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SEPTEMBER 2018

Family tradition meets
weekend getaway at

Jim Oliver's

SMOKE HOUSE

STORY BY ELIZABETH LAW

Southerners are no strangers to hospitality, and just across the state border Jackson County shares with Tennessee, our neighbors in the town of Monteagle provide that familiar, warm welcome.

A beautiful, scenic drive from Scottsboro, traveling through Stevenson and Bridgeport crossing into South Pittsburg, Tenn., plus a short route along Interstate 24 will lead you to a place full of captivating nature, locally-owned shops and rustic cabin lodging.

Settled on Monteagle Mountain is the home of this Southern hospitality at its best. Rooting in family legacy since 1960, what started as a small wooden cabin built from the ground up has grown into its own little weekend getaway known as Jim Oliver's Smoke House Restaurant and Lodge.

Customers from all over the world have come and gone through the doors of Jim Oliver's to sample delicious Southern cooking inspired by generations of recipes. >>



Barbecue Smoked Ribs



Fried Green Tomatoes

Jim, at only twenty-one years old, started building a reputation for his cooking at a place he rented called the Bee-Hive Drive-In. Including a staff of two employees and curb service, the restaurant welcomed locals to gather while dining in the parking lot. The Bee-Hive thrived just enough for Jim to purchase a historic landmark restaurant just down the street and his business continued to grow. Fast forward to 1975, after dedicated months of labor and construction, Jim finally opened the doors to the Smoke House. Employing 14 people, with 50 seats for dining and a menu full of family recipes handed down from generations of Oliver cooks, Jim Oliver's Restaurant started a tradition featuring smoke house style meats.

Although Jim passed away in 2007,

his legacy continues through the passion and magnanimity of his family, especially his son James David Oliver and daughter Betsy. Now with over 70 employees, more than 500 seats for dining and a 10,000 square foot general store, the historic restaurant continues to flourish. In addition to the restaurant, Jim Oliver's offers an 85-room lodge and 23 rustic log cabins featuring fireplaces, jacuzzi tubs and everything needed to create a wonderful mountain vacation experience.

"We offer good home style cooking, served by friendly folks, everyday," says James David.

"Our restaurant is complete with waitress service, a full menu and an all-you-can-eat self serve food bar with all of the fixings."

The Smoke House is the best of both worlds with generations of recipes of mom and pop cooking, and enough space to serve groups up to 1,000 people. The restaurant is dedicated to its patrons, opening their doors every day of the year. September through May, dining is open from 6:30 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and until 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday. During the months of June through August, dining is available extended until 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Their specialties include country ham, Southern fried chicken and catfish, beef brisket, smoked ribs and pulled pork and the most appetizing fried green tomatoes. They offer a variety of Southern-cooking sides such as seasonal pinto beans, skillet cabbage,

fried apples, slaw, fresh sliced tomatoes and cucumbers. Along the hot food bar a passed-down recipe of vegetable beef soup and warm, cast-iron skillet cornbread can be found.

Breakfast is served all day at Jim Oliver's. The breakfast menu includes a platter full of smoked country ham, eggs sunny side up (or however you prefer them), warm homemade biscuits or sourdough toast, grits and fresh-sliced tomatoes. Other breakfast specialties include the famously-delicious smoked bacon, sausage, pancakes and any-way-you-want-them omelets.

“Dad never was satisfied with standing still, so he created a business that could cater not only to local folks, but also travelers.”

JAMES DAVID OLIVER



James David Oliver, Owner of Jim Oliver's Smoke House

Fried Frog Legs







PHOTOS BY **AMBER HUSTON**



A visit to Jim Oliver's is no time to skip dessert. Susan, "the pie lady" makes some of the best fried pies in the South. Made fresh every day, the pies come with the choice of six delectable fillings including peach, apple, chocolate, coconut, strawberry and cherry. Top them with homemade ice cream and warm caramel, and it is a treat for the ages. Another popular dessert is the famous Bread Pudding topped with a choice of homemade fruit toppings.

Stepping into the general store is like stepping back to "the good ole' days." An entire evening could be spent looking around at all of the antiques and old-fashioned and handmade goods. Homemade fudge in a variety of flavors, family-recipe crackers, popcorn and pork skins, traditional candy like swirling lollipops, Bit-O-Honey and salt water taffy can all be found throughout the store. Sweet teeth will be pleased during a stroll through the candy wonderland just inside the door.





Caramel Apple
Fried Pie

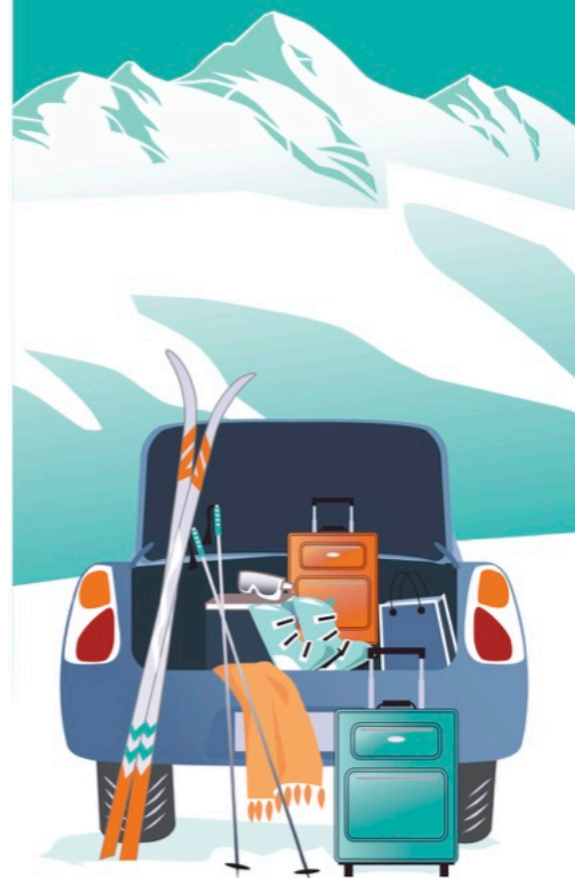


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Showcasing over twenty flavors of barbecue and hot sauces, from mild to extra hot, there is a flavor for everyone. There is also a variety of salad dressings, fruit toppings, ketchups, mustards and meat rubs. Guest are welcome to sample any of the condiments during their time at the Smoke House. Full bottles are also available for purchase in the store.

Smoking meat is a specialty of "Smokin' Man Mike," the restaurants meat and rub guru. Stop by the counter where Mike has samples of what he is cooking on the smoker that day.

Sample the meats, rubs and sauces all before sitting down to order.

Walking deeper into the general store, unique finds can be discovered around each corner. The wooden shelves showcase crafts, handmade soaps, candles, personal care products, family-recipe jams, jellies and pickles. There is plenty to explore while a 1920 player piano produces tunes for enjoyment. Spotted on the walls are pieces of history such as vintage baseball jerseys and gloves, old-fashioned coke bottles, and sepia-toned photos each telling their own story.



"Smokin' Man Mike"



Displayed on a wall of one of the dining areas hangs a large black and white photo which holds a special place in James David's heart.

"This is a photo of my grandfather," says James David.

His grandfather is pictured sitting next to a cousin who was to be a groom during the upcoming hours of when the photo was taken. Details show worn-in work boots and clothing dating back to the 1930s.

"It's a funny story, because if you look close enough you can see my grandfather's cousin has a black eye," he laughs.

"They had just gotten into a fight, on his wedding day."

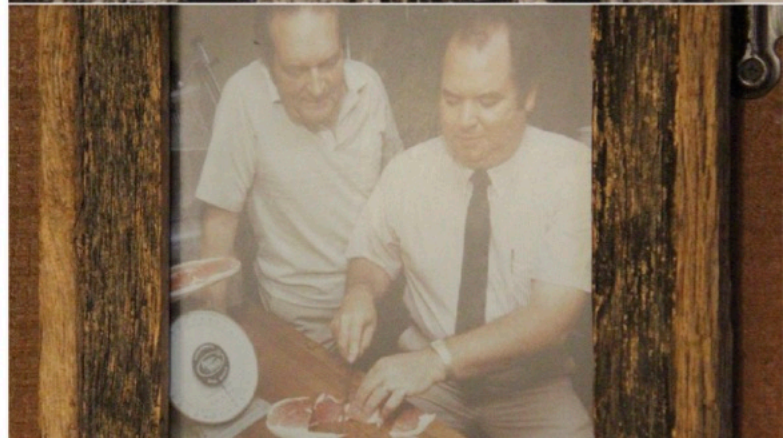
Luckily the story has a happy ending, as the cousins made up just in time to have a photo snapped. In the photo the young men are sitting on a

mule in which the newlyweds used for their farewell ride after the wedding.

Next to that photo hangs another cherished photo showing a young Jim Oliver discussing the Smoke House with a journalist from Chattanooga's Times Free Press.

In addition to the restaurant and lodging, the site has a 20 acre recreational campus featuring a pool, pond, pavilion with picnic tables, wooden porch swings and a kid's zone furnished with fun games and activities for all ages. Bicycle and fishing pole rentals are also available.

"Dad never was satisfied with standing still, so he created a business that could cater not only to local folks, but also travelers," says James David.



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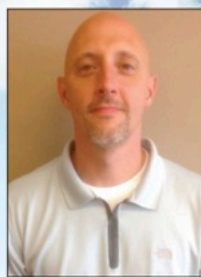
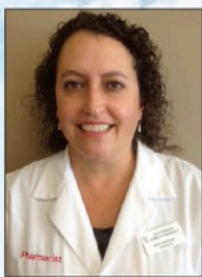
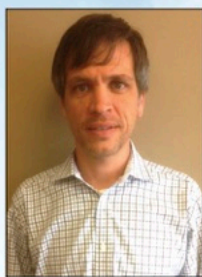
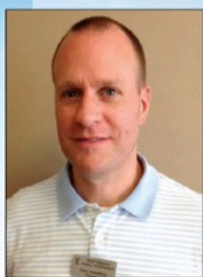
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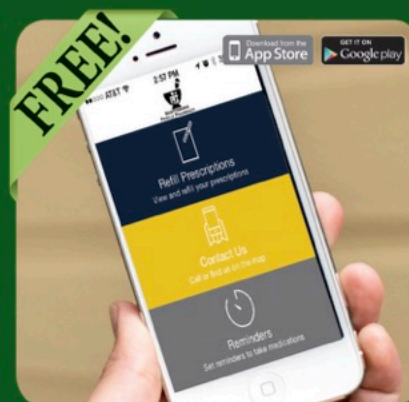
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ENTERTAINMENT

The Smoke House also offers a 5,000 square foot conference center to accommodate meetings and reunions. The center can also be known as The Music Room on Friday and Saturday nights, where the restaurant serves a full menu and drinks during live shows. The recurring event is called Monteagle Mountain Music.

Each weekend, the Smoke House opens up its doors to the music room allowing singer-songwriters and a variety of musicians to take the stage. The event is free to attend and is family-friendly. The music series features many up-and-coming artist out of Nashville, USA's "Music City."

Inside a the music room, cabaret style seating invites guests as cozy, radiant candlelight and twinkling fairy lights create a magical setting. Surrounded by music-related antiques from vintage microphones, to vinyl records and old instruments sits a small, colorfully-lit stage welcoming artist for an intimate performance. Genres of pop, blues, soul, bluegrass, folk, country and acoustic rock provide a unique show each weekend. Performers can talk to guests, telling them about lyrics they have written, stories about how they became writers and notes about their upcoming albums. Many famous songwriter, some who have written songs recorded by great artists such as Keith Urban, Hank Williams Jr. and Elton John, have stood on stage at Jim Oliver's.



PHOTOS BY AMBER HUSTON AND ELIZABETH LAW



THE LOVERS.

Cole Vosbury and Amanda June, a duo from Nashville know at The Lovers, showcase their talent during an intimate set in The Music Room at Jim Oliver's.

Surrounded by the warm glow of candlelight and the magical vibes of the stage lights, the duo's soulful, harmonizing voices fill the room.

Vosbury, originally from Shreveport, Louisiana, discovered his love for music at a young age. Growing up with a musical family, he found influence through church, playing drums, learning piano and, at age 13, fell in love with playing guitar.

He went on to perform on season five of NBC's hit television show, *The Voice*, which took him to the top four on Blake Shelton's team. He then decided to lay roots in Nashville and begin traveling around the country writing and performing music.

One night in Franklin, Tenn. at a place called Puckett's Boat House, he heard an alluring voice coming from the stage. This is when he first set eyes on Amanda June.

"I just had to go up and introduce myself," says Vosbury.

Amanda June, originally from Dayton, Ohio, set out at the age of 18 to pursue a career as a singer-songwriter. She knew Nashville was where she needed to be, and followed her passion to develop herself as an artist. Through a friend and fellow singer, Walker Hayes, June started to perform on stage at Puckett's Boat House during songwriter sessions.

After meeting Vosbury, the two were naturally drawn to each other. They started performing together on a regular basis and wrote their first song together called "Pieces."

In 2016, The Lovers officially formed, mending together voices

to create seamless sounds of blues, folk and rock.

As a duo they draw inspiration from Stevie Nicks and Tom Petty. Personally, Vosbury loves Chris Stapleton, Michael Jackson and Bruno Mars. But ultimately they are influenced by all genres of music.

"We want to make a good, well-rounded album," says June.

Playing drums, piano, bass and guitar, Vosbury produces all of The Lovers recordings.

At the moment, Vosbury and June are working on their first studio album. In addition to covers, the duo performs originals on stage. They also enjoy singing several songs written by their friend, Dave Pahanish, who first led them to Jim Oliver's Music on the Mountain.

Pahanish, a singer-songwriter who has written hits for artist such as Toby Keith, Tim McGraw and Keith Urban, also occasionally performs at the Smoke House.

Find the duo's single, "Let's Get Lost" on Spotify and check their website (theloversmusic.com) for upcoming tour dates and locations.

As Jim Oliver's nears its thousand-show mark, organizer Marla Sitten, continues to bring hit songwriters and aspiring artists to Music on the Mountain.

"This place has become a muse for singer-songwriters and it's just a very healing place and just a cool place to hang out," says Sitten.

"After being in the music business for twenty years, I can truly say these shows can stand up to anything you would see in Nashville, Tennessee.

It's just been a wonderful experience working with JD Oliver to create a place for these artist to showcase their talents, and allow music-lovers to come out and enjoy a free show."







The Lovers

Mabus Jackson



Two shows happen each Friday and Saturday between 7:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. On occasion, Mabus Jackson, a familiar local, takes the stage. Jackson is well-known in the Monteagle area, and is a multi-instrumentalist specializing in acoustic guitar and harmonica. He is an amazing singer and songwriter who enjoys pleasing crowds from around the country during their visit to Jim Oliver's Smoke House.

An all-inclusive destination full of adventurous nature trails, mouth-watering food, live entertainment and ultimate mountain lodging is a rare find, especially one that is within an hour drive from our home. The next time you are looking for a weekend getaway, look no further than Monteagle's one-of-a-kind gem, Jim Oliver's Smoke House and Lodge.

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Nestled along a winding path of back roads in rural Pelham, Tennessee is a vertically narrow, dark opening in the side of the Cumberland Mountains known as The Caverns.

It doesn't look like much more than a shallow opening from the top of the hill, but as distance closes in, the vast abyss of darkness begins to show character to the naked eye.

A rocky entranceway surrounded by moss-covered boulders lies beneath a precipice of trees towering above the crowd. Vibrant lights of blue and purple create a magical glow on a path to an oversized arched doorway.

Stepping inside, the limestone cave ceiling sparkles and rock edges glow red and yellow from stage lights. The atmosphere is nothing short of surreal in the concert venue which homes the nationally televised Bluegrass Underground.

Although the temperature is in the 90s during the half-mile, gravel-path hike from the parking lot to the box office, upon crossing the entry of cave mouth, a brisk mountain air cools the temperature down to the upper 50s. It's recommended to wear layers for added warmth and shoes right for muddy cement floors. After all, it is a cave.

welcome to the

UNDERGR




OWN

STORY BY ELIZABETH LAW

JACKSON 27

Band of Horses perform popular hits such as “The Funeral” and “No One’s Gonna Love You” as well as songs from their newest album, *Why Are You OK*.

PHOTOS BY AMBER HUSTON

A photograph of a drummer performing on stage. The drummer is wearing a dark shirt and is positioned behind a drum kit. The stage is dimly lit with blue and purple lights. A microphone on a stand is positioned in front of the drummer. In the background, there is a large, textured wall that looks like a cave. A Marshall amplifier is visible in the foreground on the right side.

Caverns owner and Bluegrass Underground creator, Todd Mayo, turned the cave into Tennessee's newest (and oldest) venue, which held its first concert in March of this year.

The Caverns capacity is 1,000 people for standing room only shows and 750 for seated shows. Fans can get a close-up view of artists as they enter through the cave opening, same as the concertgoers, and pass along side the crowd as they walk to the stage.

The cave has permanent light and sound systems installed, and is managed by a 100-person crew who, according to staff members, is more like family than co-workers.

"We're like family around here. I love it so much. It's such a great place to work," says Caverns medic Dennis Jones. He works at the caverns along with his wife Rhonda.

Fans of a variety of music genres will enjoy the decent into The Caverns. Bluegrass Underground has housed artists such as singer-song writer Brandi Carlisle, award-winning bluegrass band, Balsam Range and hip hop legend, Wyclef Jean.

The first episode of Bluegrass Underground, featuring The SteelDrivers, aired 10 years ago.

Their 10th anniversary weekend brought back The SteelDrivers on Friday night, followed by singer-songwriter, Corey Smith on Saturday night and indie rock group, Band of Horses, on Sunday.

Emmy-award winning Bluegrass Underground has televised a decade of shows, which started at Cumberland

Caverns. Due to the growth of the event, Mayo and his team decided last year to move to their current location, The Caverns.

"We were really happy to announce the grand opening of The Caverns, the forever home of Bluegrass Underground and many other special musical moments that will bring folks together in a spectacular space like no other the world over. Or under," says Mayo in a press statement.

Season eight of Bluegrass Underground premiered on PBS on September 5. Each week for 13 weeks Bluegrass Underground offers a new episode, featuring bright new stars, revered living legends and groundbreaking musical innovators.

Upcoming shows include a range of artists from musical legends like Kathy Mattea, Tim O'Brien and The Sam Bush Band, to the reigning International Bluegrass Music





Association's vocal group of the year, Flatt Lonesome, and 10-time IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper to the Jam Band/Jazz-Funk of Lettuce, the eclectic activist Soul music of the Rev. Sekou, and the distinctly Cuban Pop-Rock of Havana's Sweet Lizzy Project.

Tickets for all shows are available for purchase online at thecaverns.com.

Outside food or drinks are not permitted inside The Caverns, but they offer a food and drink menu including the Fiery Gizzard Hot Chicken Sandwich and a selection of beer including brews from Yee-Haw Brewing Company out of Johnson City, Tenn.



Band of Horses lead singer, Ben Bridwell



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There is no cellphone service in the cave, but full wifi service is available, even inside the cave. They allow pictures while in the cave and encourage concert-goers to post to social media and use their hashtags (#thecaverns and #bluegrassunderground), but they do not allow flash photography during the show. Digital, disposable or 35mm cameras are allowed at The Caverns.

The concert venue offers patrons the Monteagle Mountain Stay and Cave Travel Package. Monteagle Mountain,

just a fifteen-minute drive to The Caverns, is known for its serene beauty and peaceful mountain air. Stay on top of the mountain at Jim Oliver's world-famous Smoke House Lodge. Relax in the historic, authentic Tennessee lodge that offers home cooked meals in a beautiful setting. Shopping, dining and great hikes are all within a short drive of the lodging site.

The package includes two premium seats guaranteed in rows one through five, accommodation for two at The

Smoke House Lodge, two exclusive Caverns package t-shirts, one exclusive "Best of Bluegrass Underground" album digital download and one exclusive Caverns hat. In addition to lodging and accessories, the package also includes luxury coach transportation to and from the venue, two Caverns meal vouchers and an exclusive 2018 artist signed and numbered Caverns poster to commemorate your visit. A representative will also greet you at the venue and help make your experience the best it can be.



Corey Smith performs
at The Caverns as
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Combining the awe-aspiring wonder of nature with the energy-increasing vibes of a subterranean concert is a bucket-list destination for music and outdoor lovers.

"There's so many things in this world that divide people – I don't need to name them – but there's not enough things that bring people together," said Mayo.

"When you come to Bluegrass Underground you will see urban and rural, white-collar and blue-collar, young and old, black and white, hipsters and dorks like me, all together for a love of music. It's a wonderful thing being able to do that." Bluegrass Underground welcomes all to enjoy an adventurous experience in their magical cave and reminds us to dig deeper.

