

LIFE

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Lisa Davis

Features
Editor

Waiting for the tooth fairy

The tooth fairy is on standby at our house, waiting for my son to finally wiggle free the upper right canine tooth that has been deviling him for the past week.

I've tried to pull it for him, to no avail. People have offered him pliers.

I've considered tying one end of a string to the tooth and the other end to the dog's favorite bone, like in the book *Henry and Ribsy*.

It's unusual for my son to be having trouble with his tooth, because, only a couple of weeks ago, the boy lost five teeth in 12 days.

Two at school, one at home at 3 a.m. (he woke us up to tell us), the last two in the span of five minutes while writing an essay on the Civil War.

It was at this point that he announced his teeth should be worth more money, because they were becoming so much trouble. Does the tooth fairy offer twofer specials?

Apparently, our tooth fairy is cheap. Well below the national average of \$2.13 per tooth, as reported by the Official Tooth Fairy Poll website. (Why am I not surprised that there's a tooth fairy website?)

Does this mean that each household has its own particular tooth fairy? Or is there just one tooth fairy who practices gross inequality of income distribution?

Most people agree that the tooth fairy is female, although 3 percent think the tooth fairy is male, according to research done by the late Rosemary Wells, a former professor at a dental college who became the nation's foremost expert on the ways of the tooth fairy.

The tooth fairy doesn't operate the same way in every country.

In the Philippines, you're supposed to throw your baby teeth over the roof. In Ireland, kids bury their baby teeth.

My kids have lost teeth at school, bringing them home in those cute tiny plastic treasure chests. They've lost them at the library, and in hotel rooms (where the tooth fairy managed to find us even though we were out of town).

They haven't always been able to hang onto their lost teeth long enough to get them under their pillows. My son lost his first tooth twice; once out of his mouth, once out of his pocket.

When this happens, the kids write notes of apology to leave under their pillows.

Once my daughter made a replacement tooth out of pink clay. In these situations, the tooth fairy has always been immensely understanding and generous.

Although my daughter did try to scam her once, leaving a fake tooth made out of paper.

A friend of a friend once said that she and her sister used to set traps for the tooth fairy. "Somehow, she always outsmarted us. She drew the line at wisdom teeth ... said she'd already paid enough just having them extracted. Go figure..."

A SENSE OF PLACE



Photos special to The Star

1. The Goldsmith-Schiffman Elementary School in Huntsville has room for 800 students in 44 classrooms. The cafeteria is themed around a park lodge. Designed by Chapman Sisson Architects.

2. The John P. Thayer YMCA, which serves both Phenix City and Columbus, Ga., is modeled after the many textile mills in the area. The main entrance is enclosed in glass, and the climbing wall is visible from several blocks away. Designed by 2WR Inc.

3. The Intermark Group ad agency of Birmingham is in a historic downtown building that was originally a car dealership in the 1920s. Now, a salvaged Airstream trailer has been converted into a conference room. Designed by ArchitectureWorks.

4. The Maritime Training Center in Mobile (built to withstand hurricanes and floods) was designed to reflect the city's history as a port. The building resembles a loaded container ship, with a gangway entrance and a screen shaped like the bow of a boat, with numbers for water-depth markings. On the back of the building, old shipping containers have been converted into classrooms. Designed by Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood.

Exhibit captures the best of Alabama architecture, from lake houses to robotics facilities

BY LISA DAVIS

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Ever thought much about a parking deck? A hospital wing? An elementary-school cafeteria?

The way such spaces are designed can mean the difference between attraction and eyesore.

"Alabama Architecture 2010," a new exhibit at the Berman Museum of World History, aims to draw attention to architecture's place in our private and public lives. The exhibit, which runs through Saturday, is sponsored by the Alabama Architectural Foundation, a nonprofit organization that funds college scholarships and works to raise awareness of the role that architecture plays in our communities.

On display are drawings, photographs and descriptions from among the 30 projects that were submitted to the Alabama Council of the American Institute of Architects' annual design competition.

There are schools, hospitals, industrial facilities, corporate headquarters, airports, YMCAs, churches, houses, lake houses, historic preservation projects — and the new party pavilion for the president of Auburn University.

A treehouse at the Huntsville Botanical

Garden has its walls deliberately and playfully askew.

An architectural office in Fairhope looks like an echo of a serene Santa Fe church.

An office building and parking garage for the Birmingham Parking Authority is actually eye candy, with a glass stairwell soaring up from one corner.

New student housing buildings at Auburn are clustered around a central greenspace. "The individual buildings are good, but when it becomes this village, it's great," said Jay Jenkins, of Munroe-Jenkins Architects in Anniston. Jenkins is chairman of the awards committee for the AAF and organizer of the exhibit.

"One of the purposes of this show is to educate the public on what architects see as good architecture. And that's very opinionated," Jenkins said. "It's like that old idea from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: 'What is good? Do we need someone to tell us what good is?'"

"Well, no. You can tell if something is good. You can tell this is all good, thoughtful design — and our communities can benefit from more of the same.

"It can be a treehouse, a parking deck, a hospital — all of those pieces deserve the same attention."

Two of this year's award-winning proj-

ects — the Maritime Training Center in Mobile and the Robotics Training Facility in Huntsville — were designed by Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, the architectural firm that will be designing Anniston's new Department of Human Resources building.

While the AIA has long held its annual design competition, this is the first time the entries have been displayed publicly. When the exhibit leaves Anniston, it will travel to Montgomery, Mobile and Birmingham.

There are no local firms represented in the exhibit, because none entered the competition this year. The economy put a dent in entries this year, Jenkins said, because there are simply fewer projects being built.

Jenkins hopes to make the exhibit an annual event, eventually touring to 10 or so cities around the state. He'd also like to offer behind-the-scenes architectural tours — say, for instance, guided tours of loft apartments in downtown Anniston, or the historic St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, or the future Longleaf Botanical Gardens.

Because the spaces that we carve out for ourselves, they matter.

**FOR MORE PHOTOS,
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