

FORECAST

TODAY MON TUE
 46°/30° 41°/28° 50°/27°
 Complete forecast, A2

CORONAVIRUS

Statistics on COVID-19 reported by the Alabama Department of Public Health as of Saturday night.

County	Cases	Deaths
Colbert	5,054	61
Franklin	3,514	39
Lauderdale	7,149	72
Statewide	399,150	5,299

Hardest hit county: Jefferson with 58,394 cases and 784 deaths.

REGION



Colbert officials optimistic about drug court program

Kyle Brown supported Colbert County's Drug Court program when he was the chief assistant district attorney, and once he was elected circuit judge he knew it was something he wanted to bring back. Brown was elected circuit judge in 2018. The drug court program has been up and running for about a month, Brown said. B1

LIFE

Dogs ease pandemic isolation for nursing home residents

Hebrew Home has had a pet therapy program for 20 years. Now, the activities department is expanding the canine corps with two new recruits in training to give residents more of the affectionate physical contact that has become so scarce and precious in the coronavirus era. F1

WEIRD STORY

Massachusetts lawmaker wants to name state dinosaur

BOSTON — A Massachusetts state lawmaker is asking for the public's help to select an official state dinosaur. State Rep. Jack Lewis said he plans on filing the legislation on Jan. 15. But first, the Framingham Democrat is asking residents to select from one of two dinosaur species discovered in Massachusetts. Podokesaurus holyokensis, which means "swift-footed lizard of Holyoke," was first discovered near Mount Holyoke in 1910 by Mignon Talbot, the first woman to name and describe a dinosaur, according to Lewis. Anchisaurus polyzelus, which means "much sought after near lizard" was discovered in 1855 in Springfield.

— The Associated Press

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GameDay: Tide, Buckeyes vie for title. Section G

MUSCLE SHOALS

Millwright says gender never stood in her way



Joey Hildreth pulls a lifting chain as she works at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing on Friday in Madison. (DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY)

By Lisa Singleton-Rickman
 Staff Writer

MUSCLE SHOALS — Joey Hildreth has been a millwright for 46 years.

The Muscle Shoals native of Scotch-Irish descent with the fireball personality to go with her flaming red hair shrugs off any insinuation that her barrier-breaking career is nothing less than heroic.

Soon to be 76 years old, she says she's way past that.

"Since I was 29, I've just done a job that a lot of women are maybe afraid of, or don't think it's women's work," said Hildreth, who goes by the nickname JoJo.

Hildreth said her brothers and father were millwrights, so she thought about doing nothing else other than what the rest of the family did for a profession.

"I wasn't thinking about breaking barriers, I just had a passion and I pursued it," she said.

Millwrights are people



Muscle Shoals native Joey Hildreth has been a millwright for 46 years. (COURTESY PHOTO)

who install, dismantle, repair, reassemble and move machinery in factories, power plants and construction sites.

In a field traditionally dominated by men, Hildreth couldn't wait to put her electronics engineering degree from the University of Alabama to work.

She began working at NASA

and had a hand in the first moon landing in 1969.

But she knew there was more awaiting her — good pay with benefits and a match of her skills and interests.

By 1974 she was delving into the career that would be her life's work.

SEE MILLWRIGHT, A4

COVID-19

75 and older to receive vaccine

First responders also getting shots starting Jan. 18

By Caroline Beck
 Alabama Daily News

Alabamians 75 years or older and first responders including law enforcement and firefighters will be able to receive COVID-19 vaccines by appointment starting Jan. 18.

The Alabama Department of Public Health and Gov. Kay Ivey made the announcement on Friday, but said the addition of these groups is not a full expansion into the next phase of vaccine rollout.

"I appreciate the swift work of ADPH to establish a system to efficiently provide our limited resources of vaccine to as many Alabamians as possible," Ivey said in a written statement. "We have previously worked to provide vaccines to our health care workers who are on the front lines of the pandemic, and now, are diligently working to expand access to our seniors, law enforcement officers and various members of our first responders. It is critical for everyone to remain patient; demand is high, and supply is low. ADPH and their partners are working around-the-clock to assist as many people as they can."

Work continues on vaccinating Alabama's more than 326,000 health care workers and nursing home residents who are in the 1a first priority group of ADPH's vaccine allocation plan.

As the allocations of vaccines for the 1a group are being satisfied, ADPH is now encouraging sites to vaccinate people over the age of 75 and those in law enforcement in order to prevent any loss of vaccine due to cold-chain storage requirements.

"We recognize that demand

SEE VACCINE, A4

MILLWRIGHT

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Admittedly it was a weird time in the workplace. People either loved or hated her.

She didn't waste time worrying about her doubters, but she did work hard to make a name for herself in an industry where intense 12-hour days are still common.

She honed her mechanical skills, including welding, that carried her from job to job at paper mills, steel mills, automotive plants and more.

She's worked domestically and abroad.

To this day she says some of her favorite work was rebuilding turbines that provided power.

She and her husband raised a family. When her children were grown, she began traveling for work again, often pulling a fifth-wheel camper from job site to job site.

She didn't work with any other women in her field until the late 1970s. Not a lot has changed she said. Female millwrights are still a rarity.

At the soon-to-open Mazda Toyota Manufacturing plant in Madison, where she currently works, only eight of the 90 millwrights on the job are



Joey Rakestraw, left, hands a tool to Joey Hildreth as they build a friction line inside the painting area of Mazda Toyota Manufacturing on Friday in Madison. (DAN BUSEY/TIMESDAILY)

female.

Her stamina hasn't waned, but she knows her limits now.

She doesn't weld much anymore. She has an apprentice who does the welding while she does the

fittings.

Working for the D.H. Griffin Co. in the paint shop, her days are still long — about 12 hours on site, plus nearly four hours of driving each day from her Muscle Shoals home.

Clint Smith, the business agent for Local 1192, said he's known Hildreth all his life and has always held her in the highest regard.

"She was the first woman in the millwrights in north Alabama, and I can tell you she's a great role model for all our men and women coming up in our program," he said. "She's good. She's real good."

Hildreth's philosophy is that hard work comes with loving your job.

"My mother was an airplane mechanic during

World War II and all she knew was hard work, so I have a pretty strong background to draw from," she said.

As she thinks back over her career spanning nearly five decades, she jokes that she has retired many times through the years, the longest "retirement" being six months.

"I'm just like the Energizer bunny, I just can't stop, so there's no telling how long I'll work," she said, adding that she has additional incentive these days raising her two great-granddaughters, ages 4 and 5.

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