

# 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"*

April 2026

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## HGMS Meeting - 28 APR 2026 - 6:00

### Auction Recap and Meet and Greet

Dear fellow rock finders, many thanks to all who helped out at the auction. It was a success due to all who worked and participated. You made it a success!

This month we will have a short business meeting followed by a meet and greet time. So bring a snack to share with someone you don't know and hope to see you Tuesday!!!

Web Page - [www.huntsvillegms.org/](http://www.huntsvillegms.org/) email - [hsvgems@gmail.com](mailto:hsvgems@gmail.com)



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## Library Display

We had a great display in the library for March, thank you to everyone who contributed to make this a success.



## October Show + Southeast Fed + American Fed Annual Meeting

We will be hosting the combined Southeast Federation and American Federation Annual Meeting in October 2027 during our Fall Gem Jewelry and Mineral Show. Their business meetings will be held at the Double-Tree Hotel just south of the Jaycee Building. Details will need to be worked out ahead, but most of what will be needed from us will be the Meet & Greet to be held in the south room of our Ed Ctr on Friday evening. We will cater a light meal. Volunteers will be needed to help make this a success.



Metal Smithing/Silver Group by Kathy Bowman & Shelley Curran

**May Project: The “Easy Hinge” Pendant**

**Date: Monday, May 4, 2026 (Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> if the Monday class is full)**

The May Project is an Easy Hinge Pendant. The hinge construction is simple however, the entire pendant has several elements- none of them hard - so it will take more than one session to finish the entire Pendant.

The picture of the example shows four very different looking pendants, but they are all made with the same basic hinge technique. We will be using base metals for this project. You can mix the color of the metals for more interest Your pendant can have two stones, one stone and a hollow form or one stone and a riveted element. I will have several texture plates and some commercial rivets available.

You will need to provide a stone. (I will have some for sale if you don’t have one) The stone should be no larger than about 1 1/2 inches in the longest dimension. The samples pictured are set with the longest dimension horizontally, but it works vertically, depending on the cut of the stone. There are lots opportunities for unique designs with this pendant.

The Kit in base metals will be \$8.00 If you want to add a silver hinge and silver bezel wire for contrast it will be available at our cost. (For example, at \$78.58/ozt spot this would add about \$8 to \$10 to the kit depending on how large the stone or if you want silver rivets.

We have 9 seats available. If there is sufficient interest we will hold another session the following Thursday. To sign up for this class send an email to [HGMS@wildivystudio.com](mailto:HGMS@wildivystudio.com) or sign up in person Monday and Thursday nights or at the HGMS meeting.

**Certification/Safety Classes:** The next Certification/Safety class is **May 19<sup>th</sup>**. 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@wildivystudio.com](mailto:Certifications@wildivystudio.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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 April 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](mailto: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.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Pebble Pups

### April Meeting

Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> - 6:30pm  
 HGMS Education Center  
 7901 Bailey Cove Road SE  
 Huntsville, AL 35803



During our March meeting, we learned about minerals and mineral testing. Thank you to Bill Friday, Matthew Sager, and David Miller for helping me get the juniors some hands on experience testing minerals and teaching them what to look for when they are out on their own! The kids enjoyed seeing how the minerals are different when you really look at them and why you can't always trust what you are seeing at first glance.

One of our goals this year was to get the Pebble Pups out looking for rocks more, and we are certainly doing that! After our meeting, we had a good turnout for our Brilliant Field Trip with a group of 20. The landscape was different this time, but the Brilliant wood was there and we found a lot of great pieces! The State Geologist of Alabama shared the history

of the Wetumpka impact and how that impact created a trove of fossilized treasures for us to find millions of years later. The property owner made it extra special by helping the kids learn how to find it in the dirt. It was a great learning experience and a great time learning how to look for something special!



This month the Pebble Pups will be working on a jewelry project. They will be making beaded bracelets. All supplies will be provided by the club, so there will be no cost for this activity. If you are interested in helping the kids make bracelets, please let Suzanne Miller know. We would appreciate any help we can get!

We have been invited to join the North Mississippi Gem and Mineral Society for their field trip on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 to Twenty Mile Creek. Put on your water shoes, grab your sieves and buckets, and spend the day splashing around in the creek looking for shark teeth and other small Cretaceous fossils! Please use the [Field Trip Form](#) to sign up so we can let NMGMS know how many people to expect from our group. Reach out to Suzanne Miller at [hgmspebblepups@gmail.com](mailto:hgmspebblepups@gmail.com) with any questions.



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](mailto: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](mailto:HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com) to share your ideas!

Would you be interested in sharing what you know about rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, or how to find/use them? We would love to have you come lead one of our monthly programs! Please reach out to Suzanne Miller at [HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com](mailto:HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com) to discuss.



## Mineral of the Month – Zoisite (var. Tanzanite)

By Leslie A. Malakowsky



Trichroism: A single crystal viewed from three directions.

Tanzanite is the gemstone variety of the mineral zoisite. Tanzanite is a calcium aluminum hydroxyl *sorosilicate* (a mineral in which the silicate anion has a double tetrahedra structure) with the formula  $\text{Ca}_2\text{Al}_3(\text{SiO}_4)_2(\text{Si}_2\text{O}_7)\text{O}(\text{OH})$ . (Zoisite is a member of the epidote mineral group.) The other gemstone varieties of zoisite are thulite (pink to rose red), anyolite also known as “ruby in zoisite” (green with red and black), and fancy zoisite (yellow, green, or orange). But of the four, only tanzanite is faceted for jewelry.



Upper left: heat treated.

Lower left: untreated.

Lower right: faceted gems.

Tanzanite varies in color from dark/medium/light blue, violet and reddish purple due to trace amounts of vanadium. Tanzanite is 6.5 on Mohs scale - harder than feldspar (6) but softer than quartz (7) – with a pearly or adamantine luster when rough or a vitreous (glassy) luster when properly cut and polished. It's usually found as prismatic striated crystals or as dense, mainly homogeneous masses. It's a member of the *orthorhombic* crystal system (having 3 mutually perpendicular axes of different lengths), which is an important identifying characteristic. Another identifying characteristic is tanzanite's optical properties. Tanzanite is known for its *pleochroism* (displaying different colors when viewed at different angles under transmitted light). Gemstones that display two colors are “dichroic”, but tanzanite is “trichroic”, alternately displaying blue, violet, and dark purple. Colors can also appear more intense when viewed under different types of light. For example, blues under fluorescent light and violet hues under incandescent light. Tanzanite rough can be drab, reddish brown, or colorless, so manufacturers use heat treatments to bring out the blues, violets, and purples.



This gemstone is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century discovery. In 1967, a gemstone then called “blue zoisite”, was discovered by Jumanne Ngoma near Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. Ian McCloud, a Tanzanian geologist, correctly identified it. The identity was later confirmed by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), the British Museum, and others. In 1968, Tiffany & Co. changed the name to tanzanite for marketing purposes. In 1984, the Tanzanian government issued a certificate of discovery to Ngoma. In 2002, tanzanite was added as a December birthstone to the American

Gem Trade Association (AGTA) birthstone list, the first change to their list since 1912. Tanzanite is rare because it formed under unique conditions in only one place on Earth. About 585 million years ago, tectonic plate collisions generated intense heat and pressure near the base of Mount Kilimanjaro transforming igneous rocks into vanadium-rich tanzanite in only one 7-square-kilometer (4.35-square-mile) area of Tanzania. Geologists estimate the odds of finding another deposit are one in a million. Tanzanite is valued according to the 4Cs – Color, Clarity, Cut, and Carat weight. Intense, saturated blues or violet-blues are the most prized. Prices can range from \$100/carat to \$800+/carat based on quality. Interestingly, untreated stones are more valuable than treated ones. References: [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), [mindat.org](http://mindat.org)

### Brad's Bench Tips

"Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" and "Broom Casting for Creative Jewelry" are available on Amazon [www.BradSmithJewelry.com](http://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.



### CUTOFF WHEELS

Cutoff wheels (also called Separating Discs) are inexpensive and do a great job cutting or shaping steel. You can use them to sharpen tool points, cut piano wire to length, make slots, and sharpen worn drills. Other uses include modifying pliers and making your own design stamps.

My preference is the one inch diameter size. Be sure to hold the wheel firmly so nothing moves to break the disc, and definitely wear your safety glasses. Those are little flakes of steel coming off the disk.

BTW - Cutoff wheels are not as good at cutting soft metals like copper, silver and gold. They will work, but soft metals tend to clog up the cutting edges.



### DEBURRING JUMP RINGS

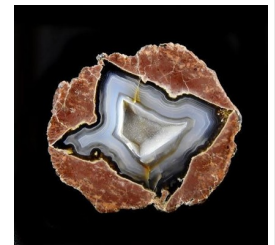
When cutting jump rings from large gauge wire for chain making, you'll notice the saw leaves a small burr. An easy way to remove these is to tumble the rings with some fine-cut pyramids. It's best not to tumble for a long period because it tends to remove the polished finish from the wire.

No tumbler, no problem. You don't actually need a tumbler. I just put a handful of pyramids in a wide mouth plastic jar and shake for a bit. You can find these pyramids in the tumble finishing section of most jewelry supply catalogs.



### Monthly Rock Swaps - First Monday each Month - May 4

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 May 2nd, 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: James Mallonee

Past President - Shelley Curran

Directors:

James Yack

Ashlee Pool

James Mallonee

Anthony Zwilling

Les Bartel

**2026 COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**Property: Bill Friday**

**Show Chair: Shelley Curran**

**Program Chair—Bill Friday**

**Assistant Show Chair: Jan Edmunds**

**Webpage: Leslie Malakowsky,**

**Show Publicity Chair: Ashlee Pool**

**Auction Chair: Ashlee Pool**

**Show Treasurer: Theresa Chivers**

**Field Trips: Anthony Zwilling**

**Mineral ID: Lowell Zoller**

**Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller**

**Facility Maintenance: Bill Friday**

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](http://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 CALENDAR

- 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

Deadline for Next  
Newsletter May 17

**Dated material  
Do not delay**

Apr 2026

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