



# A RETURN TO OZARK

## REBUILD, REVITALIZE, REJUVINATE

Change is coming. Correction. Continuous Change is here. A local hometown hero, Joseph R Waker Jr., returns to Ozark AL. This time he is poised to bring the residents of Ozark together to make history.

**THE SOUTHERN STAR**  
September 5, 2015

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CM K

**Little Caesars**  
**HOT-N-READY**  
PIZZA  
1455 Andrews Avenue  
Ozark  
334-774-1001

**Football Contest**  
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**Star Scribe's Scribblings**  
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# The Southern Star 75¢

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**Column One**

**The Ozark Area**  
...will be held on Sunday, September 13, 2015 at Perry Recreation Center. Please come & bring your favorite dish to enjoy a day of fellowship. 11:00 am - 1:00 pm.

**Last Day**  
...Low in the Great Ozark Basin. An area a small white...  
...Chickadee...  
...to Duhan, Ronald...  
...334-422-4886.

**Come Support Miss**  
...Alabama  
...A watch party is scheduled for Monday night at 6:00 pm, at Johnny's Barbecue to watch Ozark's Miss McGuffee compete in the Miss America Pageant.

**Fish Fry**  
...hosted by John Val...  
...on September 12 at the Fox and Henne...  
...in Eden. The menu includes fried fish, fried steak, French fries, french onion...  
...homemade desserts, and tea. Plates are \$10.00 each and will be served from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. There is no carry-out. The proceeds of this fish fry will be used to fund our mission to protect and serve you. Please stop by and support your local volunteer fire and rescue and enjoy a delicious meal.

**The Ozark Area**  
...The Ozark Area...  
...County Council of Arts and Humanities is putting on a play titled "Cubano". Two males are needed to complete the cast of 3 actors. These two male parts are small parts. This play is scheduled for a performance of October 20th and 21st. Rehearsals are from 5:30PM to 7:30PM and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30PM to 5:30PM. If you are interested in trying out for these parts, please contact Leo Bullock, at 774-7881 or Sandy Smith at 334-774-4327. Dale County Council of Arts and Humanities is a non-profit organization, and all profits go back into DCCAH, in order to continue to promote the Arts in the Wiregrass.

**Blood Drive**  
Sept 19 from 11am-4pm at Kelly's Motel in Ozark. Donate a pint of blood and receive a free pint of ice cream.

## Ozark Micropolitan Ranks No. 1 in Alabama

The Ozark micropolitan area, which includes Dale County, ranked first in the state and is among the top 100 amongst economic micropolitan statistical areas in the nation, according to Polisson Corporation's 2014 and 2015 Economic Strength Rankings.

"This ranking demonstrates the positive impact of Ozark and Dale County's commitment to economic development partnerships for locating, retaining and expanding business and industry with quality high paying jobs," Ozark Mayor Billy Blackwell said.

Economic strength rankings are released every year by Polisson Corporation of Palm City, FL. Polisson is an independent economic research firm that specializes in analyzing local and state economies.

"The Ozark micropolitan area is ranked 72nd of 556 micropolitan statistical areas in the nation and is the only Alabama micropolitan area ranked in the nation's top 100. The Enterprise micropolitan area ranked second in the state, followed by the Troy area in third. Other Alabama micropolitan areas featured in the study include Albertville, Calhoun, Selma, Seward, Talladega-Sylva, and Valley.

"The study demonstrates the stability of the Ozark micropolitan area. Since 2008, we've consistently maintained a spot in the top 100 among micropolitan areas across the nation," said Victoria Cook, Ozark-Dale County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director.

Rankings are based on 21 economic factors over a 20 year period from 1994-2013. Factors measured include wages, personal income, employment statistics, construction revenue, retail revenue, and consistency of growth or decline. Overall state of the economy is based on the standard of living of counties that work and live in the area.

"I believe this ranking is an example of the progress we can make by working together in our Ozark-Dale County economic development group as well as working with the entire Wiregrass region," said Dale County Commissioner Chairperson Mark Blankenship. "I am extremely proud of the progress we are making in Dale County."

For a micropolitan to be considered in a study, the area must have a city with a population of at least 10,000 but fewer than 50,000. Dale County cities and towns that comprise the Ozark micropolitan include Arden,...

## A Return to Ozark Rebuild, Revitalize, Rejuvenate

By Bernard Jones  
Change is coming. Correction: Change is here. A local hometown hero Joseph R. Waker, Jr. returns to Ozark, AL. This time he is poised to bring the residents of Ozark together to make history. He intends to notify residents to show the nation what Alabamians are made of.

Waker recently visited with Ozark's Mayor Billy Blackwell to discuss the future of Ozark. The two men talked out a vision where consistency and unity will prevail as well as plans for increased business growth to transform Ozark into a southern jewel. Waker is working diligently with Ozark officials to inspire residents to help themselves. Among his current efforts are a Salvage Car Donation Drive, Park Beautification Project and Run the Street Family Day Festival.

Waker visited Ozark August 28 - September 1, 2015 to gain a better understanding of the current "state of affairs" in Ozark. In his observations Joseph Waker was heartbroken to find many nicosity residents are jobless, some paths are purposeless and many of his friends and neighbors continue struggling.

Joseph also attended the recent 100 Man Summit held at Greater South Ni...



JOSEPH R. WAKER, JR.



**GOING GOLD** - "Going Gold" is a nationwide campaign to "Color the world Gold in every child, everywhere will survive cancer". The G-9 project was inspired by an 11 year old, Aerie, whose twin brother Jack was fighting this terrible disease. The mission of the G-9 project is to raise awareness and inspire action. Students at Liberty Primary School are learning the importance of giving back by raising money to donate to Wiregrass families fighting childhood cancer. Guidance counselor, Mrs. Lisa Shirley, has been teaching lessons about generosity and encouraging students to learn about service and ways to help out. Liberty has chosen this as a school project. Each Friday in September, Liberty students will have the chance to participate in "Hat Day". Students who donate \$1.00 will get to wear their favorite hat for the day. Proceeds will go to help Wiregrass families in their fight against childhood cancer.

## A Return to Ozark

### Rebuild, Revitalize, Rejuvenate

By Bernadette Jones  
Change is coming. Change is here. A local hometown hero Joseph R. Waker, Jr. returns to Ozark, AL. This time he is poised to bring the residents of Ozark together to make history. He intends to unify residents to show the nation what Alabamians are made of. Waker recently visited with Ozark's Mayor Billy Blackwell to discuss the future of Ozark. The two men

hatched out a vision where community unity will prevail as well as plans for increased business growth to transform Ozark into a southern jewel. Waker is working diligently with Ozark officials to inspire residents to help themselves. Among his current efforts are a Salvage Car Donation Drive, Park Beautification Project and Run & Shoot Family Day Festival. Waker visited Ozark August 28 - September

3, 2015 to gain a better understanding of the current "state of affairs" in Ozark. In his observations Joseph Waker was heartbroken to find many minority residents are jobless, some youth are purposeless and many of his friends and neighbors continue struggling. Joseph also attended the recent 100 Man Summit held at Greater Sardis Mission. *Continued on Page 2A*



JOSEPH R. WAKER JR.

S. C. Harper. Joseph also spoke at the summit reiterating, "We must come together as a community of one. It's past time for action."

The proposed projects underway will encourage residents of both affluent neighborhoods and poor communities to build a better Ozark together. Currently there exists an obvious divide between the two communities. Racial divides persist as people of color feel unwelcome in certain public facilities. All residents should feel welcome to enjoy public recreation facilities without hesitation. Ozark youth should have a safe place to play as well as inspiration for their future. Working within our communities Waker, along with Mayor Blackwell intends to make this dream a reality. Currently minority businesses are also non-existent in Ozark. The established businesses in Ozark are also "feeling the pinch" in this blighted economy.

Waker intends to change that by opening up opportunities for business development from new business as well as re-igniting patronage from within. He is working with current residents encouraging them to patronize local businesses.

Upon his return to Washington, D.C., Waker started a telephone drive and Facebook drive sparking a

wave of pledges and support. He encouraged over 3,000 Facebook followers and made countless phone calls. "It begins with you. What are you doing to help yourself?" "We need to give back to our community, helping our neighbors who in turn help us!", said Waker. The burden of rebuilding has been resting on those who can barely sustain themselves, let alone sustain a community. Waker stated, "Those of us who can give time, money or sweat equity should do so. By working together we can all prosper." During the next few months residents of Ozark will witness an evolution that's been "a long time coming." Be a part of this monumental movement by joining your neighbors for good.

Joseph R. Waker, Jr. is a native of Ozark, AL who currently lives in Washington, DC. He is Founder and CEO of both Waker Foundation - a non-profit 501(c)(3) charity group whose mission is to empower and improve our community by providing job training, education, safe and affordable housing (donations to the Foundation are 100% tax deductible); and Waker CD, LLC - a corporate development company whose core principles are: service, empowerment, sustainability, heritage and culture.

### Rebuild, Revitalize Continued from 1A

sionary Baptist Church where S.C. Harper, pastor led an engaging discussion on current community ails. "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools," stated,

