

PLAYING HER SONG

AYANNA JACOBS-EL, 18, IS USING HER PASSION FOR MUSIC to inspire change in her community. While on her journey, Kohl's recognized Jacobs-El for her positive impact on the Birmingham community and selected her out of 37,000 nominees as a Kohl's Care Scholarship recipient.

The program honors American students for their dedication and effort to improve their communities. Nearly 200 role-model students receive scholarships based on leadership, initiative, generosity and their community projects.

Jacobs-El believes sharing her music with the community can inspire people her age to turn down peer pressure and find a better meaning in life. "I wanted to show students that they have control over their lives, even at a young age," Jacobs-El says. So without a major record deal, she self-produced, composed and then distributed her two albums, and then set out to perform her music live at various locations throughout Birmingham and Huntsville. Jacobs-El' lyrics inspire action, motivation and a sense of invincibility.

"My music counteracts the mentality that other songs today are presenting, like drugs and alcohol," Jacobs-El says.

Jacobs-El fell in love with music at age 5 and by the time she was 9, she knew she wanted to attend Berklee College of Music, where she is now enrolled. -MORGAN TAYLOR



Fish Fry

THE CAHABA RIVER SOCIETY'S FRY-DOWN RETURNS to Trussville Springs Sept. 28 for a new round of catfish cooking competition, which raises money to support the quality of Birmingham's main drinking water resource — the Cahaba River.

Although it's young, this 4-year-old food festival has attracted thousands of people. The Fish Market Owner George Sarris will be among this year's judges. Each team is given 24 pounds of catfish to prepare any way — fried, blackened, grilled, sautéed, whatever works best.

CRS Executive Director Beth Stewart says tasting different catfish recipes is a great way to see Birmingham's diverse culture. "Food brings Birmingham together in a lot of ways. It's exciting that we have a food festival on the river that celebrates our culture and such important environmental resources," Stewart says.

In addition to the cooking competition, the event includes educational activities, games and a beer garden.

Donations will benefit the CRS' Shane Husley CLEAN Environmental program and the Water-Smart Growth program. Both focus on the education and the preservation of quality water.

Tickets are \$20, free for children 12 and younger, and are available at frydown.com. -MORGAN TAYLOR



TOP: George Sarris displays a dish at the Cahaba River Society's Fry-Down. MIDDLE: Children and adults aren't afraid to get their feet wet at the annual event. ABOVE: Trophies are awarded for the best catfish at the festival.

Outdoor Adventures

WHILE TRAVELING THE COUNTRY in 2011, Fynn Glover interviewed college students about how they find outdoor recreation. As he traveled from city to city, he was frustrated by the "sea of mediocrity" produced by web searches. The information that Glover found was fragmented and sometimes unreliable or outdated. Instead, he began visiting local outdoor stores and bike shops in each city.

"The information I got there was very detailed and authentic," Glover says.

Glover realized there was need for an organized resource with detailed, reliable information for outdoor enthusiasts. "We really take a curated, editorial approach," says Glover. With support from outdoor companies such as Chaco, Marmont, Horny Toad, Osprey, Outdoor Research and Yakima, RootsRated has hired a group of professional writers, editors and photographers who generate all the information and stories for the website. As of now, RootsRated is in 61 cities — including Birmingham — and has recently released an iPhone app. The website gives users a wide variety of activities to choose from including hiking, wind surfing, backpacking and disc golfing. A food and drink option allows users to find restaurants near their outdoor destination. For each destination, RootsRated provides how far the location is from downtown, a short profile of the location, directions and more.

Conservation group Wild South brought Birmingham to Glover's attention. Folks at Wild South described the city as "an outdoor mecca that not enough people know about." Visit the site at rootsrated.com or download from iTunes. -JIMMY LICHTENWALTER



RootsRated introduces outdoor enthusiasts to a number of adventures around the nation, including a wealth of activities in the Birmingham metropolitan area.