

A SPIRIT THAT IS NOT AFRAID



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What Auburn Oil Co. has in store for Auburn's community



The logo of the Auburn Oil Co. Bookstore, as can be seen by the front doors of their building in downtown Auburn.

Photo by [Cole Peake](#) | [Photographer](#) | The Auburn Plainsman

By [Ella Walton](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#)

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Book buffs and latte lovers alike can find their paged paradise behind the doors of Auburn Oil Co. Booksellers on Magnolia Avenue. From author signings and trivia nights to local handmade products, Auburn Oil Co. exhibits its ever-growing commitment to the Auburn community.

Auburn Oil Co. was founded in October 2019 by co-owners Mike Armor and June Wilcox. The two also co-own another bookstore called [M. Judson Booksellers](#), which is located in Greenville, S.C.

Armor, who was born and raised in Auburn, believed it was a shame for a university town to lack an independent bookstore. As a civil engineer, owning a bookstore was “more missional” to him than anything.

“I think Auburn really deserves a bookstore, and it’s something that should be an integral part of the community,” Armor said.

The name “Auburn Oil Co.” was inspired by Armor’s dad. When Armor was growing up, his dad owned seven Phillips 66 gas stations.

“It was a time when you pulled in and someone came out to meet you, pumped your gas, washed your windshield, sometimes vacuumed out your car,” said Armor. “My dad stayed most of the time on the one on Opelika Road, and it kind of became a gathering place for a lot of his friends.”

Because people would park and sit inside the station, it grew to become a gathering place for the whole community. That is what Armor and Wilcox envisioned for their bookstore — a place where people are welcomed and can read, drink coffee or wine, chat and have a good time together.

The bookstore possesses several ways they engage with Auburn’s inhabitants. This year, they began monthly themed trivia nights and are also closing shop earlier to host after-hours book club meetings.

“We’ll leave someone here if you want to buy and shop, and we’ll usually do half-priced wine by the glass,” Armor said.

Auburn Oil Co. offers page pairings as well — events where employees pair a wine with a book that compliments it.



[Cole Peake | Photographer](#)

An Auburn Oil Co. "blind date" book, lying next to one of the vintage chairs that can be found in their downtown Auburn bookstore.

Their blind date bookcase showcases shelves of paper-wrapped books, an idea that was inspired in 2016 by another bookstore. Customers aren't aware of the title or author when they buy the book; instead, they must rely on the brief, employee-made descriptions written on the front of the paper.

As someone who doesn't like uncertainty, Armor wasn't sure how people would respond to the blind books, but he found that it appealed to a lot of people who enjoy surprises. Some people, he said, have found new authors to appreciate through the experience.

"If I can introduce somebody to a book that they otherwise wouldn't have picked up, that gives me a sense of accomplishment," said Armor. "I think that's how my love of owning a bookstore grew."

Auburn Oil Co. not only creates a welcoming environment for customers to gather but also focuses on fostering relationships with local authors. The bookstore holds author events and signings, through which experienced authors and authors new to the scene can mingle amongst themselves and with customers.

"A lot of people are not aware of the talent we have here locally," Armor said.

Auburn Oil Co. partners with several local businesses — they sell Kudzu Hill soap and candles, which are made in Auburn, and their coffee beans are from Mama Mocha, an Opelikan, family-owned coffee roaster.

Auburn Oil's coffee menu features employee-crafted specialty drinks, which can be replicated year-round if customers fall in love with a particular blend. One of their most popular is the Butterbeer Latte, a Harry Potter-inspired drink including caramel, butterscotch and hazelnut.

Armor appreciates Auburn Oil's employees, who come up with most of the store's ideas.

"One of our greatest strengths is the people that work here. They have a passion for books and they're happy to share that passion," Armor said.

Alissa Brown, an Auburn Oil employee of about four and a half years, has a passion for talking about books with customers, especially when they share the same niche book interests as her. She also enjoys getting to know the people she works with.

"Sometimes I feel like it's hard to find your book friends, and this is like an automatic 'you have to talk to me about books now,'" Brown said.

One of Brown's favorite memories working for Auburn Oil Co. is when, for the bookstore's fourth birthday, she made an [Instagram reel](#) of customers telling the bookstore happy birthday and why they love the store.

Caroline Redfern, a freshman pro-flight major, and Angelina Shunnarah, a freshman genetics major, share a love of fantasy books and visiting Auburn Oil Co.

"I just like small, local businesses better," added Shunnarah. "It's such a cute little bookstore."

This "cute little bookstore" provides a place for students and locals to find connections while fulfilling their coffee and book fix. Following in the footsteps of its namesake, [Auburn Oil Co. Booksellers](#) binds people together, making a positive (book)mark on Auburn's community.

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Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



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