

NEA'S

PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2025



It's Back!

**RETURN OF LOOSE CABOOSE
SPARKS NOSTALGIA**

**SPECIAL SECTION: A FORMAL AFFAIR
KIDS PLAY: PRESERVING THE DYING ARTS
PROGRESS IN NORTHEAST ARKANSAS**

A PUBLICATION OF MOR MEDIA, INCORPORATED

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With Big Ideas**



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ON THE COVER -

Brittany Edgar and her children are looking forward to the revival of the Loose Caboose Festival in Paragould this May.

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Cover Photo by Shelby Russom

CORRECTION - In the January edition of Premiere, an article on the Greene County Tech Marching Eagles should have listed the former band director as Keith Dortch.

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From Us to You

February is when I feel like the new year is here. January is such a long month but not long enough to tie up all the loose ends from the previous year. Then we get to February and see March on the calendar and realize the first quarter is already set.

I always say Premiere makes the year go by fast with only twelve deadlines compared to working in daily newspapers and having so many deadlines. This edition of Premiere has several "past" references and the nostalgia of it all has made me a bit melancholy. Adding my Paragould Podcast appearance to the month really has me looking back at my journey.

When I worked in newspapers, our Progress Edition featured articles on achievements by local municipalities, Economic Development Commissions, and non-profits. Most of those were tangible infrastructure improvements you could easily see but as I reflect, I see that what we didn't realize was that "Progress" is also in all the tiny things that contribute to how our communities make you feel, how they make you want to be a part of something that is progressive.

Bringing back the Loose Caboose Festival has also contributed to my realizations. Our downtown is very different now than

it was as the last Loose Caboose ended. I have been surprised by the comments from the target demographic of what our revitalization goals have been. Several twenty to thirty somethings have said they look back fondly on their memories of Loose Caboose and look forward to starting new memories with their families.



That is the goal of a vibrant downtown, to get the next generation to want to be active in keeping our towns successful. So, we hope you enjoy our "Progress" articles on subjects such as art and fun trolleys and some of the aspects of progress you might not think of, but ones that truly add to a progressive Northeast Arkansas.

Dina Mason
General Manager & Publisher
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As 2025 already begins to slip away, I wanted to take a moment to note how excited I am to be part of my first Premiere Awards!

Currently voting is under way for the Jonesboro Premiere Awards (closing on February 14th), and shortly after that we will open voting for the Paragould Premiere Awards in March and April.

This is your chance to vote for your favorites in a variety of categories with the winners in the Jonesboro contest featured in our May magazine and the winners in the Paragould contest featured in July. (Full page ads in the magazine direct you to the ballot, or you can visit neapremiere.com.)

One of the things I love about Premiere is the interaction with our readers, whether it be through the news tips we receive,

contests on our Facebook page, photo submissions like the amazing snow pics we have in this month's edition, or our annual Premiere Awards. That interaction is just another part



of fulfilling our mission to share the Good News of Northeast Arkansas and the People Making It Happen!

Gretchen Hunt
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For the Love of Focaccia

BY KATIE COLLINS



It's the month for LOVE, allegedly, and I just happen to LOVE single-serve or mini versions of recipes. You can imagine my delight then when I came across a recipe for an individual focaccia loaf. I even went out and bought a 6-inch round pan that I LOVE, just for the occasion.

Homemade focaccia is a dangerous thing – it's easy to eat a lot of it, and if you only have a single serving, you can't feel too bad for eating the whole thing! This is definitely a "your patience will be rewarded" recipe, as there is a lot of waiting involved in the process. The results are absolutely worth the wait. I don't see any reason why you couldn't double/triple/quadruple this recipe to make a bigger loaf in a bigger pan if you wanted to. I topped mine with thinly sliced shallot, olive oil, and flaky salt. You can add whatever sounds good to you or just keep it simple with just olive oil and salt. Show yourself some LOVE this February with your own mini loaf of Homemade Focaccia!



Focaccia Loaf

Ingredients:

Dough:
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup + 1 Tablespoon warm water
1/2 Tablespoon instant yeast
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Toppings (optional):
Extra virgin olive oil
Halved cherry tomatoes
Fresh rosemary
Sliced onion or shallot
Garlic
Flaky sea salt

Directions:

In a bowl, combine the flour, water, and yeast until a rough dough forms. Cover and let rest for 30 minutes. Add the salt and olive oil, mixing until smooth. Cover and rest for another 30 minutes. Stretch and fold the dough, then cover again and let it rest for 30 minutes. Repeat this process two more times. Refrigerate the dough overnight. When ready to bake, line a 6-inch round pan with parchment paper and drizzle the bottom with olive oil. Transfer the dough from the fridge to this pan, cover and let rest for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Dimple the dough with your fingers, then top with toppings. Bake 15-20 minutes. Best served warm!

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Small Town Mayor

With Big Ideas

BY KARAN SUMMITT

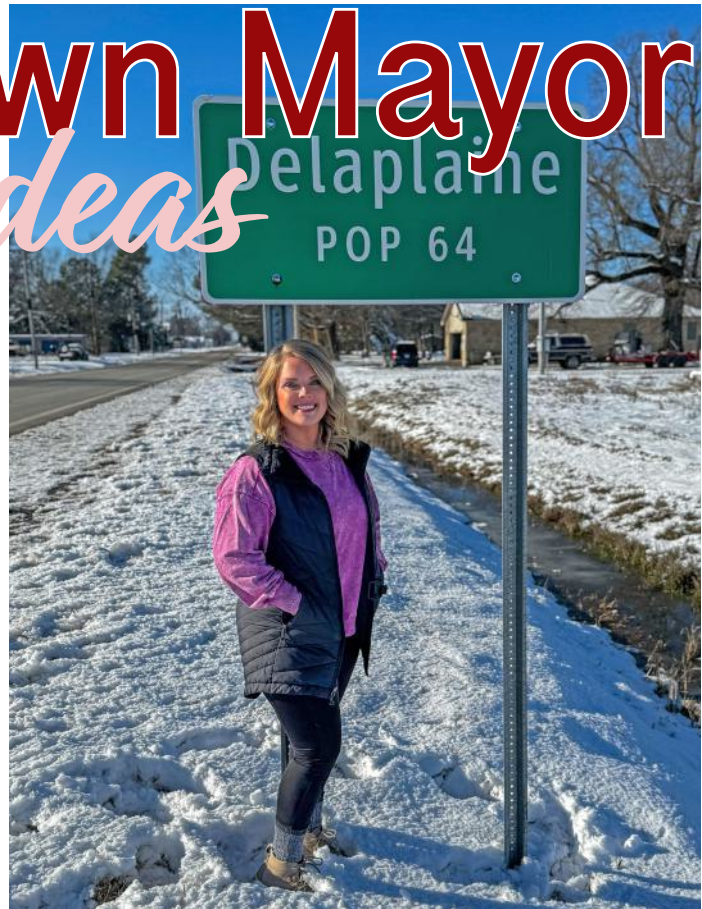
Unless you know the backstory, it seems an unlikely path. The university-educated millennial city girl raising her children in a rural community and getting involved in small town government leadership, becoming passionate about a town that on the surface might appear to be dying.

But it is those things below the surface - years in the making - that came together and led Emily Sisco to become mayor of Delaplaine. The story goes back several generations with the deep family roots both Emily and her husband Beau have in the community. It is a story best told in Emily's own words.

What are your family connections to the Delaplaine area?

Beau grew up in Evening Star and attended school at Delaplaine from kindergarten until the school closed in 2007 when he was in 10th grade. His dad was born and raised in Delaplaine. Beau's grandparents owned and operated Stoney's, a mechanic garage, parts store and gas station there. Beau often says that if the school were still open today, it would be his first choice for our children. He also reflects on the important practical life lessons he learned at Stoney's - things like working with people, how to change oil and work on vehicles. Another cherished memory is the Saturday mornings spent with his grandmother, Brenda, when she would cook him breakfast before he went off to work with his granddad. These very lessons - the same ones we want to teach our own children - were instilled in Beau in the house and community where we now live.

My grandfather, Wendell Eubanks, and father, Kevin Eubanks, had a cabin at Brookings on Black River. Brookings is just a hop and skip from Delaplaine. My sister and brother-in-law now own the cabin, though it is still referred to as the "Eubanks cabin" by those who hunt and fish in the area. Papa and Dad owned a gas and oil dealership that serviced many farmers in the Delaplaine area, so between outdoor sports and



taking care of customers, our family knew many folks that lived in and around the community.

I remember playing peewee basketball on Saturday mornings in Delaplaine and listening to classic rock bands with my dad on the way to the games. I think those games in Delaplaine were some of his favorites. He would see many clients he considered friends, and we'd finish the day by heading to the cabin. We spent summers there as well, fishing and riding a boat up and down Black River.

How did you and Beau end up living in the Delaplaine community?

In 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was escalating, close friends approached us with an unexpected proposition - they asked if we would consider selling our house. After much thought, we decided to go ahead, despite not having a clear plan or idea of where we would go next. At that time, Beau's grandparents had passed, and his sister owned their house in Delaplaine. We were looking for a temporary place to stay while we took the time to explore our options for purchasing and rebuilding. Nearly five years later, we are still in that same place, uncertain of what the future holds. However, as long as I am here, I remain committed to supporting the community in any way I can.

How did you come to be Mayor of Delaplaine?

After moving to Delaplaine, I learned the town had a city council, and my initial involvement was driven by personal reasons. With two young boys at the time, I wanted to create a better space for them to enjoy the outdoors. The local park, located near our backyard, was in need of some updates, so I began researching ways to improve it. I expressed my interest in joining the city council to help bring these changes to life. At the time, Eli Murray was the mayor, and he was



incredibly supportive of my ideas, offering his full approval to pursue grants and explore options for the park's revitalization.

I served on the city council for two years before becoming mayor. When it was time for Eli's re-election, he offered his support to help me "run" for the position of mayor. Initially, my goal of updating the park was driven by personal motivations, but over time, as I became more connected to the community and its members, my perspective shifted. What began as a personal project transformed into a passionate commitment to serve the entire community. That's why I chose to take on the role of mayor. I was elected and officially took office in January 2023.

You mention how the Delaplaine community drives your desire to serve. What makes Delaplaine a great community?

I've always felt a connection to the area due to the time I spent here when I was younger. It wasn't until I moved here that I truly realized just how tight-knit and passionate the community is. Sometimes, I think people unintentionally overlook the town - not out of malice, but because unless it's duck and goose season, Delaplaine can feel like a stop along the way to somewhere else. However, since relocating, I've come to recognize the needs, desires, and untapped potential here. I see residents who deserve amenities that enhance their health and well-being.

My goal is not to "improve or change" the area, but rather to enhance what we already have. I want to help preserve a community that was once thriving and still is but in a different way. Since the school closure many have moved on but what is left are wonderful people who want to preserve a lifestyle that is quickly disappearing in America.

The community is a beautiful balance - far enough from the hustle and bustle to offer a true sense of country living, yet close enough that you



know your neighbors and, most importantly, feel safe. For example, my neighbor to the north makes the best spicy pickles, fresh salsa and gumbo. Another neighbor's grandchildren visit regularly, playing with their cousins at the park, where the sounds of side-by-sides, go-karts and laughter fill the air. Yet another neighbor has an incredible garden that's open to anyone, growing the best squash you can find, along with stunning sunflowers. This sense of community, where people share their talents and care for one another, is what makes Delaplaine so special.

Farming is the year round bedrock of our community but hunting and fishing run a close second. These latter activities not only provide recreational opportunities but also contribute to the local economy, bringing in tourism dollars that support local business as well as businesses in our surrounding counties.

Tell us about some successful efforts to improve the Delaplaine community.

We recently secured the FUN Park Grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, a \$100,000 grant that funded a new playground, sidewalk, handicap-accessible parking and a pavilion, all completed last spring. Additionally, we received \$200,000 in ARPA (Arkansas Rescue Plan Act) funds from the county, which enabled us to secure two more matching grants. These grants will help us build a walking track and continue park updates, including a basketball court, additional sidewalks, benches, bleachers, and fencing for the baseball field. In total, through grants and ARPA funding, Delaplaine has been blessed with approximately \$465,000 for park improvements.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the tireless dedication and hard work of our treasurer, recorder and clerk, Mary King. Mary has put in countless hours behind the scenes, paving the way for progress that allows our town to move forward. I am deeply grateful for her contributions and the unwavering support of our incredible city council members. Together, we truly embody a team working toward the best for our community.

One of the most heartwarming developments has been the beautiful Christmas light display created by our Fire Chief, Justin Gates. For the past two years, his dazzling display has welcomed visitors to Delaplaine during the holiday season. Featuring synchronized lights and a singing Christmas tree, the display delights both children and adults. Tune in to the correct radio station as you drive by, and you'll experience the magic firsthand!

Continued ➔

What do you see as the benefits of raising your boys in a small community?

I honestly question why anyone wouldn't want to raise their kids this way! Yes we are further away from the grocery store, but who cares? My kids are being raised in a close-knit community where there is a strong sense of belonging and security. They are constantly surrounded by familiar faces who look out for one another. If we are outside you can hear the constant honk from vehicles of family and friends who drive by and wave. The boys have an abundance of opportunities to play outdoors and connect with nature. Through rural living, my children have been educated in practical life skills that include how to bait and cast a line and remove what was caught (momma refuses to do that, so I'm glad my boys will), firearm safety and the use of firearms for harvesting food.

They have been taught how to safely drive and operate side by sides, vehicles, boats and some smaller equipment, as well as performing basic maintenance and repairs. They are also knowledgeable in building and managing fires and providing responsible care for their animals.

While rural living may have its challenges and lack of conveniences that a larger town or city can provide, the positives that living in Delaplaine offers comes with a nurturing and enriching environment for my boys and the other children in this area.

What plans do you have for the future of the Delaplaine community?

We are actively pursuing plans for a community building, road resurfacing and enhancements to our drainage systems and ditches. While we've made significant progress in addressing drainage issues, it remains an ongoing effort requiring attention. Another priority is establishing a tornado-safe shelter since many in our community currently lack a secure space during severe weather.

We're also considering reviving the "Fire Festival," a beloved tradition from years past. This event brought the community together for a silent auction, live music, delicious food and a bake sale.

Despite the challenges we face, particularly limited funding, our town's resilience shines through. We rely heavily on grants and donations to accomplish projects and keep Delaplaine thriving. Without hired staff



like larger towns, the responsibility often falls to me, our city council members and generous community volunteers. Whether through donating time, equipment or resources, our community steps up when there's a need.

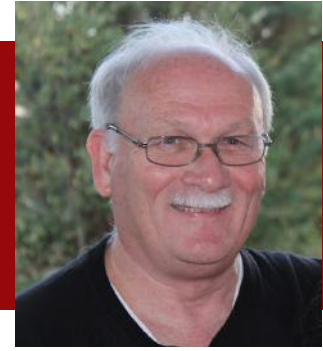
I hope to continue making Delaplaine a safe and welcoming place where people can enjoy outdoor spaces that promote health and well-being. I am deeply grateful for the strong relationship we've built with Sheriff Brad Snyder and his deputies. Their dedication has been instrumental in keeping our area safe and addressing any needs that arise. They have never overlooked us and are always quick to respond, which I sincerely appreciate.

I am incredibly thankful for the kind, passionate, and supportive members of this town. They have welcomed me with open arms and continue to back the efforts we've made to enhance the beauty and vitality of Delaplaine. Together, we are building a brighter future for our town, one step at a time.

An advertisement for Glen Sain Chevrolet. It features a blue Chevrolet truck parked on a dirt road with a mountain range in the background. The text "Glen Sain" is written in a large, cursive font in the top left, with "God Bless Our Troops" underneath it. The Chevrolet logo and the word "CHEVROLET" are in the top right. At the bottom, it says "BEST PRICE" and "BEST SERVICE" on either side of the contact information: "870.565.4352 | 6345 US 49 | GLENSAINPARAGOULD.COM".

Get Rich

WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



As I recall the situation, it started like this: I was minding my own business, stretched out on the couch watching TV, when I happened to glance at the French doors leading to our deck and saw this giant orange and white cat peering in with its nose pressed up against the glass.

I should have kept that information to myself but instead alerted my wife to the cat's presence. She immediately got up to look and then began to fret over it: Was it lost? Did it have enough food? Could it find shelter? All these questions began to bounce around the room until I said, "Cindy, don't feed that cat." Then a few minutes later I repeated, "DO NOT feed that cat." Sometimes a guy just has to put his foot down and take charge.

Later that night, after she had fed the cat, she worried about its safety. It had been declawed, she learned through thorough examination consisting of picking it up and petting it; to me, that indicated it belonged to someone who doesn't live on our deck, and I suggested Cindy shut the door, go to bed and hope the cat returned home to someone who was bound to be missing it.

She refilled a bowl with food and put a blanket and a heating pad – yes, I said a heating pad – in a cardboard box because she said it was supposed to be really cold overnight and she didn't want the cat to freeze. I said it had a fur coat and had survived this long, so why didn't we let it figure things out on its own.

We already have an inside dog, one we got shortly after we had to have our previous one put to sleep and I put my foot down and said, "We're not doing that again. We're not getting another dog." We have a dog now and I didn't think we needed someone else's cat to complete an unmatched set.

So, we fed the cat and about three o'clock the next morning it was having a heated debate about territorial rights with a black and white cat, right outside our door. There was a lot of growling and loud meowing, and I had to go out and shoo off the second cat before my wife decided to build a cat condo and start a commune. The next day, Cindy pointed out that we needed to let the cat stay inside because it couldn't protect itself properly since it has no claws. I said it should avoid confrontation and stay outside, preferably in some other neighborhood. I put my foot down.

Our daughter put the cat's photo on social media and asked if anyone

happened to be missing it, and countless people instructed us via electronic communication to "take that cat inside. It's too cold for it to be outside at night. Take that cat inside!"

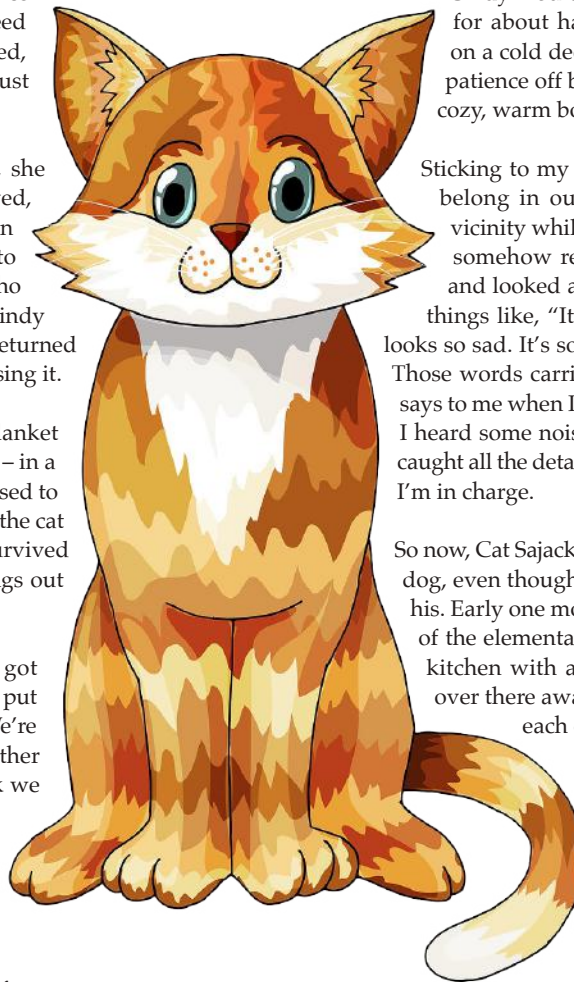
I still didn't want to give in. I like cats but I don't want one underfoot in the house. However, Mother Nature stepped in as if to bolster Cindy's argument when she sent a raccoon on the deck to eat the cat's food late one evening. I was happy to take my turn making the new creature leave long enough for the cat to eat, because I was afraid if I didn't Cindy would want to keep it. We played that game for about half an hour, with me standing outside on a cold deck yelling at a raccoon and freezing my patience off because I was too big to fit into the cat's cozy, warm box.

Sticking to my guns, I continued to say the cat didn't belong in our house, on our deck or even in our vicinity while Cindy clung to her belief that she was somehow responsible for the feline's safekeeping and looked at the window repeatedly before saying things like, "It's too cold. I don't want it to freeze. It looks so sad. It's so pretty. It's a good cat; it's so friendly." Those words carried as much weight as most others she says to me when I'm trying to watch the ballgame; I know I heard some noise from over there but I'm not certain I caught all the details. Anyway, I put my foot down because I'm in charge.

So now, Cat Sajack lives in our house and coexists with our dog, even though he wants to eat Zoey's food instead of his. Early one morning last week I looked like a member of the elementary school Safety Patrol, standing in the kitchen with arms outstretched and keeping the cat over there away from the dog over here so they could each eat the appropriate food from a dish.

I kept looking around the room for all those social media people who insisted we bring the cat in, hoping they were ready to take their turn as room monitor in the world of cats and dogs. But it was just me, two animals and a sleeping wife.

We had a house full of people over on a Friday night and Cat Sajack couldn't take all the noise and retreated to the deck, where the raccoon made another guest appearance and upset my wife. Since I'm the earlier riser in the mornings, I fully expect one day soon when I start my morning pot of coffee to look over at the breakfast table and see a raccoon eating a banana or enjoying a bowl of cereal. I don't know exactly how long after that I will be sleeping in a box with a heating pad, but I'm certain the day is coming if I don't put my foot down.



In Education Opportunities Abound

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Options for high school students have progressed in recent years, with students able to take advantage of a variety of programs, such as those at Black River Technical College's Career and Technical Center.

BRTC'S Career and Technical Center, funded by the Office of Skills Development, is a free program enabling high school upperclassmen to get a head start on a career in several areas of expertise. Students can graduate with a high school diploma as well as with a BRTC certificate in fields like Industrial Electricity, Robotics, Machine Tool Technology, Automobile Service Technology and Collision Repair, as well as Respiratory Therapy, CNA and Phlebotomy, among others.

Juniors and seniors at participating high schools are eligible to apply for the program, with more than a dozen Northeast Arkansas school districts being on board. Students are generally bussed in during the regular school hours to take part in the courses, then returned to their respective schools to finish their academic requirements.

Darenda Kersey, Director of Career, Technical, and Concurrent Education, said the benefits awaiting the students are two-pronged. "First, they finish high school and they've already been trained for a work-ready position," she said. "Whether it's welding, CNA or whatever, they are ready to go to work. And two, since it's funded by public school funds, they are not charged a penny. They don't have to take out a student loan of any kind."

Offered at BRTC campuses in Paragould, Pochahontas and Piggott, the program currently accommodates 180 students. "I have been the director since 2020," Darenda said, "and my first year we had 52 students; now it's 180. I'd say that's a success."

While it is open only to juniors and seniors, Darenda said she has taken calls from parents of sophomores "who know their son wants to be a welder and they want to know how to get him into the program. A lot of the kids already have an eye on the future and are interested because they know they want to do some of these things we offer as a career."

Any students interested in checking out the classes may reach Darenda by phone at 870-248-4184 or via email at darenda.kersey@blackrivertech.edu.

Esports grows in popularity

The center also has an eye on a more relaxing form of education and entertainment through its Esports program. Esports, short for electronic sports, is a form of competition using video games. Esports often takes the form of organized, multiplayer video game competitions, particularly between professional players, played individually or as teams, according to Wikipedia.

Multiplayer competitions were long a part of video game culture but were largely between amateurs until the early 2000s, when the advent of online streaming media platforms, particularly YouTube and Twitch, enabled a surge in participation by professional gamers and spectators.



By the 2010s, esports was a major part of the video game industry, with many game developers designing for and providing funding for tournaments and other events.

Dane Dillion, Dean of Students/Director of Student Development, said there are two aspects of esports. "There's recreation and there's competitive," he said. "We have it set up where they can go in and log on and play whatever video game they are into. We take requests on what games we might provide for them and go purchase them. Anytime we're open they can come in and chill out. It goes into, although not directly, the area of mental health because it takes their minds off things."

While there are some high school sponsored teams around the area, Dane said "we are not yet dedicated to having a BRTC esports team but we do make provisions for the individual to participate if they want. We can pay their fees and provide travel for them. And it's another avenue for providing entertainment and competition for students."

For instance, on BRTC's Paragould campus, students can take advantage of a modern gaming room, with high-end PCs and gaming computers and consoles. "We have PS5, Xbox, PS4 consoles. It's available from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and they can hang out as long as they want to hang out," Dane said. "The other day I checked on the camera and five of the six chairs were filled and the feedback from employees is that they really enjoy it and the seats are usually full. It's obviously well used."

Students Kolton Boyd and Skyler Gramling are two who make the most of the gaming room setup, explaining some of their interest in taking part. "Competitive gaming is not new, it's just new to schools," Kolton said. "It's like football, but instead of the physical you're playing the game on a screen. You could look at it like trap shooting: It's a hobby, something to do."

While there are professional players in the sport, neither student says he has eyes on a pro future for himself. "Some might make pretty good money at it," Skyler said, "but you'd have to be really good at it."

Both students agree they enjoy the competition, going up against the other guy in a variety of games to see who comes out on top. By the same token BRTC is coming out on top at each of its sites, giving high school students a head start toward a career while also offering opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment.

PET *of the* MONTH

SPONSORED BY ARPETS HOSPITAL

BY KATRINA BREWER

Ripley is a 6-month-old French Bulldog we brought home from Kentucky while on vacation. He enjoys playing with his toys and sitting on his older brother Max's head. He gets the zoomies quite a lot, and it doesn't matter if it's in the house or outside.



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Health Matters

BY KARAN SUMMITT

HEART HEALTH



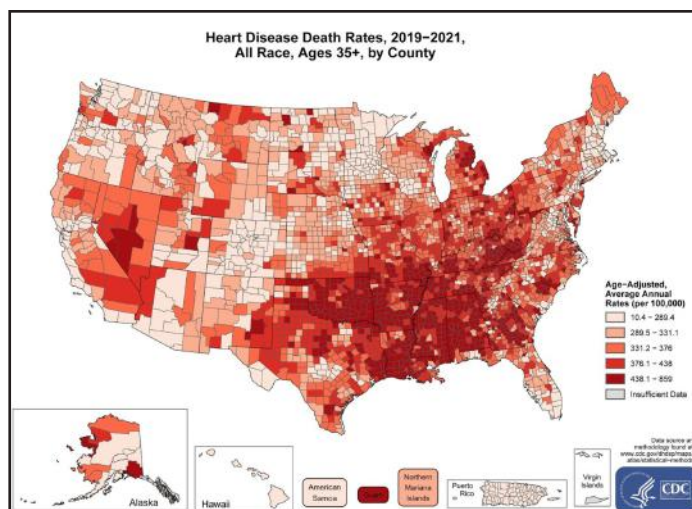
Gender, Ethnicity, Family History and Geography Matter

Did you get the memo? Are you wearing red this month? For years February has been the month for raising Heart Health Awareness. It's a good thing when you stop and consider these statistics from the Centers for Disease Control:

- Heart disease is the number one chronic disease for both men and women.
- Each year about 702,880 people die from heart disease. That is one in every five deaths in the United States.
- Heart disease kills more people than all forms of cancer combined.
- Heart disease will cost \$316.6 billion annually in healthcare, medications and lost productivity.
- About 805,000 Americans have a heart attack each year, with 605,000 being their first heart attack. This puts them at substantially increased risk for future heart attacks.
- Arkansas has the fourth highest rate in the nation for heart disease mortality. It is notable that the East Arkansas delta region is home to some of the highest rates for heart disease in the nation.

Heart disease is an umbrella term for any type of disorder that affects the heart. The most common type of heart disease in the United States is coronary artery disease (CAD), which can cause heart attack, angina, heart failure and arrhythmias. In simple terms, CAD occurs when the arteries, which supply blood to the heart, narrow or become blocked.

High blood pressure, high LDL (bad) cholesterol and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease. About half of Americans (49%) have at least one of these three risk factors. Several other medical conditions and lifestyle choices also put people at a higher risk for heart disease. These include diabetes, being overweight or obese, a poor diet, physical inactivity and excessive alcohol use.



But there's more. Your personal risk for heart disease includes some things we have far less control over than diet, exercise or substance use. Things like gender, ethnicity, family history and where you live. Let's start with gender.

In the United States, heart disease kills more women each year than breast cancer. It can affect women at any age, but the risk of heart attack and stroke increases with age, especially after menopause. High blood pressure is the top risk factor for heart disease in women, with other risk factors that include starting menopause before age 40, having endometriosis or polycystic ovarian syndrome, and autoimmune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

Men tend to have their first heart attack an average of 10 years earlier than women. Research shows that along with typical risk factors — such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes — men are at increased risk of heart attack earlier in life due to hormone changes, abdominal obesity and emotional challenges in middle adulthood.

Symptoms of a heart attack may vary between the sexes. Men typically present with chest pain. Women also experience chest pressure (it's still the leading complaint), but they are more likely than men to report nausea, sweating, vomiting and pain in areas like the jaw, shoulders or back.

Ethnicity matters when it comes to heart disease risk, with minority groups carrying a heavier burden. For example, 47 percent of Black adults have been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease, compared with 36 percent of white adults. Hispanic women are more than twice as likely as white women to have diabetes, which is a major risk factor for heart disease. American Indians are three times more likely than whites to have diabetes, raising their risk for heart disease.

These differences between racial and ethnic groups are called health disparities. Health disparities are a complex and challenging problem in the U.S. and around the world. Researchers view race and ethnicity in broader terms than simply looking at biological traits. Social factors also play an influential role in shaping people's health. These factors include economic status, access to healthcare, education, cultural views, safe surroundings and access to nutritious foods.

Family history can impact the risk for heart disease. Genetic factors may play a role in high blood pressure, heart disease and other vascular conditions. However, it also is likely that people with a family history of heart disease share common environments that increase their risk. The risk can increase even more when heredity is combined with unhealthy lifestyle choices.

In the United States where you live can also have an impact on heart disease risk. This often ties in closely with some of the issues

HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS: MEN VS. WOMEN

By American Heart Association News

The most common symptom of a heart attack for both men and women is chest pain. But women may experience less obvious warning signs.

MEN	WOMEN
Nausea or vomiting	Nausea or vomiting
Jaw, neck or back pain	Jaw, neck or upper back pain
Squeezing chest pressure or pain	Chest pain, but not always
Shortness of breath	Pain or pressure in the lower chest or upper abdomen
	Shortness of breath
	Fainting
	Indigestion
	Extreme fatigue

Source: American Heart Association's journal, Circulation
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mentioned above that have to do with ethnicity and health disparity. For instance, counties in the Arkansas Delta region have some of the highest heart disease rates in the nation. These areas are also home to high poverty, lower education status, food “deserts” in rural areas and limited access to affordable healthcare.

Early action is the key to preventing deaths from a heart attack, but many people don't know the signs. While most folks recognize chest pain as a symptom of a heart attack, many are unaware of all major symptoms. About 77 percent of fatal heart attacks occur outside a hospital, suggesting that many people with heart disease don't act on early warning signs. The major warning signs of a heart attack are:

- Chest pain or discomfort.
- Upper body pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or upper stomach.
- Shortness of breath.
- Nausea, lightheadedness or cold sweats

Heart disease is not inevitable, nor does a diagnosis of heart disease have to become a death sentence. By working closely with your physician, being aware of personal risk and taking a proactive attitude toward healthy lifestyle changes, you can be a force for lowering the statistics cited earlier.

Karan Summitt is a retired health educator with 25 years experience 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.

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In Infrastructure

Safety, Transportation & Greenspace

BY KARAN SUMMITT

Real estate agents keep an eye on affordable interest rates and know it's "location, location, location" that brings in the property buyers. Civic leaders trying to grow their communities have a decisively longer list if they want to attract businesses, citizens and industry to their area. That list includes a strong work force, good schools, safe neighborhoods, alternatives in transportation, a wide variety of retail establishments and plenty of recreational options close to home.

The list leans heavily on tax receipts and the willingness of the community to support new growth. Taking advantage of grant money becomes essential to the funding process, as does selling new ideas to the general public. The good thing about this kind of growth is that it becomes its own engine -- successful projects seem to pave the way for additional ones.

A community's infrastructure is defined as the set of facilities and systems that serve a country, city or other area, encompassing what is necessary for the economy, households and workplaces to function. Composed of public and private physical structures, infrastructure is essential for sustaining and enhancing living conditions and the surrounding environment.

That definition may be a mouthful, but in everyday language, infrastructure is what makes an area attractive and worthy of putting down roots. It is all the things in a community you would look for if you were planning to move there, making it a desirable "location, location, location."

Civic leaders know an essential part of their job is sustaining the current infrastructure of their communities as well as keeping a far-reaching eye on what is needed for future growth. Most infrastructure projects are tremendously expensive and require a series of steps before completion. Often the dollars needed for new projects have to compete with the same pot of funds necessary for maintaining current amenities. Despite these challenges, 2024 witnessed good growth in the infrastructure of Jonesboro, Paragould and the surrounding area, especially in transportation and recreational trails.

Jonesboro: Trails and Transportation

In November of 2024 Jonesboro leaders celebrated the completion of a new bike trail connecting Arkansas State University with



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downtown Jonesboro. The goal of the trail was to make Jonesboro more accessible for people who may not have adequate transportation. A collaboration between the City of Jonesboro, the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) and the State of Arkansas, the MLK Bike Trail is the first protected bike lane for cyclists in the city.

The bike trail is part of the Jonesboro Greenway Trail project. When complete, the trail will be a 29-mile, 12 ft. wide multi-use trail that winds around Jonesboro, connecting major destinations that include parks, Turtle Creek Mall, Arkansas State University and downtown.

At that same November celebration, community leaders unveiled red and blue trolleys, a new addition to the city's JET (Jonesboro Economic Transit) system. In operation since May of 2006, JET saw an increase of 30 percent more riders in 2024. An additional bus route was added in October, with plans to add a fifth route in February of 2025. The system currently has 140 bus stop locations.

Along with the growth in area population and the increased use of JET buses came the opportunity to apply for and receive a Federal Transportation Grant to purchase the trolleys. Trolleys operate at much lower emissions than normal buses, with less harm to the environment. Currently there are five trolleys. Each one can seat 26 passengers, compared to 16 riders on the buses. All trolleys are ADA compliant, and plans are to incorporate them into city events such as parades and tours. To help generate excitement and familiarity, the trolleys are making their way around town to area schools and public events. Feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.

JET also received a federal grant to update 27 current bus stop shelters and add 20 more in new locations. With the updated shelters residents receive better protection from the elements, better lighting and informational media screens.

In addition to the buses and trolleys, JET provides paratransit service for those with functional mobility limitations. These vans come to a passenger's home and provide transportation to wherever is

needed. Restrictions do apply and passengers must qualify to use the paratransit service.

Paragould: Safety and Expansion on the 8-mile Creek Trail

The idea of a community trail in Paragould came out of the establishment of the Greene County Future Fund. The GCFF set out with three main priorities -- establishing a recreational trail system, pushing the city for curbside recycling and establishing a green space in the downtown area.

In 2016 the GCFF applied for the first of three TAP (Transportation Alternative Program) grants (\$403,000, \$303,000 and \$250,000) to help fund the first three phases of the 8-mile Creek Trail. Construction on all three phases was started in the spring of 2021 and the trail opened to the public in 2022. Total cost was around \$1,865,000, with the three TAP grants, totaling \$956,000, providing over half of that cost.

Since its initial opening there have been substantial improvements to the trail, most of them funded by private business investment, nonprofit groups or grant funds. These improvements include:

- Eight benches purchased by private businesses.
- In 2023 Leadership Paragould Alumni placed a workout station on the trail in Harmon Park at a cost of around \$33,000.
- Leadership Class 26 (2023) placed a trailhead marker/map at the Fire Station. This class also planted 15 trees along the trail near the fire station.
- Leadership Class 27 (2024) placed mirrors at dangerous intersections on the underpasses.



- The GCFF used proceeds from the Get Downtown Festival to buy a trail counter that shows 6000-7500 visits to the trail per month.
- Main Street Paragould purchased a directional sign at the trail intersection near Nunn's Construction to help point people to downtown Paragould.

Upcoming plans include mile markers purchased by the current Paragould Leadership Class to aid visitors in knowing exactly how far they have walked or run on the trail. An Urban and Community Forestry grant was awarded to plant approximately 50 new trees along the trail.



In 2024 the city installed 10 call box cameras along the trail to give citizens an extra sense of security. These cameras are motion activated and powered by solar panels, making them completely self-sustaining. The cameras feed directly into the local 911 dispatch system in case citizens need medical help while on the trail. A safety tax passed in March provided funds for the cameras.

The contract for phase four of the trail system -- which will add an additional mile, making the trail five miles long -- has been signed. Work is scheduled to begin in the spring. With a bid cost of \$519,000, the trail expands to the south and west toward Bland Baseball Park. The city received an additional TAP grant in the amount of \$300,000 to help offset this cost.

In January 2025, another TAP Grant in the amount of \$500,000 was awarded to build a bridge across Eight Mile Creek, connecting the phase four trail expansion to the baseball fields, Pruetts' Chapel Road and the neighborhoods of Silo Ridge, Hill Home and Park Ridge.

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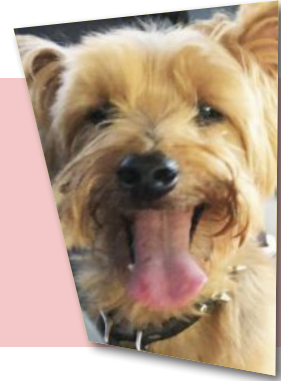
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THE ADVENTURES OF

Lester

BY VICKI McMILLAN



Valentine's Day 2025 dawned on a bright and sunny Friday morning. I was up early to go to see my groomer, Miss Julie. I was scheduled for a bath, a trim and a mani-pedi. All went well and I was back at home in time to splash on some cologne and head down the street to pick up Dottie the Doodle in my little red Corvette (which actually is pink with Barbie stickers on the doors -- but reliable transportation, none the less). Dottie and I were going to Downtown Paragould on the perfect date to celebrate Valentine's Day!

Our first stop was Something Sweet to get a blueberry scone. The girls there were so nice, it made us feel bad about barking at the cats at Something Pawsitive, that were conducting purr therapy. Then we strolled down to the corner, and compared our memories of the smells of Terry's Café and mourned its passing.

Dottie and I checked out the mural and tried to take a selfie, but it looked like us in front of a big dog paw. We looked at the Caboose, and then continued back down Pruett Street. Dottie wanted to stop in The Paisley Pineapple, so we did with the understanding that I could stop in at The Cultured Man. (A store definitely with me in mind!)

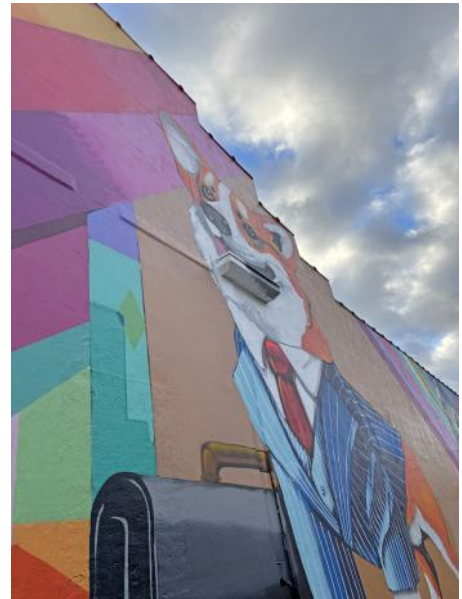


Of course, we couldn't miss Weber's Book House and Unraveled Yarn Boutique. I personally am so happy we have a local bookstore!

By now, we had been chased out of some stores and had worked

up an appetite. Since the weather was so good, we dined al fresco at Chow 118 and had a delicious meal!

We ended our day at the Dog Park at Harmon Play Field where I regaled Dottie with my exploits as a wide RETRIEVER for the Paragould Rams Football Team. She appeared to be very impressed: She looked into my eyes. I looked into her eyes. Our hearts were beating as one. And then.....and then.....



"LESTER, GET UP AND GO OUT TO POTTY! YOU CAN'T JUST SLEEP ALL DAY."

Wha..? What? It was all a dream?? It's not Valentine's Day yet?? You mean, Dottie and I weren't on a date?? Sigh. At least the Downtown part is true.....

Regards,
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Looking Back And Moving Forward

BY GRETCHEN HUNT



Northeast Arkansas residents will have the opportunity to “Spike it Rich” once again this year as the Loose Caboose Festival returns to Downtown Paragould in May after a little over a decade hiatus. Several other favorites from the event will be returning, as well, including Bingo, the carnival, a car show and catfish!

Since the announcement of the festival’s revival, many who attended the event as children have been sharing their memories of Loose Caboose and their excitement to make new memories with their children. Festival organizers have grabbed on to that feeling of nostalgia and designed a kids T-shirt that proclaims “I’ve heard the stories; Now I get to make my own.”

For Brittany Edgar, who volunteered at the festival as a kid, when she looks back, she remembers a lot of different aspects. “My favorite memory was probably riding around on the 4-wheelers, helping deliver waters to workers, or seeing if anybody needed anything, or helping rope off streets, just being a kid but still being part of it,” Brittany, who is a member of the current Leadership Paragould Class, said.

Allison Hestand, CEO of the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce, said everything just lined up for the return of Loose Caboose, set for May 15-17, noting that with previous logistical issues squared away it became possible for the festival to make a return.

“As a Chamber, at the same time, we were launching our Chamber Foundation and needed a fundraiser,” Allison said. The foundation was organized to fundraise and support workforce development and educational advancement in Greene County. With a plan in mind to revive the event, proponents went to the boards of organizations previously involved to get permission to bring the festival back.

Among the organizations consulted were Main Street Paragould, which had previously been involved with Loose Caboose, and the Greene County Future Fund, which most recently hosted the Get Downtown Festival.

“You’ll see many of the same faces that you saw at Get Downtown helping with the Loose Caboose Festival,” Allison said. “We did discuss that two festivals

would not do as well. They wanted to support Loose Caboose and they will add another Greene County Future Fund event in the fall, so we have more family-friendly events for the community.”

Main Street Paragould is partnering with the Chamber for the event, with 10 percent of the annual profits from Loose Caboose going to the organization to be used for beautification of the downtown area as a thank you for allowing the festival to take place in the Commercial Historic District and for the help of the Main Street Director, Miranda Reynolds.

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Allison said Loose Caboose is a heritage festival celebrating the history of the railway and its impact on Paragould, as well as the fact that the community still has many workers making railcars today. For many NEA residents it also feels like a return to the “Good Old Days.”

Brittany’s three children will get to attend this year’s event, experiencing Loose Caboose for the first time, and they have proclaimed they will be attending all three days.

“I think it’s going to be awesome,” Brittany said. “They’ve heard about it, but they don’t really know what to expect. You can kind of compare it to the fair in a sense, but in Downtown Paragould it’s just the vibe. It’s so much more than that. I’m looking forward to them seeing the streets shut down and everyone walking around and hearing the train

go down the tracks sometimes.”

The festival is also slated to include vendors, food trucks, a petting zoo, 10K, 5K and fun run races, a bike ride, a kids pavilion and an innovation station. Live entertainment is slated on two stages, including a performance by Milwaukee Tool Shed on Saturday, May 17th, at 8 p.m.

“I think it’s been very well received,” Allison said. “Sponsorships are nearly sold out. Everyone’s excited to see how it will be coming back.”

Anyone interested in more information, becoming a vendor, volunteering or sponsoring can visit www.loosecaboose.org.



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Avoiding a Toxic

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

Valentine's Day



With Valentine's Day quickly approaching, many of us send our loved ones flowers or candy for the special holiday. And who doesn't love getting flowers and candy? But certain flowers can carry some fatal toxins, as can some candies - especially the sugar free forms! In this article, I will go over several of the most common types of toxin exposures we see in the veterinary world on this LOVE-ly day.

Lilies are one of the most deadly flowers to cats and dogs, however more fatalities are seen with cats that ingest any part of the lily plant.



Lily plants, when ingested, cause Acute Renal Failure - this means they rapidly cause the kidneys to fail, especially true for cats. The damage done to the kidneys from lily intoxication is irreversible.

Unfortunately, most patients that present with symptoms of this disease process (not eating, vomiting) and have a history of ingesting the plant, even with aggressive treatment do not survive. Dogs, however, most often develop severe gastrointestinal upset (vomiting, drooling,

diarrhea), but those with a severe sensitivity are at risk of severe kidney injury. Best to get rid of these plants or to keep them completely out of reach of all pets and watch for any leaves, pollen and petals that may fall which your pet could then chew on or eat!

Another common plant that is given as a gift as a home decoration on holidays is the palm plant. Palms, especially Sago Palm, can be quickly fatal if ingested. Ingestion of a palm plant, specifically the seed which carries the most potent toxin, causes rapid development of gastrointestinal signs (vomiting, drooling profusely and diarrhea), sometimes within 15 minutes of digestion, and can cause Acute Hepatic Failure - which is liver failure - and then often leads to death. Palms, while really neat plants, are just a bad idea to have in your home if you have a pet. Especially a pet that tends to get into things it shouldn't!

Candies, especially chocolates, are one of the most popular Valentine's Day gifts. While quite delicious to us, they can cause a range of symptoms in pets. Some may not suffer at all or show any signs of eating chocolate, while in others it may cause severe GI discomfort or even death. Methylxanthine is the primary toxic component in chocolate, with caffeine following as a close second. Dark chocolate and baking chocolates pose the highest risk of complications while milk chocolates and white chocolates are much less life threatening.

Deaths associated with chocolate are not common, but always depend on that specific pet's sensitivity to it. Many pets may just experience vomiting and diarrhea, while others may have much more severe signs including cardiac arrhythmias and neurological signs like tremors. Did you know that chocolate toxicoses is so common in pets that there was a calculator created simply for determining if the

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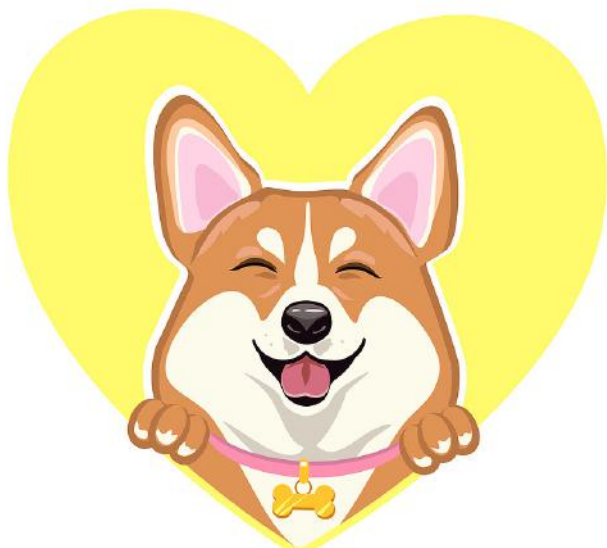


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type of chocolate that a pet ingested will require treatment and what that form of treatment should be (i.e. emergency intervention versus monitoring for any symptoms)?

Staying with the candy topic, let's now move on to sweeteners. With a diet and sugar-conscious population, many candy gifts are of the sugar-free form. To make these foods sweet without using natural sugar, artificial sweetener is often used. These artificial sweeteners come in many forms, but the most important one to remember with all pets is Xylitol. Xylitol, while a naturally-occurring sweetener that is safe for people, is extremely dangerous and fatal to cats and dogs. Very small amounts can cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), seizures,

liver failure and death. This is, unfortunately, a very common toxicity that can occur because of how common xylitol is used in food, gum, toothpaste, even some nasal sprays today.

Gum is the most common form of exposure in pets, especially dogs. Most of these toxin exposures occur because they smell something fruity (the sugar-free gum) from Mom's purse or in Dad's pocket and get into it. Liver failure is all too often the result and quickly leads to death. If your pets get into anything, especially something sugar-free, always contact your veterinarian as soon as possible for advice on what to do. With this type of toxin ingestion, you never want to wait to contact your vet until your pet develops symptoms; oftentimes it can be too late to save them. Best advice I can give is to purchase gums that do not contain xylitol, and keep any product that contains xylitol completely out of reach of pets!

For any pet owner, it is always best to check with your veterinarian or Animal Poison Control for any questions on possible toxin exposure. Now that we have gone over many of the possible poor outcomes and risks of certain Valentine's gifts, I hope everyone has a wonderful and safe Valentine's Day! And remember, don't feed your pets table scraps!

Dr. Kristin Sullivan is a small animal veterinarian practicing since 2012. She owns ARPets Hospital and PAWliday Inn in Brookland, Arkansas with her husband Michael Sullivan. She strives to provide the highest quality veterinary care, advocating for her patients, and works to educate the public in animal health care and preventive medicine, while promoting the human-animal bond.

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In The Arts

Making Things Brighter

BY SHELBY RUSSOM

From lively theatre shows to bright, fun murals, the art scene continues to flourish throughout Northeast Arkansas. Recently, organizations such as The Stage Theatre Company and White's Artworks have joined the movement.

WHITE'S ARTWORKS

Jason White of White's Artworks dreams of filling each town with beautiful paintings interwoven with history. He believes murals, whether complicated or simple, have the power to bring cities to life.

Jason's story begins as a young boy. He said he has loved art for as long as he can remember and while other kids asked for toys, he sought after art supplies.

"In kindergarten, we would get a stamp on our hand if we took a nap," he said. "If you got a stamp, you got something out of the treasure chest. And while all the other kids were getting candy, I was getting crayons, little sketchbooks and colored pencils."

But his journey was not easy. Like many, he struggled with thinking he could never succeed as an artist. Jason said this mindset held him back for years, and he feels if he had just taken the leap, he would have found success in his passion much earlier in life.



PHOTO BY SHELBY RUSSOM

"Art has always kind of been my Nineveh. I just had this internal fear of not being able to make it," he said. "The whole starving artist mentality, so I ended up just following money."

Jason spent years finding ways to incorporate creativity into his life and thrived in spaces that allowed him to do so. He studied web and graphic design and afterward worked in Dallas for seven years in jobs he felt weren't quite right for him and ultimately moved on from. He then returned home and painted custom shoes to keep his creative side alive while working in non-creative fields.



PHOTO BY SHELBY RUSSOM

However, something didn't feel right. He was suffering from not exploring the things he was passionate about.

Eventually, Jason decided to take a chance on himself and his talent. He landed a job painting windows for First Security Bank, which sparked a love for providing something fun for businesses and their customers. Jason said that marked the beginning of his new journey — his own company devoted to sharing his art with towns everywhere, named White's Artworks. In his first year, Jason painted four bank windows. In his second year, 28. After his business gained this traction, Crane Automotive asked him to paint all of its car lots for the Christmas season. Jason said those jobs were a blessing to him, and he was thrilled to keep going with the work, but he still had doubts.

"I just felt like the Lord said it was time," he said. "I had been running for so long, and I had the conversation, 'Jesus take the wheel. If this is something I am supposed to do, you're going to have to do something.'"

And then it happened. Jason posted to social media a time lapse video of himself painting a Razorback on a window. He said he didn't expect much, seeing as he had a small number of followers, but the video was a hit.

"It had like 9,000 views the next morning," he said. "I thought I got hacked because I couldn't figure out why so many people were seeing it. Razorback Nation had reposted it, and that was confirmation that I had made the right choice. I felt the Lord say it was time."

From there, he has brought his colorful murals to towns all over Arkansas. He has even become the Chair of the Searcy Art Alley Committee, a city that has just won the trendsetter award for murals.

Recently, his work has brought him to Downtown Paragould, a place he said is just as bright and fun as the mural he completed for Graham Law Firm.

"It's all about brightening up downtown areas," Jason said. "It's such a big movement to restore these downtowns. It's so important to the

communities and it's just a blessing to do."

The legal-themed mural depicts two blind justices against a vibrant background. At the center of the piece is the law firm's own, Walter the Corgi, in a suit with a briefcase. Lauren Graham, owner of the firm, said she hopes the colorful mural will feel inviting to those visiting downtown and become a fun place for people to take photos, potentially increasing foot traffic.

Jason dreams of sharing his knowledge of art and town history with people everywhere through free classes and podcasts. He said he cannot spread art throughout these deserving communities alone, so he wants to see others step into this line of work. Another aspect of his dream is to offer every town he visits a free American flag mural, demonstrating his commitment to his country and the people within it.

Jason said he hopes to inspire everyone to find ways to express themselves and delve into their passions, whether that be cooking, painting, photography, writing, etc.

"I really find art in everything and I really do encourage everybody to try to explore their own creativity," he said. "I strongly believe that we are created in the image of our creator, so by definition, we're creators."

THE STAGE THEATRE COMPANY

The Stage Theatre Company in Jonesboro uses its productions to promote diversity and inclusion while creating a safe space for all actors to showcase their talents.

Established in 2021 by Abby Kuonen-Broadway, the nonprofit organization hosts a wide variety of shows every year, including Disney's Descendants, The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Willy Wonka and more. Each show produced helps the company grow closer to its goal of involving each member of the community in the theatre experience.

"I wanted to give everyone a place to go," Abby said. "A place to escape their everyday worries and stresses and to dive themselves into their love of arts."

Abby said successful community theatre groups from across the



country inspired the process of creating The Stage. She and some of the current board and committee members studied and compiled aspects of other organizations that could benefit participants in NEA. Abby said since its creation, The Stage has grown exponentially, with up to four shows a season.

"Our very first show had a cast of about 40, and now our cast size is often over 100 or more," Abby said. "We have expanded our reach within NEA and have cast members from all across the state, even Missouri and Tennessee."

Marketing director Peyton Riley said she feels being a part of The Stage has made her into a better person, and she values everyone within the company who helped make that possible.

Peyton said The Stage has allowed her to contribute to society in ways she otherwise would not have been able to.

For each show, the cast engages in a community project, blending a passion for the arts with their commitment to caring for the people in their community. The project completed depends on the size of the show and cast and has included singing at nursing homes and helping at local non-profits.

The Stage's target audience is anyone and everyone. Board member Lacy Baker, Ph.D., said the strong sense of family and welcoming atmosphere at The Stage drew her in. Abby said the company's dedication to allowing every person to participate in the arts sets it apart from others. If someone auditions, they will be cast regardless of singing, dancing or acting skills. Peyton said she values the company's decision to help everyone find their place on the stage.

"Whether you're a seasoned performer or completely new to the arts, regardless of your age or abilities, we welcome you with open arms," Peyton said. "Join us and discover the joy of theatre, the magic of creativity and friendships that will last a lifetime."

As a non-profit company, Abby said The Stage is not putting on productions for money. Instead, the focus is on encouraging participation and inclusion. Fundraisers, special events throughout the year, and individual and business sponsorships and donors help to fund the company's mission of creating an inclusive and enriching theatre experience.

There are multiple ways to be a part of the mission of The Stage, from acting and building sets to costuming. For information on auditions for a performance, visit thestagetheatreco.com.

Upcoming auditions and rehearsals will be held at The Floor at 2704 Alexander Dr., Suite K, in Jonesboro. Auditions include: Disney's Descendants: February 1-2; Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat: May 24-25; Willy Wonka: August 2-3; and The Best Christmas Pageant Ever the Musical: October 11-12.

Not an actor? No problem! The Stage also accepts volunteers, business sponsorships and individual donations. For more information, email The Stage at thestageoffices@gmail.com.



Snow Day

BY CHUCK LONG

OFFERS FUN FOR ALL



Weather has always been an interesting thing to me. I enjoy the seasons as they change, the various weather events that might occur and the efforts to predict those events. We have progressed a long way from the days of watching the television camera pan the weather gauges, calling the time and temperature line, or checking the current temperature on the Security Bank sign. Now we watch weather as it happens, whether it be Jim Cantore as he fights through an angry gale, or Ryan Vaughan as he warns us with the Panicometer. It fascinates me the way animals and people react to various weather events.

We are fortunate to live in an area that provides a strong sense of all types of weather and seasons. Spring can be a beautiful time, but the accompanying storms can be devastating. The summer heat can be intense. The crispness of that first cold morning of fall is wonderful. And then there are the winter storms, with the silence of falling snow, or the clatter of sleet pelting everything around it.

Outside of weather events that might cause damage or catastrophe, I find all the events enjoyable in certain ways. But a good snowfall is my favorite. The anxiousness before the storm as everyone scrambles for milk and bread, the quietness as it falls, and the beauty left as snow blankets the earth are all highlights. But the post-storm activities are some of my favorites and have been a part of my life from the earliest memories.

As a youngster, hunting snow-covered fencerows or fields was high on the list. We would put a shotgun and rifle in the truck, hit the road and pursue whatever game would present itself. Rabbits were high on the list as were doves and other birds. An occasional coyote might cross our paths and, if open water could be found, waterfowl would become a priority. We would leave early, get back late, clean our bounty, and one of my grandmothers would feed us a hearty meal to warm us up and give us energy for the next day.

I still enjoy pursuing game across the snow covered landscape, but now I often use snow days as a learning experience. One day in the snow tracking game can be more revealing than several days in a leaf covered forest. Travel corridors, bedding areas and feeding areas are obvious in the snow and it's much easier to follow trails and find likely hunting locations.

It's also a great time to evaluate what game might be available on the property or to check out a new hunting location. As much as I enjoyed those days afield, when our girls were born and we moved to Marmaduke, things changed, and snow days turned into something much different. We are blessed to have a large open area in front of our home that we share with family, and it has become our play area for snow days.

Many of the snow days are now spent pulling kids on sleds, hoping to thrill them with the ride, but avoid injury. That's a thin line, but the snow offers a good buffer when someone goes flying off whatever device might be behind the UTV. We used the typical sleds, preferring



those that hold three or four people, but some years we have had to become creative to satisfy the need to thrill the riders. A johnboat behind a truck can haul many at one time, especially those too young to sled on their own or that like to go slow and steady. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a Porta-Potty door was one of the fastest, slickest and most tricky sleds we ever used. Car hoods and other homemade contraptions also provided a means to thrill folks, both young and old, as we bounced over hills and swung around curves.

The sledding fun generated hungry participants, and good food became very important to survive the snow days. Chili, potato soup and shrimp chowder are often on the stove for those who need to fill their belly for a quick boost. Cookies, cakes and various candies would also line the counters to refuel for the next sled ride. Homemade hot chocolate would help provide a quick shot of warmth.

A staple for the sled days, or any snow day for that matter, was snow cream. There are many recipes for snow cream, but we keep ours very simple. Sweetened condensed milk, preferably Eagle Brand, is mixed with just a bit of regular milk to make the syrup and then some clean, fluffy snow is added to get a heavy slush consistency. I like to add a bit of peanut butter to my snow cream.



When you really think about it, the number of snow days we have in Arkansas is very limited. Maybe that's why they cause such a hullabaloo in leading up to the storm, but that is also a reason to get out and enjoy each and every day we have snow on the ground. It creates an almost magical outdoor environment that invites fun, exploration and fellowship. Yes, it can be a little inconvenient and a little messy, but it is worth it.

Hopefully our weather folks will see fit to send some more snow our direction before winter is up and we will have the opportunity to enjoy it with family and friends. If you need somewhere to go ride a sled or eat some snowcream, look us up. We will be out there playing, and I hope to see you out there!

Chuck Long is a lifelong Arkansas outdoorsman. Chuck retired from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission after thirty plus years of service and now enjoys sharing his love of the outdoors through writing, speaking events and social media outlets. Have an outdoor question? Reach out to Chuck at cflong2002@yahoo.com.

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In Business

Resources Available

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

Communities celebrate when new businesses open and mourn when others close their doors, but behind the scenes are stalwarts who are working day in and day out to provide resources to both existing business and budding entrepreneurs.

The GIN (generating innovative networks) in Paragould is still developing, but already has much to offer businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs, including a makerspace, which features equipment for pottery, woodworking, metal works, 3-D printing and more.

“The opportunity is immense,” John Clark said, noting that sometimes people hesitate because they are uncertain about using the different types of equipment. “We’re going to provide some instruction and some facilitating. I would really like to get people past the initial intimidation to where they are comfortable coming in and using all the opportunities we have.”

He said the goal is for them to be able to produce and sell an existing product or create a new product that can be sold at a pop-up business or the soon-to-be-open Small Business Incubator next door to the GIN.

Allison Hestand, director of economic development for Paragould, said the incubator, which will be known as theHUB, is nearing completion and will give entrepreneurs the opportunity to get a taste of operating their own retail space.

“By providing micro-retail units with low overhead (low rent and short lease terms) in the heart of Downtown Paragould, theHUB aims to be a catalyst for small retail growth in the Paragould area,” Allison said. Applications for theHUB are expected to open this month with leases anticipated to start on March 1.

Gaylon Tate, president of Tate General Contractors, which oversaw construction of The Gin, along with several other community projects in Paragould, said he has enjoyed building a relationship with the city and seeing the results that come from the cooperation between the city and other entities.

“It seems like everybody in Paragould is working for the good of the city,” he said. “We have been a big part of the progress the last five years, so it makes us proud that we’ve done so much for the city.”

Teresa Branch, workforce development director at The GIN, said in addition to the makerspace and providing workforce training, the GIN also partners with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center to do business consulting monthly in Paragould.

The ASBTDC, based at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, offers a variety of resources for new and existing businesses to help entrepreneurs start, run or grow their business. They are most known for the one-on-one consultation, offered at locations throughout the region, at no charge.

Laura Miller, director of the center, said being a small business consultant is a very rewarding job. “I get to go to work each day and

help entrepreneurs and small business owners fulfill their dreams,” Laura said. “Helping them reach milestones, such as getting their ideas out of their head and onto paper, navigating the start-up process, hiring their first employee, holding a grand opening, making their first sale, expanding their business, are all exciting accomplishments.”

Laura said she believes one of the most important resources ASBTDC provides is market research. “We have access to relevant market and industry information that our clients don’t have access to or would not be able to afford,” Laura said. “I think that the most important service that we provide is educating small business owners and entrepreneurs how to make the best decisions for their business now and going forward. Our services are confidential and offered at no charge so ultimately all decisions are made by our clients.”

The ASBTDC is located at the Delta Center for Economic Development, which also offers a variety of resources, according to executive director Andrea Allen.

“The best resources the Delta Center offers are the expertise and applications available across campus at Arkansas State University,” Andrea said. “We specialize in connecting the resources of the university to the region. This includes services from the Small Business Technology Development Center, located at the Delta Center, as well as Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions and A-State Innovate programs. Additionally, the Delta Center works to cultivate relationships with state and federal officials to ensure those resources are shared with inventors and entrepreneurs.”

Partnerships, collaboration and innovation are hallmarks of the Delta Center’s work, according to Andrea. A key initiative is A-State Innovate, which was started in 2017 through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to help move ideas from conception to the marketplace through proto-type assistance and connecting inventors to business resources. “A-State Innovate has three locations: the Garage, a makerspace located on campus, the Lab, located at the Arkansas Bioscience Institute at A-State, and the Shop, located at the Workforce Training Consortium facility in Jonesboro’s industrial park,” she said.

Andrea said it is rewarding to help startups and small business. “Supporting local businesses creates a sense of community and connection,” she said. “Local businesses also add unique character to a community, create jobs, and keep money circulating within the area, elevating the entire city, region and state.”



John Clark
Makerspace Administrator, The GIN

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February 27th

The 2025 Northeast Arkansas Be Pro Be Proud Draft Day will be held Thursday, February 27th, at Nettleton High School in Jonesboro.

Be Pro Be Proud is a workforce development initiative led by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas.

The Draft Day provides career exploration and interview opportunities to high school students by matching their interests and skill sets with relevant career options.

To find out more information about the 2025 Draft Day Series and how to be involved, visit AR.BeProBeProud.org.

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Make Prom Unforgettable

Prom is a time to celebrate life with friends while dressed your best. You deserve to have this time in your life be perfect; after all, you only get so many chances to go to prom.

From promposals and dresses to flowers and limos, prom can involve a lot of planning. Your first step may be deciding who you want your date to be and how you will ask them. Often, promposals include various thoughtful elements like posters, candles and of course, flowers! Hayley Turner, designer at Bearded Bouquet, said adding your date's favorite color of flowers into your promposal can help sweeten the moment.

This year, Hayley expects the prom trend of little hand wrapped bouquets of flowers she calls "prom posies" to continue. She also noticed that while boutonnières are pretty standard, there are little pocket square versions emerging that may be the next trend.

Once you have your date secured, or have decided to go solo, it's time to decide on your outfit. There are many questions that go into this process, but it does not have to be intimidating.

Kaitlyn Dewberry of Emma & Kait's recommends you begin looking

at least two to three months in advance and come to the shops with inspiration. This gives you plenty of time to consider which accessories like sparkling jewelry, statement clutches and shoes pair the best with your outfit.

Kaitlyn also said it is important to stay true to your own style when shopping for your perfect prom look.

"Whether it's a classic, bold or boho look, make sure your dress reflects your personality and makes you feel confident," Kaitlyn said.

Jessica Southard of Jessica's said she has noticed prom trends involving certain styles and prints and the color green.

"We're doing a lot of floral prints this year," she said. "They are back into ball gowns a little bit more, although we are still selling a lot of straight. Ballgowns had sort of taken a back seat, but they are becoming more popular again this year."

No matter what colors, styles or cuts you are into, shop early with inspiration and find the perfect outfit and flowers to make your prom an unforgettable experience.



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MOORE on MANNERS



To help the wedding run smoothly and be a great wedding guest do the following:

PLEASE RESPOND: If you receive a wedding invitation and a response is requested, please do so. The bride needs to know how many people will be attending the wedding and the reception. Space for the wedding and food for the reception are often based on a head count. It makes it much more difficult for the bride and groom to plan their “big day” when they don’t know the number of people who will be attending.

READ YOUR INVITATION: Check your wedding invitation to see how it is addressed. The invitation will be addressed to the people who are invited. Bringing extra guests may

place the bride in an awkward situation. Space limitations and budget considerations will often dictate the number of guests that are invited.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY: If you’re unsure as to what to wear, check the invitation for the following information: (1.) The type of ceremony; (2.) The location of the ceremony; (3.) The time of the ceremony. If you’re uncertain as to what to wear to the wedding, don’t hesitate to ask the host. If the bride and groom have a wedding website, this type of information is often listed.

CHECK THE WEDDING WEBSITE: Find out if the bride and groom have a website. A wedding website is a great way keep guests informed of wedding plans. A couple’s website will usually post dates, directions, RSVP’s, gift registries, events, dress, updates and photos.

ARRIVE ON TIME: When the service begins, the bride should be walking down the aisle, not you. If you are late, try to wait until the bride has walked down the aisle. Then you can quietly walk down an outside aisle and find a seat. Usually finding a seat in the back of the church or in the balcony is the least disruptive.

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE: Check to

make sure your cell phone is either turned off, or turned to the silent mode, during the ceremony. The only people speaking during the ceremony should be those in the wedding party.

RESPECT THE WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER: If a wedding photographer has been hired to take pictures of the wedding ceremony, let them do their job. Getting out of your seat and trying to take your own photographs can be distracting during the service.

VISIT AT THE RECEPTION: The wedding reception is the perfect place to visit with the bride and groom, members of the wedding party and other guests. Be aware, however, that the couple will want to visit with others, so try not to monopolize their time. And before you leave the reception don’t forget to thank your host for inviting you!

Quote of the Day:

“May your wedding day be a time to celebrate all the richness love has brought into your lives.”

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 lmooreparagould@gmail.com.

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PLANNING *Your Wedding*

If you are planning a wedding for the near future, you may wonder where to start. After some research we found that step one can vary, but often centers around deciding when and where you want to exchange your vows.

If you know you want to be married on a specific date you may want to start by finding a venue that is available. Spring and fall are high volume seasons, and you may need to book as much as a year ahead. Venue choices vary depending on if you have the ceremony and reception at the same location or opt for an off-site reception after a church ceremony. The logistics of guests getting from one location to the other could affect your choices, according to Greg Vance owner of Harmony Gardens in Jonesboro.

"With the size of our venue, we are always pro having the wedding ceremony and reception both onsite," Greg said. "By having both the ceremony and reception at the same venue you're ensuring a smooth transition through all the events. Having separate venues often ensues chaos as guests show up to the wrong venue first, get lost moving from the ceremony to reception venue, or simply choose to not attend the reception after the ceremony."

In addition, your choice might be based on geographic area or your dream wedding "vibe." Whether you are looking for a rustic or chic

feel, an indoor or outdoor space or how many guests you intend to invite, all play a role as well.

Greg suggests making a list of non-negotiables that you want your venue to have. "Another important thing to consider is guest count," he said. "There are countless venues in our area, but not all are created equal as far as amenities and space. Not only space for all of your guests to enjoy the reception, but space for your favorite people to get ready with you that morning."

Advancements in portable toilets make remote venues more viable options, according to Randy Hedge with Hedge's Portable Toilets. "Our trailers offer the ability to keep your guests comfortable with luxury portable restrooms that feature running water, electricity and heating and air conditioning," he said.

Once the date and venue are determined, consider setting a meeting with a printer to plan your "Save the Date" and formal invitations, as well as set the design for programs and other materials. Becky Hatosy, owner of PostNet, points out that using a local printer can help you customize the details to match your style.

"We recommend a look that reflects the personality of the bride and groom," Becky said. "Don't go overly elegant if you are a rustic person

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... or don't go too formal just to make someone else happy. It is your day. Choose what fits you."

She said meeting with a printer can help guarantee you get what you want. "Designs are not restricted to preset templates," Becky said. "Colors, photos, fonts can all be changed to fit what you want. If you order from a website online ... you are not always going to get what you see on the screen. Color variances happen, sizes look different on a screen than in print. 'Personal' can definitely be a game changer in having less stress for your important day!"

Many brides are most excited about the dress, so that might be your first step. The style of the dress may set the stage for your choice of venue. There are no wrong choices as to where you start planning, but think of each step as a building block. What is the most important thing to you?

When shopping for your dress, Jessica Southard of Jessica's Bridal and Formal advises brides to come six to nine months in advance and carefully consider what you are looking for and who you want there with you.

"I would not bring more than two to three people with me, because you are the bride and you need to do what you want to do as a bride. You need to be able to focus on what dress makes you happy." Jessica said it is also important for brides to consider what they want in a dress. She said the theme does not have to dictate which dress you choose.

"Purchase the dress that you dream about, no matter what the theme is," Jessica said. "We've sold a dress with a cathedral train for a beach wedding. I feel like the bride should get the dress of her dreams because she is the main focus. Even if everyone else is wearing blue jeans, she should be able to wear what she wants."

Kaitlyn Dewberry of Emma & Kait's Bridal and Formal Boutique said drop waists are back for the 2025 wedding season. "The basque waist is one of our most popular styles for this year," she said. "Corsets, bows and sleek satin gowns will be all the rage in 2025."

The style of the dress and the venue selection may help determine the choices for flowers, or perhaps the flowers might help set the tone. Hayley Turner, designer with Bearded Bouquet, suggests using flowers to accentuate your wedding and add a nice finishing touch. She said she and other designers use flowers to capture the personalities of the bride and groom.

"We can go with the trends, but we like to see 'what colors do you like? What flowers do you like?' so that it's more personal and tailored to them so that it can feel comfortable and feel like their wedding day," Hayley said.

An important aspect of wedding planning that may get overlooked is registering for gifts, but many stores, such as Everyday Chef, still offer local registries. Choosing what you need for your home can prevent receiving duplicate gifts or unneeded items. Instead, your guests can pick from a list of items they know you will love.

Next on the list is food! If you are a sweets fan the cake might be first on your list. Tracy Mothershed, owner of Something Sweet, said she typically suggests that couples start planning the wedding cake at least 6 months out, especially if the wedding is during the peak season.

Continued ➔



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"This gives plenty of time to secure the date, determine the number of guests for serving sizes, and work out all the details of the design," Tracy said. "We are here to ensure a beautiful cake that is also delicious and memorable for the newlyweds."

Tracy said she understands that not everyone likes cake and there are some wonderful options to serve to accompany the cake or as an alternative to cake.

"We have cookie cakes - stacked layers of your favorite cookie such as chocolate chunk or peanut butter can be fun; brownies - I mean who doesn't love brownies; cheesecakes - rich, decadent with a variety of toppings or add ins; cupcakes - not quite the same as a cake and you can get multiple flavors; or a dessert bar - can't choose - go for a little bit of everything!"

Michael Tolson, owner of CHOW, offered these suggestions when making catering decisions. "We can start with a budget and how many guests you expect, or you can choose a menu and we can determine the cost whether you choose a full plated sit-down meal or finger foods."

Sandy Morales, owner of Sandy's Bakery and Catering, said communication is key. "I

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always tell my customers that I can try to make anything and everything that they are looking for whether it's their favorite food or something that I have made them a long time ago that I haven't yet made for my events yet. I definitely like to work with my clients to try and get them to choose what they would prefer rather than have them choose from a set menu."

Sandy said the most important factor to consider is budget. "Clients might not be able to get everything they were wanting depending on how much they were wanting to spend per person," Sandy said. "With the food costs getting higher and higher every day, it can be harder for people to get everything they were wanting for the price that they had available."

She also recommends giving your catering service ample time to prepare for your event so they can let you know of any issues ahead of time.

Add in shopping for rings, and the list of tasks and the different choices can be overwhelming. Sometimes items can be combined, such as if the venue also offers catering services, or there are certainly options to hire a wedding coordinator who manages all the tasks for you.

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AMMC Foundation

Heartbeat of Healthcare

The Arkansas Methodist Medical Center Foundation in Paragould is looking back on a successful 2024 and looking forward to plans to continue its impact in 2025.

“The Arkansas Methodist Medical Center Foundation is the heartbeat of local healthcare,” Tori Thompson, director of the Foundation, said. “All donations given to the Foundation go directly to improve programs and services at AMMC. As healthcare continues to change and grow more competitive, the Foundation works to keep funding available and ensure we have the best resources right here in our community.”

Last year, the Foundation made a \$1.9 million investment in programs and services to improve healthcare at AMMC. This donation is one of the largest in AMMC’s history! In 2024, the Foundation provided a new ambulance, balloon pumps for the Cath Lab, portable nursing



computer carts, medical scales, hearing screening machine for infants, a cryosurgical gun, oxygen analyzer and a hematology analyzer.

“The Foundation received the largest grant ever awarded to AMMC for a new MRI,” Tori said. “The MRI will be the most up-to-date in our area and will provide faster, more accurate scans. A grant was also received to provide a Music Therapy program for Chateau on the Ridge residents and AMMC Inpatient Rehab patients.”

In 2025, the Foundation is hosting several events that need community support, including:

- AMMC Foundation Pageant, February 8, GCT High School
- AMMC 75th Anniversary Celebration, April 5, The Station at Power Plant Park
- AMMC Foundation Golf Tournament, September 11, Paragould Country Club

If you would like to purchase event tickets, be an event sponsor, make a donation in memory or honor of a loved one or discuss ways to support AMMC, please call 870-239-7077 or email foundation@arkansasmethodist.org. Your support provides the continued heartbeat of local healthcare.



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Officers

Attorney General Tim Griffin hosted the 2024 Officer of the Year Awards Luncheon on December 12th to honor law enforcement officers from across Arkansas, including Arkansas Officer of the Year Chief Deputy John Cutrell of the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, five regional winners and officers of the year for each county.

At the conclusion of the event, Griffin issued the following statement: "Each year we honor the service, sacrifice and dedication of Arkansas's law enforcement with the Officer of the Year Awards. The men and women we've recognized today have shown outstanding courage and commitment to their communities in the past year. As we celebrate the ways they have gone above and beyond to keep Arkansans safe, we honor not just these few, but all law enforcement officers."

Corporal Marcus Simpson with the Arkansas State Police was named Officer of the Year for the Northeast Region. He was also the county winner for Jackson County.

Other County Officers of the Year in Northeast Arkansas include:

Clay County: Trooper Christian Underwood, Arkansas State Police

Craighead County: Special Agent Heath Gurley, Arkansas State Police

Greene County: Corporal Stephen Pace, Paragould Police Department

Lawrence County: Deputy Jason Fraser, Lawrence County Sheriff's Office

Mississippi County: Sergeant Jared Camp, Manila Police Department

Poinsett County: Lieutenant Jay-Ryan Woods, Poinsett County Sheriff's Office

Randolph County: School Resource Officer Felipe Baiza, Maynard School District

"As the top law enforcement officer in the state, I am committed to supporting and working with Arkansas's law enforcement community to ensure they can continue to protect and serve our citizens at the highest levels of excellence and professionalism," Griffin said.

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Snow Day

PHOTOS SHARED

Snowmen, sleds and snuggles were the order of the day when snow blanketed Northeast Arkansas on January 10th and 11th.

Premiere Magazine put out a call for photos on our Facebook page and you did not disappoint! We had hundreds of submissions, a sampling of which we are sharing here.

To see all the submitted photos visit our Facebook page.



SUBMITTED BY JULIE RICH



SUBMITTED BY CHANDLER WEBER



SUBMITTED BY ERIN HOLLAND



SUBMITTED BY JORDAN LAMB



SUBMITTED BY TAYLOR SMITH



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- 2/3 - Monday at 7:00pm, Greene County Spelling Bee Free Admission
- 2/8 - Saturday at 7:00pm, Chad Garrett and Friends \$15 at the door
- 2/15 - Saturday at 7:00pm, Zaden J - Elvis Impersonator
- 2/21-23 - Friday & Saturday at 7:00pm, Saturday & Sunday at 2:00pm, "You Can't Take it With You" Presented by: Act II Performing Arts | Act2performingarts.org
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DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD EVENTS



February 3rd

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February 8th

4-8:00 p.m.

Moonlight Madness
Participating Downtown Merchants
Main Street Paragould Event



February 8th

7:00 p.m.

Chad Garrett and Friends
Downtown Collins Theatre

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



February 13th

6:00 p.m.

Singo Bingo
Skinny J's
Main Street Paragould Event



February 15th

7:00 p.m.

Zaden J - Elvis Impersonator
Downtown Collins Theatre



February 24th

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Bluegrass Monday
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FEBRUARY 2025

Teaching Taxidermy

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When it comes to finding a way to get some students more interested in his art class, Riverside High School's Daniel Eakins has the right stuff. Literally.

Discovering long ago that many of his high school kids shared his love of the outdoors he incorporated some of that into artwork projects – he is himself a wildlife artist -- while at the same time offering to guide those who wanted to learn the basics of taxidermy through the process, a hobby he picked up years ago himself. "I usually have a young bunch of duck hunters in class," Daniel said. "I'm a graduate of Riverside, I grew up in the woods, hunting stuff, so I can relate. But I could not afford to have something mounted when I was young. That's how I got into taxidermy, myself."

He had an acquaintance who knew a lot about the craft and from there "when I got old enough I had a friend help me and I watched YouTube and got good enough to teach it to people. One year I had a group I couldn't connect to but when we started taxidermy they were interested because, just like me, they couldn't afford \$300 to mount their duck. When I show them how to do it, it's about \$40. They always

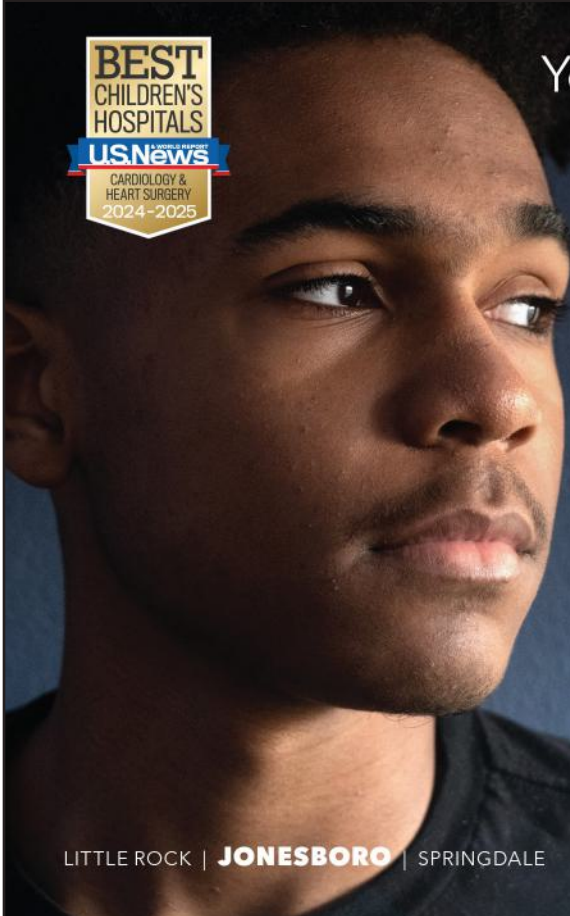


see the price, so more boys got into it."

According to industry figures, the approximate cost of professionally mounting various forms of wildlife looks like this:

- Duck: \$250 or more
- Canada geese: Up to \$600
- Smaller common gamebird species like dove: \$300 to \$600
- Pheasants: \$600
- Grouse: \$600

An athlete during his teen years, Daniel said baseball "was a fun game and came naturally but I loved the outdoors, hunting and fishing. In the woods, I can calm down. I loved it, and art is a way to stay connected. Art was never a boy-girl thing for me. But in college lots of times I would be the only guy in a class. There was this stereotype




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of art not being manly. So I try to make my classes interesting to both boys and girls. Art is natural ability and confidence.

"I liked art and painting ... and in teaching it I was looking for something to give kids a reason to be here. This kind of helped change the attitude about taking art. It's not an easy A, but it shouldn't be stressful, either; they should enjoy it. Helping with the taxidermy gets more people involved."

Daniel is not allowed to perform the various steps for a student, since the Migratory Bird Act demands one be licensed to perform the operation "unless it's for yourself. I can't actually mount it for them, but I can guide them through the process. I can tighten the stitches. The boys, especially, have shown a real interest.

"Girls like to do more fashion painting, as a rule, and girls seem more natural at art. Some girls really take to the taxidermy, though, and like to make the duck look pretty. It's something they can do. Some years I have to find something else because this isn't interesting to anyone."

Daniel provides the forms needed to shape the body of the animal and the students then go through the required steps to use borax as a preservative, posing the animal in the manner they prefer, then using stitches and wire supports to produce the desired effect.

"Lots of times seeing a painting or picture helps them decide how they want their duck to look," he said, "like if they want it to be flying or not. With the advanced class, they bring ideas and I help them bring them to life. We've done a pheasant. We've done trout and bass before. And we've made duck calls. Kids love making their own duck calls and tuning them. I still have former students contact me and show me their work or ask questions. It's gone over real well."

Daniel has been at Riverside for 14 of his 16 years of teaching and said he takes pride in not only the finished products his students manufacture but also in the fact that art class is now more popular on campus. "Classes range from 12 to 27 students, depending on if it's advanced or not," he said, "and we do a lot of nice work. The kids take pride in it, and that's what matters."



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AP Honor Roll

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

PARAGOULD PROGRAM GROWING, IMPACTING STUDENTS

Paragould High School has been focusing on developing its AP Program and received word in the fall that the hard work has paid off. For the first time ever, PHS achieved AP Honor Roll status.

Sarah Cooper, who is in her third year as AP coordinator for the Paragould School District, said the honor roll is designed to recognize districts whose AP programs are delivering results and broadening access for students.

After receiving bronze in 2024, Sarah said they are aiming for silver now. "When I started we had 10 AP classes, now we have 15. Every year

I try to add at least one," she said. "Every year I've been in it, it's grown and grown."

For students like PHS senior Sam Hooten, the AP Program gives them a chance to push themselves a little harder than regular classes.

"It's given me a great opportunity to challenge myself, which I feel like I've learned a lot from. I would definitely recommend it," Sam said, noting that it allows the students to learn more in a better classroom environment. "Instead of a classroom full of students who don't want to learn, you have a smaller class size and students who want to learn."

Sarah said the focus is on providing the best opportunities to both the students and the teachers. "We want our students to walk away from any AP course and say they were challenged and will be able to take what they learned and put it to good use for their future education and career."

Schools can earn the Honor Roll recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing their school's college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness. Paragould High School was the only Northeast Arkansas

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School listed on the 2024 Honor Roll.

PHS had 41 percent of the 2024 seniors who took at least one AP Exam during high school (Bronze), 25 percent of the 2024 seniors scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam (Bronze), and 13 percent of seniors took five or more AP Exams (Gold). PHS was awarded at the Bronze Level overall on the AP School Honor Roll.

Throughout his high school career, Sam will have completed seven AP classes, two of which he is taking this year. In addition to providing an opportunity to get some college credit early, Sam said the AP courses also helped improve his college entrance exam scores.

"The scores on tests range from one to five, and a three is qualifying," Sam said. "I have scored a three on three tests and a four on two of them." While he still has this year's courses to complete, he has already received the designation of Distinguished AP Scholar, the highest honor the AP College Board awards, having tested out on all five of his previous classes. "I knew college was going to be a part of my future, so why not finish off quite a bit of it? Even if you don't take the class concurrently, if you qualify you will get the college credit."

There is also a financial reward for PHS students who qualify on their AP exams. "In September, I got \$400 because I passed four tests," Sam said. "The year before I got \$100."

PHS gave away \$18,500 in AP scholarships to students who qualified on their 2024 AP exams. The school had its best year to date with 185 qualifying scores and 104 students in grades 10-12 who qualified on one or more of their exams.

"That is a 65 percent qualifying rate," Sarah said. "There were 46 2024 seniors with 80 qualifying exams, 37 juniors with 81 qualifying exams, and 21 sophomores with 24 qualifying exams."

Six students earned the title of Distinguished AP Scholar through AP College Board for scoring a 3 or higher on at least five AP exams and having an average of a 3.5 qualifying score. Ten students earned the title of AP Scholar with Honors for scoring a 3 or higher on at least four AP exams and having an average of 3.25 qualifying score. Twenty-four students have earned the title of AP Scholar for scoring a 3 or higher on three AP exams. In addition, five 2024 PHS graduates earned the title of Distinguished Scholar and 16 earned the title of Merit Scholars through the new Arkansas graduation qualifications.



"Our scores were at or above state qualifying percentages for AP scores and we reached several national qualifying percentages," Sarah said. "PHS increased our qualifying AP score percentages from 43 percent in 2022, to 52 percent in 2023 to 65 percent in 2024."

Awards were presented during an AP Ceremony hosted by the school. Sam spoke at the ceremony, along with AP teacher Coach Jacob Giles and 2024 PHS graduate Shelby Hilligoss.

Sarah said in addition to providing

professional development for the AP teachers, the district also sends them to extra training and special conferences. She said all of this is to ensure they are teaching at a differentiated level.

"As the AP coordinator, my goal is to help the teachers and support the students. We have AP Saturdays with mock exams. We also have free online tools that we pay for and offer to the students at no cost," she said. "The teachers we have want to see the program grow, and the students who take these classes want good classes and want to learn."

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BY SHELBY RUSSOM

The Greene County 4-H program volunteers are preserving the art of sewing one stitch at a time. Eight years ago, 4-H volunteer Mindy Tritch noticed something her daughter loved was missing from the program's numerous clubs and activities. Inspired by her daughter's creative interests and supported by 4-H volunteers, Mindy revived the Sewing Group, which now has 16 active members.

The group meets six to eight times a year to complete projects like knitting, sewing, crocheting and more. However, the Sewing Group is more than just fiber arts. Members also complete community projects, bond with one another, and even create items to brighten people's lives. Mindy's daughter, Reesie, said the first project she can remember was making sock puppets for hospitalized children.

"I have just loved getting to do community service throughout it (her time in the club) and getting to hang out with friends and teaching kids how to sew," she said.

The group has completed projects like bowl koozies paired with soup for the food pantry and even scarves for the local coat tree. Karie Belle, a member of the group, said her favorite project was making and praying over a quilt for a friend with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Reesie said she also cherishes this project.

"It was just so sweet to watch everybody bring in all of those skills and talents," Reesie said. "It didn't look perfect, but the thought behind it was. Everybody worked together to help somebody."

4-H also offers a bit of healthy competition to encourage its members to showcase their work and talents. The competition, known as the 4-H O-Rama, consists of 40 competitive events showcasing the work of all of the project-based groups within 4-H. The members said they are thankful for the opportunity to enter their work into competitions, which range from the local to national level.



Recently, the Sewing Group has become a place of bonding. Many members bring their parents and grandparents to meetings to sew together, involving those who taught them to sew in their latest creative endeavors. Luz, a club member, said her family sparked her interest in sewing, and she wants to be like them.

"My nana and sister sew, and they're really good at it," she said. "I want to be as good as them someday."

The members said the Sewing Group is much more than a club. They said they love what it represents and how close it has brought everyone together.

"It's definitely a family," Reesie said. "If someone is going through something, we'll make them a quilt or something like that for them, and it's so much fun."

Mindy said she deeply values the Greene County 4-H as a whole. She said she is thankful to be a part of this program and looks forward to everything they will accomplish together.

"My favorite part of being in 4-H is the mission work we get to do," Mindy said. "Every single club, every single meeting, we have one aspect, every month, of missions and how we're going to serve and make the community better."

Kristie Head, volunteer leader, said she encourages everyone to join 4-H because it is a welcoming, low-stakes way to get involved in the community and even find new passions.

"4-H is open to anyone ages five to 19," Kristie said. "You don't have to make the team, you don't have to pay your dues, you don't even have to show up every time."



4-H is a free program dedicated to providing opportunities for children to learn and discover passions that help them find their place in the community. The program is open to ideas for community projects, new project groups and volunteers. Those looking to sign up can find information on the Greene County 4-H website.



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TEACHING TRADITIONS TO CHILDREN HAS TIMELESS BENEFITS FOR ALL

SUBMITTED BY DR. DANA BEVILL WATSON
LICENSED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST, FAMILIES, INC.

In today's fast-paced world, where technology and efficiency dominate, preserving traditional skills like sewing, canning, leatherworking, woodworking and gardening is more important than ever. These time-honored practices, passed down through generations, offer invaluable benefits to both children and elders. The face-to-face time spent together, focused on hands-on activities, strengthens relationships, enhances emotional well-being, and fosters a deep sense of competence and value for both generations. These shared experiences create a meaningful space for connection and important conversations that deepen intergenerational bonds.

For children, the undivided attention of an older, trusted family member boosts their self-esteem and helps them feel important. Elders, in turn, experience fulfillment and a sense of purpose when they see their knowledge being passed down. These moments contribute to the mental health of both generations, as they feel valued and emotionally connected. For elders, teaching combats feelings of loneliness or isolation, while children gain wisdom and perspective that only an elder can provide.

Learning traditional skills offers children more than just enjoyment — it provides a sense of mastery and accomplishment. Tasks like sewing, cooking, and gardening allow children to see the results of their efforts, building self-confidence and competence. In a world where many children lack opportunities to create with their hands, these skills are increasingly valuable. Additionally, learning from an elder provides emotional

support, deepening children's understanding of their family's history and values and fostering resilience in the face of challenges.

For elders, teaching these skills promotes a sense of competence and value. In a society where older individuals are often sidelined, being a teacher reaffirms their expertise and vital role within the family and community. Teaching brings a sense of accomplishment, knowing they are leaving behind a lasting legacy. It also keeps elders mentally engaged, which is crucial for cognitive health.

For families like ours, who may not have deep-rooted creative generational skills, similar benefits can still be found in the quality time spent together. While we may not have inherited specific crafts or artistic traditions, the simple act of being present for one another helps build emotional bonds. When elders attend activities and events with younger family members, enjoy games, movies, crafts, or travel, it cultivates a sense of attachment and mutual respect. Shared experiences provide opportunities for connection and reinforce love and support.

For families separated by distance, maintaining connections is even more important. Technology makes it easier to bridge the gap with phone calls, letters, and video chats, allowing family members to share stories, exchange updates, and make memories in real-time. These interactions ensure that distant relationships remain strong, and children can continue to learn from the wisdom of their elders. Whether through physical presence or virtual connections, the key lies in the quality of interaction — spending time together, sharing moments, and building a foundation of love and support.



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Getting it

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

While society has rapidly embraced the computer age, one thing the keyboard has a hard time providing is a means for writing one's official signature. Before the advent of smartphones, texting and computers, cursive writing was the way to go, dating back to the time of the Romans.

With people typing more rather than writing, cursive has been falling by the wayside for quite some time, but a group of Marmaduke High School seniors asked for a crash course in penmanship in order to be able to sign documents appropriately. "Probably early in the school year they talked about wanting to learn how," said Kelly Clayton, who along with Mike Cook serves as a Senior Class Sponsor. "They wanted to know how to sign their names for resumes and job applications. One said, 'You probably should teach us to write in cursive,' so I printed off some elementary worksheets and we went from there."

In 2010, the newly-formed Common Core State Standards for English initiative did not include cursive handwriting instruction. The following year, 41 states adopted the Common Core standards and removed the requirement for cursive instruction in the respective state curriculum, most adopting keyboarding as an alternative. Since 2016, several states have reintroduced cursive writing into their curriculum but some



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students, like those in Marmaduke's senior class, missed out on the basics.

Bailey Hendrix was one such student, doing "pretty much everything on the computer. We talked about needing to sign checks, write important letters, pay bills ... things like that. We thought it was a good idea to bring it back. It wasn't real hard for me, like writing my name, but for some it was hard. I really liked it and was determined to learn it. I practiced a lot, got my name down. I hadn't seen it much until now."

Kelly said instruction took place during MHS' class period known as Senior Seminar, something new to the school this year. "It is kind of the brainchild of Mr. Robinson and Mrs. Church," she explained. "We go over things seniors need to know before they hit the real world. We have no Home Room this year, so we meet with the seniors every day. We've had so many more speakers, like college representatives, some from the military, local businesses. This way we don't have to pull them from a class period; we schedule it for this period."

Not all of the seniors are in the class but Kelly takes 19 in one room and Mike takes 19 more in another and they work on the much-needed life skills. "We ask them to write a reflection every week of what we did or what they learned and when we started working on writing Carson Robinson said, 'I was one who suggested we learn to write cursive. I had no idea how terrible I would be at it.' But they knew they needed it to have a legal signature. There were some who didn't like it but I saw improvement. Most of them know they are going to need it sometime."

Kelly said some students struggled, but most eventually figured out a way to pen a legitimate signature. "Someone said, 'I can't make a G' and I told them to develop their own style, find a way to make it easier. That's what most of us do anyway. I was proud of them for trying and a lot of them got pretty good at it."

Bailey said she found the instruction to be important, yet fun at the same time. "They asked all of us in the senior class if we were interested," she said, "and you'd think it would be easy, but when we tried it there were some laughs. I know I will use it. I'm glad we did it."

LEARNING LIFE SKILLS

in Gymnastics

Parents looking for programs that help their children develop mentally, physically and socially should consider enrolling them in gymnastics, says Bill Grogan, owner of Champions Gymnastics in Paragould.

Among the skills Champions lists that gymnastics can help your child with are:

- develop better balance,
- improve coordination,
- improve body-spatial awareness,
- develop better hand-eye coordination,
- improve ability to grip objects,
- build full body strength,
- become more courageous,
- gain better control of body movements,
- improve listening skills,
- learn to work and think independently,
- learn to take turns and encourage others,
- learn perseverance,
- improve interaction with peers,
- become more focused,
- gain self-confidence,
- develop a positive attitude!

"Gymnastics is much more than a sport," Bill said. "Give your child access to a fun and safe way to build, improve and develop skills that will last a lifetime!"



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'OLD' GAMES CAN TEACH NEW SKILLS

BY JILL STEWART
STEWART PEDIATRIC THERAPY

When was the last time you played a game of jacks, or even better ... when was the last time your child played a game of jacks? Many of the games of the past worked on skills that kids or parents were not even aware of. The games were just fun and a way to pass the time.

However, with a decline in skill sets in many kids today, we can look to the past to see what has changed. Not only can we see that some of the old games have been phased out over the years, but we also see a huge change in what has taken the place of some of these classic games – electronic screens. Some of the classic games include marbles, hopscotch and jump rope. All of these games work on coordination, turn-taking, visual motor skills, counting and fine/gross motor strength.

Not only do games such as these provide fun and work on important skills, they are also a great source of social interaction. While you wait on your turn, you might talk to your opponent about things that have happened, or some dreams you have or maybe even a problem that needs working out. Sometimes, in life, we need to slow down and play a game of jacks, have some fun and work out a problem.

When was the last time you enjoyed food sitting at the table with your family? When I was growing up, we always had a family dinner time. It was an important part of our day. We listened and were listened to and grew closer together. Breakfast and lunch were also eaten at the table.



Like jacks and our old-fashioned games, not eating dinner together is also a lost time of social interaction. Several skills are learned by children when eating at a family dinner table. First of all, enjoying your food is much easier while sitting down without distraction. Your little one might also pick up ideas of trying new foods while watching you or older siblings eating foods they haven't wanted to try yet. Also, eating at a table helps you be more mindful of what and how much you are eating and helps little ones learn fine motor skills and visual motor skills.

Time goes quickly and slowing down is hard, but so many life skills are learned when little ones (and big people, too) slow down, spend time with loved ones, and cut out distractions. We encourage you to slow down this month, learn a new (old) game, find out something new about your family members and choose to enjoy eating at the table together.

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Bridging the generation gap

Student hosts drive for senior citizens

BY SHELBY RUSSOM

Recently, Molly Baker-Huynh noticed just how much the B.E.E.S. Senior Center does for the community, without expecting anything in return.

Determined to show them her support, the ninth-grader at Greene County Tech organized a canned food drive. In just one and a half weeks, she raised over 500 cans – an impressive feat that B.E.E.S. Center executive director Carol Fleszar said did not go unnoticed.

“It was wonderful,” Carol said. “They collected so many cans, and I was blown away.” Carol said this was the first time since she began working at the B.E.E.S. Center that it had been the recipient of a food drive instead of being the donor.

Beginning on December 9 and ending on December 17, the drive provided the center's members with food for their Christmas dinners, something they expressed their thanks for.

Fourteen-year-old Molly said as student council president, she is expected to do things for the school, like pick out dance themes, but she wanted to think outside of the box and create something that would truly have a positive impact on the community.

“I started thinking about food drives,” Molly said. “And then I thought about how the Senior B.E.E.S. never really get anything, so I thought I should help them.”

Creating the food drive on her own was a challenge. Molly helped make announcements at school, organized which classes would collect cans and even gathered all the donations herself. This work is something her mother, Rachel Baker, said she is proud of her for.

The drive’s success helped prove to the senior B.E.E.S. that Molly and others her age notice them despite stereotypes about the younger generation.

“It means that the younger generation cares about us,” Senior B.E.E. Mo Carlson said. “To go through all of that effort to give us a little extra food – it touched my heart.”

Senior B.E.E.S. Lea Hall and Bill Ring also expressed gratitude and appreciation for Molly’s effort and were impressed by her young age. “She did a fantastic job,” Lee said. “I think it’s so wonderful that young people care about the old people.”

Molly plans to continue helping around her hometown and hopes her actions inspire others of all ages to find ways to help in their communities.



Bill Ring, Lea Hall, Molly Baker-Huynh, Mo Carlson

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First Babies of the New Year



Rakai

Rakai Xzavier Coleman was born at St. Bernards Medical Center in Jonesboro on New Year's Day at 11:10 a.m. His parents are Kyra Coleman and Rataivon Walls, and all are doing well. Rakai is the first baby born during St. Bernards' yearlong 125th anniversary celebration!



Harden

Harden Ryker Eppes was born on New Year's Day at 1:41 p.m. at NEA Baptist Memorial Hospital in Jonesboro. His parents are Devon Eppes and Aaliyah Stanfill of Hoxie. Harden is a healthy baby boy weighing in at 8 lbs and 21 inches long! Welcome to the world, little one.



Oliver

Oliver Franklin Faxon was born on New Year's Day at 2:41 p.m. at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould. Oliver came into the world weighing 7 pounds, 12 ounces and measuring 20 inches long, bringing joy to his proud parents, Paige Franklin and Jeremy Faxon.



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Upcoming Events in NEA



Imagination Unleashed

February 14th-23rd

A-State Theatre will present Imagination Unleashed February 14, 15, 21 and 22 at 7:30 p.m. and February 16 and 23 at 2:30 p.m.

The production, which is a collaboration of the Devised Theatre Class, will be presented in the Simpson Theatre of the Fowler Center on the campus of Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

Students will collaborate to create a devised theatre piece inspired by personal experiences and societal themes.



GCFAC Gala

February 15th

The Greene County Fine Arts Council will host its first Broadway Nights Gala on Saturday, February 15th, at 6:30 p.m.

The event, which will be held at The Barn at Locust Creek, 922 Greene 517 Road, in Paragould, is black tie optional and will feature a silent auction, red carpet welcome, Broadway trivia and GCFAC Production Stars Awards.

All local theatre participants and supporters are invited to attend. Check the Greene County Fine Arts Council Facebook page for more details.



Polar Plunge

February 15th

Dive into cold water for a cause at the Jonesboro Polar Plunge on Tuesday, February 11th, at 6 p.m. at the Jonesboro Pool Center, 1421 W. Nettleton Avenue.

Proceeds will benefit Special Olympics. Register to jump on-site the day of the plunge starting at 5 p.m. or in advance online. You can also support your favorite plunger by donating!

Plungers across the state will also have a chance to win raffle prizes, including a \$1,500 grand prize, a \$1,000 runner-up prize, a \$500 cash prize and a \$250 instant winner prize!



Red Dress Gala

February 15th

The Community Health Education Foundation will host its Red Dress Gala on Saturday, February 15th, at 6:30 p.m.

The fundraiser will be held in Centennial Hall of the Reng Student Union on the campus of Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. Tickets are \$150 or \$1,000 for a table reservation. To make reservations, call 870-931-4044.

CHEF's mission is to be a premiere non-profit health organization that annually provides health education and chronic disease programs.



Alley Cruise

February 23rd

Fast Glass Corvettes will host the 15th annual "Alley" Cruise Bowling for St. Jude on Sunday, February 23rd, at 1 p.m. at Hijinx in Jonesboro.

Four-player coed teams can register for \$160, which includes three games of bowling, equipment, a large single-topping pizza and a pitcher of soft drinks. Registration is due by February 17th. Sponsorships are also available.

For more information, contact Carol Barnhill at 870-680-0623 or email carolbarnhill57@gmail.com.



Young Artists Concert

February 23rd

The Delta Symphony Orchestra will host its Young Artist Concert on Sunday, February 23rd, at 3 p.m. at Riceland Hall in the Fowler Center on the campus of Arkansas State University. The concert features the winners of the DSO's nationwide 2025 Young Artist Competition, as well as a youth chorus from area schools.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.deltasymphonyorchestra.org. For more information, group rates and special needs accommodations, call 870-761-8254.



Pancake Breakfast

March 1st

The Jonesboro Kiwanis Club will host the 83rd annual Pop Stricklin Pancake Day on Saturday, March 1st, from 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, located at 710 Southwest Drive in Jonesboro.

A fundraiser for the organization's community projects, the event features a pancake breakfast and has been a popular and successful civic club fundraiser in Northeast Arkansas for many years.

Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$7 or at the door for \$9. Children 6 and under eat free. Visit the Jonesboro Kiwanis Club on Facebook for more information.

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HAPPENINGS

LIVING THE MISSION AWARD PRESENTED

Physicians practicing at St. Bernards Medical Center awarded Dr. Utibe Ndebbio their 2024 Living The Mission Award, an honor given to a doctor who best represents the St. Bernards mission of providing Christ-like healing.



Dr. Utibe Ndebbio

The award, announced December 9 during the hospital's annual medical staff meeting in the St. Bernards Community Room, involves a selective process that begins with nominations submitted by any of St. Bernards' 4,700-plus team members. A selection committee pares the nominees to three before more than 200 physicians vote a winner by submitting secret ballots.

Dr. Ndebbio joined St. Bernards in 2022. In only two years, he has earned a reputation for providing exceptional care.

Born in the United States in Georgia, Dr. Ndebbio returned to his parents' home country of Nigeria when he was young. He received his education and early medical training there, beginning his career in public health endeavors. He moved to the United States in 2019 to begin a medical residency at Mount Sinai Health System in New York. He finished his residency at North Alabama Medical Center before moving to Northeast Arkansas.

MOM, DAUGHTER COMPLETE RN PROGRAM

Black River Technical College's Registered Nursing pinning ceremony was a family affair for a mother-daughter duo. Michelle Knight and her daughter, Kandra Knight, graduated together as members of the RN Fall 2024 class.



Michelle and Kandra Knight

Kandra said she remembered her mother talking about wanting to be a nurse, but circumstances kept her from getting to follow through with her dreams. Kandra said in her junior year of high school she became certain that nursing was the path she wanted to follow. After discussing her choice with her mother, Michelle told her she would apply for classes with her.

Both Kandra and Michelle applied to BRTC and completed their registration in the spring of 2022. The duo fast-tracked their pre-requisites online in 2023, then applied to the RN program. After sending in their applications they took the entrance exam and were both accepted into the program. Kandra said the whole experience has been awesome and humbling.

"She is truly my best friend, my biggest supporter, and the best mentor I could have been blessed to go through this with," Kandra said.



Chad Chadwick, Dina Mason, Lindsay Roberts, Allison Brady, Noah Tullos, Brian Osborn

JILL'S CASH WINNER CHOOSES TOGETHER WE FOSTER FOR UNICO BANK DONATION

Allison Brady was the big winner in the Jill's Christmas Cash giveaway, winning \$1,000 for herself and \$1,000 for charity. She selected Together We Foster from Unico Bank's list of charities to be the recipient of a \$1,000 donation as part of the annual promotion.

The mission of Together We Foster, which has served the Northeast Arkansas foster care community since 2017, is to support foster and biological families, foster children and the Department of Children and Family Services.

NEA BAPTIST ADDS MAKO SMARTROBOTICS FOR HIP REPLACEMENTS

Northeast Arkansas residents can take advantage of new technology for hip replacements, as NEA Baptist is now offering Mako SmartRobotics™ for hip replacement surgery.

Mako SmartRobotics' 3D CT-based planning coupled with AccuStop™ haptic technology can help surgeons plan for better outcomes like less pain and quicker recovery times compared to manual surgery, helping patients get back to the things they love, quicker.



"With Mako SmartRobotics™, I can utilize a CT scan to create a personalized surgical plan based on each patient's unique anatomy before entering the operating room," said Dr. Edward Cooper, who performed the first MAKO robotic hip procedure in Northeast Arkansas in 2024. "During surgery, I can confirm my approach and make any necessary adjustments while guiding the robotic arm to execute the intended surgical plan. It's exciting to be able to offer this transformative technology across the joint replacement service line to perform total hip replacements."

Total hip replacements in the United States are expected to increase by 71 percent between 2020 and 2030. Mako SmartRobotics™ for Total Hip is a treatment option for adults who suffer from degenerative joint disease of the hip. During surgery, the surgeon guides the robotic arm through bone preparation to prepare the hip socket and position the implant according to the predetermined surgical plan. In a controlled study that measured bone removal, results suggested greater bone preservation for Mako Total Hip compared to manual surgery leading to improved patient experience during recovery.

"We are proud to offer this highly advanced SmartRobotics™ technology," said Sam Lynd, CEO at NEA Baptist. "This addition to our leading orthopaedic service line further demonstrates our commitment to provide the communities we serve with outstanding care."



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Next Month

Sharing Stories



Local authors, including Dan Stidham, share the stories behind their stories.

NEA Seniors



Life after retirement for members of the Lil Cabin Band includes performing for area senior citizens groups. Read about the band in March's NEA Seniors Section.

March into Literacy



Read about literacy programs that are making a difference in the community.

8 life events that can affect your life insurance needs

- | | |
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