

NEA'S

PREMIERE

January
2022

MAGAZINE

THEN, NOW, & FUTURE

**THEN, NOW,
& FUTURE**

Through the Eyes
of Our Leaders

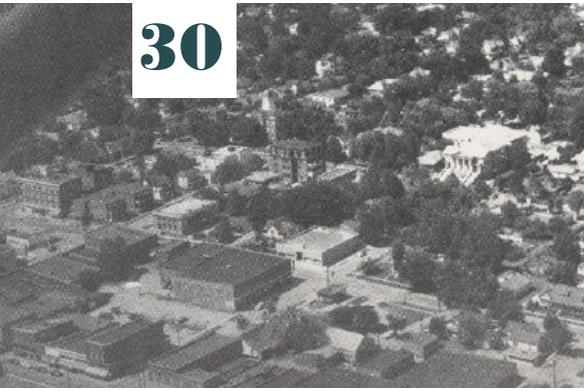
**PARAGOULD
COURTHOUSE**

The Landmark's
History and Present Use

**PLUS:
PROFESSIONAL
PROFILES**

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EVENT CALENDAR

January - July 2022



- **January 25 - 10:00 a.m.**
PREVIEW OF LOS ANGELES & HOLLYWOOD TRIP
First Community Bank Community Room
630 Southwest Drive
- **February 19**
TOOTSIE at the ORPHEUM
Memphis, TN
Lunch at the Beauty Shop
- **March 30**
THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES
Murry's Dinner Playhouse, Little Rock
Jukebox musical comedy with pop songs from the 50s and 60s
- **April 23**
DOGWOOD & AZALEA FESTIVAL
Charleston, MO
Stroll along the 6 mile Dogwood-Azalea Trail. Enjoy upscale vendors, quilt shows & live music.
- **May 11-13**
ST. LOUIS, MO
St. Louis Cardinals vs. Orioles
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- **June 24**
A CLOSER WALK WITH PATSY CLINE
Playhouse on the Square - Memphis, TN

July 11-15 - LOS ANGELES & HOLLYWOOD

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A photograph of the Hollywood sign on a hillside. The sign is made of large, white, block letters and is set against a backdrop of dry, brownish hills and some green trees. The sky is clear and blue.



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From the Manager



It is astonishing and a bit bewildering, at least to me, to ponder the thought that we are all part of an ever-unfolding story. Time spins on and things change and sometimes we notice and sometimes we don't. The not-noticing is what leads us to sometimes look up and think, "Wow, time sure moves fast!"

Indeed, it does, and though there is no way to pause time or to slow it down, I do believe we can spend more of it appreciating what has changed – and what has not.

This is our second "Then & Now" edition of Premiere and with this one we decided to also pay attention to the "Future." The comparison of photos and the hints at what are to come sure do mesmerize me and I am sure they will you, too.

We're putting this magazine together just a few days following a catastrophe in NEA.

A tornado devastated surrounding communities – one of which was specifically highlighted in this edition – and as my heart breaks for all affected, I hope these photos and these stories are a reminder that what things looked like "then" and what things look like "now" are different from what they will look like in the "future."

I hope some "Then and Now" photos are reminders of how far we have come and what we must preserve, and maybe others are a reminder of what must be repaired and what we can help rebuild. I hope we remember to treasure what was important then, appreciate where we are now, and acknowledge what we must do to achieve a bright future.

Lindsey Spencer

Manager of Creative Content

A white GMC SUV is shown driving on a snowy road through a forest. The GMC logo is visible on the front grille and in the top left corner. The name "Glen Sain" is written in a cursive font in the top right corner. At the bottom, there is text: "BEST PRICE" and "BEST SERVICE" on either side of the phone number "870.565.4352" and the website "GLEN SAIN PARAGOULD.COM".

GMC

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NEA'S PREMIERE MAGAZINE

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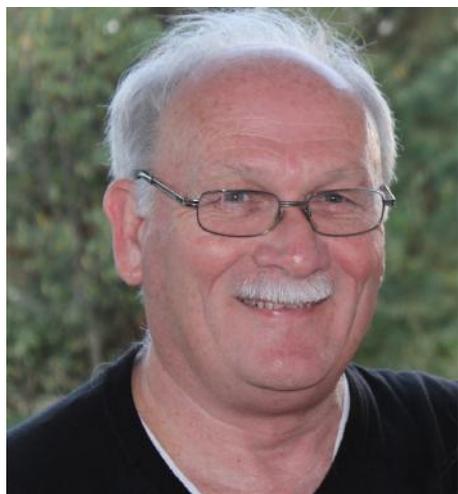
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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



One of the popular singing groups from back in my day was a band called Three Dog Night. The musicians had more than twenty Top 40 hits, including three that rose to No. 1: "Joy to the World," "Mama Told Me Not To Come," and "Black and White."

It was many years before I learned the meaning of their group name, mainly because when I was a teenager I questioned very little. After all, there were also bands named Mott the Hoople, Moby Grape, Cream, The Grateful Dead and Foghat and I just figured one day at practice someone put aside one of those funny cigarettes and said, "What should we call ourselves?" and the names emerged from the fog for whatever reason.

Somewhere down the line I heard reference made to the phrase "three dog night" and learned it supposedly refers to an expression meaning a night so cold that one needs to sleep while embracing three dogs in order to stay warm. On a normally cool night, I guess, one would snuggle with a single dog; on a colder night it would take two dogs to be comfortable and on a frigid evening, I suppose, one would face a three dog night.

Some seem to think the saying originated with North American Eskimos while others vouch for

Indigenous Australians. Regardless, the crude reference to a nightly temperature gauge gave rise to a successful musical act.

I'm thinking it may be time to form a group of my own, since several times in recent memory I have told my wife, "This is a three cup morning."

My daily routine consists of making an early-morning cup of coffee and going to the computer to read from several news sources; when that initial cup is finished, I go back to the coffee maker to brew a second round of liquid life source before returning in hopes of finishing my reading.

On days when I feel especially old and unable to generate much energy, I label them three cup mornings and down yet one more round of coffee, and those instances seem to be occurring more frequently than in the past.

Maybe Three Cup Morning would make a good band name, and while I've never actually written a song I do have plenty of ideas. I have the titles and "written by" all taken care of; now all I need is some words and music and such, and I'll have a bunch of hits on my hands. Tunes like "That's Too Small To Read" and "That Worked Yesterday" will ring true with many my age, as will "Cut Your Hair and Pull Up Your Pants," "Stop Honking, I'm Doing The Best I Can" and "I Don't Know How To Do That."

I recall reading during my senior year in high school a story about many of the popular young songwriters of the day who explained they generally drew from everyday life experiences to come up with song ideas and lyrics. My first thought was, "Well, you lead a lot more interesting life than I do" because they wrote about love and kisses and parties and celebrations, and I tried to think what it would sound like if I pieced together a tune from my everyday life.

The only titles I could come up with were "Mrs. Dale Yelled At Me Again" and "Coach Gore Made Me Run Bleachers." I honestly didn't figure either would be a big hit, but that's about all I had going on in my life at the time, unless you'd want to add, "I Still Wear A Flat Top."

In Mrs. Dale's defense, she was simply doing what any good teacher would do, trying to get me to put in a maximum effort in the classroom in spite of my having a minimum interest. I unfortunately came along one year after my sister, who was just about every teacher's favorite student because she wanted to be the best of the best at everything she did. I wanted to stay eligible for sports.

Mrs. Dale tried her best to create in me an interest in the classics, but I had a classic disinterest and was perfectly happy with making a B.

As for Coach Gore, I can't actually fault him for being frustrated with my performance on the basketball court. I was very much an underachiever until my senior year, and then it was too late to make much of a player out of me. My problem was that in baseball I was always one of the better players on the team and in basketball I was one of those guys who sometimes sat so far away from the coach he would have needed binoculars to find me, if he had wanted to ... which was not all that often.

So if you turn on your radio and hear a snappy tune like "And That Was My Good Knee" or "Do I Have To Go?", chances are good I wrote it, and I probably wrote it on a three cup morning.



LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

Around the New Year, everyone is talking about starting over, taking hold of their lives, setting new goals and getting “back on track.” There is actually something beautiful about this. We all know that we’re not quite right, and we long to start over. There is a common grace to the calendar that allows us to do that, and for that reason I actually enjoy this time of year very much.

But there’s also a dark side. We waste our God-given desire to be made new on resolutions that have no power to change us.

We make ambitious, sweeping resolutions; and in less than a month our hopes for change are quietly discarded. So here’s the challenge for 2022. Don’t make resolutions - make habits.

Unlike resolutions, we actually *become* our habits. This is because every time we do something, it does something to us. More than the big stuff, it is the little daily habits that set the trajectory for who we do or do not become.

So if we want to actually change, we need to take a sober look at where our habits are leading us.

There are no changed lives outside of changed habits. This is why the great Aristotle once said, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

Research tells us it takes 66 days for a new behavior to become a habit. So start now. Stay with it. And don’t grow weary in doing good. Like an acorn to an oak tree, your little habits, over time, will grow into something bigger and more beautiful than you can imagine.

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PET *of the* MONTH

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BY KATYA CHRONISTER

I actually used to work for ARPETS as a customer service specialist, up front at the desk. About my third month there this couple and their granddaughter came in with these adorable three puppies they found. I had been wanting a dog for a really long time. I lived with my mom at the time and we had plenty of animals, but none of them were really “mine.” Those puppies were a “drop off” appointment so I was able to go back in the kennel area throughout the day and just gawk at how cute they were, especially this curly haired, lanky one. He would just almost flop on me when I would pick him up, like his head was too big for his body. I found out the lady was wanting to give them new homes, so I gave her my number and told her I wanted the curly haired one. On June 30th, 2020, I got to take him home.

He has just really been a joy in the lives of my fiancé and me. He didn’t enjoy being moved out of my mom’s house and into our apartment but he’s best friends with my cat Bevo (also a rescue from ARPETS) and you might see her peering out from behind him in one of the pictures. So she makes it so much better for him at the apartment. They are pretty much attached at the hip. He’s just the best dog, so calm and sweet, just a little scaredy-cat some of the time. He loves his little lamb chop toy and his favorite treats are Crunchy-os. My fiancé and I call him Tuckey all the time.



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I sat at the computer and the words would not flow. I had a couple of ideas rolling around in my head, but I could not transfer the ideas to words. I typed a few characters, then backspaced all of them. I tried again, only to delete the entire paragraph. I sat and looked at the screen, rolled my thoughts around and tried to mold them into sentences, but finally walked away.

A couple of days later I got a bit done, but distractions prevented progress and I once again gave up. I sat down again on Friday afternoon and pounded out a few paragraphs, but life got in the way and I had to step away.

That happened to be Friday, December 10, 2021. That date that will now be etched into our memories due to the mayhem and tragedy we watched unfold that evening. As had been predicted, the unusually warm weather spawned a series of tornadoes that wreaked havoc from Arkansas to Kentucky. The weather event was historic and catastrophic.

As I watched it unfold, my heart hurt for those who were in the path, and my heart continues to ache for all those who suffered loss. Though it was fifteen years ago, the memories of our losses from April 2, 2006, are still fresh. The loss of most of our town. The loss of our home, the loss of homes of loved ones, as well as the homes lost by several friends were brought back to the forefront of my mind as I watched the coverage. It was devastating and heartbreaking in 2006 and it hurts me to watch others suffer the same pain.



April 2, 2006, left us feeling devastated, and I thought we would never regain our lives, but people came from far and near to offer a hand, a snack or a hug. We rebuilt, recovered and have been truly blessed. Family, friends, coworkers and people I had never met played a big part in that process and helped us clean up the debris and repair our lives. The love, kindness and help that took place was beyond comprehension and we are still humbled by that compassion.

Nature itself had reared its ugly head and taken much from us, but nature would play a big part in our healing process. As it has been throughout my entire life, the outdoors played a very important role in the recovery after the storm. Many of my "outdoor friends," guys and gals I had spent time with on the lake, in the duck woods or at deer camp showed up to help. The cleanup was a hard and dirty process, but that did not deter anyone. The work was made easier by having those alongside who shared a love of the outdoors, allowing us to occasionally drift away from the difficult task by sharing a few hunting and fishing memories.

Though time was limited, I had friends invite me to hit the water and chase a few fish. I was able to get away for a morning and my longtime hunting friend, David Wilcox, took me on a memorable turkey hunt. Those moments away from the rubble allowed my mind to clear and find some normalcy and provided a great relief from a mind numbing process.



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education
Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

As our friends in neighboring communities go forward, they will need us. By the time this hits the magazine racks, much of the cleanup will be done, but people will still need a hand. They will need someone to help, someone to listen and someone to help renew their minds. This is a great time for those of us who enjoy the outdoors to reach out to our "outdoor friends" who have been impacted by this life changing event.

Rachel Carson, in her book "Silent Spring," wrote, "Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."

There is something special about the outdoors that promotes a healthy mind, spirit and body. Sharing that with others is one of the greatest rewards and greatest responsibilities of those of us who enjoy being out there. And what better time to do that than when our fellow outdoorsmen are in a tough spot?

I know this column has been out of the ordinary for an outdoor piece, but these words are what ended up on the page. Please take time to reach out to our friends who have suffered great loss. They will benefit from some earnest prayers, a kind word and a helping hand. As we enter 2022, lift somebody up, pass on a kind word and love your neighbor! I hope to see you out there!





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Hello!! My name is Atley Robertson. I am a graduate from the ASU Newport Cosmetology program. In addition to Cosmetology, I am currently enrolled in school to become a Permanent Cosmetic Artist. My services include, bridal and event makeup, bridal and event hair styling, hair coloring, blinding, hand tied extensions, waxing, spray tans, and soon, permanent cosmetics! My favorite thing about the cosmetology industry is having the ability to enhance a client's natural beauty and making them feel confident and beautiful. I am so excited to offer my services to NEA and I can't wait to meet all future clients!



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MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

stand when introducing themselves or being introduced. (Women used to remain seated when they were introduced, but no longer.)

say, "Hello, Mrs. Doe." When you repeat the person's name, you show an interest in that person and saying the person's name helps you to remember.

Have you ever been in a room full of people, most of whom you don't know? Whether you are at a business or social event, this can be a daunting and uncomfortable situation.

When you are faced with this situation, what do you say or do?

Should you:

1. Do nothing, because you don't know what to say?
2. Wait until someone introduces himself to you? It's not your responsibility to introduce yourself, is it?
3. Introduce yourself?

If you have the opportunity, introduce yourself.

You may think, "I know I should introduce myself, but that is easier said than done."

If you follow these tips, you won't feel self-conscious, you'll feel self-confident.

1. **STAND UP.** If you are seated, you should stand if you are able. You show respect when you stand. Both men and women

2. **MAKE EYE CONTACT.** Look at the person you are meeting. Looking at the person projects an image of confidence. Looking away or around the room implies you are not very interested.

3. **SMILE.** A smile helps to make the other person feel comfortable and shows you are interested.

4. **GIVE YOUR NAME.** There is no need to go into a long speech. All you need to do is give your name. Speak clearly and distinctly. Don't speak too fast or run your words together. You are giving new information and the other person needs time to process it. If you have met the person before it is wise to give your name again, and if possible, additional information such as when or where you met. If you have met someone before, but are uncertain whether or not they remember you, don't say, "Bet you don't remember me?" This only serves to make the other person uncomfortable. Save the game, "Twenty Questions," for another time.

5. **RESPOND WHEN INTRODUCED.** When you are introduced to someone say the person's name. Look at the person to whom you are being introduced, smile and

6. **REMEMBERING NAMES.** If you forget someone's name there is no need to panic. All you need to do is say, "Please tell me your name." Don't say, "I don't remember your name." When you say, "Please tell me your name," you can go on with the conversation without an awkward pause or any distractions.

7. **SHAKE HANDS.** In most instances, both men and women shake hands. A hand shake is accepted as a greeting in many parts of the world today.

Following these tips can put you "at ease" in almost any situation. The next time you are faced with a room full of people, some or many you don't know, you will feel relaxed and self-confident.

Linda Lou Moore is a certified etiquette consultant. She offers business professionalism and dining seminars for adults, and etiquette and dining programs for children and teens. Contact via Post Office Box 726, Paragould 72451 or at manners@paragould.net.

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Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

Mom guilt was not something I expected after having a baby. In fact, for the first few weeks after Eva was born, I was accepting of any and all breaks I could get. I treated myself with skincare, long showers, afternoons on the back porch. But as Eva grew and it was expected of me to handle it all on my own, I was bombarded with guilt whenever I tried to take time for myself.

So for a long time, I didn't. I dedicated every moment of every day to raising my daughter, because I thought that's what I was supposed to do. My patience was stretched thin and I had nothing to give to other areas of my life: work, friends, my marriage.

After a few consecutive nights of meltdowns from me and Eva both, it finally clicked that I couldn't pour from an empty cup. I had to fill my own needs first. It still took a long time to work on, though.

Anytime I would leave Eva with my grandparents and return home to rest, I felt useless. Why was I spending my time sleeping when I could do the laundry, work, or cook? I enjoy keeping house so I convinced myself that completing those chores acted as a form of self care. But in the back of my mind it really wasn't what I wanted to be doing. I wanted to read a book or crochet, or just sit with a cup of coffee.

Over the last few months, I have focused on not feeling guilty for taking time to do what I want and need in order to be the best mother I can. That means allowing Eva to play alone in the mornings while I sit nearby with coffee. I don't get off the couch until I finish my cup, and I have set that boundary with her (gently, of course). I don't rush through my showers. And before writing this, I went to a friend's house for brunch and enjoyed the entire morning without an ounce of guilt.

Other caregivers have the luxury of going on with their lives as normal and I believe it is time to give that to mothers, as well. We often care for our children without a second thought for ourselves, but that narrative has to change.



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Cocoa Crawl

Downtown Paragould hosted a Cocoa Crawl on December 11th in which participants could purchase a commemorative mug ahead of time and get the mug filled at different participating businesses as they shopped.



The Ugly Sweater Party



Parker Mobley visits with Santa



Khloe, Shawna, Michelle, and Hope



Macie and Debbie Copeland



Collin and Grace McDiarmid

More photos from this event can be found on Premiere's Facebook page.

Enchanting Night



Downtown Paragould hosted Enchanting Night on December 9th from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. featuring carriage rides and Santa visits.

More photos from this event can be found on Premiere's Facebook page.



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Holiday Traditions



Holiday Traditions and Holiday Market took place in Downtown Paragould on December 4th. The special event featured carriage rides and visits with Santa in addition to a market featuring handmade items and homemade treats.



Avery, Tinlee, Tatum and Courtney



Danielle Mitchell and Jeremiah Allen

More photos from this event can be found on Premiere's Facebook page.

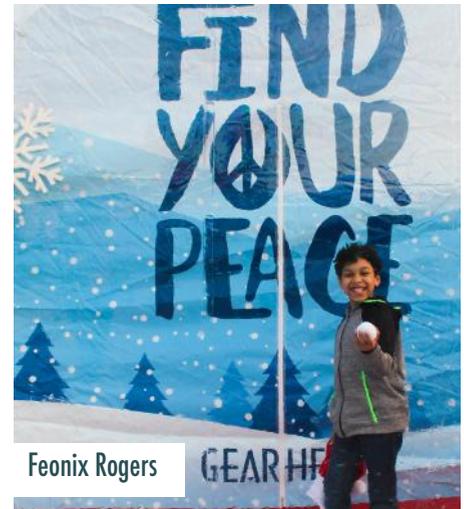
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JoyFest



Finley, Cohen, and Avery

Downtown Jonesboro Alliance hosted its second annual JoyFest featuring a Trail of Trees, a Ferris wheel and other rides, coffee and hot chocolate, shopping, Barton's Snowflake Village, musical performances and more.



Feonix Rogers



Matt Cavanaugh and Jenny Powers

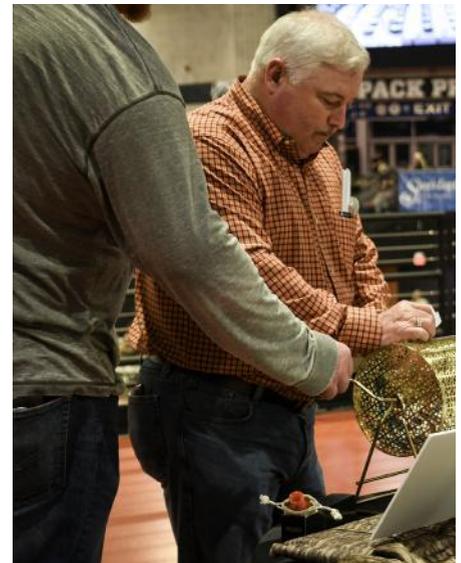


More photos from this event can be found on Premiere's Facebook page.

Duck Classic



The 19th Annual Duck Classic took place on December 10th and 11th including a banquet at First National Bank Arena and hunting on different lands around Northeast Arkansas.



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Taking Care of Your Pet's HEALTH

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

And just like that, 2021 is behind us. I can't believe how quickly this year has flown by! It all seems to move in fast forward these days. And, if you think about it, that's how most pets live their lives. They say that a dog ages seven years in one 365-day year. They really are living in fast forward motion. You think about that aging process- that would mean seven yearly visits in one year to see your doctor. Now, seven visits in one year seems quite excessive for just a standard wellness check. However, did you know that it is recommended that every pet be evaluated and have a wellness screen every six months?

Now, if you think about 1 annual visit every 3.5 years, that doesn't seem too bad!

Ok, that's probably enough with the aging analogy. The point is, that pets age at a much faster rate than we do. Small dogs and cats do not age quite as quickly as large breed dogs, but nevertheless, the average estimate stands.

General wellness exams are recommended every six months for cats and dogs. These wellness checks include a physical examination by a licensed veterinarian, appropriate biannual diagnostics (fecal examinations for intestinal parasites, heartworm testing), vaccinations, ensuring appropriate preventative measures (heartworm, flea, and tick preventives), and a wellness blood and urine screen.

These urine and blood tests can tell us so much about the internal organ function of your pet. All too often I have a pet that presents and is ill. We check blood work, maybe a radiograph (x-ray), and a urinalysis- this information is so helpful in acquiring a diagnosis so that you can move forward with the best treatment plan.

However, a common pitfall is not having an established baseline. Baselines are so important. If I had run these test on this same patient when he/she was well, then I would know where the numbers typically are and it can help me to know what numbers

are most normal for this patient- this, in turn, helps us to best predict the severity of the active disease process and can also give us more information about the probable prognosis with and without the recommended treatment.

During New Year, we wish for health, wealth, and prosperity. It's no accident that the first one listed is health. I hope that this article helps you to determine the best path to a healthy future for you and your pets. For any questions regarding diagnostic tests and what they mean, please call your local veterinarian or reach out to me at ARPets Hospital. Happy New Year to you all!

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RED Re-Release Party



Explore MOR NEA (exploremernea.com) & Jill Radio hosted a Red Re-Release Party at Native Brew Works to celebrate Taylor Swift's re-release of her Red album. The party featured a special red seltzer made just for the event on site at Native, a lyric game, and more. Ticket sales benefited the Foundation of Arts and the Greene County Fine Arts Council.

Photos by Knight Productions
Flowers by Generations Floral Company





More photos from this event can be found on NEA Jill Radio's Facebook page.

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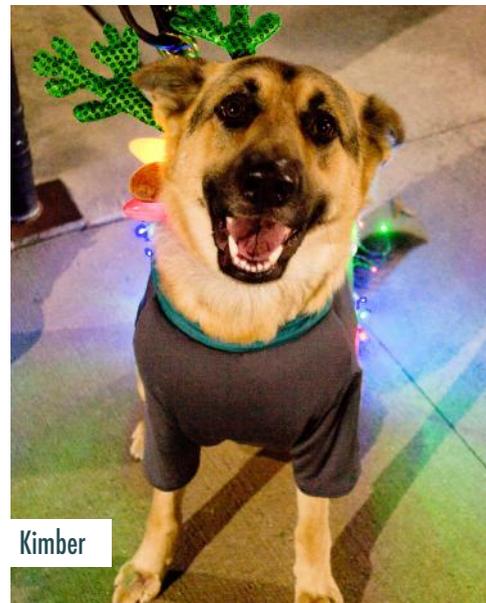
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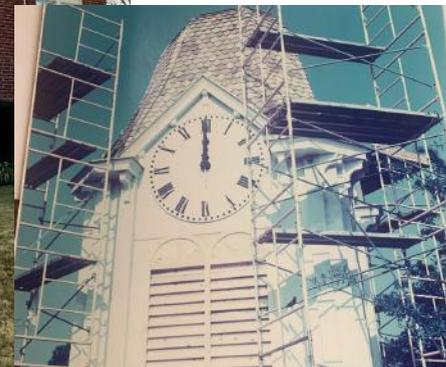
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OLD PHOTOS COURTESY
OF THE PARAGOULD
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

STILL SERVING

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

The government offices of Greene County now sit in a new building that was completed in 1997, but the old courthouse was originally contracted over 100 years before that.

After the addition of a clock and tower, the courthouse officially opened in April of 1888. The first county seat belonged to the community of Paris in 1833 but after several moves and the incorporation of Paragould in 1883, the government center was moved to the heart of the city.

Constructed in a Georgian Revival style, the building originally boasted red bricks that were later covered in brown stucco. A two-story addition was built in 1916, and over the years, the original floor plan was altered to create office space. The historic building was also, at the time, centered in town and its landscape has an interesting history of its own.

Alyssa Blakeney, communications and events coordinator at the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce, said

Paragould became home to the second oldest Statue of Liberty in the United States on November 11, 1924 (Armistice Day).

“Several Paragould residents worked to raise \$2,000 to purchase the statue,” Blakeney said, adding it would serve as a memorial to the 40 Greene County men killed in World War I.

“According to newspaper reports, more than 5,000 people turned out at the Northeast corner of the Greene County



Courthouse on Armistice Day for the unveiling of the statue," she said.

Other names were added to the memorial after World War II, and the Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars. The statue was added to the National Register of Historic Places on June 20, 1997. The courthouse also joined the register 21 years earlier on August 11, 1976.

In 1965, the original clock tower of the courthouse was removed when county officials determined it would be cheaper to take down than repair. A new tower was placed in 1995, and prior to that, one Paragould native worked to bring other restoration to the building.

According to the Greene County Index, Mary Ann Schreit believed the brown stucco should be removed and the building returned to its 1888 glory. Some citizens thought the building would be torn down once construction of the new courthouse began, and a writer to the newspaper even suggested videotaping the historic landmark for future generations before demolition.

With Schreit's appeal to the community, the Greene County Courthouse Preservation Society was formed. The clock tower was replaced, the original red bricks were unveiled for the first time since WWI, and a commemorative sidewalk was added with bricks inscribed with donors' names.

Today, the courthouse has undergone various renovations and after the county seat moved to its new home, the building now serves as home to the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"After the new courthouse was built, the building wasn't used until the Chamber began using it," Blakeney said.

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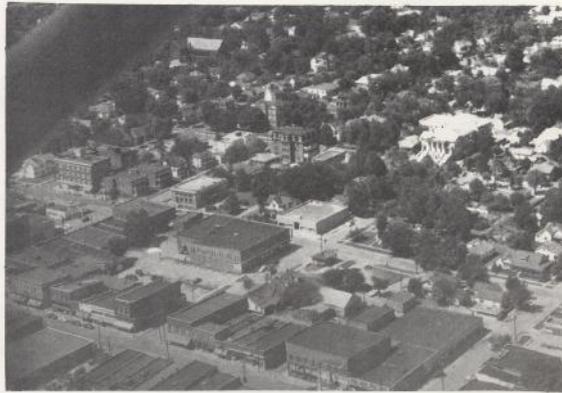
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Aerial View of Paragould 1950



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

One thing new Paragould Mayor Josh Agee has learned is that “every day as mayor is frustratingly slow. You have a lot thrown at you on a daily basis and you can’t snap your fingers and get something done,” he said. “Someone will call with a code enforcement issue and I remind them we’re over 100 years old and we’ve only had a code enforcement office for a few years. We’re a hundred years behind, but every day we’re making progress. And progress is what we’re all about.”

When considering matters of progress compared to the Paragould of a hundred years ago it is easy to at first call to mind life in the 1800s. But a hundred years ago was actually the 1920s, not the 1800s, and a time when all of American life was changing prior to The Great Depression. Paragould was no different; incorporated in 1883, the timber industry was king into the '20s.

As the land began to be stripped of trees, agriculture took over and farming cotton, corn and soybeans proved successful.

The availability of rail transportation brought about a surge of large corporate investments. Men left their farms and headed to work in the timber mills and factories that had been recently constructed around the area. Merchants and professionals followed. When several Gainesville businessmen opened stores here prior to 1900 it marked that town's demise as the county seat; Paragould assumed that mantle and growth resulted on a steady basis.

By the time the 1920s rolled in, Paragould was a multi-faceted career area. It became the principal trading center of Northeast Arkansas with an infrastructure developed to adequately support the demands of new industry and growing population.

Department stores, banks, a hospital -- all the basics for a thriving community -- took root. When the stock market crash of 1929 triggered The Depression, fortunately, none of the Paragould banks failed.

Still, factors such as the tremendous slow-down of the business activities nationwide and collapsing farm prices handcuffed the local economy for over a decade.

On the positive side of those times, Dr Pepper had relocated here in the '20s, followed by Ely shirt makers, Ed White Shoes and Foremost Dairies and before long thousands of local residents had steady employment. The 1950s-60s growth was spurred by the arrival of Emerson Electric, and the marriage of farming and industry proved successful for the Paragould community.

Today

As mayor, Agee has on his to-do list a number of local projects, including the Eight Mile Creek Trail, the Downtown Farmers Market, injecting “tons of money” into the parks system, improving drainage issues and introducing a mobile sky patrol to invest in keeping crime down.

“The entire area is a key piece to the puzzle,” he said when looking at specific places in which to make progress. But if he can select only one of his many wishes on which to concentrate, he says it is focusing on the expansion of industry. “The biggest issue I think we have is in being industry and service based,” he said. “We still have lots of industry and in a poll 58 percent recently said they would expand if they had the workforce. So anything we can do for bettering the quality of life and to convince people to move here -- and keep residents here -- that’s what we want to look at.

“Recruit and retain, look at that. Let’s face it; people don’t move somewhere because of good drainage, although it’s important. They move places for schools, hospitals, jobs and quality of life.”

Allison Hestand, Director of Economic Development/CEO of the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce, is in perfect agreement. She points to a series of events representing progress as being attractive to individuals and industries looking for new homes, as well as for firmly-rooted locals.

“We are introducing new restaurants and eating establishments,” she said. “We just did the ribbon cutting for the new Sonic Drive-In south of town and we have Starbucks and Steak ‘n Shake under construction; and Freddy’s Burgers should start in the spring. 1812 Pizza and The Twisted Goose are coming to Downtown.

“We have multiple houses and residential areas that are in the works, including one on Barnhill Road and one on the corner of Mockingbird Lane. They will provide hundreds of new homes. And our fiber Internet is a really big deal, as it is all across Arkansas. We became a Gig City in 2021 and our situation is already taken care of whereas a lot of communities are still trying to get there. We have solar energy coming into our municipally owned provider and more to come.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



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She said the current growth spurt is “because that is a focus of the city of Paragould. Our utilities, police, fire, health care system ... they have really taken care of us. Getting the fiber optics done under budget where other communities can’t seem to do it, that is so big, especially when it is necessary for so many to work from home in these times. It’s the little things like that that are taken care of constantly that prepare us for what’s ahead.”

Change, Agee said, is not to be feared, but rather embraced. It won’t change Paragould’s unique identity as a mixture of small town and big city life. “Every town has a McDonald’s or a Walmart,” he said. “Every town doesn’t have a Chow 118 or a Hyde Park or a Terry’s Cafe, or the boutiques and places where the artists are. It truly makes for us the best of both worlds. Some people don’t understand the importance of downtown. I feel downtown is our inheritance, what the founders of our city left to us. We know people who have squandered an inheritance. We’re taking care of what we’ve been given, building tomorrow’s expansion. That’s the key thing: It feeds so much of our growth.”

Tomorrow and The Economic Development Corporation

The Economic Development Corporation is a private not for profit organization charged with directing the economic development efforts for Paragould and Greene County. Working in partnership with the City of Paragould, City of Marmaduke, Greene County, Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, Paragould Light, Water and Cable and the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce, the EDC hopes to ensure land, buildings, and other necessary resources needed for the betterment of the Paragould area exist.

Goals include improvements in the areas of transportation; new business growth through entrepreneurship; establishment of small industrial and service parks; creation of large industrial complexes for future expansion; developing a unified image for Paragould and Greene County through marketing projects; and supporting efforts for development of programs to facilitate orderly growth.

Both Hestand and Agee beam about the prospects for the EDC’s soon-to-be constructed Generating Innovative Network (GIN) in the 200 North block of Pruet Street. “It’s a small business

incubator,” Hestand explained. “We will expose you to ideas or thoughts, or train you. We’ll work alongside you as we train you. We hope at some point to be an exposure point for what industries tell us they need in a worker.”

Agee said the GIN is “tied directly to local industry. The Innovation Center is really to take to small businesses and entrepreneurship ... like small restaurants, bakeries, even to teach welding. If we can get some sixth- and seventh-graders down there and show them what welding is all about one of them might say, ‘I really like this; I think I can do this,’ then we might convince them to become an experienced welder, which translates to job opportunities right here and we all benefit.

“We plan on holding summer camps. Some grants provide for people to come in and work them. I tell people we have to find our program and our progress. We won’t be great at *everything* but we can be good at *some* and great at *some* and this center is going to be an incredible asset. It will be a place to pitch ideas, and I’m real excited about that. It will have a conference room where you can sit around the table and trade thoughts and ideas.”

Hestand also has great hopes for the center. “It will supply space for entrepreneurs and small businesses and also serve as a workforce training center,” she reiterated. “If you have an idea, we will try to help facilitate that for you. We will try to get people who are out of work, back into work. It will provide small business workspace and it will develop in several stages. I guess you can say it is a small business/entrepreneurial support system and a workforce cultivator. It’s a little more like a starting point for a business. We will provide some classes, and it will be grant funded so a lot of what can be done will be tied to what the grant money can be used for.”

She said the current success of Downtown Paragould is due to “a group of investors who saw a vision and were committed to seeing it through. It’s a commitment from all the industries and individuals involved. I will say our community is one blessed by people coming together. Since I’ve been involved in economic development I realize just how lucky we are. We are people all trying to move in the same direction. We have remained steady, which has helped maintain the good reputation of our community.”

Growth supported by an active community spirit and combination of visionaries and “doers” is what has taken Paragould from a town with muddy streets and wooden storefronts to a vibrant, thriving entity. “We have plenty to be busy with for the next ten years, and then we can measure how much progress we’ve made, how much growth,” Hestand said. “We have placed an emphasis on the quality of life in our city and we’ve focused on that here in Paragould for a while. We want to give people a reason to be proud to live here and want to impress people to want to move here and contribute to our community.”



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OF MAIN STREET PARAGOULD &
RICHARD BRUMMETT

Downtown Paragould



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

It is important to remember what Downtown Paragould has always been, because the city's history is almost as unique as its name. But it is also a must to consider the today and tomorrow of the downtown area, the site of progress, vitality and vision.

Paragould's start as a railroad town has been well documented. It is the only Paragould in the world, born by combining the names of two railroad tycoons -- J.W. Paramore and Jay Gould -- whose railroads literally crossed here in 1882. At the time, this part of Arkansas was home to some of

the highest quality lumber sources in the nation and with rail transportation readily available, the timber industry blossomed. As would be expected, towns began to pop up all along the rail lines.

Before long Paragould also began to thrive as a manufacturing town. Woodworking and general timber-related businesses were necessary and appealing vocations: Si Whitley is credited with starting the first saw mill; Henry Wrape and Dave Ray put in a stave mill; the Hickson Brothers company found fortune with lumber; and a chair factory also was constructed. Soon

an ice plant, electric light plant, telephone system, water works, and sewage system all sprang into existence to serve the ever-growing population ... not a boom as in oil-rich areas of the country, but a steady growth.

Growth demands additional services and a fire department was constructed in 1892, a city council formed in 1885, a hospital in the early 1900s. Churches, banks, schools, newspapers and retail stores became the norm as the city -- and a bona fide downtown area -- began to form. In the early years, much of the Paragould

business sector was located on the North end of Pruett Street.

Downtown Paragould took on a more modern look with the addition of street lights -- referred to as The Great White Way during WWI -- and department stores, hotels, restaurants and more dotted the landscape as both agriculture and manufacturing began to outgrow the timber industry as sources of income.

Longtime residents fondly recall business names like Bertig Brothers, Joseph's Mercantile, Trice Brothers, Wyatt's, Meriweather and Steadman hardware stores, the Vandervoort Hotel and grocers Kirchoff and Nesler. Downtown was the place to be for shopping, visiting with neighbors and entertainment in the form of an opera house and movie theaters. But like most downtown areas across the nation, Paragould's fell victim to the arrival of strip malls and large discount stores that favored sites located away from the downtown area during the 1970s and '80s. They offered more attractive shopping hours than the 9 to 5 downtown shops did and more parking spaces but the difference between Paragould and many other cities is that local leadership never let go of the connection between a healthy downtown and a healthy economy, and efforts were put in place to bring life back to Pruett Street and the surrounding area.

Today, the fruits of those efforts can readily be seen. Restaurants, boutiques, clothing stores and more line Pruett, as well as the adjoining streets. Downtown merchants, in conjunction with Main Street Paragould, have turned their area into a place to be ... and a place to want to be by offering events and experiences for families to enjoy on a frequent basis. The historic Collins Theatre is home to top-notch musical acts as well as stage productions. And up and down Pruett Street, door to door and store to store business owners encourage patrons to come back downtown after dark for special treats.



The Historic Collins Theatre in Downtown Paragould recently installed new carpet. Photo courtesy of Joy Robinson.

Just in recent weeks Downtown Paragould has played host to the annual Christmas Tree Lighting in Centennial Park; Holiday Traditions and Holiday Market featuring carriage rides and Santa visits, hand-made, home produced and baked goods; the "Winter Wonderland" Christmas Parade; Enchanting Night, with carriage rides and Santa visits; the Cocoa Crawl, where guests purchase a Cocoa Crawl mug from one of the businesses, then sip and shop all over Downtown with merchants refilling the mugs at each stop; a production of *The Nutcracker* and The Ultimate Oldies Show at the Collins.

"Something for everyone," Main Street Paragould's Gina Jarrett likes to say, pointing to even more things "currently in motion, like The Farmers Market Pavilion. We don't know a timeline yet, maybe in six months, probably will be in the summer," at the old power plant building that is scheduled for restoration.

"1812 Pizza will be moving into the old building that was a used goods store at the North end of the 200 block of Pruett," Gina said, "and the refurbishing is going quickly. Probably looking at the first of the year, depending on construction, for them to open. They have uncovered some of the past while renovating; they found some four-paned round windows that were hidden by interior and exterior walls, on the North side. They are fantastic.

"On the other corner of that block, where Believ Paint and Glass sat for about fifty years, that will become The Twisted Goose, owned by the people who in the past had The Red Goose here in the Downtown area before. That one will depend on the work as well; the remodeling is happening and they're removing the drop ceiling for a herringbone plank ceiling and mimicking it on the floor. That will add two super eating establishments in Downtown."

Paragould's Economic Development Corporation also plans to take up a large section of the block with a new enterprise of its own. Gina said these moves and many others on schedule will be "huge, so huge, for Paragould." She is planning her retirement for "first of the year-ish" with Miranda Reynolds already at her side, ready to step into the driver's seat of MSP.

"She is such a huge blessing to me," Miranda said of her current boss. "Imagine me inheriting the Christmas Parade without her guidance. She is helping me learn the ways of Main Street Paragould. Things go so fast from training and everything and then she just says to

someone, 'Hi, y'all, meet Miranda' and off we go. I am very fortunate to already know some of the people in leadership roles through my time in television ... the mayor, Allison Hestand ... KAIT was a very good platform for me. I welcome the challenge with open arms; absolutely welcome it. I hate to see Gina leave ... it will be too quiet here in the caboose. But I'm very excited to see what can be done in the next fifteen years in Downtown Paragould."

Gina said even more is in store to add to the area's appeal: "The Foundry will be making a big move after the first of the year, probably quadrupling its space. Another one of that block, Willow Salon, is the brand for Backroad Social. She's getting ready to go full retail instead of just half her space for retail. We learned Southern Soil is closing but some of its most-loved brands will stay downtown except in another business. Next to Chow, new owners and new businesses we can't reveal yet are coming ... it's all going to be tremendous for Downtown."

"All of these are game changers for Downtown," Miranda added in agreement.

"Progress takes time," Gina said. "When I walked into this office in 2005 there was in place a plan for a Farmers Market. Not the one we have now, but one was in the plans. What we see now is the vision. Progress just takes time."

Miranda summed it up by saying, "All toward a common goal."

That goal has always been to keep Downtown alive and thriving, and it's working.



Gina Jarrett

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January 15
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The Collins Theatre
7:00 p.m.



January 23
Natasha Rayevskiy Dance
Studio presents
"The Nutcracker"
The Collins Theatre
1:00 p.m. & 4:00 p.m.



January 24th
Bluegrass Monday
The Collins Theatre
7:00 p.m.



January 28th
Daniel and Angie Stidham
presents Ronnie McDowell
featuring Allen Hilbert
A benefit for Melba Barnes
The Collins Theatre
7:00 p.m.



January 31st
Greene County Spelling Bee
The Collins Theatre
7:00 p.m.

A complete listing of all Downtown events can be found under "Events" at downtownparagould.com or facebook.com/oneandonlydowntown/events.

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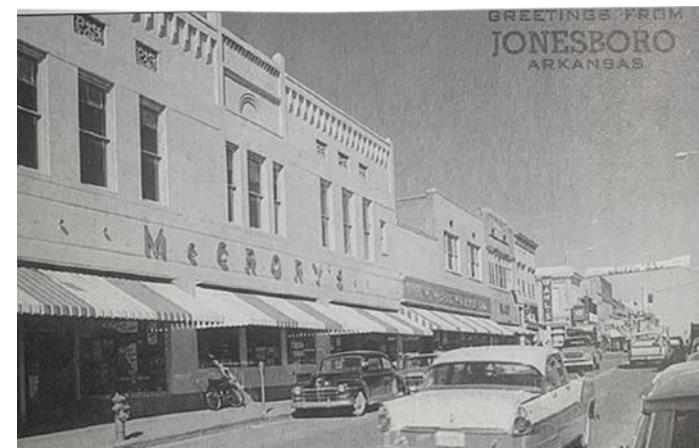
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Downtown Jonesboro Then
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January 7th - 9th
Carrie the Musical
The Forum Theatre
 Different Times



2nd & 4th Thursday
Singer Songwriter Series
The Recovery Room
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- Heather Shrader

WHAT IS &

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

If there is one thing Heather Shrader wants people to know, it's that you don't need anyone's permission to impact your community in a positive manner – unless, as in her case, you want to use their building.

Heather, who grew up in Trumann and has since lived in Northwest and Central Arkansas, now lives in the Downtown Jonesboro area with her husband, Brandon. While driving past a building she must've laid eyes on hundreds of times, a new thought occurred to her: She wanted to see the old Coca Cola mural restored.

"I'm not an artist. I don't know anything about painting," Heather clarified, acknowledging the fact that one does not have to be the expert in order to be the one to make things happen. "I don't know anything about the proper restoration of murals. I came in with no knowledge. I just saw an opportunity to make an impact and I wanted to explore, wanted to see if I could get it done."

The inspiration to see the mural returned to its former glory did not end with the thought of it – Heather reached out to Coke to see if they'd be willing to front the cost for the project. The first, and often repeated, question was: "So who are you with?"

"And I said, 'Well I'm not with anyone, I just live Downtown and I saw this mural,' and they said they'd actually been trying to do something with that mural for a long time, so if it's something I was interested in facilitating ... but it kept coming back to, 'Who are you with?'"

Heather didn't have an answer for that, but it didn't stop Coke from supporting her in her mission.

A "yes" from the well-known and beloved brand was not the end, though, for the mural that would take much more than a chunk of change to complete.

WHAT'S *possible*



PHOTOS TO LEFT COURTESY OF VINCE PEARCY & RANDOM GOTT

MORE OF VINCE'S WORK ON PAGE 42

"I'm just a person that lives in this community that took some initiative to explore their own ability to impact their surroundings and their community. I don't need anyone's permission to do that - well, except the building owner, where we painted." - Heather



From the time Heather reached out in March 2021 to the completion of the project in October, she would learn on the fly just what it took to find the funds, hire an artist, and work out logistics for a project of this size.

During that time, there was a lot of negotiating and working to find the right artist, because the mural was not like other murals. Heather explained it involved a ghost mural - rather than a blank space, the wall consisted of a mural close to one hundred years old and had been painted a few times over the years. Heather and the others who helped in her mission wanted to see the mural returned to its original state and needed an artist specifically knowledgeable about historic murals. Vince Pearcy is the name that kept coming up.

Heather credited DJA with helping her find Vince and for their support at every turn, Olympus Construction for donating a lift, and the West End Neighborhood Association for donating paint. Each of those steps were a win, but each were single checkpoints in a longer journey.

"I found out the actual cost that goes into making a project like that happen, and the logistics to making a project like that happen," Heather said, explaining that in order for Vince to do the project and do it right, he would need help cleaning up the wall in addition to other arrangements. The initial offer from Coke that Heather believed would feasibly cover the project began to look like just a fraction of what would be needed. The street - a very busy one - also needed to be shut down in order to access the mural.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



“There were so many moving parts that I wasn’t really privy to, or prepared for, that I had to learn on my feet to make it happen, because I started something and I couldn’t let it go,” Heather said. “I wanted to see it through.”

Every day she walked past and saw progress, Heather felt her spirits lift.

The iconic mural in Downtown Jonesboro wasn’t the only one Heather was facilitating in 2021. Around the same time, Heather stated it seemed there was a much bigger plan at play.

“I’m not affiliated with any organization but I’m a very resourceful person. I get to meet lots of cool folks Downtown so I knew that DJA, if I couldn’t find an artist they could, so I reached out to Lindsey Wingo. She hunted down Vince for me

because he’s that historic mural artist. She knew I had coordinated that contract with Coke, so when she was ready to put more murals Downtown, she came back and said, ‘Hey, I’ve got all this wall space, we want more murals, do you have an artist that might be able to bring to fruition some of these?’” Heather recalled introducing the story that she had, oddly enough, just met an artist in Little Rock whose work she greatly admired.

And again, around the same time, a boutique in Heather’s hometown of Trumann also asked if she knew of an artist who would be interested in painting a mural.

Heather helped coordinate artist Talia Winkler with Downtown Jonesboro, Wildflowers Boutique, and Stepping Stones Homeless Shelter.

Heather’s personal favorite mural is on the side of the shelter because of what it represents as much as what it looks like.

“I think there’s a misconception on homelessness, and that people that are homeless deserve it in some way. But in reality, there are so many of us that are one paycheck away from being homeless,” Heather stated. “It can happen very easily. That shelter is particularly close to me. Within one day after spreading the word, the citizens of Trumann raised the funds for that mural. They said, ‘We need a phrase, we want something hopeful and colorful and inviting, something that depicts what this shelter does; let’s make a statement to this community about who we are and what we’re here for.’ ‘Cause again – trying to repair this perception of what this shelter does for the community. It’s a safe spot, a safe place to land. So, we came up with ‘Hope lives here.’”

Heather said driving down the road it’s amazing to see the mural peel out from behind the architecture as you approach the shelter.

How does Heather feel about helping bring about something that will outlive her and helping provide something that people appreciate every single day?

“I think the message isn’t ‘I did this’, it’s ... it isn’t about credit, I just hope when people see these murals, and see people like me, they know I’m just a person that lives in this community that took some initiative to explore their own ability to impact their surroundings and their community. I don’t need anyone’s permission to do that – well, except the building owner, where we painted. I think it was a shock to some that I didn’t come in the name of DJA, or the city or anything. I was just a person that thought this would be a good idea. I got a lot more out of it than I ever really expected. I love my community. I love watching people come together. Those murals are going to be around for a long time, and no one’s going to know that I did it, and that’s fine. But I know. One of my favorite quotes in the whole world is that, ‘True leaders plant trees whose shade they know they may never sit in.’ That’s what real leaders do. They sprinkle seeds everywhere and know they may never actually see the benefit but they know it’s worth it and worthwhile. The payoff for me is being able to drive by and see something that I was able to see through.”

It's true that not many people will know who was the driving force and the connection between making these beautiful works of art possible – perhaps only the others involved and those who read this story, but that's okay. In the grand scheme of things, not many people are going to know those murals happened because of Heather Shrader; but because of her, many people will experience art, beauty, and inspiration. And that just may lead to many, many others deciding they want to make something cool happen, too.

Heather says it best: "No matter what organization you're affiliated with, you can impact your surroundings, your community, and other people, with the tools that you carry. It is your responsibility, if you want to see change, to make it happen. If you see something that can be made better, then make it better. Use the resources that you have. And if you don't have the resources, then find someone that does. If all of us could really step into exploring our own individual capacity and ability to impact our environment, there's no telling what our space could look like."

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Photo to Left from
Images of America
Jonesboro And Arkansas'
Historic Northeast Corner

THEN,
NOW,
& FUTURE



The Coca Cola Mural (Page 39) was not the first Vince Percy has restored. Vince restored the Globe Drug Store Mural at the corner of Huntington and Main - TWICE!

Downtown Jonesboro

Downtown Jonesboro has seen revitalization over the past years that has many excited about preserving its history and looking forward to its future.

525 Church Street

What is now Church Street Station, an event venue, used to serve as a courthouse and a post office. This building still stands and offers a historic gem on Church Street.



Photo courtesy of the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce

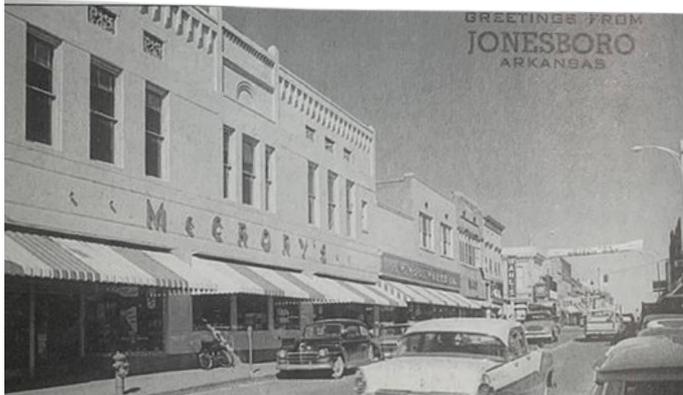


Photo courtesy of the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce



The Foundation of Arts Forum Theatre

The Foundation of Arts Forum Theatre was once the Strand Movie Theater



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{Then/ Now}

THE FACTS

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It happens **right here in Northeast Arkansas**. Human trafficking affects every community in the United States across age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds. Human trafficking is just as prevalent in the rural areas, suburbs and small towns as it is in urban areas.

You can help.

{NOW}

HOW YOU CAN HELP

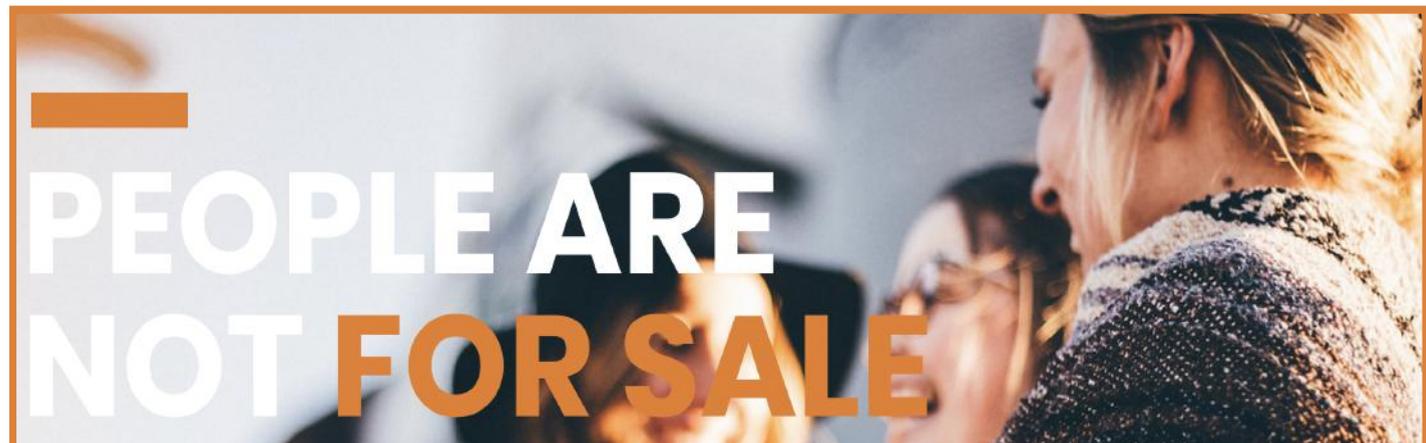
Donate to support organizations that go to work every day supporting law enforcement, helping victims, and educating communities.

Educate yourself. Know the signs. Hope Found provides training and education to the community on understanding the definition of human trafficking, who traffickers are recruiting, how they are recruiting and how to identify victims of trafficking. Preventing one person from falling prey to a trafficker is worth the time, effort, and money.

THEN, NOW, & FUTURE

{FUTURE}

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Our mission is to end human trafficking. We need your help.



January 11th is Human Trafficking Awareness Day & Department of Homeland Security's Wear Blue Day – please consider donating to help us support survivors of human trafficking in our own community and our efforts to end it for good. Donate and learn more about how you can help us bring an end to human trafficking on homefoundnea.org

And join us in wearing blue on January 11th to bring more awareness to NEA. Tag us in your social posts and invite your friends to support Hope Found. Let's [#endhumantrafficking](https://twitter.com/endhumantrafficking)

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JONESBORO

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

In 1859, not even 200 people resided in Jonesboro. The construction of a courthouse was delayed several years and the first train through the city became stuck, and supplies had to be carried into town. Despite this rocky beginning, the city is now called home by more than 70,000 residents and business is booming.

"Growth is everywhere in Jonesboro: industrial, commercial, retail and residential," Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce president Mark Young said. "There are currently several major industrial projects under way in Jonesboro's Craighead Technology Park, representing over \$100 million of investment."

Young added that home sales have already eclipsed 2020's record and permits for new home construction are on pace to set yet another record. In fact, the projected population for Jonesboro in 2024 is over 83,000. Young said in the last 20 years the population has grown over 40 percent.

"But that's just data," he said. "What a spreadsheet doesn't show is how Jonesboro has transformed into a city built on modern manufacturing, cutting-edge healthcare and education. We're growing in every economic aspect because people want to invest their capital and live their lives here."

Adding to that growth are two major mixed-use developments. Young said between Greensborough Village and Southern Hills, nearly 400 acres of retail, office and residential space are being created.

According to a Jonesboro Unlimited Economic Advancement Report, JU created a plan in 2017 to create 2,500 new direct jobs. The goal was exceeded in only three years. In the report, JU chairman Chris Barber said the group was confident they could meet the goals set in that plan.

"What we didn't expect was that (we) would exceed them so thoroughly," he continued in the report.

New healthcare clinics, photography studios, churches and parks are also all noted in the third quarter report. The newest initiative, announced in August, highlights business growth and innovation, talent and workforce development, quality of life and infrastructure, and branding and marketing.

"Arkansas State University has just announced the beginning of an Arts and Innovation District on campus," Young added. "The plan comes with a historic \$25 million challenge gift from the Wingate Foundation, the largest gift in A-State's history."

Young has been with the Chamber of Commerce for 15 years and has seen the city change tremendously in that time. He calls the growth "impressive."

"We have a real 'blink and you'll miss it' energy happening here," he said. "If you don't visit Jonesboro with some frequency you will always find something new and exciting."

In fact, those who haven't visited in years may not even recognize Jonesboro.

"One thing that has not changed is the great people," Young added. "Quality of life, low cost of living, plentiful jobs and a constant dose of southern hospitality make us special," Young said.

FOA The Foundation Of Arts



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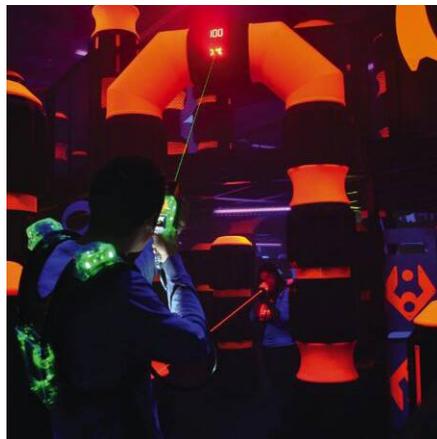
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HIJINX



Hijinx – formerly the Jonesboro Bowling Center – was previously owned by Lavon Crawford. Stacey Blaxton purchased the company in 2002 with plans to transform the location into a family entertainment center.

The first task was to remove eight lanes in order to put in a multi-level Lasertron Arena. There are still 32 bowling lanes in addition to arcade games. In September of 2017, the Jonesboro Bowling Center went under construction again and this time some rebranding as well.

Hijinx, as it soon became known, added a ropes course and a soft contained play and foam factory. Today, there are more than 60 arcade games and four rock climbing walls. But the family center isn't done growing.

The future includes plans for a go-cart track that will be three levels and a miniature golf course that will be located under the track. Hijinx is always looking for new attractions and the latest in gaming and adventures in order to bring new entertainment to Jonesboro.



Hijinx

GAME NIGHT
REINVENTED

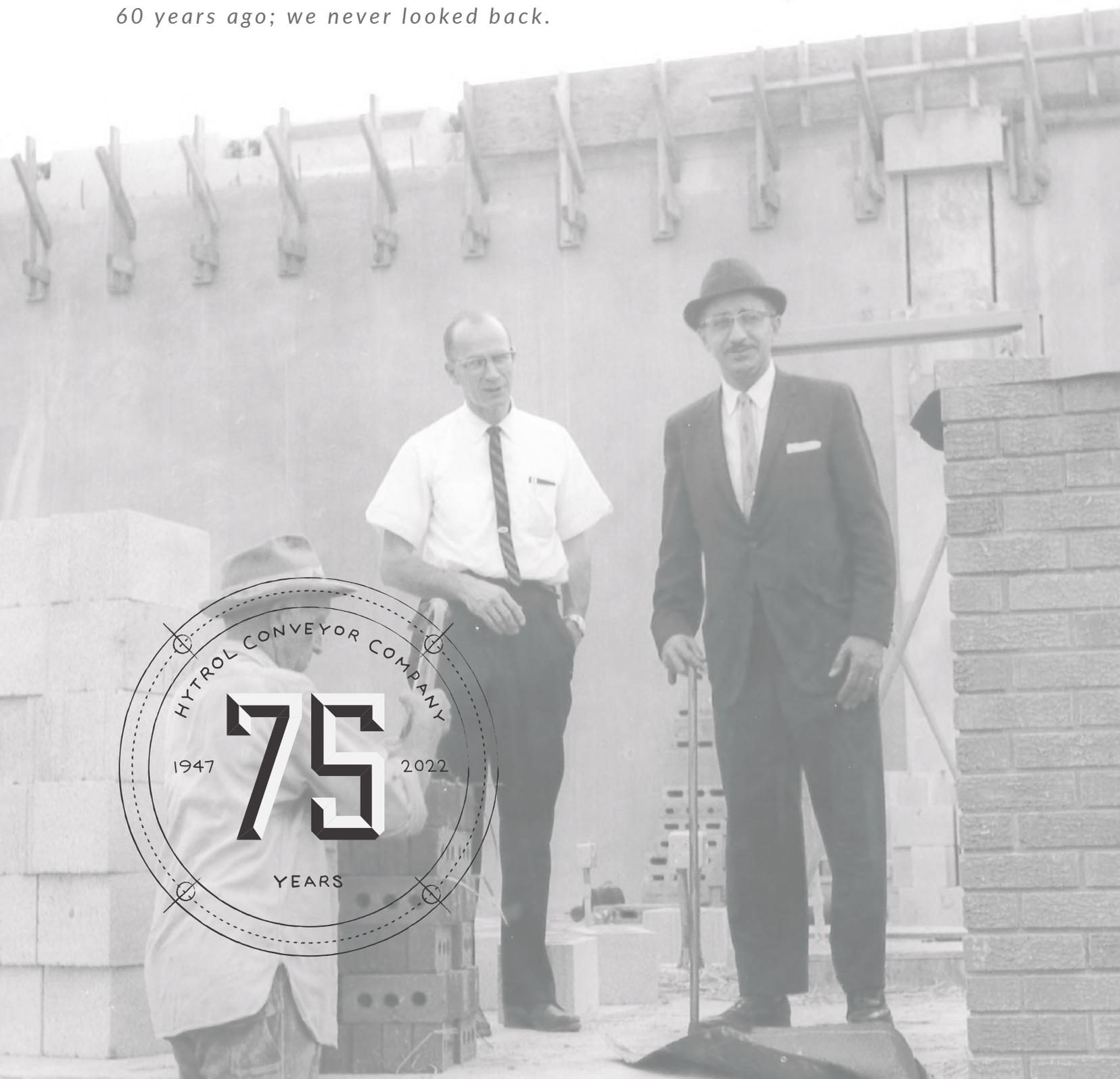
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Jonesboro Health Food Store

45 years of serving NEA

Jonesboro Health Food was first imagined by Wilma Stone in 1975. She believed whole-heartedly in living a natural lifestyle and made it her life's work to share that passion with the community. She first opened the little store on Stone Street. (Yes, it was named after her.) It eventually grew into the location it is now. When Ms. Stone reached retirement, she sold her store to her niece so she could keep it in the family. In the '90s Sue Russell purchased Jonesboro Health Food and expanded its offerings. She grew the business for around 15 years, then sold it to her great niece -- current owner Amanda Yates.

Jonesboro Health Food looks much different today than it did even 10 years ago. When Amanda and her husband bought the store, they doubled its size and brought in natural and organic groceries. A few years later, another change took place: Out with the groceries and in with the Olive Oil! Today, Jonesboro Health Food shares its space with Mt. of Olives, a gourmet olive oil and balsamic vinegar store but still offers the high-quality supplements and knowledgeable staff it has always been known for.

For small businesses to survive, they have to adapt and change.

Jonesboro Health Food has gone through many changes over the past 45 years and more are to come. Amanda has a degree as a Doctor of Natural Health and nutritionist. She is going to continue to work in those capacities and hopes to continue to expand on them. As for the store, expect a total revamp in 2022. New categories of merchandise, a new layout, and some new staff are all in the works for next year.

One of the traditions of Jonesboro Health Food is to offer a customer appreciation month. This year they are bending tradition to offer two! The first will be in January this year. We all know we pledge to do better every January; well Jonesboro Health Food wants to help you meet and keep those goals. It will be offering discounts throughout the store and weekly giveaways.

Amanda believes in cleansing the body and resting the digestive system at least once a year and January is a great time to do it. Key nutrients for helping that reset are probiotics, enzymes, stress-fighting adaptogens, anti-inflammatories, and whole-body cleanses. But don't forget the non-nutrient essentials -- sleep, sun, prayer, and self-love. Another amazing cleansing option is the ionic foot detox offered at Jonesboro Health Food.

These will be on special for January as well and can be booked individually or in pairs.

Jonesboro Health Food wants NEA to know it is there for them now just as it has been for 45 years. Its passion is empowering friends and neighbors and community to live the healthiest lives possible. The employees are so thankful for the support and patience Jonesboro has given them over the past couple of years especially, but also for allowing them to have served them for almost a half century!



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LESLIE BALLARD

Hey! I'm Leslie.

I was born and raised here in NEA and I'm passionate about serving in the place I call home. I've been working in the world of marketing, recruiting, and human resource for more than seventeen years – but I'm not the least bit tired of it. I still wake up [nearly every day] excited to grow my businesses and get to know my customers.

I wear a few different hats: I'm a Realtor with Arkansas Elite Realty where I get to help people find the perfect home for them. I recently opened Downtown Nutrition of Paragould that is a blast both because I get to meet new people all the time and help them achieve the healthiest version of themselves. And I'm also the owner of The Branding Soul where I help connect people to their marketing and branding needs. I enjoy helping businesses find their "soul" purpose and figuring out how to show that in their branding.

I love to fish and spend time with my family of seven – my husband, our four kids and our dog, Dunder – yes his name is inspired by The Office.

I live and breathe for Christmas and used to race at George Ray's, where they called me Leadfoot Leslie.

leslie.welcomehome@gmail.com
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CHAD OLDHAM

Chad Oldham is the driving force behind Oldham Law Firm, PLLC, and says he does what he does because of "a love for the elderly garnered from time spent with my grandparents and their friends."

After graduating from Crowley's Ridge Academy High School in Paragould, Chad continued his education at the University of Arkansas with degrees in Finance and Accounting -- including a Masters in Finance -- a Juris Doctorate, and at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a Master of Laws-Estate Planning. He is a Certified Trust and Financial Adviser (CTFA).

He has 19 years of experience in Estate Planning/ Elder Law, and as a Probate Attorney and Trust Officer. He said his specialized training and certifications in estate planning and elder law and "19 years of practice dedicated to those fields" give him an edge when dealing with clients.

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VIRGINIA WALLS

Virginia Walls, a graduate of Southern Arkansas University, has been a State Farm Insurance Professional since 1993. Born in Camden, it was about 35 years ago that she traveled through Paragould and commented, "Paragould seems like a nice town and I could live here." She believes God had a plan that she didn't realize until 1993. Today, Paragould is home and has been for some time. Virginia loves assisting people with all of their insurance needs because it puts her in a position to help people realize their dreams and recover from unexpected losses.

"I have a great licensed team to help take care of our State Farm customers. Our customers are like family and we want to be there for them," Virginia says. "Local service is very important."

Virginia and her team insure more than cars and homes – they also offer life, business, recreational vehicle, disability and Medicare Supplement insurance as well as a full portfolio of investment options.

Outside of serving her customers, Virginia enjoys watching the local sports teams and the Razorbacks. She loves to travel and cook.

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LAUREN GRAHAM

Lauren Graham is a criminal defense and family law attorney in Paragould. Lauren is a graduate of Paragould High School. She received a bachelor's degree in political science from Arkansas Tech University and a Juris Doctor degree from Saint Louis University School of Law, with a certificate in criminal litigation skills. Lauren gained invaluable experience working as a public defender and then as a legal aid attorney, and now she utilizes her public service experience as the owner of The Graham Law Firm PLLC.

Lauren has successfully represented clients in a variety of legal proceedings, including felony jury trials, probation violation hearings, motions to suppress evidence, order of protection hearings, divorces, child custody hearings, paternity hearings, and guardianships.

Lauren enjoys criminal defense and family law because these practice areas allow her to advocate for her clients in a way that makes a serious difference in their lives. Many of Lauren's clients have no one else in their corner, and she enjoys helping her clients when they seem to have the odds stacked against them. According to Lauren, "The most satisfying part of what I do is helping a client achieve a not-guilty verdict or keep custody of their children. My goal is to give my clients the help they need to move towards their future."

Lauren is licensed to practice law in Arkansas, Missouri, and the United States District Courts for the Eastern and Western Districts of Arkansas. She is currently accepting new criminal and family law clients in both states.

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*The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements.





TYNER MCCULLAR

“As a kid I always wanted to be an astronaut; when that didn’t work out, I found the closest thing to it, and now I have been an Insurance Agent at Cook Insurance Agency for over a year. Most people would consider me to be a ‘talker,’ but if you knew my family you would understand that it is just simply my genetics. One of my favorite parts of my job is being able to connect with new people! I have been active in some sort of philanthropy group since I was in high school, so I am thankful that with my job I am encouraged to serve the City of Paragould in multiple capacities such as Kiwanis and Paragould Emerging Professionals. Since the day I started at Cook Insurance I have felt like part of the family here, and from the beginning I felt like I was meant to be an Insurance Agent. I would attribute that to the plethora of knowledge that my bosses and coworkers are able to provide me. I wouldn’t be where I am today without them. I’m very excited to start my career in my home town, especially at such a time of growth for our area. All of the great improvements and events going on in Paragould make me proud to call it my home, and excited for the future of our city. I am thankful for all of the support I have received from the community, and look forward to many more years assisting Northeast Arkansas with all of their insurance needs.”

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Happenings



The Keith Ward Memorial FFA Scholarship has been awarded to Jordan Mackenzie Brock of Hoxie. Brock is a 2021 graduate of Hoxie High School and the daughter of Melissa Brock. She is currently pursuing a technical certificate in welding from BRTC.



Greater Vision Church hosted a Greater Vision Christmas on December 18th that included gifting 624 total gifts to children – of those, 300 were hand crafted wooden toys made by a couple in the church. Kids received a ticket and were able to use them to “purchase” a gift with their ticket in order for them pick out an item they would truly want. We will also have a booth set up for coats, scarves, and mittens for people in need to pickup

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THE GREENBRIER COMPANIES



Misty & Hayden

Hayden and Misty crossed paths during their high school days. Hayden is from Lepanto, graduated from East Poinsett County School District and Misty is from Trumann, having graduated from Trumann High School. They continued running into each other after high school while they both were attending college at ASU-Newport.

It wasn't until several years later that God placed it on their hearts to pursue a relationship together where they quickly found out how much they have in common. A regular date night for these two includes a dinner and movie or a trip to a Hogs game. They both enjoy hunting together, being with their family, calling the Hogs, attending church, and cooking at home.

Hayden surprised Misty by proposing in the most romantic way during a couples photo shoot. Six months later their wedding was hosted at a family member's beautiful homestead outside of Brookland on 10•16•21, surrounded by their close friends and family. The wedding was a country chic affair and everyone was encouraged to wear western attire.

The bridal party, as well as the bride and groom, wore their favorite cowboy boots. They had a beautiful ceremony on land surrounded by cattle and a pond, decorated with pampas grass and whiskey barrels. It was a dream come true for Misty and Hayden with beautiful weather and the perfect scenery.

Photographer / Videographer: Knight Productions

Wedding Planner / Designer: Latham Stevens

Floral: Kate Ellis James

Dress: Low's Bridal and Formal

Tux: Men N' Black

Catering: Bella'z Event's and Catering

DJ: DJ Epic

Cake: Lana Zirbel

Hair: Hollie Looney Makeup: Brooke Rapert

Officiant: Brother Jim Duffel

Jewelry: Sissy's Log Cabin & Bobbi Hydrick

Rentals: AR Tents





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*Photo submitted to Premiere in 2021 features a young Pippa enjoying a snow day.

Next Month

Local Love



Speaking to many different people of all ages, with varying backgrounds and lifestyles, about why they love Northeast Arkansas and what makes this community special.

Wedding Special Section



Advice, tips, and resources for planning a special day.

REMINDER:
Premiere Awards



Remember that voting for the Jonesboro Premiere Awards is OPEN and the Paragould Premiere Awards are coming soon!

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