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OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS WEEKEND

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Saturday, January 10, 2026

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FOOD BANK OPENS DOORS TO NEW COMMUNITY MARKET



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Martha Henk, executive director of the Food Bank of East Alabama, readies to cut the ribbon on the new Community Market in Opelika during a ceremony on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026.

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After years of searching, planning, fund-raising, designing and building, the Food Bank of East Alabama celebrated the opening of its new Community Market of East Alabama, which the organization hopes will do more than provide food to those in need.

It was around 23 years ago that the Food Bank of East Alabama opened the first Community Market, and on Tuesday, food bank board members, staff, local leaders and more cut the ribbon for the new Community Market, which is more than three times the size of the original and officially opened on Wednesday. For Food Bank of East Alabama Executive Director Martha

Henk, who has been with the food bank for more than 30 years, seeing the new 15,000-square-foot facility gives her goosebumps, and she hopes the building can live up to the name.

"This isn't just about getting food. It's about building community. And that's the

Please see **MARKET**, Page A2

Opelika to host prestigious amateur pickleball tournament

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An amateur pickleball tournament that Auburn-Opelika Tourism called one of the most prestigious in the country is coming to the Opelika Pickleball Facility later this year.

The USA Pickleball Golden Ticket series, which offers amateur players a direct pathway to the USA Pickleball National Championships, will be held at the Opelika Pickleball Facility from March 11 to March 15. A-O Tourism said in the news release that hosting the event puts Opelika in elite company with other cities like Las Vegas, San Diego and Colorado Springs.

"Hosting a USA Pickleball Golden Ticket tournament in Opelika confirms something people here have known for a long time: Opelika is among the elite pickleball destinations in our nation,"

Opelika Mayor Eddie Smith said. "This tournament is not only an opportunity to bring visitors to our city and impact our local economy but also allows our locals to compete at a national level."

The hosting of the tournament comes after years of building and improving the pickleball facilities in the City of Opelika. The Opelika Pickleball Facility, which is located directly behind the Opelika Sportsplex and Aquatics Center, has 24 covered pickleball courts and has hosted several tournaments over the past few years. A-O Tourism said the facility "is one of the premier pickleball complexes in the region."

"This tournament continues to put Opelika on the national stage in sports tourism," said Anthony Terling, sports

Please see **PICKLEBALL**, Page A3



In this file photo, Mary Lou Brown and Cathy Whaley compete against Janel McGinley and Mary DeVries in a women's doubles match during the Alabama Senior Olympics at the Opelika SportsPlex on Sunday, April 14, 2024. The Sportsplex will be hosting the USA Pickleball Golden Ticket series in March.

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