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OPERATION IRON RUCK



COURTESY PHOTO

To kick off the annual Operation Iron Ruck effort, Gov. Kay Ivey hosted student veterans from Auburn University and the University of Alabama in her office for the official signing of the Operation Iron Ruck Day proclamation.

Governor calls for statewide support

FOR THE LEDGER

As boots hit the ground for Operation Iron Ruck the day before Thanksgiving, Gov. Kay Ivey offered her strong support for the annual march, an effort led by student veterans at the University of Alabama and Auburn University to bring awareness to veteran suicide.

Earlier, to help the students kick off their effort, Ivey hosted student veterans from both universities in her office for the official signing of the Operation Iron Ruck Day proclamation.

Wednesday morning, student veterans from both schools began their journey, ruck marching from Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa to Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn. They arrived with the Iron Bowl game ball on Saturday.

“Our veterans have carried the weight of defending this nation, and Alabama will always stand firmly by their side,” said Ivey. “As the ruck takes off, our student veterans

are once again proving what sets Alabama apart—putting rivalry aside and walking for a cause bigger than themselves. Their devotion to their fellow servicemembers reflects the very best of who we are. I’m proud to stand with them and proud to support Operation Iron Ruck.”

Operation Iron Ruck spans 151 miles between the two universities through the heart of the state. Student veterans and other participants carry 22-pound ruck sacks containing donated items that the students will deliver to Bill Nichols State Veterans Home, Mission 22, Tuskegee Veteran’s Assisted Living Centers and Three Hots and a Cot. The items include hygiene products and an assortment of food items.

“It says a great deal about the character of our student veterans when those from Auburn and Alabama choose unity over rivalry during Iron Bowl week to confront the issue of veteran suicide,” said Alabama

Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Jeff Newton. “Their commitment to this march strengthens bonds within the veteran community and offers meaningful support to those who need it most. I’m deeply proud of both universities and every participant for their dedication to bringing attention to this critical cause.”

Alabama is home to approximately 400,000 veterans. Though veterans represent about 10% of the state’s population, Alabama veterans also represent a disproportionate 18% of suicides. There were 139 veteran suicides in Alabama in 2023.

If you or a loved one is battling depression or having thoughts of suicide, you are encouraged to call The Veterans Crisis Line at 988, Press 1 to speak to trained counselors and access immediately available resources.

For more information on Operation Iron Ruck, please visit <https://operationironruck.com>.

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Gov. Kay Ivey

Coffee County celebrates agriculture and industry

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NEW BROCKTON — Celebrating those who “Grow Alabama” was the focus of the Coffee County Farm-City Week Banquet held recently at the Coffee County Farm Center in New Brockton.

Farmers, Future Farmers of America members, civic and business leaders gathered to highlight the impact of agricultural and industrial partnerships in Coffee County celebrating those who exemplify this year’s Alabama Farm-City Week Theme “Grow Alabama.”

A highlight of the night was the presentation of the Alabama Century and Heri-

tage Farm, recognizing family farms that have been in operation over 100 years and played a significant role in Alabama’s history. Amy Belcher presented the award to Redmon Farms, LLC owned by Harvey M Donaldson located in the Brooklyn community of Coffee County.

Hosted by the Coffee County Farm-City Committee, the annual event also featured Poster Award winners, Beef Award, Forestry Award, Industry of the Year, Business of the Year, Row Crop Award, Poultry Award, and Farm of Distinction.

Graham Kelley from New Brockton Elementary School is the Farm-City Poster Contest Winner in the kindergar-

ten through third grade category. Farm-City Poster Contest Winner in the fourth through sixth grade category is Cohen Mathis.

Dana and Keith Boswell were the winners of the Coffee County Farm-City Beef Award. The Forestry Award Winner Charles Matthew Brunson. Sunbelt Solomon is the Industry of the Year awardee. Business of the Year is Good to Go Inc. Row Crop Award Winner is Kyle Windham. Poultry Award Winner is Chase Hendrix. 4-M Inc. is the Farm of Distinction.

Earlier in the week the Coffee County Commissioners signed a proclamation

recognizing Alabama Farm City Week, held annually during the week of Thanksgiving in Alabama. Since 1955 the week to celebrate the farm-city relationship has also hosted educational and fellowship events to strengthen the relationship, said Gavin Mauldin, Coffee County Extension Director.

“The Coffee County Farm-City committee would like to thank all the sponsors that made the awards banquet possible,” he added.



Mauldin

Best Bets, a community calendar of events, [PAGE A3](#)



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