

Maecy Starnes

Kinsley Stovall

Milasia Jones

Gracyie Sansom

Marli Rolling

Isabella Grissett

Maggie Ruth Wiggins

Audrey Ward

Makenna Harrelson

Carnley Beth Johnson

Ada Blackstock

Olivia Cravey

Sadie Carpenter

Lexi Stallworth

Klyasia Woods

Sarah Katherine Reese

Saranel Brundidge

Shambresha Woods

Victoria Walker

Zoey Phillips

Ginny Jeter

## DISTINGUISHED DARLINGS

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Aida Bryan

Alice Rogers

Brylee Williams

Cadie McClung

Camryn Smith

Caroline Bumpers

Caroline Griffin

Eden Popwell

Ella Wiggins

Ella-Kate Worley

Emalynn Phillips

Joy Marie Amis

Karrington Weaver

Khloe Morris

Kinlee Phillips

Lexie Kervin

Maxwell Bilger

Mila Bay Newton

Pearson King

Raylee Tidwell

# Carrington Hodge

## DISTINGUISHED YOUNG WOMAN OF AMERICA FOR 2023

Alabama's Carrington Hodge was named Distinguished Young Woman of America for 2023 during the 66th National Finals.

Carrington is a graduate of Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School. Her academic honors include being named a 2022-2023 CollegeBoard National African American Recognition Program Scholar, AP Scholar, Princeton Prize Certificate of Merit recipient, and more.

Outside of the classroom, Carrington is passionate about education and social justice. The project she devotes most of her time to is an initiative she founded, "Unmasked: The Simone Project." The project began as a YouthServe assignment that Carrington strongly felt should continue on. The organization addresses topics such as minority history, social justice, and current events that may be uncomfortable to study in a classroom environment.

Aside from "Unmasked," Carrington is extremely passionate about working with children. This love for impacting youth has led her to become involved in organizations like YouthServe and has influenced her future career path in pediatrics.

In the fall, Carrington will attend Vanderbilt University on a pre-medical track, where she will also be on the dance team. She plans to attend medical school and pursue a career in pediatric neurosurgery. After dancing competitively for much of her life, she is most excited about expressing her love for dance in a new way with the team at sporting events and school activities.

With over \$57,000 in cash scholarships and a gold medallion, Carrington will represent the Class of 2023 as Distinguished Young Woman of America for this year.

### FUN FACTS

- If you ask Carrington what her perfect Saturday looks like, it definitely involves some sort of activity! She loves water parks, rollerskating, and being active.
- Carrington has been dancing since the age of three and will be on the Vanderbilt dance team starting this fall.
- While her comfort show is "Grey's Anatomy," she's recently been binge-watching "This is Us."
- She is an only child! Carrington is her parent's pride and joy, and she knows they will be her biggest cheerleaders even when she moves away for college in another state.
- Carrington's hidden talent - she sings! Whether it's in a choir or in the car, Carrington loves to carry a tune.
- When asked who inspires her, she replied "Definitely Julianne (Distinguished Young Woman of Alabama for 2022). I have grown up with her and watched her balance school, dance, and service. I have been inspired by the way she handles it all."

*LEFT TO RIGHT, CLOCKWISE: Carrington participating in the Fitness category; having fun at Bellingrath Gardens and Home; taking a selfie with her new gold medallion; on the beaches of Dauphin Island; at the Girl Scout Party; performing her talent on stage.*







# DYW OF COVINGTON COUNTY

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## Grace Shellhouse

*Distinguished Young Woman of Covington County for 2023*

Grace Shellhouse is honored to have represented Covington County at the Distinguished Young Women of Alabama program in January. Grace is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Benny Shellhouse of Andalusia, Alabama, and is a proud graduate of Andalusia High School. Grace was highly involved in her school as well as the community during her high school years as AHS marching band color guard captain, first chair flute and a member of National Honor Society.

This past year, Grace has had an amazing and fulfilling experience serving as the Distinguished Young Woman of Covington County. In January, she traveled to Montgomery for a week to represent her county in the state DYW program. During her time at the state program, she met an amazing group of young women and created memories that will last a lifetime.

Grace will be attending college this fall at Troy University, and she plans to major in Political Science. She has been fortunate to receive the following scholarships: Troy University Chancellor's Scholarship, Troy University's Legacy Scholarship and the Mabel Amos Scholarship. Grace also received DYW Scholarships for being chosen as both the Distinguished Young Woman for Covington County and as the local program Self Expression and Interview winner.

Grace appreciates the program's impact on herself and encourages other young women to participate. Grace says, "I have loved every second of being Covington County's DYW for 2023. The connections I have made and the friendships I will keep have been my favorite part. It is an amazing opportunity, and I am honored to have represented this program for the past year."



# DYW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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<b>Janna Marsh</b> .....	<i>Chair</i>
<b>Celeste Mohon</b> .....	<i>Judges</i>
<b>Melissa Wilson</b> .....	<i>Financial Records</i>
<b>Tori Norris</b> .....	<i>Fundraising, Little Sisters</i>
<b>Katie King, Parrish King</b> .....	<i>Special Events</i>
<b>Jennifer Lindsey</b> .....	<i>Be Your Best Self</i>
<b>Ellen Sikes</b> .....	<i>Scholastic, Stage Management</i>
<b>Becky Garner</b> .....	<i>Production Management, Choreography</i>
<b>Hayden Raines</b> .....	<i>Distinguished Darlings</i>
<b>Jana Clark, Amy Reynolds</b> .....	<i>Backstage, Ticket Sales</i>
<b>Taylor Kelley</b> .....	<i>Publicity</i>
<b>Sydney Sanders</b> .....	<i>Program Book</i>
<b>Amber Clark</b> .....	

# EVALUATION PANEL

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**ELIZABETH WHITTON** graduated Magna Cum Laude from The University of Alabama in 2012 with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. Elizabeth resides in Enterprise, Alabama where she has been teaching 1st grade at Hillcrest Elementary for nine years. This year concluded her eleventh year in education and second year as a Kindergarten teacher. Elizabeth is very passionate about giving back to her community. She previously served as the 2020-2021 Enterprise Junior Women's Club President. She enjoys her time serving on the board for the Coffee County Distinguished Young Woman Program. Elizabeth is married to Matt Whitton, and they have two children Parker (4) and McCool (2).

**LINDSEY COXWELL, CPA**, is a Financial Controller with Aetna, a CVS Health Company. She is a two-time graduate of The University of Alabama at Birmingham with a Master's Degree in Accounting and a B.A. in Broadcast Journalism. Lindsey competed in the 1999 Jefferson County's Junior Miss Program and later served as a Junior Miss Big Sister for four years. Lindsey won the 2003 Miss UAB pageant and was also selected the overall talent winner. She went on to compete in the 2003 Miss Alabama Pageant. Currently she is a member of the Belle Lettres Service Organization, which sponsors the Distinguished Young Women of Monroe County Scholarship Program. Lindsey serves on the talent, interview, and choreography committees. She has served as a judge for numerous Distinguished Young Women programs across the state. Lindsey has over 20 years of dance training in ballet, tap, and jazz, and was an instructor for 15 years. She and her husband Will currently reside in Monroeville, Alabama. She serves as a board member of various local organizations including United Way of Monroe County and the Monroeville Industrial Development Board.

**MANDY LASSITER WEST**, a native of Cullomburg, Alabama, was Choctaw County's Junior Miss in 1994, where she won the talent, scholastic, and interview awards. She is a 1994 graduate of South Choctaw Academy, and graduated with Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration from Troy University in 1998 and 1999. She is a Certified Public Accountant and is currently employed as the controller at Gate Precast Company. She has been an auditor, judge, and volunteer with the Distinguished Young Women program for the past 23 years. Mandy is a member of the Belle Lettres Service Organization who sponsors the Distinguished Young Women of Monroe County program. She has also served DYW as a Be Your Best Self motivational speaker. Just last year her daughter, Caroline was named the 2023 Distinguished Young Woman of Monroe County. She is member of First Baptist Church Monroeville. Mandy and her husband Woody reside in Monroeville, Alabama, and have two children, Caroline and Cooper.

**VALERIE SAMUEL CRAWFORD** is a native of Tuskegee, Alabama. She resides in Montgomery, Alabama with her husband Sam. Valerie received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Alabama State University and a Master of Science Degree from Auburn University at Montgomery. Valerie is a retired educator with 34 years of service. She was employed with Auburn University, Auburn University at Montgomery, and the University of Alabama Birmingham. She is currently employed part-time with Alabama State University as an Academic Advisor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. Valerie has served as a scholastic and program judge for the Distinguished Young Women's program formerly Junior Miss for the past 22 years for several counties throughout the state of Alabama. Valerie is actively involved in her church where she serves on the administration as financial secretary/treasurer and a member of the praise team. She is an active life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Valerie enjoys spending time with her family and working in her yard.

**DR. ROBERT P. MATHNER** earned his Bachelor of Science from The University of Southern Mississippi, a Master's in Exercise and Sport Science from The University of Florida, and a Doctorate in Physical Education from The Florida State University. Dr. Mathner spent over 14 years working in athletics departments at four different NCAA Division I institutions and currently is a professor and Undergraduate Program Coordinator for the School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management (HSTM) at Troy University. In his role at TROY, Dr. Mathner and his colleagues have developed curricula and projects to improve the communication skills needed for successful interviews and presentations. He has published many peer-reviewed research articles in the areas of collegiate sports wagering and sportsmanship and has presented his research at conferences and symposiums nationwide. In addition, he has judged several pageants and Distinguished Young Women (DYW) competitions in the state of Alabama and serves on the DYW Coffee County Board of Directors. He is currently serving as President of Forged Men's Ministry. He has been happily married to Dawn, his wife of 29 years, and together are the proud parents of three children: Amber Nagele of Jupiter, Florida; Kade Mathner, and Kyla Mathner, Alabama's Distinguished Young Woman of 2019.

# SCHOLASTIC PANEL

JENNIFER GARDNER, Auburn University at Montgomery

## CASH SCHOLARSHIPS

This year Distinguished Young Women of Covington County will award \$22,500 in cash scholarships which can be used for tuition and fees, room and board, books or other educational expenses at any accredited institution of higher learning.

<b>DYW of Covington County 2024</b> .....	\$5,000 Tuition Scholarship
<b>First Alternate</b> .....	\$4,000 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Second Alternate</b> .....	\$3,000 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Third Alternate</b> .....	\$2,000 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Fourth Alternate</b> .....	\$1,000 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Interview</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Scholastics</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Talent</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Self-Expression</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Fitness</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Spirit</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Be Your Best Self Essay</b> .....	\$500 Tuition Scholarship
<b>Rising Star</b> .....	\$250 Tuition Scholarship

## COLLEGE-GRANTED SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to the cash scholarship awarded, the Distinguished Young Woman of Covington County for 2024 will receive a \$3,000 tuition scholarship from Lurleen B. Wallace Community College. It must be used by the end of the spring 2025 semester.



Educational institutions across the country offer college funding opportunities for Distinguished Young Women participants. To view college-granted scholarship opportunities, visit [distinguishedyw.org](http://distinguishedyw.org). Please check with the college or university for any restrictions or conditions that may apply.

# EVALUATION STANDARDS

Distinguished Young Women judging standards and ideals are universal, based on qualities and characteristics—lasting values—that make up the entire individual. The basis of selection and the format are the same at the local, state, and national levels, emphasizing excellence in scholarship, personality, physical well-being, creativity and human relations. Half of the judging procedures are “behind the scenes” in scholastic achievement and the judges’ interview. Onstage presentations make up the other half of the judging: fitness, self-expression and talent.

### INTERVIEW .....25%

In a 10 minute interview and discussion session with each candidate, the panel looks for perception, a sense of values, clarity of expression, concern and ability in human relations, depth of knowledge, ability to think and reason.

### SCHOLASTICS.....25%

A panel of qualified educators review and rate transcripts of grades and scholastic test and college entrance examinations.

### TALENT .....20%

Judging is based on originality, technical ability, appropriateness of selection and costume, stage presence during performance of a stage presentation of a vocal, instrumental, dance, etc.

### SELF-EXPRESSION.....15%

Grace, poise, carriage and posture, composure, speech and ability to communicate, and choice of gown

### FITNESS.....15%

Coordination, stamina, agility, posture and carriage in sports attire are considered in an overall evaluation of health and physical well-being.



# THROUGH THE YEARS

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Since its beginning, America's Junior Miss program, now known as Distinguished Young Women of America, has become the oldest and largest national scholarship program for high school girls. The first national finals of Junior Miss, held in Mobile, Alabama, in 1958, was a spin-off of Mobile's Azalea Trail Festival launched by the Mobile Jaycees as a positive and constructive program for America's young women. Open to high school senior girls, eighteen states sent representatives to participate in the first national competition.

Through the years, the Junior Miss program has made a number of changes to reflect the ever-changing roles of America's young women. A program name change was made several years ago, but the Junior Miss name was later reinstated. AJM continued to struggle with national support and public perception, and after much research, the AJM Board decided to "re-brand" the program in order to clearly identify the organization as a national scholarship program for high school girls. In addition, a new position statement was formulated and a new name, Distinguished Young Women of America, was chosen.

## PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The Distinguished Young Women program embraces diversity by seeking volunteers and participants from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In June of each year, representatives from all fifty states and the District of Columbia arrive in Mobile to participate in the national finals. The winner, as the Distinguished Young Woman of America, travels around the nation promoting the program and its "Be Your Best Self" platform which encourages all young people to succeed in life. Thousands of outstanding young women participate each year in local programs and compete for more than \$1.5 billion dollars in cash tuition and college-granted scholarships to participants at the local, state and national levels. Distinguished Young Women encourages each participant to complete her college education, serve her community, become a leader and thereby set a good example for other young people.

Distinguished Young Women is a non-profit organization governed by a board of civic, business and professionals leaders. The state franchise holder issues franchises to individuals, civic and service groups, and other community organizations to conduct local programs.

## HISTORY OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Covington County Junior Miss program began as an Andalusia Jaycees sponsored event from 1970 until 1974 when the Jaycees disbanded, although an at-large candidate was selected the following year. In 1979, Louisa

Belcer Baker, a former Covington County Junior Miss, reorganized the local program and laid the ground work for our long-standing program. The following year, Linda James and the late Susan Sullivan became co-chairmen of the newly reorganized program, and in 1985, a Board of Directors was added. Through the hard work, leadership and creativity of Louisa, Linda and Susan, the county program was revitalized and became an award-winning program. Nancy Hammett later became the local director and continued to oversee an outstanding program until her "retirement" in 2012. Our local program has been the recipient of a number of awards. It was among the Top 5 programs statewide on several occasions and in 1989 was named the Outstanding Local Program in the U.S. In 2005, Covington County was one of only seven counties in the state to receive a 4-star ranking.

Since its inception, the local program has had participants bring home cash scholarships and awards, as well as thousands of dollars made available from college-granted scholarships offered through the Alabama Junior Miss Foundation on the state level. In 1980, Susan Ashworth received a preliminary award in poise and appearance, and Patricia Vick received the overall scholastic achievement in 1981. In 1983, LaDonna Hutcherson brought excitement to our county when she was named first alternate in the state program. The ultimate pride and honor came in 1984 when Ginger Nettles became "our very own" Alabama's Junior Miss.

The winning tradition continued in 1985 when Traci Andrews was named second alternate. In 1989, Sharri Proctor was named to the Top Ten, and in 1997, Sarah Stone won a preliminary talent award and was second runner-up. In 1998, Jenny Nesbitt won the state scholastic achievement award. In 1999, Alexa Jones won a preliminary award in presence and composure, and in 2006, Sara Catherine Short won preliminary awards in self-expression and fitness and was in the top eight. Jesse Kelley won preliminary awards in fitness and self-expression in 2007, and Mallory Mims won a preliminary fitness award in 2009. In 2015, Allison Yant earned preliminary awards in talent and fitness. In 2016, Elizabeth McCalman brought excitement to the county when she placed in the top eight in the state finals and won three preliminary awards in talent, fitness and self-expression. In 2017, Lillian Andrews won a fitness preliminary award.

All of our "Has-Beens," as they are fondly known, have distinguished themselves not only in the local and state programs, but in what they have continued to accomplish. We are proud of each of them and thank them for the wonderful tradition they have helped establish in Covington County.

# THROUGH THE YEARS

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## OUR "HAS-BEENS"

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1970	Mary Ann McInnish	1990	Chrissy Malphrus	2007	Jessica Kelley
1971	Linda Larigan	1991	Christy James	2008	Allyn Powell
1972	Debbie Pebworth	1992	Heather Jacobs	2009	Mallory Mims
1973	Laurie Howell	1993	Emily Donaldson	2010	Lauren Powell
1974	Louisa Belcer	1994	Emily Bowers	2011	Devin Williamson
1975	Tambry Short	1995	Ashley Krudop	2012	Ander Helms
1979	Lynn Etheridge	1996	Amy Hall	2013	Mary Beth Correro
1980	Susan Ashworth	1997	Sarah Stone	2014	Emily Kelley
1981	Patricia Vick	1998	Jenny Nesbitt	2015	Allison Yant
1982	Ada Barnes	1999	Alexa Jones	2016	Elizabeth McCalman
1983	LaDonna Hutcherson	2000	Melissa McCord	2017	Lillian Andrews
1984	Ginger Nettles	2001	Morgan Goodwin	2018	Callen Woodard
1985	Traci Andrews	2002	Kelly Henderson	2019	Emory Garner
1986	Jill Spurlin	2003	Natalie Franklin	2020	Cameron Stephens
1987	Amy Smith	2004	Molly Grimes	2021	Ada Short
1988	Connie Roberts	2005	Kristen Kerr	2022	Marion Starnes
1989	Sharri Proctor	2006	Sara Catherine Short	2023	Grace Shellhouse

## BE YOUR BEST SELF

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The Be Your Best Self program allows Distinguished Young Women participants to reach out and encourage young people nationwide to make a commitment to being their best selves in areas such as academics, physical fitness, morality, character, and social and civic participation. Embracing the BYBS message empowers young people with valuable tools to face the challenges of negative peer pressure. Drawing on their own personal experiences, Distinguished Young Women program participants deliver helpful messages emphasizing the importance of setting goals and striving to reach them.

### **BE HEALTHY**

Be physically fit and drug free.

### **BE INVOLVED**

Serve your community.

### **BE STUDIOUS**

Stay in school.

### **BE AMBITIOUS**

Set and achieve goals.

### **BE RESPONSIBLE**

Live by moral and ethical principles.

defining  
moments

# BYBS ESSAY WINNER 2023

---

## Kayley Peebles "Ambition"

The idea behind “Be Your Best Self” is one that can change your attitude, change your perspective, and most importantly change the trajectory of your life. Even before I learned the five important elements of BYBS, I was already engaged in many of the attributes of the program’s philosophy. However, participating in Distinguished Young Women has allowed me to understand these topics from a new position so that I can finally learn to be my true best self.

For as long as I can remember, school has always been the most important aspect of my life. Learning was always fun for me, and I strived to be as studious as possible, especially when I was younger. When I was 10 years old, a family friend of ours graduated from high school as Valedictorian of her class. Oblivious to the meaning behind Myesha’s many honor cords and sashes, I enthusiastically asked my mother about them. It was during this time that I acquired a childhood dream that has been most prominent in my life thus far: become Valedictorian.

It was the allure of Myesha’s accolades and the applause following her speech that instilled this aspiration in me, but it was my perseverance that brought me closer to my goal every day. Along my journey, however, my goal somewhat changed. It was in high school that I realized I could be the Valedictorian who earned the position by making the best grades in my class or I could be the Valedictorian who joined a sport for the first time. I could be the Valedictorian who volunteered in her community and helped bag free food for children. I could be the Valedictorian who never attended a high school football game in my life but went to one because I knew I would regret it when I graduated. Or I could even be the Valedictorian who stepped outside her comfort zone and participated in a program called Distinguished Young Women. The path to my meaning of “Valedictorian” could have been as straight as an arrow, but I am so thankful it was not.

The “Be Your Best Self” message is one of hope, joy, and passion. To be your best self is to prosper in your strengths, battle your weaknesses, and blossom into the person you aspire to be. I will continue to share this motivation with others just as it was shared with me because I truly believe that it has the power to transform the lives of everyone involved. Just as Myesha inspired me, I want to influence others to pursue their dreams to spark their ambition.



# BYBS ESSAY WINNER 2023

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London McClure

"Gratitude"

In December of last year my family moved to Covington County. It was the middle of my junior year and my life felt completely uprooted. I was resistant to the change and frankly bitter. I felt the move was going to ruin my established plans and that I wouldn't be able to recover. Alas, as I immersed myself into the culture I slowly became a proprietor of change. I was surprised at how welcoming the community was and how much the community has to offer. I was able to take the five elements of Be Your Best Self philosophy to change my mindset and establish new goals for the future.

One of the things I'm most grateful for from moving to Covington County is the introduction to the DYW program. I first heard about it from a friend who expressed interest in joining. She described it as a real opportunity to showcase my academic skill. School has always been a great comfort to me. It's something I enjoy and know I am good at, and something I can strive to be better at. When I learned that DYW showcases academic achievement, it was exciting because I've never been given the opportunity before. However, then I learned about the fitness portion of DYW. As someone who has never played any sports or taken any dance classes, the fitness portion was extremely daunting. It almost completely deterred me from joining the program. I thought I was incapable. Fortunately, I was able to change my mindset with ambition. I worked hard on learning and mastering the dances and fitness required to be DYW. It was difficult, but with the motivation of becoming Covington County's next DYW it was worth it. I was able to achieve my goals with the support of my community. The other girls and board members helped me along the way and illustrated to me what makes a real distinguished young woman: someone who doesn't give up in face of adversary and someone who helps others overcome adversary. Without the support of the women in the program, throughout this journey I think I would have lacked the lesson that mindset is vital to success.

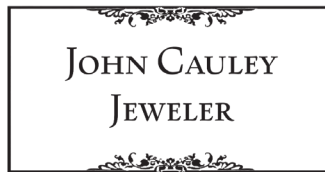
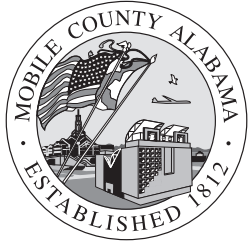
I also learned the importance of support from others in success. Being a primarily academic kid, it's easy to fall into a more self-centered culture of only looking out for your own needs. And when I was put in a situation that I was falling behind other girls, to me, it was justifiable to quit. I resented things that didn't come easy to me, and I was embarrassed of my lack of comprehension compared to the other girls. But to my surprise I wasn't welcomed with chuckles or cold shoulders, rather, help and advice. Without their help and encouragement, I believe I would still be struggling with the same negative mindset of "if I can't do it, then why try". The greatest lesson I've learned is not how to do a push up, but that helping people and encouraging people through their own difficult times is just as important to my success as it is theirs.

In conclusion, I am eternally grateful to my move to Covington County and the introduction to the DYW program and subsequently introducing me to the five elements of Be Your Best Self philosophy. The philosophy has shaped my mindset about community and ambition. I'm grateful for the changes I've endured and I'm excited to see how they will help me in my future.



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**CONNECT**

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Taylor Wood Kelley, 2013 Participant  
Alli Yant Ward, 2015 DYW  
Elizabeth McCalman, 2016 DYW  
Lillian Andrews, 2017 DYW  
Callen Woodard, 2018 DYW

Emory Garner, 2019 DYW  
Cameron Stephens, 2020 DYW  
Ada Short, 2021 DYW  
Marion Starnes, 2022 DYW  
Makayla Harrelson, 2022 Participant  
Mollie Furr, 2023 Participant  
Catherine Pettie, 2023 Participant  
Kayley Peebles, 2023 Participant  
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**(334) 222-2030**

*Grace Shellhouse*  
2023 Miss World Domino Queen

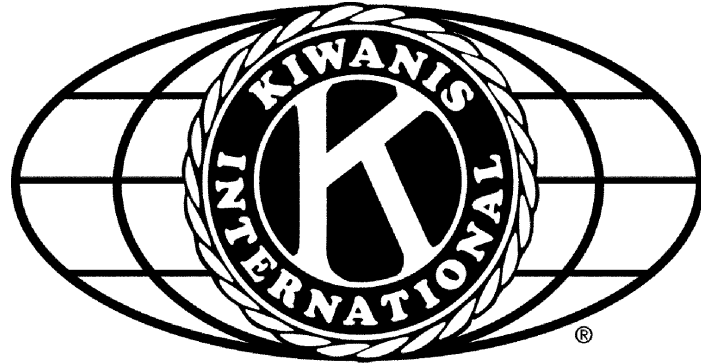


Andalusia Rotary Club is proud to have  
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The Distinguished Young Women of Covington County is pleased to continue its affiliation with the Andalusia Rotary Club. A portion of the proceeds from this year's World Championship Domino Tournament is used to help fund the annual Distinguished Young Women of Covington County program. The Andalusia Rotary Club presents a cash tuition scholarship to Distinguished Young Women. The Distinguished Young Woman is now designated as the Miss World Domino Queen and presides over the activities at the World Championship Domino Tournament each year. Through the years, the Andalusia Rotary Club has been an active participant in helping provide scholarships for the Distinguished Young Women of Covington County Program.

[worldchampionshipdomino.com](http://worldchampionshipdomino.com)

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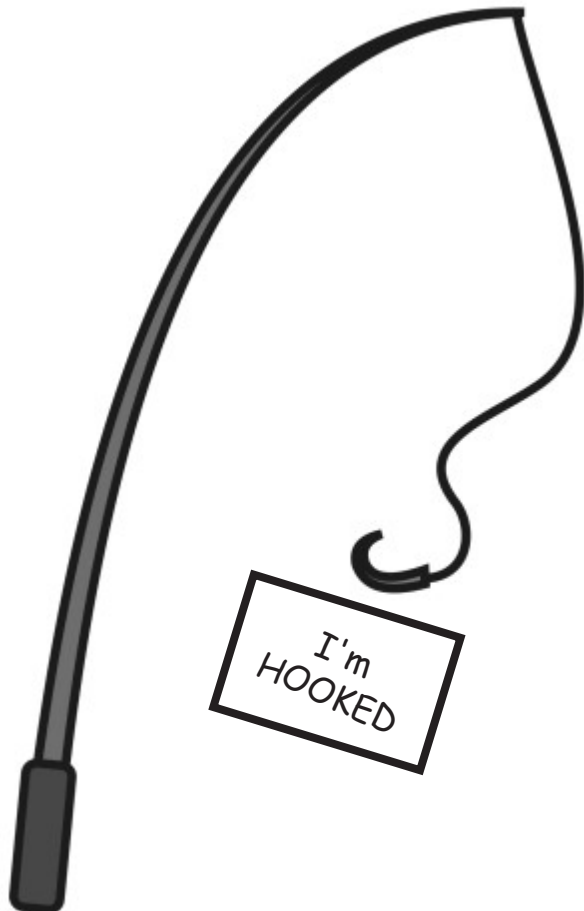


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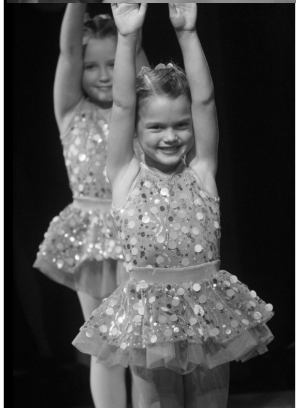
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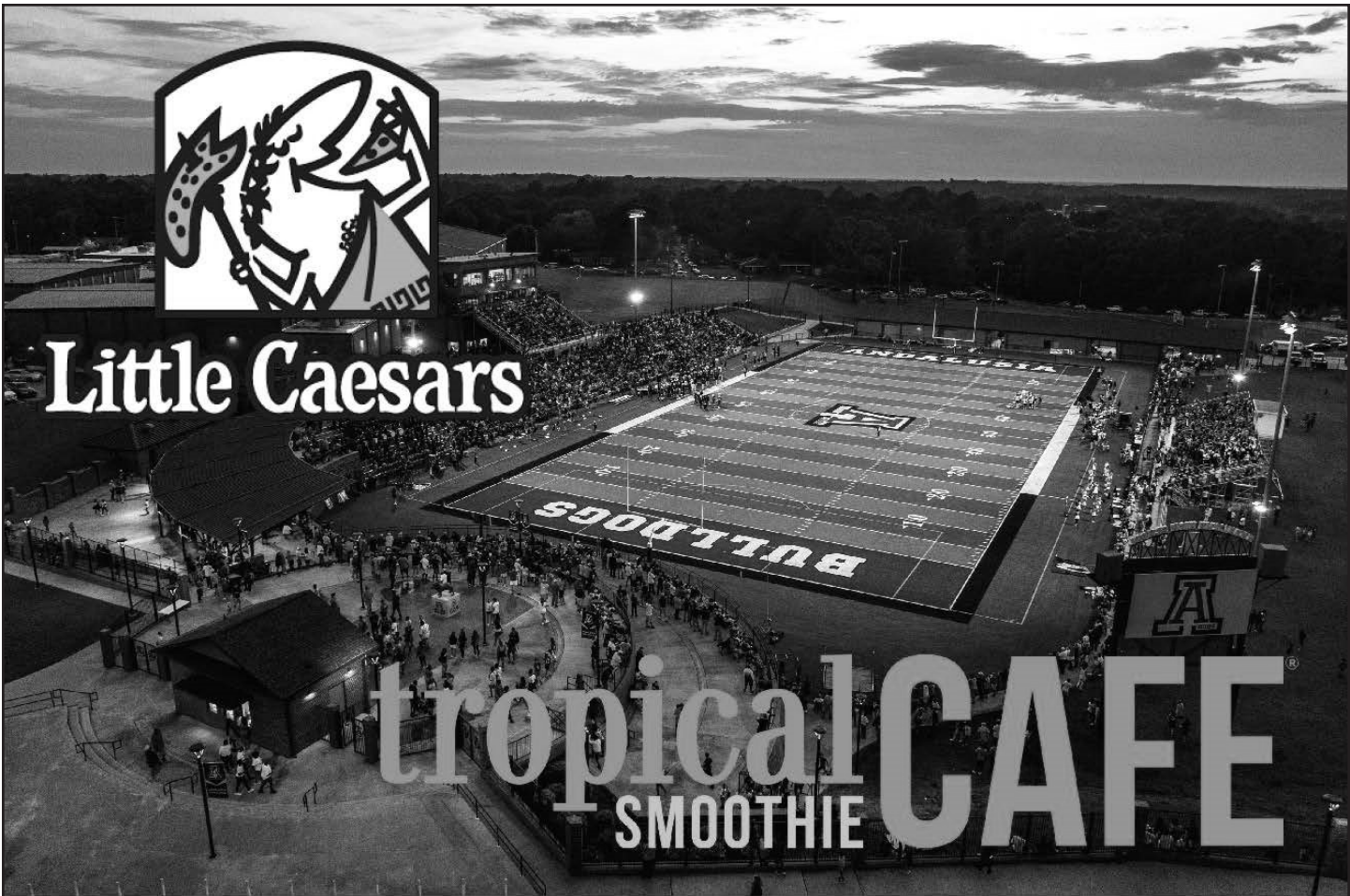


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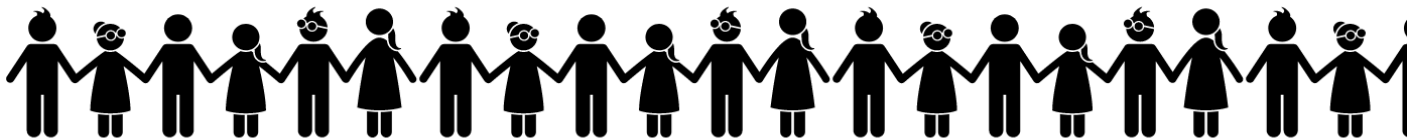
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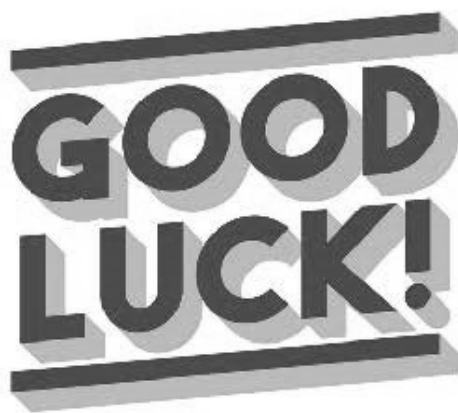
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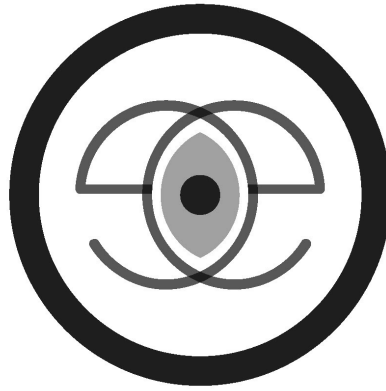
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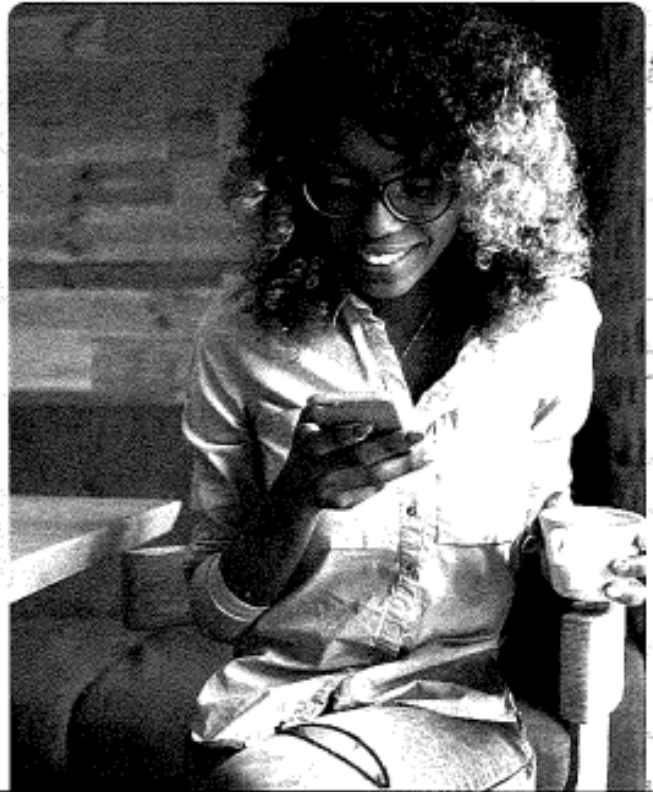
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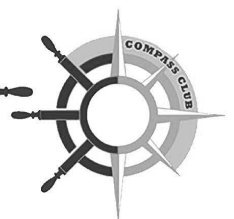


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