

NEA'S

for the
LOVE
of
COMMUNITY

PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

JOEY PRUETT - RECTOR MUSEUM

WEDDING PLANNING

KIDS PLAY IN NEA

February 2023

A PUBLICATION OF MOR MEDIA, INCORPORATED



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From the Publisher



February is the season of LOVE and we LOVE bringing you all the “Good News and the people making it happen” in NEA!

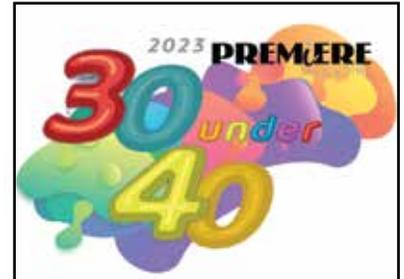
This edition is filled with community love, wedding bliss and a bit of our new Kids Play section. We hope to find more resource stories for the next installment in April, like “How to sign your kid up” and when for sports. What are some questions you should ask about when looking for a Daycare?

Let us know what you would like to see -- we are also looking for kids in NEA who are volunteering and making NEA a better place. Email me if you know of any.

Speaking of looking for “Good News,” we are also taking nominations for our 30 under 40 section that will publish in June. If you look around and see that there are 20 or 30 somethings who are contributing to the betterment of NEA, go to neapremiere.com and use the form to nominate them.

Premiere wants to be the highlight of all things “Good” and we love to give publicity to anyone making the effort to “do good,” so keep an eye out and be sure to let us know when you find “the people making it happen.”

Email me at dina@mormediainc.com



Premiere Magazine is accepting nominations for Northeast Arkansas Community movers and shakers!

The 2023 30 under 40 nominations should be those you see making our communities a better place to live, work and play.

People like your kids coach (or the “Team Mom” that always has extra snacks)

The volunteer teen that is at the soccer field or helps take care of the church property.

That Gen X’er that defies the stereotype by volunteering on multiple Chamber committees or Junior Auxiliary.

We could go on but I think you get the idea.

email graphics@mormediainc.com or go to neapremiere.com for a nomination form. Deadline is April 15th.

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FOR THE LOVE OF COMMUNITY JOEY PRUETT OF RECTOR

By Richard Brummett



If you pay a visit to Rector and come across something you really like, chances are good Joey Pruett has had a hand in it.

Make a visit to their extremely impressive museum ... Joey is instrumental in its beginning and success. Attend a veterans recognition ceremony ... Joey was probably there from the start. Enjoy the Labor Day Picnic ... he's right in the middle of it from the ground up. And take in wonderful musical entertainment in the well-known Ford Room, there he is, front and center.

This love of community didn't just spring up overnight, but was instead built on years of watching others help Rector thrive. "When I first moved here as a boy," Joey recalls, "there was a TV repairman, J.D. Clayton, who was just generous, and he used that attitude to do things -- like they had a haunted house. I would hang out at his place and I learned some of my electric training there. He could make anything. He would do the sound for the Labor Day Picnic every year and you had to climb 30 feet in the trees and mount the horns ... I kind of started there.

"And then there was a couple that lived here, Bill and Ruth Ann Vanlandingham. They were the same way, active in everything. I was up at the gym where he was one time and he asked me why I was there, and I said, 'Because I want to grow up to be just like you and Ruth Ann.' I watched them. They were so involved and wanted to see our city continue."

So, today, Joey follows in the footsteps of those he admired so many years ago for one simple reason. "I love Rector," he explained. "I hear all the time, 'Man, we just can't do it like you guys do in Rector.' I'm proud of that. The Gaither concert we had was huge, like more than 100 volunteers. Could you get that many somewhere else? I don't know.

"Another guy told me, 'I go through Rector twice a week and the

population sign is still within 200 of what it was 50 years ago. Why?' Well, lots of reasons but I think Labor Day is the core; it keeps it alive. So many people from all over always go back to Rector on Labor Day, 10-12,000 people, and not just from here."

Retired from a long career working alongside Danny Ford in the automobile business, Joey has his sights currently set on one of his first loves: music. He has spent most of his life playing in bands or promoting musical acts and concerts, and now he wants to bring more of that enjoyment home. "I'm trying to build Rector as the music center of Clay County," he said. "We're doing some really exciting things in the Ford Room, here at the museum. For instance, I heard from a county band I was trying to get to play here, 'Oh, no, you just had the big hitters there.' Well, I took it as a

compliment.

"Sometimes the acts are well-known and sometimes it's new people, but they are all awesome. Music is very different in a small town. A lot of people don't understand what happens in Clay County ... we don't have the strong tax base like a Paragould does. We don't have Lowe's and Walmart and Gazaway's. In Clay County, three towns the same size share the tax dollars. It's very difficult to do what I want to do. We don't have the resources like you do in, say, Paragould. We have to depend on the same three or four businesses to help us."

Joey is recognizable, having played guitar for years with The Ultimate Oldies program and said he got his start when he was about 7, joining his first band. "Then there was the craziness of being a young rock star and I started the group Psychedelic Freight Train," he said, "and the name tells you enough. I started Country Stache and did some shows, and we did some really good Memphis things, opened for Jerry Lee Lewis. I started a disco group, Patchwork, with all the lights and everything. And then I've been producing for years and years."

His Ford Room "wall of fame" boasts acts and shows he has produced or performed with, and names like Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Reba McEntire and even The Rolling Stones roll of his tongue. "As a producer, once the artists are hired, then you get busy and you hire all the sound, lights, set up catering and rehearsals, and get stage managers," he explained. "When the first song starts, I'm done."

His list of community activities is too long to document in a short interview session. He is the Vice President of the Helping Hands organization that provides things like shoes to school students in need and he "did the first couple of Vietnam Days and it turned



into a huge, huge deal. That's been turned over to the VFW now. In the '70s I was in a group, the Men's Organization, independent guys that did so much, and we helped build the Community Center, got our first ambulance, just doing projects and getting great financial support. We do some nice stuff."

Volunteering for so many things covering such a broad spectrum, Joey could be forgiven if he couldn't immediately settle on his favorite area of concern, but he says without hesitation, "The Ford Room, by far. It's an entertainment venue dedicated to the memory of the Ford Theater right across the street, because it *was* our entertainment. I try to provide the best of the best entertainment here. Not only can you go to listen, but you can interact. There's a meal during intermission, a sandwich and a coke and you can browse the museum, which I think is fantastic, and rub elbows with the musicians. Every third Thursday; and the fifth Thursday will probably be gospel music."

Is he spread too thin? "It's why I retired, so I can do what I want to do. I love being involved in whatever situation arises. I've worked alongside Reba, and Willie Nelson, so I don't mind being a backup ... I don't necessarily like being out front. But I want to do whatever I need to do to make Rector stay the place we all love."



ALLEY CRUISE FOR ST. JUDE



Sign your four person team up for all the fun at the 13th annual Fast Glass Corvettes “Alley” Cruise for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

The 2023 event will be held at Hijinx on Sunday, February 26, at 1 p.m. Each four person team must be mixed, containing at least one member of the opposite sex.

There will be three rounds of bowling and lots of door prizes along with trophies and the best ... raising money for a great cause!

The cost is a \$100 donation that includes three games of bowling per person, use of bowling equipment, a large single-topping pizza and a pitcher of soft drinks; or an \$80 donation with no food or drink.

Fast Glass Corvettes has raised over \$50,000 in the past 12 years and set this year’s minimum goal at \$5,000. There are sponsorship opportunities and your door prize donations are appreciated, as well.

To sponsor, donate a door prize or to sign your team up, contact Carol Barnhill at Cbarnhil@astate.edu or perry@mormediainc.com or contact anyone you know in the Corvette Club.



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DON'T FORGET YOUR VALENTINE OFF-SEASON CHORES

BY CHUCK LONG



CHUCK LONG
Avid Outdoorsman
Retired Outdoor Educator

February is not often viewed as a great month for an outdoorsman. There are small game hunting opportunities, but most hunting seasons have wrapped up and the hangover from a long duck and deer season tends to make the days appealing for recuperation. Random warm, sunny days often bring about thoughts of fishing, but the temperatures and conditions can limit time to get on the water. The ups and downs of the weather often enhance the melancholy mood of the month.

But all is not lost for those of us who enjoy the outdoors. There is still plenty to do, both inside and outside. Looking for ideas? Here are a few things to do during our shortest month. One of the first things I like to do is clean and reorganize the hunting equipment. My gear takes a beating and receives little attention throughout the season so a little time on maintenance can get things ready to be put away. Firearms should be cleaned and stored properly. Clothes will need to be washed and waders and boots should be cleaned and dried for storage. I also like to clean out all bags, backpacks and vests and organize and store all gear.

As I put away my gear, I try to make a list of needs for the following year. Ammunition, clothes and other gear might be on that list and this will give me an opportunity to purchase these items before the next season.

Once I have my hunting gear squared away, I like to work on fishing equipment

and prep it for upcoming trips. Though I fish throughout the year, late winter tends to be a slower time and this gives me an opportunity to organize tackle and take care of other duties like cleaning and relining reels.

Another thing I like to do during this "slow" month is to organize my memories. This takes many forms. I am fortunate to be able to share through this column and other outlets, but I also like to record some of the happenings from the previous hunting season in other ways as well. This might be in social media posts or handwritten notes. Pictures and/or videos are also great memories to organize. We often end up with loads of pictures that tell the story of days in the outdoors and a little time dedicated to organization can help preserve those memories. I also like to review maps and make sure I have recorded the pertinent information I might need on those as well.

Late winter usually offers some great opportunities to spend some time with other outdoorsmen and women. There are often wild game suppers, conservation organization meetings or other social events where hunters and fishermen can get together and discuss the seasons and support conservation. These events can provide great opportunities to network and get to know other local folks who share a like interest.

Stuck at home? I like to catch up on a few of my favorite YouTube channels. The Hunting Public, Randy Newberg, Do It

Yourself Hunter, Bama Beach Bum and Richard Gene – The Fishing Machine are some of my favorites. They provide good entertainment and lots of basic outdoor knowledge.

Another great use of time is to do some planning for future activities. A few questions will help guide that planning. What does the outdoor calendar look like for the upcoming seasons? Do I need to plan for some time off work? Do I need to apply for permits? Do I need to talk with landowners about permission? Do I need to shop for a lease or book a guide? Do I need to take a trip to look at a lake, a boat launch or a public hunting area? These questions will help get the ball rolling and get things headed in the right direction for the coming year.

One of my favorite things to do during the offseason is to cook and share the game that has been taken throughout the year. We try to eat as much wild game as we can during hunting season, but the schedule often seems hectic with no time to cook and that leaves plenty for use throughout the year. We have our traditional recipes like fried deer or duck, teriyaki deer and pan seared backstrap, but we also like to try new recipes with the bounty from the field. There are several great resources for wild game recipes and a quick internet search will produce many different ways to prepare game. One of my go-to pages for a wide range of wild game cooking tips would be Hunter, Angler, Gardener, Cook by Hank Shaw. Honest-food.net is the



address and it covers everything from fish to deer to duck and offers an abundance of ways to cook each one.

There are many other great outdoor options for this time of year. I like to fill and monitor my bird feeders to see what species might be passing through the neighborhood. White-tailed deer will begin to lose their antlers and a stroll through the woods might produce a shed that a buck has left as he passed through the area. It is also a great time to drive the countryside and view bald eagles. Due to the waterfowl migration, eagle numbers peak during this time of year and a drive through waterfowl will likely offer a great opportunity to spot one of our nation's iconic wildlife.

One big tip for all my outdoor friends for the month of February is to make sure and take care of your Valentine! Mine deserves something nice after putting up with me for three to four months of hunting season, and I am sure yours does as well.

February is often looked at as a month of transition as we try to leave winter behind and look forward to spring. This time of transition offers some great opportunities for those of us who enjoy the outdoors, and I hope to see you out there!



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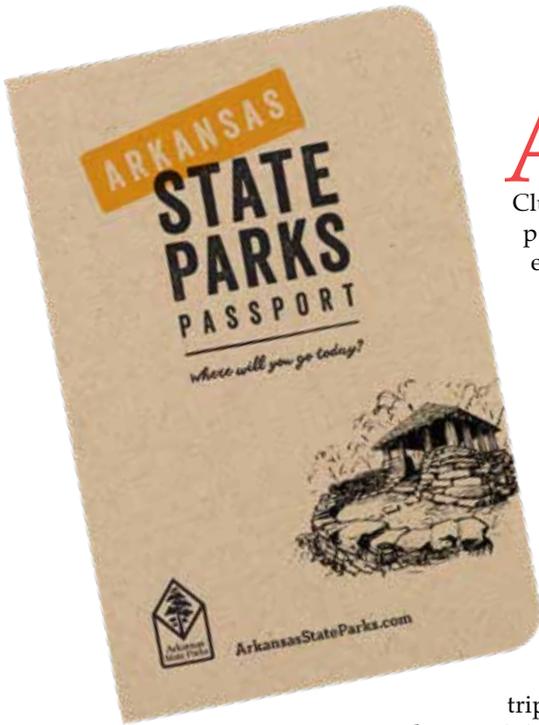
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ARKANSAS PARKS YOUR PASSPORT TO FUN



Arkansas State Parks is introducing Club 52, a rewards program that encourages people to visit all 52 state parks. Club 52 is an extension of the Arkansas State Parks Passport Program, which helps guests

first visit, Club 52 gives you another way to mark your journey."

A free passport can be picked up at an Arkansas State Park visitor center. Passports can be stamped at a visitor center, or a rubbing of the stamp can be made in parks where there is not a visitor center. To redeem rewards, Club 52 members can take their passport to an Arkansas state park visitor center during normal business hours (call before) and have staff check their passport stamps.

With five park stamps, guests receive a Club 52 sticker. With 25 park stamps, the reward is a set of Club 52 playing cards. Those who collect 52 park stamps receive a Club 52 T-shirt. Stickers and playing cards can be redeemed immediately. T-shirts will be ordered and mailed to the member. Stamps must all be in one Arkansas State Parks passport and cannot be combined in different passports.

"There is something for everyone to experience at our state parks," said Stacy Hurst, secretary of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. "Club 52 gives an extra incentive to discover something special at each park while making memories to last a lifetime."

Arkansas State Parks encourages Club 52 members to share the excitement of their journey by uploading photos and videos at ArkansasStateParks.com/passport and on social media using the hashtag #ARStateParks.

document trips to state parks by receiving a stamp (or stamp rubbing) in an Arkansas State Parks Passport. Club 52 members get their passports stamped when they visit a state park and earn rewards for visits of five parks, 25 parks and 52 parks.

Club 52 is free and open to anyone who wants to "Get Out to Get In," as the program's slogan states.

"Club 52 is a fun way to explore Arkansas state parks and make your own adventure," said Shea Lewis, director of Arkansas State Parks. "Whether you have been to a park before or this is your

A large advertisement for NEAR SIGNS Commercial Contractors. The background is a repeating pattern of the words 'NEAR SIGNS' in various colors and orientations. At the top, there are five award medals: a blue star for 'Premiere Winner 2015', a blue star for 'Premiere Award Winner 2016', a green star for 'Premiere Award Winner 2018', a yellow star for 'Premiere Award Winner 2019', and a red star for 'Premiere Award Winner 2020'. The word 'NEAR SIGNS' is written in large, bold, yellow and orange letters across the middle. Below it, 'COMMERCIAL CONTRACTORS' is written in black, and the phone number '870.239.3305' is written in large orange numbers at the bottom.



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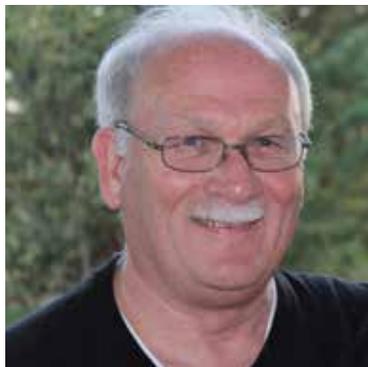
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Last month I autographed a copy of *Premiere Magazine* for my neighbor, Tom. It was actually his daughter Tabitha's idea; she said he would get a good laugh out of it so I complied, but it's not the first time I've been asked to put my signature on a copy. A couple of times a mother has asked me to sign a copy on the page that contained her child's photo and story, and even though I felt a bit silly in doing so, I agreed.

Now I'm wondering if these autograph requests elevate me to celebrity status. I mean, people don't ask for autographs from nobodies, do they? So, I must be somewhat famous now and that opens up a whole new can of problems because I don't know how to act like a celebrity.

I Googled ways to look and act famous and I'm not certain I am going to be able to live up to expectations now that I'm a noted author in high demand. The first suggestion was to begin wearing glamorous clothes and already I'm regretting my new status. I don't like glamour and expensive and fancy; I like comfort and low key and cheap.

"It's important to actually look into and purchase outfits that a celebrity might wear," one website told me. "This usually means designer brands are a must-have. No star is going to be shopping at Old Navy. Almost every rich (or rich-adjacent) person will immediately recognize knock-offs, so it's important to invest."

That's a problem because my entire wardrobe looks like it came from a sporting goods store or discount house, and that constitutes one of my comfort zones. Any time I am forced to wear dress pants and a necktie in order to comply with community standards I feel like a defendant being marched into court at a murder trial, someone spruced up by my attorneys so I won't look so close to destitute and desperate. One glamorous outfit would most likely cost more than the entire

contents of my closet.

Tip Number Two was to Carry Yourself Correctly. "A person's appearance doesn't lie only in their clothes -- it also lies in the way they carry themselves. You aren't going to see a celeb on TV slouching in their chair or walking with their head down. High-profile people all know the importance of carrying themselves with dignity. To look like a celebrity, it's crucial to improve your posture. Consider a class if you can afford it -- knowledgeable professionals can help you in ways you couldn't dream of."

Okay, I know I'm drawing a line in the sand here because I always disliked school and I'm not about to willingly go that route again via the How to Sit Up Straight class at my own expense. Besides, if stretching out on the couch watching ballgames isn't acceptable then I'm going straight to Celebrity In School Suspension anyway because I'm not putting on a show for anyone who can't understand the need to watch the Cardinals, the Razorbacks and a large collection of other teams on the TV in a comfortable position.

"Speak the Right Way," I am advised. "A part of carrying yourself well is speaking in the right way. While it's easy to fall into

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patterns of sloppy speech and extreme slang, celebrities usually resist this urge unless they're around intimate friends and family.

When talking to strangers or in public situations, be careful not to use excessive slang or curse too much. It's unrefined, and doing so might shatter your illusion of class."

Slang, and possibly an occasional curse word that slips out, represent ballplayer humor and lingo and that's what I am: basically a ballplayer. Phrases like "it don't matter" and "he ain't right" are going to find their way into my conversations because most of the people I hang out with are people I played ball with or against, or people I once coached, or are parents of kids I coached, or former players who are now parents asking me to coach their kids ... and it don't matter to me if someone's grammar ain't all it's supposed to be. Or if mine ain't, either. Most of them people ain't right, anyway.

"Try and Support a Good Cause" is another tip. "Good celebrities are known not only for their appearances, but also for their good deeds. Most of them support a charity that's important to them. You should do

this, too, if you want to act like a celebrity." This is one I don't have a problem with, as long as contributing about \$4.32 will suffice, because that's all the extra cash I am currently able to get my hands on.

Next, I'm told I should Be Well Rounded. "While you're, of course, going to have specific hobbies and interests, it's important to keep an open mind and be well-rounded."

I think I'm well-rounded. I like baseball and basketball and softball and, at times, football. I've been known to play golf and tennis and ping pong, and I used to like bowling before my left knee decided it might explode at any moment, so I sort of shy away from actually participating in athletic activities in person. But, as you can see, I have a whole host of things I like.

To look more like a celebrity, it is suggested I "wear something that is not traditionally worn as 'outside of the house' clothing. Here's the thing no one tells you about fashion ... 80 percent of it is wearing something outrageous and just saying, "This? Oh, this is fashion," so I wore my sunglasses in church the other day and people just assumed I had had cataract surgery and didn't ask me to sign anything.

"Eat or drink a LOT of one thing," I was advised, because the name of the game when it comes to the celebrity lifestyle is excess. The more, more, more, you can get of any one thing, the better." Okay, that one is easy because I drink enough coffee to keep the industry afloat but I guess I don't publicize it enough. Apparently I am supposed to document just how much coffee I'm consuming, especially in restaurants, by snapping off a host of selfies, which I just can't bring myself to do. I come from an era where you got your picture taken when you did something worthwhile, something of substance, not when you just decided everyone on the planet must be dying to see exactly where you are and what you are doing and who you are doing it with every second of every day ... so I'm just gonna pass on that one because it really don't matter to me.

There were several more suggestions about keeping the public updated on my dating status and my workout routine, of which I have neither, so I think I am going to just slink back over to my couch and read an occasional book, watch the ever-present ballgame and drink my coffee, remaining somewhat anonymous until I am again asked to sign something.



Happy Valentine's Day!
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Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

I've learned the hard way I don't like to be away from my daughter.

My best friend had her son two months before Eva was born. She said something in those early days that has stuck with me: "It's like my heart is walking around outside my body." I believed her, but I didn't really get it until Eva was here. But, in her two and a half years, we've hardly been separated.

As I write this, I am less than 12 hours away from boarding a flight that will take me to the Bahamas for seven days. This trip has been planned for years and I thought I was ready for it: the sand, sun, a drink in hand ... what mom wouldn't be ready?

After dropping Eva off with my parents and driving away, I realized it's me. I'm the mom who isn't ready. My husband and I have taken trips without Eva before. But those lasted, at most, three days.

North Missouri is the farthest away I've been from her, so going from that to an island in the middle of the ocean for a straight week is a little tough.

I know she is going to have a wonderful time with our family. In fact, maybe she won't even want to leave Mimi and Pawpaw's once we return. I promised to call her every day. It will feel strange not having her sleep next to me. And yet, under my worries and tears, I know this vacation will allow me time to be more than just a mom.

I'll be able to go out at night, knowing I can sleep in. I can catch up on books, writing, and even doing the simple act of nothing at all. At the end of this week though, returning to my sweet baby will be a million times better than any beach trip.

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February 2023

Caring for the LITTLE ONES



Trumann is home to our third location, and first built from the ground up, opening in 2020. Our fourth and fifth locations opened in 2022, in Blytheville and Osceola. We are happy to announce the opening of our newest building and sixth location, Paragould North!

The mission of Arkids Pediatric Day Centers is to be a positive influence in the pediatric community, striving to provide quality healthcare services, and to improve the lives of individuals and families.

Providing the best care, attention, and stimulating activities children require is a hallmark of the kind of services provided by Arkids Pediatric Day Centers. Our belief is that by investing in the children of Arkansas we are aiding in developing our greatest natural resource for the future.

Arkids Pediatric Day Centers believes in developing the whole child, which include the families. We always want to ensure our parents/caregivers feel heard and supported.

Arkids Pediatric Day Centers started in Paragould in 2013 with the goal of setting the highest standards in the areas of child development and creating an environment where people enjoyed coming to work. We opened our second location in Jonesboro in 2017.



Arkids Pediatric Day Centers is a specialized developmental day treatment and preschool program for children ages six weeks to six years old with special needs and/or developmental delays.



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"I am so proud my daughters have made such progress since they've been here. I am in love with this facility!"

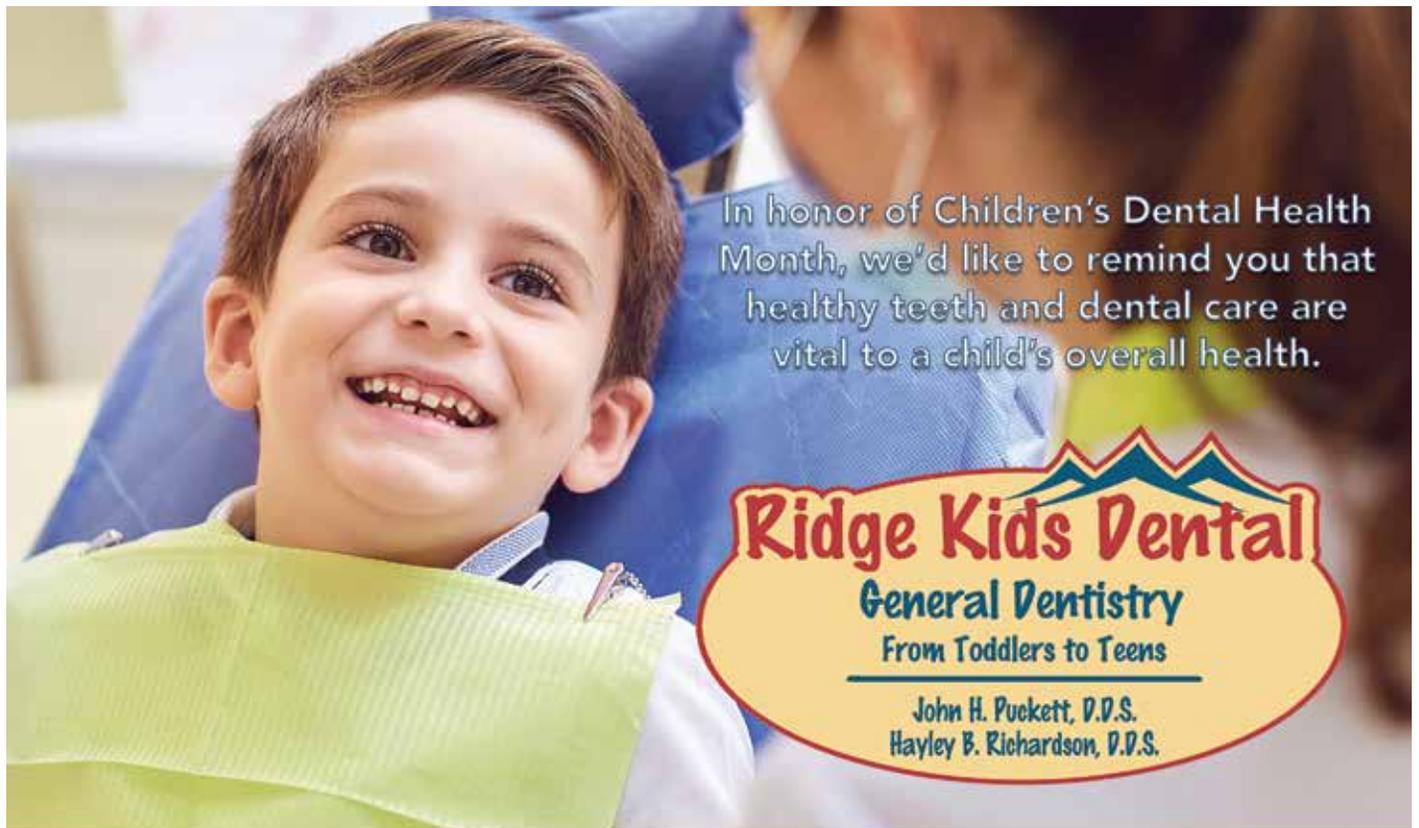
"Thank you so much for all you have done to help him grow and learn. You have touched his heart and mind with your kindness and love."

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Contact Paragould North 870-560-5260 Paragould South 870-240-0444 or visit arkidspdc.com for more information.



In honor of Children's Dental Health Month, we'd like to remind you that healthy teeth and dental care are vital to a child's overall health.

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Keeping Babies' HEARTS HEALTHY

Types of ultrasounds and when to get them



heart is more developed – can take up to two hours. Lee said a detailed look at the heart can reveal defects and indicate if they are severe enough to require specialized care immediately after the baby is born. Some conditions can be treated successfully at local clinics, like the ACH Jonesboro Clinic, but others might require the advanced pediatric facilities at Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock.

Fetal echos are performed in the ACH Jonesboro Clinic and are recommended if:

- there is a family history of congenital heart disease
- there are irregularities, or arrhythmias, in the fetal heartbeat
- the mother has diabetes
- routine ultrasounds reveal other abnormalities

Knowing about a heart condition ahead of time can help families prepare for their child's needs before birth. Lee and the pediatric cardiology team at the ACH Jonesboro Clinic use ultrasounds to help monitor and manage heart conditions in children after birth. Some heart issues can be treated with medicines or surgery, while others require lifelong management with heart specialists like Lee.

Preparing families for either of those situations can remove unnecessary stress and help kids lead long, fulfilling lives.

A child's health – including heart health – begins in the womb. Most pregnant women understand the importance of eating healthy while avoiding specific foods, drugs or alcohol. Genetic factors also play a significant role in a baby's development. Obstetricians and nurse midwives screen for potential issues and monitor and care for both baby and parent during pregnancy. Prenatal ultrasounds, also called sonograms, can provide basic information, like the baby's sex or if there are twins (surprise!), and also give indications of health concerns. Occasionally, a routine ultrasound will detect an irregularity with the baby's heart, and the doctor may recommend an additional ultrasound called a fetal echocardiogram, or fetal echo for short.

Dr. Sam Lee, pediatric cardiologist at Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) Jonesboro Clinic and associate professor of Pediatrics in the Pediatric Cardiology section at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, said, "The list of possible heart abnormalities is wide-ranging. A fetal echo provides a comprehensive look."

A routine ultrasound takes 20-30 minutes, but a fetal echo – performed any time after the 18th week of pregnancy when the

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Dr. Sam Lee is also an associate professor of Pediatrics in the Pediatric Cardiology section at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.



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Single Parent SCHOLARSHIP

Eligible single parents are invited to apply for Summer 2023 scholarships at aspsf.org/applynow. The deadline to apply is March 15.

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund (ASPSF) awards scholarships up to \$1,200 to eligible single parents who are attending college or obtaining technical training. A full list of eligibility guidelines is available at aspsf.org/eligibility.

"It has taken a major financial burden off of me as well as giving me hope and encouragement that somebody is rooting for me to succeed," said recipient Sherlisa, who's studying strategic communication at Arkansas State University.

If awarded, recipients can use the funds for any combination of school and/or household expenses that remove a financial burden and help the student stay in school.

Scholarships are combined with wraparound services — including workshops, mentorships, and tutoring — to create a support system helping single parents along their higher education journey to graduation and professional employment. If a single parent is not attending summer school, he or she can



apply later for another semester. Here are upcoming ASPSF scholarship application openings and deadlines:

- Fall 2023 Semester: Apply between April 15-June 15, 2023
- Spring 2024 Semester: Apply between Aug. 15-Oct. 15, 2023

For more information about Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund — which has awarded more than \$30 million in scholarships across the state to single parents since 1990 — contact ASPSF Program Manager Marci Langston at mlangston@aspsf.org or (870) 527-4070.



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Making Memories

WORTH THE EXTRA EFFORT

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE



Owner Kevin Lloyd has been in business for two years and carries a wide stock of learning toys, fidget toys, and even a selection of baby items. The main showcase, however, is the stuffed animal building station. Kids can choose from a wide selection of turtles, cats, unicorns, birds, and bears, fill them with stuffing and even pick out clothing for their new furry friend.

The other shelves in the store are filled with goodies for all ages. "I have everything from Paw Patrol to Disney stuff," Lloyd said. "We just try to carry a good mixture."

In addition to toys ranging from traditional (wooden blocks, puzzles) to trendy (sensory objects like Pop Its), The Toy Store also hosts a collection of arcade games found by Lloyd's wife Charla, who also brought in the playhouses tiny guests can enjoy while shopping. An outdoor play area is located on the side of the building, and merry-go-rounds and other quarter rides line the store entrance.

"We try to make it an experience," Lloyd said.

In the good old days, you could visit The Mall at Turtle Creek (or even the Indian Mall, for those who remember it) and have a full day of adventure: buying new clothes, a snack at the food court, toy shopping and more. There might be a little more legwork involved now, but these old traditions are still available in Northeast Arkansas thanks to local businesses.

Going to the mall as a kid was exciting. Countless toy stores, candy shops and gaming areas provided plenty of entertainment. That same experience can be found today at The Toy Store Gifts and More in Jonesboro.

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Another former Mall favorite ... because toy shopping can be hard work, and good behavior could be rewarded at the candy shop. Not to worry ... try the wide selection at Carroll's Candies, owned by Allisa Carroll and chocolatier Tony Hendrickson. The shelves are stocked with everything sour, sweet, and salty. Caramels, freeze dried candies, Pez, and suckers are just a few of the delicious treats you can pick up. Can't decide? Try a mystery bag instead! And for those in Paragould looking for a stop closer to home, Something Sweet also boasts an impressive candy wall that allows you to fill up your own bag with your favorite mix.

Remember the arcades in the Mall? After refueling with some sugar, why not finish off the day with some gaming? The Foundry, located in Downtown Paragould, is a full-service tabletop gaming shop. Gamers can find accessories such as dice, clothing with favorite characters, and plenty of arcade games to fill up their afternoons.

How about the bookstore? Local bookstores are popping up in Jonesboro, Paragould and even Walnut Ridge. Make plans to visit with your kids and savor the memories of your childhood while making memories for them.

While it was easy to have everything in a one-stop shop, the lack of a mall in NEA shouldn't be a hurdle for shoppers. Take a bit more time to visit these local stores and others and you are more than likely to find even better treasures and make special memories along the way.

It will be worth the extra effort in memories made.



The candy wall at Something Sweet in Downtown Paragould



The candy wall at Carroll's Candies in Jonesboro

Arkansas Hunter's EDUCATION COURSE



The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is holding a Hunter's Education Course that is free and open to the public at the ASU-Newport Library, located in Walton Hall, on April 10th, 11th, and 12th from 1-4:30 pm.

Completing a Hunter's Education course is required for all hunters in Arkansas born after 1968. This course is open to the public and will cover subjects such as conservation, sportsmanship, archery, survival, first aid, and firearm safety.

You must attend all three classroom sessions and successfully complete an exam in order to receive a hunter's education certification.

Registration is required as space is limited, and you can register at register-ed.com Call the Nature Center at 870-933-6787 or visit agfc.com for more information.



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KIDS PLAY GREAT ACTS OF KINDNESS

By Richard Brummett



School Counselor Tiffany Curtis said the entire Paragould School District was participating in The Challenge, which included “a week of kindness. We have a Kind Acts checklist that includes things as simple as writing teachers a thank you note or saying ‘thank you’ to the cafeteria workers.

“The teachers are all involved, too. The classroom doors are decorated with kindness slogans for a contest and our partners in education from Ridge Kids Dental will come judge them for us. The kids all like being involved. You tell them they have fifty acts of kindness and just one week to do them ... well, these kids are competitive. They are really into it.”

In an age where society at large seems to be less compassionate than in days gone by, Baldwin Elementary School students in Paragould are finding that kindness can be a pretty good thing.

By taking part in The Great Kindness Challenge, kids were shown how even the smallest act can produce big results and the campus-wide effort is promoting good will toward one’s fellow man ... or woman ... or boy ... or girl.

The Great Kindness Challenge is a proactive and bullying-prevention initiative. It is one week devoted to performing as many acts of kindness as possible. Using the provided checklist of 50 kinds acts, students take the challenge and prove that bullying constitutes weakness. At the heart of The Great Kindness Challenge is the simple belief that kindness is strength. This year’s event was to take place January 23– 27.

Tiffany said the school faculty continued to come up with fun activities for the students, spurring their interest. Art teacher Shawn Wright was helping them produce a Kind-hearted Hands mural, where they traced their hands and decorated them any way they wanted. The finished product was then hung on the wall in the school. Students were also working on learning a Challenge theme song.

“The kids have been in my room putting





together cookies and cards for the community,” Tiffany said. “They come in and make cards and they get to pick the places to deliver them. We’ll take them to the central office and they get to places like our Partners in Education at Utility Trailer, Allen Engineering, and Ridge Kids Dental. Last year we took them to the fire station, the mayor’s office, the sheriff’s department, PLWC, the hospital. We just dropped off a big old ‘thank you.’ The kids love it. They idolize some of these people. It means a lot to the kids and to the people they recognize. Last year the sheriff’s department said they were so thankful. They said they get forgotten a lot since they are way out there.”

Paragould Mayor Josh Agee acknowledged the week by signing an official proclamation and Tiffany said the weeklong event is “great for the kids but it’s good for the adults, too. Our whole district is involved and worldwide more than 18.5 million people are taking part.

“It’s a very positive thing ... for everyone.”



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As if putting people into a home isn't enough, the Arkansas Realtor Association goes even further and contributes back into the community in a big way.

Local realtor organizations partner around the state and give hundreds of thousands of dollars to organizations like Special Olympics and Habitat for Humanity. "A lot of time people have this conception that we just sell houses and they don't see the amazing things we do in our communities," said Sandra Kelley, 2022 state president of the ARA and a Weichert Real Estate agent.

"I think that we have the biggest hearts of all of us because we know what it means." One organization the ARA raises money for every year is Special Olympics. In just one year of raising funds, Sandra said she was able to present a check to the Arkansas

The organization also did three Habitat for Humanity builds in the Benton, Arkansas, area and donated \$60,000 to them. Two of the homes were 4-and 5-bedroom homes; the homeowners pay back the cost from building the homes through a mortgage. "The national association of realtors has a relief foundation for when there is a natural disaster," Sandra added. "They give grants to people to help pay their house payment, rent payment, anything to help them get on their feet after a national disaster." She said they gave \$100,000 when the Jonesboro tornado hit and gave another \$100,000 to Trumann in a similar situation. "The state association sent us \$50 Walmart gift cards and we go hand them out so people can get necessities to get started," she said. When a disaster hits, "you don't even have a toothbrush. Think about how much all of that costs.

"We were the first state in the whole country where every local realtor board gave money to the realtor relief foundation, giving \$121,000," Sandra said. "When people see realtors out there working, we don't just sell houses, we sell communities.

Sandra said they have hugged people, and stood on street corners raising money. "It's such an amazing thing to see," she said. They raise money doing roadblocks, buncos nights, events, and auctions. Locally, Sandra would like to see the realtor association raise \$10,000 to contribute.

As the state president of the organization, Sandra said she travels a lot and can see where Arkansas stands nationally. "I was always amazed," she said. "We really are the heart of America. We are very blessed. In Northeast Arkansas, the people here are phenomenal. We don't realize how lucky and blessed we are."

Sandra has been with Weichert since 2019 and has been in real estate for 22 years. She is married to Jason and they have two children.



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CALLING ALL CHOCOHOLICS

BY KATIE COLLINS



Flourless Chocolate Cake

Serves 16

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375

Spray a 9-inch round cake pan with cooking spray.

Melt the butter and 1 cup of the chocolate chips together in a microwave-safe bowl for 1 minute.

Remove and stir. If not completely melted, microwave again in 10-second increments until completely melted and smooth when stirred.

Add the sugar, salt, and vanilla and stir; add the beaten eggs and stir until smooth; then add the cocoa powder and stir until just combined.

Pour the batter into the pan and bake for 18-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and place the pan on a wire rack to cool for at least 10 minutes. Loosen the cake by running a knife along the edges and carefully turn the cake out onto a serving plate - you want the top to become the bottom - then let the cake cool completely.

While the cake cools, make the ganache by placing the heavy cream and remaining 1 cup of chocolate chips in a bowl and heating 30 seconds at a time, until they're

melted and smooth when stirred.

Spread the ganache over the cooled cake, then let the cake sit until the ganache has set. You can place the cake in the fridge to speed up the process if you like. Slice and serve. Store leftovers in the fridge, but it's better to let your servings come to room temperature before eating, if you can stand to wait that long!

Ingredients:

Cake:

- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Dutch process cocoa powder

Ganache:

- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

This month's recipe is for serious chocoholics, so if that's not you, you might want to turn the page and check back next month.

It's the most chocolate forward dessert I've ever made or tasted, and I dare say it is a restaurant quality dessert so amazingly easy to make at home. You may look at it and wonder why it's one single layer, why there's no buttercream or decoration.

Simply put, IT DOES NOT NEED IT.

This single layer of ganache-covered delight speaks for itself in the first bite. CHOCOLATE is the love story this month.

Get ready for your next great love, the Flourless Chocolate Cake.

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DEADLINE FEBRUARY 15TH



SCAN ME

FOR THE LOVE OF COMMUNITY BABY SAFE HAVEN

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT



Efforts have begun and support is growing for a Safe Haven Baby Box to be installed somewhere within the city limits of Paragould, but the when, where, and how remain uncertain.

Gia Taylor, President of the Greene County Right To Life organization, is one of the main proponents and continues to address the

issue with city and county leaders, and just about anyone else who cares to listen. "I think it's necessary. It gives a woman another reason not to have an abortion," Gia explained. "The other side yells at us, and says, 'You don't want abortions but you're not willing to take care of them,' so I just want to give a woman another avenue."

She said Arkansas is "a Safe Haven state, and we are a Safe Haven city. Some women aren't going to just hand their baby over. They've been found on side roads, in ditches, alleys, a garbage can. This is needed. We need to get more people behind it; we had a good showing at the Quorum Court recently and we're working on different ways to introduce it to the city."

Safe-haven laws are statutes in the United States that decriminalize the leaving of unharmed infants with statutorily designated private persons so that the child becomes a ward of the state. All fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have enacted such statutes though the wording differs from state to state. Safe-haven laws typically let parents remain nameless to the court, and many states treat safe haven surrenders as adoption surrenders, a waiver of parental rights. Police stations, hospitals, and fire stations are all typical locations to which the safe-haven law applies.

Arkansas law says the surrendered infant must be thirty days old or younger and the unharmed newborn may be anonymously relinquished by the parent of the child.

Currently, the child is to be handed directly to the provider -- any on-duty staff member at a hospital Emergency Department or a law enforcement officer -- who will notify the Division of Children & Family Services (DCFS) within 24 hours of relinquishment.

In some places, a climate-controlled baby hatch or "baby box" is provided to allow babies to be safely dropped off anonymously and without encountering other people, and that is what Gia hopes to see in Paragould. "The Quorum Court is very much in favor of us having one," Gia said. "Now to find the place to install it if we can get the overall approval needed. It has to be a place that is open 24/7/365 and personnel trained in CPR."

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Her interest is not totally from the sidelines; she has some personal experience with the big picture. "I am an abandoned baby," she said. Her parents had told her early on she was adopted but had not gone into great detail about her life story. "They had always said for me to not look at the blue papers. After Dad died I did, I looked at the blue papers and learned I was left at Washington County Hospital. It kind of hurt my feelings, but I was left safe.

"I found my mom three years ago," she said. "Her dad was in the military and they were in Texas and she'd been dating a guy about a year, and about the same time she got pregnant they were moving again. She didn't even tell her parents and she was in her dorm room by herself at the U of A and had me; and hours later I was on the steps in the stairwell at the hospital. As far as I know, she never told anyone."

Gia's background search was, understandably, not welcomed news to her birth mother, who showed little interest in helping fill in the blanks at first. "Finally, she called me back and I'm not sure she has ever even told her husband," Gia said. "But I told her, 'I want to thank you for what you did. My parents gave me everything I needed and almost everything I wanted.' I have had a good life but it could have

turned out worse."

That's one reason she is passionate about getting a Safe Haven Box in the city, explaining it takes an initial investment of \$15,000 and then an annual fee of \$300 for the box to be checked by experts. All the pieces -- the money, the location, support from city government, qualified personnel -- all have to come together to see the plan put into effect.

"Jonesboro has one at the Fire Station on Brazos Street," Gia said. "They raised the money before asking the city to put it in. Theirs has an alarm when the door is opened, and it quickly goes off; if they're gone from the station, they notify dispatch, and in only a couple of minutes they respond. That's sort of the idea I envision here, but where is the best place to put it? My personal opinion is the Fire Department on the east side of town."

Gia said she is currently visiting area churches "to make them aware of our chapter" and continues to push the Safe Haven Baby Box idea to community leaders. "I don't want to be too pushy," she said, "I just want to see mothers have an option other than abortion, and babies to have a chance."

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Engagement Announcement

Brianna Kiplinger and Logan Faber



Brianna Kiplinger of Jonesboro and Logan Faber of Paragould are happy to announce their engagement and approaching wedding.

The bride's mother is Julie Rodney and the groom's parents are Michael and Stephanie Faber.

The wedding will be at Crowley's Ridge State Park on May 20, 2023.

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OR WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT?**

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BIRTH



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WEDDING

GREENE COUNTY SPELLING BEE

Congratulations to Molly Mai Baker-Huynh, a 7th grader from Greene County Tech, who was the Champion speller of the 72nd Greene County Spelling Bee at the Collins Theatre in Paragould. Ryker Hudson, a 6th grader at GCT claimed 2nd and Daniel Crowley, a 7th grader at Crowley's Ridge Academy, took third.



Molly goes on to represent Greene County at the State Spelling Bee March 11 in Little Rock!

The event was presented by First National Bank and the Greene County Retired Teachers Association and broadcast live on 103.7 iRock and 1490 KDRS AM. Thanks to sponsors: Weber's Book House; Broken Spoke Tire; Weichert Realty; White Printing & Office Supply and MOR MEDIA, Inc.

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SERVICE ANIMALS EXPLAINED

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



When it comes to service animals, there are really two main groups in which to classify them: service animals and emotional support animals. I will break these down and discuss how they are each very important and how they have improved many lives.

Emotional support animals can be more simply defined. Emotional support animals are not true service animals as defined by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), but they are often a part of a medical treatment or therapy plan and do provide a service. They are generally not trained for a specific service, but provide comfort and support to their owners. Although, in my opinion, all pets improve our mental health and well-being and also provide us with

companionship, a true emotional support animal must be prescribed by a licensed medical professional to a person with a disabling mental disease. These animals provide immense support and greatly improve the quality of life for the people to whom they are prescribed.

Service animals are trained for a specific task. These service animals generally have to have specific traits and typically fall under specific breeds. Some of these traits are a desire to work and please their owner, a calm demeanor, friendly temperament, and intelligence. Breeds that commonly exhibit some or all of these traits are golden retrievers, German shepherds, labrador retrievers, standard poodles, boxers, Bernese mountain dogs, border collies, Pomeranians, and Portuguese water dogs. I love Pomeranians very much, but some of you may be wondering, "Really? Pomeranians?" Yes! Most of the dogs on that list, which is not a complete list, are large breed dogs. But, those that have smaller living spaces, like apartments, especially with big city life, may not be able to house a large breed dog. Pomeranians are quick learners, social, extroverted, and are perfect for small space living.

Now, service animals provide quite the array of different jobs for their owners. This list includes: allergy detection, mobility assistance, seizure alert, hearing dogs, guide dogs, autism service dogs, and many more. These are all service animals to help a person with a medical condition

or disability.

Another group of service animals is those that offer protection to their community. These are law enforcement dogs and military dogs. These animals have a very specific set of skills they use to provide assistance to the armed forces, police and military. Police dogs are used for scent detection: to search and detect weapons, drugs, cadavers, explosives, and search and rescue. They are also great at detecting cases of arson by sniffing out chemical fire accelerants. Police dogs are widely used for public enforcement and safety- these guys are trained to chase down criminals and stop them, with their bite when necessary. Wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of that! Take it from someone who deals with animals every day; even a bite from a landshark small breed dog is no fun! Military dogs are also trained for much of this and also tracking and patrol. These service animals are invaluable to our society- they, much like their masters/handlers, perform heroic duties for our country and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their service to our country.

No matter the task, ESA and Service Animals provide, for lack of a better word, immense service to our country and its citizens, and our lives have been made much happier and more comfortable because of them.

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PET *of the* MONTH

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BY SUMER HALL

Mauui Gray was adopted locally from Something Pawsitive in Paragould on January 2, 2022. She was a healthy kitty when we got her, but she developed an illness after about 6 weeks of being with us. The diagnosis was FIP (feline infectious peritonitis), and it is fatal. I was heartbroken and panicked at the thought of losing her because we were all so attached already. I researched online and found a drug that was not approved for cats but had excellent research with an overwhelming cure rate. The medicine was very costly, but we took a chance and ordered it. Within 12 hours of injecting the medicine Maui went from being on death's door (I really thought we might lose her before the medicine arrived) to wanting to play and be active. It was nothing short of a miracle. We did 84 days of therapy and 84 days of observation and are now considered cured. She is happy and healthy.

Buddy Love appeared on October 3, 2022. My son was a new driver and Buddy must have crawled under his car at Paragould High School and rode home to join our family. He was a tiny kitten and precious so we knew we couldn't turn him away. It felt like the universe sent him to us.

We were concerned about how Maui would react, and it was tough for a few weeks but before long they were cuddling and playing. They are the best of friends now and I cannot imagine our lives without them. They are the first cats we've ever owned and now we wonder what took us so long.

Cats are underrated!

Want to see your pet featured in Premiere? Submit your pet via our Facebook post each month! Follow NEA Premiere Magazine to stay in the know.



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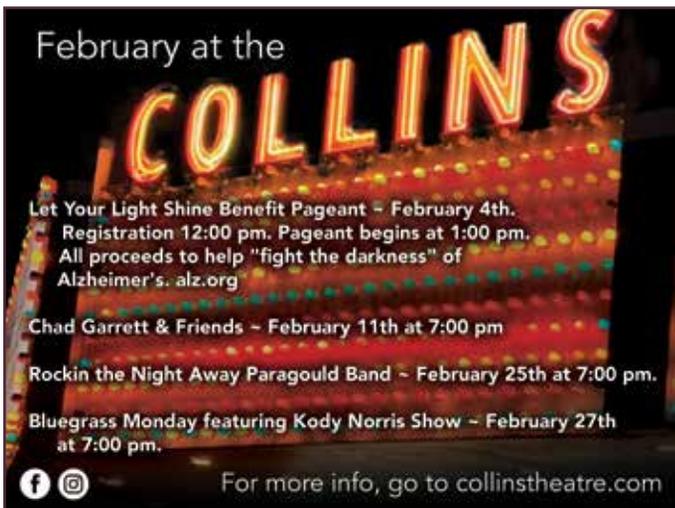


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CUPID'S HEADQUARTERS



February at the
COLLINS

Let Your Light Shine Benefit Pageant - February 4th.
Registration 12:00 pm. Pageant begins at 1:00 pm.
All proceeds to help "fight the darkness" of
Alzheimer's. alz.org

Chad Garrett & Friends - February 11th at 7:00 pm

Rockin the Night Away Paragould Band - February 25th at 7:00 pm.

Bluegrass Monday featuring Kody Norris Show - February 27th
at 7:00 pm.

For more info, go to collinstheatre.com



CHAMPIONS GYMNASTICS

Parents Night Out!
February 3rd!

Parents Night Out, Friday Feb. 3, 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., open to all
children 5 years - 12 years, \$15 per child, online registration
link on our Facebook page & website, must register and
pay online.

Watch for future PNOs posted on our Facebook page.

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Bridal Registries:

Sydney Markum & Timothy Brown March 18, 2023
Alex Cupp & Payton Free April 1, 2023
Abbie Stokes & Chandler Martin April 22, 2023
Sarah Beth Deweese & Will Mangrum April 29, 2023
Kyleigh Horner & Zac Hoggard May 6, 2023
Lunden Gibson & Dallas Moss June 3, 2023
Maggie Schreit & Jonah Treece June 24, 2023
Tyler McMurray & Isaac Jumper June 24, 2023

Love is in the Air!

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EVENTS



February 3rd
 Parents Night Out
 Champions Gymnastics
 7pm



February 4th
 Alzheimer's Benefit Pageant
 Collins Theatre
 12pm



February 14th
 Treat your Valentine
 DowntownParagould



February 25th
 Rockin' the Night Away-PHS Band-
 Collins Theatre
 7pm



February 27th
 Bluegrass Monday with The Kody
 Norris Show
 Collins Theatre
 7pm



February 23rd
 New Farmers Market
 Growers' & Makers' Meeting
 Paragould Chamber
 5:30pm

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

Happy Valentine's Day!

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Unico Bank and MOR Media, Inc., our weekly \$99 sponsors, celebrated the 2022 Cash and Wish drawing winner and presented the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society with a \$1,000 donation.

Shirley Hice was the 2022 \$1,000 Jill's Christmas Cash Winner and she chose the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society to receive the \$1,000 "Wish" to a charity in honor of her new puppy "Precious."

Thank you to our sponsors and to all the participants. We hope to see you again next year!

Community

Calendar Highlights



This story displays true love and acceptance between sisters and expands upon the emotional relationship and journey between Princesses Anna and Elsa.

Based on the popular Disney movie "Frozen." Presented by Arvest Bank.

The Historic Forum Theatre, 115 E Monroe Ave, Jonesboro

Friday, February 10, 2023 -Sunday, February 12, 2023

foajonesboro.org



The Greene County Tech Odyssey of the Mind teams will present the Harlem Wizards playing the Eagle Dream Team as a fundraiser to help the team travel to World Competition in May in Michigan.

The Event will be at the GCT JHS Gym February 20th. Game starts at 6:30 p.m. and the doors open at 5:30 p.m.

The Eagle Dream Team is made up of principals, coaches, teachers, superintendents, and even some community celebrities.

Tickets can be purchase at the door that night or are on sale now at harlemwizards.com



Looking for something Fun to do? Go to neapremiere.com and click on the ExploreMOR Calendar tab for all the wonderful events you won't want to miss!

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2023

Weddings

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WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

TO INVITE ... OR NOT TO INVITE THAT IS THE QUESTION

Do we hear Wedding Bells?

When planning a wedding, a frequent topic of discussion is whether or not to invite very young children. Some feel a wedding would not be complete without young children while others feel that even the best behaved young children can become restless and disruptive during a long formal ceremony. So, should very young children be included in the guest list?

THE WEDDING GUEST LIST FRAMEWORK

Deciding upon the guest list can be a tricky task. Many wedding experts suggest that the wedding guest list be considered a framework for the event. The framework for the guest list usually consists of the following:

- The size of the wedding.
- The style of the wedding
- The cost of the wedding.
- The location of the wedding.
- The formality of the wedding.

Using this framework can help in determining whether or not the wedding will be child friendly. A guest list that includes young children or a guest list for adults-only may be a difficult choice. Couples should consider how they feel about their wedding ceremony by considering the pros and cons of inviting young children. Here are some guidelines. You may think of many more based on your circumstances.

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INVITING YOUNG CHILDREN

Consider inviting young children if you:
Want them to be a part of the wedding event.
Feel they are an important part of your family.
Would like the wedding to also serve as a reunion for family and friends.

INVITING ADULTS

Consider inviting only adults if you:
Think young children may be disruptive during the wedding.
Have selected a location that may not be child friendly.
Are planning a long, formal, solemn ceremony.
Want to limit the number of guests.

WHO'S INVITED?

The first impression guests may have of the wedding is the style of the invitation. Is the wedding formal or casual? Will the wedding be held indoors or outdoors? The invitation often sets the tone of the wedding celebration. The invitation indicates who is invited. If children are invited then the parents' names are on the outer envelope and then on the inner envelope the parents' names and children's names are listed. If children are not invited then only the parents' names are listed on the outer and inner envelope. If using only one envelope, list the names of those invited.

HELP FOR PARENTS AND THE WEDDING PARTY

Providing a nursery or hiring babysitters to watch very young children during the wedding ceremony and the reception is greatly appreciated by parents, guests and the members of the wedding party. Often a separate card is enclosed in the invitation notifying guests that a nursery or babysitting services will be provided. This service gives the parents an opportunity to attend a wedding and reception that may not be conducive to very young children. Parents and guests can relax and enjoy the ceremony without worrying about a crying child. And, the wedding party can concentrate on the event and not have to be concerned about tired and fidgety young children.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

" A HAPPY MARRIAGE IS A LONG CONVERSATION WHICH ALWAYS SEEMS TOO SHORT." Andre Maurois, French Writer

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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The advertisement displays three rows of wedding print examples. The first row shows a light blue and white floral design with cards for 'INVITATIONS', 'SAVE THE DATE', and 'AMILY SIMON'. The second row features a rustic design with brown and green foliage, including 'You are invited', 'Save the Date', and 'Thank You' cards. The third row shows a forest-themed design with green and brown tones, featuring 'Taylor + Charlie', 'Save the Date', 'Reply', and 'Thank You' cards. To the right, a collection of various wedding cards is shown, including 'Wedding Invitation', 'Welcome', 'Menu', 'Thank you', and 'Save the Date' cards, all with floral and greenery motifs.

Professionally Beautiful

THE CAKE IS THE CENTERPIECE

Why you should choose a professional cake decorator for your wedding...



You've set the date, now to choose the wedding cake. Your best friend's Aunt Sue has agreed to make your cake at minimum cost. Yay! Or not; choosing a professional may be the better option. Sure, it will cost more, but they know what they're doing. The professional cake baker can advise on every aspect such as size, flavor, color and design. Tell them how many guests you're planning, and they can tell you what size cake you need.

They will give you peace of mind on your big day. Being professional, they will take care of all the details including delivery and set up. This is one less thing for you to worry about on your special day.

Your happiness is important to them. All cake decorators I personally know have a deep sense of pride in their work. They

want the customer happy, and they want their cake to be a beautiful centerpiece.

A professional cake decorator will also offer wedding consults. Things to consider before coming to the appointment are number of guests, design ideas and flavors. During the consult, the decorator will help guide you along the process of making your dream wedding cake a reality.

If you book a wedding consult with Something Sweet, you can choose six flavors of cake to try. Tracy will sit down with you to go over all the details. After the consult is completed, a deposit is required to book the cake. You can then have peace of mind that your cake will be delivered and set up as the beautiful show piece of your dreams.

Something Sweet opened in the Historic Downtown Paragould in December 2011 as Paragould's first sweet shop with a focus on cupcakes and custom decorated occasion cakes. Book your professional "Cake Tasting consultation" with Tracy Mothershed, Owner-Cake Artist at Something Sweet.

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It is really sweet of a family friend to offer to help save you money by "shooting" your wedding, but remember, a wedding day goes by in a flash. In the blink of an eye all the hard work and preparation is over and you are now happily married. But how will you show future children what your day looked like? How will you show your family members, who were not able to attend, how your wedding dress looked if the friend's efforts do not turn out?

Professional photographers and videographers are there to capture each moment of your big day and eliminate the stress of making sure you will have physical memories to look back on forever.

Knight Productions can take care of the photos and the videography, making it one less vendor to deal with and your photos and video all have a cohesive feel.

For more information go to knightproductions.info

Beautifully *Sweet*

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Call today to book your wedding consult and cake tasting.



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Start with a Statement

A RING AS UNIQUE AS YOUR BRIDE



family. After running a manufacturing business in New York for two decades and teaching design at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) in California, Gotay opened a retail business in Jonesboro - Gotay's Gallery of Jewelry Design.

Gotay is known for making custom jewelry pieces in collaboration with customers beginning with an idea, proceeding to a sketch, and ending with the fabrication of an original piece. "My task is to interpret the customer's ideas and translate that into a well-made piece of jewelry."

"I have enjoyed this industry," Gotay said. "The longer I am in it the more I find to



Over a quarter of a century ago, Nelson Gotay, who hails from New York, met a Southern Belle from the Ozarks and settled in Jonesboro where he opened his jewelry design business. Gotay originally entered the jewelry business as a jeweler apprentice working with his

learn. In an every-changing industry, there is more to learn every day. For example, properties of gemstones, modern metals, the use of colors in design, new technologies, and more. In the end, I pull these elements together to produce something that is fashionable and well-made."

But it's not just fashionable that he's after; customer satisfaction is key. "My goal is to use sound design principles that result in an aesthetically pleasing piece that is also built to last decades. Sometimes the customer may be happy with the initial design, but I may want to make changes to ensure the piece can be properly fabricated and is long-lasting."

The reverse is also true. "My philosophy about design is this: I believe I can have an aesthetically perfect design with all elements working together, but if the customer doesn't like it, the design is no good. In the end, I want the customer to be happy."

Gotay talks about stones, colors, gems, and cuts in a way that reflects his 50 years of experience in the industry. During these fifty years, he has learned many techniques and notes it is possible to design a piece that is aesthetically pleasing but cannot be made: "I try to avoid the mistake of making

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an item that is not stable or is too fragile. I try to build out problems while holding true to the design." He also adds that you have to be able to clean, polish, and resize as necessary. "Another jeweler should be able to work on it, so a piece should be designed with these thoughts in mind."

Though creating a custom design might seem daunting, Gotay takes it in stride. "It's very rare that a customer comes in with an idea for which I can't figure out a workable fabrication technique," he said. "It happened when I was an apprentice, but not anymore."

Many things have changed in the years Gotay has been designing jewelry. Using colored stones in the center of an



engagement ring is a prime example. He said today people are using sapphires, rubies, tanzanite, and even pearls, adding these are one-of-a-kind pieces as people are choosing stones that have significance to them. "There is no limit to what kind of colored stone people are asking for, even pearls from the Mississippi River," he said. "Nothing says it has to be a diamond. Another trend is going back to yellow gold; most recently it has been white gold or platinum. Colors are fantastic but you have to work with them. It's an artistic challenge."

All the work at Gotay's is done in-house including casting, mill work, setting, and polishing. Most pieces take about three weeks to complete after a rendering is made. Most of Gotay's customers come to

have something custom made, the opposite of a typical store which is most likely to sell something from the showcase. "At this point, my goal is to work with customers to create those special family heirlooms that can be passed on for generations. It is the individual customer experience that brings me satisfaction." Gotay added that on occasion, "I have remade a piece multiple times when something bothered me. I do it until it is right, the way it needs to be. To me, this is an art more than a business. As an artist, you never stop growing and learning. You are always experimenting and improving on the last piece."

That commitment to excellence has kept him in business. A former client had this to say: "Mr. Gotay creates the most beautiful pieces of jewelry. Timeless and elegant."

"Individual masterpieces that you will pass down for generations. Well worth the time just to visit with him about jewelry you are considering. Remarkable gallery if you are looking for a unique gift, as well."

To discuss your design dreams, drop by for a visit at Gotay's Gallery of Jewelry Design located at 2604 E. Nettleton Avenue in Jonesboro. You can call him at 870-972-8743 or find him on Facebook at Gotay's Jewelry.



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Show your Style

PICK THE VENUE



Choose a venue that suits your style.

Dates book up fast, so if you want a specific date get it booked ASAP. Your choices will be narrowed by the amount of guests you expect and if you are holding the ceremony at a church and then need a venue for the reception.

Cheryl Davis is the coordinator for the new Jonesboro Wildflower Event Venue at Hilltop and she suggests asking:

- What is the venue aesthetics or style?
- How many guests can you accommodate?
- Do you have catering or a catering kitchen?
- What are your audio/visual capabilities and what is included in my quote?

If you are looking for an extraordinary unique venue, Wildflower is a distinctive and desirable event space, balancing upscale ambiance with eye-catching décor and modern flare. The space offers custom interiors true to the name, with a large food and wet bar, specialty lighting and HomeTroniX audio visual elements.

Contact Cheryl Davis for a tour and more information at 870.974.1018 or info@wildflowereventvenue.com



Wildflower Event Venue offers a feeling of class and sophistication in an upscale environment. The design driven space is unique and functional.



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Flowers that Express YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE

Bearded Bouquet was founded in 2019, with Zach Jones as the lead designer and owner. Zach, who is originally from the Jonesboro area, and has moved back to the area after a stint of living in Asheville, North Carolina, where he worked on the floral team at the Biltmore Estate. Biltmore Estate is America's largest privately owned residence and is renowned for its acres of gardens as well as its interior and architecture. While on the estate, Zach worked in the main house creating floral arrangements for the palatial home as well as maintaining a unique collection of plants that graced the 175,000+ square feet of the home.

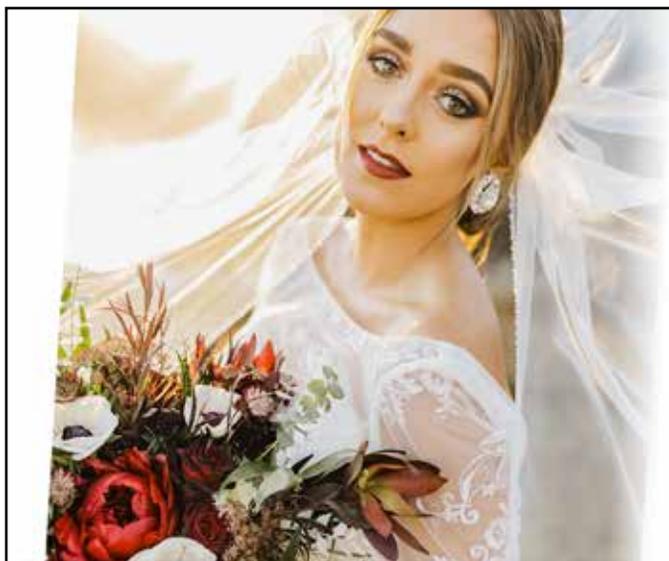
While his time at Biltmore was stellar and a tremendous learning experience, he decided to move back to Northeast Arkansas to be closer to his family and to bring the Biltmore European garden style arrangements to his hometown. Bearded Bouquet specializes in bringing dreams to reality, whether it be a bouquet to brighten someone's day or once in a lifetime events like weddings. We like to say here at Bearded Bouquet, "Because or just because." You don't always need a reason to have flowers.

Bearded Bouquet is a full-service flower and retail shop, with everyday gifts, different and exotic plants and, of course, flowers. They offer same day delivery of gorgeous blooms and lush greenery, all based on seasonality and availability to ensure the freshest cuts for clients. They also buy local when possible and when in season here in our area. Everything from peonies, to zinnias, sunflowers, and gladiolas. Zach also likes to practice a technique he learned

at Biltmore simply referred to as "cutting," where they forage for greenery on land they have access to. This way, they have fresh local greenery not traditionally found in daily arrangements; like spirea, magnolia, and honeysuckle. This creativity gives our arrangements that natural garden style we are known for.

Bearded Bouquet specializes in floral for wedding and events as well, whether you want something classical and elegant or you want to make a splash with your wedding, we can help make your visions come true. We are located at 3410 E. Johnson in the Shoppes at Hilltop, and we would love to meet with you about making your wedding or event a reality.

Come by the shop at Hilltop in Jonesboro or look at beardedbouquet.com for examples and inspiration. Or call 870.333.1661



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Enjoy Your Day

HIRE SOME HELP!



An often-understated role in a wedding is a planner, who makes not only the wedding, but the whole wedding planning process go smoothly. So, couples wanting to save money on their wedding may want to rethink the part about saving the money on a wedding planner and doing it themselves. "A lot of people think maybe I'll save a couple grand and plan everything myself and on the day of I'll get my mom to do a few things or get bridesmaids to do stuff," said Suzie Woodring, event planner and owner of Silk and Thistle Events. "But it doesn't have to be that hard."

Suzie emphasizes making the day as stress free as possible. "It's an emotional decision and I don't take that lightly," she said. "Let me help you with your big day. I take a lot of care with the decisions. It doesn't matter how little or much detail you want. If it's important to you, it's important to me and I'll make sure it's all there."

Suzie loves to be there from the very start so you can get the right aesthetic, vision, and even the right vendors. "When you hire me, you tap into the vendors I know and trust versus you going to three flower shops and you don't love their aesthetic or you don't want cookie-cutter. I can introduce you to new people you've maybe never heard of." Wedding planners can also be the go-between for the couple and vendors so that on the day of if there is a question, they are going to the planner and not the bride and groom, making sure the day is stress free. "If the cake is late, I'm not going to the bride and say, 'Hey, what's their number?' That's undue stress on an already emotional day. Let me do it so you can enjoy the day. And don't miss the day worried about details." She adds that if you ask a family member to

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do a task, then they are missing the special dance or the bouquet toss themselves. Leaving it to a professional means that the whole wedding party can also enjoy the event.

Not only do clients get access to vendors, but they also get access to ideas. "We have some experience of designing and we get good at coming up with ideas to suit the day," Susie said. She came up with the idea of having a treat tower when the couple didn't want a traditional cake, having instead bite-sized desserts that meant something to the couple that also made their day unique.

Suzie notes that you spend the most time upfront in the initial wedding planning, checking in as the date moves closer. She will spend as little, or as much time as needed and has even gone with brides to look at gowns. There is no cap on the time she will invest in planning a wedding. She loves taking a vision and tying it up with a bow.

"A wedding planner is going to have the client's needs and wants in mind 100 percent ... that's all we care about," she said. She recommends planning to spend 15% of the budget on the wedding planner.

Suzie doesn't have a favorite part but does mention that the sweetest part of the day is when the groom looks back and sees his bride. "There's magic on that day," she said.

Suzie works alone but offers a shout-out to her husband who has helped build things and has served as bartender. "It means a lot that he sees my passion and how much I love this and wants to

push it to the next level and be successful," she said. The couple have two children: Sarah and Lora.

Silk and Thistle Events also does corporate events, baby showers, kids' birthdays, non-profit events, and more. She has been doing event planning for more than 15 years, starting wedding planning as a favor to friends. "Covid and life taught me that life is short and if I enjoy this it needs to be something I love. In my first year I had five events in five months and felt lucky to have people who trusted me in my first year as a small business. I just enjoy it. I enjoy getting everything together so when they walk in there is no care for the details, it's just enjoying the day," she said.

For more information, call Silk and Thistle Events at 501-472-5783.

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The advertisement features a photograph of a jewelry store interior with wooden display cases, white armchairs, and a red poinsettia centerpiece. In the foreground, several pieces of custom jewelry are displayed, including a ring with a large purple gemstone, a ring with a large blue gemstone, a ring with a large clear diamond, and several bracelets with various gemstones and designs.

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Can a local grocery and grill known for its burgers possibly be the perfect place for you to order the food for your rehearsal dinner or wedding? Yes, absolutely!

Lorado Grocery and Grill offers catering and to-go meals that include half chicken, pork steak, ribs, and steak with sides like baked beans, slaw, Mac and cheese, and potato salad ... and even the cake!

It has won the Best of NEA in multiple categories, but that's not the only reason you should use it. "We are family owned and operated, we're a local business, with award-winning food," said Brandon Pugsley. "We greet you with smile and you will leave with a belly full."

Brandon and Mika bought the business last year from his parents, Randy and Angela Pugsley, who bought it from Randy's dad, Dale Pugsley. This Jonesboro-based restaurant has been around since 2005; Brandon runs it now, along with his wife.

They offer to-go but will deliver for a small fee. Setup is not included. You just need to give them about a week in advance to get your order ready. They are local but are willing to go further for your special event.

The store is located at 31 Highway 168 West in Jonesboro and its phone number is 870-275-4654. Check out the Facebook page or their website www.loradogrill.com if you'd like to get an idea for how good their food looks. Most of their food is cooked fresh to order; they even have a smokehouse so they can offer ribs and BBQ smoke meats on-site.

"We offer it all," Brandon said.



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BRTC ADMINISTRATION SERVES COMMUNITIES



Black River Technical College (BRTC) Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Brad Baine and Vice President of Student Affairs Jason Smith recently assisted the Pocahontas Police Department (PPD) in two promotion panels to help the department evaluate and examine law enforcement officers in line for promotions.

PPD Chief David Edington said the promotion panels are a new approach for PPD promotions. "Instead of leaving the decision up to one individual, we decided to produce a panel of community members to form interview questions and interact with the officers," Edington said. "As law enforcement officers we tend to only look at things from a law enforcement perspective, and

bringing in other community members helped to broaden the scope of the interview."

Baine said the panel consisted of community members of diverse backgrounds including former and current law enforcement, professionals, media representatives, educators, and community volunteers.

The committee he was involved in was responsible for developing interview questions, reviewing the submitted portfolios from the PPD officers and conducting interviews. He said the purpose was to produce recommendations for law enforcement officers to receive a promotion in rank. There was a systematic process used to help the committee make their recommendations and all recommendations were submitted to Chief Edington.

Edington said the department brought in professionals from the college, but also members of the community "from different walks of life," who would be more objective and form questions as citizens, instead of officers. In the end, Edington said the promotion panel worked well, ending with his agreeing with the recommendations of both panels, and promoting the officers under consideration.

"I greatly appreciate the cooperation with the college, this was a win-win situation," said Edington.

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Happenings

BRTC AWARDS THE DR. JOSHUA R. TONEY, DDS, P.A., SCHOLARSHIP FOR FALL 2023



Hailey R. Bland of Paragould has received the Dr. Joshua R. Toney, DDS P.A. Scholarship, made possible by funding from Dr. Joshua Toney of Sandhill Dentistry in Pochontas. She is a 2022 graduate of Paragould High School. Bland is seeking a nursing degree.

The Dr. Joshua R. Toney, DDS, P.A., Scholarship is an annual IBERIABANK/BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament named scholarship. Each scholarship is sponsored by a \$1,000 donor who is able to name the scholarship.

The Black River Technical College Foundation matches the \$1,000 donation allowing students to be awarded \$1,000 per semester, fall and spring, provided the student maintains enrollment and GPA requirements.

DARON FREDERICK NAMED CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER



Daron Frederick has been named Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. He joined the cooperatives in 2013. Frederick replaces current CIO Robert McClanahan, who has had a 42-year tenure with Arkansas' electric cooperatives.

"I would like to thank Robert McClanahan for his selfless service to the cooperatives. He has been a part of just about every aspect of the information technology systems that power our technology infrastructure today.

"I look forward to continuing my career with the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas in the role of Chief Information Officer," Frederick said. "Our team is one of the best in the nation at being laser-focused on our mission of improving the quality of life for Arkansans and deploying the best technology solutions to achieve our operational goals both today and in the future."

BRTC AWARDS THE AGHERITAGE FARM CREDIT SERVICES SCHOLARSHIP FOR FALL 2023



Neeleigh Darty of Paragould has been awarded the AgHeritage Farm Credit Services Scholarship, made possible by funding from AgHeritage Farm Credit Services.

Darty is a 2022 graduate of Greene County Tech High School and is the daughter of Neal and Ashley Darty. She is seeking a business degree and plans to go to Arkansas State University to build on her degree after graduation. She plans to use her degree to open and run a boutique of her own.

The AgHeritage Farm Credit Services Scholarship is an annual Novaria/BRTC Foundation Golf Tournament named scholarship. Each scholarship is sponsored by a \$1,000 donor who is able to name the scholarship. The BRTC Foundation matches the \$1,000 donation allowing students to be awarded \$1,000 per semester, fall and spring, provided the student maintains enrollment and GPA requirements.

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Next Month

Celebrate Women



March is National Women's History Month and we will look at past and present women who impact NEA.

Spring Break



What to do with the kids within a day of NEA. No and low cost activities you will want to get on your list.

Special Section



Our quarterly NEA Seniors section will have lots of Spring season information for seniors and those providing elder care.

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