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# BOOM!

The River Region's Official Magazine For Aging Well

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# Ally Andrews

## A Joyful Beekeeper & Critter Therapist

No matter your age, find your purpose and live it! Live with Memories not just dreams.

This month's cover profile is Ally Andrews, owner of Wildly Blessed and Ally's Adventures. Ally is a 3rd generation FarmHER and beekeeper, in fact she was honored as the Alabama Beekeeper of the Year in 2022! Ally has a unique perspective on life and it involves nature and critters, both of which she shares with as many people as possible. Aging well requires we have a purpose and Ally knows what hers is and she will share it in this month's cover profile. We recently spent some time with Ally at her Andrews Double A Ranch in Eclectic, AL. Of course she had her very special Alpaca, May May join us on the photo shoot and it was a real treat for the entire BOOM! Team. If you would like to know more about bees, beekeeping, nature's bounty, petting zoos...Ally Andrews is the best place to start, and we know you'll enjoy getting to know her as much as we did.



Ally the Beekeeper



Ally's Adventures, Petting Zoo



Ally the Master Gardener



Alabama Beekeeper of the Year

**BOOM!:** Please give us a brief biography, i.e., where you're from, education, what brought you to the Montgomery area, did you raise your family here, schools, family, etc.?

**Ally:** I am a Child of The King, born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, June 13th, 1965, to Johnny & Dolorus Andrews. We moved to Montgomery when I was two and had a great life growing up

there. Even though I grew up in Montgomery my heart was in the hills of Tennessee where I spent most of my summers running wild and free, barefoot, exploring the creeks and learning the ways of the land from my maternal grandparents, farming, homesteading, beekeeping, learning about our earth and how it can care for and keep us fed and healthy. I learned how my indigenous ancestors survived off this great land and is where God placed the desire in my heart for the lifestyle I live and love now!

I attended Flowers Elementary, Goodwyn

Jr High and graduated from Jeff Davis High School in 1983. In May of 1983, I entered corporate world, I was hired as a temporary part time secretary, beginning my career with Diversified Builders, I kept that job for 24 years moving into bookkeeping and office management. In 2007 I moved on to the Job I recently retired from, after 17 years with Woolard Brothers Commercial Contracting. I was office manager, bookkeeper, and all-around one-woman office. I told my bosses before they hired me, I will not leave here for another corporate job, I will leave here for my farm and well...



here I am now working my farm! In 1987 I met John Ashley Andrews we were married in 1988 (yes, I married someone with the same last name that I was born with, I



*Ally and husband John*

was born an Andrews and will die one) and God has blessed us with 35 years together. We have two wonderful children and two bonus children, Allysa & BJ Robinson and Joseph and Hayley Andrews plus four Grand Blessings!

We were fortunate to move to Eclectic in 1999 to a little piece of Heaven on Earth, which was

the beginning of Andrews Double A Ranch. I have loved raising our children and now our Grand Blessings as part of our Homestead surrounded by farm critters and lots of nature. Homesteading, to include farming and beekeeping are our lifestyle, the



*Ally's youngest Grand Blessing, John Henry 5th generation farmer!*

one I love to live and teach others. Our children learned hard work ethics and the determination it takes to be a farm and homestead family. They grew up in Eclectic schools, were part of sports, 4-H, and married their schoolmates.

I am blessed to be a long-time member of Landmark Church of Christ in Montgomery where we get to worship with our family and extended family and share my passion at times.

**BOOM!:** Allyson, you refer to yourself as a FarmHER, you are a third-generation

beekeeper, an Alabama Master Beekeeper, and the Beekeeper of the Year in 2022, please share some of your journey on becoming a Master Beekeeper? Why are bees so valuable?

**Ally:** Keeping bees, loving bees, teaching the importance of bees, sharing bees, raising bees, and protecting bees has been my passion for



*Ally's Family: L-R, BJ Robinson, Hoyt Ashley, Allysa Andrews Robinson, Lofton Tucker, Hayley Andrews, Laiken Elaine, Joseph Andrews, John Ashley Andrews and Ally*

many years. As a third-generation beekeeper I have instilled into my children and grandchildren, who are the 4th & 5th generation, plus many others, the importance of having bees here

on our Mother Earth and the work that is involved in keeping and harvesting honey and producing products from my hives.

By the way, FarmHER is well, a female farmer 😊

The Alabama Master Beekeeping Program, which I helped bring to Alabama in 2009, and I still sit on the board and help teach, is a yearly 3-day event. The program is

a lot of learning by books, presenters, live hive demonstrations, testing and my favorite part of the program, the public service credits, going out into our community, with living bees and teaching the importance of bees in our world. I share at schools, civic groups, TV programs, classes, and living the lifestyle of a beekeeper. My sharing experiences earned me the title "Crazy Bee Lady!" My husband John says I can talk bees in my sleep.

I am a certified Welsh Honey Judge, and have tasted, judged, and collected honey from all over the world. I do honey tastings at assisted livings, schools, clubs and basically for anyone who wants me to do so.

I keep bees in Alabama and Florida and have some of the best tasting honey, pepper infused Hott honey, orange blossom honey and creamed honey.

I was chosen Beekeeper of the Year for the state of Alabama in 2022, WOW, what an honor. I know my Pappy & Mama are looking down smiling at me! I helped re-start Central Alabama Beekeepers Association in 2009 and just

resigned from a long jaunt as President.

I teach classes about beginning beekeeping in the spring and fall here on my farm and teach a Jr Beekeeping class and camp here for home school families and in the schools as well.

**BOOM!:** Wildly Blessed is a



*Ally with baby May May in front of Giant Redwood, California*



business you operate from your Andrews Double A Ranch in Eclectic, Alabama. Please tell us how Wildly Blessed got started and what products you offer? Where can our readers purchase your products?

**Ally:** I am *Wildly Blessed* on this earth to have learned how to wild forage for food, herbs, weeds, flowers, seeds, mushrooms, and so many things that God placed on this earth to use in my products and as medicine and things that can help heal and care for our bodies.

*Wildly Blessed* is a strong woman owned and operated business. Out of a desire to use the most natural products on my skin and in my body and the bodies of my family, I started getting back to my native American roots, learning from herbalists, going on herb walks, reading and researching, what the natural parts of the earth do to benefit our bodies. I started using products of my hive, wild foraged plants natural oils and butters to begin making, healing balms, tinctures, salves, syrups and more. It is a soul satisfying feeling to know how to keep healthy, sometimes heal and care for my own body from things right here in and around our farm. I make some of my own medicine, when needed, soaps,



*Saddle Therapy, Ally & her horse Scooter*

name *Wildly Blessed, LLC* came to be.

I am a certified Cottage Food home baker and ServSafe Food Handler, and my specialties are honey banana nut bread, honey divinity, honey fudge, wild foraged jams and jellies and some specialty seasonal items. I grind my own wheat berries for use and offer fresh ground flour for sale on the farm. I sell farm fresh

free-range eggs, pollen, bee propolis tincture, natural vanilla and the aforementioned honeys.

Some of my products are elderberry mint lip balm, anti-itch salve, hot muscle rub, lotion bars, loofa sponge soaps, elderberry products, all natural bees wax food wraps, alpaca dryer balls, all natural insect repellent wipes, goats milk soaps and a few seasonal

deodorant, shampoo and use very little commercially made products. I currently take no medicine, have healthy skin, hair and am as natural as dirt.

I started gifting some of these products to my friends and family and they LOVED THEM and folks started encouraging me to make and sell them to others, I did and that's how my business

items as well.

I have a new cute tiny shop/ store on my farm in Eclectic, where I infuse and conjure up my products. I sell at the City of Wetumpka Farmers Market on Thursdays May-August, and lots of craft shows and Pop-up vendor locations throughout the year. I would love for folks to follow my social media pages, on Facebook and Instagram where I share just a little bit as to who I am and what goes on in my *Wildly Blessed* world. *Wildly Blessed* products can be found in stores in Montgomery, Wetumpka, Eclectic, Auburn, Kent, Alex City, Millbrook, Prattville, Kowaliga, Red Hill, Dadeville, Redland, and I ship all over

the world. I am currently working on revamping my website for better ease in online ordering.

**BOOM!:** Another business you operate from your ranch is "Ally's Adventures". Please tell us more about this business that features some of your favorite critters or "kids" as you like to

call them, especially "May May". How would you describe the purpose of Ally's Adventures?

**Ally:** One of my favorite "jobs" is my Ally's adventures and Petting Zoo. I started this as a business in October 2022, but have shared my critter "kids" for years as my children were involved in 4-H throughout their lives and critters were just a part of the farm to share. I incorporated my love for my farm critters, as I started sharing my love for them off the farm with others in way of



*Ally at her favorite North Carolina getaway spot on the Big Creek*



*Ally working out at Next Level Boot Camp Lake Martin*



nursing homes, assisted living homes, schools, hospitals, churches, camps, homes.

I can share the Love of Jesus through this ministry. I offer many experiences, parties, corporate events, therapy visits, manger scenes, oh the joy, smiles, laughter, and love this brings to so many. I now know sharing the Love of Jesus with as many as I can with my critters is My Purpose in life.

My most precious gift is my May May, she has a large part of my heart and is very close to me. She is a one-year-old alpaca who was gifted to me by my alpaca breeder and friend because she knew I would share her with so many, I have and will continue to do so. I bottle raised her and she has seen more of the USA than most folks have, as she traveled on our trip across the country in the back seat of our truck when she was 2 weeks old. Spoiled much doesn't even describe her and easy to say she loves me too.

Most of my petting zoo "kids" are miniature and several have been bottled raised also I have been gifted several and they all have names and know their keeper. I have miniature goats, mini jersey



Critter Therapy with Ally's Adventures.



cows and a mini horse, babydoll sheep, alpacas, exotic chickens, ducks, bunnies, hedgehog, leopard geckos, A UNICORN and I bring the honeybees too. It is a great experience that I love to share with ALL.

**BOOM!:** Allyson, you have shared that one of your favorite scriptures is Psalms 34:8, which reads, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Would you please tell us more why this scripture is important to you and your work?

**Ally:** Psalms 34:8 "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Oh, the joy of those who take refuge in Him." This scripture

resonates within me and is on my labels, trailers, signage, because I want people to know how good our GOD is and how blessed we are by Him and His love. He has created me to share His glory and joy to as many as I can, and that's why this is a beautiful verse to me!

**BOOM!:** How would you describe your purpose in life?

**Ally:** I have a dear friend that wrote the book *The Purpose Puzzell*, who challenged me last year to find my purpose in life. As I have described above my purpose is to share the love, joy, and happiness of Jesus with as many as I can through my critters, products and all aspects of my life!

**BOOM!:** What is it about living in the River Region that you like? What do we need more of?



Family trip to the Turks & Caicos Islands with Ally's daddy

**Ally:** I like living in the River Region because this area is my life. So many things to do and bee a part of. So close to the beach and mountains, two of my favorite places away from the farm. Another one of my blessings is being able to co-

host Elmore County TV where I get to go monthly to eat and give my food reviews around our county. There are a lot of great eateries in our area that serve all folks in all walks and ages of life.

**BOOM!:** How do you like to relax and wind down from a full day of activity on the farm?

**Ally:** I absolutely love my saddle therapy, horseback riding, is very relaxing to me, I have been riding most of my life, and ride as often as I can on one of my favorite males in my life, Scooter, a



Ally with 2022 travel partners, Jimmy & Cammy Day along with Tippy, Abby and May May



perfect quarter horse. Scooter is one of my dearest friends this side of heaven. Also, I love sitting on my new porch in my quiet time, usually in the mornings while spending time in the word and talking to God, thanking him for all my blessings.

As a 2018 Master Gardener I

love plants! Native perennials are my favorite and I love having my hands and body in the soil, planting, pruning, working the soil, earthing, foraging, and forest bathing are so rewarding to me. Spending time outside, just sitting listening to the sounds of my farm and the world I am surrounded with, frogs hollering, sounds of summer and watching how things work well together is relaxing to me.

**BOOM!:** With a busy life, how do you like to spend time with family and friends? Describe your experience as a mother and grandmother? What do your grandkids call you?

**Ally:** I also love spending time with my family!! One of my favorite ways to relax is with my family and friends, breaking bread together, swimming, and playing outside together. We make it a point to be together as a family, usually on Sunday nights, Sunday Funday. I enjoy being outside and my grand Blessings all love the outdoors too. My brother and sister-in-law share their cabin on Lake Martin, and we always enjoy the lake activities, especially when my sister and brother-in-law visit from Houston.

I choose to not watch TV as it is distracting for me, so I have a lot of time outside. When my children were younger, involved in sports, 4-H and other community events I was always there to support them, I loved being part of their lives then and now, I am so very proud of them.



Ally with Bee Buddy and mentor, Lisa Reynes

My grand blessings ages are 5, 3, 3 yrs and 9 months. I am AL or LAL to them and that is my favorite name! I love them to be here and share all my experiences with them, on the farm, in the woods, foraging, picking, gathering. They will

have every opportunity to learn how to live off the land we live on as well.

**BOOM!:** What are some of your favorite travel experiences? Favorite getaway spot? Any travel dreams planned?

**Ally:** I love to travel and have the best farm sitter, my husband, who doesn't like to travel as much as I do. He tends to the farm and critters. He does cool projects to surprise me when I get home and I have come home to some amazing home improvements and additions to our farm.

My favorite get away spot is the mountains in North Carolina, where we have a cool, primitive horse camp right on the creek, no power, no phone service, very relaxing and a lot of nature. We try to visit at least two times a year, spring, and fall. My closest friends who are like family and my family are always up for a trip somewhere fun. Some of my favorite travel experiences are the yearly beach trips that we take as a family. I loved traveling with my parents before they went to Heaven, Mama in 2015 and Daddy in 2018. The two trips that are among my favorites are from 2016 when most of our family traveled to Turks &



Wildly Blessed Products



Wildly Blessed Products

Caicos. It was an amazing trip and one of the last big ones I was able to travel with my Daddy.

Last year I was blessed to travel 21 days through 21 states, 7,800 miles across our country and up to the top of it, out to California to see the most BEE-utiful trees I have ever seen, Giant Redwoods. The trip included my dear friends Jimmy and Cammy Day along with our English Shepherds Tippy and Abby and my May May. May May was only two weeks old and on a bottle, so of course she had to go along with us, as I was her Mama! We traveled across the country in our SMC horse trailer with living quarters. *It was the trip of a lifetime!* We saw so many cool things, met so many new folks at our camp sites just the way I love to travel! We had no schedule just a few points of interest we wanted to visit and did.

We were sort of like a tumbling weed just blowing through the wind, stopping to rest and enjoy our beautiful country!

I have a grand trip I am planning for next year as we celebrate a BIG birthday for one our dearest friends this side of heaven, driving up

through Canada to Alaska. Ireland is also on my radar.

**BOOM!:** As you've aged, how have your priorities changed? How would you describe what it means to "age well"?

**Ally:** I believe to age well one must take care of one's mind, body and soul. I wake up daily with a very thankful heart! I spend quiet time with my Heavenly Father first, spending time in his word and having a conversation with him, then I start my day. I eat well and stay hydrated, I love my YOGA tribe at Harmony Yoga and Wellness and my workouts at Next Level Boot Camp Lake Martin, both keep me in tuned to my body and help keep it strong. Stay active folks!



**BOOM!:** Do you have any hobbies or other activities that grab your attention, besides farm life?

**Ally:** I love to dance and do so as often as I can. I enjoy hunting in the fall and winter, I have harvested deer with my bow and my rifle and so enjoy being in the woods.

**BOOM!:** Many people, as they age, experience a renewed sense of purpose, new goals, etc. How would you describe this sense of renewal in your life? Any advice for the rest of us seeking renewal?

**Ally:** No matter your age, find your

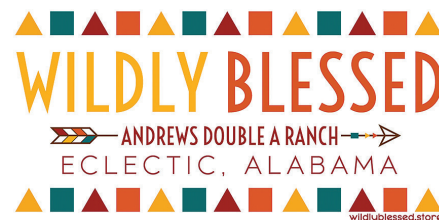
purpose and live it! Live with memories not just dreams.

**BOOM!:** What are some of the future challenges you're contemplating for Wildly Blessed and Ally's Adventures? For Yourself?

**Ally:** Only God knows the challenges forth coming but with HE as my director I shall face them head on!

**BOOM!:** Give us three words that describe you?

**Ally:** Inspirational, JOYFUL and Earthy.



Find Ally's Products by following her at Wildly Blessed Facebook and Instagram pages. Also, at [wildlyblessed.store](http://wildlyblessed.store)



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[www.RiverRegionBoom.com](http://www.RiverRegionBoom.com)

*We want to thank Ally for sharing some of her life's story with us this month. Ally is an advocate for all things naturally from Mother Earth and the critters she shares her homestead with. If you want to better understand her passion for nature and her critters or have questions reach out to her at 334.799.2254 or email at [allyson.andrews@icloud.com](mailto:allyson.andrews@icloud.com). Her Andrews Double A Ranch is located in Eclectic, a short drive from anywhere in the River Region. We hope you'll share Ally's story with friends and family, they'll enjoy the reading experience. Thanks to DiAnna Paulk and her creative photography skills, she loved being around the special farm critters! If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about our cover profiles, including nominating someone, please text them to Jim Watson at 334.324.3472 or email [jim@riverregionboom.com](mailto:jim@riverregionboom.com).*

*Thanks for Reading BOOM!*