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May
2020

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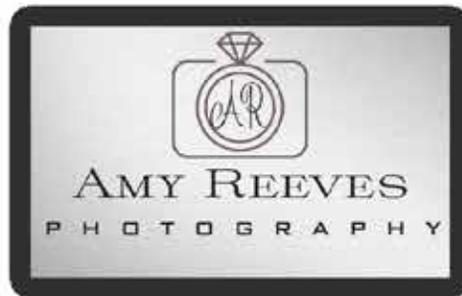
NEA SENIORS

Personal training, NEA Artist, plus coping with quarantine

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From The PUBLISHER... DINA MASON

“

There are no words that cover this situation. At least, not any that would adequately portray the craziness ... but there are words that describe the Northeast Arkansas people and their reaction to not only a pandemic, but a tornado thrown in for good measure.

Heroic; strong; kind; compassionate; empathetic; you get the idea. I am so happy to be the media that concentrates on “The Good News and the People who make it Happen.” There is always good news no matter how tough times get. As a matter of fact, tragedy sometimes brings out the best in people and we have tried to bring you some of those stories.

We changed some plans for this edition. May is usually our Jonesboro Premiere Awards but we moved that to the June edition and have started distributing the award certificates to those we can get them to, and they are happy to see a bit of good news! We also moved the June NEA Seniors section to this edition, so do not miss the advice and articles. If you are like me and have had to “ground” the Seniors in your lives then you’ve had a deja vu moment in reverse -- “No, Mom, you cannot go get your mail at the Post Office. Stay Home means Stay Home.”

We will all get through this together and we will hug and laugh and celebrate BIG. Until then, remember to practice patience and be kind!

”

Glen Sain 

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Danny Ford

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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



This business of being self-quarantined because of the corona virus has brought about lifestyle changes for most, not quite as many for those of us who were already pretty much homebodies anyway. Still, having eliminated lunch dates with family and friends, Sunday School, committee meetings and class dinners, there is more time at home for spousal conversation, TV watching and chore finishing.

During this time of hanging out with the wife and dog, I have made several observations:

- When this virus-quarantine thing finally ends, a lot of us are going to look like we just got home from Woodstock. Long hair, scruffy beards, clothes worn for seven days in a row ... we're basically the new generation of hippies without the good music.
- Up to this time, when I spent the morning just lazing on the couch and accomplishing very little, I felt a bit embarrassed when

someone would call and ask, "What have you been doing?" If I were going to be honest I would have to answer, "Oh, not much. Just lying on the couch being lazy."

Now when someone calls and asks, "What have you been doing?" I proudly answer, "Oh, not much. Just lying on the couch, saving the world."

Who knew my daily naps were actually disaster drill training?

- My wife is a lifelong Perry Mason fan so we have been treated to countless reruns of the TV show that was popular back in the days of black and white programming. I think every channel runs an episode once or twice a day ... or, at least, it seems that way. My question is this: How did Hamilton Burger and Lt. Tragg keep a job? Neither one of them has been right about a case since the show debuted in 1957.

- Even with much more free time on my hands and a need to find something to fill it, I still have not been tempted to turn my camera toward my face in order to take a selfie. Never have, don't plan to. I grew up in a time when you got your picture taken when you had done something noteworthy; you didn't just photograph yourself and say, "Hey, everybody, look at me!"

I also have not taken any pictures of my food, regardless of how tasty it looks on the plate, and have felt no urges to show the social media followers photos of my fingers or feet.

- I am mildly puzzled by the reaction so

many people are having just because they can't go out and have contact with fellow human beings. I thought we as Americans had been trying for the last decade or so to do away with all social contact whatsoever anyway. We shop online so we won't have to go into a store where they have people and when it gets to our houses the delivery guy just knocks on the door, puts it on the porch and leaves. We can even pay all our bills with the click of a computer keyboard button instead of going inside a business or entering the Post Office to purchase a stamp.

Now, it is possible order our groceries online and just pull up and have someone put them in the back of our vehicles, eliminating the need to walk up and down the grocery aisles and risk having to have a conversation with another person. Most of us can even stay at home and watch church services on TV on Sunday mornings.

We've done away with land lines and telephone books so people can't just look up your address and drop by; they have to know your cell phone number to get in contact with you and most of us won't even answer the phone when they call, figuring if it's important they'll leave a voicemail. And in reality, we'd prefer a text message or email over the actual trading of voices through conversation anyway.

So, again, I'm puzzled when people indicate they miss their family and friends. I thought the new American way was to go inside, lock the doors and pull the blinds and hope everyone would leave us alone. Works great if you want to take a nap.





LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

I love to garden. I love to work in the soil, to sow the seeds, weed, water and watch the produce grow. I love to share our harvest with others. And of course, I love to eat what we don't give away.

I came by gardening honestly. Both sets of my grandparents kept a garden. I grew up eating cucumber salad, homemade pickles, freshly picked okra (after being fried, of course), black eyed peas, corn on the cob, and anything else my grandparents chose to grow.

One of the reasons I love gardening is because it takes me back to my childhood. But more than that, I love to garden

because of the life lessons it teaches me. Just this morning I discovered nearly one hundred chocolate pear tomato sprouts bursting through our garden soil. This came as a big surprise considering we chose not to plant tomatoes this year. These newly developed plants are not the result of any seeds we intentionally planted. Rather, they are from the tomatoes that fell off last year's plants.

The fallen tomatoes rotted, but then released a seed that stayed buried all winter long before giving birth to new life.

Reflecting on this reality, I am reminded that even in the winter, in what appears to

be a season of death, God can bring about an abundance of life.

With that being said, maybe you feel like you are in a season of death. Whether it be because of Covid-19 or something entirely different, someone or something you love has gone into the ground. You should grieve that loss. But not without hope.

The God of the Bible is a God of resurrection. Whether it's something as small as a tomato plant, or as world changing as the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, God is famous for birthing life out of death.

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BY LINDSEY MILLS

A few months ago, I wrote about the feeling of soaring, of being on a metaphorical mountain top basking in the view of current life circumstances that included an upcoming wedding, competing in perhaps the most famous race in the world, and moving into a new home.

In early March the virus that had seemed a distant threat got closer to home. In what seemed like a very short amount of time I went from barely knowing what true threat COVID-19 posed and rolling my eyes at the extreme reactions (most notably the disappearance of toilet paper) to wondering if I should have taken it more seriously, earlier.

The Boston Marathon was postponed. We decided to reschedule our wedding. We still were able to work on and move into our remodeled home, but I admit I am simultaneously grateful and sorrowful because in the midst of this blessing, a tornado wreaked havoc on the homes of some of our community members and they will never be able to get back what that storm ripped apart.

I'm not really sure what to feel right now.

I'm thankful for my job, that I can continue to work on good news and inspiring stories that I hope uplift the community, and I'm grateful I can do it from home. I'm sad to delay our wedding, a celebrated time with loved ones, and push back marrying the best person I know.

I'm overjoyed about our new home. I'm disappointed we can't share it with our friends and family right now, and often feel guilty about how happy I am here because I know some people not far from me just lost the places where they felt most safe and comfortable. I'm pretty okay with the fact I'm not running a marathon this spring because I honestly wasn't ready, but I'm sad I won't be together with the friends who will run it with me for a while.

More than anything, in this time of uncertainty, social distancing and staying at home, I just miss seeing and embracing everyone I love. With all these conflicting emotions rolling around inside of me, I am reminded it's okay to be happy, to be sad, and every emotion in between because that's part of life, and it makes the good moments that much better.

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Sounds Like Quarantine

BY SARA BROWN

A playlist for May

1. In My Room – The Beach Boys

a. This isn't the classic Beach Boys sound you'd expect. In contrast to their more well-known upbeat surf-rock tunes, this track is calm and borderline melancholy. Despite the melancholy sound, the lyrics actually bring a sense of hope during this uncertain time of virus and quarantine. "In this world, I lock out all my worries and my fears / in my room, in my room." Just because we're stuck at home and times are uncertain doesn't mean we have to spend ALL of our time worried.

2. Don't Stand So Close To Me – The Police

a. The song just has a good groove to it that makes it a lot of fun to listen to. The subject matter isn't necessarily relevant to our current situation, but all in all, the band really hits the mark with this one. Staying six feet apart if you do have to go out is important, so don't be afraid to walk around the grocery store blaring this one.

3. Alone Together – Dan + Shay

a. This is such a fun, peppy song that's sure to get your spirits up! It's got killer harmonies, hard-hitting drums, and an energetic sound that'll get you on your feet in no time. This duo's idea about being alone together is great if you've already got someone living with you, but if you don't, maybe wait until all this is over before giving their idea a whirl.

4. Lonely Boy – The Black Keys

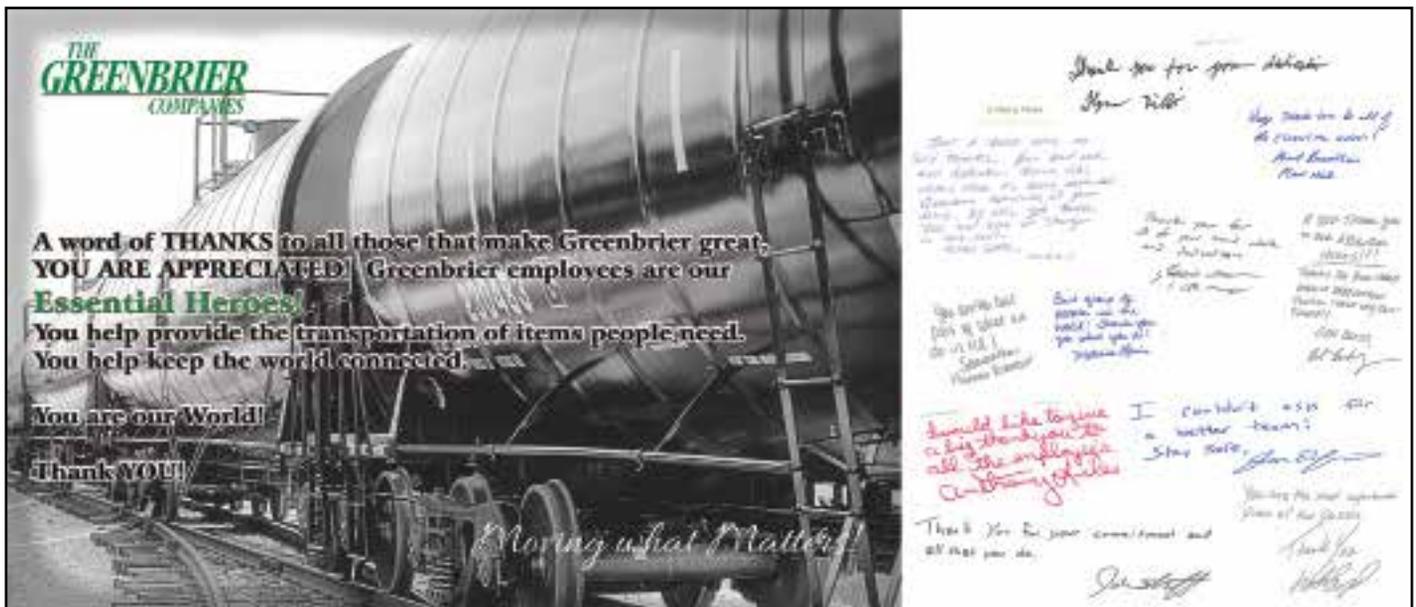
a. This song has a perfect blend of that classic sound mixed with a modern flair – perfect to listen to when you're looking to boost your mood and just jam. Its retro feel will remind you of the times when you were able to leave home without worry, but it rocks so hard that it won't bring you down. Whether you yourself are a "lonely boy" during quarantine or not, this song has a great beat that'll leave you forgetting you were stuck at home in the first place!

5. Take Me Home Tonight – Eddie Money

a. What's better to jam out to in your room than some '80s rock and roll? This track has some great guitar, killer vocals, and a wicked saxophone solo – lots of fun going through your headphones. Eddie Money has got the right idea. Home is the best place you can be right now to protect yourself and others, so why not put this song on and dance?

6. All By Myself – Eric Carmen

a. Here's a song for everyone who loves to dramatically lip-sync around the kitchen. Whether you find yourself all by yourself while stuck at home or not, putting on your best performance of this track is a surefire way to keep yourself entertained and maybe even put a smile on your face.



PET OF THE MONTH

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BY TABITHA ANDERSON

This is Mr. Benny Kai Burcham, a one-year-old Lab mix. Benny was found at around 4 weeks old, abandoned. We adopted him and he is now training to be my service dog for psychiatric and medical alert tasks.

His days right now are spent being a puppy, playing with his brothers Ryder (Golden Labradoodle) and Coal (Snchnoodle), chilling around the house and running in his new back yard. Soon, he will be a fully trained service dog and be able to help his mommy.



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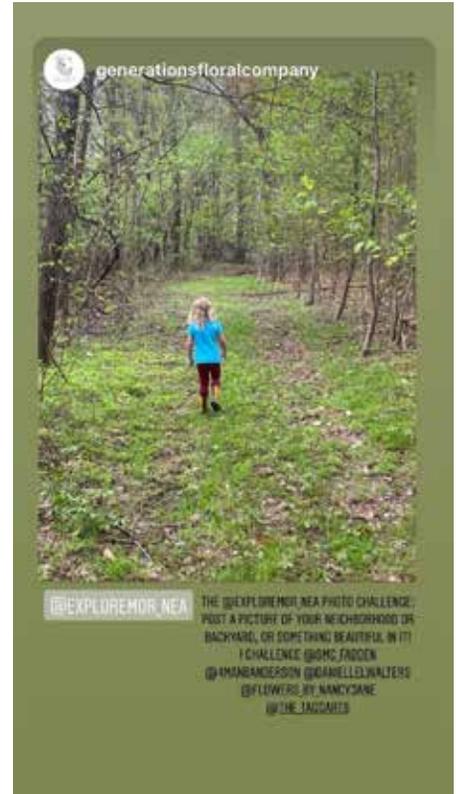
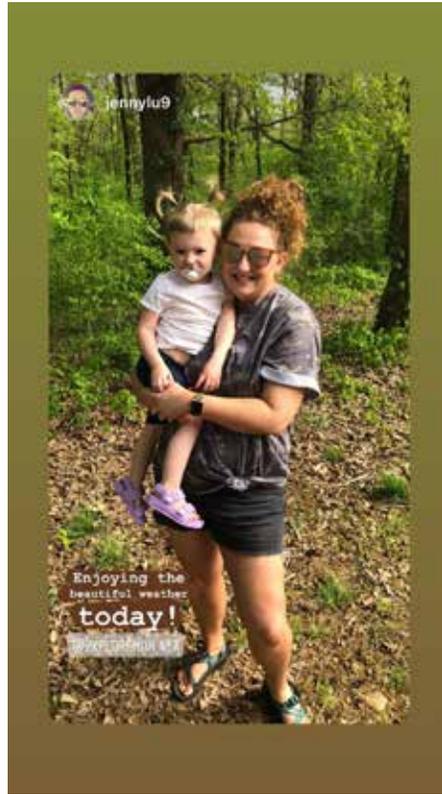
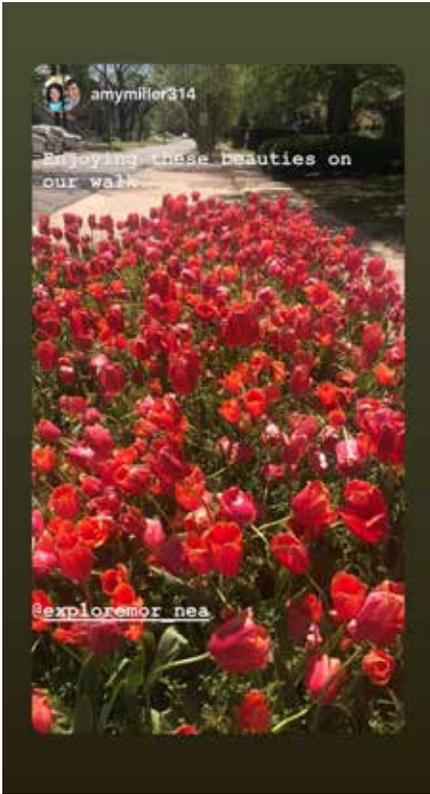
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Quarantine Coping:

MOR Media Inc.'s digital platform, Explore MOR, invited NEA residents to submit their photos of how they are exploring their own neighborhoods during quarantine. Here are some of our favorites!



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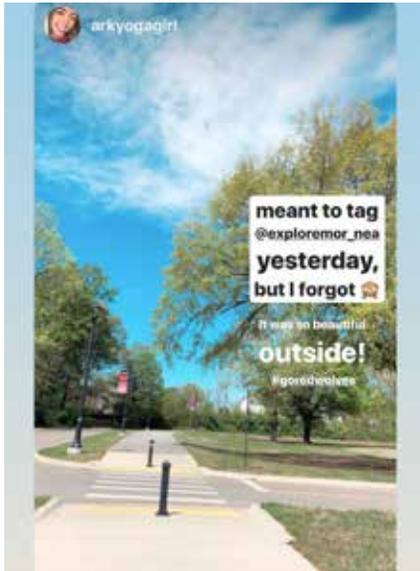
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Quarantine Coping: Park and Pray

Community members came together on Friday, April 10, to show support for Arkansas Methodist Medical Center health care workers at the COVID-19 Park and Pray. Over 200 cars parked in the AMMC parking lot and listened to live coverage on 107.1 JACK FM. Mayor Mike Gaskill, Greene County Judge Rusty McMillon, Rev. Dane Womack from First United Methodist Church and Breck Freeman from Paragould Central Baptist Church provided prayers for local physicians, nurses and staff, and praise songs were heard throughout the parking lot. Dozens of local law enforcement officers parked their rescue vehicles in the AMMC lot to show support and help ensure the safety of our community. The staff at AMMC is extremely grateful for the outpouring and love and support shown at COVID-19 Park and Pray. Special thanks to Omer Overbay and Brain Osborn for volunteering to make the event a success.



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Kody watched the rods intently as Ross eased the boat around the lake. The rods arced in a gentle bend from the weight that held the bait at the proper depth. As Kody watched, the pole lost its usual arc and the line went limp and he set the hook. A two-pound crappie was quickly in the boat and Kody was hooked on fishing.

That was many years ago, but Ross Whitney and his son Kody still enjoy their time on the water. Ross, a supervisor at Cupples Sign Company, and Kody, a registered nurse in the ICU/Emergency Department at NEA Hospital, spend their off time in pursuit of fish throughout Northeast Arkansas and the nearby area.

Early memories of fishing for Ross include fishing Reynolds Lake with a cane pole. In preparation for the trips, his mom would help him dig worms and they would head to the water. In his youthful perception Reynolds was the "biggest lake in the world." A move to Louisiana broadened his fishing horizons and he quickly found crappie to be his favorite pursuit. With a ten-foot fiberglass pole, a Pringles can full of tackle and a boat in the back of the truck, the cypress-lined oxbows and lakes of Louisiana became a favorite destination.

Ross came back to the Paragould area and began fishing crappie tournaments in the early '90s on Lake Wappapello.



In 1997 he ventured into national events and in 2001 he and his partner were able to capture a big win at Patoka Lake in Indiana, becoming CrappieUSA National Champions.

Ross continued to pursue crappie tournaments until Kody showed an interest in fishing. Kody wanted to chase largemouth so they shifted gears and began fishing bass tournaments. They fished the Bassmasters Weekend Series, Arkansas Team Bass and Greene County Bass Club tournaments as well as other events. Success came in bass tournaments, including one of the biggest totals of bass in a Northeast Arkansas tournament with a five fish limit from Lake Charles that tipped the scales at 31.68 pounds.

The bass fishing bug lasted a while, but they reverted to crappie fishing because of the team focus.

As with any fisherman, the Whitneys were always looking for an edge and one thing that seemed to be eluding them was the perfect jig. They began to experiment and the concept for Crappie Pro Bead Jigs was formed. This unique jig combines a copolymer bead head with a dressing of hair or feathers. The copolymer eliminates the use of lead in the jig, and causes the jig to fall erratically as it descends.

First made for personal use, the success of the jigs soon spread and they began to produce a few for friends. More requests came in and the business of Crappie Pro Bead Jigs began. The demand has grown and Crappie Pro Bead Jigs will be featured this year by Grizzly Jig, one of the largest crappie dedicated retailers in the country. Ross and Kody often spend hours tying jigs to fill orders from friends that have used their product or seen their product on their Facebook page or in a catalog.

Even though the Whitneys have had success on the tournament and commercial side of fishing, they are just



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

simple fishermen wanting to be on the water somewhere chasing fish. Kody says the lake he most likes to fish would be Greers Ferry in Cleburne County because of its diversity and opportunities to fish a variety of ways. Ross says his favorite place might be Lake Frierson, not because it is loaded with fish, but because it is a challenge. He also holds Grenada Lake in high regard because of the lunker crappie that dwell there and Wappapello in Missouri holds a special place because of his history with that lake.

What has drawn them to fishing? Kody said he likes to get away from all the distractions, get some fresh air and re-energize by wetting a hook. Ross likes the preparation for the trip and the anticipation that precedes each cast and each new spot to fish. Each says their favorite way to fish would be single pole fishing brush with a black and chartreuse jig. The eternal confidence of a seasoned angler is evident with Ross as his favorite thing to tell others is "the fish are always biting somewhere!"

It is always enjoyable to visit with folks who enjoy the simplicity that can be found with fishing. It is such a unique sport that provides a wonderful outlet. Fishing provides an opportunity to enjoy fresh air, solitude and put some food on the table. I hope you will take some time to get on the water and I hope to see you out there!



Quarantine Coping: Teacher Parade

How can you be together when you can't be together?

Mitzi Hicks has an answer for that. Hicks, the mom of two elementary students at Crowley's Ridge Academy, came up with a great idea to bring the school's students and families and its teachers together ... in a socially distant sort of way.

Hicks, with the help of fellow CRA moms Krista DeRoe and Meaghan Kingston, organized a CRA Teachers Parade on April 9. CRA student families arrived at the Paragould Cinema 8 parking lot that afternoon, and vehicles were arranged in several long rows. Every family was reminded to remain in -- or in some cases, on top of -- their vehicles to maintain social distancing protocols.

A little after 6 p.m., a line of trucks and cars featuring CRA teachers and employees pulled into the lot, and snaked its way past row after row of student families. There were smiles, laughs, and quite a few tears as both students and teachers realized how much they'd missed each other since March 16, the last time they'd all been together at CRA.



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It Rolls in the Family

BY BETHANY GALLIMORE

For many athletes, a love of their sport starts early in life, and that's certainly the case for youth bowler Zakery Grosvenor. The 15-year-old Nettleton freshman has already qualified for the national Junior Gold Championships this year, and his path to success is rooted in family, creativity, and persistence.

Zakery remembers bowling with his parents, Sebrina and James Grosvenor, when 5 years old. At that age, his six-pound Spongebob ball hit more gutters than strikes, but that wasn't enough to deter his enthusiasm. "I was just able to be around it because my family is a bowling family," Zakery explained. "I just kind of fell in love with it at the start."

By the time he hit middle school, he was averaging 130 per game — a respectable number when a leisurely adult bowler tends to score between 70 and 140 in a typical game. Today, his average is well within the 205 range, and he's added

at least one 290-point game — just one strike away from the perfect 300 — to his competition record.

Grosvenor's young age isn't the only thing that sets him apart as a bowler. He also uses the lesser-known two-handed style: He rests his right thumb on top of the ball instead of inside, then uses his left hand to steady the ball on the backswing. This method allows him to create more rotation with his release, which in turn gives the ball more power as it slides down the lane. His parents, both avid bowlers, weren't certain when Zakery first explained he wanted to try the less-traditional two-handed bowling. But when he scored a 160 in his first game using the technique, they knew it would be the best fit for him.

Watching the pros, participating in Nettleton's high school league, and learning from his parents have all helped Zakery improve his game. James, Zakery's father, coaches him and his fellow youth

USBC members on Saturday mornings, setting up cone drills and helping the bowlers perfect their approach and swing.

As with every skill, practice makes perfect in bowling, too. During a normal season, Zakery hits the lanes at Hijinks for up to four hours a day, six days a week.

"He's caught the bug," said Kelly Stevens, Hijinks General Manager and Youth Coordinator, who sees the consistency Zakery dedicates to his practice. "It's the work he's putting in. He's out here practicing until we close!"

The high school freshman has already placed in the top rankings in both state and regional tournaments, and this summer, he's headed back to competition to try again for the national championship.

Zakery first earned a spot in the USBC Junior Gold competition in 2019 after placing first in the regional USBC Pepsi

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Challenge Scratch in Hot Springs and earning second overall in the statewide Class 5A high school tournament. Last year, he came within 10 pins of making the final cut at Junior Gold in Detroit, and in July, he'll be heading to the tournament in Las Vegas to try to beat his record.

Zakery is striving to one day go pro, and his support team believes he can make that happen. Speaking about his future prospects, James says Zakery has good chances of continuing his career past high school. "I definitely think he has what it takes as long as he sticks with it and works on the mental and the physical part of it together," James shared. "When he puts his mind to it, and his game is on, he can stand up to most."

Of Zakery's improvement over the past few years, Sebrina says it's been encouraging to see how he's progressed with the effort he's invested. "One day, when he was about 13, he came to me and said, 'Mom, will I ever beat you?' Now, I shoot a 220 and he can shoot a 250, so I think that that day has come!" she laughs. "He's come such a long way. It amazes me to sit and watch him bowl."

Sebrina is an enthusiastic advocate of youth

bowling, both for its social aspect and its encouragement of physical exercise. "They say when you bowl three games, you walk a mile," she said, speaking of the sport's connection to athletic ability. Zakery agrees that physical fitness is important for good bowling results — when he's not practicing on the lanes, he incorporates weightlifting and balance exercises to stay on top of his form.

For those who might take up the sport themselves, purposeful and consistent practice is key. Zakery believes successful bowling takes dedication as well as skill. "To get better, it's just practice," Zakery explained, connecting to his own experience. "You're not going to get good at this sport overnight, you're just going to have to keep on practicing. And, if you like the sport enough, don't give up."

The Grosvenors have certainly made bowling a touchpoint for family connection, and their encouragement of each other shows how a love for sports is passed through families and supported through local communities. For the Grosvenors, Zakery's path to nationals has started right here at home, and they're excited to see a passion for bowling continue to grow in the Jonesboro community.

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Reaching Higher, Throwing Farther

Paragould High School's Olivia Hancock is not only one of the best discus throwers in the state, she is ranked among the best in the nation

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

It might not be as dramatic as Phoenix rising from the ashes, but a state champion's drive to success was born of an initial failure.

Paragould High School's Olivia Hancock is not only one of the best discus throwers

in the state, she is ranked among the best in the nation in her age group, pretty lofty results for a girl who didn't even know what a discus was when her father, Brad, first mentioned it to her. "Up until the 7th grade I honestly did not even know a discus was. I didn't know a thing. I didn't

really think I would get into it as much as I did," the senior-to-be said. "My dad threw in high school and he said, 'Why don't you try it?' So we ordered a discus off of Amazon and in my first meet I scratched all three times."

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That meant none of her throws counted and she was disqualified, promptly situating her at an important athletic fork in the road. She could say she didn't like it and quit, or she could choose the path she did. "I said, 'I will not do that again,' and just kept going," she said. "Maybe it showed my personality a little bit."

And a good personality it is. As Olivia prepares for her final year of high school competition, she will enter the season as the defending Class 5A State Champion, the runner-up in the overall Meet of Champions in Arkansas and can boast a 14th place finish in the Jr. Olympic Nationals in North Carolina. Her state meet winning throw was 121 feet, 5 inches, a distance she planned on improving during this school year and the summer Jr. Olympic schedule. But the corona virus pandemic took care of that, ending the first opportunity and, for the moment, at best postponing the second.

"This year has been disappointing but I've tried to stay positive," the 17-year-old said. "I wanted to get some big throws recorded so some coaches could see me. In track, you got to have some

numbers for colleges to look at. This year is different, obviously. Since there are no meets, I'm sort of having a track off season, lifting and taking online coaching with a lot of people. My goal is to get to 140 (feet) this year so coaches can see me. If you get to 140, that's a Division I prospect. I'm still hoping I'll get to go to some summer meets and get throws recorded. My dream would be to get to throw in college."

During the school year she also enjoys competing on the PHS basketball team, as her mom Rebecca did during her high school days, but she has found she also relishes the individuality throwing the disc carries with it. "I love basketball but this is a sport where the focus is on me," Olivia said, comparing her performance to that of a golfer. "... Every throw is on me ... everything you do is entirely on you. I like that. I like the pressure to come through and if I mess up, I've only got me to blame.

"With things like the javelin, hammer and so on they get misconstrued sometimes. People think you just muscle them out there but that's not how it works. At camps, they tell me my

footwork is really good. My footwork almost pushes it through me. Technique and form are the main things. When you see Olympic throwers, you see more athletic-looking people."

So, for the time being, Olivia is working out at home under the tutelage of her dad and taking advantage of online coaching clinics hosted by Olympic trial prospects. "They kind of have nothing to do right now so their online coaching is great for me," she said. "The throwing community is so small that people like to help each other.

"The track is closed right now because of all this so I painted a circle on our concrete driveway and throw in the yard, but there's a fence, and now I'm throwing over it and my dad has to climb over to bring it back. He says we're going to have to move."

An excellent classroom student, Olivia said she has "good ACT scores and I'm looking at some smaller schools right now but if a Division I school came knocking on my door, that would be hard to turn down. That would be something else."

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Unexpected

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Just about every little boy who picks up a basketball or pulls on a baseball glove imagines himself being a professional player some day. As the years go by those dreams generally prove to be just

that -- dreams -- when reality sets in and different career opportunities become more evident.

Not so for Skyler Bowlin, a former Paragould athlete who has pieced together a nice professional basketball career abroad. The Greene County Tech High School graduate has been playing for nine years as a pro and has had plenty of success, a real rarity for a kid from Northeast Arkansas and particularly for one who didn't necessarily see himself following that path.

"Never. It just happened," he said when asked if professional basketball was a longtime goal. "My plan was to follow my dad and grandpa and mom and be a coach somewhere after college. I had a pretty good four years at Missouri Southern and about the middle of my senior year someone said something about had I considered playing overseas and I said, 'Not really, but that would be great.' Then when I got my first opportunity, I was shocked. I definitely didn't think it would become a career."

After helping GCT to the high school state championship while playing guard for his father, Scott, Skyler moved on to Missouri Southern and became one of the top players in the league. As he continued to grow

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physically, his game began to expand as well and overseas teams came calling. A 6-3 guard with scoring, passing and defensive skills fit in well wherever he landed. "I've been playing nine years in four or five different countries," Bowlin, now 30, said. "The championships stand out, for sure. I've been pretty lucky."

His first was in Australia. From August to April he had played in Germany, then spent the next four or five months in Australia "and we won the championship; and I was Finals MVP. That was an amazing, amazing experience," he recalled. "In 2014-15, in Denmark, we won The Cup, which is like a tournament inside the season with all the league teams, and then we won the championship and I was the MVP. That was one of my most fun years as a pro.

"The next year, in Sweden, I was Finals MVP again and I know I have been very fortunate to be on teams with good talent and teams that have a goal of winning the championship. Now I've moved up to the top league in Germany and it has been harder. It has been a rollercoaster with ups and downs because the talent at this level is the very best."

Before the corona virus pandemic shut all sports down, Bowlin was performing well for the s.Oliver Wurzburg club. "This season, which is not technically over but it is, I was averaging just over 11 points a game, just under 4 assists and a couple of steals. I was having a pretty solid season for my team," he said. "In Europe, scoring is not as easy as it is in the NBA. We play four 10-minute quarters and the rules are a bit different, so scoring is not as much as in the states."

With the shutdown, Bowlin has found a bright spot in that it has given him more time to spend with his wife, Camilla, and their newborn son, Luka. Just as playing ball overseas had not been on the radar screen throughout his college years, neither had finding himself in the roles of husband and father.

"Meeting someone from Europe was definitely not on my to-do list," he said, laughing, "but here I am. Me and Camilla are enjoying the travel even though it's hard to be away from family for me in the states and for her in Denmark. But it's an opportunity to travel that we know won't last forever. Since we have a newborn, it's different; I can't imagine trying to practice twice a day after not sleeping any at night. We are still trying to figure out this little one's schedule. The break was very unfortunate, but for family time to enjoy with my child and my wife it couldn't be better."



Just how long he plans to continue the grind of pro sports is not a definite thing. He said he feels he has "at least a couple more years" of quality play but added, "I kind of go year-to-year. If you ask me after a three- or four-game losing streak I'll probably say I'm done. But if we start winning again the next week I'm like, 'Oh, yeah, I can definitely do this a few more years.' I'm fit, I'll be 31 when next season starts ... so I think another year or two probably.

"I've been able to make some money and provide. The salary varies from league to league. When I started off playing I was making nothing. You have to work your way up; if you think I'm some sort of millionaire, you're way off. I came home after my second year at Denmark and someone said, 'I bet you're making really good money' and I told them I had to ride a bicycle to all my games, rain, sleet or snow. But it was an experience that helped me grow."

He credits his dad, his mom Darlene Woods Horton and grandfather Jim Bowlin -- all successful high school coaches in Arkansas -- with helping mold the character it takes to survive in the pro game. "I've been blessed to have good people around me who pushed me to be the best," he said. "I'm very lucky to be in the place that I am. I definitely try not to take it for granted. I never really thought of it as being unique, coming from Northeast Arkansas, but it is really cool. I take pride in being from Paragould and Northeast Arkansas. There aren't a lot of guys doing it."

An advertisement for "Unleashed Doggy Daycare & Boarding, LLC". The background is a vibrant garden with pink peonies on the left and a small, fluffy dog walking a green wheelbarrow on the right. The wheelbarrow contains a potted plant. In the center, there is a green house icon with a white dog face inside. Below the icon, the text reads "Unleashed Doggy Daycare & Boarding, LLC" in a yellow, bone-shaped banner. Underneath that, it says "NOW OFFERING DOG WALKING AND HOME DROP IN SERVICES!" in green. At the bottom left, there are icons for Facebook and Instagram. To the right of these icons, the text says "Monday-Friday: 6am to 6pm" and "Boarding Available 7 days/week".

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Helping Others Live Healthier

BY DEBBIE HAAS

Emily Vinson is committed to leading a healthy lifestyle and being an example to both her CrossFit students and the staff and patients she serves.

Growing up, Emily was active in everything: softball, gymnastics, basketball, running, and cheerleading. After graduating from Senath-Hornersville High School, she went to Arkansas State University where she received her nursing degree. Even though nursing school was demanding, she wanted to stay active and physically fit, so in addition to running, she started working out at the Trim Gym.

Around that same time, CrossFit was just being introduced to the Jonesboro area. CrossFit is a high-intensity fitness program incorporating elements of several sports and types of exercise using weights and cardio. Emily enrolled in the

CrossFit class, but soon enlisted the help of Coach Chris Rich to program individual workouts targeted specifically to improve her weaker areas.

"I would get mad at myself when I couldn't lift a certain weight or complete certain aspects of a workout," Emily shared.

As she grew stronger, her confidence grew stronger as well. Being a competitive person, Emily completed her given workouts, pushed herself harder, and then went on to earn her level-one CrossFit certification during a two-day course in Tennessee which enabled her to become a CrossFit coach.

After getting her certification, Emily began coaching CrossFit at the Trim Gym. "The best thing about coaching is being able to motivate others the way my coaches motivated me," she said.



Photo by Amy Reeves Photography



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Emily is good at motivating others: She piqued her husband Lance's interest in CrossFit, too. He has since become a CrossFit coach with her at JBR Strength and Conditioning. He said one of Emily's favorite quotes is, "Your body can handle almost anything, it's your mind you have to convince."

Modeling a healthy lifestyle is a must for Emily. She has maintained a healthy, clean diet along with regular gym workouts and

give advice on what to eat or how to be healthy unless I am living the example," Emily said.

Competing is in her blood. She's been in several half marathons over the years, always pushing herself to improve her time. Emily and Lance both have participated in CrossFit competitions, including Rampage on the Ridge. Teams of four, usually two men and two women, complete several cardio and weight-lifting workouts. They are scored on the time it takes to complete

member would be best at each obstacle. Lance thinks she just needs to have fun.

A regular day in Emily's life would begin at 3:00 a.m. She gets up and takes care of her four dogs, two golden retrievers and two Jack Russell terriers, gets in a 3-mile run and then heads to the gym to coach the 5:00 and 6:00 classes. She does all of that before heading to her full-time nursing job, where she serves as the ICU manager.

Emily wasn't deterred when the gym closed due to the social-distancing mandate. In order to adapt to the new normal, she and Lance set up a home gym so they could still get their daily workouts in along with running.

Being physically fit helps with the pressures of working in a hospital.

"The hardest part about nursing, especially in the ICU, is always the patients we lose. We have patients for several weeks sometimes, and we get to know them and their families," Emily shared. "Those times are always the hardest."

Emily lives her life serving others, whether in the hospital or in the gym helping others get physically fit.

A photograph of a woman in blue scrubs and a white face mask, flexing her right bicep. She is wearing blue gloves and a blue headband. The background shows a hospital building.

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BY LINDSEY MILLS

Josh Agee doesn't remember a time he didn't enjoy being active. The Northeast Arkansas native played basketball, football and baseball growing up. It was after he and his wife had their first child together that Josh realized he'd kind of let himself go and he decided to run a 5k. Josh chuckles at the memory of his first race: After training for six months, he looked up at about a mile and a half to see his mother and his wife driving beside him in the car. "They hollered, 'Are you doing ok?'" Josh shared, shaking his head a little with a laugh. "I said, 'Oh yeah, I'm killin' it!'"

At the time Josh recalls there being an active running group in Paragould, very friendly and competitive enough to revive his love to compete; a few years of training with that group and eventually a buddy talked him into buying a bike.

"I remember, as a kid, my dad managed Big Star and Like Soda gave him a bike," Josh shared. "In one summer, I wore out two bikes." When he started to ride again as an adult, the moment he clipped in his passion was rekindled.

In recent years Josh has completed 5ks, 10ks, half marathons and ultramarathons (this is the classification for any race longer than the marathon distance of 26.2 miles) on the road. On the trail, Josh has run 25ks, 50ks and two 100 milers. He's also finished numerous sprint and Olympic distance triathlons, a Half Ironman and a full Ironman.

Many wonder how staying awake and moving for such long stints of time -- sometimes more than 24 hours in the case of the 100 milers -- is doable, much less enjoyable. But for Josh it's a combination of camaraderie, an opportunity to be outside, and a good way to, as he says, "burn off the crazy."

"I have a group of friends," Josh said, "sometimes we'll pick up the phone and say, 'Let's ride to Kennett and eat donuts



Photo by Amy Reeves Photography

and ride back!' I also love just getting out and being able to let off some steam. There's nothing like it. My grandad used to live four miles from his car lot so he'd run there and he'd run home. I called him one day to tell him I was going to run four or five miles and think about something that was on my mind and he said, "Son, if you go out for a run with something on your mind, chances are it's not still going to be there when you get back."

Training for endurance sports takes a tremendous amount of time and dedication. Training for the 100-milers Josh said he would usually start at three in the morning, making a six-mile loop where he would run two miles, walk a mile, run two miles and walk a mile, which would land him back at his house where he would get something to eat and drink and set off again. The monotony of it, he explained, would help him get through a similar feeling experienced during the night portion of a long race. It also prepared him for what it feels like to use muscles used when walking rather than attempting to run for miles on end and then be forced to walk – a mistake many beginner endurance athletes make. When athletes attempt to run the full distances and then are almost inevitably forced to

walk, they end up using muscles they hadn't prepared to use.

"I don't like to run 5ks anymore because they hurt," Josh said, attempting to explain the draw of longer distance races. "That's the great thing about ultras; I'm not fast, I'm like the tortoise. I take a walk break, enjoy the scenery, and then run a little bit. I like the longer distances and slower pace."

This mentality has given Josh the motivation necessary to cover extraordinary distances and experience places in incredible ways. Often he and his training group will meet to start their run or ride, see the sun rise, get a whole day's worth of exercise and see all parts of the county before many people get out of bed.

Races bring their own experiences, but the amount of time preparing to race has provided plenty of its own stories. A friend of Josh's had gotten into Leadville (arguably the most challenging and prestigious race in the world of mountain biking) and Josh was preparing to crew him. The pair got up early one morning and drove to Allison, Arkansas, to train.

"I didn't prepare and it got so hot that day," Josh recalled. "I ran out of water. Ran

out of food. So, we get out, and there's a store we're planning to go to – but they're closed, nothing is open – we've done this route before but always on a Saturday. So, the store is closed, but they have a coke machine. We are scrambling to find change and I get a coke. When we get to Norfork, I am toast. I am so done. I was thinking, 'I'm not going to make it back. I have got to have something.' Well, it's Sunday and the only thing in town that's open is a liquor store – we're in Arkansas! They had passed an ordinance to have liquor stores open on Sundays and, thank God. I went and laid in the floor of that liquor store. I got a coke and a bag of chips and when I got home, I told my wife a liquor store saved my life."

Josh encourages everyone to find a physical activity that enhances the rest of their lives, whatever it is for them. "We can always find an excuse not to work out. I heard once, 'Taking an hour from your day doesn't subtract from your 24 hours, it adds to the other 23.' If you're eating healthy and working out, you're going to have more mental clarity. You're going to have more energy to hang out with your kids. It will make you a better spouse, a better parent, and a better person."

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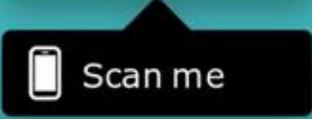
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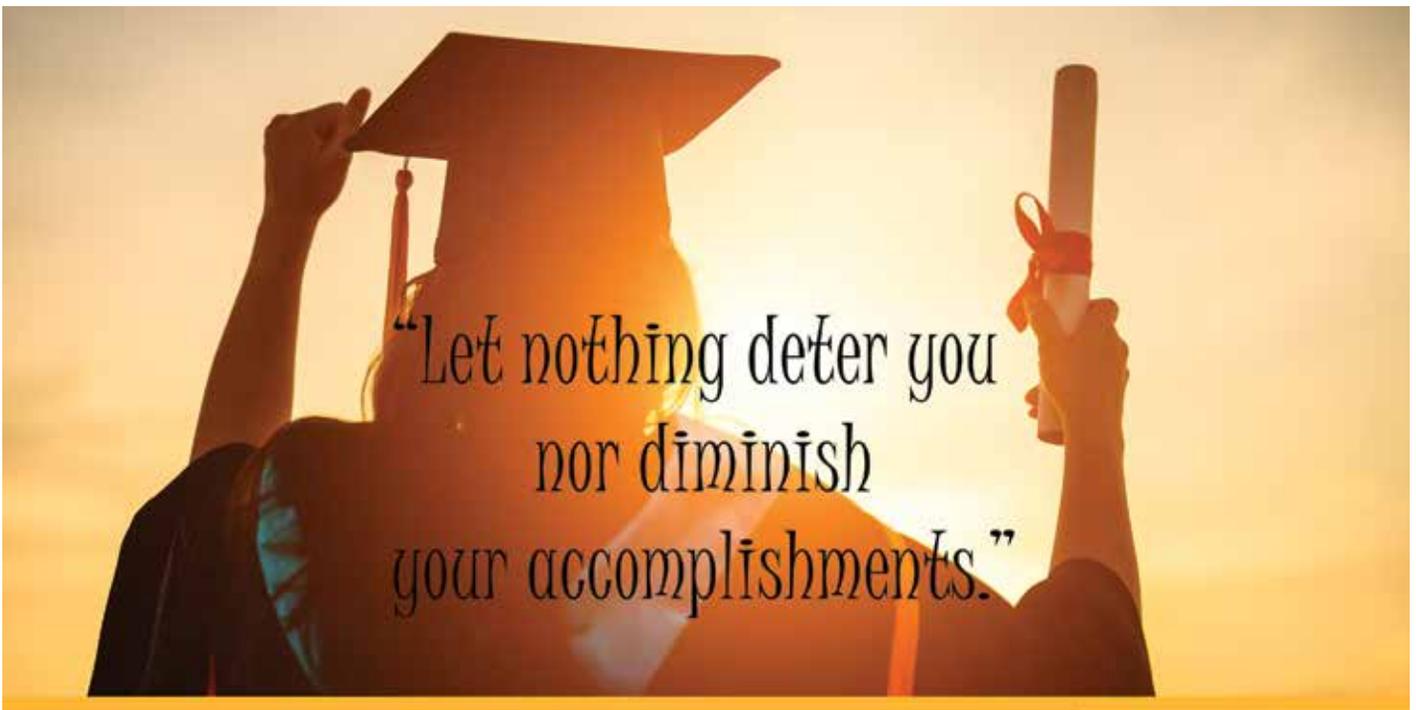
BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



Andie Pratt says she has been on top of a horse since she was 4, but it was a few years down the road before she came to realize her passion for riding could also be a way to get her college education funded.

Andie, the daughter of Joe and Leah Pratt and a 2019 graduate of Greene County Tech High School, is a member of the equestrian team at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, having accepted a scholarship near the end of her senior year. While not as common as team sports scholarships in this area, Andie said equestrian grants are available “just like any other sport. Schools recruit you. When you go to a big horse show, coaches are there. I had looked at a few other schools but Baylor is where I ended up. When I was 12 a close friend at the time went to UT-Martin so I realized it was a thing and I could pursue getting a scholarship. I’ve been traveling since I was 12 to big shows, showing on the national scale. I’ve been Top 15 in the world a couple of times.”

While she started competing early on in the Western Pleasure category, today her event is Reining, which she is aware requires an explanation to some. “It’s a pattern,” she said. “Have you seen a



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horse run down real fast, then stop and slide? That's what I do. It's about turns and stopping and sliding. The horse has to look like it willingly wants to be guided. You're graded on style ... how well you execute maneuvers."

One interesting part of competing at the collegiate level is that individuals don't get to take their own horses with them on road trips. "We don't get to choose our horse. When you travel to different schools, they supply the horses and two riders draw and share a horse," Andie said. "You have four minutes before you compete to get familiar with your horse. It's a definite home team advantage."

Judges then determine the scores they hand out after considering the athletic ability of the horses by completing a pattern of maneuvers that include circles, flying lead changes, 360-degree spins, and sliding stops -- all things at which Andie is very accomplished. At the amateur level, she was a multiple time World Finalist, the Adequan Level Two Ranch Riding Reserve World Champion and the 2018 Dixie National Youth 14-18 Reining Champion.

Baylor is known as a tough academic school, so the athletes have to learn how



to mix study time with practices and meets. "It's not easy," she said of the class workload, "but being on the team, we have resources. They stay on top of our grades. In high school I practiced about three hours a day. I was at the barn right after school. In college, we're limited because we have to follow NCAA rules about all of that."

Like most other events, the national

competition and Big 12 Championships were canceled because of the corona virus, sending Baylor -- a Top 10 team -- and all the others home. Andie, a pre-Speech Pathology major, said she has spent her time doing classwork online and looking forward to the return trip to Waco once the ban is lifted.

"It's what I love to do," she said.

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#JONESBOROHERO

We'd like to shine a spotlight on members of our community who stepped up to help others during and after the tornado that ripped through Jonesboro in late March. We sought out individuals who showed extreme kindness through great and small acts and invited others to nominate heroes on social media using #JonesboroHero and #NEAhero.



Ryan Vaughan

& Zach Holder

On the evening of March 28 NEA seemed to hold its collective breath as the severe weather threat turned into a tornado warning and then a watch. It seemed to happen so quickly, and soon there was a swirling mass of wind and debris wreaking havoc on Jonesboro before moving on to Brookland. Residents took shelter and incredibly there were no lives taken that night. Many attribute the lack of injuries and 0 death toll to Jonesboro Hero: Ryan Vaughan.

"Ryan Vaughan and the Storm Team at Region 8 were getting people into safe places 15 minutes before sirens even went off," said Jasmine Delaney, Jonesboro resident. "Then, they live streamed the entire tornado and continued to give specific streets and areas that were in immediate danger. They are HEROES."

Zach Holder of Region 8 was at the station when the storm moved over Jonesboro and many NEA community members shouted out the meteorologist in the aftermath for his work to keep everyone in the know.



Lou Shipman

Dillard's store secretary Lou Shipman has been showing the true meaning of customer care, even when natural disasters seem to upend all sense of ordinary operations.

In a Facebook post, long-time Dillard's customer Kelsey Washburn explained how Shipman went above and beyond to hand-deliver a missing section of an online order just two days after the Mall at Turtle Creek took the full force of an EF3 tornado. Although the mall was functionally closed to shoppers, Shipman continued to walk preplaced orders out to customers to help create some level of normalcy in day-to-day life.

"When I saw her walking to meet me at one of the blocked off entrances to the mall, I was overwhelmed with appreciation for the kindness that she exhibits," Washburn said. "Mrs. Lou reminded me that even in the midst of chaos, there is still so much good in the world."

Shipman, who has worked for Dillard's since 1987, says going out of her way for others is a part of who she is. "That's just how I was raised," Shipman explained.

Nonetheless, her efforts are making a real impact on the people around her. "Mrs. Lou took it upon herself to put a stranger like me before everything else and make sure I received the online order I purchased," Washburn wrote. "Mrs. Lou teaches us to not only look for the good, but to be the good."





Bill Vacco & Team

“Besides losing our house, our son Cameron lost his basketball goal in the March 28 storm. Our next-door neighbor in Bridger Place, Bill Vacco, is a firefighter, and he knew Cameron would be lost without that goal! So today Bill and the guys from Jonesboro Fire Station 2 showed up in style to present Cameron with a new goal! Thank you Bill, Jonesboro Fire Department, and Play It Again Sports for bringing a smile to my boy’s face this afternoon!” - Jennifer Salo

The firemen who made this happen: Bill Vacco, Steve Beck, Judd Alsup, Aaron Burke, Tyler Tomerlin, and Barry Riggs

James Bickham

The local photographer and videographer worked hard to remind residents that Jonesboro is strong and will get through anything thrown its way.

“James is a hero,” Shatel Gaines shared. “He’s went above and beyond to show our city is resilient and that when we are faced with adversities, our community will rise up, come together, and overcome. He’s rallied the community and has provided many resources and meals to those in need.”

Watch Bickham’s inspirational video and find links to help the artist give back to the community via his Facebook page.



Read about more Jonesboro Heroes including Willie McDonald, Holli and Paul Nietzsche, Britt Morgan, and Danny Fuller online at premiere-magazine.com.

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**PERSONAL TRAINER,
TRIATHLETE,
BACKPACKER:**

Toni Inboden

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Toni Inboden

BY LINDSEY MILLS

Looking at and listening to Toni Inboden it's obvious she has a passion for being active and for helping others, so naturally her career as a personal trainer is a good fit. However, what is not obvious, what she informs me of when we visit, is personal training was not her first career but rather something she "stumbled into."

Toni found her line of work after 20 years' working for KAIT and a career in sales management before that. She decided she wanted to finish her college degree for her 50th birthday and the only class available during a lunch was a sport psychology class. At the time Toni played a lot of tennis and decided the class would be fun.

She didn't have anything she necessarily wanted to do with her degree, aside from simply obtaining it, so when the university said she needed to declare a major to avoid losing her prior credits, she "declared for no real reason other than wanting to go back to school." One thing led to another, she explained, and she became a full-time student. Eventually, she needed an internship.

"Which I thought was just ridiculous," Tony said. "I really did. I thought, 'I could be the parent of any of these children and I'm going to do an internship with them!'" Toni called on her own former personal trainer and after some time learning from her, she told Toni she should get certified. Today, she's been personal training for 10 years and her new career path has led to a number of unique experiences for the now endurance athlete, including recently a hike into the Grand Canyon.

"I can't say enough about the whole trip. Again, this was sort of a fluke, kind of like how I got into personal training," Tony shared with a laugh. "There was no set thing - I wasn't supposed to do it. I wasn't part of the original group but one of the other members was injured and couldn't go so someone I was training for the trip said, 'Do you want to go?' And I said, 'Yes, yes I do.'"

The trip was a bucket list sort of thing, but while many people have things they want to do, fewer have the courage to make the opportunity or take the opportunity when it arrives. In July Toni started preparing



herself for the trip of a lifetime while also helping others prepare for the same trip that would take place in September.

"First of all," she said, "I would tell anyone that they can do it. If they are in reasonably good health and have reasonably good knees and hips, they can do this. But they do need to prepare for it. There are specific training programs you can do for this hike - not just hiking - but this particular hike, the terrain and the steps. People think you just take this little trail and weave your way down, but really, it's big steps. Your back needs to hold your pack. Your legs have to carry you and your backpack. We did eccentric exercises like stepping up and stepping back, but what's important to remember is, you gotta train yourself to step off of it - up and over, not up and back. But mainly go out and hike, learn to use your trekking poles."

The group of eight women shuttled from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon to the North Rim where they hiked 14 miles down to Phantom Ranch, stayed two nights, and hiked nine miles back out to the South Rim.

"Everyone did great, except old Toni here," she chuckled at herself. "About three miles in, I did something to my knee." Faced with the decision to keep going or

turn around, she decided she would not miss the opportunity. She kept going.

"People on the trail are just the friendliest. They probably didn't know I was injured, maybe just thought, 'Oh, she's older' so all the especially young people I encountered, they'd say, 'Just one step at a time. One step at a time.' And I'd think, 'Yeah, just one step at a time - a really small step, but a step.'"

One step at a time Toni descended into the Natural Wonder. She mentioned not knowing if she'd made the right or wrong decision to press on, but she stuck with her choice and the next day she did rehab on her knee in the cold water of Bright Angel Creek.

When she returned, her husband asked, "So do you think three times around Craighead Forest really prepared you for that?"

More recently, Toni took a stab at her first triathlon. "I'll be 61 in a couple months and you know, joints do become a factor as we get older so I can just see, down the

road, I mean I work with people so I know swimming will be best for alleviating pressure and still be able to be active. I learned to swim as a kid and I swim recreationally – and by that I mean I play in the water.”

So Toni asked a colleague to work with her on swimming. Her co-worker suggested the indoor tri.

“Why on Earth would I do that?” Toni laughed. “And then I thought, well, why not?”

Toni said at this point in life competition isn’t a factor, but it’s simply what can she do, right now. “Plus,” she added thoughtfully, “to be an example for older people – it’s not over, push through, keep moving. We’re not done yet. We’re just not.”

For the next few months Toni trained.

“There were times I thought, ‘I’m not training enough. This is not going well.’ The Saturday before the tri I just had to know where I was, so I came and did my swim, got dressed, got on the bike and then the treadmill. And I finished. So I said, ‘Okay look, I’ve done it! I had witnesses.

Do I really have to do this on Saturday?’” Her colleagues encouraged her to do it for the actual event, and said she might even shave some time due to the adrenaline. She saw one of the other ladies who had been training, could tell she was nervous, and found herself saying, “We are going to be just fine.”

“And because I said ‘we’ that was that,” Toni explained. That was that, and Toni did shave 90 seconds off her time in the week between her trial and the actual race. “We did it, and it had so very little to do with the time it took us,” Toni recounted. “You get to an age, your need to exercise changes over time, and why we exercise changes over time. When you get older, it becomes just let’s keep moving, let’s have a quality of life where we can enjoy all of these things that we worked so hard to be able to do as we approach retirement years. You want your body to still work for you. There are some that have things they have no control over, but there’s another population who can control things – and we should. We should put our body to work for us so we can keep going and doing and enjoying life and enjoying family and enjoying activities. We work our whole life to get to a point that we don’t have to work in that way anymore,

but then our health is problematic, so for those who can – and not everyone can – but for those that can, let’s keep moving, let’s put one foot in front of the other and let’s just keep going.”

As a personal trainer, Toni understands it’s her job to help people find a reason to keep going. Many people who want to be more active seek a personal trainer because they know working out is good for them, but they need help finding the motivation.

“When people seek a personal trainer, they’re seeking a reason,” Toni explained. “If someone is going to that length, something is going on in their head. We have to tap into what that is. Some people say they want to get up and down off the floor while playing with their grandchildren. Some people have a history of heart disease or diabetes in their family and they want to keep that at bay. You just have to talk and really get to know somebody to understand, what’s going on, really. Everybody’s motivation is different. It’s different at different ages. It’s different with different life experiences. That’s why it’s called personal training: When you get personal with somebody like that and you understand what those factors are, you can really round it out.”

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Business Spotlight:

Guardian Group

Cat Ballard on the importance of life insurance.

BY LINDSEY MILLS

Life insurance is a topic many people don't want to dwell on. After all, the assumption for many might be that talking about life insurance means talking about death – perhaps not a cheery conversation. However, as the saying goes there are only two things in life that are certain: paying taxes and dying.

Cat Ballard is the Director of the Guardian Group, a boutique life insurance brokerage who's goal in business is to keep things simple for their clients. Cat specializes in handling life insurance, and she wants people to know life insurance policies are important.

"We understand talking about it is uncomfortable," Cat said. "But it's important to do the right planning once so you don't have to think about it when you or your loved ones are in one of the most stressful

and distraught-filled time of your life."

Cat said education is key when working with clients, and one of the biggest things in educating people is in reference to cost because people tend to overestimate it. She also shared that the younger the generation, the more they tend to think they're invincible but what Cat wants people to remember is we don't get to choose our time and on top of losing a loved one, one shouldn't have to think about finances. "It's going to happen, whether you're prepared or not and you never realize the impact it has until it does happen, and then you really don't want to think about it," Cat said. "By the time you have a diagnosis there's not much time to plan, so make sure financially you're still okay."

Basically, when the inevitable comes and we

are all faced with losing a loved one, let the finance side of things be done with so you can focus on what matters.

And life insurance policies don't always only correlate with dying.

"There's dying and there's kind-of dying," Cat explained of how Cash Value Life Insurance works. Certain products accumulate over time and are sometimes accessible without actually dying so the insured can use the built-in benefits to supplement their income or retirement, pay medical bills or leave something for their kids.

For more information on life insurance policies that will best serve you and your loved ones, contact Cat Ballard at (832)-463-1911 or via email: Cat@GuardianGroup.com.



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NEA Artist Brenda Ward

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

What started as a sleep study in 2012 developed over the next seven years into a diagnosis that stirred fear inside Brenda Ward.

The 72-year-old, of Jonesboro, spent 2012-2019 developing symptoms of Parkinson's after she was diagnosed with REM sleep behavior disorder. After that first sleep study, she said Parkinson's was written on her report but the sleep disorder rated number one and treatment for that began instead.

"For the next seven years, there were signs beginning to rise," she said. "Loss of smell and taste, my left arm didn't swing when I walked, I got choked on water. My handwriting grew smaller each day."

In 2019 she was officially diagnosed but even after those seven years of preparation to hear the words, they still hurt her.

"I have a strong belief in God," she said. "I may never understand the 'why.' It is what it is, so I share my story and attempt to be there for others."

This desire to help others developed into the creation of Parkinson's Partners, an organization that gives those with Parkinson's a place to discuss everyday struggles and victories. "Our purpose

is to share and educate the Parkinson's community of the resources available to them," Ward said. "We are also attempting to meet with the medical community to share resources."

In addition to creating her own group, Ward has spent her time volunteering at the St. Bernards Flo and Phil Jones Hospice House and the cancer floors. A friend suggested she would be a good fit and so, she said, off she went.

"I have had to back away from the infusion floors for now because of my Parkinson's," she added. "My gait can be a bit off and I would never want to stumble and hurt someone."

Ward said she loves the hospice house because it helps refresh her spirit, but she doesn't do those things for recognition or reward; if anything she does helps another, she is blessed, too. Longtime friend Janie Cruce said she has watched Ward survive difficult life situations using her faith and a strong desire to keep going.

"I cannot help but admire her," Cruce said. Cruce added that several months ago Ward also began painting oil and acrylic. "She had never painted, but that didn't stop her," Cruce said.

Ward said Cruce brought her a sketchbook and charcoal pencils as a form of therapy. Though her daughter was artistic, Ward had never drawn, much less painted. The two began drawing and painting just for therapy and now have an art exhibit at the Jonesboro Public Library titled "Blurred Vision Creations."

"The name came about due to my being legally blind," Ward said.

Despite these varying health problems, Ward keeps pushing on. Cruce said the serious challenges of life do not stop Ward if they can be avoided. And Ward carries on through these challenges while continuing to educate others.

"I wish people would realize every disability is not visible and not everyone who has Parkinson's is affected the same," Ward said. "If you do not understand us, at least accept us. We have Parkinson's but Parkinson's does not have us."



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More Than a Job

BY KALIE HUNTZINGER

In today's world it is growing increasingly common that we forget humanity. We remain focused on businesses and concepts like profits, gains, losses, and other numbers. These numbers, though, fail to highlight those facets of society and life that are most commendable: selfless service, empathy, compassion, patience, duty and other such values. We need to make it a point to honor those people in life and in business who exemplify those virtues. For this reason, Liberty Park Senior Living would like to shine a spotlight on Ms. Alix Denton for her service as Activity Director for our community.

Alix has been a member of the Liberty Park Senior Living Community since it opened its doors in December of 2019. Though the community is still new, Alix has already left an indelible mark on its culture. While Alix focuses on her job with her whole heart, she can also be seen

regularly helping nursing staff, assisting with the general activities of daily living, and contributing to the operations of other departments. She is always willing to lend a helping hand. Alix shows that same level of care, if not more so, to the residents of the community and makes it a point to spend time with each and every resident personally. She is constantly building those important relationships with the residents and listening to their wonderful stories, personal histories, and words of wisdom.

In getting to know the residents to the degree she does, she tries to use that personal knowledge to find, create, and organize activities every resident will enjoy. She ensures every resident has something to do that he or she enjoys and engages them socially as often and as well as she can in ways that are meaningful and fun.

This determination to ensure enjoyment

clearly comes from a place of love and, along with that comes other characteristics such as kindness and compassion. These are virtues lending themselves to providing a real sense of comfort among the residents and staff when needed.

In the same way that she is determined to provide a real quality of life for her community members, she likewise unwaveringly maintains a smiling, positive attitude. While singing and dancing when she thinks no one is looking, Alix is exhibiting a love of life that is infectious to those around her.

So, it is for these virtues and heartfelt actions that we at Liberty Park are proud to shine a spotlight on Alix Denton in the same way she shines the spotlight of her soul on all of us here. There are not enough wonderful words and sentiments to express how lucky we are to have her here in our community.

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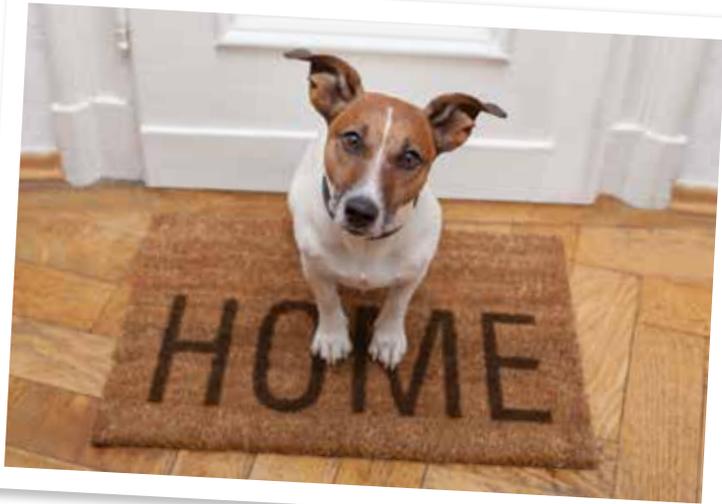
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Quarantine Coping: at Chateau on the Ridge

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



Staff members at Chateau on the Ridge in Paragould have always been good about encouraging residents to spend time outside. Now they're having to come up with more things for them to do inside, thanks to COVID-19.

"It has been a challenge," said Activities Director Julie Wilkins, "because we have to do things so differently, but everyone has been as helpful as they can be. This activities director had never seen sponge rollers in my life until about three days ago but I've learned to work with them and fix those hairdos. More than ever it's been a team atmosphere. What needs to be done gets done, regardless."

Groups for games and other gatherings now have to be limited to no more than 10 people but that doesn't mean resident favorites like Bingo have been canceled.

The game is now played in groups of eight, three or four times a day and residents can attend the one that suits their personal schedules. "We've had to get a little creative," said Wilkins, who started her job in early January. "We have a floor piano, where you can touch it with your feet, not your hands. And we do lots of singing. If we see six or eight people in a common area we'll break out singing oldies with them. And we do sitters in shifts with smaller classes three times a day."

She said one of the most popular moves seems to be finding ways to connect family members with their loved ones. "The virtual stuff," she said, "you know, Facetime, Duo, all the different formats. If they have any sort of smart device they can see each other. We hooked up to a big TV the other day and someone got to see their son in Hot Springs.

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When times change, so do we. Residents at Chateau on the Ridge enjoy frequent video visits with loved ones through FaceTime, Zoom, and Skype.

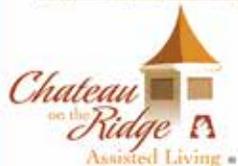


During a time when hands-on activities aren't always feasible, Chateau residents enjoy the 'feet-on' option of playing a tune on our foot piano.

Window visits with cherished friends and family members are our favorite times of the day!



Residents and staff have been busy sewing masks for all! A talented Chateau resident stitched and embroidered this one by hand, using fabric from an old flour sack.



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“Or family can come and with an I-phone communicate on both sides of the glass panes. They can pull up chairs, like in the bistro area, and see each other, and some have windows in their rooms where they can do that. We try to do a lot of things as outreach to the family.”

She said some days they must “really get inventive. We did the little ‘bears in the window’ thing that a lot of kids were doing and we put Easter Eggs out in the trees in the courtyard for them to look at. One resident even played tic-tac-toe on the glass with a little boy who was outside. We try to make something fun of the simple things that can happen.”

Small groups are allowed to step outside for a while, either out front or in the back where there is a walking trail, flowers and a vegetable garden. “There is a new interest in getting outside,” Wilkins said, “but inside or out everyone here is taking care of everything that has to be done. We are all jumping in. We might get on the radio and say, ‘Who can do nails today?’ and it might not look as professional as it has in the past but we know they appreciate what we’re doing for them.”

Wilkins updates the Chateau’s Facebook page daily so people can see their loved ones through the multiple photographs she posts, knowing just getting a look at a face now and then lends some comfort. “We certainly do love them,” she said of the residents. “I have only been here and home for the last month-and-a-half to two months. But I love and want to protect them as much as possible. We try to accommodate them because when we do, that makes for a happy resident.”

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Quarantine
Coping:

Seniors and Covid

BY KARAN SUMMITT



In the best of times, loneliness and isolation are a threat as we age. The freedom and ability to go and do whenever and whatever we wanted slowly gives way to limitations brought on by failing health. For many seniors, church services, trips to the doctor or grocery store and participation in local senior activities are the lifeblood of good mental health.

But even when there is strong family support, many seniors find themselves with an excess of free time to spend. So what happens when the things that kept them busy and connected to others are suddenly curtailed, when the opportunity for social activities is denied and they are confined to their homes?

It doesn't take long for the social distancing of today to take a few short steps into tomorrow's depression. While COVID-19 has us thinking about the increased risk for physical complications in the 65-plus population, it is just as important for us to care about their mental health. The same restrictions protecting them physically can become triggers for a mental setback.

So what can you do during this COVID-19 crisis to stay connected to the seniors in your congregation or family? How can we care as much about their mental health as we do their physical health?

Here are a few suggestions that will bless them and let them know how much you care:

1. If your senior is media savvy, make sure they know how to access online church services, Bible classes, daily devotionals or whatever your congregation is doing to stay connected. Plan family Facetime visits.



2. Organize a window visit or sit outside when weather permits, observing the 6-foot distancing guidelines.
3. Create a phone call chain with different people or family members calling the senior each day.
4. Celebrate special occasions. Have a virtual birthday party, organize a car parade, make signs for their lawn or door. Create new memories just for this unique time.
5. Write a letter or send a card with a note telling them what they mean to you. They will treasure it and read it over and over again. Utilize small children in this effort for an extra special treat.
6. Put together a Joy Jar and leave it on the doorstep for them to pick up. Pack the jar with encouraging scriptures, quotes, jokes, memories, small wrapped candy, etc.
7. Purchase items that can help them pass the time -- board puzzles, books, word game puzzles.
8. See to their needs. Make sure they have food, personal supplies, medications, transportation for appointments that are important to be kept.

The old adage “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade” is a great encouragement to turn our present difficulties into opportunities to serve those in need. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to the isolation all of us are experiencing. Let them know you still hold them close in heart.



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An Outpouring of Love

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

It started out as a normal evening around the Dillport home. Some of the kids were outside playing while parents Kory and Katy had settled down to watch a movie. But when their oldest son came in for a minute, life changed dramatically for the entire family.

“He saw the smoke and came running into our room,” Katy said, “and we all ran outside and within 15 minutes our whole house was engulfed in flames.” The best guess was an electrical surge as the cause of the fire and Katy remembered “the wall was on fire when we ran in there. We did that out of instinct but then we got out.”

Their home a total loss, the Dillports had to try and figure what to do next. And that’s where the Paragould community stepped up. “We truly are really blessed,” Kory

said. “We have gotten everything back ... and these are tough times for everybody. We are so humbled and grateful for all that has been done for us.”

On the evening of the fire Katy’s youngest brother offered his house as a landing spot and they piled up on the couch and in the floor, all understandably upset. “The next morning we went back to look at it,” Katy said, “but we just drove straight by. It was too heart wrenching. We pulled into the Walmart parking lot and we started to pray about where we were going to go and what we were going to do and his phone rang. It was a friend named Terry Bailey ... someone we’ve known as an acquaintance through sports and our kids, and he said he had a rent house they had been remodeling on and we were welcome to it, and we could live rent-free for two

months.

“We were shocked,” she continued. “The minute we asked what we were going to do, the phone rings. We pulled in the driveway to look at it and he tossed the keys to Kory and we both kind of cried a little and then went to gather up the kids and show them.”

The children were staying with relatives and by the time the family regrouped and returned to its new home, friends and loved ones had already kicked into high gear. “Teachers and counselors from the school came with beds, and people brought tables and chairs and a washer and dryer. There was food in the cabinets ... it looked like we just came home.”

Clothes and other essentials continued

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to come in from all over the community and Katy's boss at Belle Meade in Paragould, Pam Diggs, called and said, "You wouldn't believe the outreach on your behalf. Checks and money are just pouring in," and the impact was not lost on the Dillports. "Very humbling," Katy said. "The Paragould community really knows how to pull together. It was amazing, really. We are still awestruck. The next day our kids had shoes and clothes. A church donated beds and dressers ... we are caught up on everything we need now but, goodness, have we been blessed."

The parents hope the children -- Karver, Kyrsten, Kannon and Kaydn -- learn from the tragedy what simple brotherly loves means and will be anxious to help out others, just as complete strangers helped come to their rescue. "It was all so crazy the way things happened," Katy said. "It was even more of a blessing when you realize all the stores were closed (because of the current pandemic). God has blessed us."

"I would just really love to say, 'Thank you,' to everyone," Kory added. "This has been amazing. We are so, so thankful to everyone. What a great community."

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Granny M's



BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

What began as a simple trial to make a delicious pepper jelly recipe in the 1970s has since turned into a local business for Brenda Maddox.

Granny M's Gourmet Foods, based in Jonesboro, now stocks its products in stores across Paragould, Piggott, Rector, Kennett and Trumann, but it all started in Maddox's kitchen nearly 40 years ago. Maddox said she came across a recipe one day for pepper jelly and decided to try it out, but neither she nor her husband enjoyed it.

She didn't give up there.

"I just started making it," she said, adding that she took the original recipe and tweaked it for her and her husband's taste buds, thinking along the lines of, "I wonder what it would taste like if I added pineapple?"

Maddox said she played around with flavors while her husband taste tested for her. Peach, orange and raspberry flavored jellies came next. Soon enough her friends and family were asking for jars and her first venture into the business world with cooking came in 1998.

Maddox owned a shoe store in the Indian Mall and through word of mouth had several people asking for her jellies. She originally didn't want to sell because they were family and friends but in September she put up a kiosk in front of the shoe store and started selling.

"Everybody liked it," she said. "We sold out the first day."

Next came calls to the health department to ensure she was

following proper protocol. Maddox even contacted the University of Arkansas in Little Rock for nutrition advice and sent off her recipes to be analyzed. In 1999 she attended her first show at the Dallas Gourmet Food Market with just one product, her mild pepper jelly. Orders poured in.

“By the time I went back for my second market, I had added another product,” Maddox said.

Today, Granny M’s has expanded to eight flavors: pineapple, raspberry, peach mandarin orange and lemon glazes, hot and mild pepper jellies, and a hot pepper sauce.

“It really grew,” Maddox said. “I am proud of it.”

Maddox attended market from 1999 until her husband passed away in 2015, but she still receives orders from local businesses for the jellies and she also attends Lit’l Bita Christmas.

“And here I am just still doing it years later,” she said. “It’s sort of a crazy way it happened.

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Opaa! Provides food to students in need.

Opaa! Food Management, established in 1978 and family owned and operated, is helping make sure kids out of school don't go hungry while schools are closed due to COVID-19.

"Opaa has been feeding students during the summer since they began working with Greene County Tech about seven years ago," said Jennifer Angelo. "The Emergency School Closure gave us the opportunity to serve our students/community by providing nutritional meals to all kids that need one."

Opaa! is providing any student, 18 or younger, two meals a day free of charge. This is open to ANY student who needs it; they do not have to attend Greene County Tech. Students can pick up breakfast between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and lunch between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. at the Greene County Tech Primary School.





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Happenings



Paragould Rotary and Southern Bank made donations to area schools and organizations to help feed community members during COVID-19. Mission Outreach received a 200 dollar check from Rotary. Greene County Tech School District received a check for 500 dollars to go toward food bags for students. Paragould School District received a check for 500 dollars to go toward food bags for students. Marmaduke School District received a check for 500 dollars to go toward food bags for students.



Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, healthcare facilities around the nation are utilizing an increased amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) items such as masks, gowns, and gloves. On March 20 BRTC's nursing department was more than happy to assist 1st Choice Healthcare when they requested supplemental supplies until distributors can deliver to their six clinics.



Paragould, Arkansas native, Airman Olivia Manley, was awarded Blue Jacket of the Quarter aboard USS Constitution, April 22. Bluejacket of the Quarter is awarded to a junior sailor who exemplifies outstanding dedication to duty and superior performance by going above and beyond their assigned job.

"Hard work will always speak for itself, and I am so proud and happy to do what I love every day in the Navy," said Manley.

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This spring, 26 Leave a Legacy Scholarships were awarded to practical nursing students graduating in May from Black River Technical College. The recipients are Shea Capps, Rheanna Siebert, Emily Hamilton, Kaitlyn Stromatt, Brandi Wells, Maranda Sickler, Anna Barnhill, Elizabeth Moore, Jeanina Smith, Brandy Kennedy, Kimberly Griffin, Sierra Ring, Shania Wheatley, LeighAnne Carlile, Jenny Barber, Ben Gore, James Freeman, Breck Rushing, Shellee Hollis, Joshua Tippitt, Jayla Elliff, Ammy Morrow, Courtney Marchbanks, Danielle Lester, Kaitlyn Rosseau, and Katherine Cole.



The Katie Blankenship Kirby Scholarship has been awarded to Practical Nursing students Sierra Ring of Cardwell, MO, and Shania Wheeler of Pochontas.



A team of students and R.M. 'Bob' Wood Sales Leadership Center director Dr. Katie Hill from Arkansas State University's Neil Griffin College of Business recently grabbed several top awards at the regional team Challenger Sales Institute Competition in Oklahoma City. A-State's representatives won first place in the case competition and finished second in role play, while Hill, assistant professor of marketing, was named the team challenge reserve champion. (From left) Hannah Dunton, Dr. Katie Hill, Shawna Martin, Taylor Fortenberry, Shelby Thompson, and Todd Wilson (senior manager of fleet sales at Love's Travel Stops).



BRTC TOPSS welding student Christopher Zitzelberger recently earned the Silver Career Readiness Certificate. The National Career Readiness Certification measures work skills, and as a job applicant it is a great addition to a resume that may increase your chance for employment. Chris is a junior at Corning High School.

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Beverly & Coty

Coty and Beverly met at Chili's while she was traveling back and forth from Arkansas to Florida for her broker's license there. She was on a two-week visit back in Arkansas. They had mutual friends and Coty was the only person who could keep up with how much Diet Coke Beverly drank. They hit it off immediately.

"She 'picked me up' on the bar room floor while I was serving at Chili's and next thing I knew I was fixing furniture for her," Coty shared.

"Not sure I've ever 'picked someone up' but if I ever did, it was him," Beverly said.

The couple has been together since July 9 of 2019 and said they "grew together as an act of fate."

"Our relationship is indescribable," Beverly said.

Coty had a beautiful and thought-out proposal in mind, but the couple had been discussing marriage for some time when they just mutually decided they were ready. "We asked our preacher when he was available, called him on a Tuesday, and he was available on a Thursday," the couple said of how the wedding came together.

"Our wedding was small and intimate. Looking back on it, it was the absolute best day of my life. I wouldn't change a thing about how our wedding happened or the complete intimacy of the entire event," Beverly said. "Neither of us were stressed and it was all about each other. We actually almost didn't tell anyone else, but we decided our closest family members

needed to know, so we surprised them."

"It was wonderful," Coty added. "There was a half moon. We catered burgers and glazed chicken from Chili's. And we were in a log cabin in Finch which has a special meaning for the both of us. But you should have seen Beverly, she was beautiful."

The color scheme was red and green; the cabin was decorated in Christmas. "I found the most beautiful red roses and frosted greenery to go with them so it was perfect," Beverly shared about the event.

The couple shared that Rob McIlwain performed the wedding and his wife helped make their day special, too.

"Rob did an amazing job and invited us into his home, which was extraordinary," Beverly said. "Our family was amazing as well. My sister and brother-in-law helped a ton on such short notice. Kandas Crawford, Coty's manager, helped us with getting the catering. Peterson's warehouse supplied the flowers.

"I could make a list a mile long about why I love Coty; he supports everything about my goals and drive in life. He doesn't try to make me be anyone but myself," Beverly said. "It's an amazing feeling to have someone love you and cherish you for who you are."

"She never quits and she always finds a way to be positive," Coty said of his bride. "She really does everything she can to be optimistic in life."

Photography by Pamela Ward



#JONESBOROHERO & #NEAHERO CONTINUED

Danny Fuller

On Saturday, March 28, the sky turned black and the winds picked up. My husband called me to the back porch to show me the wall cloud. I took one glance and said, "Let's get in the basement now!"

Before we even came up the stairs, we both got texts from Danny and Betty Fuller, friends and co-workers, checking on us. Three of our family members' homes suffered minor damage to total loss.

Danny, an XPO driver, wanted to do something to help all the victims. He couldn't get the idea out of his head that night and on Sunday he contacted the XPO Center Manager, Trevor Carr, to see if there was any way that XPO could help. XPO could offer the truck and trailer if Danny could get someone to partner with XPO.

Danny called Dr. Bill Panneck, the Senior Executive Pastor at Central Baptist Church. They got in touch with several businesses to take collections of money and/or items needed by victims of the tornado.

On Wednesday, April 1, an XPO tractor-trailer pulled into the parking lot of Central Baptist Church. The church put the event on its social media outlets to get the word out. Many volunteers showed up to help load the truck. Throughout the day, the trailer began filling up. Several companies showed up. Unilever donated body lotions, shampoo, and other personal products and Post donated boxes of cereal. Individuals dropped off money, water, and other items. The community came together in this time of need.

At the end of the day, the trailer was then moved to Grace Baptist Church, located near some of the hardest hit areas in town. Grace Baptist along with the Red Cross organized a donation store for the tornado victims. People could pick up water, food, or personal items that were needed. Over \$7,000 was raised as well. Many heroes came together to make this donation drive a success.

This all started with the idea of one person that sparked and caught on fire to help many.



Willie

McDonald

Donna Brister stopped at Academy to offer help after the tornado passed and was told the story of a Jonesboro Hero who likely saved a life with his actions.

"This sweet lady was with her friend when the tornado hit and the young man on the right held onto her to keep her from being pulled into it ... she suffered cuts and bruises, but was saved by his act of heroism ... don't know his name, my daughter and grandson helped her to our truck," Donna wrote on her Facebook Page.

Willie McDonald was interviewed on KAIT and has been showered with praise on social media platforms but no amount of thanks can be given for his selfless act.



KAIT-TV is pleased to announce that its parent company, Gray Television is contributing \$10,000 towards tornado recovery efforts in the Jonesboro, AR area. The donation will be made to the United Way of Northeast Arkansas' Jonesboro Tornado Recovery Fund.



Britt Morgan

Donna Brister stopped at Academy to offer help after the tornado passed and was told the story of a Jonesboro Hero who likely saved a life with his actions.

"This sweet lady was with her friend when the tornado hit and the young man on the right held onto her to keep her from being pulled into it ... she suffered cuts and bruises, but was saved by his act of heroism ... don't know his name, my daughter and grandson helped her to our truck," Donna wrote on her Facebook Page.

Willie McDonald was interviewed on KAIT and has been showered with praise on social media platforms but no amount of thanks can be given for his selfless act.



Above: Volunteers and businesses setup collection points for donations across Jonesboro including at Mosquito Joes (Breanna and Jenny Wilson) and Tommy's Express (Kylie Huth, Hayden Carr, Izzy Garcia & Nick Warren). A-state students Anaelle Charles and Josh Kruse created a piece of art at Craighead Forest Park designed to lift spirits. And a man traveled from Little Rock to help loved ones clean up their home that was destroyed by the tornado.

+Quarantine Coping:

HEROES AMIDST A PANDEMIC

Holli & Paul Nitzsche

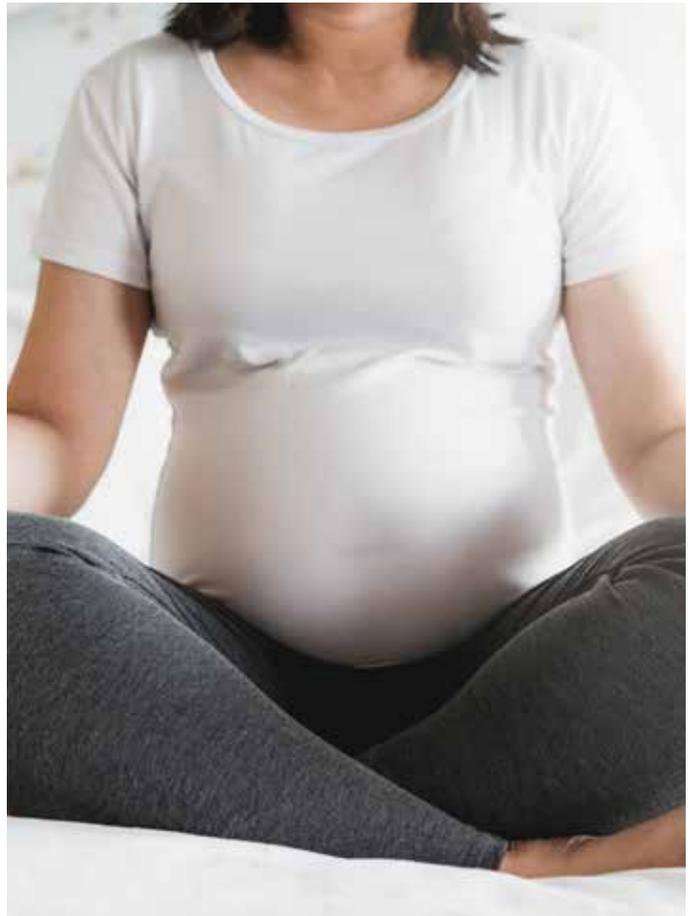
BRTC nursing instructor Holli Nitzsche and her husband Paul, both members of the armed services, have been deployed to help with the COVID-19 response. Holli, a captain in the 339th Army Reserve, was deployed on April 3 to Missouri where she will be assisting in a field hospital. Holli leads the nursing assistant program at BRTC.

Paul, also a captain in the Army Reserve, was also deployed on April 3. He was sent to Texas where he will be given orders and will be working in transportation in response to COVID-19. Paul will be deployed for six months.

The couple have three young children who will be cared for by their families. BRTC is very proud of Holli and her husband for their incredible service to our country.



Pregnancy Yoga



BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

If a little bundle of joy is coming your way in nine short months, there is so much to think about. The nursery, pediatricians, diaper brands and what type of bottle to use, just to name a few. In the midst of all that craziness, however, it is also good to take a step back and take care of yourself.

Most women don't immediately go out and join a gym when they find out they are pregnant, but staying active during those nine months keeps you and baby healthy, and can aid in a safer, easier delivery. Prenatal yoga is the perfect way to get in exercise without putting too much strain on the body.

Yoga absolutely soothes the aches and pains that come with each trimester but the overall benefits of a prenatal practice go much deeper. According to *Yoga Journal*, jumping on the mat while pregnant can increase relaxation techniques, lower stress and teach proper breathing, all of which will come in handy when that much anticipated due date arrives. Fatigue, high blood pressure and mood swings are also common pregnancy symptoms that yoga can help alleviate.

In the first few weeks of pregnancy, a regular yoga practice without any modifications can still be done. After all, that bump isn't in the way yet! But as the belly grows and the body begins to change, so should the postures you flow into. Avoid deep backbends, inversions

and twists. Instead, focus on meditations, side stretches, hip openers and resting postures.

Child's pose is the perfect resting posture that allows you to relax, breathe and still stretch all at the same time. While on your knees, bring the big toes together and take the knees out as wide as your yoga mat. Drop the hips back toward the ankles and walk the hands and arms forward until your upper body is stretched out on the mat. For extra support, place a blanket or pillow on top of your ankles or calves to sit on, and even throw a pillow under the torso to lean into. Take several deep breaths in this pose.

Hip openers are also extremely important throughout pregnancy in order to prep your body for delivery.

Deep squats are important to practice during each trimester and can stretch the hips and relieve pressure you might be feeling in the lower body. From a standing position, take the feet slightly more than hip width apart, toes turned out. Carefully lower toward the ground, keeping the chest open and upright while the hips drop down. Many of us in Western cultures have problems with deep squats, but place a rolled up blanket under the heels if they pop up, or stack several pillows behind you to sit on if you cannot squat all the way down.

Meditation and breathing are perhaps some of the most important yoga techniques that will help you through your pregnancy journey. Pregnancy is hard on the body and can take a mental toll on some. By practicing meditation or even learning how to breathe properly, the stress and anxiety you might be feeling can be greatly reduced. These two practices will also come in handy during the fourth trimester, when you might experience postpartum depression or just regular old stress from adding a newborn to the household.

With so many types of yoga available, it truly is an activity that anybody can do, but always check with your doctor before beginning a new routine.

College Tips by a College Student

BY SARA BROWN



It has been a crazy semester – the craziest one I’ve seen so far, but it’s finally May, which means it’s almost over. Thank goodness. We’ve been through a lot this semester with Covid-19 putting us online for nearly two months and the tornado that came through Jonesboro at the end of March. It’s been a lot to have to deal with, and it’s about to get crazier with end-of-semester project deadlines and finals coming up. Turning in these projects and completing finals online is going to be a new and likely stressful experience for all of us, but here are some things you can do to make things a little easier.

Tip number one: Check your online resources often for deadlines and updates. Wherever your professors and instructors post stuff, be it through email, Blackboard, or something else, check those things AT LEAST once a day, but do it as often as you can. Professors and instructors will likely be willing to work with you through any challenges you face in completing these online courses, but they’ll be most understanding if you’re up to date on what’s due when and any updates to your assignments.

Tip two: Reach out to your professors and instructors if you’re still confused on anything. Chances are, they’ll be understanding and won’t mind a bit to answer your question. Remember, you’re not the only one trying to deal with something new; your professors and instructors have never done anything like this either. This is new for all of us. Ask any questions you may have sooner rather than later so you get the answers you need in a timely fashion.

Tip three: Be patient with your professors and instructors. Don’t bombard them with a bunch of emails about

unnecessary things. Asking relevant questions you have about your assignments or asking for help when you need it is one thing, but it’s another to send several emails a day asking them about things you could have read on Blackboard or things they can’t control. Be mindful; this is the first time many professors and instructors have ever taught an online class. They’re learning as they go just like you are, and there’s no reason to make things harder on them. Send emails about what’s important to getting your work done, and learn to let some things go.

Tip four: This should be obvious at this point -- stay at home unless you are absolutely unable to. The last thing you need before finals and project deadlines is to get sick. You’re more than likely not going to be able to complete your work and take your finals if you do contract Covid-19, and there’s only so much your professors and instructors can do for you. Your best bet is to stay at home and focus on getting through the remainder of this semester for both your own health and the health of others in your community.

And finally, tip five: Don’t be too hard on yourself. We’ve been through it this semester, truly. There’s no need to beat yourself up about how the semester went or what your grades are. You’ve done the best you can do considering the circumstances. We went completely online in a matter of days: Professors and instructors didn’t have much time to get their courses ready, students didn’t have much time to adjust to the new way of doing things. There was a tornado that affected quite a few A-State students and faculty. The point is, it’s been a tough semester, but we’re almost done. Just do the best work you can do and we’ll all get through it together.



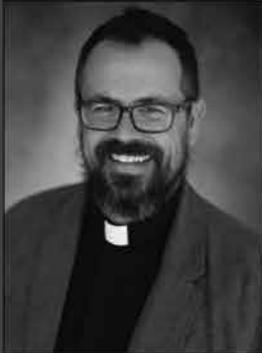
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BIRTHS

Benjamin Clay Hollis

Jerrod and Samantha Hollis of Jonesboro are proud to announce the birth of their son, Benjamin Clay Hollis. Ben was born at St. Bernards Hospital on Sunday, March 22, at 9:29 p.m. He weighed in at 5 pounds, 3 ounces and was 17 ½ inches long. Ben is the little brother of Brooks Hollis, age 3. Maternal grandparents are Kerry and Melonie Knight of Bono. Paternal grandparents are Kevin and Sheryl Hoke and Carl and Sherrie Hollis, both of Jonesboro. Great-grandparents are Helen Knight of Bono, Wilson and Sue Shipman of Brookland and Geraldine Hoke of Harrison.



Parker Andrew Burns

Hannah and Kalen Burns of Paragould welcomed a son, Parker Andrew, to the family on February 25.

Parker Andrew, delivered at NEA Baptist Hospital, weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces and was 20 inches long.

Grandparents are Holly and Billy Parker, Jackie and Kenny Powell and Kim and Kaci Burns.

Photo by Emily Cottingham (Captured by Cottingham)



Pets!



That's right, this issue is all about the animals that complete our families. Watch our Facebook for how to submit your pet to be included!

Quarantine Coping (Continued)



Please continue to send us information on individuals and organizations who are serving their community during this time.

Jonesboro Premiere Awards



Premiere readers voted, in June we'll reveal the winners of the 2020 Jonesboro Premiere Awards!

On The Cover: Emily Vinson
Photo By: Amy Reeves Photography

A close-up photograph of a woman with brown hair wearing large, dark sunglasses and a purple top. She is smiling. In the background, a person in a denim shirt is visible. A circular logo for "Gracefully Southern accessories & gifts" is overlaid on the top right. Text on the advertisement includes: "The Sun will come out!", "JEWELRY ACCESSORIES GIFTS, APPAREL & MORE!", "Shop on line and pick-up curbside or watch our Facebook for store hours.", "870.335.5274 • 203 N. Pruet St. Downtown Paragould", and "gracefullysoutherngift.com" with social media icons for Instagram and Facebook.

An advertisement for Ajax Floor Center. The top section has a red background with the text "Ajax Floor Center" in a large, white, cursive font, followed by the slogan "We are in this Together!" in a smaller, white, cursive font. Below this, a black banner lists services: "Waterproof Laminate, Luxury Vinyl Plank, Carpet, Natural Stone, Laminate, Hardwood & Tile" and "NEW Custom Blinds, Shutters, Shades, Cabinets & Counter Tops". The main image shows a woman and a young child sitting on a wooden floor, playing with toys. A graphic of a tornado is overlaid on the left side of the image. Text on the image reads: "If you have been impacted by the tornado and need flooring estimates we can help." and "More Time at Home Confirms... It is Time for New Floors!". At the bottom, it says "Authorized Schluter Dealer Platinum Dealer for Karndean LVP". The footer has a red background with white text: "FREE Estimates", "6481 HWY 49 South | 870-236-4000 | ajaxfloorcenter.com".

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