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March  
2020

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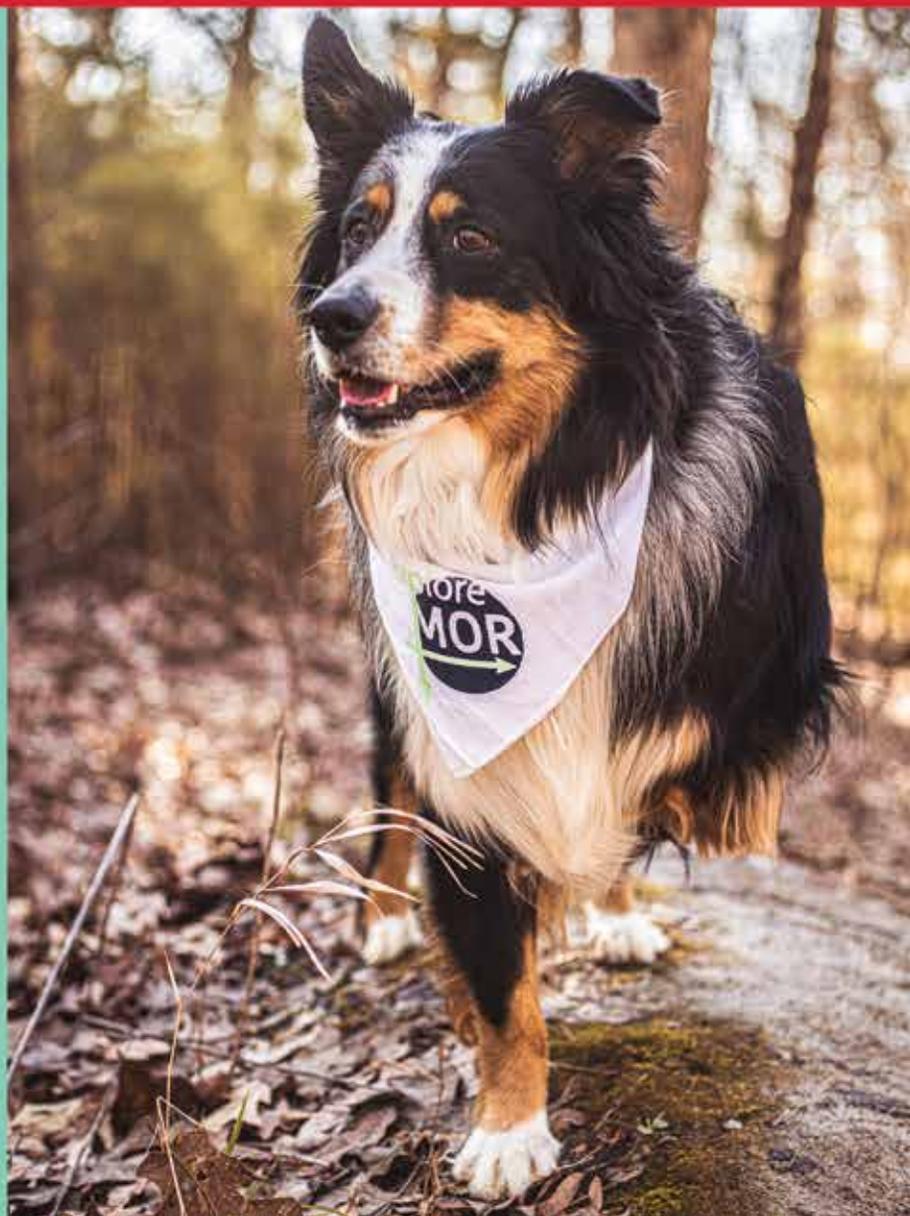
## This Month:

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Sprucing Up  
for Spring

Spring Break Right Here;  
Exploring Our  
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# From The PUBLISHER... DINA MASON

“

“Girl Power” “Empowered Women” “Woman Strong” We always celebrate women in our March edition and this year there are so many great stories we couldn’t choose one for the cover! All the ladies in this edition who defy the boundaries that may have once been placed on women -- or each serving as such strong examples of how “tender” strong can be -- exemplify the contributions of women to the good of our society.

From ladies who made a mark in the WNBA to a model, mom, big buck hunter (yes, that is all the same person), these stories will show the fact that a soft heart is certainly not a sign of weakness. The words that stand out in every one of their stories are “tenacity; strong will; servant’s heart; champion for kids; community advocate; mentor” and so much more. I have always loved the quote, “A strong woman stands up for herself. A stronger woman stands up for everyone else,” and these ladies all let their strength shine through our

communities and for the young ladies coming up in them. You will enjoy getting to know each of them. March also has our first edition of NEA Seniors of 2020. We always strive to tell the stories of local seniors, all while delivering to our readers information and resources to enhance their lives or the lives of seniors in their care. This edition has so much information you will not want to miss out. Whether you are looking for activities to get involved in or whether you have someone in residential care who wants to get back into independent living, our contributing writers who deal with senior care issues daily have information here and additional resources to get more if you need it.

As always, thank you for reading Premiere and thank our advertisers for making it possible to produce this monthly community magazine for Northeast Arkansas --“The Good News and the People Who Make it Happen.”

”

Glen Sain Ford

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# Paragould School District's Annual Entrepreneur Day

Paragould School District's Advanced Placement Coordinator, Karen Snyder, invited several community members to come to the Annual Entrepreneur Day to help judge AP students' business ideas in a variety of categories.

## Winners

### Elevator Pitch

Sticky Buns - Lilly Agee (7th Grade)

### Business Display

Beautiful Intelligence - McKenzie Minor (10th Grade)

### Commercial

Blizzard Baking - Olivia Ellis and Shelby Hilligoss (8th Grade)

### Overall

Beautiful Intelligence - McKenzie Minor (10th Grade)



See more photos from this event on Premiere Magazine's Facebook page.

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# College Tips by a College Student



BY SARA BROWN

Many college majors require a minor, others don't, but it never hurts to expand your study into other domains to both increase your knowledge and make you more competitive as a job candidate down the line. If you want to or are required to have a minor, now is a great time to start thinking about what that might be.

Tip number one: Think about what topics directly connect with your major first. For science majors, something math-related is popular. For English majors, journalism is popular. For psychology majors, sociology and criminology are popular. Choosing something related to your major is a great way to enhance your skills and make you competitive in the job market or when applying for graduate school. However, I'm a psychology major currently minoring in Creative Media Production. That doesn't seem like a great fit but read on to see why it makes sense.

Tip two: Think about things you're passionate about. While choosing something relevant to your major is important when making a minor selection, it's also important for it to be something you at least halfway care about. After all, your major is supposed to be something you're passionate about, so what you incorporate into it with your minor would serve you better if it's something you're interested in.

Tip three: Take that thing you're passionate about and see if you can connect it to your major. I wouldn't have thought media would go with psychology, but I've taken several media classes now that have made mention of topics I've already covered in psychology classes and I've found my knowledge of psychology has been quite beneficial in many of my media classes. You never know, the two things you might not think could ever go together may actually be the perfect fit.

Tip four: If you're having trouble thinking of possible minors, talk to other students in your major or students across campus in general. Find out what possibilities are open to you and see if anything speaks to you. I was interested in Creative Media Production as a minor already, but finding out that another Psychology student was also minoring in it helped me feel more confident in my decision.

Finally, tip five: Make a list of the minors you're interested in and talk with your advisor. Their job is to help you make the best possible decisions for your college career, and they can help you decide what minor is best for you and your career goals, and what's best for you is what's most important.



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The event will take place on March 7, 2020, at noon at St. Bernards Health and Wellness in Jonesboro. If you've ever wanted to try a TRI, this is the perfect event for you! Swim 300 meters in a lap pool, head upstairs to ride 5 miles on a stationary bike, then jump on a treadmill to finish with a 2 mile run. This event is very beginner friendly and spectator friendly, so invite your friends and family to watch!

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The advertisement features a green background with a pattern of shamrocks. On the left, there is a logo of a house with a dog's face inside. On the right, a bulldog is wearing a green tinsel collar and a green party hat. The text is in various colors and fonts, including a large, bold, yellow font for the main headline.



# IN BETWEEN

BY LINDSEY MILLS



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Have you ever driven home after a weekend away or perhaps just dinner, and thought when you arrived in your driveway, "Wait, how did I get here?" You are so familiar with the journey you can turn on auto pilot and navigate the road without paying much attention to the turns you're making. When you arrive at your destination, you don't much recall the many steps you obviously had to take to get there. That's how I feel about turning 25.

Of course, I was present for the years prior. I can pretty much pinpoint where I was for every birthday. And yes, I remember where each year was spent. But thinking about the number 25 just turns it all into a blur.

If you're older than 25, rolling your eyes and thinking, "Oh come on, you're still a baby, you have no idea!" then please, hear me out. I agree with you. I'm young. But that's what is even wilder to me. If my life already seems to be flying by, what about a few years from now? Twenty years from now? Fifty years, God willing, from now? Yikes.

I'm starting to realize all those things I was told while growing up are true. Things like, "Enjoy it, you'll wish you could go back," and, "Don't try to grow up too fast, this is the best time of your life." The ringing thought in my head currently is, "Already?"

You know those things you get really excited about? Those things that make you giddy and you just feel like they're forever away and can't wait for them to be there? Birthday parties come to mind. Prom, the State Cross Country meets, summer, moving into my dorm, driving my new car, graduating college. Now

looking back, I wish I could have held on to them a bit longer. I wish I could have hovered in those moments. Instead, as they passed, I was already looking for the next one.

To be honest, I don't feel like an adult. And now, instead of running toward that title, I'm pumping the brakes. I can't just take my car to my dad when it has a problem; I have to take it to the shop and pull out a credit card. When my bed is ultra-comfy in the morning, I can't skip work like I skipped class (yes, guilty!).

There is no ceremony, no ribbon cutting for entering adulthood. There are lots of little moments where you are startled to realize you are in fact doing an adult thing and no one is even surprised, nonetheless, concerned. My moments: signing a lease, getting engaged, and drinking a beer ... with my dad.

How do we slow down time? How do we pause the movie that is our life? How do we rewind and go back to those moments we didn't appreciate? We don't. We can only try to stop wishing for the next thing so that maybe we can take in what's happening right now. Even if what's happening is pain, or sadness, or just boring in comparison to what we are hoping for. All of those less-welcome experiences are what prepare us to appreciate the much better ones.

There are still all kinds of things I am very much looking forward to. One of those things is celebrating my birthday this weekend with some of my favorite people. I'm going to try to think less about all the other things I'm looking forward to and more about where I am.



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One of my favorite pastimes is reading because I enjoy learning about people, places and things I've heard about but never paid enough attention to. Throughout most of my school years I read words but didn't always comprehend because my hyperactive nature had me figuring while I sat still reading, someone, somewhere was bouncing a basketball, hitting a baseball or catching a throw and I wanted to be a part of that.

Now that I'm older and not too hyper-anything, reading fits into my frequent activity of sitting on the couch and wondering why those kids outside are making so much noise. I was a solid A-B student throughout school but being told to read things I had no interest in ruffled my feathers. *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Canterbury Tales* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* more than befuddled me, especially the latter one, because I naturally assumed it was a poem about an older guy playing on the Seattle Mariners baseball team.

During one class period we were assigned Saki's *The Open Window*, which appealed to me at the time because the teacher said it was a short story. True enough it took only a few minutes to read the work, but it meant little to me. That's how I knew I would be the first one called on in class the next day, so I read and re-read in hopes of coming up with something more than words on paper. Sure enough, the following morning when class began the teacher asked for volunteers to discuss the story and while studious classmates raised their hands excitedly in a "Choose me! Pick me!" fashion, I performed my usual procedure of slinking down behind the student in front of me, hoping to become invisible. And, sure enough, the next words I heard were, "Richard, why don't you tell us what you know about the work of Saki?"

My reflex action was to reply, "It's what I put on my footie so I won't get cold. When my handies are chilly, I wear gloves, but not when I'm reading because that makes it hard to turn the pages." Keeping those thoughts inside, I was still hunkering down in silence when she again said, "Richard, please tell us what you learned from *The Open Window*."

"Well, there was this window," I began, looking for some sort of approval. A nod, a gesture, anything positive. "... And it was open, which is probably where the guy got his title. Hence, *The Open Window*."

I thought the word "hence" might add a sense of legitimacy to my summation, an idea proven incorrect soon thereafter. "And then this kind of sissy fellow goes to a house to meet a woman but she's not ready -- something married men would probably relate to better than a teenage boy -- and this little girl tells him a story that scares him and he runs away."

"And?" the teacher asked.

"And that was the end," I said confidently.

Crickets. The room was silent except for the occasional snicker one of the smart kids let slip out, and then the question was again up for grabs. The teacher picked out one of the anxious arm-raisers who responded, "Well, I thought the little girl represented the charlatans of the world, people who draw in the innocent with wondrous tales and then let reality come crashing down around them, especially for those naive enough to believe things without fact checking."

"Very good," the teacher said.

"Whaaat?" I said, my left eye almost closed and my face grimacing as I turned my head to the side much like a dog does when it doesn't understand how the treat was in your hand but then suddenly was gone. Then Smarty Smartison contributed, "And I felt it represented a variety of themes -- honesty, trust, conflict, confidence, deception, freedom and control."

"Excellent," the teacher said while performing a small hand clap.

"Wha-a-a-t?" I said, repeating my earlier expressions of disbelief as I looked back at the story in my book. "You got THAT from THAT?"

So I read it again, partly to see if I could derive some of that book learnin' from it and partly because the teacher made me write a report on Saki. Come to find out Saki wasn't really even the guy's name (it's H.H. Munro, for those interested) and I figure if a fellow's too embarrassed by his work to put his real name on it, it's probably not a good read to begin with. However, just a few days ago I read it again and now it makes a little more sense to me, which says maybe at this advanced age I would make a real good high school readin' person. Or maybe it says I'm already a good reader when I get to choose my own subject matter.



**Congratulations to Archer Mae Paddock on being the first baby born this new year!**

Archer was born January 2, 2020, at 8:17 a.m. weighing 7 lbs. 5 oz. She was delivered by Dr. Charles Cesare, and proud parents are Emily Stahl and Jacob Paddock. Baby Archer received a basket of diapers, wipes and gifts from the AMMC Auxiliary, AMMC Wellness Center, First National Bank, Walmart, City Drug, Ashley Burk Photography, Paragould Daily Press and MOR Media/Premiere Magazine. Flowers and ribbon were provided by Ballard's Flowers and Alvin Taylor's Flowers and Gifts.

# Puppies and Vaccines

DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

**N**ational Puppy Day is March 23 and since we are celebrating puppies, I would like to talk about vaccinations. Puppies, just like children, need vaccinations to help stimulate an immune response to best prepare their bodies for many of the common, and often fatal, viral and bacterial diseases they may come into contact with. Puppy vaccinations are often started around 6-8 weeks of age.

Typically, there are four series of the common Distemper and Parvoviral vaccines administered 2-3 weeks apart. The reason they are done 2-3 weeks apart is because it takes each vaccine about two weeks for it to have peaked in the immune response it would have helped to promote, then we re-vaccinate to help further boost this response; in this way they are best equipped to fend off these nasty viral and bacterial diseases.

A question that I often get is, "Will these vaccines make my puppy sick? Can they get this disease from the vaccine?" The answer to this is: Anything that stimulates an immune response can make you feel a bit under the weather, but will not result in the disease it is trying to prevent. Many vaccines (excluding Rabies vaccines) are termed Modified-live vaccines; this means they can cause an immune response like the real disease can, but it cannot, I repeat, cannot cause the actual disease.

Vaccines mimic viral and bacterial diseases; when the body is presented with these "mock diseases" it stimulates the body to produce antibodies; antibodies help to fight the infection. So, long story short, if the body is presented with a disease it already has formed antibodies for, then the lesser chance that the body will be diseased by it. Ergo, vaccines are good and make for healthy puppies. :)

Another statement I often hear is, "My puppy is indoors only and doesn't even potty outside, so do we really need to vaccinate?"

The answer: Yes, yes you do. The truth is that even if your pet never steps even one tippy-toe outside, we still do. People can carry things in on their shoes, pant legs, hands, anywhere, and then your pet can be exposed. It is always best to be prepared than to wait for the bad to happen and try then to respond.

In closing, vaccinations are the best way for you to be proactive about your furbabies' health. During a time where we are seeing such amazing advances in veterinary medicine, don't let a nasty preventable virus get your puppy down. Instead, if you have further questions, please call ARPets Hospital or your local veterinarian for the best information on vaccinations and vaccination protocol.



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The water looked inviting as we crossed the dam that separated Pickwick Lake from the Tennessee River. Gene Bennett and I had made the three hour trip to one of our favorite fishing holes and were excited to get on the water.

We arrived at the parking area for the ramp and we loaded the necessities in the boat. Gene hopped in the boat and I backed him down the ramp. The boat slid off the trailer, Gene started the motor and then I drove back up the ramp and parked the truck. One last glance through the vehicle told me we had all the gear and I hurried down the ramp, donned my life jacket and we were off.

The first order of business was to catch bait. I hopped up on the front deck with the cast net as Gene idled us along the bank looking for schools of shad. All was going well until Gene uttered some words you never want to hear in a boat, "Hey Chuck, I think we have water coming in the boat!" I looked at the floor and the carpet was becoming soaked with water. Gene maintained control of the boat while I ran to the back and opened the hatch to assess the problem. It did not take long to find the issue -- water was pouring in from the drain hole. We had forgot to put in the plug!

Gene acted quickly, gave the motor some gas and we picked up speed and headed to the middle of the river, which reversed

the flow of the water. We ran around to get a little water out, then I inserted the plug and we headed back to the ramp. I got the truck and we put the boat back on the trailer. We pulled the boat up the ramp, popped the drain plug and drained the water. Within a few minutes we were able to relaunch and get back on the river.

Sometimes things do not go as planned and that is one of the unique things about hunting, fishing and spending time outdoors. The fish do not bite, the ducks decide not to work, the deer decide not to move and equipment breaks down. Some days it might be as simple as a backlashed reel, tangled fishing lines or lost dogs. Other days it might be boat trouble, gun problems or weather issues, but that is all part of being in our great outdoors.

For a non-outdoors person it may be a little hard to understand how the lack of success can call us back to the water or woods. I may make hundreds of casts to catch a fish, all unsuccessful, but there is always that hope for the next one.

I might sit on a deer stand for days waiting on that moment a buck shows itself, or call at flock after flock of mallards that ignore the pleadings of our calls. The motor may not start, the boat may leak, the flashlight may go out and I might even get a little lost, but I still go back.

That feeling is a hard one to explain to a person who does not get out there. I am often asked how I can enjoy early mornings, cold temperatures, sunburns, equipment failures, and a possible lack of success on each outing. If it was only about the catching of fish or the taking of an animal, I think I would have quit long ago.

The tangible rewards of a duck on a strap or a fish in a cooler is a very small part of why I am out there. I am there for the pursuit, the chase and the challenge. It's



## CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

the thought of what I might see or hear next. It's the hope that the next cast, call or sit in a stand will be successful. It is enjoying nature at its very best, or maybe at its very worst. It is spending time with family and friends. It is peace, quiet and the challenge of matching wits with an animal on its home turf. It is a timeless test of man against nature and the beasts that live in it. And I thoroughly enjoy each and every moment, good or bad.

Gene and I finally got the boat drained and relaunched and, after enduring the trouble, we had one of those days that fishermen dream about. The tug of stripers and catfish along with an occasional bass and drum tired our arms and a day that started with trouble ended as a day full of fish.

And so it goes in the outdoors. Just like in life, sometimes bad things happen and sometimes good, but if you will keep a good attitude and keep pressing on, things work out. As we head into spring I hope you will take some time to get out in God's great outdoors and see what nature has to offer. It might be unpredictable but the thrills and excitement can be rivaled by nothing else. Get out and enjoy it and I hope to see you out there!



# Sounds Like... Spring!

BY SARA BROWN

A playlist for March.

## 1. Here Comes The Sun – The Beatles

You can't have a spring playlist without this song. The song welcomes in the sun after a "long, cold, lonely winter," and I imagine that's something we're all hoping for right about now. The song is warm and bouncy, and it always lifts my spirits when I hear it, just as spring does to all of us after a long winter. The lead vocal on it is nice and light and the song always helps me feel like spring is coming.

## 2. Mr. Blue Sky – Electric Light Orchestra

This song sends a welcome to the blue and sunny sky of the day, and when I think of spring, I think of blue, sunny skies (and rainy days!). This is just a happy song and a great mood lifter, much like the song I mentioned just before this one. When it's winter, we miss the blue skies of spring, and this song lets us imagine that they're here.

## 3. Spring Vacation – The Beach Boys

You probably know The Beach Boys from their poppy, summery songs about surfing and the beach from the 1960s, but this song from 2012 has a bit of a different feel to it. It feels more flowery and springy, like a sunny, green, spring day, and its bouncy vocals and guitar are bound to get you feeling ready for spring to hurry up and get here!

## 4. April Come She Will – Simon & Garfunkel

This song just sounds like spring to me. The only things I hear on the track are the vocals and an acoustic guitar, and both are so sweet and gentle that it feels like the first warm day after a cold winter. The song discusses the rain of April and though it goes on to talk about the summer months, I think it's a perfect way to welcome spring.

## 5. Dream A Little Dream Of Me – The Mamas and the Papas

Mama Cass sings this song so beautifully and the song remains light and airy throughout. Lyrics like "night breezes seem to whisper 'I love you' / Birds singing in the sycamore tree" really bring out an image of spring to me. It's a generally pleasant song and is a perfect song to get you ready for spring.

## 6. Let's Run Away – The Last Bandoleros

This song talks about running off to California, Las Vegas, Memphis, and Mexico – all places that sound like a perfect spring break trip! It's a fun, bouncy track that never stops moving, and the harmonies on it give it an energy that's very reminiscent of spring in my eyes.

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# PET OF THE MONTH

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BY ERICA HARGUESS BAUGH

Izzie came in my life 12 years ago as I was starting the OTA program in Little Rock. A friend of my mother's had puppies and just needed to get rid of them. I had no idea how much I would need this girl! Her love has gotten me through college, meeting and marrying my husband and her favorite part, having our babies! She even traveled to Orange Beach to be a part of our wedding.

Izzie's favorite thing is going bye-bye. She doesn't care where the car is going, she's just ready. She loves her two human babies, Baron (5) and Ellie Reese (3). Every time they are sleeping, she can be found next to them near the edge of the bed protecting them. If they are playing in their rooms, she will be found outside their door watching their every move. If you can't find Izzie in Jonesboro, you will find her enjoying the breeze on her boat at Norfolk.

If Izzie could talk, she would express her love for these two kiddos. I can't explain how much she truly loves them. Then she would probably complain that she isn't allowed to roam around our farm and chase chickens and cows as much as much as she'd like. She thinks she's a farm dog but only if it's not too hot or too cold out!



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# NEA Women:

## Sonja Tate



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Sonja Tate could easily toss her list of accomplishments onto the table and you'd immediately get the idea she might know a little about the game of basketball: Division I player at Arkansas State University where she is the scoring leader in program history with 2,312 points; holds the ASU single-season scoring record and has the top five single-game scoring performances, hitting 50 once and topping 40 five times; conference Newcomer of the Year and Player of the Year; Kodak All-America; MVP of the 1993 National Women's Invitation Tournament after a victory over Southern Methodist University in the finals; professional player both abroad and in the ABL and WNBA stateside, with great success at each stop.

And the list gets longer instead of shorter, so the question becomes, does any of that help her in her current role as Paragould High School's girls' basketball coach and athletic director? "Absolutely not," Tate said of today's challenges. "Not a thing. I wonder if some of them even know. Maybe their parents do. When it comes to that, it can hurt in a way; some may have pre-perceived ideas about how I will be. I just want to teach them to win basketball games and to win in life. It's about trying to build relationships and getting them to

listen to me."

She's also no rookie to the coaching game. Tate coached at two high schools in North Carolina, has been an assistant at her old high school in West Memphis, and has been on the bench at both the junior college and Division I college levels. "I love coaching, I really do," Tate said. "For me, I just try to see them as who they are at this time. When I first coached over 12-some years ago, I thought everyone who came out to play wanted to be there and loved the game. But in reality, today you have so many different reasons -- because their friends play, because their parents want them to play, some are using it to get into college because it looks good to have been on the varsity team. Whatever their reason is for being here, I want to teach them what success looks like."

Tate grew up in the West Memphis area, where she attended junior high and high school and where she polished her individual basketball skills. She was one of 11 children in the home, and she said having eight brothers meant there was always a game going on ... even if the boys didn't want their sister hanging around. "I had to fight to get in the game, and then I had to fight to stay in the game," she

said, laughing, at recollections of days gone by. Those early battles for recognition and respect helped create the drive that pushed her well beyond the boundaries of the court.

"That helped me be a good player, and it helped me to know how hard I could push myself to do greater things," she said. "When I was through playing I knew I wanted to coach, and if I was going to coach, I wanted to win."

She said in previous stops she "used to be a yeller and a screamer -- some probably still think that I am -- but I'm not. I'm trying to help motivate them to do what I need them to do. I try to put myself in their shoes, go back to when I was in the 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade, remember how hard it was to understand if the coach was yelling at me or not.

"I look at it like this: I'm being their guardian at the time, and because of that it's important the things you feed into them. I know in the past I got frustrated at them not doing what I wanted and I try to watch my body language ... I still have work to do. But I say to them, 'I'm not telling you I know all there is to know ... but I know quite a bit.' If they will listen I

will eventually tell them something they need to hear.”

Tate knows the importance of her role in today’s world where teens deal daily with the hurdles presented by social media, mental health issues and peer pressure. She understands coaches have more opportunities to influence teens positively or negatively than almost any other adults they encounter.

“You know what, that’s really scary,” she said. “I try to build a good relationship just as I am also teaching life lessons. So many lessons they can learn from these games and, at 48, so many I can learn just being a part of a sports team. It’s a big challenge and a big responsibility. I realize that and I accept that. I want to be a person they will think of years down the line and maybe call if they’re struggling with something. I have players that still do that today even if we have been apart a long, long time. I know I have to do more than try to win basketball games. I have a responsibility to these girls to help them understand things about life that are going to happen in the future. It’s a big responsibility, but I think -- I hope -- I’m the right person for it.”

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NEA Women:

# Kaley Slatton



BY BECCA JENNESS

**G**earhead Outfitters, a well-known and well-loved outdoor company in the area, was founded in Jonesboro in 1997. Since its advent, it has grown into a successful regional chain. Throughout the past 23 years, the business has impacted the lives of many, including Kaley Slatton.

Kaley started working with Gearhead in 2011 at just 18 years old. She was born and raised in Jonesboro, attending Valley View High School. She later went on to graduate from Arkansas State University with her bachelor's degree in sports management. This, however, was not where Kaley initially saw herself at the beginning of her college career.

"The plan was just to work at Gearhead in college," Kaley said. However, she changed her major four or five times before she figured out what she wanted to do. As she worked with Gearhead, she realized she wanted to study a business-

related subject and eventually landed on sports management as her major. Also, while working at Gearhead, she fell in love with the products, the customers, and the team. "Gearhead is home to me, and I can't imagine being anywhere else," said Kaley.

Landing her management role did not come without a challenge. For Kaley, the biggest she faced was age. Working at Gearhead Outfitters has been her only work experience. Thus, she had to establish a work style for herself. She proudly declares that the team at Gearhead poured into her to help her really grow into her position. After becoming a manager at 21, it's evident she had a great support staff that helped her navigate her managerial role.

The store Kaley manages is located in The Mall at Turtle Creek and is one of their most profitable locations. Though to many this might be intimidating, Kaley finds motivation in managing the store

and pushing for further success. The staff and customer relationships she has formed fuel her to drive herself and her team to greatness.

Although the outdoor industry is largely male-dominated, Kaley never felt as though she was the underdog. Kaley stated, "I've never been intimidated by that." She went on to explain that her love for the outdoor industry trumped any potential intimidation. The encouragement Kaley received came from both male and female coworkers and helped her to assume the position without any fear of failure.

As a woman in an industry dominated by men, Kaley encourages fellow women who are pursuing careers in male-dominated fields to simply go for it. She says, "Don't ever doubt yourself. You are as strong and capable as anyone else in this field." She never wants women to feel lesser-than simply because of their gender. "Believe in yourself and never look back," Kaley says.



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BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

For 19 years Jody Walker has taught at Arkansas State University but at the beginning of her career, most people assumed she was a secretary or receptionist instead of an instructor.

Thankfully, there are more women in the field of engineering today and that mistake rarely happens anymore.

In 2001 Walker began teaching in the College of Engineering and she is now a Mechanical Engineering Instructor, as well as teaching general engineering courses.

"I've always liked science and math," she said. "In high school I wanted to be an architect but I couldn't draw. This was just before Computer Aided Drafting became readily available."

At the time her mother taught at the ASU College of Business and was friends with the Dean of Engineering. She sent Walker to talk to the dean and that was the beginning

of her career. "He looked at my transcript and told me it looked like I was good at math and science, and that engineering would be a good fit for me," she said. "He also mentioned that mechanical engineers had the most competitive pay."

Walker went on to graduate with her Bachelor of Science in Engineering and worked as a product engineer and product design engineer before going to graduate school for her Master's in Mathematics. She also holds a professional engineering license in thermal and fluid systems.

During her schooling, Walker found she was one of few women in the field.

"There were very few girls in the engineering program when I was a student, maybe 10," she said. "There was only one other female engineer when I did my engineering internship, and no other female engineers when I was a design engineer. I was the first female instructor

in the college. Now there are three others." Aside from teaching, Walker has also been the faculty advisor for student projects involving local industries such as Hytrol Conveyor, Anchor Packaging and FritoLay.

Walker said being a strong, introverted Type A personality is an engineering trait that helps her love her job. She said she enjoys promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), especially for girls, and stays involved in several STEM events each semester.

Another favorite aspect of her career is completing a project from beginning to end, and also how smart her students are.

"When my students, especially the female students, complete their degree and get a wonderful job in the field of engineering, it's a feeling of accomplishment," she said. "I live vicariously through them."

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# NEA Women:

# Brookshield Laurent

BY LINDSEY MILLS



Dr. Brookshield Laurent is not a native Arkansan, but you probably wouldn't know that simply by hearing her talk. Dr. Laurent's passion and desire to serve the Northeast Arkansas community are so evident in her words and her work, it's easy to believe NEA is now her home.

What brought her here? Dr. Laurent is an osteopathic doctor who knew early on she wanted to serve people as well as help train future physicians.

"I chose to become an osteopathic physician because of the philosophy: You can't just look at the human body and its symptoms to treat it, you have to consider the mind, the body, and the spirit when addressing health," Dr. Laurent explained. During her residency, and while completing a policies study fellowship through the American Osteopathic Association, she began to see all the moving parts that affect health.

"I decided I wanted to use my position in medicine to advocate for patients through policy making," said Dr. Laurent. This was the first of many steps toward the discovery of her personal mission.

A feasibility study revealed if you were to look at the Delta region in terms of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer, it lights up like a Christmas tree in this area. The need for research, and action, was one aspect that intrigued Dr. Laurent about Arkansas.

"A mentor of mine, Dr. Ross Lee, was working closely with Arkansas State University leaders to bring a branch of NYIT here," Dr. Laurent explained. This work led to the first osteopathic medical school in Jonesboro. The school held its inaugural event in 2016, and it was when Dr. Laurent found herself first stepping foot in Jonesboro for the event, she realized she's supposed to be here.

"I had a strong missional sense to come here. It drew my attention. At first my position consisted of lots of Zoom meetings, but listening to the leadership here I began to better understand how many great, resilient people there are here," she said.

Dr. Laurent decided she wanted to be a part of the community, and the community she found has kept her here. A desire to influence health and wellness, and impact

prevention rather than just treatment, is what has led to Dr. Laurent's current position: Executive Director of the Delta Population Health Institute.

Established by NYIT in 2019, the mission of the Delta Population Health Institute is to address health and wellness not only in this community, but the Delta community at large. The purpose of the institute is to show how everyone is connected to transforming where we live, learn, work, play, and grow. "Putting a health plan into all of these dimensions is how we can create a culture of health," Dr. Laurent said. She urges people to understand health and wellness is the responsibility of an entire community and everyone in it.

"It's exciting to educate people and let them know you don't have to be in the health care business to address health. Everyone has the opportunity to be a healer in their community. Teaching this, helping people find ways to build healthier communities, transforming lives ... that's my mission," Dr. Laurent shared.

"The institute was created to leverage the assets of NYIT, education policy engagement, and community engagement to help create a culture of health," she continued. "The issue, when we talk about health, the burden of the conversation is often laid upon health care providers and hospitals. Those entities are expected to provide the discussion. Our [Delta Population Health Institute] goal has been to broaden the influence at that table."

Dr. Laurent explained how doctors, clinics and hospitals are important for when something goes wrong, but how as a civilization we all need to think strategically about prevention and wellness as a whole. She urges other "stakeholders" to come to the table and ask of one another, no matter what community you're in, what does the culture of health look like where you are?

"We all need to talk about health," Dr. Laurent concluded. "Everyone needs to know that, absolutely, they are contributing to the wellness, well-being, and quality of life in their community."

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography

# NEA Women: *Katie Liddell*

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

**K**atie Liddell always enjoyed working out but in 2014 she started to get serious about the gym. Today, she lifts heavy and trains hard for competitions, all while showing others how to have a healthy relationship with food and that women can bodybuild without “looking like men.”

At the end of 2014 Liddell began trying out different gyms and workouts to see what it was she was really looking for.

“I had tried bootcamps, yoga and running as well,” she said. “But none of it stuck. My very first show was in 2018 and that’s when I first started training for this whole bodybuilding lifestyle.”

But before she found her niche in bodybuilding, Liddell did her research. She said she loved working out and showing off her hard work but wanted to see what it truly took before she jumped in headfirst. She read articles, watched YouTube videos, followed bikini competitors on social media and listened to podcasts before deciding she could do it.

“I just thought, ‘Yes, I want a new project,’” she said. “I felt like I was spinning my wheels in the gym, so why not mix it up?”

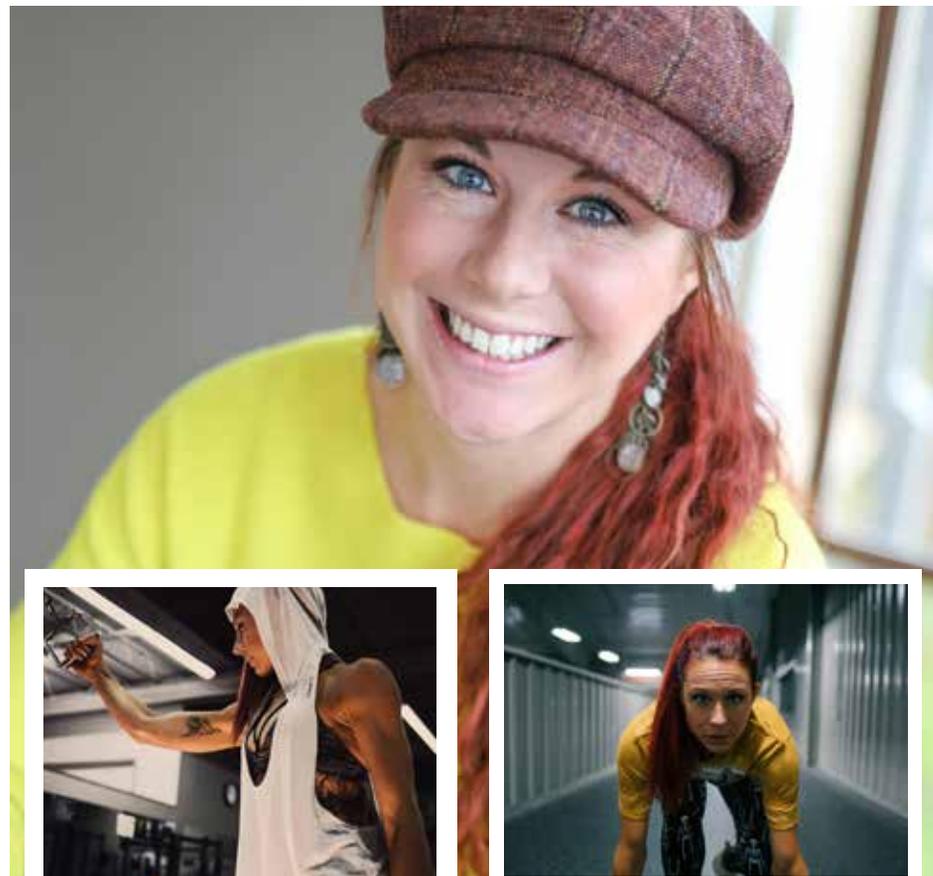
This, in her own words, began her road trip to “Shred City and Gainsville.”

To prepare for her competitions Liddell started out with two upper body workout days, two lower body workout days and three rest days. As she got deeper into her first competition prep she added in cardio as needed. During off season she participates in two days of moderate cardio and four full body workouts. Liddell is taking 2020 off to work hard for her next competition.

“Since I’m trying to grow in this improvement season, I am focusing on shoulders, lats and glutes,” she said. “And making sure I hit 10,000 steps daily.”

And of course, there is the food.

“There are no bad foods out there, besides maybe expired foods or foods you have



an allergy to,” Liddell said. “Carbs are not the devil. Eat foods you like but don’t over indulge, unless that brings you total joy.”

She added that during her first prep she lost 30 pounds while keeping peanut butter, bananas and Rice Krispies in her diet.

“Be mindful, know when you are full and above all, keep a healthy relationship with food,” she stressed. “You control the fork. Do not let food control your mind.”

During her fitness journey Liddell also decided to study for her personal training certification, which she received through ACE Fitness.

“I’ve had people approach me because I’m always working out, so I might as well cover all my bases when they ask for workouts,” she said. “Plus, it’s always fun learning more about something you’re totally interested in.”

With all the seriousness that comes with

bodybuilding, there are, of course, some blooper reels those outside of the fitness world may not think about. Liddell said the funny stories that come out of competitions are endless.

“One for sure is the lengths one will go to make sure they do not pee on themselves and ruin their tan,” she explained, adding that she has heard horror stories of competitors who were center stage in the spotlight with speckled tans down their legs.

When it’s actually time to hit the stage, Liddell said her favorite part is meeting and talking to new people. Through all her shows and gym hopping she has made quite a few friends. But, she also loves seeing what the human body can do with some love and care.

“Just learning what your body is actually capable of with the right determination and mindset, it’s amazing,” she said.

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography  
Photo Credit (Smaller): Phillip Carr via PHC Studios

# NEA Women:

## Candace Evans

### and the Pretty Proverbs Sister Circle

BY BETHANY SEATON

On an otherwise quiet Monday evening, women trickle in to a small meeting room on the A-State campus. Some chat with friends and shoulder book bags from a day filled with studying; others push in strollers and monitor small children who crawl across chairs waving Spiderman action figures. It's the bi-weekly meeting of Pretty Proverbs' Sister Circle, and chapter advisor Candace Evans is eager to begin.

"Welcome, everyone!" Evans opens, greeting new and returning members alike. As the eyes of the attendees turn to her, it's clear she's in her element. She expertly introduces the nonprofit's mission statement and goals, then turns the platform over to student leaders who begin icebreakers and Bible-based discussion groups.

As two younger members present the evening's discussion topic from the Pretty Proverbs blog, Evans sits within the circle, offering nods of encouragement as the women share insights and personal experiences. It's a position of supportive mentorship: Modeling effective behavior, trusting in mentees to make the right decisions, and offering encouragement whenever needed.

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography



Evans is the chapter advisor and leader of the all-women mentorship organization Pretty Proverbs, a Jonesboro-based nonprofit dedicated to bringing women together in faith, fellowship, and sisterhood.

The nonprofit organization was founded by A-State alumnae Brianna Rodgers and Mo'Nique Grant in 2014 as a way to provide women and girls in the Jonesboro area with Christian-based accountability, fellowship, and mentorship. When Rodgers and Grant left Jonesboro to pursue careers across the state, they handed over leadership of the A-State chapter to Evans. Since then, she has continued to build its community of trust and support through its community service and Sister Circles.

Sister Circles, the organization's signature evenings of discussion and sharing, are equally led by Evans and undergraduate student leaders. Evans provides professional, yet big-sister-like guidance while helping younger women develop confidence and communication skills. On this meeting night, the group moves through topics ranging from time management to alcohol use to personal relationships, issues Evans herself remembers needing guidance on when she

was a college student. "I've been in their shoes," she explained. "I know what it's like to need support."

Evans first came to a Pretty Proverbs Sister Circle as a student in 2015. The founders' ability to meld fashion and fun with deeper faith drew Evans into the organization. "It was initially an outlet for me," Evans said. "Now, I'm able to help others open up and give them that safe space."

A heart for service and a desire to grow others' faith is essential to Evans' current work with the organization. "I'm astounded at the ladies who come in here — I love their tenacity," she explained. "A lot need encouragement or have questions. Most of the groups that I mentor are disadvantaged; they need exposure to something positive."

In addition to the bi-weekly Sister Circles, the A-State chapter of Pretty Proverbs engages in active community service across the Jonesboro area. The group has collaborated with Habitat for Humanity, CityYouth, the NEA Food Bank, and Magnet School.

"We don't just want to be known at A-State," Evans said. "The vision for the

impact is worldwide: We want women to know that they can still dress up, still look good, still be pretty, be comfortable in their own skin, and still serve Christ."

A leader throughout the community, Evans also works with Sister to Sister, personal mentees, and Fullness of Joy Church, where she coordinates an after-school cheer program. Professionally, Evans draws on a communications and media background to work as an academic advisor and adjunct instructor for A-State's School of Media and Journalism. This position as a professional advisor connects her passion for excellence in academics with her desire to help people on a person-to-person level.

"Mentorship is a big part of my life," Evans explained. Through Pretty Proverbs, as well as her other service activities, she is able to fulfill her passions for helping others become more engaged in their goals and in their faith.

Evans' message for potential new members of Pretty Proverbs is simple: "You have a circle here." For Evans, Pretty Proverbs is more than a nonprofit — it's a true fellowship, one that she's grateful can offer women in her community a real sense of sisterhood.

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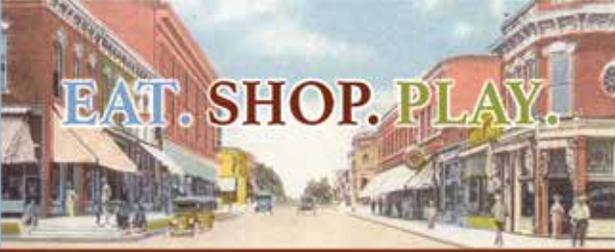
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# NEA Women: *Aly Shourd*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



Chances of seeing Aly Shourd just about anywhere you go are pretty good. The Corning resident is a mother, so there are all the school activities that go along with that; she's the wife of Charlie, who is part of his family's Legacy Equipment Business; she's a real estate salesperson and a model and a hunter ...

And, if she has her way, some day she will add actress and singer to the list.

"Mom life keeps me pretty busy," she said, laughing at the thought of increasing an already full schedule. "I really enjoy trying to juggle it all. The older kids are both into softball and baseball and basketball and pee-wee basketball. I stay inspired toward what I might want to do, though. The kids tag along sometimes. The guys, not so much when it's modeling stuff. But my husband is very supportive, he's my backbone."

Shourd, a 2008 graduate of Corning High School, said a health scare prompted her "to do more with myself," thus the shot at modeling and the eventual deal with BMG Talent. "I saw an advertisement and I went and auditioned in Memphis, and within 12

hours got a callback. They wanted me as a model for BMG Atlanta and they gave me a contract. I have done quite a bit of runway and hair shows. I hope for a movie someday. I have had a couple of auditions for movies, but it just didn't fit me."

Now in her fifth year with BMG Global in Atlanta and Chicago, she said her rural upbringing sometimes jumps out when working, but adds, "I grew up country. I know that. I'm proud of that. Sometimes I'm conscious of my voice. They'll stop me in commercials sometimes and say, 'Can we do that again?' I have done one for Adidas and hair for Garnier. It varies. I just take them when it fits; I don't always go to every booking. Sometimes it's travel issues, either location or state."

Her natural beauty leads one to believe she might have traveled the pageant circuit in years past but she said it isn't so. She grew up barrel racing and playing softball and basketball and cheerleading, and there was little time for the beauty contests: "Like I said, I grew up country. I wear heels and I wear boots. Mom told me not to get the big head when I was young, so there was no pageant life, no pageant experience. I used to dress up at home in heels for Mom, but that's all. The first time I'd ever been in a pageant was in the Mrs. Clay County."

Which she won, entering mostly to bring attention to the many volunteer efforts she supports. "I still hold the crown of Mrs.

Clay County Arkansas International," she said, "and I still volunteer every time I can. Mostly I do it because of the need for the kids in the community, and to show my own children to help whenever they can."

She is a Make-A-Wish volunteer and has been a part of the Junior Auxiliary of Paragould. She has logged more than 500 hours of community service, created an annual Dress Drive that provides children in foster care and around Northeast Arkansas formal attire for Prom and special events and is also the creator of the ARKANSAS Angels at Work network to provide help for those in need.

Step back, take a deep breath and prepare for more. "I was already into modeling and decided while I was at home I needed something to keep me busy," Shourd said, again with a hearty laugh. "I went to the National School for Realtors and then started juggling mom, sales and hunting. I am an agent at Burch and Company, and I sold a million dollars my first year and two million my second year. It gets better every year. Hunting, I just make the time for that. I don't get to do it a whole lot but when I do, I plan to kill something."

She captured the Biggest Buck Award for her home town in 2017 when she downed a large buck, somewhat of a sore spot with her hunter-husband. "I'll tell you right now, it was very, very distressing," she explained from behind a big smile. "It sits on the wall, a 10-pointer. He won't even look at it. It was the biggest in Clay County for 2017, a 40-yard shot. I was beside myself."

Shourd has plenty more accomplishments that could be discussed and many more ideas to fill just about every hour of every day, but what she wants most is to set the proper example for her children, Cadin, 13; Hunter, 12; and Jacob, just over 3-and-one-half months old. "I have a servant's heart," she said, "and I want my kids to understand the importance of that. You have to mold your kids."

"But I'd still love to do a movie ... and sing."

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography

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# Kind People Can Make *Dreams Come True*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



**Pictured:**  
Front: (from left) Heather, Dayton and Joey  
Back: Trace and McKenzie

Anyone who has dealt with cancer knows the initial fear the dreaded word brings along with it. When the diagnosis is directed at your child, the situation only worsens.

Such was the case for Joey and Heather Gilkison of Piggott just a few years back when their then 9-year-old son, Dayton, became increasingly sicker as the days went by. The family had just returned to Northeast Arkansas after following work opportunities to Texas and California when Dayton began to have swelling on his neck. Early doctor visits indicated he might have Lyme disease but a reaction to medication prompted further examinations.

“His lymph nodes were swollen. The doctors early on didn’t get it right,” Joey said. “All the while the cancer was growing. On the way to Jonesboro one day Heather stopped in Paragould first and we were sent from there to Little Rock. The doctor there said it didn’t look good, it was cancer. They did a biopsy at Children’s Hospital and it was cancer. Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.

“They suggested because of treatment he had already received, that didn’t sit well, it looked like St. Jude’s was best to handle



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*Stay close. Let them imagine.*

it. At St. Jude's, they said he had acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Being a blood cancer, he could need up to three years of chemo treatments."

"It scares you to death," Heather admitted, wondering at the time what would happen to their son. Joey said they were both downtrodden one day at St. Jude's, "... looking down and depressed and then these kids came by riding tricycles with little glitter bags. It kind of helped us think about waiting for the day he can do that."

A year later Dayton was declared cancer free. "It was put into remission," Joey said. "He has maintained a clean bill of health." At the news, Heather said, "It meant everything to me."

Because of the intense treatments, Dayton missed a year of school. He underwent so many chemotherapy treatments his hips and legs were negatively affected. "At 9, 10, 11, 12 he was doing so much chemo his hips went out," Joey said. "He was in a wheelchair, bedridden, using a walker. It took a long time before he reunited a bond with his brother and sister."

"It kind of messed up my speech a little bit," Dayton, now 15 and a sophomore at

Piggott High School, said. "I missed my fourth grade year. I'm done with physical therapy this year, though."

But the story gets even better. According to Joey, Piggott resident Geraldine Crawford played a major role in getting Dayton hooked up with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Crawford leads volunteer efforts like staging an annual fundraising roadblock, setting up a Father-Daughter dance and other events to bring awareness to Make-A-Wish opportunities. Joey said she was "mainly responsible for getting Marmaduke to maybe sponsoring his wish. For the reveal, he was invited to do a dog show where kids had goats and cows and animals in a competition at Marmaduke school. When they called Dayton's name they said he was the winner. The cool thing is, they told him it's a Make-A-Wish party. I think he had a hint by then."

Indeed he did. "I mean, why would they invite me to Marmaduke?" he said. "I knew something was up but then they said I was going to Disney World and that was pretty cool."

The family went to Orlando in March of 2017, staying at Give Kids The World Village "where a lot of Make-A-Wish

kids go," Joey recalled. "It's unique, little villas popped up everywhere. They have everything for special needs kids ... ice cream from 8 to midnight. Holiday themes every day ... Wednesday was Christmas and Thursday Halloween ... something every day. It's like a little wonderland."

"Gatorland and the water park were my favorites," Dayton said. "The one with Mt. Everest, the rollercoaster. It was pretty great."

More important to the parents than the trip is the reminder that there are still good people in the world, willing to help when all seems lost. "Geraldine, she's been a pillar in our family," Joey said. "She has done so much to help so many. From the simple words to so much more. A couple of months before his birthday, she asked if it was okay for Dayton to receive birthday cards. We said, 'Sure' and her goal was to get 1,000 cards. And he got 10-12,000 cards. She is very special."

The Gilkisons look at the effort put forth by Crawford, the Make-A-Wish people and the Marmaduke School team as reason to believe in the goodness of mankind. "We look at it as a big group of kind people," Joey said. "A lot of really kind people."

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# NEA Women: *Vonnie Greer*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Each year the Polar Plunge -- a fundraising event for Special Olympics athletes -- draws huge crowds, especially Paragould's version held at Crowley's Ridge State Park. Plungers dress up in various outfits and jump into the chilly January waters, all in fun and for the benefit of others. It has turned into one of the top money-makers in the state for SO.

Supporters of all ages file into the park at various times, some from the earliest moments and others right at starting time, but from start to finish familiar chants fill the air:

"Where's Ms. Vonnie?"



"Ms. Vonnie, will you take my picture?"

"Can I have my picture made with you, Ms. Vonnie?"

Ms. Vonnie is Vonnie Greer, one of the women who first brought the Plunge to Paragould in 2005 and one who is pretty much the face of the local charitable event



as far as many are concerned. After 14 years as a Special Education teacher, 14 more as an administrator in the Greene County Tech School District and now 16 coordinating the local version of the Polar Plunge, Greer has made friends of kids, families and helpers and seems to be right where she belongs.

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"It makes me feel like the most special person in the world," she said of hearing her name shouted repeatedly by people who love her and seek her attention. "It's exactly why I keep on doing this. It's the highlight of my day, and I hope it's the highlight of their day, too. I taught for so long that many of them were my students, and many of them I only know through Special Olympics. I love seeing every one of them. Over the years, some have moved away but I will go to Searcy for the state meet and someone will shout out my name. It might be a student from years ago or a family member of theirs, but it makes you feel really good when they are so excited to see you. They'll say, 'Do you remember me?' and I let them know that I certainly do, and they are a special part of my life."

Greer and fellow educator Audrea Martin jumped in -- literally -- at the Area 7 Plunge in 2004 and thought it would be a wonderful thing for Paragould to host. They started the local event the next year and guided it through its early stages together. "We only had about eleven plungers and I think we raised about \$1,500," she said of the initial outing. "Now people are asking about it as early as May and, as we know, this community is great about stepping up for

a good cause. We consistently raise over \$20,000 each year and we even went over \$50,000 once. We never know how many we'll have, but one thing we do know: Paragould people will show up."

Greer's younger sister, Tina, was handicapped so she was familiar with the ups and downs one faces under those circumstances and felt it a natural transition to the world of working with Special Education students once she became a teacher. "I grew up being thankful and grateful for everything I do, and sometimes I questioned God about, 'Why her?' For every milestone in my life I felt it wasn't fair for her but then, she was the highlight of my life. She was three years younger and truly so enjoyable to be around. Before she passed away she was sitting on the couch -- she had cancer -- but she was just sitting there and smiling at everyone. She was such a lovable person.

"God has this way of preparing us. She was sweet and went through so much but she brought our family together. She was definitely a great inspiration to me and to anyone who was around her."

Now Greer fills the lives of so many others with inspiration. Polar Plungers of all ages

can't wait to hug her, share stories and accomplishments with her, tell her of their latest adventures and she serves as the expert listener, looking them right in the eye, returning their obvious expressions of love. "I am so blessed," she said. "My only regret is that it's hard to spread myself around enough. Even though I'm retired, people call me all the time and sometimes I have to say, 'I can't, I'm too busy today ... maybe tomorrow.' Some can't do Special Olympics because of the noise so they want to just go shop or eat and when I tell them I can't, I can hear the disappointment in their voice. I don't know where all this free time you're supposed to have after you retire is.

"I don't know how long I'll keep doing it," she said of helping spearhead efforts to make Paragould's Plunge one of the best. "I'll eventually step down and let someone else have it. We have great volunteers and a great support team already. But it's my baby right now and I don't want to let it go. Whoever does it after me has to have the same passion for it that I do. I honestly love it. These are people I've talked to, listened to, cried with. They're my kids, my people, you know?"

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography

Late January and into the first day of February the PBA made its annual stop at Hijinx for the 2020 Greater Jonesboro PBA Open.

Jakob Butturff, a pro bowler and one of many who participated in "Bowl with the Pros" on January 31 said it was his third time in Jonesboro. "I love coming to Jonesboro," the athlete shared. "It's fun traveling around on the tour, getting to go to new towns and meet new people. Bowling with the community here is great; it's one of the things about each stop that I look forward to."

The chance to participate right alongside the pros is a unique opportunity and certainly not something all athletes will get to do in their careers. It's also an event that brings a lot of people to the area.

"This event is so valuable and important to our community," said Corrine Bell, Public Relations and League Coordinator for Hijinx. "The event brings in people from all over the country, the world even. And it gives community members the opportunity to hang out with, and participate with, real pros!"



See more photos from this event on Premiere Magazine's Facebook page.

# Bowling With THE PROS



Pictured: Jakob Butturff, Kristy James and Benjamin James

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**BURIED AT SEA:**

*Evelyn Nelsen*

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NEA Women: June Williams  
and the Power of Friendship

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# Money Follows the Person

BY BARBARA WEESE



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## For more info:

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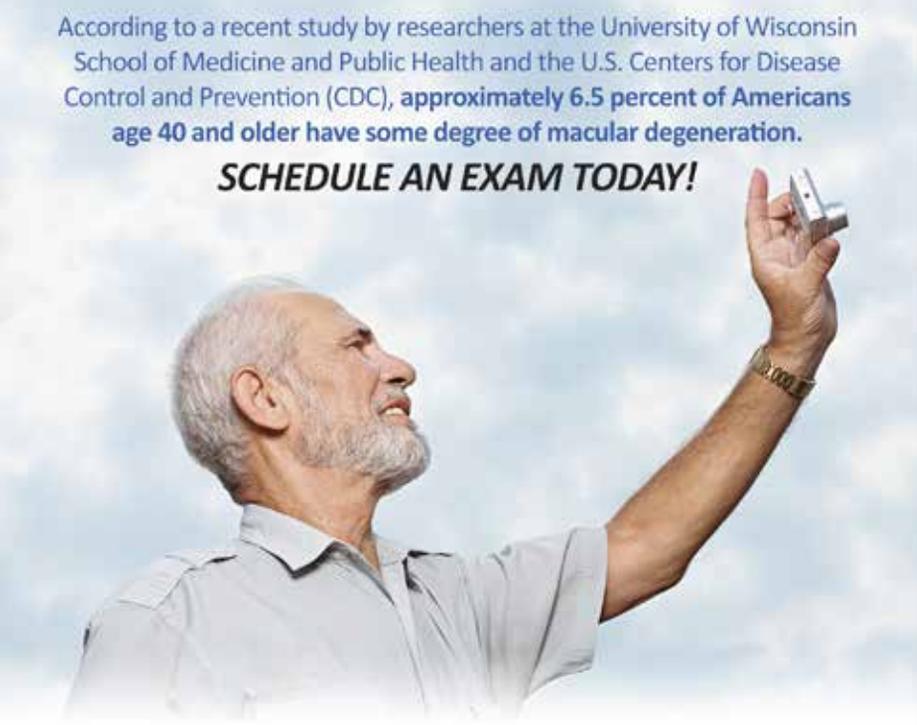
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According to a recent study by researchers at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 6.5 percent of Americans age 40 and older have some degree of macular degeneration.

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NEA Women:

# June Williams

and the Power of Friendship

BY LINDSEY MILLS



Some people radiate kindness. Meeting June Williams for lunch on a dreary January day, I swear I felt a wave of sunshine wash over me when she met my gaze and we introduced ourselves. Her blonde hair and big smile might trigger the thought “southern belle,” but once talking, anyone will realize June is well-traveled, educated, and so much more than her bright eyes and Southern drawl.

We sat down, and with very little probing June launched into a story. “I assume this is what you’re here for?” she asked after a brief pause in her dialogue. “To hear the

story?”

“Absolutely,” I confirmed, and June dived back into her narrative. What June shared with me was not really her story. Instead, she went into great detail how she met and befriended El Salvador doctor and lawyer, Samuel Tejada, while he was in the states. The way June said Samuel’s name expressed her deep affection for her friend, and the story further revealed how much she cared for the man who called Jonesboro a safe haven for a year and a half.

“I knew early on that Samuel was

AMAZING. Just amazing. I’ve overused that word before but that’s the only thing I know to say about him,” June shared.

Samuel joined June’s ESL class and when she learned he was in the U.S. seeking asylum, June knew she wanted to do whatever she could to help him. “I just thought, this is someone who deserves any help I can give him,” June said. And set out to help him she did.

Little did June know the road ahead that she and Samuel would walk together. At first, she simply wondered if she could help the community get to know Samuel better so that if his family were to move here, too, they would be able to think of it as home. “If you saw me at any point in that year and a half you probably knew Samuel,” June said. She invited him to basketball games, to church, and out to lunch.

But when Samuel was denied a student visa, denied asylum, and denied other opportunities to stay in the country legally, June knew she wanted to do so much more than help Samuel feel welcome. She wanted to help him BE welcome, be legal, in the United States.

June went with Samuel to immigration court and when it was Samuel’s turn the judge asked June if she was his attorney. “No,” she replied, “I’m just here as support. I’m his English teacher.”

June’s support for her friend runs deep, and it led to another visit to immigration court after Samuel left the country voluntarily. June’s representation there, along with securing the proper documents, caused Samuel’s case to be dismissed rather than labeled “deported” which would have made it impossible for Samuel to ever re-enter the States.

June and Samuel’s friendship has



continued to grow, and now Samuel is back in El Salvador, safe, with his family, and also welcome to return to the U.S. in the future. June has been to visit Samuel, and wants everyone to know that El Salvador is a beautiful country. "The people are industrious and friendly," June said, her voice revealing her fondness for the family she's made there.

It was on this trip that June saw more of Samuel's heart, and realized she wanted to go at least one step further in aiding her friend. "I noticed that he would pay out of his own pocket to make sure his clinic would stay open and take in even those that can't pay," June said.

It was this information, and a discussion while visiting El Salvador that led to the creation of New Vision. Over dinner, while discussing how June would rally support in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to help pay for the glasses that would help so many children see, June said, "Samuel and I have a new vision..." Samuel's eyes got wide and

lit up, June explained, and then he said, "June that's it! New Vision!"

New Vision has supplied more than 40 pairs of glasses for young kids in El Salvador. At least 100 children have been evaluated with 100 more waiting for an appointment.

"Samuel sends pictures every week of the children with their new glasses," June said. "The smiles on their faces show the gratitude that Samuel says they and their parents feel that someone so far away cares about them."

June's praise for Samuel went on, lengthy words of his kindness and what he works so hard to provide for his community. I smile as I listen to her talk, because all of that kindness she sees in her friend, I see in her. This makes me think: The power of true friendship can span continents, impact so many lives, and fuel the kindness in all of us.

Photo Credit (Portrait): Amy Reeves Photography

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# Burial at Sea

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Just about anyone who has tried to get something accomplished over the telephone understands the difficulties that can arise. In fact, comedians construct entire routines centered on the frustrations of being placed on hold, speaking to computers instead of humans, and the inability to make a stranger on the other end of the line understand what you need to accomplish.

Evelyn Nelsen of Jonesboro has a story from the other side of the coin, a tale of people willing to help from the moment the telephone was answered until her heartfelt request was completed.

Evelyn's husband, David, passed away in January of last year at the age of 91. A Navy veteran, one of his ardent desires was to be buried at sea, a somewhat difficult task for a resident of Northeast Arkansas. "He wanted his ashes spread over the Pacific," Evelyn said, "but I didn't know if I could get him to the ocean. I didn't know how to begin to get that accomplished.

"So, I called the Pentagon. People seemed astonished when I told them about it. They said, 'Why would you



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do that?' and I said, 'Why not? It's ours, it's our building.' And the Navy could not have been kinder. The first man on the phone gave me all the particular phone numbers and told me all of what to do and what has to be done."

With the process under way, Evelyn began following the necessary path toward the finish line, thanks to helpful people at each stop along the journey. "He did his basic training in San Diego, so that made it easier," she said, "and it cost very little -- \$15 because of California regulations. They told me what all to do, so I did it. Not only that, they called me. A man from Washington called and I registered everything because you have to have a permit and he said, 'I'll be looking for his ashes.' I told them he wasn't an Admiral; he wasn't even an officer and they said that doesn't make any difference. They called when they got the ashes. They said it will be a while but he will go out on the *Decatur*."

The final ceremony took place in August and Evelyn received a touching letter from Commanding Officer J.R. Bowen of the U.S. Navy. He captured the scene vividly, even describing the weather on the day of the burial as a warm morning with slight winds. "RD2 David A. Nelsen Sr.'s remains were brought aboard the *USS Decatur* while at the Naval

Station in San Diego on August 1," the commander informed her. "The ship departed at noon August 9 to conduct seventh fleet emergent tasking in support of our nation's commitment to freedom of the seas. Because of the time your family member spent in service to his country, it was a fitting choice that he be committed from the deck of a proud ship so employed."

On August 14 at 9:17 a.m. according to Navy tradition, the ship was stopped, colors displayed at half mast and participating officers and crew appeared in dress whites. Both religious and military ceremonies were performed "with dignity and solemnity," Bowen assured, and a seven-member rifle squad and 10-member honor platoon carried out the somber task. "Officers and crew were proud and honored for the opportunity to participate in the committal ceremony," Bowen concluded.

"I got a lovely letter and pictures," Evelyn said proudly. "They sent a map showing where it was, where he's buried, and it's almost to Hawaii. I thought it was wonderful. I was so thrilled. He got a 21-gun salute. He would have been tickled.

"And the Navy could not have been nicer or more helpful," she added. "It sort of revives your belief there are still good people out there."



# Determination & Attitude

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

If life is supposed to teach us lessons, Jay Shelton has an A in two subjects: Determination and Attitude.

Despite a series of physical setbacks -- a stroke and a brain aneurysm in 2006; two neck surgeries in 2007, front and back; lower back procedures in 2010 -- the 73-year-old Shelton continues to amble in to the Greene County Senior B.E.E.S. Center in Paragould and take part in the twice-weekly Beanbag Baseball activities along with teammates and others.

"He amazes me," said Carol Fleszar, Executive Director for the Senior B.E.E.S. "He's got braces on his leg, no use of his left hand and he continues to come up here and play Beanbag Baseball two times a week. I admire him so much. A lot of people wouldn't do that. I just find him amazing."

From his point of view, Shelton said the attention is unnecessary. He just wants to do as much as he can, as long as he can. "The hardest thing for me is to be humble," he said, just as a fellow Senior B.E.E.S. member offered to get his lunch tray for him. "I've always done it for myself and whoever else needed help. God gave me the wisdom to know I can't do what I used to do. It's okay to let them do things for me; they get a blessing from it, too. I get it; I know they want to do it for me."

Still, whatever he can do, he wants to continue doing. "God blessed me with a strong will and a positive attitude. That really helped me," he said. "I came from physical therapy to here today. I don't want to be a couch potato. I see someone in my path weekly with struggles worse than mine. I see people every week I wouldn't trade places with."

Shelton said he was already in bed at home when he had the stroke in 2006. He didn't realize at first what was happening, but was aware he couldn't feel his head and his left arm wasn't moving.

"I got out of bed to take care of it, and down I went," he recalled. "It was the total left side. I was stubborn, and fell. Our neighbor helped get me up and into the car, but I don't remember all of that. I didn't remember everything about being in the car; I had passed out in the floor. They said I would never walk or talk again but God allowed me to recover. I did the work, but He allowed me to recover. I continue to do physical therapy 13-and-a-half years later. Without it, I would be in a wheelchair or an invalid. That night when the car reached the light at 412 and Rockingchair Road, God had me awake enough to answer my wife when she asked if I wanted to go to the hospital here or in Jonesboro. I said

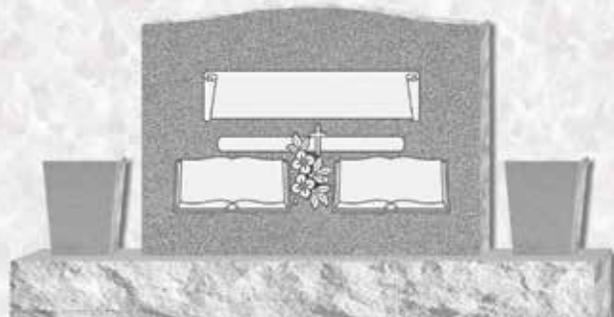


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better here, and I would not have made it to Jonesboro."

He spent more than two months "trying to learn to walk and talk again," he said. "I stayed here the whole two-and-a-half months; it was closer for my wife to come here. My body has deteriorated in the last year. But Dr. (Jason) Noel said my physical shape helped me with my recovery."

Shelton is quick to point out having a dedicated, loving spouse has also been a huge part of his recovery process. "It is such a blessing to have my wife Francis beside me. They told her when I had the stroke that she would probably have to tend to me for the rest of my life, but still, she was right there. God allowed me to recover some more than expected and it eased some of that for her, but she has been right by me all the way, right by my side."

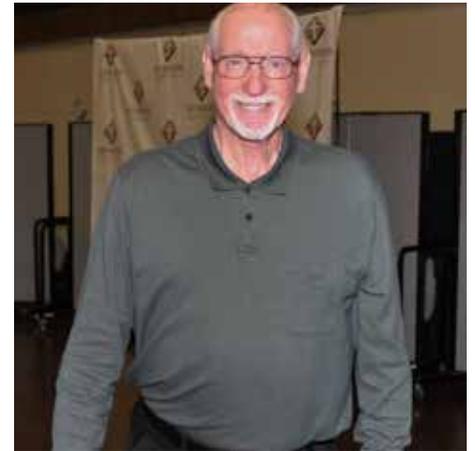
Shelton still holds on to his job at Phillips

Funeral Home as a Family Services Coordinator but admits it is a bit more difficult these days because of his physical limitations. "I haven't done as much the last couple of years because of my aches and pains. Going to homes is harder because they might not have a rail and that's harder for me. And I fell recently here. I got overbalanced reaching for the chair in Beanbag Baseball and before I knew it, I was on the floor. My neck was sore and I had headaches all weekend but I didn't feel like I had any pains like broken bones. My left arm just doesn't work at all, so I have to adjust to that."

So, a couple of times per week, Shelton dines with his fellow seniors and then works his way to the center's gymnasium, where he uses a cane to assist in making it to his spot when his turn "at bat" arrives. He steadies himself, hands the walking stick to a helper, then tosses the bags toward the board in hopes of a hit. He is part of the State Championship team the

B.E.E.S. have assembled.

"He is so determined to do this," Fleszar said. "Admiration is what we all have for him. Admiration for how much he just keeps on going. He's an inspiration to us all."





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## Walking the Walk

**P**atty Sue Camp attended the Greene County Master Gardeners meeting in January as a guest speaker. Patty is a former Master Gardener and is very involved with the State Parks of Arkansas. She shared information concerning the Buffalo National River Iron Ranger Challenge.

The challenge for 2020 is to complete 100 miles of physical activity on any public lands within the state of Arkansas. This means any activity in an Arkansas National Park, Arkansas State Park, US Forest Service site, National Wildlife Refuge site, Army Corps of Engineers site or city park will be counted. Activities include walking, running, hiking, biking and paddling. As of January 28, Patty lacked just a few miles reaching her 100 miles in the first month of 2020. She walked a total of 930 miles in 2019 and her goal is to equal or exceed that in 2020. Patty also contributes a huge amount of volunteer work at Crowley's Ridge State Park and other parks throughout the state.

All parks are looking for volunteers to help preserve the land. There are many walking trails at Crowley's Ridge State Park: Lake Ponder Trail, Walcott Lake Trail, Dancing Rabbit Trail and Spider Creek Trail. Lake Frierson State Park is also in Greene County and offers the Dogwood Lane Trail and Biking Trail.

Visit [www.arkansasstateparks](http://www.arkansasstateparks) to find all the parks in Arkansas and get your IHIKE ARKANSAS STATE PARKS badge from each State Park; try [neabaptistfoundation.org/programs/wellnessworks/](http://neabaptistfoundation.org/programs/wellnessworks/) or contact Will Oliver III at 870-936-7960.



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We want to thank you, Premiere readers and advertisers, for making it possible for us to continue to share the good news and stories about the people making it happen. Here's to another year of growth and to finding new ways to share good news.

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# Artisan Emporium

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE



The goal of one local business is to give artists and crafters a sense of community with a common area for creative outlets. Newly opened, the Local Artisan Emporium in Jonesboro has become an avenue for local businesses to showcase products without the overhead of a storefront and employees.

Amanda and James Yates, owners of Mt. of Olives, opened the Emporium in November 2019.

“Local businesses built our town,” Amanda said. “Small business owners know their customers, support community events and work to support their families. But small businesses are struggling everywhere and an alarming number close every year.”

From this thought process came the creation of Local Artisan Emporium inside of Mt. of Olives. Amanda said she currently hosts seven vendors with a variety of goods from handcrafted clay dishware, crocheted jewelry, cutting boards, clocks and other wood items.

“Every item here is unique,” she said. “There are no others like them anywhere. They cannot be ordered online or mass produced. The selection changes month to month as new goods are made or seasons change. Also our vendors can customize or special order items to your exact needs.”

Amanda added while she welcomes any artist through her doors, she thinks it would be fun to have metal works,



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birdhouses or outdoor crafts added to the inventory. For the future she hopes to have open house dates for the community to browse not only the different vendors, but to sample refreshments made from the Mt. of Olives oils and vinegars.

Amanda and James opened Mt. of Olives four years ago, and they travel every few months to stock up on olive oils from other states.

"I love to cook and as a doctor of natural health, good quality ingredients and nutritional content are very important to me," she said. "It is such a fun business and we love sharing our space with other local business owners to create the most unique shopping experience in NEA."



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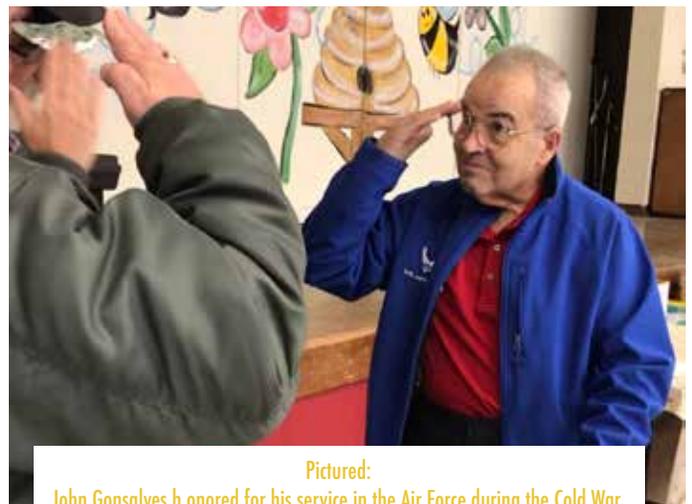
# Senior B.E.E.S. Event Spotlight



Pictured:  
Bono Lakers came to the BEES Senior Citizens center to play Bean Bag Baseball



Pictured:  
Barry & Rogie Morrow



Pictured:  
John Gonsalves honored for his service in the Air Force during the Cold War.

# NEA Wellness Works

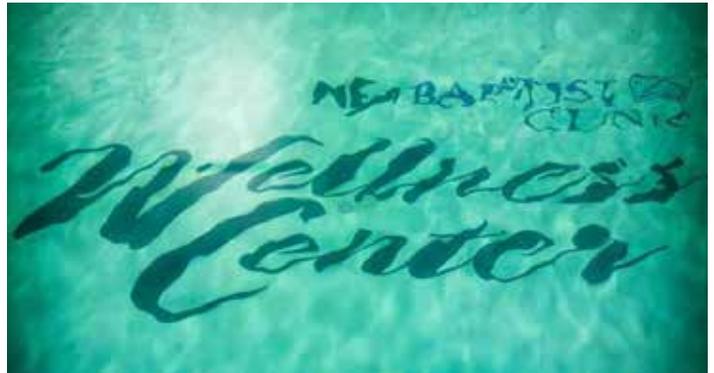
**W**ellness Works is a free 12-week program offered by the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation for individuals living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cancer, and COPD.

The goal is to empower each participant with the knowledge and tools to effectively manage their conditions and improve their quality of life.

Each participant will receive a 12-week membership to NEA Baptist Wellness Center, complete with a full fitness assessment and prescribed exercise program with weekly follow ups to assess progress. A variety of lectures covering the basics of nutrition, sleep, and stress management are also included to help provide a coordinated effort for disease management.

Participants who successfully complete the program will receive a discounted membership to the NEA Baptist Wellness Center, as well as other great rewards.

Although Wellness Works is a free program, it does require a referral from your physician. You can download the form online at: <https://neabaptistfoundation.org/programs/wellnessworks/> or contact Will Oliver III at 870-936-7960.



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The Arkansas Department of Human Services has approved 7.0 Continuing Education (CE) hours for completion of this REST course for Nursing Home Administrators and Licensed Nurses – Approval ID# AR 6323-DAAS19-7 This project is supported, in part, under a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. These contents, however, do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

# Rest for You So You Can Care for Them

BY VALERIE FIELDER

**D**id you know family caregivers often pass away before their loved one for whom they are caring? The statistics are staggering. Family caregivers have high mortality rates, and incidences of acute and chronic conditions, as well as depression. Respite is the most requested support service and has been proven to provide relief necessary to maintain their own health, strengthen family stability, and avoid or delay long-term care for themselves and their loved ones. However, respite is in short supply.

Research has shown 64% of Arkansas caregivers say they need some form of respite or break but only 10% receive it. Across the nation, 65 million American caregivers provide 80% of long-term care, yet 89% do not receive any respite services. Even the best of the best caregivers need a temporary break to care for themselves.

“Respite is a simple way to provide a temporary, short-term break to family caregivers providing care for a loved one with chronic illness or disability,” said Linda Willey, R.N., Coordinator for the UAMS Schmieding Home Caregiver Training program and Certified Respite Trainer. “Any form of relief is welcomed by most caregivers. It may just be for an hour or two once in a while up to a week now and then.”

Using the Respite Education & Support Tools (REST) curriculum, Willey will provide a unique, interactive free training in April to help participants be confident and successful when providing assistance to those in need. Community and faith-based groups will benefit from the training with an emphasis on those wanting to start a volunteer program to aid family caregivers.

Supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Aging, this is the fourth year the Schmieding Program will offer the daylong training. The program also includes a partnership with the Arkansas Lifespan Respite Coalition (ARLC) whose mission is to support and promote the development of a comprehensive statewide respite and crisis care system that is responsive to the needs of caregivers and their families, and enhances the quality of life for all individuals.

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter once said, “There are four kinds of people in this world: those you have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.” According to Valerie Fielder with the UAMS Center on Aging Northeast, “It doesn’t matter which



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category you fit in, the need for respite is critical as well as beneficial for family support.

“The high cost of home care, long-term care or even medical care often puts our families in dire need to find economical ways to obtain services. Volunteer groups such as churches can provide much needed respite care for their members and communities.”

Fielder, also certified as a Respite Volunteer Trainer, says this program is a great way for these volunteer groups to learn more about how to recognize when someone needs help and be able to offer that assistance. “Even extended family members such as brothers, sisters, cousins, in-laws and so forth would benefit if their loved one is caring for someone at home,” Fielder said.

Willey and Fielder have both been caregivers for their mothers who had diagnoses of Alzheimer’s or dementia so their firsthand knowledge as family caregivers provides great insight to a look inside what others may be facing as well. Contact Linda Willey, RN at [lswilley@uams.edu](mailto:lswilley@uams.edu) or call the UAMS Schmieding Caregiver Training Center at 870-207-7600 for the date and location of the free event to be held in April 2020.

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# Are Tax Credits The Best Way To Subsidize Long-Term Care Costs?

BY CHAD OLDHAM

Most major Democratic presidential hopefuls have proposed new government assistance for those receiving long-term supports and services and their families. Mayor Pete Buttigieg has proposed public catastrophic long-term care insurance.

Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders would make home-based care a Medicare for All benefit. And former vice president Joe Biden and Sen. Amy Klobuchar would create new tax credits for long-term care.

But tax credits may not be the most effective way for government to provide this support. They can be difficult to administer and, as designed, likely these would benefit relatively few of those who most need assistance.

## Going two better

Biden's plan includes a \$5,000 non-refundable tax credit for family caregivers. It tracks an AARP proposal to give caregivers a credit for up to 30 percent of documented long-term care expenses above \$2,000.

The credit would begin to phase out for couples with income of \$150,000 or for singles who make \$75,000.

A bipartisan bill in Congress called the Credit for Caring Act is based on this idea. Klobuchar goes Biden one better. Well, two better. She's proposing a broad package of long-term care reforms, including three new tax benefits: A new 20 percent tax credit to partially offset premium costs of qualified long-term care insurance.

A \$6,000 tax credit to reimburse family caregiving expenses. A separate (unspecified) refundable tax credit for those receiving care to help offset qualifying long-term care costs, such as nursing facility care, home care, assistive technologies, respite care, and home modifications.

## Refundable and non-refundable credits

It is important to distinguish between refundable and non-refundable tax credits. Non-refundable credits offset income tax liability and thus can be claimed only by those who pay federal income taxes.

Refundable credits not only reduce tax liability for those who owe taxes, but also provide a direct government payment to



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those whose tax liability is lower than the credit amount and even to those who owe no federal income tax at all.

The Tax Policy Center estimates that in 2018 about 44 percent of U.S. households paid no federal income tax (though they paid other taxes, such as payroll or sales taxes). And a separate analysis finds about 80 percent of those 75 and older owed no federal income tax. A non-refundable credit would be worthless to those who pay no federal income tax and provide only a limited benefit to those whose tax liability is small. As a result, relatively few families would benefit from Biden's and Klobuchar's non-refundable caregiver credits.

### Would they be meaningful?

Klobuchar's refundable credit for long-term care recipients would benefit more low-income older adults. But would a few thousand dollars be meaningful to someone whose annual cost of care could easily approach \$100,000? For example, an annual \$5,000 credit might pay for four or five hours a week of home care, or about two weeks in a nursing home. Not nothing. But not a lot.

Credits to subsidize the cost of long-term care insurance raise similar questions. A 60-year old woman who buys a good long-term care insurance policy can expect to pay roughly \$4,000 in annual premiums. A 20 percent credit would save \$800, lowering her after-tax cost to \$3,200. But would many more people buy at that price?

Then there is matter of administering these tax breaks. Caregiver credits inevitably will come with a long list of complex rules and definitions. Who is a qualifying caregiver? How impaired does a care recipient need to be? What services and supports are eligible for the credit? Who would be eligible?

Buttigieg's public long-term care insurance plan also raises questions of when an insurance benefit is triggered. But claims could be managed through a public insurance program staff or outsourced to experienced private claims managers.

With tax credits, the job of determining eligibility would fall to an already understaffed IRS with no experience in these matters.

The Credit for Caring Act generally tracks

the eligibility rules for the tax deductibility of private long-term care insurance policies (premiums already are eligible for the medical expense deduction — up to an age-based annual limit). For example, it would require a health professional to certify that a person needs assistance with at least two activities of daily living (such as bathing, eating, or toileting) to qualify. But how would the IRS administer these rules? How would it prevent fraud and how would families know when they are eligible?

The sheer number of tax credits Klobuchar is proposing may also be reason for concern. Three separate credits with three separate sets of rules will potentially confuse families and lead to mistakes, and may even discourage people from claiming benefits. Given multiple options, people often do ... nothing. This has been an ongoing problem with the many tax subsidies for higher education. Biden and Klobuchar deserve kudos for addressing the problem of long-term care. But tax credits may not be the best way to solve it.

\*Reprinted under license of ElderLaw Answers and Attorney Chad R. Oldham, 603 SW Drive, Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401. 870.930.9919.

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# Happenings



The Get in Gear Fitness Series presented \$35,000 to 10 Northeast Arkansas charities from the funds raised by fitness events in the past year.



The Healthy Heart 2-Mile, part of the Get in Gear Fitness Series, was run on February 8 on the Arkansas State University campus. For more pictures from the event visit Premiere Magazine's Facebook page.



Habitat for Humanity awarded Honey Baked Ham the prized ladle for its winning soup at Souper Sunday.



President Jim Burgess swore in the 2020 Board for the Greene County Historical & Genealogical Society at its regularly scheduled meeting January 27. From left: Corresponding Secretary, Carol Tomlinson; Treasurer, Kay Holmes; Recording Secretary, Cynthia Starling; Vice-President Membership, Judy Routon; Vice-President Programs, Paulette Parker; and President, Jim Burgess.

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# Gal Gala

On February 8, 2020, the American Cancer Society hosted its First Annual Gal Gala. The event was an opportunity for women to come together for a night of fun, food, and music. This year the event took place in downtown's The Crossing and is aimed at raising funds for cancer research and to provide free resources and services, like free rides to chemo, free

places to stay near hospitals, and a live 24/7 helpline for cancer patients and their families.



See more photos from this event on Premiere Magazine's Facebook page.



**Pictured:**  
Stefanie Brackin, Paula Williams, Courtney Fry and Jenna Keahey



**Pictured:**  
Charitti Laminack and Claire Phillips



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# LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

It has been said we are living in a man's world. Inevitably, this can leave many women feeling mistreated, overlooked and inferior. This is incredibly unfortunate when you consider the way God views women.

A quick glance through the Bible yields many examples of the love and esteem God displays toward His daughters: The Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1 deliver Israel from certain death. In Exodus 38 we find "the ministering women who ministered" in one of the holiest of places. Nehemiah 3 shows women playing an active role in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. The redemption of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba in Matthew 1 gives a startling commendation of

how the Lord not only sees women, but sees women of marginalized ethnic backgrounds. Mary is chosen to carry the very Son of God in her womb. Acts is filled with women who usher in the kingdom of God through their lives, leadership and influence. The women God has drawn into His family take part in a magnificent legacy.

We also see God's care and concern for women in the life of Jesus. Over and over, Jesus goes against the cultural norms of the time and interacts with women in a way that shows love, honor and dignity. Jesus meets the woman at the well marked by abandonment, and she becomes an evangelist in her community.

The bleeding woman who touches His garment is declared healed in public, restored in the very realm where she has experienced disgrace. Jesus interrupts our favorite Type A personality, Martha, drawing her in to sit at His feet, a place where women simply were not invited at the time. And a woman with a poor reputation worships Him in a way that invites disgrace from others, yet she is commended by Jesus Himself.

With that being said, it is ungodly to view women as inferior to men. From beginning to end, the Bible reassures us that God not only cares deeply for women, but that He also sees them as playing a crucial role in the fulfillment of His Kingdom work throughout the world.

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# Mattie & Jeffrey

**M**attie Elizabeth Robinson and Jeffrey Logan Ring were united in marriage on September 20, 2019. Mattie is the daughter of Mike and Diane Robinson of Paragould and Logan is the son of Kelly and Brian Southard of Paragould and Mike and Cherrie Ring of Brookland.

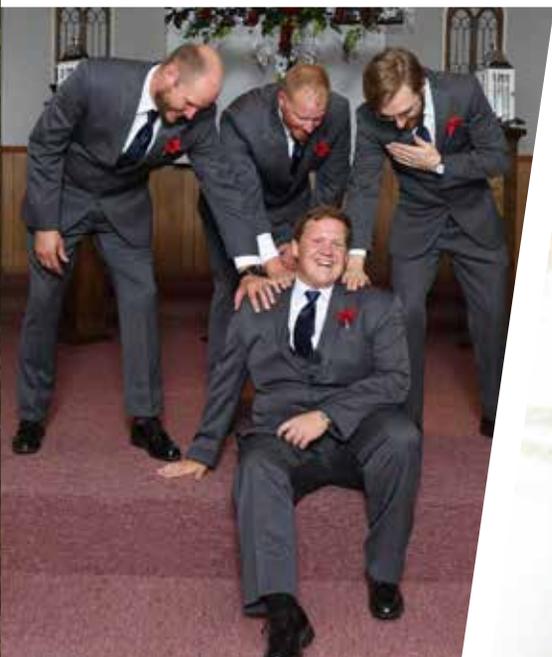
Logan is employed at the United States Postal Service of Brookland and Mattie is employed at the Paragould School District. They love spending time with friends and family, playing card games, and are both very involved at church.

The couple has grown up in the church together,

making it a very special place for them to stay involved. They enjoy helping their pastor teach the Get REAL program, a biblical self-defense martial arts program that teaches children Jiu Jitsu.

The wedding was held at Oak Grove Heights Baptist Church with Bro. David Stallings officiating. The wedding party consisted of matron of honor, Sierra Ring, bridesmaids Rachel Poole and Sheena Alls, best man, Josh Thomas, and groomsmen Sean Ring and Robert Alls. The event was shared with a host of family and friends.

Logan and Mattie celebrated with a honeymoon trip to Alaska.



Photography By Ashley Burk Photography

# ENGAGEMENTS

## *Sarah Parks & Hunter Caples*

Sarah Parks and Hunter Caples have announced their plans to be married on October 24, 2020, at The Silos.

Sarah is the daughter of Pat Jones and Brett Parks, and Hunter is the son of Natalie McNeely and Dennis Caples.

Photography by Hailey + Alan Photography.



## *Sarah Yopp & Joshua Barnhill*

Sarah Yopp and Joshua Barnhill have announced their plans to be married on February 27, 2021, at First United Methodist Church in Paragould.

Sarah is the daughter of Jeff and Canessa Yopp, and Joshua is the son of Roger and Shani Barnhill.

Photography by Whitney Vassar Photography.



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# 2020 Kids' Events

# March

**13**

## After School: Brain Games

**When:** Thursday at 4:00 p.m.

**Where:** Craighead County Library in Jonesboro

315 W Oak Ave, Jonesboro

**Info:** [libraryinjonesboro.org](http://libraryinjonesboro.org)

## Each Monday & Wednesday Storytime

**When:** Each Monday & Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

**Where:** Greene County Public Library  
120 North 12th Street, Paragould

**Info:** (870) 236-8711

**21-29**

## Arkansas Spring Break

**When:** Saturday - Sunday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**Where:** Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center

**Info:** <https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/crowleys-ridge-state-park>



Destiny Morris passed the time with a game of chess, facing off against her mom. Destiny, 9, is the daughter of Justin and Crystal Morris of Leachville.

# March

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### 6

**What:** First Fridays at the Forum

**When:** Friday, March 6 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** The Foundation of Arts - Forum Theatre (115 E Monroe Ave. in Jonesboro)

**Info:** A night with Cory Jackson and his band as they return to the historic Forum Theater stage in downtown Jonesboro as part of the First Fridays at the Forum Concert Series. Jackson will be joined by fellow Voice contestant and finalist, Marybeth Byrd. Visit [foajonesboro.org](http://foajonesboro.org), the box office at The Forum, or call 935-2726 to purchase tickets.

### 6-8

**What:** The Fantasticks

**When:** Friday, March 6 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** The Glass Factory (313 Huntington Ave. in Jonesboro)

**Info:** The world's longest running musical, "The Fantasticks," is a timeless fable of love that has charmed audiences all over the world. The Link Theatre Company (see story in February issue of Premiere) will run performances from March 6th - March 8th. Visit [thelinktheatre.org](http://thelinktheatre.org) for more info and/or to purchase tickets.

### 7

**What:** Get in Gear Fitness Series Indoor Triathlon

**When:** Saturday, March 7 at 12 p.m.

**Where:** St. Bernards Health and Wellness (1416 E Matthews Ave. in Jonesboro)

**Info:** The second event in the Get in Gear Series is the Indoor Triathlon. If you've ever wanted to do a tri, this is the perfect event for you! Swim 300 meters in the pool, head upstairs to ride 5 miles on a stationary bike, then jump on a treadmill to finish with a 2 mile run. The event is beginner friendly and easy for friends and family to watch. Visit [gettinggearseries.com](http://gettinggearseries.com) for more info.

### 7

**What:** Hunter Education Class

**When:** Saturday, March 7 from 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

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

**Info:** Get your hunter education at Crowley's Ridge State Park. The class will take place in the group lodging area dining hall and is free. Registration is required. There is no specific age requirement to enroll in hunter education. The primary instructor for this course will be Park Interpreter Elizabeth Kimble, at Crowley's Ridge State Park. For questions on how to register for the class or any information about the class, call (870) 573-6751 or email [crowleysridge@arkansas.com](mailto:crowleysridge@arkansas.com).

### 8

**What:** America's Best Pageants "Candyland" Pageant

**When:** Sunday, March 8 at 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

**Where:** Collins Theatre (120 W. Emerson St. in Paragould)

**Info:** America's Best Pageants is excited to announce their Candyland Pageant. A sweet, fun-filled pageant day.

### 10

**What:** The Muses "Celtic Spring"

**When:** Tuesday, March 10 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** The Fowler Center (201 Olympic Dr. in Jonesboro)

**Info:** The Muses invite you to divert the mind, and stimulate creative musings. Their vision is to inspire, educate, heal, and delight their audiences by providing diverse expressions of classical art and educational enrichment opportunities to all of the citizens of Arkansas. Back by popular demand, The Muses return to Riceland Hall with an inspired and enchanting performance of Celtic music. More info at [yourfowlercenter.com](http://yourfowlercenter.com).

### 13-15

**What:** Sleeping Beauty: The Hundred Year Adventure

**When:** Friday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** Collins Theatre (120 W. Emerson St. in Paragould)

**Info:** Presented by the Greene County Fine Arts Council on March 13 and 14 at 7:30 p.m. and on March 15th at 2:00 p.m.

### 23

**What:** Bluegrass Monday

**When:** Monday, March 23 at 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** Collins Theatre (120 W. Emerson St. in Paragould)

**Info:** The band The Baker Family will perform a concert of bluegrass music on Monday, March 23, at 7 p.m. at the Collins Theatre, 120 West Emerson Street, in downtown Paragould, Arkansas. The concert is part of the Bluegrass Monday concert series presented by KASU, 91.9 FM. KASU will literally "pass the hat" during the concert to collect money to pay the group. The suggested donation is \$5 per person.



We want to thank you for taking the time to learn more about what's happening this month around Northeast Arkansas! This will be the last month we print a community calendar in Premiere, but have no fear! You can keep up with what's happening around NEA on our new platform, Explore MOR. We've worked very hard to create a place that makes it easy to stay in the know. Visit [exploremornea.com/community-calendar](http://exploremornea.com/community-calendar) and explore MOR(e) of our community!

# Stay Tuned

## Earth Day



Why only celebrate for one day? We're shining a light on local gardens, events, and activities for celebrating the Earth all month long.

## National Volunteer Month



Community members who give so much of their time ... and details on how you can get involved, too.

## Special Section: 20 Twenty-Somethings



20 Twenty-something members of NEA who are "killing it."

On The Cover: NEA Women  
Photo By: Amy Reeves Photography

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