

ROCKET CITY ROCKS & GEMS



The Monthly News Bulletin of the Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society, Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 58 #3

"We'll go to the Moon for a Rock"

March 2026

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Annual Auction & Sale

Saturday, March 28, 2026

Doors Open at 9 am—Bidding Starts at 10 am



We need LOTS of Members to help with the many tasks for a successful event. Thanks

Web Page - www.huntsvillegms.org/ email - hsvgems@gmail.com



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Dear Friends, it is a sad time and a hopeful one. Two of our fellow rock enthusiasts passed away this month. Brian Burgess and Deb Barnhart will both be deeply missed. Their contributions not only as members of HGMS but also on the personal level have been innumerable. Deb and Brian made the world a better place and made us better by being here. I think of them in the cosmos skipping meteorites.

On the more usual business side, our annual auction and sale will be on March 28. We need your help with setting up on the 27th and manning things on the 28th.

Come with joy-full hearts and deep pockets! Jan

Huntsville Gem and Mineral Society

Annual Auction & Sale

Saturday, March 28, 2026

Doors Open at 9 am—Bidding Starts at 10 am

- Lapidary Equipment
- Lapidary Rough
- Slabs
- Specimens
- Cabochons
- Fossils
- Finished Jewelry
- Jewelry Supplies
- Decorative Objects



Plus more on the
Buy It Now
tables!



FREE PARKING—Handicap Accessible
Cash Preferred - Credit Cards Accepted
COME JOIN THE FUN: YOUR TREASURE IS WAITING!

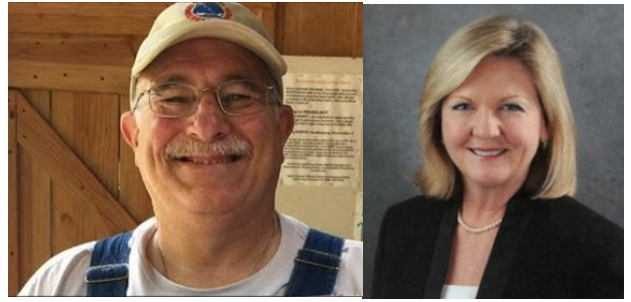
LOCATION

**HUNTSVILLE GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY
EDUCATION CENTER**

(located behind the Gym) at the
SANDRA MOON COMMUNITY CENTER
7901 BAILEY COVE ROAD SE
HUNTSVILLE AL 35802

Hello North Alabama Rockhounds!

It saddens me greatly to hear of the passing of both Brian Burgess and Deborah Barnhart. It particularly reminds me of how much I miss all of the great members in the Huntsville Gem and Mineral Society. Pam and I have been in Georgia now for over six months but many days I wish I could just come by the club and see what everyone is up to. That is a five and a half hour trip each way but I will make that trek every chance I get.



But it didn't take me long to get plugged in here. I am still a member of HGMS but I have joined the NorthEast Georgia Gem & Mineral Society and I'm now an instructor at William Holland School of Lapidary Arts along with HGMS' own Shelley Curran and Theresa Chivers. Shelley, Theresa and I will be teaching during William Holland's "Federation Week", the 5th thru the 12th of June. Shelley will be teaching MetalSmithing, Theresa will be teaching everything you need to know about Chain Maille and I will be teaching Mineral Identification for ages 15 to 50+ (no age limit for those who want to learn). And of course, we are only three of the 17 instructors scheduled for that week. And if you register before the end of April, you will get an early bird, \$50 discount! Go to <https://lapidaryschool.org/register/> and search for one of our names or under category, look for Federation Week. I hope to see a good crowd there for that week. And the week is open to any member from any club associated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Yes, that means any of the sub federations besides SFMS. Come and make friends with folks from all over these United States!

One last thing, As your SFMS 1st Vice-President, I will be including an article every month, in the SFMS LodeStar newsletter describing how SFMS works and how the SFMS can benefit you and HGMS. Look for The LodeStar in your inbox and read it thru as well as this newsletter. I just hope I can do as good a job with my LodeStar articles as all who contribute to this newsletter.

Hello and welcome to "Almost Spring"! As your 1st Vice President, Acting Membership Chair and a new member of the Education Committee, I'm excited to let you know that you can now sign up for classes the second week in June at William Holland. For many years the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies has hosted an SFMS Federation Workshop in the month of June. That week has always been a great time for people with a common interest to come together for a week of relaxation, enjoyment, sharing and learning. I attended last year and had a wonderful time not only in the class I took but also meeting all of the wonderful instructors and students. I made a lot of friends that week and I look forward to seeing not only some of them again but also making new friends from across the country. Many of you plan your vacations around that week. In the last few months some of you have called and emailed me asking about this year. I'm happy that your questions have been answered. Last year's Education Committee of the SFMS decided to not host an SFMS Federation Workshop this year but thank you to William Holland School of Lapidary Arts! The school has stepped forward and planned an exciting "Federation Week", the week of June 7, 2026. This will include students from all Federations in the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. A total of 17 instructors, including me, have signed up to teach. Exciting evening activities are also being planned. This will be a good week to meet and make new friends and learn new ideas from all areas of the country. Classes and Instructors can be viewed at William Holland School of Lapidary Arts in Young Harris, Georgia. Registration is there also. William Holland is giving a \$50 Early Bird Discount if you register by APRIL 31 as a way to thank you for participating in the First Annual All Inclusive Federation Week. I will be there. I hope to see many of you! We will have a wonderful time! I also want to thank the hard work of the Education Committee Chair, Lisa Roberts for pulling together two official SFMS Federation Weeks at Wildacres Retreat Little Switzerland, NC, August 10th-16th and September 7th-13th as well as an Eastern Federation week May 11th-17th. Please see her article describing those classes and how to attend those weeks. Mike Harrison, SFMS 1st Vice-President vp1@southeastfed.org

Your SFMS 1st VP

Mike Harrison



Metal Smithing/Silver Group by Kathy Bowman & Shelley Curran

APRIL PROJECT CLASS. Multilayer Pendant with Stone. April 6th, 5-9:00 pm.

In this class you'll fabricate a smallish pendant with multiple layers and dimensions. A small stone can be incorporated or not.

This involves sawing out small pieces and soldering them onto a wire frame, front and back. This will give practice in sweat soldering, pick soldering and torch control.

For those who choose to use a stone I suggest less experienced students choose a pre-made bezel cup and small cab and those with more experience fabricate a tube setting.

This should be a fun class. Your piece doesn't have to match the example picture, have the same design, eg leaves but it will follow the same general format.



To sign up contact Shelley or Kathy or sign up in class.

Kit cost to be determined by metal used and if a stone is chosen. This pendant is suitable to be made in base metal or silver, with or without stone.

We have 9 seats available. If sufficient interest we will hold another session the following Thursday.. To sign up for this class send email to HGMS@wilddivystudio.com or sign up in person Monday and Thursday nights or at the HGMS meeting.

Certification/Safety Classes: The next Certification/Safety class is **Mau 19th**. Currently there are only a few names on the list.. Send your name and contact information (name, email address, and cell phone number (for text messages) to Certifications@wilddivystudio.com. to get on the Wait List.. Seats will be filled in the order we receive them. We only have space for 9 students per class. Note: If your email is requesting a seat for more than one student, I need the contact information (name, email, and phone number) for each student.

CERTIFICATION CLASS INFORMATION – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

After Certification Class dates are set, email notices with information about the class(es) will be sent to the first 9 people on the request list about a week before the scheduled date. **You must reply to that email to be scheduled for the class or to request a future class.** One reminder email will be sent to those who do not respond to the first email. If there is no reply after the 2nd email, **your name will be removed from the Certification Requests list.** If you are still interested in Certification, you will have to send in your information again to get on the current list.

Facebook Users: The Metalsmithing class has our own page in Facebook groups. You can see info on classes, examples of project classes and other general information. Members of the group can post their finished class projects. Our class page is HGMS Metalsmithing Group.

The link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/438777169648170>

Volunteer Positions *

Class Instructors:	Kathy Bowman Shelley Curran Jan Edmunds (Monday AM)
Tools/Equipment Inventory/ Store Manager	Bob Goble
Safety	Bob Goble
Kit Manager	Shelley Curran
Webpage & Social Media Management	Kathy Bowman

***Note: We are all volunteers, so the schedule is subject to change.**



Rocket City Jewelers (RCJ) News March 2026

RCJ is open to all HGMS members 16 and older. All skill levels are welcome! No certification is required, but experience using jewelry tools is a plus. We offer one class a month with 4 opportunities to finish the project. Many thanks to **LindaSue Reed and Lisa Urban** who contributed to the HGMS display at the main library this month. **Note:** If you're taking the **Wire Woven Cuff class**, there's 2 more opportunities available: **March 18th, 6-9p and March 25th, 2-5p.**

How to Sign Up for Classes

You can sign up one quarter at a time, or for the whole year. Please pay one month in advance so check in goes smoothly, and we can start class on time. To sign up for a class, please email Theresa at rocketcityjewelers@gmail.com at least a **month** before class. Include your **name, contact info, the class(es) you want, and the dates** you plan to take them. Or, you can sign up at RCJ meetings and monthly HGMS meetings.

Remaining 1st Quarter Class

March: Wire Woven Cuff. Weave copper wire and beads to create a cuff style bracelet. **Kit \$5.** **Note: You can still sign up for this class, but you'll need to provide your own beads (see Judy).**

Mar 18: 6 – 9p, make up.

Mar 25: 2 – 5p, make up.



2nd Quarter Classes

April: Wire Wrapped Pendant. Wrap a purple turquoise cabochon using copper wire. This is an example. **Kit \$8.** Sign up now; there's still room! Please note that April has a 5th Wednesday.

Apr 1 & 15: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

Apr 8 & 22: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

Apr 29: 2 – 5p, make up.



May: Celtic Visions RWB Pendant. Create a patriotic pendant using the Celtic Visions chainmaille weave and red, white, and blue rings. **Kit \$5.**

May 6 & 20: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

May 13 & 27: 2 – 5p, class and make up.



June: LME IX – Layered Metal Earrings Paddled Drops. Create wire woven earrings with green stones and decorative paddled wire drops. **This is an example. Kit \$5.**

June 3 & 17: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

June 10 & 24: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

Note: Should severe weather occur on any RCJ meeting day, the meeting will be canceled, and members will be notified.



Field Trip Opportunities

March 6-7, Wetumpka Impact Crater Festival. The Montgomery club will have a table in the exhibition hall.

April 11. Sylacauga Magic of Marble Festival.

Pebble Pups March Meeting Thursday, March 26th - 6:30pm
 HGMS Education Center
 7901 Bailey Cove Rd Huntsville, AL



Our February meeting was a busy program with great turnout! We had 35 kids join us between the older group and the younger group. While there were a lot of us, we had a chance to learn about crystals. We talked about how crystals form and the shapes they take. We went hands on to make models of the different shapes, compare the differences between salt and sugar crystals, and identify the samples in front of us based on their shape. A special thank you to Theresa Chivers for leading the older kids! They were so fortunate to have someone with a chemistry background leading their conversation!

After our meeting, we took our learning on the road with a field trip to Hogg Mine in LaGrange, GA. The kids had a great time learning more about crystals and their shapes while they looked for quartz, aquamarine, beryl, tourmaline, and kaolin. We had great turnout for the field trip with 15 kids and 14 adults joining the dig.



This month the Pebble Pups will be talking about minerals and the different tests that can be used to identify them. We will have a chance to practice identifying minerals and we will discuss how minerals are different from rocks.

Join the Pebble Pups for a field trip to Brilliant, AL on Sunday, March 29th, 2026 to look for Brilliant wood! Learn what it is, how it was formed, and how to find it. You may also find some ironwood, chalcedony, or chert! If you would like to join, please fill out the [Brilliant Wood Field Trip Interest Form](#) or reach out to Suzanne Miller at hgmspebblepups@gmail.com.



Please note that this field trip is only open to active HGMS members.

Some fun facts about minerals to get you ready for our meeting on the 26th: Water is not a mineral, but as soon as it becomes ice it meets all the criteria to be a mineral.



Diamonds and graphite are both made entirely of carbon, but their atomic structures put them at different ends of the hardness scale.

There are over 5,300 different species of minerals – and yes, they call them “species.” Pyrite (also known as “fools gold”) gets its name from the Greek word for “stone which strikes fire” because it can spark when struck with metal.



The American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) sponsors the Future Rockhounds of America (FRA) program for kids under the age of 18. The HGMS Pebble Pups participate in FRA Badge Program. You can check out all the badges that our Pups can earn by visiting their page at <https://www.juniors.amfed.org/fra-badge-program/the-badges>.

Pups who complete activities outside of club activities can send an email to HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com to receive credit for their activities. If your Pup would like to share what they have learned, seen, or found with the rest of the group, please let Suzanne Miller know and we can give them time at the beginning of the meeting to talk to the group! Sharing will help Pups earn their presentation and communications badges. Is there a topic your Pup would like to learn more about?

Do you have an idea for an activity that our group would enjoy? Have you found a great place to hunt for rocks, fossils, or gems? Email Suzanne Miller at HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com to share your ideas!



Mineral of the Month – Antigorite (var. Bowenite) *By Leslie A. Malakowsky*

Antigorite is a member of the *serpentine* group of minerals. Serpentine minerals are common rock-forming silicates rich in magnesium, iron, and water. This group also includes the mineral serpentine; not to be confused with the rock “serpentinite”. Serpentinite contains one or more serpentine minerals, which may or may not include serpentine. Fun fact: In 1965, the California Legislature designated the mineral serpentine as “the official State Rock and lithologic emblem.” (California’s official state *mineral* is gold.)



Polished Bowenite Serpentine

Serpentine minerals are created when ultramafic rocks (igneous rocks with a very low silica content) undergo metamorphism. These minerals are greenish, brownish, or spotted with a greasy-looking slippery-feeling texture. The group name comes from the resemblance of the greenish color to that of a serpent or snake.

“Serpentine” commonly refers to *any* of the 20 varieties of minerals in this group. These minerals are polymorphous, meaning that they have similar but different crystal structures. While individual varieties are not always easy to identify, there are three important distinguishable serpentine minerals: chrysotile, antigorite, and lizardite. (Yes, you read that correctly. Lizardite was named for its type locality at Lizard Point, Cornwall, England.) Chrysotile has a fibrous crystal structure that makes it a good source of asbestos. Antigorite and lizardite have a platy crystal structure that makes them good stones for decorative carving. For example, lizardite is hand carved into trinkets by Cornwall artisans for the tourist trade.



Bowenite is a hard, compact variety of antigorite with the formula $Mg_3(Si_2O_5)(OH)_4$. It’s considered a semi-precious gemstone. It ranges in color from dark apple green to light olive green to shades approaching yellow. It’s often mottled with cloudy white patches and darker veining. Bowenite’s hardness (5.5 on Mohs scale, between apatite and feldspar) and beautiful color make it ideal for carving and jewelry. The New Zealand Māori have used it for centuries for tools, weapons and ornaments. Today, they use it for jewelry, especially pendants. Jewelry manufacturers such as Fabergé (founded by Gustav Faberge in 1842 in Saint Petersburg, Russia) use it in their jewelry. (In 1967, a bowenite cabochon was featured in a brooch presented to then U.S. First Lady Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson as part of the “Our Mineral Heritage Brooch” celebration.)

Bowenite was named by James D. Dana (1813 – 1895) in 1850 in honor of George T. Bowen (1803 – 1828), who first analyzed it in 1822. Dana was the American mineralogist (among other professions) whose publications *System of Mineralogy* and *Manual of Mineralogy* are standard texts for serious mineral collectors. Bowen was a professor of mineralogy at the University of Nashville, Tennessee.



Pounamu pendant

Yellow bowenite is sometimes called *retinalite*, and New Zealand bowenite is called *tangiwai*. Elaborate bowenite carvings from the Suzhou region of China are known as *Suzhou jade*. Besides bowenite, many other types of serpentine are used in the gem trade under the names *false jade* or *Teton jade*.

Small deposits of bowenite are found worldwide, but the most important deposit in the United States is the type locality at Dexter Lime Quarry, Lincoln, Providence County, Rhode Island. Not surprisingly, bowenite is the state mineral of Rhode Island!

In New Zealand, bowenite is known as “pounamu” or a type of *greenstone* – a group of hard durable stones highly valued by the Māori. Greenstone is particularly significant to the Ngāi Tahu tribe on the South Island where most deposits are found. These deposits are legally protected, so don’t collect without permission.

References: <https://en.wikipedia.org>, <https://www.mindat.org>

Brad's Bench Tips

"Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" and "Broom Casting for Creative Jewelry" are available on Amazon www.BradSmithJewelry.com For those who enjoy these bench tips, I'm happy to announce a second volume is now available on Amazon. "More Bench Tips" includes 86



additional ways to save time, avoid frustration or improve quality at the bench. These new tips cover problems in fabrication, stone setting, casting, soldering and polishing.



BEZEL PROBLEMS

When bezel setting a cab that has rather sharp corners, have you ever had problems pushing the metal down at the corners? It's a common problem often causing a wrinkle in your bezel and a grimace on your face.

In order for a bezel to capture the stone, the top edge of the bezel must be compressed and become shorter to lay down onto the stone. With a round or oval stone this naturally happens as you push and burnish the bezel. But when setting a stone with corners, the tendency is to push the long sides of the bezel down first. No compression occurs along the sides, and all excess metal is left at the corners. Compressing everything there is difficult. Often the only way to remove the extra metal at the corner is to make a saw cut and fold the two sides in to touch.




If you want a smooth bezel all around the corners, the simple solution is to set the corners of the bezel first. Then push in and burnish the sides. In this way the necessary compression is distributed along the length of all sides and not forced to occur at the corners. With the corners set first, the top edge of the bezel can easily be compressed along the sides.

CHEAPER & BETTER PICKLE

Most jewelers use a granular pickle mixed with water. The active ingredient is sodium bisulfate. This can be purchased online (amazon.com/dp/B084GPS6KR) or from local stores as a common pool chemical like pH Down used for adjusting the acidity of the water. Check the list of active ingredients for a brand that is 95% or more sodium bisulfate.

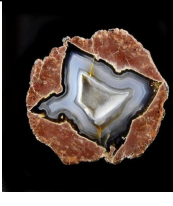
An added benefit is that the pool chemical is usually more pure in form than what is sold for jewelry use and does not cause the brown grime often found floating on the top of the pot.

Remember to stop by the main Huntsville library to see the HGMS display representing various aspects of the club! The display is in the *right* wall cabinet as you walk through security into the front lobby. You can view the display now until the end of March.



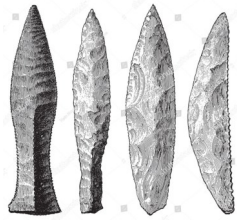
Monthly Rock Swaps - First Monday each Month - April 6, 6:00pm

Everyone has fun looking over and trading rocks at the Education Center from 6 to 9 pm. Bring rocks to trade, or just come down to see a lot of interesting rocks. Have yours identified.



Flint Knapping Continues—Saturday April 4th, 9:00, Ed Center

The first knapping sessions have been successful with some experienced and some coming to learn the techniques. A few specialized tools needed for the art are being purchased by the Club. Come on by to practice, socialize, and/or to learn.



2026 HUNTSVILLE GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY 2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President - Jan Edmunds -
Vice President - Doug Blakeslee -
Secretary: Debbie Epperson -
Treasurer: Theresa Chivers -
Membership - Theresa Chivers -
Editor: Bill Friday - 256-527-8227 -
Past President - Shelley Curran -
Directors:
 James Yack -
 Ashlee Pool -
 James Mallonee -
 Anthony Zwilling -
 Les Bartel -

2026 COMMITTEE CHAIRS Show Chair: Shelley Curran

Property: Bill Friday	Assistant Show Chair: Jan Edmunds
Program Chair—Bill Friday	Show Publicity Chair: Ashlee Pool
Webpage: Leslie Malakowsky,	Show Treasurer: Theresa Chivers
Auction Chair: Ashlee Pool	Mineral ID: Lowell Zoller
Field Trips: Anthony Zwilling	Facility Maintenance: Bill Friday
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller	

The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education, 7901 Bailey Cove Rd. SE, Huntsville AL 35802
Metal Smithing/Silver Instructors: Shelley Curran, Kathy Bowman, Jan Edmunds
Lapidary: Bill Friday, James Yack, Anthony Zwilling, Les Bartel, Theresa Chivers,
Rocket City Jewelers: Judy Osmundson, Theresa Chivers, Leslie Malakowsky
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller, Matthew Sager, Theresa Chivers, Dee Dee Morton, Bill Friday

Monday **Metal Smithing/Silver** 5:00pm - 9:00pm
 1st Monday Rock Swap 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Tuesday **Lapidary** 9:00am - 2:00pm
 Lapidary 6:00pm - 9:00pm
 HGMS Meetings 6:00pm - 8:30 4th Tuesdays

Wednesday **Lapidary** 6:00pm - 9:00pm
 Rocket City Jewelers
 1st & 3rd Weeks - 6:00pm - 9:00pm
 2nd, 4th, 5th Weeks - 2:00pm - 5:00pm

Thursday **Metal Smithing/Silver** 5:00pm - 9:00pm
 Pebble Pups 6:30pm 4th Thursdays
 Lapidary 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Friday **Lapidary** **Discontinued**

Saturday **Metal Smithing** 9:00am - 3:00pm irregular 1st Saturday of the Month
 Lapidary 9:00 - Noon - First Saturday of the month
 Flint Knapping 9:00 - Noon - First Saturday of the month



PURPOSE OF THE SOCIETY: The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society is a non-profit educational organization for people interested in mineralogy, geology, paleontology, and related lapidary arts. Its primary purpose is the education and enjoyment of the members and the general public in these areas. This purpose is accomplished through programs and activities, shows, lectures to school children and organizations, and exchange of rocks, minerals, artifacts, and newsletters.

DUES: Annual dues are \$20.00 per person, \$25.00 per family, and are due on October 1st of each year

Membership Applications may be found at our webpage www.Huntsvillegms.org or at the HGMS Education Center during a meeting or at one of our activity periods: 7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 35802

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of the month except for March Auction, June picnic, Christmas Dinner and major holidays.

The Society is affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies , the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, and the Dixie Mineral Council

Federation Newsletters: SFMS: <https://www.southeastfed.org/newsletter>

AFMS: <https://www.amfed.org/newsletter>

2026/27 CALENDAR

- 28 Mar '26 - **SATURDAY** Rock Auction, Education Center 8:00am
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL
- 28Apr '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 26 May '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- Jun '26 [Saturday - date to be determined] - Annual HGMS Picnic, Monte Sano State Park
- 28 Jul '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 25 Aug '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 22 Sep '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, HGMS Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 9-11 Oct '26 - HGMS Fall Gem, Jewelry, & Mineral Show - Jaycee Building
2180Airport Rd SW, Huntsville, AL 35801
- 27 Oct '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Ed Ctr
- 24 Nov '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 9Dec '26 - Christmas Dinner - details as it gets closer
- We will have a great potluck dinner again at the Ed Ctr.
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 26 Jan '27 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 24 Feb '26 - 26
- 23Feb '27 Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm

Deadline for Next
Newsletter April 19

Dated material
Do not delay

March 2026

Rocket City Rocks & Gems
Bill Friday, Editor
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Huntsville, AL 35803