

NEA'S

PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2024



JON FULKERSON
MAKE YOUR MARK!

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS
NEA TEACHER & STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
SPECIAL SECTION: KIDS PLAY

A PUBLICATION OF MOR MEDIA, INCORPORATED

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Cover Photography by Knight Productions



Let's get ready for school!



Meet Stephanie, the newest stylist at Rouge Spa & Salon! She graduated from Paul Mitchell in 2018. It's her passion to help people to rediscover confidence and feel beautiful. She enjoys working with color to create beautiful styles. When she's not in the salon, she is spending time with her husband and daughter.



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From the Publisher

Back to School seems to come around faster every year ... and I am not a teacher, nor do I have any children involved in school anymore so I can't imagine how fast it must seem to those who do. But here we are again and even if you are practiced at the transition everyone can use a little advice to get through a new school year, so we have gathered some for you in the pages of this August Premiere.

I hope each of you finds something in these pages that helps make this school year better and finds a parenting tip or advice that makes a positive impact on your child's experience -- from gymnastics to counseling and all the activities and community resources available to assist in your journey.

Our cover story features Jonathan Fulkerson, principal at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Paragould. When we were brainstorming ideas for this edition, we asked around about adults who were part of the education system standing out as examples of the kind of people parents want their children to encounter when they are at school. As Jonathan was brought up by different people a common theme emerged: "Delighted to be there." Jonathan speaks to the children and adults -- staff and parents -- as if they are the most important person and he is delighted to have the opportunity to encounter them.

I have so much respect for anyone who is willing to put themselves in the line of

childcare and education. I can see that it would be a rewarding career, but I also see they are subject to so much more than the task of educating -- more than reading, writing and arithmetic. I worry about our society and the atmosphere our children are growing up in.

Parenting seems to be a hard task, and some see the education system as being responsible for the growth of their kids and their being good citizens. But then there are restrictions that hinder that being taught. I have always thought training for being a good citizen starts at home and is instilled through consistent support of the school system, the community, church if you choose and all the adults around the parents and children who interact positively. No one can control it all but each of us can contribute through our own interactions with the children in our lives.

We all can commit to our part in growing each child around us into one of Premiere's "People Making the Good News Happen."



Dina Mason

Dina Mason
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MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE



Summer vacation is almost over. How did it end so quickly? Before we know, it will be time to get back into the routine of school. Often the transition from summer vacation to the new school year can be an adjustment for the whole family. Teachers suggest that planning for the school year can make the transition from summer vacation to back-to-school easier for parents as well as children. Keep in mind the following when beginning the school year.

SCHOOL'S WEBSITE

Check the school's website for important information.

ROUTINE

Establishing an earlier bedtime schedule will help getting up earlier. Also, giving children time to prepare for the next school day such as picking out clothes, organizing books, and learning to get up early can make hectic school mornings go smoother. Practicing these routines a few weeks before actually going back to school can get everyone off on the right foot.

SCHEDULES

Making a schedule of the school day along with after school activities helps to let everyone know what needs to be done. Don't forget to factor in not only the school schedule, but also homework, chores, dinner, play time, etc.

LIBRARY

A trip to the library before school starts can brush the dust off some neglected reading skills. Select books that are enjoyable and interesting. Make reading fun!

STUDY TIME

Introducing children to a study schedule can assist in preparing them for homework and school projects. Playing games that incorporate reading and math skills helps children get ready for school.

CLOTHES

Check the school's dress code. Buying back-to-school clothes and school supplies ahead of time is one less worry for both the student and parent.

ACTIVITIES

Planning back-to-school activities or parties gets everyone ready for the new school year and helps make the transition more comfortable.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Children feel more comfortable if they know where they will be and who they will be with. Knowing the location of their classroom and meeting the teacher can help lessen the "butterflies in the stomach" feeling.

COMMON COURTESIES

Take time, before school starts, to talk to your child about being courteous to others. Good manners are common courtesies that make life easier. Beginning a new school routine can be hard, but a little preparation, along with treating others as you would like to be treated, can help smooth out some of the rough spots of the school day.

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.

Quote of the Day

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

~ Henry B. Adams

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PET

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BY ALLY WEST



This sweetie is Phoebe. She has been with us since September 2020 – a true Covid kitty. She was the only kitten left of a stray cat, alone on the streets. She was so sick and we were scared of what would happen to her if we left her, so I begged my husband to take her home. Of course, he was on board.

The next day we took her to the vet and found out she had Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). The vet we used at the time urged us to put her down. Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is seen by some people as a death sentence, but they couldn't be more wrong!

Phoebe lives a perfectly normal life, other than asthma and a fish allergy! We couldn't imagine our lives without her. She is the sweetest girl – unless the vacuum is on, then she's not so sweet. She loves to smell "people food" but refuses to eat anything that is not cat food.

Cats can live long, happy lives when diagnosed with an illness. Don't give up on them, and they will surely bless you!



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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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT

Each year when we write Back To School stories my mind returns to my school days, which I cannot say I enjoyed all that much. I liked most of the people I went to school with but it was the very idea of school – sitting in a room reading stuff I didn't want to read, working out mathematical equations I didn't think I had any use for, taking pop quizzes the day after I forgot to take my book home – all while the sun was still shining and we could be playing some outdoor sport during the early weeks of the semester. On top of that, being a teacher's kid was no easy chore.

Just last month I found myself sitting alone in my high school gymnasium, a perfect time and place for reliving those unforgettable moments most players have, but I couldn't come up with any ... no dramatic game-winning shots and such. Many people don't know or have forgotten that until my senior year I was little more than a bench warmer, a kid the coaches had no plans on using much until "garbage time" arrived near the end of the game. Throughout my junior high years and the first two high school seasons, my basketball coach was also the school's football coach and, to their credit, they just told me flat-out if I didn't come out for football I wouldn't get much playing time in basketball. You probably couldn't get away with that today, but that's how it was in yesteryear, and since both of my parents were very anti-football I just took my place at the end of the bench and waited my turn ... which rarely came.

Most of what I remember about the good old Paragould High School gym is time spent running bleachers, running sprints, running line drills and climbing a rope that hung down from the ceiling. When I was a sophomore my class was relegated to the junior varsity team because the upperclassmen were simply more talented and more numerous than we were. Again, sticking to his word, Coach made me start out each day behind my classmates who played football and there were seven, so I began each day no better than eighth on the depth chart. I mostly played defense against the guys he planned on playing in the JV games, but I still managed to mess things up often enough that he made me leave the court and run bleachers or climb the rope. I got much better at both of those than I did at playing basketball, and I have to take the blame for that. I should have been determined to be so good Coach had to play me by putting in extra work and improving my skills; instead, I accepted my role as a nobody and spent most of the gametime sitting

the bench, then sitting in the stands as the varsity played.

One night we had a home game in the midst of a community flu epidemic, and we sophomores got to dress out with the varsity. They built a big lead and I actually got to take the court near the end of the contest, finding myself wide open near the free throw line with the ball in my hands. I tossed up a jump shot that swished home, and since we never dressed out with the A team again, I finished the year with a perfect 1.000 shooting percentage.

My junior year is the one that stands out to me, and not in a good way. Even guys I played ball with forget that for the first three games of the year, I started at point guard on the varsity alongside four seniors. Scared me to death. I had never played important minutes, yet here I was, supposedly running the show for the Bulldogs. We hosted a team from Memphis early on – Overton High School – and their star player was an All-American named Johnny Neumann, who two years later would lead the nation's Division I schools in scoring at just over 40 points per game. Three different times on this night coach Doy Pannell assigned me to guard this 6-5 superstar "as soon as he gets in range," and each time he bombed in a jump shot from just inside the halfcourt line.

Coach took me out and impolitely reminded me I was supposed to pick him up when he got close enough to make a shot and I said, "Coach, he hasn't gotten into range yet." And I meant it. It seemed like he was making shots from Court Street, and each time we did try to head him off he blew past us with a behind-the-back dribble and scored from in close or from the free throw line. He wound up playing in both the NBA and ABA, and I didn't.



Sometime during that game I once again found myself open at the free throw line, with the ball, and just as I had the year before I lofted my jump shot. It didn't go in and I came out, and that was the last time I played a meaningful minute that season. The following game was on the road and when I stepped off the bus the JV coach said, "Brummett, you dress out with the B team tonight" and I said, "Yes, sir" and that constituted the entire conversation regarding my demotion from varsity starter to B team part-timer.

I was too insecure to ask either coach why my status changed and to this day I don't know if it's because I missed that jump shot or because Johnny Neumann made so many of his.



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BACK TO SCHOOL

for Pets!

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



Back to school. This is one of my favorite times of the year! Reminds me of that line from "You've Got Mail": "If I knew your address, I would send you a bouquet of freshly sharpened pencils." When I was younger, and even now, I looked forward to buying school supplies and getting prepared for the new year. I do this now for my children, and love every minute of it. It was always my favorite -- I have a somewhat embarrassing love for office supplies and all things organizational. This time of year it is all about preparing for a great school year. So, how does this relate to animals? Easy! Our pets are creatures of habit. I'm sure your pet lets you know when it is treat time, dinner time, outside time, and play time. This is because they also grow quite accustomed to schedule and routine. Their routine can get thrown off this time of year as they readjust to family, especially the kiddos, not being home as much. Maybe when the kids were home, your pet got to play outside more, got a special snack for being a good boy or girl, or just got more snuggle time on the couch. Either way, they have probably grown more accustomed to the new summer schedule. Some pets readjust easily and roll with the punches, but some others do not. I will talk about some ways that you can help them best cope with a new schedule and updated routine.

The first way to help is by starting the new schedule and routine before it is actually time to do so. This can be done by waking up at the times

you will need to, walking the pet or other activity at the times you plan to, and going to bed at the time you plan to. Another good tip is to get plenty of exercise! This may seem off topic, but hear me out. Pets that get plenty of exercise, especially before school, tend to rest better when you are gone. Pets that do not get enough activity tend to become more destructive when left to their own resources. Their excess energy stores can come out in a negative way -- like chewing up the rug or carpet, digging a hole in the drywall of your house, and chewing on furniture or other items like shoes. Another way to help prevent pet boredom is with interactive toys. There are so many options in this area, from auto-fetch toys to cameras with treat feeders. Quality time is the most important! Don't forget, they still crave that attention and quality time with you -- whether it is brushing their hair or playing a quick game of tug-of-war with a toy, they need you. Fifteen minutes of activity and attention before and after school is easy and will go a long way for your pet. One other option is distraction -- especially for those pets that have separation anxiety. Playing music or some other white noise for them while you are away will not only help by distracting them and deterring their own anxiety, but will help to break up outside noises that might usually scare them.

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with rest breaks to avoid exhaustion, mental stimulation through interaction with other people and/or other dogs, assistance in training (learning new tricks), and especially socialization. I have personally witnessed dogs that go to daycare tend to naturally be more social and experience a less stressful visit when they come to see the vet. Almost every dog could benefit from daycare, but I see the biggest difference in high energy breeds and working dogs that are not expending their energy as they should. Enter the Australian Shepherd -- I absolutely love these dogs, but they need a job or something to do otherwise they tend to develop anxious behaviors. Next in line, come on up German shepherd!

German shepherds are beautiful and very intelligent dogs; they are easy to train and love having work to do. However, if not given tasks and properly socialized they can become very fearful of new people and that can come out in an aggressive form. Last one on this very much abbreviated list, the Doodle mix family (Labradoodles, Goldendoodles, Sheepadoodles, Bernadoodles ... all the doodles) these guys are generally super sweet and they've got all the energy, plus they love to chew! Daycare will help them to get plenty of exercise playing with friends, while socializing (something most of them love), and maybe getting a special chew at daycare (to keep them from chewing on things in your home like shoes and wooden furniture).

With this school year, I hope we begin getting back to some normalcy, especially for the kids, but I hope maybe some of these pointers will make the adjustment seamless for your pets as well. If you are interested in doggy daycare or just have some questions, please contact PAWLiday Inn at 870-336-STAY (7829) or your local doggy daycare. Hope everyone has a great school year!

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DEER HUNTING

Then & Now



The woods began to come to life as the sun peaked over the hills. I had set a wooden ladder stand near a persimmon tree laden with fruit and there was deer sign indicating recent activity. I hoped for a deer encounter to warm up the cool morning.

Just after the sun's rays had reached the forest floor, my eyes caught movement. Almost like a ghost, a deer materialized and made her way toward the persimmons. I stood and readied my bow. I had practiced this shot countless times in the back yard, but as I started to draw, my muscles failed. My arms would not work, and my legs began to shake. This was my first deer encounter on our family farm in Greene County and I had a case of "buck fever." I could not get my body to work. The deer walked away, and I sat back down and tried to regain my composure.

I grew up a small game hunter. I chased ducks, rabbits, squirrels and doves all over Greene County but rarely chased any larger game. The reason was simple – there were very few deer in the area. It was a surprise to see deer tracks, much less a deer. There were folks who deer hunted, traveling to places like Wirth, Hardy, Sylamore or White River, and I had been a few times, without much luck. To see a deer on our property in our county was such a shock that, in that moment, it had rendered me useless as a hunter.

The history of the white-tailed deer in Arkansas is a tale of abundance, overuse, perseverance, and grand success. A very quick look shows that Arkansas, even before it became a state in 1836, was a wildlife paradise. Diverse habitats provided lots of opportunities for game to flourish. When early explorers crossed the Mississippi into the lands that would become Arkansas, they found a source of meat to feed the hungry folks on the east coast. In the 1800s, hunting for markets, loss

of habitat and a general overharvest caused deer populations, as well as other wildlife populations, to plummet. Regulations were adopted to try to curb the overharvest, but the laws went unheeded.

To stem the negative tide and save the wildlife of Arkansas for future generations, Act 124 of 1915 was passed and created the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. J.M. Futrell, of Paragould, was one of the leaders in the effort to create a state agency to oversee the wildlife of the state. Most wildlife populations had been decimated and it was going to be a tough road to bring back wildlife to huntable numbers. In 1930, estimates from surveys across the state suggested there were less than five hundred white-tailed deer left in the state of Arkansas. But, from that low point, one of the greatest success stories in the history of conservation has been written.

Estimates of the deer population have now reached over one million animals. Northeast Arkansas was one of the last portions of the state to see the populations return, but restrictive seasons have allowed the numbers to grow, and we are continuing to see those animals thrive and multiply.

And I fear we have now almost reached the other side of the equation, where our wildlife management and habitat management practices are allowing deer populations to reach a level that might become unhealthy. I have not gathered any scientific data to uphold my theory, but personal anecdotal information seems to point that direction. In the '80s and '90s, I had very few landowners who were suffering from predation by deer on crops, landscaping, etc., contact me. In recent years that has become a common call. I do not have any hard data on deer/car collisions, but I do know they are becoming much more common across the area.

CHUCK LONG

Avid Outdoorsman
Retired Outdoor Educator



Another side to this information is that historically most deer/human contacts happened on Crowley's Ridge and deer were rarely seen in the Delta areas. But that is also not the case, as deer are rapidly expanding their habitats to include open farmland on either side of the Ridge.

Why all this talk about history and deer populations? This year the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has implemented a new package of deer hunting rules for the state and some have a direct impact on Northeast Arkansas. These new regulations are some of the biggest changes we have seen in years. We have now gone from a time of very conservative seasons and methods to trying to encourage hunters to be more active and take more deer off the landscape, thus keeping our herds healthy and in check.

I wanted to provide a little historical background this month and next month we will take a full look at the new regulations and how they will impact our deer hunting in this part of the state. I will quickly mention one change that happens in September. There will be a buck only hunt the first weekend of September, September 7 – 9, that could give a hunter the opportunity to take a deer still in velvet. Please check agfc.com for full details on this and all regulations.

As I hunt, I often think back to the days of very few deer in our area. Though our populations are booming, these thoughts of the past still make it hard for me to take a doe. But we are at the point now where we need to take mature does out of the herd. It is one of the best things we can do as a responsible hunter to insure the health and well-being of our deer in the future. I hope you are planning to hunt this fall and I hope to see you out there.

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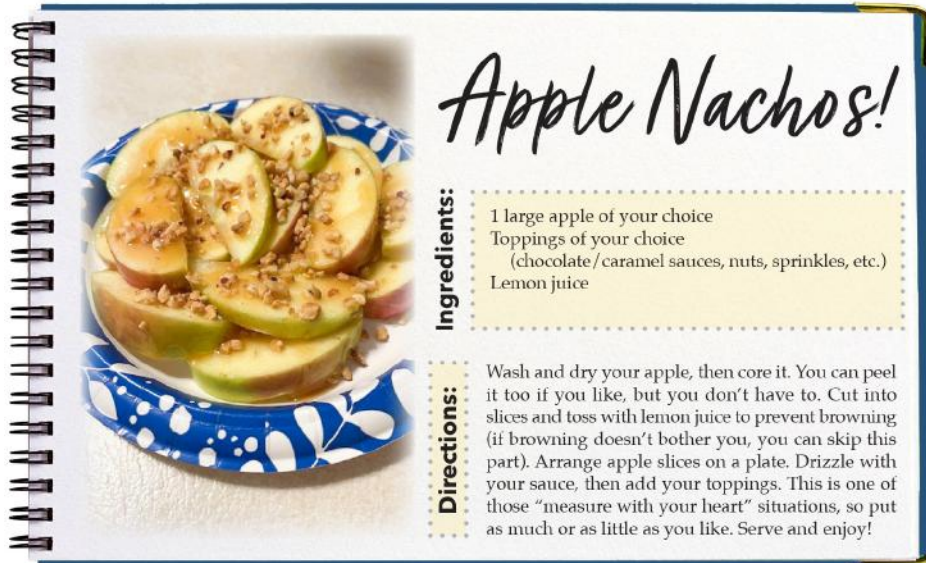
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How About Them Apples??

BY KATIE COLLINS



Apple Nachos!

Ingredients:

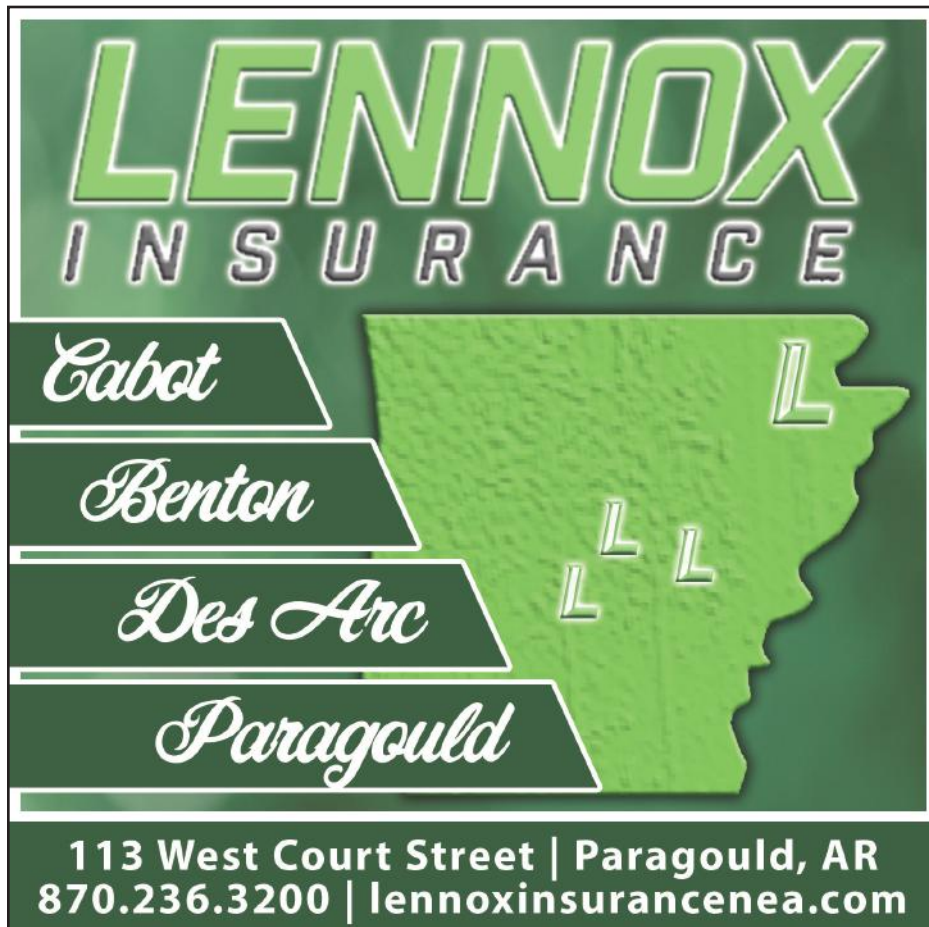
- 1 large apple of your choice
- Toppings of your choice (chocolate/caramel sauces, nuts, sprinkles, etc.)
- Lemon juice

Directions:

Wash and dry your apple, then core it. You can peel it too if you like, but you don't have to. Cut into slices and toss with lemon juice to prevent browning (if browning doesn't bother you, you can skip this part). Arrange apple slices on a plate. Drizzle with your sauce, then add your toppings. This is one of those "measure with your heart" situations, so put as much or as little as you like. Serve and enjoy!

This was one of those months that I was struggling to find a recipe for this column. I had tried one and didn't like the results, so that was out. I came in to work asking for some suggestions, and had a great one from Gabby Powell, our graphic artist/content creator/magazine guru. She suggested Apple Nachos! I thought her suggestion was perfect. It's no-bake for the August heat, it's somewhat healthy since apples are involved, and it's my favorite thing – customizable! You can buy whatever your favorite variety of apple is, whatever your favorite toppings are, you can make as much or as little as you want. It's quick, tasty, and sure to please everyone in your household. I made mine with a Honeycrisp apple, salted caramel sauce, and chopped mixed nuts. The ice cream toppings section of the store is a great place to find your toppings! The kids (and adults) will enjoy creating their own applelicious delights!

Since this edition will be Gabby's last one -- she is leaving us to find her next adventure -- it seems only fitting to use some of this space to say an enormous THANK YOU to her for always being willing to try my recipe creations, for suggesting this one, and for being one of my favorite co-workers ever. She is a genuinely good person, and she will definitely be missed around here. I'm sending her all the good vibes for whatever the future holds for her.



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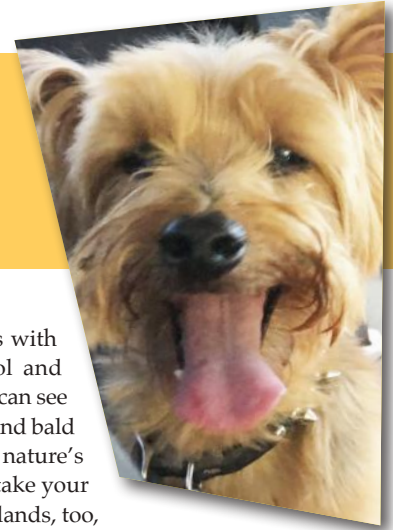
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THE ADVENTURES OF

BY VICKI McMILLAN

Lester



Hey, there, my hot and sweaty pals! Lester, here, just trying to ease through these hot days! We are in the Dog Days of Summer, which can be interpreted as a compliment to my kind -- unless you've heard about the Dog Star rising about the same time as the sun in the Northern Hemisphere. That's just a bunch of blather about mad dogs, poisonous water, etc. I chose to accept the compliment and not worry about my temperament (which is usually very good).

Nonetheless, it is hot here, and a perfect time to go find something fun to do. As I am the Rick Steves of the canine community, I have the just the place: Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky. Vicki, Mac, and I have visited there several times and it truly has something for everyone. And it's only 179 miles from Paragould!

If you like seeing wildlife in its natural habitat, check out the Woodland Nature Station. In August the hummingbird migration is officially on -- and these little buggers are everywhere! The air actually vibrates with their whooshing little wings! Then go on to the Bison and Elk Prairies. There's a paved road through these and you'll see these large animals as you slowly drive around. One time, a bison -- taller than Mac's truck -- headed straight for us! I said my prayers and at the last minute, he veered off the road! Whew.

If you are into hiking (which I am NOT), there are over 500 miles of hiking trails. They range in length from 60 miles (no thank you) to the easiest one at 2.4 miles, called the Hematite Lake Trail. (Hematite is a Greek word for "blood," which is what my four paws would be leaking if I did this trail.) You can also spot wildlife from many of the trails, and some take you from island to island via natural bridges.

You can hit one of the seven lakes with your kayak or canoe to stay cool and check out the bird population. You can see egrets, blue heron, white pelicans, and bald eagles. Also you probably will see nature's first engineer, the beaver. You can take your kayak or canoe around the small islands, too, and pretend you are an ancient explorer!

With 300 miles of shoreline, there are plenty of places to swim and fish. Carry your boat or rent one there -- just check first because two of the lakes don't allow gas-powered boats. And there a few sand beaches, perfect for swimming.

If, like me, you should have been a cowboy like Gene or Roy, there are 100 miles of horseback riding trails. Just don't forget your apples or sugar cubes.

Other sights not to miss:

- A planetarium with the comfiest seats and best air-conditioning;
- The Homeplace 1850 Working Farm that shows how the early 1800s settlers could survive without Walmart;
- And if you are a wannabee history teacher like Vicki, make sure you visit the Iron Industry Ruins. There are two iron furnaces left in this region from the early Iron Age.

I've worked up a sweat just telling you all about Land Between the Lakes! Go soon, and take the kids and the grandparents! Truly there is something for everyone!

Stay cool, Paragould!

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HEALTH *Matters*

Eating Healthy at Restaurants

The title sounds impossible — who can, or even wants to eat healthy at a restaurant? Known for rich food served up in gargantuan portions, restaurant eating is one of those times we give ourselves the freedom to bypass healthy meal guidelines.

That may not be such a good decision. A recent study published in the *Public Health Nutrition Journal* found that people who eat out consume an average of about 200 calories more a day than when they cook at home. Here's another perspective: Many restaurant entrees have 1,200+ calories, and this doesn't include appetizers, drinks, or desserts. If you choose one of the latter add-ons, chances are good you consumed an entire daily calorie budget in one meal!

"We know that parallel to the rising rates of obesity, Americans have been increasingly eating food away from home," says Lisa Powell, study co-author. Previous research suggests that 36 percent of adults eat food, drinks or both from fast-food restaurants each day, and 27 percent eat at full-service restaurants. With all these numbers in mind, Powell estimated the typical person in the United States consumes an extra 24,000 calories a year by eating out — the equivalent of six to seven pounds annually.

Where do those extra calories come from? In a report conducted by researchers from the Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, researchers found that most typically ordered restaurant meals contain larger portions and included more

saturated fat, sugar and salt than home-cooked foods. They found 73 percent of the meals ordered had over half of the 2,000 daily calories recommended for adults by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and 12 meals contained more than the full daily recommendation.

These larger portions contain the key to weight gain because diners tend to eat what is placed in front of them. Adding to the caloric damage are "bottomless" drinks and free teasers like chips and salsa. Single restaurant meals typically contained 151 percent of the daily amount of salt a person should ingest, 89 percent of the fat recommended per day, 83 percent of daily recommended saturated and trans fats and 60 percent of the cholesterol one should have daily.

In recent years, FDA guidelines requiring food establishments to make the nutritional content of their menu offerings easily available has not led to a change in American eating habits. When eating out, we tend to lean on the old adage of "what you don't know won't hurt you."

Eating healthy at restaurants begins with one hard fact: We need to do it less. The environment is ripe for good intentions to get set aside and well-worn excuses to take center stage. Recent double-digit inflation adds even more motivation to making restaurant eating a special occasion rather than a daily habit. It becomes a good choice for the checkbook balance and the calorie budget!

Strategies to reel in restaurant calories all fall under one heading



KARAN SUMMITT

Retired Health Educator

25 years educating people of all ages on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. She teaches and writes with a passion for sharing simple, doable strategies that make better health possible for almost everyone.

— micro-manage the experience. Many chains publish their menus online and include a healthy eating section with calorie counts. Know before you go what you plan to order and minimize temptation by avoiding tempting selections on the menu.

Make specific requests about healthier substitutions. Have dressings, sauces, butter and sour cream served on the side. Ask how specific foods are prepared. I once thought I'd save calories by requesting that the onions and peppers served with fajita meat be grilled without any added oil. I was told that at this particular restaurant they were dropped into a basket and deep fried!

At buffets, grab a dinner plate and make your first trip to the salad bar. Go for the fresh veggies and fruits, avoiding the fat-laden prepared salads. Omit or go very scantily on cheeses, croutons, nuts, seeds and chopped ham. Eat slowly and finish off this first plate before heading to the hot food bar.

For those over-sized entrees, plan to split a meal and order extra sides or have a to-go box brought out with the meal. Immediately ladle half the order into the box and close the lid. Again, eat the remainder slowly, savoring every bite.

In our current culture of busy lives plus a steady stream of new and tempting food establishments, Americans and eating out appear to be a match made to last. With a few good strategies you can make sure this marriage of convenience doesn't end in poor health. Bon Appetit!

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Paragould Fireworks Show



Paragould, you never cease to amaze us with your spirit and pride for community and country! The 2024 Paragould Fireworks Show was the BIGGEST EVER! Wow! Thank you all so much for coming out to enjoy the food, fun, and fireworks to celebrate our great nation's independence.

In case you missed out on the fun, here is a snapshot into the day. The Premier Pyrotechnics arrived with their boom boxes and began setup while the MOR Media team prepared the music and fun. Central Baptist – Paragould always does an amazing job preparing the hotdogs and bringing a great sense of community. Once the grilling was finished and the inflatables were set, you all began to arrive!

Tug-o-War, jumps and slides, yard games, music, and more ... we love to see each of you out making the most of a hot day. Community is built at events like these!

A special thank you goes out to each of our sponsors and the Paragould A&P Commission for making this day possible each year. We would not be able to serve our community without them. THANK YOU for making Paragould one of NEA's best fireworks shows!



For MOR(e) pictures, check the Premiere Magazine Facebook page!





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2024 Paragould Fireworks Show

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2024 Triple Swing Permanent Vacation

Photos Submitted by St. Bernards Foundation



The St. Bernards Foundation hosted its largest fundraiser of the year at the end of June. The 2024 Triple Swing Dinner Dance alone raised \$81,000 to aid in the expansion of radiation oncology services at St. Bernards Medical Center. Additional funds were raised by the annual golf scramble and pickleball tournament.

This year's theme was A Permanent Vacation, so guests of the dinner dance arrived in their beach attire and with luau vibes. The night was a perfect kickoff to the fundraising events to come. Music by Bluffett and catering by Chow helped keep the good times rolling throughout the night. A big thank you to the St. Bernards Advocates for another wonderful event!

If you would like to learn more about the initiatives that Triple Swing supports or the St. Bernards Foundation as a whole, please visit stbernards.info.



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COLLINS THEATRE IN DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD BIG GRASS BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

The Collins Theatre in Downtown Paragould is known to have great shows year-round, but its 4th Annual Big Grass Bluegrass Festival brought the talent to a new level. Bluegrass bands arrived to share that unique sound for two days straight. Performers included Dailey and Vincent, The Dillardards, The Punches Family Band, The Pam Setser Band, The Casey Penn Band, Sylamore Special, and No Time Flatt.

Bluegrass enthusiasts traveled from neighboring states and beyond to attend this event. Plans are already in the works for next year's festival, so follow their event Facebook to stay up to date and find recaps of this year's events!

Find upcoming show dates for the Collins Theatre at collinstheatre.com and follow its Facebook page!



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ARKANSAS DELTA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ACADEMY MEETS IN WEST MEMPHIS

BY ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



For their fourth session out of six meetings this year, the inaugural class of the Arkansas Delta Women's Leadership Academy (ADWLA) met in West Memphis. Twenty-five women from across the Delta are spending the year learning from leaders in a variety of communities across the region.

In this session, Marion Mayor Tracy Brick shared details about the community, challenges they have faced, and successes they have experienced.

Jim Jackson, director of tourism for the city of West Memphis, spoke about the ways they recruit visitors to their community.

"It is hard to promote anything in West Memphis because of the proximity to

Memphis but we do what we can. We spend 50 percent of our budget on marketing. We remind folks on their way to Memphis that they can play there and stay here," said Jackson.

He said they have 2,000 hotel rooms in West Memphis with a room for every budget.

In addition to working to bring dollars into the community through visitors and residents, community leaders are also working to supply the workforce.

Guest speaker Dr. Emilee Sides, associate vice chancellor for institutional planning and effectiveness at Arkansas State University Mid-South, said they work alongside industries and businesses to make sure ASU

Mid-South graduates can help fit the needs.

"We know we won't be able to make a difference in every student's life that comes through the doors, but we can make a difference for the one that is in front of us," added Sides.

Attendees also heard from former circuit judge John Fogleman, chairman of the Sultana Historical Preservation Society located in Marion, which tells the history and story of the Mississippi steamboat that sank in 1865, still today the largest maritime disaster in U.S. history.

"These soldiers had survived war; they had survived two prison camps. These men were survivors," Fogleman added.

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"They were finally, at long last, going home to their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts. On the way home, just outside of Memphis near Marion, these men died."

Fogleman, alongside Jeff Kollath, executive director of the Sultana Disaster Museum in Marion, shared details on fundraising and project planning. One of the pillars for program participants is to designate a project they can further the cause of or develop, and fundraising is a big step.

Each month, attendees get to meet and learn from a "be inspired" keynote speaker. For this session, Pat Keel, executive vice president, chief financial officer, and chief administrative officer for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital spoke to the group.

"As a participant in the ADWLA, we can share space with smart, gracious and determined presenters. The speakers have inspired me to return to my East Arkansas community to make it a better place to live and work," said Lee Ann Hoskyn, director of East Arkansas operations at Express Employment Professionals.

Speaker Dr. Brookshield Laurent, who serves in many roles at NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine, including executive director for the Delta Population Health Institute, spoke about well-being, self-care and stress management.

"I loved that she asked us what our top three priorities would be if we had one year to live. This question gave me clarity on my values and goals and if I am going in the right direction. Also she asked us to compare the well-being of our finances and if they are aligned with our life goals," said Ashtyn Lockley, crop protection sales representative for Syngenta.

The session wrapped up with speaker LaTeasha Davis, owner of Therapeutic Focus, who spoke about her business that has become successful in West Memphis, her hometown.

The next session will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 17, in Pine Bluff. The group of women will graduate from the program in November. Applications for the next class will open this fall.

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Use the Past to Better the Future

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

One person's misfortune has led to good fortune for many others, and a Paragould couple is helping further the cause.

Luke Smith, a former collegiate golfer with hopes of making it to the professional tour, was playing in a qualifying tournament in Kansas in 2021 when things took a sudden downturn. With his father, Oliver, serving as his caddy, the two became involved in a disagreement over something as minor as helping the two other players in their threesome look for their lost golf balls, and before the issue was resolved push had come to shove – literally. One of the other golfers filed charges against Luke and had him arrested, and the entire episode made him have second thoughts about playing the game he loved.

Feeling that God was leading him in a different direction, Luke now serves as the CEO of the Broken Arrow Foundation, determined to make a difference in the lives of others. As the CEO he oversees various acts of kindness that help change people's lives for the better. The foundation now partners with churches, communities, and individuals who center their focus on helping their fellow man. Luke continues to use golf as a way of meeting others and getting the word out about his

foundation, and that is how he came into contact with John and Linda Wallace of Paragould.

Linda, "the golfer in the family," according to John, was competing in a tournament in Millington, Tennessee, last year while John played the role of spectator. Hanging out on the patio while Linda and Luke played, John met the elder Smith. "This is where I heard Luke's story for the first time," John said. "As Linda and I learned more about what Luke is doing with his foundation, we were inspired with the amazing work he is doing and plans to do. It seems rare today to find such a wholesome and driven young person that is putting others in front of himself."

The foundation seeks to spread the gospel in all walks of life, and its website (www.brokenarrowfnd.com) contains stories of providing help to families and individuals who have endured difficulties. "I founded the Broken Arrow Foundation three years ago," Luke said. "We are peacemakers. When we hear of a family in need, we spring into action. We try to restore what has been lost and at the same time earn the right to share the gospel. We look at the situation and determine what

Luke Smith



is needed. Some we do all on our own, some we use three or four or five partners. We encourage believers, and witness to non-believers.”

“Luke is a young man that more than likely has never seen nor felt adversity prior to the situation he found himself in the middle of,” Linda said, “in a qualifying tournament when two grown men tried to take advantage of this Christian young man’s kindness and stain his outstanding golf talent. He struggled for months to overcome it and feels called by God to soften the blow for others when it comes to them. It is always exciting when someone is doing all they can to make peace and unselfishly make someone else’s journey easier.”

Recalling the unfortunate event that actually changed his life for the better, Luke said, “I was in chaos. I was in an unfair and unjust place, but as a Christian, that’s just part of it. We are molded to His image. Me, thinking back to it ... I’ve healed. I look forward to what God has in store. Blessings have come from it.”

Inspired by Luke’s story, the Wallaces decided to make a hefty donation to his foundation. While sponsoring the The Ranger Tool & Die Open in Marion in June, John saw it as a good opportunity to promote the Broken Arrow Foundation as well. “There were special events during the tournament to raise money for Broken Arrow,” John said, “and Ranger Tool & Die, Inc. (which the Wallaces own) also presented Broken Arrow a \$25,000 donation check to help promote Broken Arrow’s ‘Tim Tebow Event’ to be held September 7 in Memphis. Many players donated as well. This was the first time RTD had been involved in sponsoring a golf tournament like this.

“The plan is to make this an annual event and use the golf platform to help promote RTD & Broken Arrow Foundation. It seems like a perfect

platform with Luke’s golf talents and our interest in golf.”

John said the response “has been amazing. Many local golfers have donated to Broken Arrow Foundation. It has also brought networking attention between Broken Arrow and local ministries.” Linda said she is proud to be a part of raising funds for Luke’s upcoming event at Bellview Church in Memphis, where Tebow will serve as the featured speaker.

“The Wallaces are wonderful people,” Luke said. “I loved meeting them and certainly appreciate their willingness to help. The Tim Tebow event is all about peace. I feel like the world always tells us to chase or pursue happiness, which is good, but what everyone is looking for is peace. Memphis has just been named the No. 1 most dangerous city in America ... it’s in chaos. We’ve teamed up with Tim Tebow and his foundation and the whole event is to promote peace.”

The Broken Arrow Foundation is a 501(c)(3) and all donations are tax-deductible, and the Wallaces hope others in our community will find the cause worthy of their involvement. “Our participation in support of Broken Arrow started as way for RTD and the Wallace family to give back to communities and people in need,” John explained. “The foundation’s goals and achievements lined up perfectly with what the Wallace family wanted to support.”

Luke said anyone seeking more information about the foundation and its work can learn more on “Facebook, Instagram, our website. Any of our outlets. After my episode, I realized really quickly if we please God, it doesn’t matter who we displease. I made the switch in my brain, in my life. It’s character over reputation, and character is what God knows about you.”

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STORY BY KARAN SUMMITT
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Make Your Mark!

Jonathan Fulkerson: Woodrow Wilson Elementary School Principal

The familiar phrase about coming full circle might aptly describe Jon Fulkerson's career track. A 1999 graduate of Paragould High School, he has been a Greene County resident for most of his life. After earning a degree in music education from Arkansas State University, Fulkerson spent eight years as a junior/senior high band director at several schools in Northeast Arkansas. He pursued the certification required to be an administrator and that led to an assistant elementary school principal position with the Blytheville School District. In 2017 the door opened for Fulkerson to return to his alma mater as Principal at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Working with younger students is a job Fulkerson thoroughly enjoys. Previous experience as a fifth and sixth grade band director gave him an introduction to elementary kids, but Fulkerson's first assumption for an administrative position was that it would be at the junior high or high school level. What he learned with that initial assistant principal job in an elementary school was career altering. "I loved it because it was both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity to catch children in the early stages and help cement who they are going to become as adults."

Fulkerson was fueled by the fact that people may assume band directors are not strong in curriculum and classroom instruction. He wanted to prove them wrong. He admitted that when teachers are used to interacting with young adults, it takes an adjustment to connect with students at the elementary level, adjustments as simple as vocabulary, tone of voice and expectations appropriate for their ages.

Fulkerson occasionally gets a hint those efforts have paid off, especially with less expressive students who seem resistant to his attempts to form a bond. "They will draw me a picture and write 'Best Principal Ever,' letting me know I've made an impact, even when they couldn't articulate their feelings."

Good mentoring from the elementary principal he served under in Blytheville played a big role in Fulkerson's personal philosophy as an administrator. "The secret to proving you can handle the job," he learned, "is being willing to do whatever is needed for the people and students you serve."

Fulkerson went on to use the terms "culture" and "climate" to describe his approach to the administrative role. He explains:

"I have to make sure my faculty and staff wake up every day wanting to come to work. They are the professionals who know their job, and I do everything I can to say 'yes' to what they need. Our goal at Woodrow Wilson is to create a family atmosphere. We try to show our employees appreciation throughout the year, make them feel valued and give them a voice in the day-to-day operations of our school. I pride myself on not being a micro-manager."

Fulkerson does not discount the challenges teachers face each day. He shared that 15 percent of their students are English-learners, meaning English is not their language of origin, nor the one spoken in their homes. At Woodrow Wilson, over 70 percent of the students are considered economically disadvantaged, meaning many of them come to school from homes that lack stability in one or more areas. Despite these challenges, each year the school wins awards for beating the odds for growth and achievement in academic progress.

He credits his teachers with these successes. Today's educational system puts a strong focus on assessment levels -- which Fulkerson admits is important. Teachers must meet instructional requirements in a broad curriculum, as well as produce students that meet performance expectations. According to Fulkerson this creates a burden of timing in trying to find balance with the limited amount of time children have at school. "We have to have a certain amount of enjoyment every day



Continued on Page 30

Make Your Mark! **continued...**

to balance academic learning time,” he explained. “We cannot throw non-stop rigorous content at kids and expect them to synthesize everything in a usable way. When we can get students to take in information and be able to use it we’ve won.”

The COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it had on students is still being felt. Fulkerson believes the largest challenge has been in the youngest of the students, those pre-K through first graders who missed honing foundational social and emotional skills. He described these skills as learning to interact with others, to “do school” in group settings. “We all got through it,” Fulkerson said. “Parents did the best they could, but all of us are still trying to fill gaps in our students’ social, emotional and academic needs.”

As with all challenges, there were strengths that emerged from the pandemic. Fulkerson relayed how teachers became more flexible as educators. “There’s not much I can throw at my teachers that they can’t roll with,” he stated. Another strength may be that parents became more appreciative of teachers and the task they have of educating a diverse group of children. He simply said, “Many parents understood in a fresh way we are trying to do right by their kids.”

Along these lines, Fulkerson advised parents to trust the educational process, to go into every year understanding that the teachers and staff care about their child. If parents can get their child to believe that school is a great place and their present learning environment will be enjoyable, the school can take it from there. He encourages teachers to listen to parental concerns with an open mind and work together for the best solutions for the student.

We often hear about the difficulty of being a classroom educator in the current public school environment. For those who might be interested in a career in teaching or administration, Fulkerson offered some insight:

It is a noble calling because you get to add something to a canvas. If a student is a blank canvas, every teacher is able to contribute to a wonderful work of art. It is so important for teachers to make a lasting mark in the life of that student. For many people, some of their most influential mentors and examples were teachers. The rewards of teaching far outweigh the challenges.

Fulkerson knows the value of those teacher-marks on the canvas of his own life. He credits Trey Reely, his high school band director, as his single greatest career influence. He shares that he saw in Reely a shining example of a well-rounded educator and overall great person, one that was caring, committed and invested in molding his students into great people.

The son of a lawyer who later became a prosecuting attorney and judge meant Fulkerson grew up familiar with the legal community, but he admits he always felt led to teach rather than practice law. He does admit to a strong interest in school law.

Outside school responsibilities, Fulkerson serves on the board of Collins Theatre and is a graduate of Leadership Paragould 25. His family includes wife Kia, a counselor at Paragould Primary, and four children.

For right now, the circle from his own elementary days in the Paragould school system to serving as Woodrow Wilson principal is a good place to be: “I’ve always been very proud to be a Paragould Ram, so this has been a great homecoming for me. I work in a very supportive district and that makes it feel like home because home is where you are supported. I’m very happy where I am at Woodrow Wilson.”



“ If a student is a blank canvas, every teacher is able to contribute to a wonderful work of art. ”



Tips to Cut the Costs of Back-to-School Shopping

BY GABBY POWELL

Back-to-School shopping is always an exciting time for kids getting ready to return to the classroom with their friends and teachers. But their excitement is not always shared with parents who are already feeling the pressure of rising costs. Here are a few things to consider when shopping for your child to keep them, yourself, and your wallet happy.

- 1. Make a plan.** Many schools in NEA provide students with the essential school supplies they will use in the classroom every day. If they do not, check your district's website or media pages for a supply list. In addition to these items, write down the remaining things your child needs. (Reminder: No matter how much your kid insists he needs the new Spidey backpack – he doesn't!) A first day outfit is nice, but an entire new wardrobe is not necessary. Make a plan of the essentials and go from there!
- 2. Shop around.** The world wide web makes everything so accessible for us these days. Browse around different retailers to see who has the best deals and steals. And remember, there is no shame in the coupon game! Find ways to cut costs (buy in bulk, shop generic, find coupon codes, etc.) so you can splurge on a few non-essentials if the budget allows. You'd be surprised at how much some planning and browsing can help you save!
- 3. Take advantage of Tax-Free Weekend.** The first weekend is August is almost always Tax-Free Weekend in Arkansas. This means that certain electronics, art supplies, instructional materials, and clothing items are free of sales tax. While the crowds may be a bit bigger, this is a great opportunity to take advantage of!
- 4. Take your time.** This could be one of the hardest, but most important! Taking your time when school shopping can be hard but sharing the load over a few weekends can help you avoid becoming overwhelmed and help find the best deals.
- 5. Go without the kids.** This may seem silly, or maybe it makes perfect sense! Not only will leaving the kids at home help you get in and out of stores quicker, but it will also help you from being persuaded into buying more than needed. Now by all means, take the munchkins one time to pick an outfit or two, but remember your plan and stick to it!

Hopefully these simple tips will help you make the most of your back-to-school shopping experience. Remember that you only have about 13 years to prepare to send them on their next school adventure, so don't overthink the task at hand. Take in the memories and enjoy the time you have with them.



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New Beginnings

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When the early morning bell rings on the opening day of school, Lanthia Garmirath won't hear it. For the first time in 38 years, Lanthia won't be teaching or coaching since deciding to retire from the Paragould School District at the end of last year.

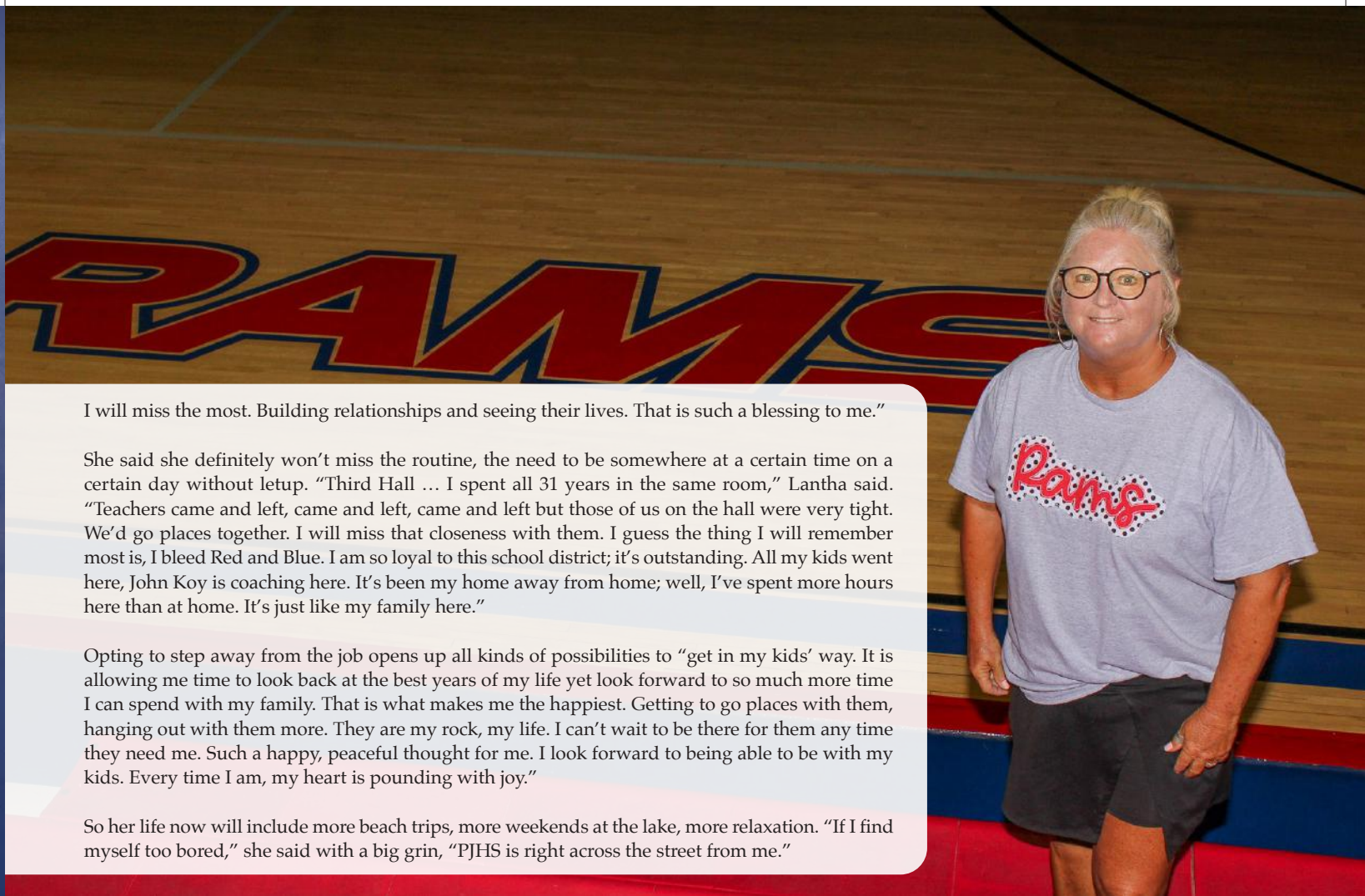
"It's just time. You can just feel it," she said when taking a look back at her long educational career and her decision to leave it. "I have been in school since I was 5 years old. I went to Stanford, home of the Razorbacks! I played ball at Three Rivers for two years and then went to ASU to finish my BSE. Then it was straight back to Stanford where I began my teaching and coaching life. I was there for seven years, then moved to PJHS for 31 years, during which I earned my Masters degree. So for 38 years, teaching has been my life. I have taught Arkansas History, U.S. History and P.E."

Many Greene County sports fans will remember Lanthia as an All-State basketball player at Stanford, picturing her in the next few years on the sidelines coaching basketball or volleyball. "And I helped a little with

track, and even reffed a little," she said. "That was different because I've given a few of them heck when I was coaching. I even yelled at my son, Tyler, when he was reffing."

She has stayed around the Paragould sports program this summer, driving the bus as athletes take part in summer camps, and she fully plans to be a familiar figure in the stands when the upcoming seasons get under way. "I still plan on going to the games," she said. "Now I can rest up because I've got nothing to do. When you're coaching, there's no time for rest. But I love watching high school basketball."

As with any longstanding association, Lanthia said the one thing she will miss is "the relationships. So many relationships you can build with kids that will last longer than just a year. I've been out somewhere and haven't seen a kid for a long time and there they are, and then I find out they've done well and they give me a hug. That's special. Through teaching, God has given me the opportunity to make so many awesome memories. God has placed so many students and teacher friends in my life that I have grown to love and appreciate. That is what



I will miss the most. Building relationships and seeing their lives. That is such a blessing to me.”

She said she definitely won’t miss the routine, the need to be somewhere at a certain time on a certain day without letup. “Third Hall ... I spent all 31 years in the same room,” Lantha said. “Teachers came and left, came and left, came and left but those of us on the hall were very tight. We’d go places together. I will miss that closeness with them. I guess the thing I will remember most is, I bleed Red and Blue. I am so loyal to this school district; it’s outstanding. All my kids went here, John Koy is coaching here. It’s been my home away from home; well, I’ve spent more hours here than at home. It’s just like my family here.”

Opting to step away from the job opens up all kinds of possibilities to “get in my kids’ way. It is allowing me time to look back at the best years of my life yet look forward to so much more time I can spend with my family. That is what makes me the happiest. Getting to go places with them, hanging out with them more. They are my rock, my life. I can’t wait to be there for them any time they need me. Such a happy, peaceful thought for me. I look forward to being able to be with my kids. Every time I am, my heart is pounding with joy.”

So her life now will include more beach trips, more weekends at the lake, more relaxation. “If I find myself too bored,” she said with a big grin, “PJHS is right across the street from me.”



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7:30 p.m.

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Main Street Paragould Event



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MADELYN SCHORER
AUGUST 2024

GYMNASTICS: IT'S MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

SUBMITTED BY CHAMPIONS GYMNASTICS

Gymnastics. What you see – incredible tumbling passes in floor routines, unbelievable strength and control in pommel horse, still rings, and bars routines, fearless balance on a four-inch beam in balance beam routines. What you don't see – learned social skills, better interactions with peers, improved listening skills, unmatched body awareness, learned perseverance, bold self-confidence.

Gymnastics classes teach children, even two-year-olds, social skills such as listening, taking turns, and encouraging others. In a gymnastics class children must listen to the instructor so they know what skills to perform at each station and when to rotate to the next station. When there are two or more children at a station each child must wait his/her turn to perform skills at that station. While waiting children are encouraged to interact with others in an encouraging manner. As you can see, gymnastics not only teaches your children athletic skills, it also prepares them for success in both school and life with skills in listening, waiting, and encouraging others.

Gymnastics teaches children to be aware of their body and how it moves. Body awareness is vital to success in gymnastics. Children learn how to control their body to complete tumbling skills, maintain balance, release and regrasp bars and rings, and perform many other skills. Learning this body control also helps them succeed in other sports should they choose to leave gymnastics.

Gymnastics teaches your children the importance of setting goals and working to obtain those goals. Children must also learn to take direction from adults other than parents while working toward those goals. Instructors as well as classmates provide encouragement while working toward skill mastery and obtaining set goals so that no

child gives up when a goal is hard to reach. As goals are set and met children gain confidence in themselves and their abilities and learn perseverance all while having fun.

Attending a regularly scheduled gymnastics class, even if that class meets only once a week, helps children learn commitment and time management. Children who regularly attend a gymnastics class learn they may be required to stop playing a game or come home from a friend's house at a specific time because they must leave for gymnastics. They learn to complete chores and homework before going to gymnastics because they have other tasks to complete afterward. Children who attend regularly see that commitment results in successfully learning skills and advancing to the next level. From the first gymnastics class to the last, children learn that success requires commitment and time management.

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SUMMER HEAT CHALLENGES. EXPERT HOT CAR SAFETY TIPS.

SUBMITTED BY LE BONHEUR CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

As summer temperatures continue to climb across the country, it is important to remember that hot summer days can lead to loss of life in a vehicle, which can reach deadly temperatures in a matter of minutes.

Sadly, since 1998, at least 910 children across the United States have died from heatstroke.

The United States saw a temporary decrease in pediatric vehicular heat strokes from hot cars during the pandemic, due to an increase in remote work and education. However, since 2022, these cases are back on the rise. As caregivers shuttle kids between activities and vacation destinations this summer, the odds of heatstroke claiming the life of a Mid-South child could climb. Experts are urging parents to always make hot car safety a priority.

"Families get into a routine during the school year and summer activities can really shake things up for most of us," says Jennifer Taylor, manager of Injury Prevention at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital and Safe Kids Mid-South. "When we experience a shift in daily responsibilities or schedules, grabbing a sleeping child from the backseat or making a plan for children during an errand run can unfortunately fall from the mental checklist."

What many people are shocked to learn is how hot the inside of a car can actually get. The temperature inside a car climbs dramatically, as much as 19 degrees in 10 minutes, and can reach temperatures up to

50 degrees higher than outside. This means it does not have to be a hot day and cracking the window doesn't help. Because heatstroke can happen anywhere, to anyone, experts urge caregivers to help protect our most vulnerable populations from this very preventable tragedy.

Le Bonheur Children's and Safe Kids Mid-South are asking everyone to remember to ACT:

A: Avoid heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And lock your doors and keep your keys and key fobs out of the reach of kids. And ask your neighbors to do the same.

C: Create reminders by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cell phone that is needed at your final destination. This is especially important if you are not following your normal routine.

T: Take action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

By continuing to work together, we can save lives and save parents from the anguish of losing a child.

For more tips and resources to keep kids safe from injuries, please visit www.lebonheur.org/safekids.



A-State Researchers TAKING ON READING COMPREHENSION, ONE FONT AT A TIME

BY ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

A group of researchers at Arkansas State University has been working together for the past three years to provide better learning opportunities for those with dyslexia.

"We wanted to know if we can use artificial intelligence (AI) to create a brand-new font that could make reading easier," said Dr. Beverly Boals Gilbert, professor of teacher education.

Nearly a dozen faculty members and students have been working as a team, examining existing fonts to know the path they would need to take to develop a new one.

Researchers began to explore the educational connections between AI and other disciplines. Following an open forum where the topic was discussed, Gilbert said she pondered ways research could be conducted to expand existing summer camps at A-State.

"Whenever I heard the presentations about ways to use AI, I thought, 'We should use AI for dyslexia.' We have done some camps for dyslexia, and we have received some grants to do summer programs for individuals who are struggling readers, so we knew what a great need there was," she continued.

Gilbert worked alongside Allen Hays, director of the A-State Delta STEM Education Center, to better formulate how to approach this topic.

"There was little conclusive data concerning whether fonts worked or not as an intervention for dyslexia," said Hays, an instructor in teacher education. "Frankly, there was not a large body of data on the subject.

I did find fonts such as Open Dyslexic were no better than Times New Roman, Helvetica or Arial."

"Dr. Gilbert and I knew we wanted to do something to help students, but we also knew we did not have the expertise in computer science or AI outside of what we had researched," said Arianne Pait, director of clinical services at the A-State Speech and Hearing Center, who joined the team with her vast knowledge on the topic paired with her desire to do more for those with dyslexia.

"Dyslexia is the most common neurogenic disorder. It is very underdiagnosed. There are estimates that 20 percent of the entire population has dyslexia or their brains think about reading differently than the other 80 percent," said Pait, assistant professor of communication disorders. Dyslexia is a word recognition disorder of written languages and can cause impairments in all five domains of language. She said while about two million people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with dyslexia, they think that number could be closer to 40 percent.

Dr. Jake Qualls, interim chair of the Department of Computer Science, said they built a regressor model for readability and used it to predict the characteristics of a font with maximum readability. They worked with the team of researchers to develop a reading game website that would be used for all participants.

With parental permission, students in kindergarten through sixth grade from four Delta schools participated. Students with fewer reading skills, including those in kindergarten and first grade, would see an



Dr. Arianne Pait (far left) stands alongside students who have participated in dyslexia intervention and research.

image and select the word they thought matched.

Pait said they worked with Leslie Parker, assistant professor of graphic design, along with some of her students, to create images using words from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

"We spent a lot of time working with her senior classes to make sure the images developed represented the DIBELS words, to give every participant a fair chance at getting it right," Pait added.

Once they had all the images to go with the words, Pait said it was time to code the website. She said a lot of work was put in by Tamra Washington, a graduate communications disorders student, and Eli Richmond, a senior undergraduate computer science major, both of Jonesboro, in organizing the content and coding the website.

"The website is a place where all our participants interacted with the systems and all the data we collected came from those interactions. We collected the type of font that was presented to the individual and then whether or not they were able to correctly answer the question," explained Qualls.

Students in second to sixth grades were shown different sentences in different fonts.

"Not only are we looking at which font was answered correctly the most, we are also looking at the attributes that exist within those fonts and then using those attributes to start generating new, unseen fonts based on those attributes," he continued.

"Of the 134 fonts, I was interested in seeing which were the highest performing and which were the lowest performing. We looked at fonts of which students were able to answer the most questions correctly and which fonts were answered the most incorrectly," said Qualls.

They found through their research, students had less trouble with thinner fonts and more trouble with thicker fonts.

"One of the nice things about these fonts we have gotten from Google is that they have a list of attributes that are associated with them. They have been judged and measured on a scale of how artistic or dramatic those fonts are," noted Dr. Jonathan Stubblefield, assistant research professor at the Arkansas Biosciences Institute.

Stubblefield said it was his job to go beyond the fonts and go into the attributes each font was assigned and discover the most correct ones for those with dyslexia.

"Our investigation is promising in that we can make easy-to-implement recommendations to those who serve those who struggle to read. Our results may also have impact to improve literacy accessibility for all," said Pait.

Pait said the project is ongoing and they will continue to recruit school districts to participate in the fall. "We have a spin-off project where we will be looking at how people with dyslexia write their letters. We are currently looking for grants to help hire more student researchers to continue to expand our reach for both projects," said Pait.

She said there is no end date in sight for the project. They will continue to gather data and use what they discover to help those with dyslexia. The team is actively pursuing external funding in order to continue this vital research.

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Opportunities for Healing **NextStep Counseling**

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

As the need for mental health services and providers continues to grow, the leadership team at NextStep Counseling is prepared to meet the challenge head on.

"I want people to know we're open and we're functioning and we want to be the call people make when they decide they need counseling," said NextStep's Kerri Garrison. "We do a lot of relationship issues, deal with anxiety, depression. We see clients of all ages at the office, in the home, at schools. We very much focus on behavior modifications for school-aged students and provide services at a number of schools around Northeast Arkansas. We do outpatient counseling ... in the center by the Cinema we have a clinic for adults only. When you're overwhelmed we can help you sort it out."

In order to continue the vital work on the local front, Kerri said she is looking for even more qualified people to join the team. "A big hire is coming soon," she said, pointing out an upcoming expansion of the workspace in the Paragould office at 1707 Linwood Drive. "We need therapists and QBHPs (Qualified Behavioral Health Providers). I would love to speak with them ... especially experienced people. We service people of all ages, from age 4 to probably 104. When you come to us, we want you to get services within a couple of days. We don't want you to have to wait a week after you call; we want you in the door, getting seen. We need more licensed therapists to help take care of that."

According to the American Psychological Association, America has not returned to a pre-pandemic pace of everyday life since the Covid outbreak of 2020. Many psychologists said they had increased workloads and longer waitlists as more people seek treatment for mental health conditions. For example, Kerri said because members of the therapy teams could not go into clients' homes during the Covid years, some therapy clinics had a waiting list of more than 400 people seeking services. "We don't have one now," she said, "and I don't want to have one. The earlier we can get someone into mental health

services, the earlier issues can be resolved and not have to be dealt with later ... or too late."

A chief factor in keeping a closeknit and reliable staff on hand to consult with clients is to make certain the workplace isn't a place they dread, and Kerri takes pride in the way NextStep helps its people balance their work and family lives. "My goal, my life's work, is for mental health professionals to have a really great place to work, where it is peaceful and supportive and someone is there to answer questions they might have," she said. "I want people with experience to be available to go help those that are just graduating or just starting out, to do mentoring for them. We support our staff to support each other."

"We want our staff to be able to take care of themselves as far as having a healthy family and work balance. They can work full-time or part-time. They can work 10 hours, or 50 hours is fine, too. We try to work around their needs and their personal life needs. I want them to feel like they work for a place that actually 'cares a lot about us.' I've worked for places that didn't; I don't want my staff to feel like that."

NextStep's long list of mental health services includes individual, family, couples and group psychotherapy; medication management; community support services and much more. Kerri said the professionals there are very adept at analyzing issues and compiling appropriate treatment plans. "Sometimes people wait until the last resort to seek help," she said, "and maybe it's just that they are struggling with the world around them, feeling 'not here', or they're sad and medication can't resolve the situation. That's when you should reach out for professional help; you might find that it will only take a few sessions or it might take a lot of sessions, but so many times you can't solve it yourself ... you just can't."

"Sometimes it's being frustrated or having fears about your own situation or a loved one ... take the next step. Fear of change, fear of new circumstances, fear of loss and grief, fear of the unknown ... we



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will help you work through whatever is hard for you.”

With the school year starting in the coming days, Kerri said NextStep is determined to add a strong team of therapists and others to help usher in the planned expansion. “We’re growing and we’re hiring,” she said plainly. “This is a great opportunity for someone who loves this work and is looking for a great place to work.”

Kerri is a co-owner of NextStep along with Kendra Fite and Katharine Parker. Dr. LeAnn Dickinson is the Clinical Director and Jason

Weatherford the Director of Operations. “Our logo means ‘moving forward’ and that’s what we’re doing,” Kerri said. “We are here in Northeast Arkansas providing mental health services and therapy. We have a great team of mental health professionals and would like to see more people join us.”

You can call the Paragould office at (870) 604-4455; send a FAX to (888) 977-2956; or visit nextstepofarkansas.com to get more detailed information.



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SUBMITTED BY STEWART PEDIATRIC THERAPY

Children learn by playing. They are born with curious minds that want to investigate the world around them, and so many important skills can be learned through play. When an infant or toddler is occupied by crinkling wrapping paper or crawling in and out of a box or watching themselves in a mirror, they are learning about their world. That learning continues as the play matures. Children begin playing with toys, with other children, playing make believe, playing reciprocal games. All of these types of play teach different skills and lessons. As children grow, play -- structured and unstructured, indoor and outdoor -- should be encouraged.

Here are some benefits of play:

- Improves language skills
- Advances creativity
- Improves concentration
- Increases confidence
- Aids problem-solving skills
- Promotes physical activity -- strength and coordination
- Assists in learning to take turns
- Supports resilience and coping skills
- Encourages creativity



Without appropriate play (too much TV, sedentary or electronic play) children may have deficits in some of these skills. With appropriate and active play, children will demonstrate improved sensory processing and body control. When a child plays outside, their vestibular (balance and movement), proprioceptive (knowing where your body is in space), auditory, tactile and visual systems are all stimulated. The more senses used in an experience, the more learning can take place. As children run, spin, jump, roll, swing, their sensory systems are activated, their brains are stimulated and their bodies are strengthened. Outdoor play is especially important as we head back into the school year. Many studies show that children have better attention to classroom work when their bodies have participated in outdoor or active play. Encourage your child to get outside and play. Better yet -- go play with them.

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Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

My children aren't school-aged yet, but I still remember the chaos August brings as schools return to session. Buying new supplies, finding new wardrobes, and fixing the dreaded sleep schedule make up the inevitable to-do list every year. It can be a little overwhelming, so as these last weeks of summer wind down, get a jump start on prepping the kids for a smoother transition back into school days.

1. Do a deep clean. Each school year requires a new list of supplies, so cleaning out the old will make bringing in the new that much easier. Toss broken crayons (or melt them down for art projects!), dried out markers, scraps of paper, dried up paint, and old slime or PlayDough. Broken pencils, dried out glue, and old paintbrushes should also be taken care of.

2. Organize those closets. With two girls, our house is overflowing with clothes, shoes, and accessories. It can be daunting going through the closets but clearing them out for sizes that fit will save you time in the long run. Pull out everything that doesn't fit (don't forget about dresser drawers) and pack away into bags that can be vacuum sealed for easier storage, or throw it all in a tub and take a trip to Once Upon A Child for some extra cash. Anything leftover can be donated to local consignment shops or school closets.

3. Set a strict bedtime. Unfortunately, sleep is not in our vocabulary at the Kenney household. But we have found ways to make bedtime a little easier for our oldest. If your child has had a later bedtime this summer and struggles with hitting the pillow earlier as school approaches, consider an "okay to wake" clock. These clocks often come with sound machine options as well, and turn yellow when it's time to start getting ready for bed, red when it's time for sleep, and then green in the morning when it's okay to get out of bed. This is a good option for kids who might struggle with telling time and need a different visual reminder.

Summer is a time to just be free and go with the flow, so making this transition back into school can be jarring. Implementing even just one or two of these tips can make it easier on parents and kids, hopefully bringing in a smooth first day of school!

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LUCY CROSSNO

The Last Round

BY KARAN SUMMITT



Back to school has a bit more meaning this fall for GCT senior Lucy Crossno. The knowledge that this time next year her elementary and high school years will be over has Lucy feeling sentimental, but also looking forward to the “joy of soaking up as many experiences as I can one more time.”

“I’m a little sad knowing my time with friends is coming to an end. I’ll miss the daily routine of seeing people I’ve been with every day since my childhood. I’ll miss all the fun times like Spirit Week, Homecoming and Prom.”

Beyond the usual academic subjects, ballgames and other typical school activities, senior year brings with it the last opportunity for Lucy to participate in FFA, something she has dedicated much of her energy and efforts to during the past four years. Besides continuing to concentrate on swine production during her senior year, Lucy will serve as GCT FFA Sentinel Officer, a role that carries with it the duties of keeping members involved and making it an enjoyable year for the GCT chapter.

Lucy’s love for FFA and especially her pigs requires substantial time outside of classes. Students are responsible for the feeding, health, upkeep of pens, cleanliness and proper daily care of their chosen animals. Participating in shows at area fairs, expos and “jackpot” competitions involves additional time working with the animal to meet competition guidelines, as well as attending the competitions.

For Lucy, her past efforts have paid off with a variety of awards, including top honors at the 2022 Arkansas State Fair. Lucy’s pig Chubbs place first in her swine class, first in division and was awarded Reserve Grand Champion Dark Crossbred Market Hog. These honors led Chubbs to place Third Overall Market Hog among all FFA students in Arkansas. Most recently in 2024 Lucy placed first in class at the Stars, Stripes and Swine Jackpot with Fern, another Grand Champion Dark Crossbred Market Hog. Fern also won Third Overall Market Hog honors at the same competition.

In addition to caring for and showing her swine, Lucy has been involved in FFA’s CDE -- Career Development Event -- with emphasis on veterinary science. This program helped Lucy grow in her basic knowledge of animals and their needs.

Keeping good grades can be a challenge. FFA competitions require multiple days away from classes when work is expected to be turned in on time. Lucy credits the GCT teachers and staff with being willing to go the second mile for students who need extra help catching up on what was missed.

Lucy stays busy outside of school activities with a part-time job, participation in her church youth group and ongoing opportunities to add volunteer hours to her scholarship applications. In the past she has volunteered with Together We Foster, Center Hill Church of Christ Food Pantry and campus cleanups.

As of now, Lucy is still undecided about her future career choice. She plans to attend Black River Technical College next fall for her college level general education basics. Though undecided, she is leaning toward a career in Early Childhood Education or Radiology Technology.

Lucy reflected on her years at Greene County Tech with these words:

“I’m very thankful for all my teachers throughout the years. GCT has a great support system, the teachers love their jobs and it shows. We have great administrators who do all they can to make GCT the best school it can be. I love that we offer so much variety in extra-curricular activities, so there is something for everyone who wants to be involved.”

Lucy has a note of encouragement for younger students, urging them to try their hardest at academics and making time to be involved in something worthwhile. From the outside looking in, it appears Lucy is a great role model for taking her own advice! Best wishes to all area 2024-2025 seniors!



Katherine, ASPSF Recipient

NONPROFIT Q&A

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ONE RACE IS ALL IT TAKES

BY KAROLINE RISKER

Jarrett Rowland won big in July at the Jonesboro Karting Complex during the JKC Cage Fight, beating out 15 other cars (in four races) when he took the lead with three laps to go. "Everything fell into his lap," said his dad, Jeremy. "He punched up to gain spots, the leader had technical issues, and at the last caution he jumped up and never looked back." Jarrett took the win and a \$520 check. A pretty good feat for a 7-year-old who is only in his second year of racing and has only six or seven races under his belt. "Races are fun," said this incoming first grader at Crowley's Ridge Academy. The achievement is especially hard-won as Jarrett had crashed a few weeks before when he skidded in his cart. Jeremy made him get back in the race but didn't get any argument from Jarrett who said instead, "Cause I want to race again. It's pretty fun."

Jarrett comes by the sport honestly. His family has a long history in dirt racing and even his number, 7, is a nod to his uncles, 7 being the composite of Jeremy's brother's number, 6, and his mom Karey's



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brother's number, 1. Jarrett watched the races and decided he wanted to do it, too. His family is very supportive, buying him a go-kart and a trailer for his birthday. It's black on the inside, and blue and white on the outside. "It's fun to get in the cart and I like to win," Jarrett said. Everybody comes out for the race, from his mom and dad to Papa, Nanny and Grandpapa. "He always has a pretty good crowd," Jeremy said. He also has good sponsors that help him out.

Jarrett also enjoys going to the lake, tubing, water boarding, shooting guns and riding dirt bikes. One day he plans to compete in late model dirt racing. "I just have a little more to grow," he said.



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MADIELYN SCHORER



A Bright Future!

BY KARAN SUMMITT

When you ask Madelyn Schorer how she feels about school, her eyes light up, a big smile appears and she enthusiastically responds with "I LOVE school!" The third grader readily admits she loves seeing friends, loves language and reading, art, music and musical productions and daily chapel, especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays when high school and elementary students have chapel together.

It sounds like there isn't much Madelyn doesn't like about school!

Going into the third grade brings new challenges, most Madelyn eagerly anticipates, some she feels a little anxious about. She has been practicing cursive writing during the summer and was proud to share she has mastered writing her name in cursive. But third grade also brings long division, a subject Madelyn wasn't so sure would bring the same joy as other subjects.

Her love of learning did not take a break over the summer. Madelyn attended many of the summer events offered to school children at the Greene County Library. She participated in the children's production of *Junie B. Jones the Musical* and continued to attend gymnastics lessons each week. For the first time this summer Madelyn signed up for weekday activities at The Ridge, a local summer camp.

Summer also meant Madelyn could dive deep into her love of reading. She concentrated on the Laura Ingalls Wilder Little House books, partnering reading with watching reruns of the television series. Madelyn hopes to make a trip before school begins to visit the Wilder Homestead and Museum located in Mansfield, Missouri. She has also been reading the Mr. Lemoncello series of books.

For some time Madelyn has taken violin lessons, but the past year witnessed a slight shift in that interest. A visit to the 2023 Blue Grass Festival sponsored by Collins Theatre led her to discover the more downhome melodies of fiddle music, something she thoroughly enjoys. When asked about the difference between a violin and a fiddle, Madelyn's eyes twinkle and with a teasing grin she says, "A violin has 'strings,' and a fiddle has 'strangs!'"

Back to school preparations for the third-grader include typical things like a new water bottle, backpack, school outfits and checking off items on the classroom supply list. A recent growth spurt led Madelyn to specifically mention needing new shoes -- it seems foot growth has been outpacing the rest of her body!

While most parents and kids tend to dread the early-to-bed-early-to-rise schedule that school brings, Madelyn mentioned she does not mind getting up for school. As summer days wind down toward the first day of school, at least one task on her back-to-school checklist will be an easy one -- getting into a daily routine. If Madelyn's enthusiasm for school could be bottled and sold, the purchase line would be a long one. Happy Back to School to all area elementary students!

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CARSON ROBINSON

Savor the Time

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Carson Robinson is involved in just about every aspect of student life as he enters his senior year at Marmaduke High School. He's a talented basketball player, is active in various student organizations and has just recently scored an impressive 30 on the ACT exam used for college admissions.

So what does a student of his caliber look forward to regarding his final year of high school? "First off, I'm just ready to enjoy my last year," he said. "I want to make the most of it. When we graduate it will be the last time I see some of them for who knows how long? I've seen lots of other senior classes because Mom and Dad are at the school and I've watched these other classes go through. I'd like to share some of the same experiences they've had."

With his parents – Shane and Nikki – being members of the academic world as an administrator and a teacher at Marmaduke, it's only natural for Carson to place great emphasis on succeeding in the classroom. His 30 on the ACT is about nine points higher than the national average and puts him among the elite, above 93 percent of the students nationally who take it.

"I've been wanting to break 30 for a while," he said. "I had gotten

pretty close to it before. Dad had me go take it first in the eighth grade and I slowly got there. This is the best I've done."

Carson is in the school's Gifted and Talented program and takes all advanced/honors courses "except for Debbie Richey's chemistry class. That's my only high school level class." He has been a Student Council Representative, which he likens to being a class officer, since he was in the seventh grade and is a member of the JUST Organization ... Jesus Uniting Students Together. "We put on See You At The Pole," he said of the student-led prayer service held at participating schools' flagpoles, "and I'm very thankful that our administration now and those before have been very keen on that. It means a lot to live in a community like this."

And then there is basketball, which has been the Greyhounds' calling card for generations. As Carson enters his final season, he is anxious yet understandably apprehensive. "We've got a new coach, which is our fourth one we've had from the seventh through twelfth grade," he said. "So far, so good. He's a much different person than our old coach but you can tell he's interested in seeing us develop. There will be five solid teams in our conference so we will have to play really well if we expect to do anything."

"I haven't really looked at college basketball," he said of taking a glance at life down the road. "I hope to keep getting better on the ACT; that will help with my decision. I've been thinking about ASU, Ouachita and Arkansas Tech. I'm looking to major in Communications to help get my message out. Writing and speaking have always come naturally. I'm sometimes known as the Grammar Police in class. I could see myself being a writer, teacher, speaker. I'm big into fantasy stuff and I'd love to create my own series. Something like being an author, one of those things you can't get right out of college."

Maintaining the proper balance between sports and academics is not always an easy task, but Carson manages it very well and seems to know where each will play a role years from now. However, life in the present fills his thoughts more than life in the future. "I'm looking forward to just feeling like a senior," Carson said. "Getting into high school, the seniors are the big kids. I look forward to living that out, and being proud of my senior year and seeing what we can do."



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Greenway Equipment is proud to introduce the very first Hunger Hero Signature Series fundraiser, a special initiative aimed at making a significant impact on food insecurity in Arkansas and Southeast Missouri.

From July 1 through October 31, 2024, Greenway will be offering a unique selection of Compact Tractors, Utility Tractors, and Mowers as part of the Hunger Hero Signature Series Lineup. One hundred percent of proceeds from the sale of these select units will be donated directly to three vital food banks in Greenway's areas that work tirelessly to fight food insecurity: the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, the Arkansas Food Bank, and the Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

"Our Hunger Hero Signature Series fundraiser is a testament of our commitment to giving back to our communities. By collaborating with our customers and partners, we are not only providing first-class equipment but also making a substantial contribution to the fight against hunger," said Bill Midkiff, CEO of Greenway Equipment. "We are honored to continue to support the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, the Arkansas Food Bank, and the Southeast

Missouri Food Bank in their vital efforts to combat food insecurity. Over the past five years, our fundraisers have been able to donate almost one million dollars to these Food Banks, and we are hoping with this year's changes, we can continue to make a difference, one acre at a time."

Each piece of equipment in this exclusive lineup will be adorned with a custom-designed Hunger Hero Signature Series decal and a signature plate from the renowned country music star, Jason Aldean. Customers who purchase equipment from this exclusive lineup will also receive an Ownership Certificate signed by Aldean as a token of their commitment to helping fight hunger in our areas.

"I'm honored to join forces with Greenway Equipment again, this time for the Hunger Hero Signature Series fundraiser. By supporting this initiative, we're not just helping those in need; we're strengthening our communities and showing what can be achieved when we work together. Greenway has been able to donate almost one million dollars through their fundraisers, and together, we can continue to make a significant impact and help ensure that no one goes hungry," said Aldean.



SUNKEN LANDS SONGWRITING CIRCLE

SUBMITTED BY ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

For the second year in a row, the stage of Riceland Hall at Fowler Center on the campus of Arkansas State University will be shared by a series of talented artists for the Sunken Lands Songwriting Circle.

The event, presented by the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, will be held on Saturday, Aug. 24. Featured performers include Rosanne Cash, who will host the event, joined by Brandy Clark and John Hiatt, accompanied by John Leventhal.

“The Sunken Lands Songwriting Circle expands Johnny Cash’s musical legacy by recognizing world-class songwriters and performers. Each year, the Songwriting Circle invites three artists to share the stage for an evening of music and storytelling,” said Dr. Adam Long, executive director of the A-State Heritage Sites.

Proceeds benefit ongoing preservation and operation of the Boyhood Home.

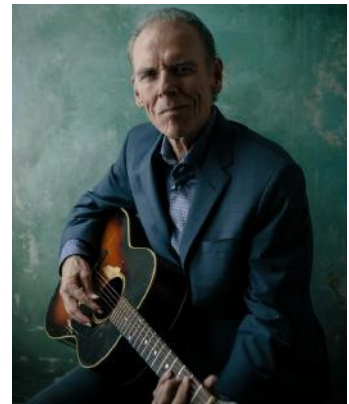
“My father’s music began in the sunken lands in the Arkansas Delta, and the gumbo soil stayed with him for his entire life. I am excited to return to Arkansas for the second Sunken Lands Songwriting Circle with John Leventhal, who released his first solo album this year,” said Rosanne Cash.

Rosanne Cash is one of America’s great singer-songwriters, woman of letters, and historic preservationist. She has released 15 albums and taken home four Grammy awards with 11 additional nominations. She has written four books and numerous essays published in national publications.

A performer who has toured the world, Cash has partnered in programming or served as an artist in residence at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, San Francisco Jazz, the Minnesota Orchestra and The Library of Congress.

A long-time supporter of Arkansas State University’s Heritage Sites, Cash is one of the family founders of the Johnny Cash Heritage Festival and a founder of the Historic Dyess Colony and Johnny Cash Boyhood Home. For her contributions to higher education and the public good, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from A-State in May 2022.

“Joining us will be legendary songwriter and longtime friend John Hiatt and Brandy Clark, who I have long admired and who won her first Grammy just this year. The evening promises to be full of great songs with good friends and we look forward to seeing our friends in the Sunken Lands once again,” added Cash.





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Fresh Eyes for the Greene County Community Fund

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

The name atop the leadership board at the Greene County Community Fund may be different, but the goal remains the same: Providing multiple local, non-profit agencies with financial support derived from donations of citizens within the community in order to better the lives of all involved.

"The Community Fund has been here since 1962," said the new Executive Director Jordan Hoskins, "and I don't want it to dissolve under my leadership. I've been here since May, doing everything that wasn't done in the absence of a director, looking forward to the future. There is power in giving, and that's the message I want to send out."

Before coming to the GCCF, Jordan was the State Director of Saint Francis Ministries, a child welfare organization, working with at-risk children and families. "I worked with people in all 75 counties across the state, wherever I was needed, putting out fires," she said, explaining that her experience in "the people business" combined with her educational background in Psychology and Human Services has prepared her for the task at hand, which is convincing people to contribute financially so the Community Fund can continue backing the 15 organizations it currently supports.

"The Community Fund needs to be reintroduced, rejuvenated, given a breath of fresh air," Jordan said. "I hope to highlight our annual funding via the August to January campaign. The total given out is \$100,000, which I would like to see grow. That comes from individual contributions, generous gifts, payroll deductions. We need to make it personal: Your dollars go to 15 organizations. Some can only give 50 cents ... we're happy to have it and happy for them to give it. We're called to love our neighbor; this is love in action."

Agencies currently supported by the GCCF and their dollar amounts are:

- *Fine Arts Council* - \$8,000
- *Together We Foster* - \$8,000
- *In His Wings* - \$2,500
- *Focus, Inc.* - \$7,000
- *Greene County Rescue Squad* - \$7,000
- *Sight Conservation* - \$3,000
- *CASA* - \$5,000
- *Historical/Genealogical Society* - \$2,500
- *Pilots for Christ* - \$4,000
- *Greene County 4-H* - \$12,000
- *Child Abuse Task Force* - \$6,000
- *Agape House* - \$9,500
- *BEES Senior Center* - \$12,000
- *Boys and Girls Club* - \$9,500
- *Options* - \$4,000

For some of the organizations mentioned, the Community Fund is either the main financial backer or, in some instances, the sole definite source of income for the group. "We cannot do overnight what has to be done,"

Jordan said. "It's one of those 'out of sight, out of mind' situations. My vision, my hope, is that every month we can get something out there until you are most definitely hearing about the Community Fund.

"It's sad to hear we're the only financial support some of these groups get, like the Historical Society or the Boys & Girls Club. I hope to get some presentations together and get local people to come with me and reintroduce ourselves. I hope to impress the importance of giving to it. To a whole generation, it is totally new information. There is no maximum you can give so, obviously, the more money we bring in, the more we can share. Your donations represent community in the truest sense of the word."

Jordan said the GCCF also provides four \$1,000 scholarships, one to a senior from each high school in the county. The most recent awards went to Jaden Yates of Crowley's Ridge Academy, Andie Piercy of Greene County Tech, Jaci Pratt from Marmaduke and Paragould's Kiley Williams.

Adding that Utility Trailer was awarded the Fund's "Philanthropist of the Year," Jordan said the GCCF has "wrapped up our interviews for agencies that applied for 2025 funding. We had a few new organizations apply for funding, so that is exciting! We're just making every effort to get the word out that we need the people of Greene County to support all these wonderful organizations financially. We're taking things back to the basics; sometimes you have to slow down to speed up.

"I'm ready to meet with individuals and groups and set things in motion. This is a great community and I know people will be willing to give and make sure these organizations are able to continue providing the services they do. If you think of your neighbor, your neighbor thinks of you."



Jordan Hoskins
Executive Director at GCCF



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Foundation of Arts

Details Below

Mean Girls Jr. auditions will take place August 3rd and 4th at 2:00 p.m. Nutcracker Ballet auditions will follow on August 23rd and 24th.

Registration for '24-'25 Year-Round Art, Theatre, and Dance class registration begins this month. For an inside look into the Arts Center, an open house will take place on August 10th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Audition and registration information can be found at foajonesboro.org!



Honeybee Festival

August 17th

Join us on August 17, 2024, for the first annual Honeybee Festival, celebrating the honeybees that have lived in the historic courthouse on Pocahontas Square for over twenty years! Vendors and food trucks are welcome. The fun will last from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For more information, please contact the Randolph County Chamber of Commerce at 870.892.3956 or email Tonya Hass at THass@RandolphChamber.com.



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Garden of Eden Reading Retreat

August 9th - 10th

The Garden of Eden Reading Retreat at the Hemingway-Pfiever Museum will explore the novel alongside two other Lost Generation novels.

Upon registration, participants will receive copies of three books. Discussion about the books will be led by experts in the field. In addition to these discussions, there will be a Saturday night banquet celebrating the museum's 25th anniversary. Admission to the banquet is included for retreat participants, and additional tickets are available for sale for members of the general public.



DSO 2024 Gala

August 24th

Join us for a fun-filled night of fine dining, live musical entertainment, dancing, and live and silent auctions! Proceeds support the Delta Symphony Orchestra's programs in Northeast Arkansas. The gala will be held at the Cooper Alumni Center on the campus of Arkansas State University at 6:00 p.m.

Tickets are on sale now and can be found at deltasymphonyorchestra.org/tickets or by calling 870-761-8254.



Street Splash Downtown

August 10th

Join us in Downtown Paragould for some fun in the sun! We will bring all the cool water you need to stay cool and collected. This is the perfect way to let the kids kill off some energy and have fun on one more summer day before school!

This event is always a hit. Bring your sunscreen and water clothes for a great time downtown!

For more information on this Downtown Paragould event and more, visit downtownparagould.com.

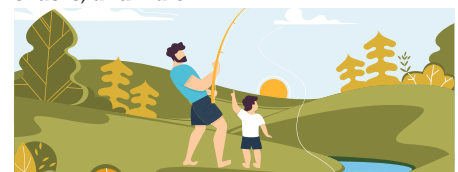


CRSP Fishing Derby

August 31st

Everyone is invited to Crowley's Ridge State Park for this family fishing event. Prizes will be awarded for each age group. All individuals ages 16 and up who are participating are required to have a fishing license. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Fishing starts at 8:00 a.m.

Fishing poles are available to borrow, and bait is available for a fee at the visitor center. Bring your own lawn chairs, weather-appropriate supplies, sunscreen, bug spray, snacks, and water.



CALLING ALL NEA SPORTS FANS!

We want to see who has the most school spirit in NEA! With school coming back into session, that means that fall sports seasons are about to unfold. NEA's Premiere Magazine wants to share the spirit with everyone by highlighting the sports fanatics from all across Northeast Arkansas!

Think your school is almighty and want to show off your pride? Do you know someone who goes above and beyond for game day outfits?

Submissions are being taken NOW for story spotlights in the September edition of Premiere Magazine. Go to neapremiere.com/contact-us or scan the QR code below!



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HAPPENINGS

FOSTER LANDS SCHOLARSHIP FROM JONESBORO AKA CHAPTER



The Kappa Nu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. recently awarded graduating senior Jordan Foster with the Herschel D. Gaines and Earline Smith Academic Achievement Scholarship.

Foster graduated from Valley View High School as an honor student with a 4.0 GPA. She further impressed the scholarship committee with her notable record of community service.

She served on the Mayor's Youth Advancement Council while at Valley View and helped coordinate city events highlighting the cultural and ethnic diversity of Jonesboro.

"Community service is being a source of help by contributing to the betterment of my community," Foster said.

The honor student plans to pursue healthcare as a course of study when she attends Claflin University in the fall while keeping service to others as a key point in her goals.

ARKANSAS METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER NAMES EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Kari Gauthier



Renee Gardner



Brandon Garner

Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (AMMC) has named Kari Gauthier as the 2023 Employee of the Year, and Brandon Garner as 2023 Manager of the Year. Renee Gardner was awarded the 2023 Going the Extra Mile (GEM) award presented by the AMMC Foundation. The awards are the highest honors bestowed on a hospital employee each year. These individuals were chosen from among 600 employees for the honor.

Employees are nominated for the award by their hospital peers, based on setting the standard for excellence by exemplifying AMMC's four pillars – People, Service, Quality and Growth.

BOYCE BONHAM HONORED AS HYTROL'S 2024 LOBERG AWARD RECIPIENT



Boyce Bonham has been named the 2024 Loberg Award recipient. The award was presented during a special ceremony held at Hytrol in Jonesboro on July 1, a special day for the company, as it is also the birthday of Hytrol's late founder, Tom Loberg.

The Loberg Award is the highest honor a Hytrol employee can receive. Loberg Day is celebrated each July in Jonesboro and Fort

Smith to pay homage to Mr. Loberg and the mission, vision and values he instilled in his company. Loberg Award recipients best embody the core values of faith, family, empathy, commitment, gratitude and community.

Bonham has been with Hytrol for over 39 years and is the Chief Technology Officer. He said, "I'm honored to be chosen. I was fortunate to get the chance to work here while Tom was involved so I could see the values that he demonstrated and instilled in others. His passion and care for employees, integrators and end users was evident in his actions and is key to Hytrol's continued growth and success. I believe it is our responsibility to pass on that knowledge and experience to the upcoming generations. Hytrol has been a great place to grow in my career, and I'm excited to see what the company's future holds."

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SISSY'S LOG CABIN WELCOMES NEW LEADERSHIP



Sissy's Log Cabin, the Mid-South's largest family-owned-and-operated jewelry store, announced William Jones IV, a third-generation jewelry professional of the family business, has assumed the role of president.

Bill Jones, CEO of Sissy's Log Cabin, expressed his confidence in his son's leadership, saying, "William has been a cornerstone of our business for many years.

His ability to balance innovation with our company's traditions will undoubtedly build on our accomplishments over the past 50 years. This is an exciting time for both our family and the company, and I am proud to see him take on this new challenge and continue Sissy's legacy."

Jones transitions into this role from COO, bringing his dedication to the family business and a vision for its continued growth and success. His leadership has been pivotal in merging tradition with modernity, driving Sissy's Log Cabin forward. With exciting developments on the horizon and more announcements to come, his appointment marks a dynamic new chapter in the company's storied history, ensuring Sissy's Log Cabin continues to be a beloved destination for fine jewelry and exceptional customer service.

Next Month

NEA Sports Fans!



School is in full swing and that means fall sports are on the way! Let's see some of NEA's BEST school spirit!

Harvest Season



There are few places where you can take a drive and not see fields of rice, corn, soybeans, or another crop. Let's take a dive into the world of NEA Harvest Season!

NEA Seniors



The fall edition of NEA Seniors is almost here! Be sure to check out the latest stories specially picked for our NEA Seniors!

Pamper Your Skin Before the School Year Begins!

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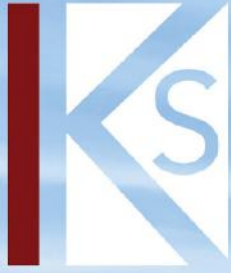


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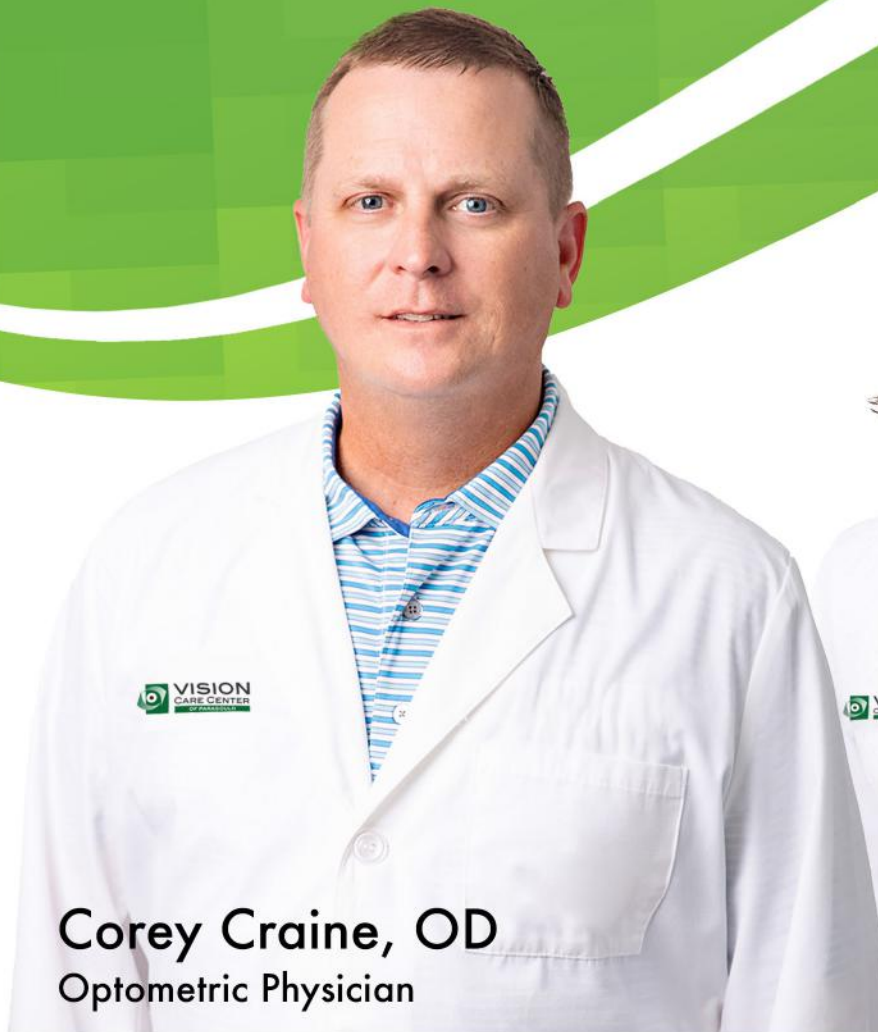
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