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From The PUBLISHER... DINA MASON

“

2019 will be “in the books” soon and we all tend to look back and see each year’s highlights. Many of us cannot believe it is “2020.” Back in the day, that sounded as if we would look like “Lost in Space,” “Star Wars” or maybe “The Jetsons” by then.

But here we are, knocking on 2020’s door and we do not have flying cars or that great robot maid and hair machine that just molds crazy hair into the perfect “Ms. J” hairstyle. We do have more technology than I care for and living in the country is my excuse for not having smart lights; NEST and many others. My new stove and dishwasher are both “Smart;” I can use an app on my phone to start them (well, if I could figure it out and if my internet at home wasn’t so slow) and no telling what else it could do.

We have a “Smart Thermostat” on the office heating and air unit but we seem to have it set to be comfortable

when we are not here and not when we are. I guess I have become that “old person” who is not sure if all this “Smart” stuff is in fact making us smarter -- or not!

But, we must move forward and so 2020 will bring new “digital” opportunities for those who love to read Premiere Magazine. Our new Premiere Newsletter will be delivered to your phone, tablet or desktop where you will be the first to see the new edition (maybe before they are out in racks some months) AND you can sign up for the Birthday Club and get a Free Gigi’s Cupcake and Paragould Cinema 8 Movie Passes to enjoy in your Birthday month! Oh, and a Gearhead Outfitters Coupon, too.

Watch out for another NEW and EXCITING digital product from MOR MEDIA soon -- 2020, here we come. (sorry, not the hair machine or the robotic maid but you are going to LOVE it!)

”

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IN BETWEEN

BY LINDSEY MILLS

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Christmas sounds like the coffee pot gurgling to life at 8 a.m. and again at 9:30 and again at 11:00.

If I close my eyes, I can imagine my dad cracking open the door and the burst of cold air that makes me snuggle into his jacket on the couch as he says, "Come on mutts!" and my dog and his both race toward the door, claws clacking on the hardwood in their eagerness to accompany him outside.

Christmas sounds like my grandma singing the tunes that spill out of the speaker on Christmas morning. She smiles at me, a twinkle in her eyes when our gazes meet and she lifts her voice a bit higher then says, "Lindsey, sing."

Christmas sounds like my brother's feet cracking and popping as he walks through the house. They've always done that, with every step. I shoot him a look when he cracks them on purpose while sitting down.

He's simply trying to push my buttons and he knows just how to do so. He laughs when I can't take it anymore and burst out, "Dave, do you have to do that?!"

Christmas sounds like my Aunt Gale saying, "Mama!" real loud from the kitchen because my grandma didn't hear her the first time. She rolls her eyes when she has to repeat things and I chuckle.

Christmas has changed over the years. As I've gotten older and lived in different places, the celebration looks a bit different with each turn of the calendar. I make it home at different times.

I split Christmas with my family and my fiancé's. But the sound of Christmas remains the same: It is the sound of people I love as our day unfolds together. It is waking up in a house that is home because of who's in it, going to sleep thankful for another day together, and everything in-between.

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College Tips by a College Student



By: Sara Brown



With the semester coming to a close and finals coming up, every student is bound to be feeling quite a bit of stress. No reason to worry, that's normal! Instead of holding all that stress in, it's a good idea to try and find one or even a few ways to de-stress to help you do your best.

Tip number one: Schedule time into your day for you to take a break. With classes, assignments, and work, you can find yourself going all day long with no time to just sit back and take a breather. Even if it's just for ten minutes (though more is better), taking a little time for yourself to listen to a couple of your favorite songs, watch your favorite TV show, or just enjoy a few minutes of silence can help immensely with stress.

Tip two: Make a schedule of what you have to get done, when you'd like to get it done, and then follow through. Sometimes having everything you have to do organized can ease stress because you have a plan, and you

don't have to worry about forgetting anything.

Tip three: Attend a fun study event. Lots of clubs on campus have different events going on at different times, and they're all designed to ease some of the stress that finals can bring. These events are also a good way to meet new people and make new friends.

Tip four: If you find yourself stressed and struggling to the point that your mental health is starting to suffer, don't be afraid to get help. Talk to someone you can trust, visit the Counseling Center, or just try to take a step back and regroup. Take care of yourself above all else.

And finally, tip five: Try and relax. Remember, we're in the home stretch. All that's left to do is wrap up those projects and papers and get ready to rock those finals, then we get a few weeks off to celebrate our accomplishments and get ready to do it all over again in the spring!

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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



Every few months several of my high school classmates gather for a meal at a local restaurant and make the most of the chance to trade stories and catch up on each others' lives. We had one a few weeks back and I sat across from three guys I always liked, and enjoyed laughing at tales from the good old days with them.

Out of the blue, one of them looked at me and said, "You know what I remember most about you in high school?" When someone says something like that to you, your interest is definitely piqued and various scenarios began to play out in my mind. I must admit I became a bit egotistic as I imagined any number of things worth bragging about.

After I responded, "No, what?" I was hoping for something like, "You had such a great touch on those long jump shots you used to make," or, very unrealistically, "I remember how all the pretty girls always talked about how shy you were but that they all secretly wanted to go out with you."

What he came out with was, "Your car had that push button transmission."

Really? That's the one thing that stands out about me some 50 years later? It's true; we did have a 1963 Plymouth Fury and instead of having a gear shift on the column or in the console, this car's was represented by a series of buttons on the panel. Once you turned the key and started the engine, you then pushed up a lever at the far left side just past the steering wheel and selected the appropriate push button -- Reverse, Neutral, Drive, 1 or 2 -- and went on your way. I remember the car and its workings well, but wasn't aware that's what I would be known for.

Maybe, without knowing it since I wasn't much of a car person, a push button transmission carried some level of prestige and his statement was quite the compliment. Maybe standard transmissions denoted hot-rodders or bad boys or poor people, and regular automatic versions were connected

to regular folks but push button ... maybe we "PB" guys were something special. Somehow I doubt it, and somehow I'm not certain it's what I want to be known for. I don't think I want people to visit my grave site years from now and look at neighboring headstones with phrases like, "Loving Husband and Father" or "A Friend To All" and then come to mine and read, "Richard Brummett. He had a push button transmission."

It makes me wonder if there are people out there who went to school with me and can't readily make a connection when my name is mentioned, and the one who brought my name up is going, "Yeah, you remember him. Baseball player ..."

"No."

"Told a lot of jokes."

"Nope."

"His car had that push button transmission?"

"Oh, that guy! What's he been up to?"

Maybe girls had no interest in dating me because I rarely spoke to them, until one of them said at a sleepover, "You know, I hear his car has push buttons," and then all sorts of "oohs" and "aahs" were elicited before someone said, "Well, sign me up for that."

Probably not, but at least one guy remembers me and my car.

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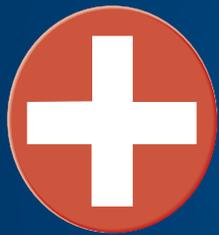
HARRY THOMASON

BY ANTHONY CHILDRESS

Harry Thomason, Arkansas native and longtime producer of popular television series like “Designing Women” and “Evening Shade,” visited Arkansas State University and Jonesboro on November 7 to promote his new book, *Brother Dog Southern Tales and Hollywood Adventures*. The title and ensuing pages focus on Thomason’s career with wife and collaborator Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, a Poplar Bluff native, in building a successful career that includes the aforementioned shows and a close relationship with Bill and Hillary Clinton, pre- and post-White House days.

During his campus stop, Thomason spoke to students about his life’s work, then moved on to The Recovery Room for “An Evening with Harry Thomason,” where he engaged an appreciative crowd with some of the book’s stories. He noted how “Designing Women” was nearly canceled by CBS after a few episodes, but a group of fans organized a letter-writing campaign that led to network executives relenting and keeping the series around for several more seasons.

Following his remarks, Thomason signed copies of the book. He referenced one of DW’s famed episodes in which Charlene (played by Jean Smart) discovers that her cousin is being physically and mentally abused by the woman’s husband. Mavis (the cousin) had been dance training the design team for an upcoming talent show. Charlene reminded Mavis that they called themselves the “Rowdy Girls” as children and to lean on her for getting out of the abusive marriage. Thomason’s stop in Jonesboro was sponsored by KASU radio, the College of Liberal Arts and Communication, and A-State’s Heritage Studies Ph.D. program.



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SAYING THANK YOU

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

A sincere “thank you” to all veterans -- in the form of a free meal -- is just the beginning of holiday generosity extended by the Veterans Support Association (VSA) in Paragould.

On November 9 the group invited any and all veterans in the area to enjoy a free meal at the organization’s building on Hwy. 412 West, offering the opportunity to win door prizes as well. “Just to say ‘thank you for your service to our country’ to all veterans,” said Don Foster of the VSA. “We’ve had veterans in the past from World War II all the way to the younger generations. It’s just a small thing we can do for them.”

With Veterans Day falling in November the group stays busy, performing the “Missing Man Table” ceremony at various sites in Northeast Arkansas and taking time to feed and visit with veterans at assisted living centers. Then in December, the VSA members travel to the nursing homes and similar centers to make gift presentations to each veteran in each facility.

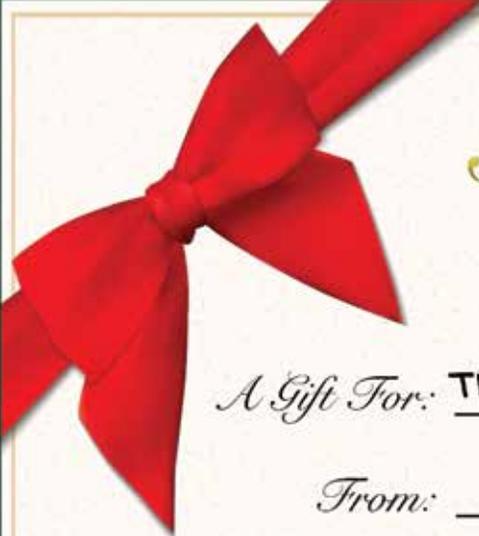
“We go to 37 different nursing homes and assisted living centers in the area,” Foster said. “We go to the activities



director at each one and get the names and branch of service for the veterans living there. We have picked up Monette and Lake City and we go up to Kennett ... all over our area. It started out with just four in Paragould, but we’ve grown. We’ve given out over 250 robes with the veteran’s name and branch of service on them. This year we’re giving them a statue, a medal, a cap and a pin. Then we will get in formation and salute them. And just visit with them.

“It means something to everyone involved,” Foster added. “When some of them are in a nursing home it’s like their family forgets about them sometimes. We don’t want any veteran ever to think they’re forgotten.”

Foster said the VSA started the practice in 2013 and each year the group members feel as blessed as the gift recipients. “Sometimes it gets emotional,” he said. “Heck, I get emotional. It’s just a real good thing to do for people who sacrificed for our freedom.”



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PET OF THE MONTH

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By Jamie Allison



Jasper is an emotional support dog for my autistic son. They enjoy playing fetch, sleeping, and running laps in the yard.

Around the time we were looking for a dog, an officer friend called to tell me about the young pup just dropped off at the Paragould Police Department. We decided to take him in and it was simply meant to be.

The funniest thing Jasper does is this bouncing motion when he runs, because of his very short legs. Also, when he sleeps, funny noises escape while he kicks his legs in the air.

He enjoys playing with stuffed animals but I think his favorite thing to do is nap. If he could talk, I think he'd say, "Are you going to eat that?"





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Christmas Park



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A NEW Holiday Tradition

BY LINDSEY MILLS

A 300-foot tunnel of lights, a scavenger hunt featuring Red Wolf Royalty, and an array of events to celebrate the most wonderful time of year are what will make up what Adam Sartin hopes will be a new holiday tradition for the Northeast Arkansas Community.

"We wanted Christmas at the Park to be so much more than just a drive-through of holiday displays," said Sartin, the owner of Ground Crew, the presenting sponsor. "There are some great lighted drive-throughs in our region, so we had to dig deep to find what was important to our community. From the name, to the experience, to how we could tie the attraction to this area. The experience had to offer guests an opportunity to connect with others."

The attraction announced back in July opened its gates to the public on November 22 and will continue to shine into the new year with a few special events to bring more to the experience throughout its duration. On December 12 the event will collect non-perishable foods in support of the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. December 22 is reserved for Community Christmas Caroling, and to celebrate the turn of the calendar year the park will have fireworks on December 31.

"We hope that Christmas at the Park offers our community a safe and fun way for everyone to enjoy the Christmas season," Adam shared, "a place to bring together families and a reminder that Christmas isn't about the hustle and bustle, but the birth of Jesus and what that means for us not just today but for eternity."

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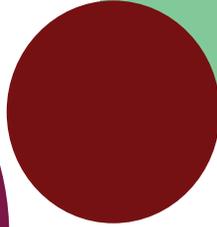
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CHRISTMAS SOUNDS LIKE...



KATIE SPENCER

To me, Christmas sounds like Mariah Carey. Christmas sounds like "I love you, I miss you, I can't wait to see you." Christmas sounds like wild, excited children who just can't get any school work done the week before their break and Christmas sounds like all of my friends saying "cheers" at our annual Favorite Things Party.



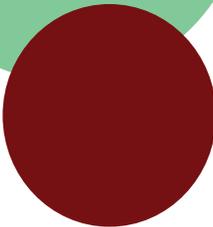
In my mind, Christmas sounds are the singing of Silent Night, O Holy Night, Jesus Loves Me and I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day. Yet, as I think about that, I realize my favorite sound of Christmas is the gentle quietness of looking at the manger scene on our front lawn, and walking into our house after work with the Christmas lights twinkling, but the quietness of no one stirring in the house. For in the quietness, I find strength in knowing that Jesus came to us as a gentle and kind Savior, where "all is calm, and all is bright."

MARY JACKSON PITTS



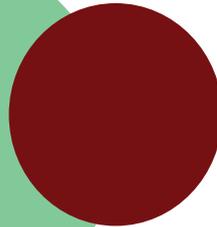
ANNE BRUETSCH

Christmas sounds like Vince Guaraldi Trio's Charlie Brown Christmas, specifically the Linus and Lucy vinyl track.



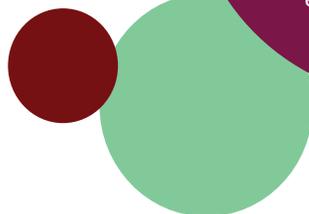
TAYLOR DICKINSON

When I think of Christmas, I think of sounds like carols, bells, and jolly laughter. I love to hear a crackling fire with the sound of a cozy Christmas movie in the background. The oven ding even sounds glorious this time of year. To me, the season rings in my ears the moment the cool weather hits — I live for the sound of the hustle and bustle with Christmas music playing everywhere I go.



KRISTI PULLIAM

Christmas definitely sounds like church choirs to me. I love Midnight Mass and worship services on Christmas Eve, it's one of my all-time favorite things to do with my family. It also sounds like silence, like the anticipation right before everyone else gets up.





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CAROL *of the Bells*

BY BECCA JENNESS

During the holiday season, many of us find ourselves unwittingly swept up in the hustle and bustle, searching for holiday-themed activities to do. We adorn our houses with colorful, twinkling lights, and frantically search for perfect last-minute Christmas gifts for loved ones. It is a joyous time, but admittedly, an exhausting time as well. Oftentimes, we get so swept up in the whirlwind, as we merely try to survive the chaos, that we forget to take a moment, step back, breathe, and reflect upon what the season is truly about.

Mission Outreach, founded in 1982, is a non-profit organization right here in NEA that provides emergency services to those in need within the community. Its goal is to provide people with the tools necessary to sustain self-sufficiency. Its work makes one stop and appreciate the deep-rooted meaning of the holiday: giving. In fact, some of its major fundraisers during the year fall during the holiday season.

We all hear it as we walk into Walmart to snag some stocking stuffers and ingredients for seasonal dishes. It's the rhythmic, metallic ring of a handbell. Perhaps, for many of us,

this is a familiar tone that signifies a sound of the season. However, for Mission Outreach it is the sound of provision. The donations collected are poured right back into the local community. They're poured right back into your community.

The money collected from the fundraising is used to purchase a myriad of items that assist the facility, which runs on a day-to-day operation. According to its website, Mission Outreach's goal "is to house the homeless, care for the sick and feed the hungry by providing a fresh start, specific help, and new hope."

The services provided range from a hot meal to mental health aid, to housing. It is with these bell-ringing donations that it is able to pay for utilities and supplies necessary for the housing provided to individuals and families in need. Another portion of the proceeds is dedicated toward running the food pantry, which serves three meals a day to both residents and non-residents. The entire operation of Mission Outreach, however, is not possible without volunteers. Those who ring the bell are typically from various organizations, such as Girl Scout troops, churches, and businesses.

So why do these groups come back every year and assist Mission Outreach? Executive Director Cheri Peters said, "A lot of people can't afford to donate money, but they can donate their time."

Even if you can't give money this season, you can give time, and to non-profits like Mission Outreach, that is extremely valuable.

To sign up to ring the bell and collect money for a wonderful cause, Jackie Ross, the Development Director of Mission Outreach, is the best person to contact. You can reach him by sending an email to jackieross@missionoutreachnea.com.

If you're simply wanting to give, you can find the bell-ringers outside of the Walmart Supercenter in Paragould every Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and every Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. starting the day after Thanksgiving until December 22. When you hear that bell ring, you're certainly hearing a sound reminiscent of the season's joy. In its ring is also the call for each of us to give back to our community this holiday season.

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CHRISTMAS SOUNDS LIKE *Magic*

BY LINDSEY MILLS

PHOTOS BY KATHRYN RICHEY PHOTOGRAPHY



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Imagine settling into the red cushioned seat, the lights dimming and a magical story unfolding on the stage. The music softens and swells, the dancers glide across the stage. The performance dazzles and captivates. One thought pulses through a little girl's mind: It's magic. I want to be a part of the magic.

This was the experience for Kristin Griggs when she was a little girl. Her mom took her to see *The Nutcracker* for the first time with the idea of sparking a Christmas tradition. Little did she know that in the years to follow not only would Kristin take to watching the show, she would dance in the Christmas classic herself one day, and later still, she would lead a group of dancers in performing the show year after year.

"It is the reason I started dancing," said Kristin, who has been leading the efforts to put on the Paragould performance of *The Nutcracker* for five years now. "Twenty years ago I saw a performance that ignited a spark for me. I sat on the edge of my seat. It was magical."

Today, Kristin is a dance teacher who helps pull together the volunteers, the funds, and the dancers it takes to put on the classic ballet.

The Elite Team, made up of dancers who rehearse at the Elite Performing Arts Studio located at 401 South 5th Street, is propelled by the hard work of parent volunteers and community donations.

Hours of rehearsal and several fundraisers throughout the year are essential to putting together the show that allows dancers to live out some magic on stage, while very likely inspiring magic to be sparked in the heart of a little girl in the audience.

"Every girl has a magical story in their head and this story embodies that vision to many," Kristin said.

Magic ... that's what Christmas sounds like to the dancers performing on stage and the community members in the audience when *The Nutcracker* hits center stage each year.

This year, the performance will take place at the Collins Theatre on December 7 at 6:30 p.m. and on December 8 at 2:30 p.m.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on the performance or to learn how to support The Elite Team each year, visit *The Nutcracker* by Elite Team on Facebook.

An advertisement for The Greenbrier Companies. On the left, a welder is shown in a dark blue protective suit and a white helmet with a respirator. The background is a dark, industrial setting with blue and green lighting. A large green banner across the middle of the image contains the text "NOW HIRING" in white, bold, capital letters. Below the banner, the text "apply online www.careers.gbrx.com" is written in white. At the bottom, the text "Kennett, MO | Marmaduke, AR | Paragould, AR" is written in white. The logo "THE GREENBRIER COMPANIES" is in the top left corner.



CHRISTMAS SOUNDS LIKE *Wrapping*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

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As shopping trends go through generational changes, so do the sights and sounds of Christmas. The ringing tones of the cash register have given way to the swiping of the plastic card and some of the personal touches have faded in favor of online shopping, but some stores still offer an age-old practice -- gift wrapping presents.

Today, many shoppers prefer the speed and simplicity of putting purchases inside

a decorative bag and heading for home, but for those who still lean toward attractive gift wrapping there are options. Perfect Touch Boutique in Paragould is one such place, where a customer can select a gift and have it boxed, wrapped and ready to go in a short time.

"We do a lot of it," said Perfect Touch's Chloe Spillman. "We wrap on the daily. If a gift isn't in a box we find one and stuff it to make sure it won't break, then we roll

out the paper, size it, measure it and start using the tape."

Those are sounds familiar to long-time shoppers: the whirl of the wrapping paper being pulled outward from the large roll and being ripped free for use; the repeated actions of tape being pulled from the dispenser and applied.

"There is an art to it," Spillman said. "I definitely think some people can make a gift look really, really pretty. And I think the more you do, the easier it gets and the prettier they become."

She said customers can feel free to wait and watch as purchases are wrapped at the store in a matter of minutes, or they can leave to finish other tasks and come back to pick up the works of packaging art later.

"I actually love Christmas; it's my favorite time of year," she said, "and I love wrapping presents. I always try to wrap something unique and make it look nice and look like you care about who you're giving it to."



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REAL MEN WEAR PINK

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

Not only do “real men wear pink,” they also raise over \$58,000 to fight against breast cancer.

The 2019 Real Men Wear Pink Campaign of Arkansas brought in a grand total of \$58,258 to support the American Cancer Society’s breast cancer initiatives. Twenty-nine men in the state of Arkansas were nominated for the campaign, with seven of those hailing from Northeast Arkansas.

“Our community managers and I reached out to our board members, volunteers and pillars in the community that were committed to being a candidate,” Phyllis Lovelace, Senior Manager of Community Development with the ACS, said. “Some of our volunteers nominate men in their communities and previous Real Men Wear Pink (candidates) recommend guys to us.”

Beginning October 1, candidates accepted fundraising challenges to become the top contributor of the year. For 2019, Chris Gamble, owner of Gamble’s Home Furnishings in Jonesboro, earned that title by raising \$8,216.

“In addition to wearing pink and raising awareness about breast cancer, these men will be raising funds to help the American Cancer Society attack cancer from every angle and save more lives from breast cancer,” Lovelace said in a press release.

For past campaigns and this year’s, candidates have fundraised through golf tournaments, fire truck pulls, company sponsors, or customers of a candidate’s business bringing in donations, such as with Gamble.

An estimated 266,120 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and an estimated 40,920 will die this year alone, according to the ACS.

In Arkansas alone, 16,580 will be diagnosed and 6,800 will die. The funds raised through the Real Men Wear Pink Campaign help in saving lives through early detection, prevention, innovative research and patient support.

Other NEA contributors for this year’s campaign included Ty Jones, John Allen French, Brandon Baxter, Dr. Christian Okoye, Brian Osborn and Jonesboro Mayor Harold Perrin.





COMING SOON

The Link Theatre Co.



Broadway couple Matt Cavanaugh and Jenny Powers have recently announced the birth of a new professional theatre company in Jonesboro: The Link. The theatre company named for Matt's and Jenny's desire to bring (link) together talent and community aims to draw from the finest Broadway, university, regional and local talent.

"The idea for this company is designed based on some theatres that both Jenny and I have worked at that are set up to have a mix of local talent, in conjunction with local talent, whether that's on stage or behind the scenes, in conjunction with professional talent," said Matt Cavanaugh. "We want to pull from all of those pockets to create something for the entire community to enjoy."

Both Matt and Jenny have established careers working in theatres around the country, and are pulling on their knowledge, connections, and resources to bring something unique to the city they call home.



Auditions for the show that will kick off the theatre's 2020 season, "The Fantasticks," took place in October with the cast to be announced soon. Performances will run from March 6-8 at the Glass Factory in downtown Jonesboro.

LEARN MORE

Keep an eye out for more details and the full story behind Matt's and Jenny's love for theatre, details about the show, and more information on the future for The Link in our February issue.

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SAVE THE DATE DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD EVENTS

December 7th & 8th

The Nutcracker
Collins Theatre
7th: 6:30 p.m. 8th: 2:30 p.m.



December 10th

An Old Fashioned Christmas Parade | Downtown Paragould
7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



December 21st

The Nightmare Before Christmas
Collins Theatre
1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.



A complete listing of all Downtown events can be found under "Events" at downtownparagould.com or [facebook.com/oneandonlydowntown/events](https://www.facebook.com/oneandonlydowntown/events).

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IT'S SHOWTIME AT THE COLLINS:

DECEMBER

December 7th & December 8th: *The Nutcracker*, 6:30 p.m. & 2:30 p.m.

Tickets will be sold at *Shear Elegance, Elite Performing Arts, and with Tresia Webb* 870-240-3425 (for reserved seating).
\$12.00 General/\$17.00 Reserved

December 21st: *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

'*Cue The Applause*' Dance Studio presents "*The Nightmare Before Christmas*"
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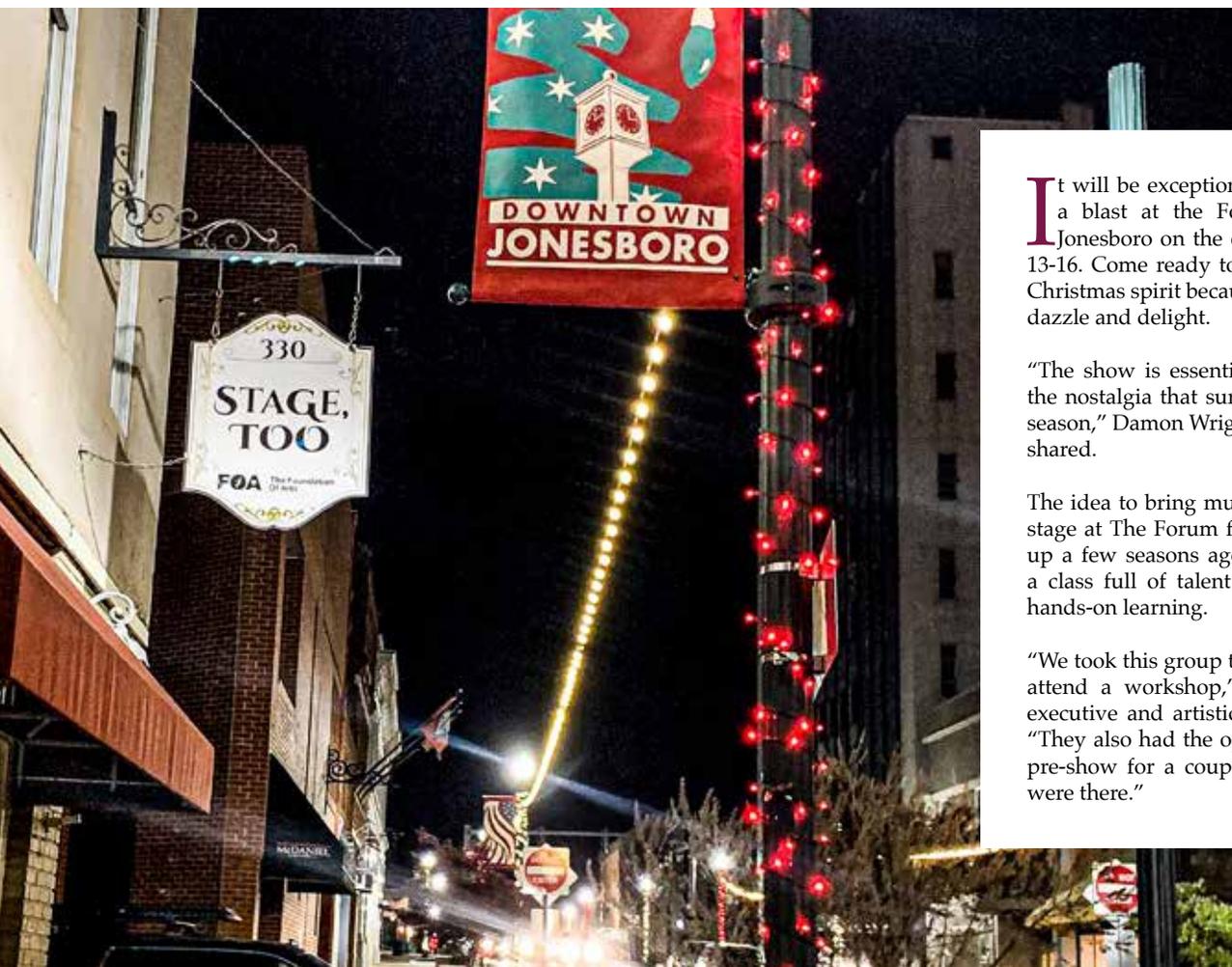
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Hayley Vance / Chandler Ellington: December 14th
Kirstyn Wyatt / Christopher Salehi: December 28th
Taylor Vericker / Austin Adams: January 4th
Alyssa Sellmeyer / Oury Beall: January 18th
Caroline Jarrett / Justin Pillow: January 21st
Carolynne Williams / Garrett Shepard: March 28
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CHRISTMAS SOUNDS LIKE *a Blast*

BY LINDSEY MILLS



It will be exceptionally hard not to have a blast at the Foundation of Arts in Jonesboro on the evenings of December 13-16. Come ready to wrap yourself in the Christmas spirit because this show is sure to dazzle and delight.

"The show is essentially trying to capture the nostalgia that surrounds the Christmas season," Damon Wright, the show's director shared.

The idea to bring music shows to the main stage at The Forum first was first dreamed up a few seasons ago when the FOA took a class full of talent to Branson for some hands-on learning.

"We took this group to see some shows and attend a workshop," said Kristi Pulliam, executive and artistic director at the FOA. "They also had the opportunity to perform pre-show for a couple of shows while we were there."

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After witnessing the reaction of audiences to the musical performances, the FOA decided to bring some of the magic home. "We put our first one together and realized it was a little harder than we thought, but it ended up being an absolutely amazing show with some fabulous talent on the stage."

The show received a great reaction and plans were hatched for another music show. A Holiday Blast will feature a few familiar Christmas characters and a whole lot of great Christmas tunes. If you're not in the Christmas spirit (and one main character decidedly is NOT) when you arrive, you likely will be by the time you depart.

"Not everybody loves to see a musical theatre show, some people don't dig that," Damon commented. "But sometimes the people that don't love often still appreciate a music show."

The musical medley will feature classic tunes with a story arch that will both incite laughter and pull at the heartstrings. The show boasts a cast of more than 30 performers, plus an additional 35 dancers from the FOA's Performing Arts Center.

Talking about Premiere's theme of "The Sounds of Christmas," Damon mentioned the "general buzz and hubbub of excitement, the crack of the fire – the pop of the wood splitting, laughter and also stillness." He went on to say, "We're trying to get it all in this show, and I think we will."

Attend the show on one of four nights to listen to the many sounds of Christmas presented by local performers on the FOA stage.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For tickets and to learn more, visit: foajonesboro.org



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CHRISTMAS SOUNDS LIKE

Singing

BY LINDSEY MILLS



If you ask Buddy the Elf what Christmas sounds like he'd probably say, "Singing loud for all to hear!"

The movie that became an instant classic in 2003 and turned into a musical in 2010 hit the stage at the Collins Theatre November 21 through 24. The Greene County Fine Arts Council production of *Elf the Musical* was made special by the talented cast and crew who worked hard to spread the Christmas cheer this season. Production began back in September and many hours were spent prepping to put on the performance in Paragould.

"Typically, we have 10 to 12 weeks to work on a musical," director Crystal Taylor said when asked about the biggest challenge in preparing the show. "We barely had nine weeks on this one due to the delay in receiving our materials from the publishing house."

That didn't stop the cast from producing something truly delightful for the community.

"This show was full of amazingly talented people who genuinely care about, love, and respect each other," said Libby Wamock-Glasco, who portrayed Emily in the musical production. "When you work alongside people with whom you honestly connect, there's an organic flow of dialog and music and emotion that ... for me anyway ... makes a show 'real' to the audience. I think this show, as magical as it is, is as real as it gets."

Before the Christmas season rammed into full gear, *Elf the Musical* reminded its audience of the many treasures the season brings with it.

"Community theatre gives people a chance to get away from reality," Shannon Youngblood, who played Mr. Greenway, shared. "Life gets hard, and stage productions, whether you're in them or watching them, distract us from the things that make life hard."

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Visit gcfac.org to learn more about upcoming shows and keep an eye out for an exclusive in our February issue.

NEA Artist

Calling all local musicians!

BY CALLI PERKINS

Each month, one location in downtown Jonesboro is a hub for local musicians to gather for a day of free-jamming and family. All musicians and their instruments are welcome to the stage to perform some of their original material or their favorite covers in the "Sunday Jam" hosted by local blue infused powerhouse Greasy Tree. Whether you're a musician who gigs each weekend or have yet to play in public, these free events are the perfect opportunity for artistic expression, networking, family outings, and support for the local music scene.



From left to right: Creed Slater, Keyven Dunn, Red Dorton, Cameron Roberts.

"All of the musicians in this town are family. We share contacts, gigs, gear ... hell, we even share band members. Our passion and commitment radiates so much that every time we tour Europe we have fans and promoters asking what we put in the water in Northeast Arkansas. This jam has been so close to our hearts because we want to share that passion and experience with everyone ... fans ... young musicians ... everyone," says Red Dorton of Greasy Tree.



Kyle Harrison

With a tip jar on the stage for anyone to choose to toss in a dollar or two, 100 percent will go toward a charitable organization each month. In October, all tips went toward the American Cancer Society. Need a singer for a band you're starting? Want to finally step on a stage and play your guitar for others to hear? Join the family at Yesdog Grill on January 12! Follow Greasy Tree on Facebook to get updates and more information on future Sunday Jam dates.



Sophie Hacker

Greasy Tree is a blues infused Power House with excess hair and even more attitude. The band's freshman, self-titled album was released in February of 2017. With the help of Pete Matthews (Devon Allman, Evanescence, and Paul Simon) and Toby Vest of High/Low Recording out of Memphis, the album has a raw, unfiltered

sound that reminds us of the greats. Cameron Roberts' scorching guitar riffs/vocals, dynamic beats/vocals from drummer Keyven Dunn, and gritty bass tones/vocals from Red Dorton create a chemical reaction of Rock and Soul that is bound to take you back to your roots.

The band itself may be greasy, but these three artists are well seasoned. The trio met through other projects and eventually joined forces on a European tour in 2015 with Teenage Head Music. The dynamic of the trio was undeniable and they quickly turned

their attention towards their new project, Greasy Tree. Among the three musicians, there are three European tours under their belts and individually they have shared the stage with Shinedown, The Killers, Charlie Daniels, Saliva, Jimbo Mathis, and many more. With work history involving A&R Firm, Big Noise LLC., Red Wax Music LLC, and Games Productions Inc., the bands' past projects have been licensed for use in three movies, and in several top shows including Big Bang Theory and Justified.

Greasy Tree toured every inch of Europe in January and February of 2018. They started the 26-date tour in Spain and took their energetic live show all the way thru Europe ending in Sweden. The band has played festivals such as King Biscuit Music Festival 2018 and 2019, Downtown Jonesboro BBQ Fest 2017 and 2018, 20th and 21st Annual Osceola Heritage Music Fest 2018 (which hosted over 10,000 visitors), and Bay Harvest Festival 2018. The band has shared the stage with artists such as Bret Michaels, Smashmouth, Fuel, Adam

Wakefield, Barrett Baber, Scotty McCreery, and The Brothers Osborn.

Photography by Brian Rodriguez

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WEEKEND GETAWAY:

BY LINDSEY MILLS

Mountain View

Over the river and through the woods ... to a charming, peaceful little town we go. Sometimes you just need to get away. Sometimes a day trip out of town will do the trick to settle anxieties and ease the mind, but sometimes a winding road away from the everyday routine makes you want to drift away for the whole weekend.

The town of Mountain View, Arkansas, certainly invites its visitors to stay a bit. With a downtown boasting several antique shops and plenty of natural beauty surrounding the area to satisfy an adventure lover's curiosity, Mountain View is the perfect place for Northeast Arkansas residents to escape the norm.

Spend a day exploring nearby parks and trails or settle into a cabin that sits creek-side to enjoy some peaceful bliss just north of town. Blanchard Springs Caverns is only 13 miles from downtown Mountain View, and several creeks (including Sylamore Creek) break off the White River to reach down through the town's outskirts. Pack your hiking boots and bring the dog for winter, spring, summer or fall adventures in this Ozark Mountain town.

Or, enjoy the weekend right in the middle of the historic downtown, wandering through the shops and eating where the locals do. A taste of Tommy's Famous A Pizzeria is sure to ignite the taste buds, and breakfast at the Rainbow Café might make you feel right at home. Set out to hunt down entertainment at Gravity Brew Works about 30 minutes north of town, or simply uncork a bottle of wine and turn on the music wherever you stay.

Whether longing for a cabin to cozy up in or a place in the middle of town, check out Ivy Vacations for rentals to suit your own preferences. Their service is sure to make you smile as they are happy to help you explore and enjoy the place they call home.

To get to Mountain View, NEA residents might take a number of routes depending on their starting point. Paragould residents will follow a route west through Walnut Ridge and south through Cave City while those living closer to Jonesboro will head southwest through Newport before traveling northwest along the White River to approach Mountain View.



LOOKING TO GET AWAY?

For more information about the city visit:

www.arkansas.com/mountain-view.

For Ivy Vacations listings and guide to the area visit:

ivyvacations.net.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When looking for places to go enjoy the nighttime Christmas lights, one generally thinks of places larger than Lafe, Arkansas.

But thanks to a family there, motorists can get a look at an impressive holiday display -- day or night. It's not a drive-through exhibit or a pay-to-view site; it's simply a family's desire to share its love of Christmas with passersby.

Sitting right on Hwy. 135 North, the property owned by Randy and Betty Hedge is host to a lovely hometown setting. In fact, that's pretty much what it is -- a look at their hometown in miniature form. There's a replica of St. John's Lutheran Church, a Sweet Shoppe and Tritch's Store, which represents Betty's grandfather's store from days past in downtown Lafe. "And the rest of the buildings are just there," she said. "It started for our nieces and nephews and we just kept it going from there. Randy and I really like Christmas and it was just something to do to enjoy that."

In the daytime hours motorists can take a look over and see the buildings, with the ground in front painted white to resemble snow and with Santa, elves and presents adding to the colorful setting. It really comes alive at night, when the lights leap out from the darkness and treat those driving by to a panorama of delight. Motorists can be seen slowing to a crawl to take in all the scenes, which stretch for some distance on the hillside and accompanying acreage owned by the Hedges.

Again, it's not a place to plan for an evening drive-through. It is simply a roadside gift from the Hedges to anyone who enjoys the Christmas spirit.



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BUILDING A TRADITION

BY DINA MASON

Sisters often have conversations about what they would like to create or do but these sisters took their idea and created a family tradition you will not want to miss.

A visit by grandchildren from Northwest Arkansas started Kathy Johnson searching for activities to create Christmas traditions with her grands in Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas. Much to her disappointment, she did not find any activities without going to Memphis.

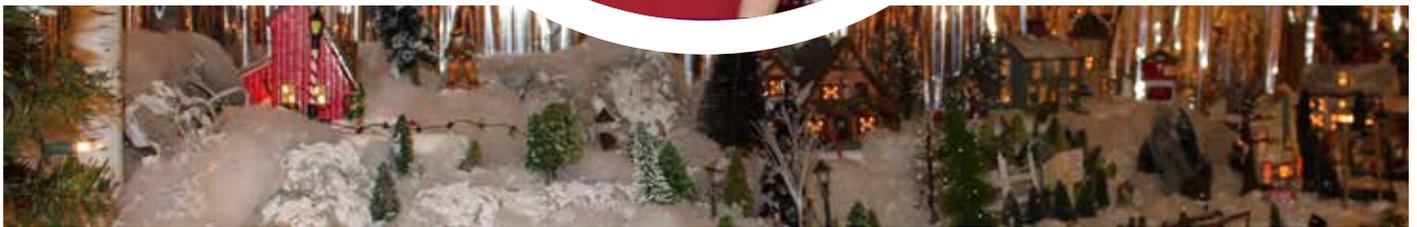
Kathy and sisters, Brenda and Dean Wright, started reminiscing about going to the Enchanted Forest when it was at Goldsmith's in Memphis. Kathy told her sisters she wanted something in Jonesboro that would be a family tradition.

The sisters used Styrofoam and Legos to create their vision then added Christmas Village pieces to map out what would be the basis for Santa's North Pole ... now over 7,000 square feet of winter wonderland fun.

The sisters found Lou Nasti, of Brooklyn, New York, a well-known designer and creator of mechanical displays for the likes of FAO Schwartz, Macy's Santa Land, HBO's Headquarters in Manhattan and the Children's Zoo in New York's Central Park, and the rest is history. They met with him in February at the American International Toy Fair and quickly became fast friends.

Through three locations and growing square footage, Lou and the sisters have grown as friends and have grown the exhibits in amazing detail; each one evokes memories for the adults as they create new ones for the children.

"We wanted Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas families to have a holiday experience they will make their family tradition and we certainly feel that our Santa's North Pole will do just that," said Dean, the sister who lives in Minneapolis but returns to Jonesboro each November to join her sisters and, now, Kathy's daughter Shelby Lovins, in the magic of creating Christmas memories for all.



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IN MY FAMILY...



GINGER BALES

Our favorite family tradition is our annual 'I Saw It First' scavenger hunt of sorts (it's a list of things to do or see: Santa hat, three blow up decorations in one yard, bake cookies for a neighbor, for example). Begins the day after Thanksgiving and ends at our family Christmas celebration.

NICOLE BRINKLEY

Every Christmas Eve the kids get to open one gift. In the gifts are new Christmas PJ's and a Christmas movie we don't own. Even Dad (Derrick) and I get new PJ's. We always watch the movie in the new PJ's and read two books. The same two: *The Night Before Christmas*, the classic of course, and *Santa Comes to Arkansas*. Then of course cookies, milk and reindeer food, and off to bed.



DEANNA SOUERS

I love traditions in general but for Christmas we always go to the Paragould Christmas Parade and get hot chocolate to take with us. We always go pick out a real tree together and put real candy canes on it, even though they disappear. We always do Christmas cookies together and we put out handed down decor like our Nutcrackers and Christmas village.

CHELSEY SAFFELL

My husband and I started a tradition last year for our first Christmas together. We made ornaments for us and our dogs and hope to continue this every year, one day with our kids. Unfortunately, one of our dogs, Elli, ate hers so here's to trying again this year!



JENNY STEWART

Ever since I was little my parents and I would put up a Christmas tree every November. As a mother now myself, I try to keep up with the decorating, cooking, and other traditions that my parents did with me when I was a child.

Thanksgiving of 2017, I didn't get to put up my Christmas tree, or decorate my home, nor cook with my mom or do any of the fun holiday traditions with my family. On Thanksgiving morning, I was air lifted to one of the biggest hospitals in the country, 32 weeks pregnant, not knowing if I would make it to Christmas. I had a heart attack with my unborn daughter. It has been, by far, the scariest thing I have ever experienced!

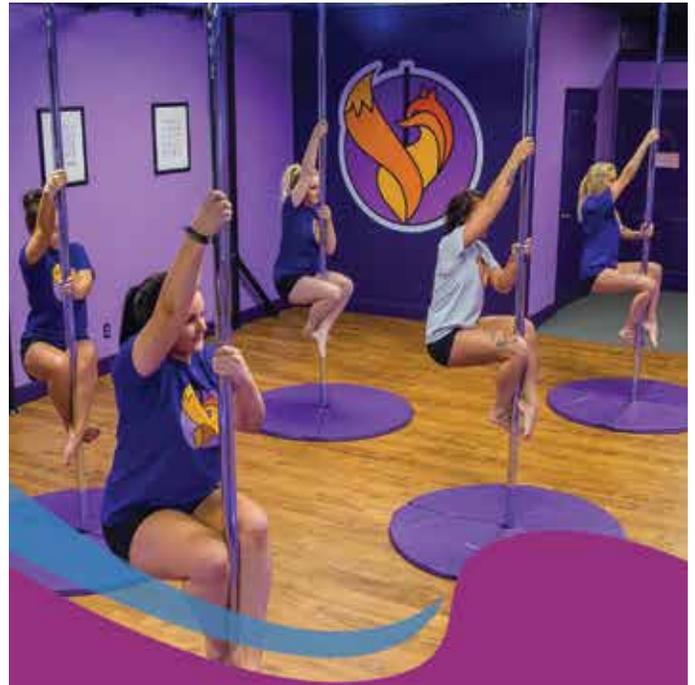
Now, two years later, my daughter and I are healthy and stronger than ever and will always have a special bond together. Every year, as soon as the clock turns our month from Halloween night to the morning of November 1st, I put up our Christmas tree and our decorations. People look at me like I am silly, but I am truly blessed that I get to spend the holidays at home with my family, and my daughter and I are alive. As I write this, I sit here sipping on hot cocoa and enjoying the Christmas tree while my beautiful daughter plays with her toys.

The holidays are always a special time of the year and I never want to take that for granted.



AMY MORRIS

My family gets together at my mom's and my siblings and I always race to be the first one there that morning. The loser gets picked on the rest of the day. My mom always bakes a whole pie just for my brother, the only boy out of four kids. My older sisters usually fight over the turkey leg, and O, the youngest, usually complains to my mom that she never fixes me a pumpkin pie since I'm the only one in the family that really likes it. My mom prays over the banana pudding each year, then adds some anointing oil to it for extra kick so any of her family that eats it will quit being heathens!



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DINA MASON

As our boys got older, finding ways to keep them coming home for holiday traditions, like decorating our tree, started to concern me. So, I thought of a point when they would have a tree of their own to decorate and decided to start buying each of them and then their wives an ornament that either said something of an event in the past year or about their personality or hobbies.

I love the Old World Blown Glass ornaments and they have so many every year and they remind me of our years in Germany, which were some of the best Christmases with snow, and Germans know how to “put on a Christmas,” plus the boys were still little.

Adding to this fun tradition has been our annual trip to Eureka Springs with the Fast Glass Corvette Club. There is a great little shop that has a great selection each year of the new editions. I get to “pretend” I’m in Germany (Eureka Springs sets the backdrop nicely as a European town) with smoked salmon, eggs Benedict at Nibbles Eatery; brats and beer on the patio at Eureka Grill and shopping at All Things Remembered for the ornaments.

I shop for each person based on their “uniqueness.” I have a couple of photos so those who know my family can try to guess whose these are.

PERRY MASON

I’m not sure how long we have been decorating ugly Christmas sweater cookies, but it has become a tradition that gets our family of adults together for a little fun and competition.

Typically, Dina or Sarah prepare the cookies and each Mason family member and several extended family members decorate the cookie to their liking. Some must be reminded that it is supposed to be ugliest and not the prettiest contest.

Once they are all decorated, they are photographed and uploaded to Facebook where we ask for votes on the ugliest one. It is supposed to be anonymous so we must refrain from sharing or they can see who the “designer” was.

Many of our family and friends say they look forward to voting each year.



PREMIERE

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Winter 2019



GIFTED:

Charles Harris

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**COVER FEATURE:
CHARLES HARRIS**

44

50

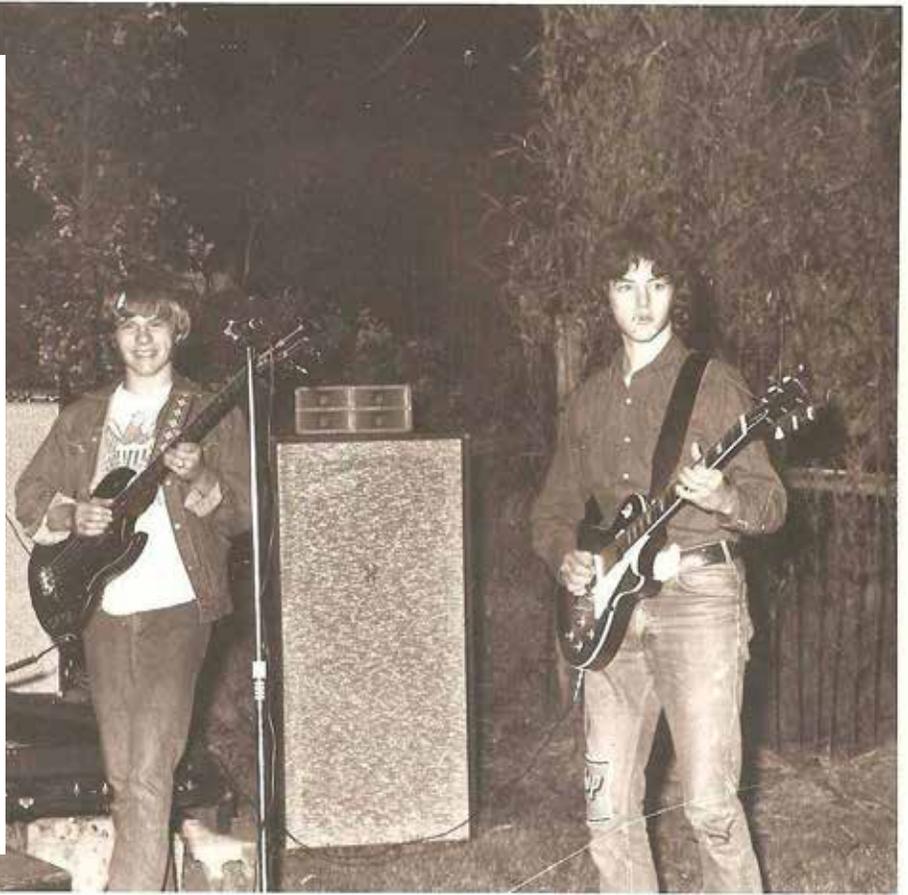
**NEA SENIOR
EXPO**

**GIFT THE GIFT
OF CHANCE**

54

THE SHOW GOES ON

BY LINDSEY MILLS



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Mike Cobb got his first guitar when Elvis was king. Decades later his love for music still thrives.

"Music, as cliché as this might sound, it speaks to me," Mike said. "I listen to music differently than a lot of people do. I listen to all of it, if that makes sense. I can't always remember lyrics, but it speaks to me. When I hear something and it makes me excited ... I can just tell when a song is going to speak to me."

Things changed drastically for Mike in the '60s when he found out, contradictory to what he'd been told, he wasn't left-handed. He flipped the guitar over and played the four strings that weren't broken.

As the years went on Mike continued to play and his passion for music landed him on middle school stages, at grade school talent shows, and eventually with professional musicians.

In high school, with a car and a little bit more freedom, Mike met some guys who liked to play music. That group led him to an older group of guys who asked him to play bass and "the rest of it was history."

"I haven't stopped since," Mike shared with a laugh. Intermittently Mike's love of music has involved a few other jobs. "I used to ride

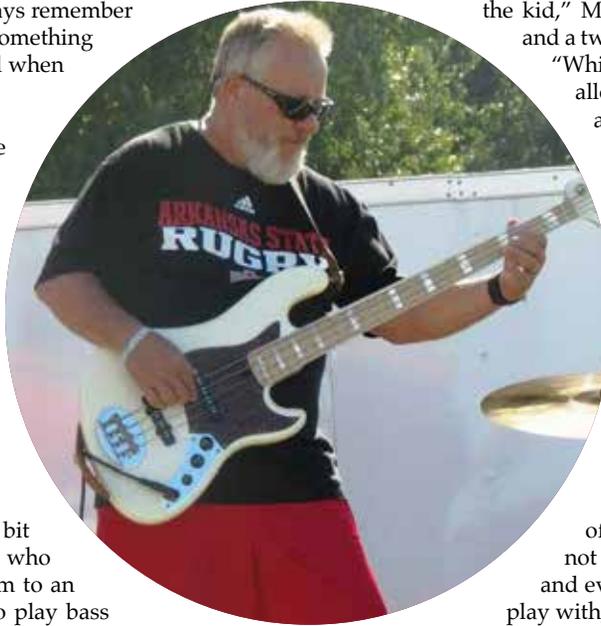
my bike down to the only music store in town and sweep the floors so I could play around on the guitars. That led to my first real job, in retail."

Mike hung around with a band that used to be called Nobody Else, but later changed its name to Black Oak Arkansas. "I was the kid," Mike said with a smile pulling at his lips and a twinkle in his eyes as he recalls the memory. "While everyone else was partying, I was allowed to hang out, keep an eye on things and play their guitars."

Mike has a degree in accounting but never wanted to be stuck behind a desk. As the years passed he played with several other bands: "We toured extensively, playing college campuses and then just heading out west for the summer to follow The Grateful Dead around."

These days, after touring, spending ample time with musicians all over the country, and owning his own record store for years, Mike still spends plenty of time playing music. That is, when he's not with his grandchildren. "Now anybody and everybody that needs a bass player I try to play with," Mike said.

When considering why he's continued to play for so long Mike answered, "I feel music more than I listen to it."



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Gifted

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Charles Harris doesn't just give gifts, he has a gift -- a talent for turning pieces of wood into works of art that amaze the casual onlooker and deeply touch those lucky enough to have one handed over to them.

Harris, 85 and a retired sheet metal worker, has become known for making doll houses for various causes for more than 25 years, giving them away as presents or donating them as items to be used in charitable fundraising efforts. They are elaborate pieces of work, all the product of an imaginative mind and a caring heart.

"To God be all the glory," said Harris. "I don't ever charge for one and I don't expect any kind of praise for it. I have given, I think it is 31, to the Hillcrest Church and I have given them to little children who are crippled and I made about 60 that I gave to the handicapped people. I like to do that more than anything else."

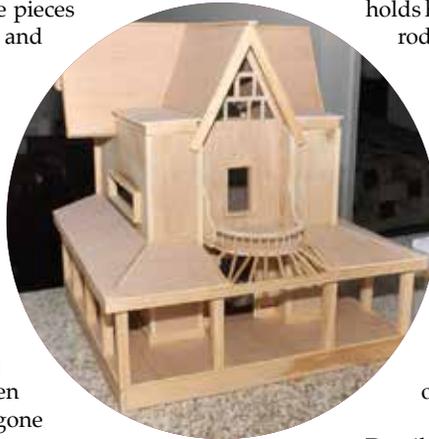
He said the hobby began when he decided to make the doll houses for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren but he might have gone overboard. His son once told him, "Dad, no more. We don't have any more room." So houses started going elsewhere. "I gave three to a woman for a cancer drive," Harris said, "and I built some things to use for children to learn in class at church. I like to give them to folks. It gives me joy."

A tour of his living quarters resembles an appearance on a TV game show: Every door promises the possibility of seeing a special prize. Behind this one is a house, behind that one Noah's Ark, behind yet another The Ark of the Covenant. "We all have a calling," Harris said, "and when I retired from sheet metal I said I didn't ever want to touch another piece of it in my lifetime. But I started working with wood and the houses came from that and I used to just stay out in my shop for hours at a time, working on them non-stop. My daughter used to tell me I had to take a break now and then and said sometimes she looked in to see if I was still alive.

"But I would have several inside my work shed and I used to invite kids in to pick one out and take home, as long as it was okay with the parents and it wasn't too big for their room. My workshop was a 10x12 shed that I insulated and I would just stay at it for hours. That house over there, I probably put 100 hours in on it. It's funny; my hands shake so bad, I could never write like you do. But in my shed,

my hands are as calm as can be. God has called us all to do different things. This is mine, I guess."

He has created items to be used as teaching aids for Sunday School settings, pointing to an impressive version of Noah's Ark, complete with a retractable loading ramp and a removable top that reveals animals that came aboard two by two and settled into their lodging quarters. And his miniature sample of The Ark of the Covenant holds his production of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod which budded, and a jar of manna.



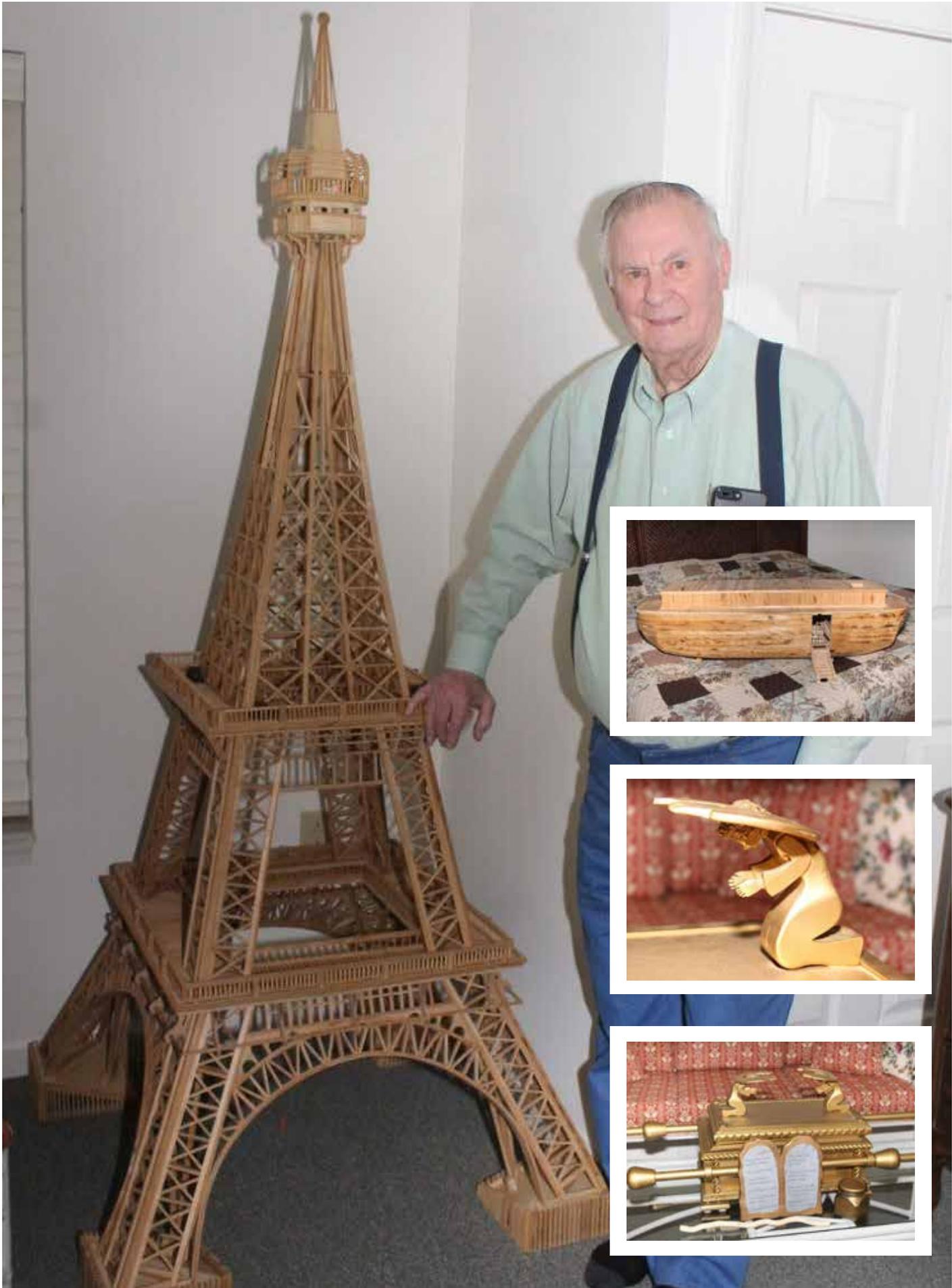
It was during one of his church meetings that he was coaxed to build one of his largest works. "Somebody challenged me at church," he recalled. "I had made a house for a child and someone said, 'Why don't you make the Eiffel Tower?' and I said, 'Say no more.' I took it and put lights under it and had it on a turntable and spun it. I gave it the whole works and probably took about 600 hours to finish." Today, it stands around seven feet tall and boasts elaborate detail as it decorates one room of his apartment.

Detail is one of the most prominent features of his work. The houses, with floor plans he said he simply makes up as he goes, have stairways and gutters and shingles ... anything that comes to mind as he builds. "I build a platform -- 18x24, 24x24, 24x48 -- and I brace it so it won't warp and then I cut the wood with a straight saw, and I've got an 18-inch band saw, and I drill all the holes for the lattice work ... then I just start adding this and that. I started using poplar wood because there are no splinters and I use Gorilla Glue to hold some of it tight."



He said he is just about at the end of the house-building trail, having moved from his home to Paragould's Chateau on the Ridge. "Well, I got old, for one thing," he said, "and I plan to sell my house and the shop and will just have to manage here in a smaller setting. I feel real fortunate to be here. I was lonely and thought I was sick but since I've come here I realize I've not got it so bad. My worries have gone away; Jesus said he would make our burdens light. The lovely crew here ... they have made it possible for me to enjoy life."

A house still under construction is for the staff at the Chateau to take and decorate, just a way to say "thanks" in Harris' mind. "Giving these to people puts joy in my heart," he said. "I get great joy from seeing people appreciate them."



HOUSES WITH

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



The Green House Cottages of Belle Meade in Paragould recently dedicated two new houses, honoring local residents for their contributions to the community while bringing the total number of homes on campus to 11.

The first to open has been named after Debra J. Vassar, who spent several years providing dedicated service to the senior citizens in the

Paragould area. "She was so prominent in the community," Belle Meade Administrator Pam Diggs said. "She was at the hospital for 20-plus years and had a big influence on AMMC and Belle Meade working together. She was the administrator at Chateau on the Ridge and we did a lot of back and forth with things like outpatient therapy. She helped make it a real good partnership and she's the kind of person who deserves to be honored."



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Stories To Tell



The second is the Busby House, named in honor of Ethan and Bettye Busby. Diggs said the couple is pretty much the picture of what honorees should look like. "Bettye was the first person to call and put herself on the waiting list for one of the new houses," she said.

"She would call about once a month to make sure her name was still on the list. We were honored to have her here for a short time. Bettye was such a big part of getting the Greene County Museum going and was instrumental in getting all the old records out of the courthouse basement and cleaned up and organized. And Ethan was just the epitome of aging gracefully. He was still running marathons up into his 70s. They both meant a lot to our city."

Belle Meade offers short term care rehab and outpatient rehab, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. The cottages provide state of the art living facilities for the permanent residents, with a capacity of 120 total.

Belle Meade is located at 2200 Chateau Boulevard in Paragould and may be reached by phone at 870-236-7104.

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FESTIVAL AT BELLE MEADE

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Each of the individual houses at Belle Meade in Paragould took part in a Fall Festival, opening their doors to the public ... especially to young Trick or Treaters.

"This is our third one and each house does a different activity," said Administrator Pam Diggs. "One house had a fortune teller, one had a bake sale and face painting, there was candy for the kids and then the big deal was a chili recipe and cook off. Visitors could go to each cottage and vote for their favorite, and the money goes into our Christmas fund. It's just a way to get the community involved with some of the things we're doing out here, and for them to see what we have and what we do before they have to make a decision about care for a family member. We want the public to be aware of all the things we have to offer."

Diggs said the Belle Meade staff and residents enjoy the day as much as the kids and their parents do. "Oh, we think it's great," she said. "There's a lot of laughter going on when we put this on. We just want to do everything we can to get the community out there. It's a way to give back to the community, and I think they said we had about 400 people come through. It's a real fun day and a real neat thing that we do. Everyone seems to like it."



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NEA SENIOR EXPO



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Center on Aging-Northeast and the UAMS Schmieding Home Caregiver Training program offered a free Senior Expo in November at Nettleton Baptist Church in Jonesboro.

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. hundreds of seniors, their families and caregivers filed through the building to learn from vendors and view presentations about the resources available to them in the region. The event was held during National Family Caregiver Month and boasted a Western theme, encouraging visitors to “saddle up and mosey on over” for education and fun. Flu shots were available at no charge as were free health screenings, dental screenings, demonstrations and breakout information sessions. A catfish lunch and bingo games were also provided to add to the pleasantries.

Numerous vendors with booths presented information about a range of services and organizations from Alzheimer’s programs, banking services and chiropractic care to estate and trust planning, financial and legal planning, senior housing and Medicare planning. Several community partners were co-sponsors, including St. Bernards Senior Services, Chad Oldham Law Firm, AllWell and Kindred at Home.

The UAMS Center on Aging-Northeast and Schmieding Home Caregiver Training in Jonesboro are programs of the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging in collaboration with St. Bernards Healthcare.

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MR. JOHN

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

There will be some sweeping changes for the Greene County Senior B.E.E.S. in the coming months ... nothing drastic, just a new custodian.

At the age of 95 and after almost 20 years of custodial work for the B.E.E.S., John Powers has decided to retire and take it a bit easier. "Oh, I'll still be up here and around," he said of the Senior Center in Paragould. "I'll just not be working and getting in everybody's way."

B.E.E.S. Director Carol Fleszar -- who refers to Powers as Mr. John -- said his willingness to do whatever needed to be done will be missed. "He started out delivering meals and transporting people," she said, "and then just started doing anything we needed him to do. He is an absolutely wonderful man. He said he's still going to come up here and have fun with us, but he's not going to push a broom -- we aren't going to let him."

Powers said the one thing he has enjoyed the most is the "fellowship with everyone. I fellowship with a lot of people and I try to get along with all of them. I think the people is what I'll miss the most, but they haven't really got rid of me; I'll still be coming up here a lot."

He was honored with a special party at the center and Fleszar said, "I just thought he deserved a real nice party going out. He says he's coming back, but from now on he won't have to empty my trash or clean my baseboards. He can just sit back and watch someone else do it. He can just be Mr. John."



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GIFT THE GIFT OF *Chance*

BY BECCA JENNESS

Mission Outreach is located in the heart of Paragould, and provides a light to many individuals in the community. The organization serves as a cornerstone in the community and for some a beacon of hope. At least that was the experience of Ms. Loretta.

I had the opportunity to sit down with her to talk about her story. She lived in Northwest

Arkansas for the majority of her life. She worked in retail for a portion of it, and she also worked with individuals with special needs for 18 years. However, Ms. Loretta suddenly dealt with an onslaught of illnesses.

Due to a degenerative disease of the spine she suddenly became disabled and was wheelchair bound. Through rehab, Ms. Loretta had to learn to walk again. She was

then diagnosed with cancer.

Nevertheless, the illnesses did not beat her down. In fact, she said, "After you have cancer, and you're a survivor, it changes your perspective of life." She took that time of reflection to travel to Southern Arkansas where she visited a cemetery where some of her relatives are laid to rest.

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To her dismay, she was detained by members of her family, and she was sent to live in a nursing home against her wishes. However, she was not done living her life, and at age 70, Ms. Loretta became a runaway.

She planned to go west, but for some reason she went east. Sleeping in her car while she was on the go, she finally stopped at a gas station and asked the cashier if there were any known shelters nearby. The cashier took the time to provide her with directions and a phone number to Mission Outreach — a kindness she will never forget. Upon arriving at the non-profit, she simply asked for a bed for one night and a shower. That one night turned into two months in Mission Outreach's housing.

With the help of Mission Outreach, Ms. Loretta has now been in her apartment for two years. Those past two years, she has been volunteering for the organization. Because of the kindness and hope given to her, Ms. Loretta said, "I pay it forward and give it back."

She predominantly works at the food pantry, checking in new customers. Boxes of food are distributed to members of the community, and more than 200 boxes exit the facility every week. These members of the community may feel touched by the work of the organization, but Ms. Loretta says her interactions with the individuals equally enrich her life.

She said, "I don't know whether I am the only person that some of those people see or talk to every week or every month, so why wouldn't I want to make a difference in somebody's life in some small way?"

Mission Outreach's impact on the community is powerful. In order to keep the organization running, it is dependent upon donations. There is always a need for food, personal care, and cash donations. Donations can be delivered directly to the building, located at 901 E Lake St. in Paragould.

There are also opportunities to donate through various fundraising campaigns that take place throughout the year, such as bell-ringing, beginning on November 29, or the food drive, which starts on November 15. Both of these fundraisers can be found at the Walmart Supercenter in Paragould.

Whether you donate time, product, or cash, every little bit counts, because it provides people with a chance, and I think Ms. Loretta said it best, "Most people just want a chance. That's all I wanted: a chance."

During this season of giving, your donation, no matter how small, helps provide someone in your community with a chance.



"MOST PEOPLE JUST WANT A CHANCE. THAT'S ALL I WANTED: A CHANCE."

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SANTA & A CLOWN

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

“Music, Reindeer, Santa, Floats and a Clown.” The headline of the *Paragould Daily Press* on December 4, 1951, was a straightforward call to the public to enjoy a night out at the annual Christmas parade. When, though, did this tradition begin?

“Nobody even knows when the Christmas parade started,” Gina Jarrett, Main Street Paragould Director, said at a Greene County Historical and Genealogical Society meeting.

Jarrett has her own memories of watching the parade in 1998 from Sleep Starlight, and another year from Britney’s Steakhouse while children ran in and out the doors with hot chocolate in their hands. When she began her research of the parade, however, she found a muddled history the further back she went.

“The Chamber has always had a part in the parade,” she said, adding that, “Mayor Mike was involved, even before he was mayor.”

Jarrett said old tapes of the parade are being archived and during her research with the Paragould Chamber of Commerce, she came across that *Daily Press* article from 1951 that promised 30 minutes of “wholesome entertainment” with eight bands and four live reindeer. The day after that parade, Paragould citizens were asked for crowd estimates, which ranged from 25,000 all the way up to 35,000. After that year, however, the parade’s history isn’t clear.

“I had always heard that for some reason the parade went away,” Jarrett said.

In 1970 the parade made its comeback with a route similar to its current one: The lineup began at the 7th and Mueller Church of Christ, traveled to Kingshighway and down Pruet Street, and then ended at the now historic courthouse.

In 2005 Jarrett took her position as Main Street Director, effectively becoming in charge of the parade the following year. While she admitted she at first had no idea how to even begin that task, the parade has since grown to around 100 entries.

“I am told that our numbers are getting bigger,” she said.

As with any large event, mishaps are bound to happen. Jarrett recalled in 2017 when the parade ended up traveling the wrong route until Brian Osborn happened to notice something wasn’t quite right, and directed the remaining lineup the correct way with the MOR Media car. Other years have seen cars catching on fire or simply quitting, and rescue squads, policemen and ambulances setting out to emergencies and leaving the lineup.

The 2019 Christmas parade is set for December 7 at 7 p.m. and the theme is “An Old Fashioned Christmas.”

“We always want the themes to be generic enough so people can use their imaginations,” Jarrett said.

She also added the Main Street Board is currently taking nominations for this year’s Grand Marshal.



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Bingo

When: Monday at 5:00 p.m.
Where: McAdams Public Library
106 Cobean Blvd., Lake City
Info: libraryinjonesboro.org

Even the little ones know Christmas is just around the corner and Nora Everett is getting into the spirit. Nora, 1, is the daughter of Josh and Kayla Everett of Paragould.





LIVING A Better Story

By Jared Pickney

I have a friend who works for hospice. I recently asked him what his biggest takeaway is from being around dying people on a daily basis. Without hesitation he said, "The things we often roll our eyes at are the very things the dying wish they could go back and relive. Things like your daughter asking you to push her in the swing or your son asking you to read him another book before bed."

My friend went on to tell me how in his six years of working for hospice he has never heard the dying regret not having more stuff. Not once has he heard them grieving the fact that they didn't get a bigger house or better car.

Rather, more than anything, they wish they could have more time with friends and family.

This is because, as Richard Plass points out, we are all relational beings. He says the following in his book, *The Relational Soul*. "At the core of our being is this truth. We are designed for and defined by our relationships. We were born with a relentless longing to participate in the lives of others. We cannot not be relational. We cannot exist well without connection and communion with another."

This is why presence trumps presents. Because more than we need toys, a shiny new gadget, an updated wardrobe or a luxury car with a huge bow on top, we need each other.

We need relationships where we can be known, belong and be loved.

This is what makes the message of Christmas so special. It's about God making a way for us to encounter his presence by stepping into this world and providing a way for us to live in relationship with Him, the only one who truly can satisfy and fulfill our souls.

God has gone through great lengths to be present in your life. This is what Christmas is all about. With this in mind, I encourage you to celebrate his presence this season while making yourself more present in the lives of those you love.

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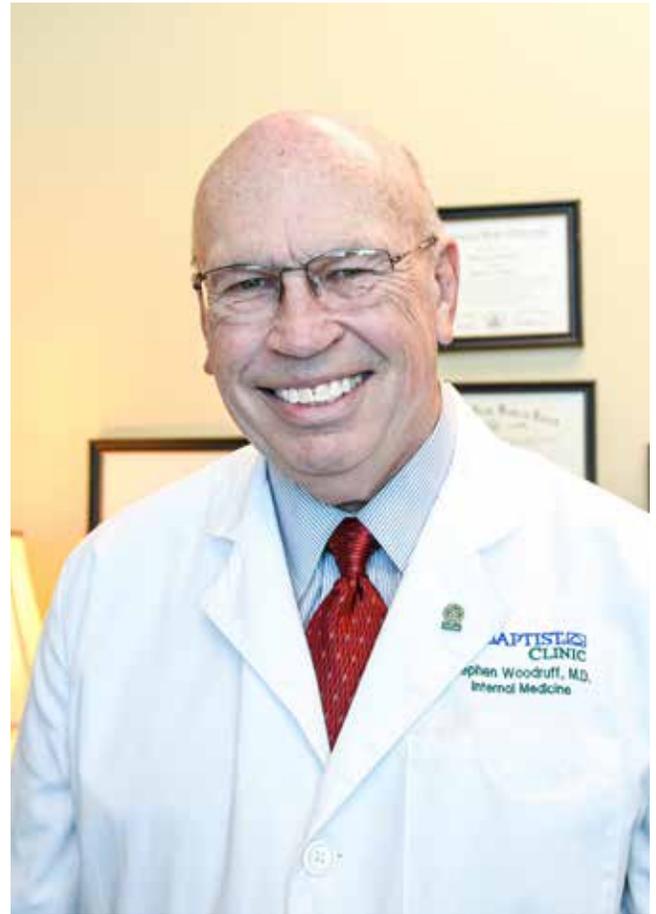
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AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

Mastership

Dr. Stephen Woodruff, MD FACP, has been awarded Mastership through the American College of Physicians (ACP). Election to Mastership recognizes outstanding and extraordinary career accomplishments. The prestigious award is offered to physicians who are current ACP Fellows, highly accomplished in their fields and distinguished by the excellence and significance of their contributions to the field of medicine. Individuals must also be actively involved in ACP.

Dr. Woodruff, who has been practicing medicine since 1982, will be awarded with Mastership at the Convocation ceremony where he will receive a special "Master" academic hood to represent the achievement. Those receiving this honor have the privilege of using the initials MACP after their names in recognition, and are considered role models in the American College of Physicians.



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ENGAGEMENTS

Mallory Brown & Ashton Pigue

Mallory Brown and Ashton Pigue have announced their plans to be married on January 11, 2020, at The Silos.

Mallory is the daughter of the late Chris Brown and Melissa Brown of Paragould, and Ashton is the son of David Pigue and Angela Lattus of Paragould.

Photography by Hailey + Alan Photography



BIRTHS

Cheyenne Kaurin McClelland



Nathan and Phalycia McClelland of Paragould welcomed their newborn, Cheyenne Kaurin McClelland, into the world on October 16, 2019.

Cheyenne was delivered at St. Bernards Medical Center, weighed 6 pounds, 14 ounces and measured 20 inches long.

Cheyenne is also welcomed by Evan and Tina Hyde and Rodney and Lora McClelland; and an uncle, Marlin Hyde.

Photo by Phalycia

Scout Spencer Hoke



Elizabeth and Brandon Hoke of Jonesboro welcomed their newborn, Scout Spencer Hoke, into the world on September 19, 2019.

Scout was delivered at St. Bernards Medical Center, weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces and measured 21 inches long.

Scout is also welcomed by his big sister, Timber Hoke.

Photo by Cobi Murdock Photography

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Lauren & Lee

Lee and I have known each other for most of our lives. We were both gymnasts at Champions Gymnastics Center during our younger years. We reconnected during college when I began working at the gym as a coach and he was coaching there as well. I was finishing up my degree from Arkansas State University in Spanish and Lee was completing his degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with the plan to apply for the Doctorate program in Occupational Therapy.

We began hanging out as friends and found out we have a tremendous amount in common. We both love to travel and have an interest in working out, and music. Eventually, that turned into a relationship in October of 2017. After dating almost a year, Lee proposed to me while we were visiting my grandmother in Alaska at the Chapel of St. Theresa's.

Our wedding and reception were held at St. Mary's Church in Paragould with the rehearsal dinner at the Vintage Rental Depot. The colors were Merlot, sage, and Marsala. Bride's maids were my sister, future sister-in-law, and high school friends, while the groomsmen were Lee's brother and former teammates. The band Everyday Life, in which my Dad is the lead guitarist, played at the reception. Our honeymoon took place in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, where we went hiking, sight-seeing, and enjoying our time together away from our busy lives.

Lauren is the daughter of Mark and Lee Ann Owen and Lee is the son of Bill and Sharon Grogan; they reside in Paragould. Currently, Lauren is completing a license in medical interpreting and Lee is completing his last year in the Doctorate of Occupational Therapy program at Arkansas State. "We are enjoying married life and look forward to all of the adventures to come. We also want to thank all of the friends, family, and loved ones that have supported us through this journey and continue to do so. We love you all."



Photography By McDuff Photography

HAPPENINGS

MA'AM MOBILE REVEALED



On October 31 St. Bernards revealed the latest addition to its cancer-fighting team: the Ma'am Mobile. The vehicle is not the first to take mammograms mobile across NEA, but will allow St. Bernards to say "yes," and therefore detect more cases early, more often.

JONESBORO VETERANS DAY PARADE



On November 9 Jonesboro honored Veterans Day with a parade and ceremony in downtown Jonesboro.

KATIE BLANKENSHIP KIRBY SCHOLARSHIP



Taylor Retherford of Life and Ally Cox of Pocahontas, practical nursing students at Black River Technical College, were awarded the Katie Blankenship Kirby Scholarship for the Fall 2019 semester.

MAYOR OF THE YEAR



Paragould's Mayor Mike Gaskill was named Mayor of the Year by the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police. Mayor Gaskill was nominated by Paragould Chief of Police, Todd Stovall.

OMED CONTEST WINNER



Katherine Byrd, a third-year medical student at New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine-Arkansas, won first place in the research student poster competition at the national Osteopathic Medical Education Conference (OMED) held in Baltimore, MD.

GCFF FUNDRAISER



On November 9 the Greene County Future Fund hosted Celebrity Waiter at the Paragould Community Center. Karaoke, food, and a silent auction filled the evening with fun and funds raised, thanks to the volunteer waitstaff.



When I was a kid, it seemed like the longest weeks of the year were those just prior to Christmas. The pages on the calendar seemed to linger on a day much longer than usual and the clocks on the school wall seemed to turn much slower. The anticipation of two weeks out of school and all the adventures that lay ahead filled my mind and conversations with friends. When the bell rang on that final afternoon before the break, we were off ... set free from the boundaries of algebra, English and history but ready to study the science of the outdoors.

I may not be able to remember where I put the TV remote, but there are some fond memories of those times that linger in my head. The DVR of my mind keeps those thoughts fresh and a sight, sound, smell or contact with someone will hit the play button and vivid thoughts will run through my head.

The best thing about Christmas break was that there were no plans. There would be family get-togethers and Christmas celebrations but, outside of those, the schedule was wide open. And that meant lots of time in the fields, woods and waters of Northeast Arkansas.

When I was very young, I had to rely on someone to take me and that always seemed to be Granddad Long or Papa Blanton. Granddad wanted to chase rabbits so there was no urgency and the times with him often started on up in the day. Papa Blanton was



a duck hunter, however. He loved the St. Francis River and the old blind that occupied a piece of those river bottoms for many years. As a duck hunter, the days started early and we were headed to the blind well before daylight. The timing worked out well for me, however, as I could get in some duck hunting in the morning and then join Granddad for rabbit races in the afternoon.

As time went on, I still enjoyed hunting with my family, but I developed lots of friendships that grew through our adventures. I wanted to get out more on my own and I did, expanding horizons to chasing ducks in other areas like local rice fields, Black River, and a few fish ponds. We also broadened our rabbit hunting from the Coffman area to Bard, Stanford and Dixie in pursuit of cottontails and swamp rabbits.

And now, here I sit almost 50 years later, with so many of those memories running through my head as I type this. I can hear the beagles running, hear Pa's old Olt pleading with mallards, smell Grandmother's breakfast as I wake to hunt, and feel the cold air that invaded each and every part of the coveralls I used to wear.

Where did the time go? Luckily, much of my time went into making wonderful memories with family and friends. I have truly been a blessed man to have been surrounded by wonderful family and friends that not only introduced me to the outdoors, but shared them with me in a much deeper way.

As we go through the holiday season, be sure to make some memories with the family. Hopefully, it will be a hunting or fishing trip that can be relived as you sit around and feast on the bounty of the harvest. If hunting or fishing is not in the cards, at least spend some time outdoors with a hike, a drive or some other way to enjoy the outdoor blessings Arkansas has to offer.

Some great options this time of year would be an "eagle drive" to look for eagles as they



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

follow the waterfowl during the migration. Make the short drive up to the Delaplaine area, over to Lake Ashbaugh and then toward Knobel, Knob or Corning and there will be eagles somewhere along the route. Look closely as there are often several immature eagles that do not have the iconic "bald" head. Another great outdoor option would be a trip to one of our state parks. Crowley's Ridge, Frierson or Lake Charles offer great outdoor experiences and the drives to each one are worth the trip.

Our family celebrates Christmas in a big way. We have multiple trees in our home, including an "outdoor" Christmas tree in my office adorned with outdoor themed ornaments. We enjoy spending time together, meals together with family and friends and a time of celebration of the birth of Jesus. Our favorite Christmas movie is the "The Grinch" and one of my favorite quotes from the movie is, "What if Christmas doesn't come from a store, what if Christmas means so much more?!" And it does! To our family, the birth of Christ means everything.

I hope each of you has a wonderful Christmas season and may God bless each of you and your families. Take a little time this Christmas season and get outside. It might be hunting, fishing, or just enjoying nature but take a little time to enjoy the outdoors. I hope to see you out there.



December

EVENTS CALENDAR

5

What: Christmas Parades in NEA

When: Thursday, December 5th

Where: Jonesboro, Trumann, & Pocahontas

Info: The 72nd Annual Jonesboro Christmas Parade will take place at 7:00 p.m. in Downtown Jonesboro. This year's theme is "Hard Candy Christmas." More info at jonesborojaycees.org

The Trumann Christmas Parade will begin at 6:00 p.m. This year's theme is "Christmas in the Delta." More info at trumannchamber.org

The Pocahontas Christmas Parade will begin at 6:00 p.m. downtown, with the theme "Christmas Through the Decades." More info on Facebook.

7

What: Factory Fest

When: Saturday, December 7th at 10:00 a.m.

Where: The Glass Factory (313 W Huntington, Jonesboro)

Info: Save the Date for the inaugural Factory Fest at The Glass Factory! Factory Fest is an all day festival dedicated to promoting local artists, growers and creators. Make plans to Christmas Shop during the day, then enjoy food, beverages and music from 6-10 p.m., as Factory Fest transitions into a VIP party. Email The Glass Factory at info@glassfactory311.com for more info.

7

What: Christmas Ornament Workshop and Food Drive

When: Saturday, December 7th

Where: Crowley's Ridge State Park (2092 Hwy. 168 North, Paragould)

Info: Christmas is the season of giving. Bring two non-perishable canned goods and you can make a long lasting, handmade Christmas ornament out of a gourd, or a tree cookie. Two canned goods are good for one ornament per person. Registration is not required for the event; however, there are a

limited number of ornaments. For questions, call (870) 573-6751 or email crowleysridge@arkansas.com.

8

What: Habitat for Humanity of Greater Jonesboro Souper Sunday

When: Sunday, December 8th at 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Embassy Suites by Hilton Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center (223 Red Wolf Blvd, Jonesboro)

Info: This event will feature unlimited soups from all your favorite restaurants in town and guests will cast their votes to declare a Souper Sunday winner who will bring home the coveted Ladle Traveling Trophy. The event will also feature a silent auction that is sure to help you check a few Christmas gifts off your list -- all for a great cause. Pre-order your tickets online today at eventbrite.com

10

What: An Old Fashioned Christmas Parade

When: Tuesday, December 7th at 7:00 p.m.

Where: Downtown Paragould

Info: Main Street Paragould presents the Annual Paragould Christmas Parade. The theme for 2019 is An Old Fashioned Christmas Parade. If you'd like an entry form or have questions, email mainstr@paragould.net.

12

What: Winter Art Walk

When: Thursday, December 12th at 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Where: Downtown Jonesboro

Info: It's the most wonderful time of the year: the NEA Artist Collective Winter Art Walk! Join many of NEA's talented artists for this free event at many locations in downtown Jonesboro including: Black Arrow Tattoo Co., Art House, Plant Cartel, Emerald's Triangle,

and Cregeen's Irish Pub. Local artists will be displaying their work for viewing and sale just in time for Christmas, so be sure to save some room under the tree for this special event! Artwork will be available for all tastes and budgets. There will be snacks and giveaways. More information on Facebook or email neaartistcollective@gmail.com

14

What: Wintering Bird Hike

When: Saturday, December 14th at 8:30 a.m.

Where: Crowley's Ridge State Park (2092 Hwy. 168 North, Paragould)

Info: Join park staff for a wintering bird hike on Dancing Rabbit Trail. Learn how to identify calls, coloration, and unique characteristics of some of our finest wintering species, such as pine warblers, Carolina chickadees, and red-headed woodpeckers. Then, relax on the suspension bridge and listen to the calls of nature. Please dress appropriately. If you have binoculars, feel free to bring them. For questions, call (870) 573-6751 or email crowleysridge@arkansas.com.

31

What: Night of Fireworks

When: Tuesday, December 31st at 9:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Where: Joe Mack Campbell Park (3021 Dan Ave., Jonesboro)

Info: What better way to ring in the new year than with Christmas lights and fireworks! Fireworks begin at 9:30 p.m., gates will close at approximately 9:15 p.m.. This will be a family friendly event offering an opportunity to enjoy a safe and fun environment.

To have your calendar items included in Premiere Magazine, email information to: graphics@mormediainc.com

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What's in store next month?
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The advertisement features a close-up of a diamond necklace with large circular links. The background is a festive Christmas scene with lights and ornaments.

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The illustration shows a man in a suit and Santa hat holding a check. The background is a stylized blue and yellow pattern.



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