

# NEA'S PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2025

## *Fresh Start:*

**New Beginnings Focus for Acuff  
in Life, Work and Ministry**

**SPECIAL SECTION: HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS  
SPREADING CHEER: 4-H PROGRAMS HELP OTHERS  
NEW PERSPECTIVE: LIFE AFTER TWO LUNG COLLAPSES**

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After going through John 3:16 himself, Adam Acuff formed Isaiah 61 Ministries to help men as they transition out of John 3:16.

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OPEN A 2025

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**JANUARY 2025**

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# From Us to You

2025 --- sounds like a futuristic movie title. But here we are -- January 2025. They say, "Time flies when you are having fun!" I must be having a blast because time seems to fly faster every year. Premiere Magazine is my fun, but I do think the 12 deadlines make the year go by fast.

January always makes me want to reflect on the past year and this one has been -- well, a busy one! I took over a retail store in my building in Downtown Paragould and, boy, has that been Fun! Really, it is fun but much more of a commitment than I thought. If you know a small retail business owner personally you should give them a hug -- they are not fine.

As I reflect on 2024, I feel like I proved to myself I can "do it all" but I also may have finally gotten to the "but I do not want to do it all" point. I want to do the things that matter -- better. That will be my 2025 motto.

Here is to a Fantastic 2025 for us all. Thank you for helping us keep the "Good News and the People Making it Happen" flowing and don't forget to let us know when you see or



hear of community members who are filling that motto!

Happy New Year!

Dina Mason  
General Manager & Publisher  
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As we begin a new year, our January edition of Premiere has a Fresh Start focus.

Fresh starts come in many forms, as you will see when reading through this month's magazine. It might be in the form of a career change, or a health crisis or perhaps a new beginning after making some wrong turns.

When we begin a new year, we also think about choices we can make as an individual, household, business or community to improve on the previous year and hopefully become a better version of ourselves.

I'm starting 2025 still fairly new to the magazine business, so I very much remain in fresh start mode. I am excited to see what stories the new year will bring our way as we continue to cover the Good News of Northeast Arkansas and the People Making it Happen!



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# Warm up this winter with cheesy bread

BY KATIE COLLINS

I just really love a good, easy base recipe that you can make your own! I came across this one on TikTok, which is an excellent place for finding new recipes, although there are some that are questionable! The base recipe is three ingredients: self-rising flour (very important to use self-rising and not all-purpose), milk and cheese. You can make it with just those three and be content. But if you've got a creative bug that's biting, you can also jazz it up with some add-ins. Start with herbs/spices. I went with lots of cracked black pepper, freeze dried minced garlic, dried minced onion, and chives. Whatever you already have in your spice rack that sounds good is good for you! The comments on the recipe video overwhelmingly suggested adding bacon and jalapenos, which sound great.

Another area of versatility comes in the pan you choose to use. The creator in the video made this in a loaf pan, but I chose to use a muffin pan. You could also use an 8x8 or 9x9 pan to make this bread and cut it into squares. Just adjust your cooking times accordingly (use Google to help decipher that if you need to).

You'll notice the recipe doesn't specify how much shredded cheese to use. The video said a "big handful" and I have always believed that cheese is a measure-with-your-heart ingredient. I had a 7-ounce bag



## Easy Cheesy Bread

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 ½ cups whole milk
- Shredded cheese
- Optional: herbs, spices, bacon, jalapenos, etc.

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350. Spray a muffin pan with non-stick spray. Stir flour, milk, and optional ingredients (if using) together. Stir in cheese. Fill muffin cups about ¾ full. Sprinkle with extra cheese if you want. Bake 15-17 minutes or until brown. Let cool for a couple minutes, remove from pan and serve immediately.

of a Cheddar/Gouda/Gruyere blend, and it was plenty to mix in and add a little on top, plus have a little bit left over. Warm up this winter with this Easy Cheesy Bread!



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## HELPING OTHERS DURING THE HOLIDAYS 4-H PROGRAMS GIVE BACK

**L**ocal 4-H members in Greene and Craighead counties completed projects in December to spread holiday cheer.

In Greene County, 4-H'ers made and delivered fruit baskets and sang carols for residents at the Mini Rise. Different 4-H clubs within the county bring items for the baskets, and the members assemble them. This annual project is a favorite for 4-H members and residents alike.



Emily M.



Everett H., Justin M.

In Craighead County, 4-H'ers conducted Operation Christmas Pantry, putting together food baskets with everything needed to make a holiday meal for 50 different households. Funding for the project comes from the Delta Harvest Classic 4-H Polo match and The Exchange Club. The project focuses on families who might need a little help during the holidays, but do not qualify for government assistance.



Millie M.



Acea E., Joscelyn L.

# A New Perspective

## *Inspiration Found in Tribulation*

BY SHELBY RUSSOM



a daughter, and so in the second time this is happening, although it's scary, I truly trust his words, and I knew this wasn't my time."

After suffering the first lung collapse, Charleston began to write down how he was feeling during his recovery journey. He said this sparked something in him — a love of sharing motivational words. Charleston then transformed those words into a book he hoped would inspire others. Titled "The Black Accountant," the book is filled with his story of trials and triumphs balanced with the hope he found through his newly strengthened relationship with God.

Charleston has continuously fought to turn his unfortunate circumstances into something positive. Now, they inspire his motivational speeches.

"The thing about public speaking is you can't talk if you don't have anything to talk about," he said. "And so, my trials, my tribulations, some of the things I have gone through just kind of helped emphasize my voice when I'm up speaking."

These challenging times not only gave Charleston something to talk about, but also made him someone others could talk to. For example, when a friend found himself in the hospital, Charleston said he could be there for him and understand what he was going through, something he said he might not have been able to provide without understanding the feelings and fears associated with being hospitalized.

Multiple close calls left Charleston with a new outlook. He said even though he has experienced dark times, he has been able to draw inspiration from them and now notices the trivial moments in life.

"You never realize the simple things," he said. "When that (lung collapse) happened, I couldn't even bathe myself. My mom had to bathe me, and that was a very humbling experience. When you come out of that, and you start to do those things again, you don't take them for granted."



Two unexpected and unexplained lung collapses were not enough to shake Charleston Girley. Instead, his faith stands stronger than ever as he embraces his newfound purpose.

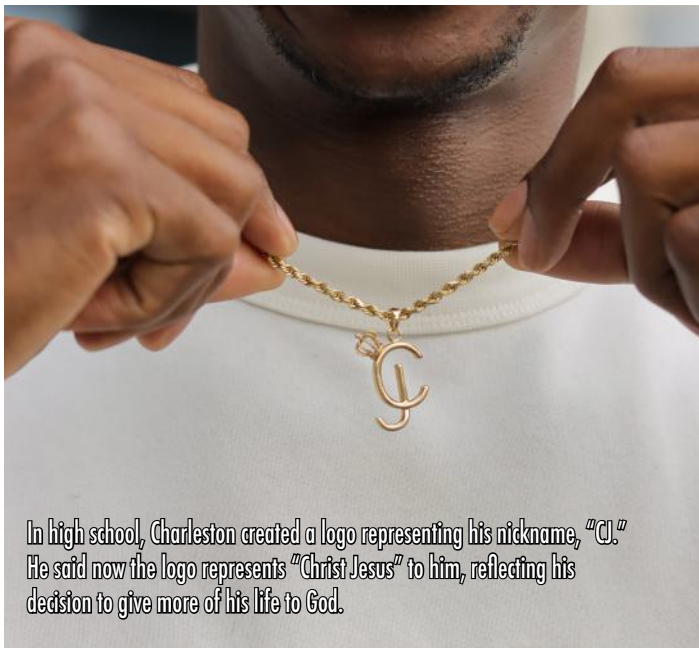
In 2017, Charleston, a football player and graduate student at Arkansas State University, found himself unable to breathe properly. Not having the typical reasons for breathing difficulty, he initially brushed off the feeling. After waking the next day and discovering the pain had yet to subside, he decided to visit the clinic on ASU's campus.

Upon further inspection, doctors discovered Charleston's right lung had completely collapsed. He then underwent a life-saving medical procedure and was diagnosed with "Spontaneous Pneumothorax," meaning the true cause of the collapse had been left unsolved. Although the completed procedure was intended to prevent future lung collapses, Charleston suffered another collapse in August of 2024, still without a specific cause.

This uncertainty has left Charleston nervous but not defeated. He finds comfort in his faith and knows God has more in store for him. He said lung collapse was scary the first time, but recently, God has revealed his purpose for him, including his position at Families Inc. and the promise that Charleston will one day have a child.

"I really have a deep faith," he said. "I had a vision earlier this year where God revealed to me of me having a daughter. I've always wanted





In high school, Charleston created a logo representing his nickname, "CJ." He said now the logo represents "Christ Jesus" to him, reflecting his decision to give more of his life to God.

Charleston said he even found inspiration in the hospital when seeing those there with him. That moment in time taught him life was so much more than what he was stressing about, like social media interactions and how people perceived him.

Although Charleston said he does not necessarily feel like he has been given a second chance at life, he feels these tribulations have given him a fresh perspective and a deeper understanding of himself.

"I feel like I've been given an opportunity to understand who I am," he said. "I feel like sometimes we go through life and we may not understand who we are, what our calling is, what our impact is on individuals, and I think this experience showed me who I was - showed me whose I was - and what my calling on this earth is."

This perspective has only been furthered by his love for his twin brother, Charles, who was left disabled after contracting meningitis as a toddler.

"My brother has always been my why," he said. "My motivation to be successful in an effort to be able to provide for him and live the life that maybe he doesn't get an opportunity to."



Throughout his life, Charleston said he has found it crucial for people to search for themselves through the purpose God provides and to love those around them regardless of the circumstances.

"Everything that you go through - they end up making you who you are today, and I do feel like I'm a new person," he said. "My faith has increased tremendously, and I've been proud to have the strength to stand out with my faith and be very vocal about it and not feel ashamed or embarrassed because that same faith was the thing that saved me and helped me out of those dark moments."



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August, 2024



December, 2024

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# Duck Classic



## Raises Funds for NEA Baptist Foundation



**1st Place Team: Arkansas Health and Wellness.**  
Pictured: Cody Parish, Will Rusher, Dwane Tankersley, Jud Nix, Will Dannen, Kyle Flanigan and Kim Provost.



**2nd Place Team: Arkansas Health and Wellness.**  
Pictured: Cody Parish, Walker Crank, Ashton Harper, Jacob North, Jack Hopkins, Hunter Bray and Kim Provost.



**3rd Place Team: Dr. Jason Colletta's Team.**  
Pictured: Cody Parish, Dr. Jason Coletta, Zane Coletta, Braxton Craine, Corey Trotter and Kim Provost



Nate Woodruff, Dr. Stephen Woodruff, Dr. Adam Woodruff, Dr. Ray Hall Jr.

# PET *of the* MONTH

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BY AMY COX

Introducing Bubby, a female long haired cat. She will be two in March. She gets her name from our exaggerating the word baby when she was little and, now, she has come to learn it as her name. She was abandoned by the mother cat in a friend's back yard when she was just old enough to walk, so we rescued her and she became part of our family.

She loves any food that is fish-related but is picky when it comes to anything else. She loves watching Birder King on YouTube and will stop whatever she is doing when it comes on. She also loves chasing a tiny piece of crushed ice which she eventually eats. She will run toward the ice maker any time she hears it being used and will meow until she gets a piece.

She usually hides when anyone comes over, but has to be in the same room as everyone who lives here. She always wants to cuddle when she sleeps, as well. We couldn't imagine life without her.



*Glen Sain*  
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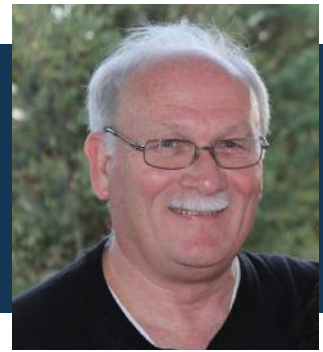


  
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# Get Rich

WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



As we turn the page and plan our starts to the new year, I continue to see advertisements and commercials encouraging me to become a healthier version of myself and even read one headline saying it's possible to "Build A New You in 2025."

That one sort of hit home with me because I often feel the need for a do-over, mostly when I pass the bathroom mirror and say, "That just can't be right."

I know there are many ways to improve this body I am having difficulty dragging around from place to place, but they require things like going to a gym and learning how to use complicated machinery and talking to people or, even worse, refusing to eat all the foods I like and chewing only grass and such, also known as salads.

I'm thinking I would like to take the short route and just purchase new body parts, leaving some things as they are and replacing the most obvious ones that are underperforming. Looking in the mirror, it would seem a new head of hair would rapidly improve my looks since I currently have this giant blank spot right down the middle of my crown.

Over the years I've read numerous accounts of people who grow their hair out really long and then cut it off and donate it to organizations like Locks of Love. I don't have enough hair to donate to Locks Of Like You A Little Bit and I'm not certain exactly what happened there because I used to have a nice head of hair; I've seen the pictures.

I can only think it has something to do with surviving the teenage daughter stage twice, wondering why they want to do things like look pretty and talk on the phone instead of taking ground balls and shooting jump shots.

The current market price for human hair is fairly reasonable, only in the hundreds of dollars, so don't be surprised if you see a more youthful version of me sometime soon, swishing my head rapidly to the side to get my hair out of my eyes.

According to this story I found detailing how much it would cost to build a new me, it would take close to a million dollars for a complete overhaul. That's why I'm only going for a few improvements here and there, because I spent my last million on Christmas presents. Up

until a few months ago I would have said my heart was doing fine but a couple of heart attacks have caused me to alter that position. A new heart runs about \$119,000 and I figure I might as well get one straight from the factory instead of purchasing a new or refurbished version and having it hang up like an overworked computer. As far as I know, you can't just unplug your heart and then plug it back to see if it will reset itself.

With a thick head of hair and a new pump, I would feel more inclined to join the exercise club but without a doubt I'd need new bones and ligaments, which will run me "a few thousand dollars." I have a torn rotator cuff on one side and a shoulder impingement on the other, and some of the medicines prescribed after my heart attack cause me so much joint pain that I drag one leg along like Walter Brennan's character, Amos, on *The Real McCoys*. Shoulders run about \$500 each and I might as well get two, especially if they are cheaper in a package deal.

I know sit ups and burpies and other exercises with unappealing names would help me flatten my oversized stomach, but a guy can buy one for another \$500 and I like the sound of that a lot better. I can come a lot closer to reaching around behind me and securing my wallet and credit card successfully – I know, because that's all I've done for the last month -- than I can getting into the floor, exercising and getting back to my feet without help from a loved one. And I'm not even addressing the multitude of noises that accompany efforts to bend my knees and sit in the floor in order to play with the grandkids, a series of grunts, pops, snaps and troublesome sounding clicks from deep inside that sound like dollar signs leaving.

Blood only runs about \$337 a pint and skin is \$10 per square inch and I figure if I wait until I've reduced my personal size it won't take as much blood to keep me functioning and certainly won't require as much skin to cover me. That should save me a few bucks since I don't intend to address things like the liver, kidneys, intestines and spleen. No one can see them anyway, and if they aren't working it's probably just time for this model to be retired.

My bargain basement venture on self-improvement would only total somewhere around \$150,000, which seems a small price to pay in order to avoid eating right, exercising and taking care of myself. I'll be starting a Go Fund Me page soon so those who are tired of looking at the current me can take pride in knowing they helped build the new me for 2025. I'm only about \$150,000 short of my goal right now.



# THANK YOU



## SPONSORS:



## Christmas Cash

Allison Brady was the big winner on December 14th when Jill 99.3 and Unico Bank presented her with \$1,000 in Christmas Cash. Two lucky winners were also presented with \$100 each, and several individuals won other prizes that were given away during the event. Other sponsors also presented \$100 cash giveaways throughout the Jill's Christmas Cash promotion. Congratulations to all the winners!





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# Health Matters

BY KARAN SUMMITT

## A FRESH HEALTH START



### Resolutions that Really Work

The diet commercials are in full force, and gym memberships are at their yearly high. In hopes that this year will be different, many Americans renew their determination to eat healthier, exercise more and lose those unwanted pounds.

Trying again is not a bad thing. Multiple studies support the fact that our bodies have an amazing ability to recover from years of neglect and mistreatment. Exercise can firm up sagging muscles and build heart and lung strength. A good diet can boost our autoimmune system and reduce the complications of diabetes and heart disease. If you are wondering whether it's worth the effort to do what it takes to become healthier, the answer is a resounding "yes!"

Maybe what you need to do differently this year is tweak the process. It's not that a healthier diet and exercise didn't work. I am willing to bet that they did work ... for a while. It's the long-term, make-it-my-lifestyle-so-I-stay-healthy changes that trip us up.

True and lasting changes begin in the mind long before we change

### 7 EASY RESOLUTIONS FOR BETTER HEALTH

1. Drink \_\_\_\_ glasses of water each day.
2. Eat \_\_\_\_ servings of vegetables each day.
3. Fit in some sort of intentional movement or stretching each day.
4. Reduce added sugars and/or artificial sweeteners.
5. Learn a new type of exercise.
6. Eat at home \_\_\_\_ nights a week or bring your lunch \_\_\_\_ days a week.
7. Commit to one small change for better mental and emotional health each month.

### Make Goals S.M.A.R.T. Set Resolutions You'll Actually Keep

# SMART



our actions. So this year before you throw out the snack foods, buy that first protein shake, and make your way to a fitness facility, try these five resolutions:

**Ditch the word diet:** Diets tend to be temporary, but a lifestyle is the way we live, every day. Losing weight slower by adopting behaviors we plan to keep for the remainder of life is a much better way to ensure lasting change.

**Find your personal "Why"s:** Zero in on why you want to be healthier. Identify some short-term and some long-term reasons. Look at the impact your health will have on your ability to live out the goals you have for life. Write them down and read them frequently, taking ownership for the responsibility to become self-motivated. After all, you are the one who will benefit most from better health and you will be the one to lose the most if you don't!

**Rewire the voices in your head:** We all have them — the excuses, rationalizations and procrastinations for NOT doing the healthy thing today. Use your why list to formulate a "yes, but ..." answer to all those excuses. Teach yourself to focus beyond the challenges of the moment by remembering the reasons why good health is important to you. We reach it one choice at a time.

**Believe in the power of small changes:** One of the greatest setbacks to a healthier lifestyle can be trying to make too many drastic changes all at once. Instead of a rigid diet and exercise plan, set a goal for where you would like your health to be in January of 2026. Plan to get there by making one healthy change each week. Layer these changes on top of each other and believe that over the course of a year, 52 small changes can make a measurable difference in your health.



**Commit to accountability and support:** For most of us who struggle with unhealthy behaviors, one of the biggest variables for success or failure is the willingness to put ourselves in a position that demands accountability and provides support and encouragement. Find folks at work with similar goals and challenge each other. Have weekly weigh-ins with a trusted friend, enlist the aid of a trainer. Join a local weight loss program or an online group. Reality check: If you could do it by yourself, it would already be done.

Whether it means multiple changes or just a few small tweaks, I hope this is the year you join that elusive eight percent of people who actually keep their New Year's resolution to get healthier. If you do, January of 2026 will be a time to celebrate achieving your 2025 resolutions instead of making them all over again!

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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# Coach D

## New career is perfect fit

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Some people might assume David Daniel had to reinvent himself when making a career change after 43 years in the coaching and teaching field. While he traded that academic background for his current role as Assistant Vice President/Business Development Officer for First Community Bank in Jonesboro, his name tag still reads "Coach D."

"Because that's who I am," David said. "Sometimes the call center will answer and someone says that they want to talk to Coach D and they know it's me, and sometimes when they ask for David Daniel they say, 'Who?' I'm just Coach D."

His basketball trail winds throughout Northeast Arkansas, starting as an assistant coach at Weiner and later returning as the head coach for the Cardinals; in Jonesboro at both Annie Camp Jr. High and at the high school; at Arkansas State University as an assistant for two years; four years as the girls' coach at Jonesboro High and finally a 10-year stint as Athletic Director for the Jonesboro school system.



"Lots of good teams and lots of good times," David said, looking back at the many stops along the way. "I remember when I took the job at Annie Camp. You've got 500 students, about 250 of which are boys, and I'm coming from a small school so I'm figuring I can find a bunch of players and win a bunch of games. My first year, we won one game. My last year we went 28-1, but that just shows you how it can go."

"I was an assistant for Barry Pruitt at Jonesboro High for 12 years and we were '94 state champions, then an assistant at ASU but after two years I realized college coaching is a 24/7 deal ... you were never off

## MAKE YOUR BUSINESS KNOWN

ADVERTISING TIPS FROM  MEDIA



### WHY SHOULD I ADVERTISE?

According to the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), advertising serves as a source of information that helps our open, market-based economy function. The ANA also said advertising fuels economic growth and educates the public on the choices available in the marketplace. If consumers learn to associate your name with a product through advertising and branding consistency, they are more likely to remember your business when they need a product or service you provide.

### IS TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING STILL IMPORTANT?

There are so many advertising outlets that still thrive regardless of the introduction of new technologies. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), traditional advertising is still important. Traditional advertising, like print and radio, offers a sense of trust to the customer because it is something they are used to.

### WHAT ABOUT DIGITAL ADVERTISING?

The SBA also recommends integrating your online presence into your traditional advertising by promoting your social media and websites and including links in targeted online advertisements. This way, you can reach your audience directly through their mobile devices.

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because you're either recruiting, or coaching, or checking classes. I was ready to get out and the girls' job at Jonesboro came open and I thought they had plenty of girls to have a really good program and I took it. My first year ... we won one game. After that we won back-to-back NEA tournaments and I had a really good time and met some wonderful young ladies."

He applied for, and got, the AD's position in 2009 because he saw it as a way to "have a bigger effect on the overall program. A lot of things lined up and we made improvements to our facilities, one of the first to have artificial football turf in this area. We renovated what is now Don Riggs Hurricane Gym ... it is a 1965 model but let me tell you something: It's hard to beat the Hurricane in there."

After a decade in that role, Coach D sought a change of some sort, not certain which direction he'd head upon retirement. "All my life," he said, "all I've ever known is 'go to work.' And I've always loved to compete. But when I said I wasn't coming back, I definitely was not a man with a plan. Beverly and I have lived here basically all our adult lives, so we didn't really want to pack up and leave, and then Allen Williams called me and said, 'Coach, I see you're retiring. I think I might have an idea that will work for both of us.' I came in here thinking I'd have a 30- to 40-minute interview and we talked for two hours. We hit it off right away and he talked to me about First Community Bank and how it started and the people involved and it all fell into place."

Today a big part of his job is partnering with a lot of those names and faces from his coaching years, whether they be former players, fellow coaches, parents or boosters. "This job has not disappointed at all," he said, offering to explain just what the title on his business card means. "I have found out that I'm pretty good at lunch and donuts. Really, I'm kind of a business development officer. All I try to do is get people to come and do some business with us ... personal checking, business checking account, trust, lock box ... whatever way we can help.

It's the best fit for me I could imagine. The job allows me to continue working on the advisory board for the Parks and Recreation Department, to be on the steering committee for the new sports complex, to continue working on the NEA Tournament, to do stuff with the Chamber. When I was the AD, that was kind of my world. I get to be a part of lots of really cool community stuff, and there's a lot of hot dogs and hamburgers."

His face is a familiar one around Jonesboro as he helps with the Great Acts of Kindness Award, the Officer of the Month 10:8 Award, and statewide with the Hooten's First Community Bank Scholar Athlete Award for football.

"Since my first year in coaching I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of people," David said, "and with most people over all those years it's been a pretty good experience. Now I have, for me, the best job in America. It does suit me. I'm just Coach D."

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# THE ADVENTURES OF

# Lester

BY VICKI McMILLAN



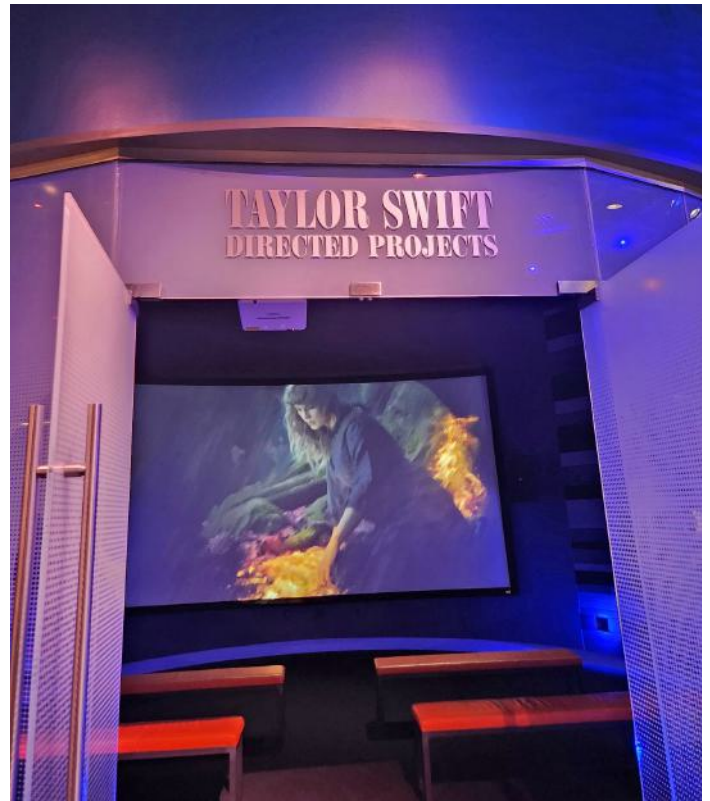
Lester, here, coming to you from 2025. I like the beginning of a new year — the slate feels like it is wiped clean and everyone plans on being thinner, prettier, more organized — just better. Reckon we ever stop to think that we are deep down good enough? Yeah, this scrappy little pound dog is getting philosophical this morning! A wise 10-year-old told me one time, “Do your best and forget the rest.” I think more of us need to adopt this mantra.

Having said all of that, I have a confession to make — something that has been heavy on my soul for the past year or so, that needs to get out: I AM A SWIFTIE. Yes, Taylor Swift, the sweetheart of girls young and old, the cat-loving billionaire who donates to charities freely, and has boosted the NFL television numbers. That Taylor Swift. I mean, how could you not love her?? She writes her own songs and even writes songs for other singers!

My openness as a Swiftie is what led me to Cleveland, Mississippi, the other day. Cleveland is the home of Grammy Museum Mississippi, not to be confused with the Grammy Museum of L.A. Live in downtown Los Angeles. Mississippi has more Grammy nominees, winners, and hall of famers than any other state in the union. In fact the Mississippi Delta (where Cleveland is located) is the birthplace of the blues, which influenced all other kinds of music.

The latest exhibit at the museum, Taylor Swift Through the Eras, showcases costumes and instruments from each of Taylor’s eleven eras. Also, the museum has many interactive exhibits and even an interactive, touch screen dance floor. You can bet your ol’ pal Lester really cut a rug there!

All in all, it is a small museum, but very well curated. Thought was put into its design from the front entrance (designed to mimic the front porch of Southern homes) to the metal on the exterior of the building



to replicate the share croppers’ homes.

Some native Mississippian singer/songwriters you may know are Faith Hill, Elvis Presley, Mickey Gilley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Leontyne Price, for you opera lovers out there. A few of them have really funny names like Muddy Waters and Howlin Wolf. And a couple you may be surprised to hear are native Mississippians: Jimmy Buffett and Britney Spears!

If you make it to Cleveland, you might as well check out Clarksdale and a few other towns in the Mississippi Delta. Clarksdale is where Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil to be able to play blues guitar, at the Crossroad of highways 49 and 61. Also, if you are a Tennessee Williams fan, young Tom spent a great deal of time in Clarksdale with his grandparents and often made parish calls with his grandfather Rev. Dakin. He often visited the Cutrer Mansion and you can, too — it’s now open to the public. The Cutrer Mansion, and Clarksdale in general, inspired Tennessee’s plays “Cat On A Hot Tin Roof,” “The Glass Menagerie,” and of course “A Streetcar Named Desire.”

I’ll close for now. I’m going to put on my Taylor Swift socks, get under my Taylor Swift blanket, and listen to Taylor Swift’s latest vinyl Anthropologie.

Your Tortured Poet,  
*Lester*

# New beginnings

## *Acuff helping others in life, work, ministry*

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

At the age of 47, when Adam Acuff looks back on his life he sees a story with many twists and turns; and though when he tells his story, including many years in darkness, it also includes a fresh start he will forever be grateful for.

"I had a great upbringing - an amazing upbringing," he said. "I got into high school and started partying a little bit. I never thought I had a problem with alcohol, but when I look back a lot of my problems stemmed from alcohol."

Adam went on to college, where he studied nursing, but a 2006 motor vehicle accident would change the course of his life. "I was the passenger," he said. "We hit a telephone pole at a high rate of speed." Adam was taken to The Med in Memphis, where he underwent numerous surgeries. "I have rods or metal in almost every area of my body," he said. "I underwent months of surgeries and came out fully addicted to fentanyl and pain meds. It really took me down a dark path."

Shortly after the accident, his mother was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. "I got mad at God and mad at the world," Adam said. "It cost me my career in nursing."

He moved to Memphis around 2007, and bad went to worse. "Back then 50 percent of my problems were me and the other 50 percent were how I dealt with it - so it was all me," he said. "My addiction took over. I ended up having another wreck on a motorcycle." More broken bones and surgeries, along with the death of his mother sent Adam off the deep end.

"I ran wild in Memphis for almost a decade. I was stabbed, arrested numerous times, overdosed, turned to harder drugs and just gave up on life completely," he said. "I went from a high rise and a BMW to homeless eating out of dumpsters. I had good family here, but when you're doing bad, you feel better around bad people."

The last time he was arrested was in 2015. While sitting in jail in Crittenden County, he made a decision. "I was sick and tired of being sick and tired," Adam said. "I called my sister. I had never asked for help before."

He said his sister, Holly Burnett, and father, David Acuff, were not expecting him to reach out as he had never done so before, but they came to West Memphis to get him and took him to meet Tony Rampley, which led to his being accepted into John 3:16.

"They never gave up on me," he said. "They took me to John 3:16 in 2015. There I surrendered my life to Jesus and it completely changed my life. All I had to my name, when I checked in and when I checked out, was a bag of clothes," Adam said, noting he hopes others will understand they are not alone in their struggles. "People who can see where I have been can have hope."



Bryan Tuggle, director of John 3:16 ministries, recalled the state Adam was in when he arrived at the ministry.

"He was tired of hurting everybody that loved him and said he'd rather die than hurt anybody else," Bryan said. "Adam knew he was going to die if he didn't get help."

Adam's experiences led him to establish Isaiah 61, a transitional ministry for individuals coming out of John 3:16.

When he returned to Paragould, he was living with his father. "I had nothing, but I had a calling to help men. I started going to jails, hospitals ... people would reach out to me who knew my story, so I began taking men back to John 3:16."

Bryan said that Adam has brought many men to John 3:16 and, more importantly, helped them find their faith.

"Coming to this place - John 3:16 - doesn't do much good, but if they can find the person Jesus Christ at this place, that will change their life," Bryan said. "Adam Acuff found that person." He said Adam was a role model resident, with a very supportive family and always focused on the future.

"He always focused while he was here that he was going to do more for God than he could do here," Bryan said. "He left and it wasn't too long he started taking men in and trying to help them just like he was helped."

In 2016, Adam's life changed again when he met his wife, Rebecca. They married in 2017 and have three kids, who are 16, 13 and 6. Adam said he tells the men in his transitional ministry how important relationships are. "Nothing brings you up faster or down faster," he said.



"My ministry really took off when I met my wife," Adam said. "She suffered a lot because I missed a lot of things. Over the course of years, I have taken 60 men or more to John 3:16. That's what we began to do is just focus on helping men out of the pit that I was once in."



His ministry would become Isaiah 61, but Bryan pointed out that Adam actually started his ministry before he even had it named.

"He is a respectable businessman, family man and minister," he said. "I know I respect him very much. He's done a lot for not only John 3:16, but for all recovery ministries that are in the area. I expect him to do mightier things in the future. He thinks ahead not behind."

Adam said he wouldn't be where he is today without the people who offered him a helping hand. In addition to his father and sister, he said Jeff Cupples with Cupples Sign Company took a chance on him and gave him a job when he came out of John 3:16.

In that job he gained experience with bucket trucks and cranes and began to cut trees on the side, again aided by Cupples who let him use a bucket truck for the work and eventually helped him launch what would become Acuff Tree Service.

"Jeff actually donated an old 40-foot bucket truck to me and I started working on the weekends," Adam said. "My business grew and it got to where I was going to have to do one or the other."

Adam said now his business not only provides tree service to individuals, but also to contracts like the electric company. "Years ago, the electric company was cutting my power off; now I'm helping them cut limbs to keep everyone's power on," he said.

He also credited Focus Bank for helping him start his company, something he realizes they didn't have to do. "They took a huge chance on me, giving me a business loan to start the tree business full-time," he said. "I owed them money from my past and they even reposed a vehicle from me in my addiction, but they still believed in me and took a chance on me."

He said while help is needed, the worst thing for recovering addicts is for someone to baby or enable them.

"You have to be firm," he said. "I want to teach men to be leaders. There is a time during addiction you have to be led, but I want to teach them to lead. Some aspect of your hurt is where you will find your calling."

He said there are challenges in recovery ministry, and everyone doesn't succeed on the first try. "You can want help – but you have to realize you need Jesus and you need help," he said. "If you don't have it, you're going to die."

He said while he was successful in transitioning after the first time he went through rehab, it is not always that simple.

"I started seeing men come out of John 3:16 on fire, doing good, but they would come back to the same situation and get caught up in it," he said. After three men he had taken to the ministry died shortly after being released, he decided it was time for another change.

"I thought to myself, I'm missing something," Adam said. "We've got to do something."

He was already employing some of the men through his tree service, but he wanted to do more. "I realized the transitional ministry is so important, but it's so hard," he said. "We give them a room, help them get a job ... we help them literally transition back into society and surround them with good men."

Adam said the men in the program gather with men from the community every morning, Monday through Friday, at 6 a.m. for Bible study. "We have all different walks of life and different denominations," he said.

In addition, for the men to be a part of Isaiah 61 they have certain things they have to do and rules they have to follow, including attending meetings.

"It's like a train on a track," Adam said. "You can be on the right track, but as soon as you get still you are going to get smacked – you have to keep moving."

Isaiah 61 now includes three transition homes for individuals coming out of John 3:16, one for instructors and two for men.

"Now it's like a big circle, I take them out there and they send them back to me," Adam said. "I want people to know if they want help to contact me. It's what I do. I will take them to John 3:16 or wherever they need to go."



# Great Year

BY CHUCK LONG

## IN THE OUTDOORS



Nature had a great year in 2024, showing off some wonderful happenings. The big event of the year, The Great Solar Eclipse, did not disappoint and left observers in awe across its path. The Northern Lights danced across the evening skies of Arkansas on more than one occasion. Various satellites and meteorites tracked through the darkness attracting viewers. We were blessed with some wonderful seasons that included a somewhat tranquil spring, followed by a mild summer, which transitioned into a mild fall that has been very enjoyable.

We now head into 2025. There is not an eclipse this year, but Mother Nature always hosts some wonderful things for our enjoyment. It is time to get ready for another great year and make some plans to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors. Here are a few ideas to consider in preparation for adventures in '25.

For the hunter, plan a trip for a new species or to a new location. It might seem like extreme forward thinking to begin to plan a trip for the fall during the cold days of January, but for many species and locales tags are allocated beginning in January and obtaining a tag is the most difficult element of the hunt. Idaho big game tags for 2025 are already available in a limited quota to nonresidents. The application deadline for an elk tag in Wyoming is January, requiring prompt attention to the application process. The application periods for tags in New Mexico and Colorado close in March or April, depending on the species and other states follow similar application windows.

Pick a species, pick a state and make a plan for a hunt. The draw odds might seem long and the process somewhat tedious, but the reward can be great if a tag is drawn. Some hunting buddies and I have been going through the application processes of several states and would be happy to offer some assistance.

Fishing and boating outings may seem a little distant as we stare out the window at the cold landscapes, but it is a great time to get ready for the upcoming water sports seasons. I like to use these cold days to organize tackle, put new line on the reels and check off any minor maintenance issues that might need to be addressed on the boat. Trickle charge the batteries occasionally, check the tie down straps and ropes and replace if needed, test the trailer lights and check the wheel bearings and tires to get things ready for the upcoming spring.

Another thing I like to do in late winter is inventory my hunting gear. I try to keep up with any gear issues or losses that might occur during the season and replace those. To save a buck or two, I keep a mental list and then check clearance sales, both in store and online, for items that might fill a need. Gloves, neck gaiters, socks and thermal underwear can often be found at a marked down price, but so can high dollar items like rifle scopes, game cameras and binoculars. I also like to address any ammunition needs I might have.

If you like to travel, it is a great time to check out some new territory. I often tease my wife into going on a venture to a prospective hunting or



fishing location with an invite to try a unique restaurant, shopping or lodging in that area. In Arkansas, the more remote areas of the Ozarks or Delta offer great opportunities for day or overnight trips to look at some hunting or fishing holes in combination with a fun trip. The rivers and lakes around Mountain Home are very inviting visits as are areas along the Buffalo River or other Ozark streams.

For those who might prefer cypress and tupelos over oak and hickory, Delta areas along the White River Refuge, Cache River Refuge and some of the state-owned Wildlife Management Areas like Wattensaw and Hurricane Lake are great to visit. The area along the White River and Little Red River from Batesville to Searcy is also a great area. Find a local restaurant, a couple of flea markets and then throw in a quick tour by a fishing hole or through some hunting ground to enjoy a full day or two on the road.

There are also some great options within an hour or two of the Arkansas border that offer great opportunity for short, outdoor-related trips. The Reelfoot Lake area provides some great views of the lake and some excellent local restaurants. The Tennessee River basin offers plenty of places to view the water, Shiloh National Park for a great history lesson, and some wonderful restaurants to grab a plate of fish. Missouri offers much the same along its Ozark streams like Current and Eleven Point, as well as some great locales along the Mighty Mississippi.





2025. Can you really believe it? It seems like only yesterday we were worried the world might shut down when time changed from 1999 to 2000. But here we are twenty-five years later so let's get ready for the new year. Do a few little things during the grip of winter to prepare, but also start making plans to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Whether it's a fishing trip, a hunting adventure or a trip to a favorite nature area, start planning now for an adventurous '25. The outdoors can do wonders for the heart, body and mind, 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](mailto:cflong2002@yahoo.com).

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# Kinlee Weatherford

## *Making the most of life*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When people say they need a fresh start on life, Kinlee Weatherford can tell them what it's like. Just before she turned seven years old hers almost ended, and she began the laborious process of learning how to live again.

"I was six, about to be seven when the accident happened," she recalls. "They had to teach me how to do everything again ... walk, talk, breathe, eat. Everything, again. I was taught just as if I was a toddler, had to relearn everything again. Retrain my brain. I did not have a normal childhood."

Kinlee's story has been well documented in Northeast Arkansas circles because she is a member of a very beloved family. Her parents, Jason and Carla, and older sister, Carlee, are all active community members and on the night of September 3, 2013, life changed drastically for all of them. Kinlee was in the tub for her nightly bath but when Jason "hollered at her a few minutes after I ordered pizza, there was no answer. I went to check on her and found her in the tub, submerged, not breathing."

Experts' best guess is that Kinlee suffered a seizure of some kind while bathing and fell unconscious under the water. Her parents started CPR, got in touch with medical personnel and soon had her airlifted to Memphis, beginning a months-long process of relearning how to live. For all of them. "I know I was at Le Bonheur for five weeks," Kinlee recalls, "and a few weeks in Atlanta, learning how to do everything again. I remember when I came home, my mom – or dad – would lay down with me until I fell asleep. They came to check on my every few minutes, making sure I was still breathing. I had a baby monitor in my room, and a camera. After a while I was like, 'Get out of my room!' But they just wanted to make sure I was still breathing."

Now 18 and a senior at Greene County Tech High School, Kinlee says life is "pretty normal. When I first got back to school it was like I was fragile and it was a little weird being back at first. Now it's 'she's fine' and no one worries so much. Some people forget what happened and now I'm just a normal kid again."

Only, in reality, she isn't. At 18 she has a much deeper understanding of and appreciation for life, having at one time been given a one percent chance of recovering to the point where she is today. "It is very definitely a privilege to be able to be here still," she said. "To have the small chance I had of recovering to now being able to walk and talk, and having the family and support system I do, that's real important to me."

"It's crazy. It's like I have two lives. I remember some things and a lot about being in Atlanta, not quite as much about Le Bonheur. But remember, I was six. I have a lot to appreciate. I couldn't have done it without my support system."

Jason, who refers to the incident as "a parent's worst nightmare," said life changed for the entire family that September evening. "Carla and I were driving to Memphis because Kinlee had been airlifted," he recalled, "and all sorts of things run through your mind. And Carlee,



who was 11, her world was flipped too. She was at a youth group meeting and neighbors had to pick her up. There was so much fear and not knowing ... but for all of us, so much positive has come out of it over the years. To be able to share our story and our faith. For us, that's the biggest blessing, to share that story, in that situation and to know ours is that one in a million child. We get to share that hope and that reality."

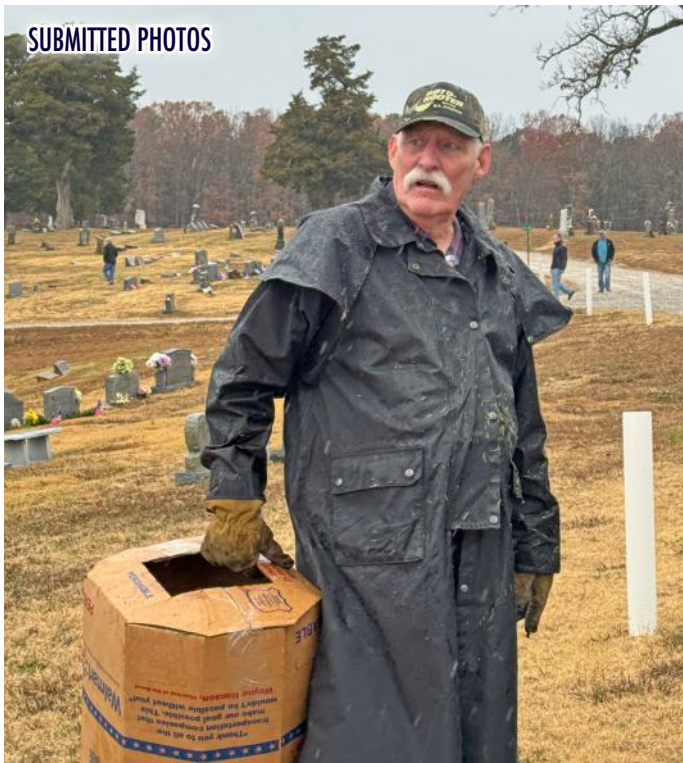
Jason and Carla often posted photos and videos of Kinlee's amazing progress along the way to keep friends and loved ones in the loop, and Kinlee does recall having a fear of water once she got home, compounded by a prescribed swimming program to deal with that very thing. And her bathroom held bad memories, leading her to shower and bathe in her parents' room instead, sometimes even to this day. But before long she was swimming on her high school team and back in the swing of teen things, playing golf, studying, dating.

Her ordeal has given her a good idea of what she wants to do with her life, hoping to pursue a degree in pediatric nursing. "A lot of the therapists and nurses I've come to know, I really love," Kinlee said. "I just want to follow in their footsteps. I will be happy to talk to anyone and tell my story. I know how it feels to be on both sides. I can talk about it now and not get emotional, but I couldn't for a long time. I can blink and still see that moment but I also feel it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to still be here. I appreciate life very much."

"Maybe it means a lot more to me. God literally gave me my life again. He put me back down here on Earth to talk to people, to inspire people."



# Wreaths Across America



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

Participating for their third year, volunteers gathered at Pine Log Cemetery on December 14th to honor veterans as part of the Wreaths Across America program.

The event included a ceremony with guest speaker Billy Calderon, Presentation of the Colors by the Brookland JROTC and the National Anthem sung by Amelia Ford.

Becca Foster with Foster's Monument Company, who helps spearhead the event, said the Brookland JROTC also made a huge impact with their service in placing the wreaths.

"This team showed up and showed the utmost respect to make certain that every veteran was saluted, named and thanked for their service," she said. "The cadets along with all our volunteers were soaking wet but did not quit until every veteran, just under 700 men and women in the 40 acre cemetery, was honored and had a wreath for Christmas."

Organizers placed some extra wreaths that were not purchased at other nearby cemeteries, including Finch Cemetery and Macedonia Cemetery. Becca said the goal for the future is to have a 18-wheeler full of wreaths delivered to be distributed around NEA.

She pointed out that some of the veterans buried in area cemeteries have no family left, but to grow the program it will take more sponsors and more volunteers.

"Our goal is to continue to grow the program and make it even bigger and better," she said. "If any business, school or local program would like to help in the upcoming 2025 year feel free to reach out to any of us at Foster's Monument in Brookland or anyone on the Pine Log Cemetery Board."



# A Fresh Start AROUND THE HOUSE

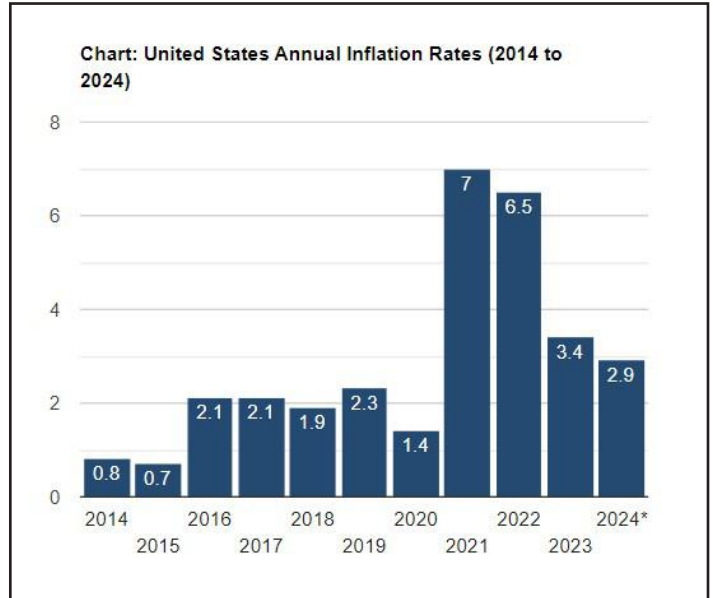
BY KARAN SUMMITT

They say numbers don't lie. If that is true, the chart included with this article showing the annual inflation rate for each of the past 10 years reveals a substantial increase in the cost of living. But then, I bet you didn't need a chart to tell you the prices of essential items like groceries, insurance, clothing and cleaning supplies have taken a sharp increase, especially over the last four years. These increases have become our new normal.

Before you throw up your hands in frustration and decide to head for the backwoods there are some good strategies to stretch those household dollars without lowering your standard of living. It takes a bit of time and effort, but the end can ease worry and stress when money is tight, as well as lay a foundation for wisely managing your resources.

According to the 2024 Consumer Experience Survey from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Americans spend 33% on housing costs, 17% on transportation costs, 13% on food costs and 8% on healthcare. Other expenses like entertainment, education, clothing and savings come into play, but at a much lower percentage. If your outgo is exceeding your income, and you are ready to tackle a fresh start on household spending, it makes sense to start with the first four big ticket items.

Let's begin with housing costs, which include mortgage, homeowner's insurance, property taxes, utilities, repairs and internet -- which is essential for most of us. It's worth a look to see if any of these strategies



can yield substantial savings over your current costs.

## MONEY SAVING TIPS & TRICKS

**CUT DOWN ON GROCERIES**

You can save money on groceries by planning out your meals each week and taking a good look at what you already have in your pantry before you head to the store.

**USE THE 24-HOUR RULE**

Before you make any impulse buy, make yourself wait for at least one day. You'll likely find that by the end of that waiting period, you don't want the items anymore.

**CANCEL AUTOMATIC SUBSCRIPTIONS**

It's time to cancel any subscriptions you don't use on the regular. Consider subscriptions and membership sharing with some family or friends.

**KEEP YOUR TIRES PROPERLY INFLATED**

It keeps you safe and means your car is more fuel efficient. Make a habit of checking the air in your tires on a weekly basis.

**LOWER YOUR CELL PHONE BILL**

Save money on your cell phone service by getting rid of extra like costly data plans, phone insurance and unnecessary warranties.

**REFINANCE YOUR MORTGAGE**

Explore if you have the option to refinance your mortgage to a lower interest rate. This can save you hundreds of dollars each month.

**SKIP THE COFFEE SHOP**

Instead of spending that \$5 on that daily coffee, you can save money by simply making coffee at home.

**CUT LAUNDRY DETERGENT IN HALF**

Many laundry detergents on the market sold today are highly concentrated. Try using a smaller amount than what is suggested to increase your number of loads.

**BUY GENERIC**

They are exactly the same as their branded counterparts and cost less.

**SHOP AROUND FOR CAR INSURANCE**

Believe it or not, changing your car insurance is pretty painless. Compare price quotes online and see if you can save some money.

1.) If mortgage rates have dropped at least 1-2%, you may want to refinance your home. This can free up more money for everyday expenses, but you will need to consider the closing costs associated with refinancing. Refinancing that lowers payments or yields equity money may also allow you to pay off other loans or credit card payments with higher interest rates.

2.) According to Insurance.com, average homeowner's insurance rates have increased 33.5% over the last five years. Comparison shopping, larger deductibles and bundling home and auto insurance are some first steps for lowering costs. Other options include increasing home security and paying for small claims out-of-pocket.

3.) Small common sense habits around the house can add up to substantial savings on utility costs. Set the thermostat to 65 in winter and 75 in summer. Check attic insulation and door and window facings to seal air leaks. Upgrade to energy efficient appliances and turn off lights, televisions, computers, etc. when not in use. Change out air filters, water-guzzling showerheads and set ceiling fans to circulate air correctly for the season.

4.) Compare internet and cable providers, both of which may be attached to cell phone service. Avoid paying for services you never use.

Transportation costs include vehicle payments, maintenance, repairs and fuel expenses. Consider driving your vehicle longer between trade-ins and paying it off, enjoying a few years payment free. Pay attention to normal maintenance routines such as oil changes and tire rotations. Do some planning and reduce shopping trips. Try working out ride-shares to work or children's activities. These may seem like small steps, but they add up when layered one on top of the other.

For most of us, rising prices for food have hit the hardest, simply because the grocery store is where we experience it most often. Food is a necessity and not an item we are able to push to the back of the

list for paying later. A good rule of thumb is this: Create a plan for food purchases and work the plan. According to Kristie Head, EFNEP Program Assistant at the Greene County Extension Office, this two-prong approach reaps double benefits. "Planning meals in advance helps reduce food waste and save money." Another rule of thumb is to remember restaurant and fast food meals are generally two to three times the cost of preparing the same meal at home.

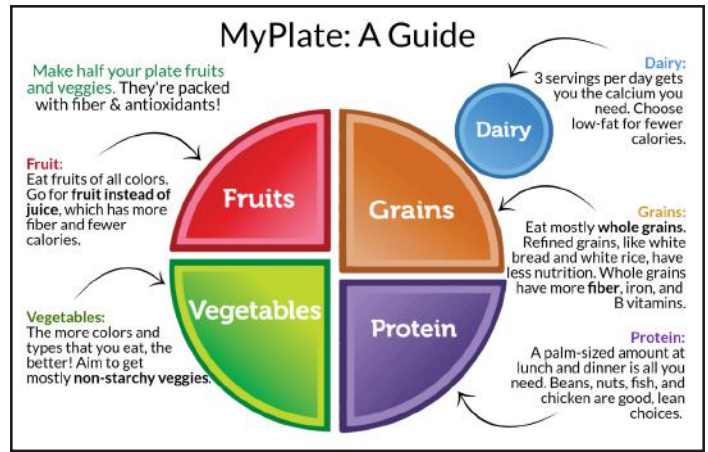
Smart grocery shopping includes purchasing foods that are healthy as well as save money. Trading off family wellbeing by purchasing less healthy foods is likely to rack up healthcare costs somewhere down the road. The USDA healthy plate model is a great place to begin meal planning. Create meals around proper portions, foods that are in season and consider limiting convenience items. For instance, being willing to prep your own fruits and vegetables instead of buying them already cleaned and cut into portions is a huge savings.

A great resource with plenty of ideas can be found at <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget>. "Small changes lead to big results when it comes to nutrition," is a good perspective to keep in mind when shifting to healthier foods.

Kristie sums it up this way. "Progress, not perfection, is what we are striving towards. Starting with what you have and where you are and making one choice at a time. In the moment there will be choices of good, better and best. There is power in your choices and make the best choice possible in the moment. Small choices consistently over time can lead to impactful change for better health and lifestyle."

Healthcare costs may seem like an area with little personal control. The key is to think not only in terms of how we might save money today, but to also look ahead and do what we can to prevent future healthcare costs. Strategies for today include healthy lifestyle behaviors like a good diet and plenty of activity. Take advantage of yearly wellness visits that identify areas of concern when they first become evident and are likely to at less risky stages.

Most healthcare plans offer appropriate screenings and preventative vaccines at little or no cost. Talk with your physician about high-cost prescriptions to see if other medications might be available or whether you may qualify for medication discounts. The best way to save money on healthcare is to stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible.



Kristie wisely mentioned the power of small changes. Making a choice that saves \$5 a week will add up to \$260/year. That may not seem like it is worth the effort but multiply ten \$5 changes in several areas of home expenditures. Now you have \$2,600/year. If you save \$10/week, you are at \$5,200/year and that might be enough for a nice vacation, starting a savings account or retiring the debt on a credit card.

Rising inflation rates are not fun, but they can motivate us to take a step back and examine the leaks in our household budget tank. All of us tend to forget how quickly small expenditures add up, especially ones that add little or no value to the quality of life.

For more assistance, the Greene County and Craighead County Home Extension offices offer research-based information and education in community group settings to help Arkansans with limited resources make better nutrition and health decisions.

They can be reached at:

Kristie Head, EFNEP Program Assistant Greene County at 870.215.9360 or contact the Greene County Extension Office at 870.239.6328.

Kim Huffman, EFNEP Program Assistant Craighead County at 870.933.4565 or contact the Craighead County Extension Office at 870.933-4565.

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## JOIN THE GREENBRIER FAMILY!





## GCT WINS FIRST STATE TITLE

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

**F**or the first time in school history, the Greene County Tech Marching Eagle Band holds the title of state champions. The win was also the first state title in a marching contest for a female band director in the 5A-7A division.

The GCT program has seen steady growth over the past 10 years, according to Band Director Kim Webb. Winning a state championship was the cherry on top.

"In 2014, the high school band had 50 kids," she said, noting the high school program now has 110, with the overall program boasting around 300 students. When Kim joined the program as assistant director under Keith Dortch, she said their priority was to increase numbers. Kim attributes their success to the culture that has been developed at GCT starting when Danny Davis was the director. "Mr. Dortch added, and I've added, but we have really good kids," she said.

"We wanted to reach them while they were young ... make it a place they wanted to be," she said. While COVID did cause a slight decline in numbers, Kim said those numbers are now back on the rise and retention is stronger than ever after eliminating sixth-grade band and starting the band program in seventh grade.

"Our high school band this year has 70 freshmen and sophomores," she said. "With them being a very young band and having achieved what we've achieved, I'm excited for the future."

GCT's show was called "Uncharted Waters" and featured music from Temen Oblak, Sea Songs, This Cruel Moon and We Overcame the Wind.

"The show started off with a call to join our journey and we had a guard soloist plant a Jolly Roger flag on the front of our boat prop to signify us beginning our journey," Kim said. "Our goal was to make



the audience feel like they were on the journey with us throughout the entire show. One of my favorite parts was during our third movement when we brought out a large beautiful blue piece of fabric that looks like water. We had performers underneath it and they manipulated it to look like moving water and big waves crashing into the shore. It was a really beautiful moment."

She said the first competition of the year was at Bryant and when her band placed lower than she anticipated she prepared herself for a rebuilding year. "We focus on being a better version of GCT each competition," Kim said, noting she tells the students not to worry about the other bands, but to worry about beating their last performance. "What I saw was the week-to-week progress was so much bigger than I've ever seen in any season."

The state competition was delayed a week, but Kim said the students never let up. "On state night, the energy was so high with the students," she said. "I took that energy into the warmups, but I told them, 'We can't let the emotion get in the way of focus.' ... They did wonderful - it was awesome."

Kim said the support from the community has been amazing, including receiving citations from the state legislature and the city of Paragould.

She said being the first female band director to win among the larger bands in the state was definitely an honor. While high school band director positions are mostly filled by men, she said she has never regretted her decision to take on the role.

"I love it," she said. "The work/life balance of all of it is really tough, but now that my kids are older, it is very rewarding to get to see them grow up with my band students." She said the possibility of having her own children in her program one day is one of the things that motivates her. "I look forward to the day that, if they want to be in band, that they are in my program," she said.

She said the success of the program would not be possible without the GCT band boosters, the school's administration and the rest of the band staff. "We've got an incredible staff right now," she said. "We feel like a family and that translates down to the students."



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# Congratulations GCT Marching Eagles!



# RISKY vs. RELIABLE IT SERVICE PROVIDER

A reliable IT service provider ensures you can concentrate on growing your business. Knowing if your IT support is suitable can be challenging without expertise. This infographic outlines the expectations from a top-notch IT service provider, whether in-house or outsourced.



## RISKY IT SERVICE PROVIDER

- Non-customized service contract
- Offers standard packages
- Reacts to issues as they arise (break-fix service model)
- Acts when vulnerabilities are exposed
- Provides one-off solutions that do not integrate
- Aligns your technology with the solutions they have available
- Responds to your questions or concerns according to their availability



## RELIABLE IT SERVICE PROVIDER

- Evaluates your current IT environment before making any recommendations
- Provides a customized solution based on your business's needs and budget
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# MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE



When we think on New Year's Resolutions, we think of change. Making small modifications or major changes will help to make life easier for you and for others.

Civility in the office can certainly make life easier. For most, small offices, crowded desks and cramped cubicles are all a part of the office setting. Working in these conditions several hours a day can certainly be trying and often too close for comfort. If you think about it, this small space is - "Home away from home."

## Quote of the Day:

"Politeness and consideration of others is like investing pennies and getting dollars back."  
~ Thomas Sowell

When working with others in small office spaces, it is always a good idea to:

(A) Assume everyone is on the same schedule as you.

(B) Always borrow your colleagues' items without asking their permission.

(C) Make certain that you do all personal grooming at your desk.

(D) Respect your co-worker's privacy and office space.

If you answered (D), "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," Aretha Franklin would be pleased.

If you spend most of your time in this type of environment, following a few guidelines can make the office atmosphere much more pleasant.

- Honor your colleagues' privacy before entering their office space.
- Ask if it is a good time to discuss business.
- Wait until you are asked to be seated. It's not a good idea to just "plop-down" and begin to visit.

• Keep your hands to yourself. Don't touch or pick up personal objects or materials that belong to your co-worker unless asked to do so.

• Arrive on time to meetings and virtual calls.

• When conducting business, be aware that others in the area can hear you. Keep your language professional.

• If you have personal business, it is best to discuss it elsewhere.

• Close working conditions mean personal hygiene is a must.

• It's best to conduct personal grooming away from your desk.

• Try to keep articles not applicable to your work off your desk.

• Almost everyone has been asked to contribute to some type of fund raiser. Although there are many good causes, don't assume your co-workers are as enthusiastic about it as you. Telling your colleagues that they need to or should contribute may make them ill at ease. They may not want to support a particular cause or make a monetary

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contribution.

• Light-hearted humor and jokes can certainly add to a fun or relaxing time at the office. However, be aware of your surroundings. Inappropriate language and behavior can make others uncomfortable and may result in charges of sexual harassment.

• Respect your co-workers' office space and desk. Don't use or remove any of their items without asking permission.

• If your office has a lounge or break room help keep it clean. Remember the phrase: "Your mother doesn't work here."

You may not be able to choose the size of your office or your workspace, but practicing politeness and consideration can make office life easier.

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 llmooreparagould@gmail.com.

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# Jumbo Fun

## CCJPL Hosts Board Game Day

Twens lived life large and showed off their board game skills at the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library Jolly Jumbo Board Games on December 6th.

Teen Librarian Michaela Huss led kids through oversized versions of classic board games, such as Jenga, Scrabble, Uno, and more, which were available in the library's Round Room from 4 to 5 p.m.

The library will host several events throughout the new year for all ages, including the Adult Knitting Club, Kid's Storytimes, Zumba and more! For information on upcoming events, visit the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library Facebook or website.



Caffery Richards

PHOTOS BY SHELBY RUSSOM



Michaela Huss



Addison Granger, Charles Atkerson



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# Birth Announcement



MELISSA DONNER PHOTOGRAPHY

*Andrew Rowe*

Andrew Rowe was born October 14, 2024, at St. Bernards Medical Center in Jonesboro to William and Lauren Rowe. The baby weighed 8 lbs, and was 20.5 inches long.

Andrew was welcomed by his siblings, Emma and Daniel, and his grandparents, Thomas and Bess Parker, Kelly and Lenia Rowe and Daniel and Jean Peterman.

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# A Healthy New Year

## For Pets

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



When I think about fresh starts, I think about trying to break old habits in order to lead to a healthier, happier and more productive life. The same can be done for your pets! I advise pet owners daily on choices for the pet for a healthier, happier life. A few topics of conversation include portion control and healthier dietary choices, appropriate exercise and activity based on age and breed, and options for mental stimulation to help avoid unwanted

behavioral issues. In this article, I will go over some of these methods to help your pet lead a healthier life.

Let's start with dietary choices and portion control. This is a very common discussion I have with pet owners. Best dietary choice for your pet is based on multiple factors such as breed, age, size, metabolic rate and health concerns. Different breeds have different recommended daily requirements. For instance a chihuahua that is a couch potato and only receives exercise when it ventures to the food bowl is not going to demand the same daily calorie count as a very active, working German shorthair pointer that exercises eight hours per day.

As you can imagine, age and metabolic rate also factor into appropriate food amount and type of diet. Senior patients typically are not as active (ergo, have lower metabolic demands) than junior patients, and therefore have a lower overall caloric demand. Further, their protein, fat, and carbohydrate demands change with age, typically decreasing.

Lastly, we take into consideration health concerns. There are many types of diets catered to pets that have specific disease processes or food sensitivities/food allergies. Kidney diets exist for patients that suffer from chronic or acute kidney disease in canines and felines. Other specially formulated diets for specific organ function include liver/hepatic, thyroid, dissolution diets for urinary bladder stones, urinary tract, brain, heart/cardiac, joints/arthritis care, and many more.

There are also diets that cater to a specific breed that are scientifically tested and proven to be complete and balanced, but always best to check with your vet before implementing a sudden diet change. Now, you are feeding an age-appropriate diet, for your small breed dog,



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that has sensitive skin, but how much to give? We all know there are charts on the back of every dog food bag recommending a certain daily amount. Those amounts are based on an average size dog of that specific type, at an average metabolic rate, at an average age. In other words, best to check with your vet on what amount is best to give your pet, especially if your pet struggles with its weight.

The idea of a healthy weight in pets has been somewhat skewed over the years - I have many people ask if their pet is too skinny when their weight is healthy, and I have many clients who thought their pet was a healthy weight when they are indeed over-conditioned. Most often the reason for an overweight pet is simple, too much food and not enough exercise. Often, simply cutting back on treats by 50%, eliminating people food and taking more walks will help lead to a healthier weight.

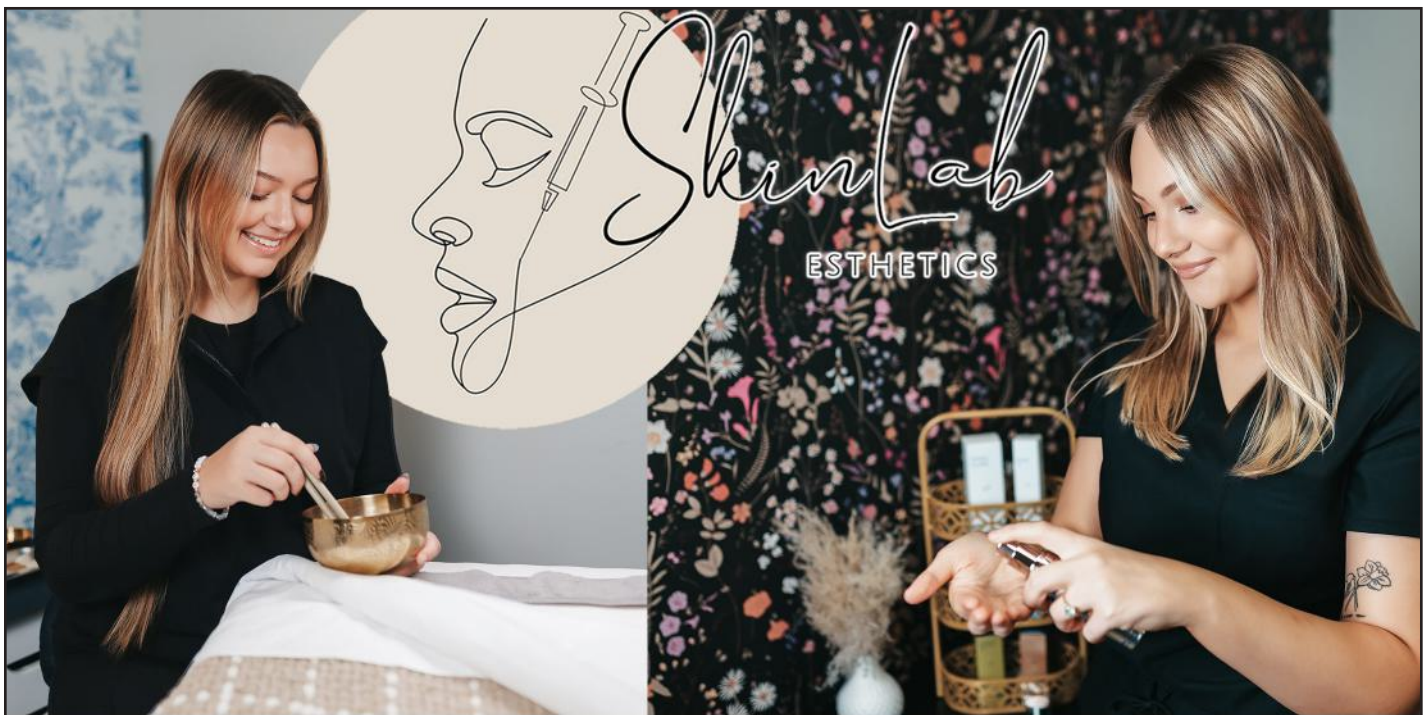
While we're on the subject of taking more walks, let's discuss appropriate exercise. For instance, a senior dog that has been diagnosed with osteoarthritis and just experienced an injury to its knee but is also overweight does not need to be taking long, vigorous walks. More appropriate exercise for this pet would be low impact exercise like hydrotherapy after a healthy weight loss program has been initiated. Alternately, a healthy young adult dog suffering no ailments to any joints can typically handle more aerobic activity to help promote healthy weight loss at a faster pace. Caveat to this ... brachycephalic breeds. Brachycephalic breeds are the smooch face breeds (yes, this is veterinary lingo, haha!), like Pugs, French Bulldogs, Boston terriers, Shih Tzus, etc. Brachycephalics have all things working against them as far as respiratory system goes. These guys can have narrow nostrils (stenotic nares), everted laryngeal sacculles (part of their throat that gets in the way for normal breathing), elongated

soft palates (longer than normal soft palate that makes them terrible snorers), and can often have smaller chest cavities which means smaller lung fields. All of these things = these patients are not good at breathing well, which also means intense aerobic activity is not for them. They also cannot handle warm and humid weather. Best for them to exercise in a controlled environment, i.e. inside except on cool, crisp days.

Exercise is great mental stimulation and takes on many forms, from canine treasure hunts to agility training. Mental stimulation is key to a healthy lifestyle. When your pet has activities it enjoys, maybe instead of begging at the treat bowl or by the dinner table, it will bring you its favorite toy to play with or try to draw your attention to that activity. This also helps to strengthen the bond you have with your pet.

Healthy lifestyle choices are not always easy for us in the beginning, but they can quickly become easy choices, then they just become your new, healthy life. For pets, we make decisions for them; be your pet's advocate this year -- make those hard decisions that are the best decisions for them. I hope everyone has a very happy and healthy new year! Best of luck to all who are making a fresh start!

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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- 1/11 - Saturday at TBA, Natasha Rayevskiy Dance Studio
- 1/17 - Friday at 7:00pm, Reza - Magician
- 1/18 - Saturday at 8:00pm, Carolanne Miljavac - Comedian
- 1/19 - Sunday at 3:00pm, Twitty & Lynn
- 1/26 - Sunday at 7:00pm, Elton John Experience, [showpass.com/elton](http://showpass.com/elton)
- 1/27 - Monday at 7:00pm, Bluegrass Monday, [kasu.org/tickets](http://kasu.org/tickets)
- 1/31 - Friday at 8:00pm, Officer Eudy - Comedian, [madhattershows.com](http://madhattershows.com)

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# SAVE THE DATE

## DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD EVENTS



January 3rd-4th

7:00 p.m.

Ultimate Oldies

Downtown Collins Theatre

Reserve Tickets: Joe at 870-215-2253



January 16th

6:00 p.m.

Singo Bingo

1812 Pizza Co.

Main Street Paragould Event



January 17th

7:00 p.m.

Reza - Magician

Downtown Collins Theatre

*A complete listing of all Downtown events can be found under  
"Events" at [downtownparagould.com](http://downtownparagould.com) or  
[facebook.com/oneandonlydowntown/events](https://facebook.com/oneandonlydowntown/events).*



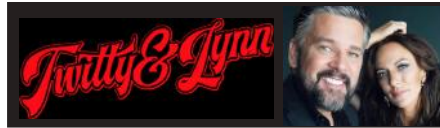
January 18th

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Girls' Night Out

Participating Downtown Merchants

Main Street Paragould Event



January 19th

3:00 p.m.

Twitty & Lynn

Downtown Collins Theatre



January 26th

7:00 p.m.

Elton John Experience

Downtown Collins Theatre

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# Through the Looking Glass

*a Mad Gala*



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# PREMIERE

## *Holiday Happenings*



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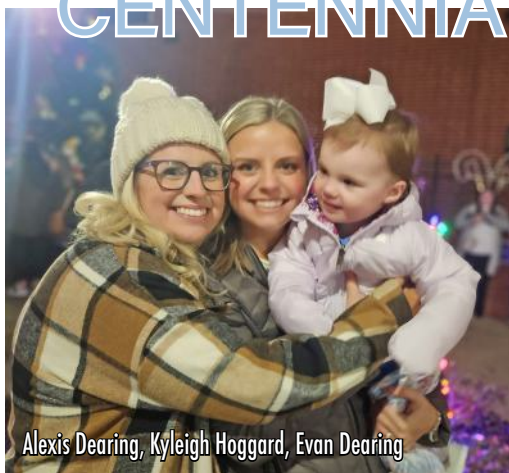


Paragould First United Methodist Church Choir



Miranda Reynolds, Judith Taylor-Wheelis

# GENTENNIAL PARK TREE LIGHTING



Alexis Dearing, Kyleigh Hoggard, Evan Dearing



Brian Pearson, Piper Pearson



Main Street Paragould marked the beginning of the holiday season with the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Centennial Park in Downtown Paragould. Carols were led by the Paragould First United Methodist Church Choir, and the tree was provided by Crow's Nest Farms. Collectible ornaments and hot cocoa were also available.



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S P O R T S



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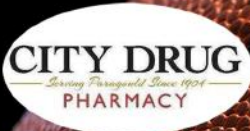
### PLAYER OF THE GAME:

# CAVENAUGH



### PRE/POST GAME:

### BROADCAST BOOTH:







# JOY FEST OFFERS HOLIDAY FUN



Karleigh Anderson

People of all ages gathered at Union Street Park in Jonesboro on December 7th to celebrate the holiday season with vendors, musicians, food, ice skating and rides

at the Downtown Jonesboro Alliance Joy Fest. The free event created a joyful atmosphere, including the lighting of a 55-foot-tall Christmas tree, provided by RightFiber.



Kiersten Potts, Molly



Blakely Callhoun, Zelda Horton, Lilly Vaughn



Melody Conatser



Anna Ganong, Cody Duncan

PHOTOS BY SHELBY RUSSOM

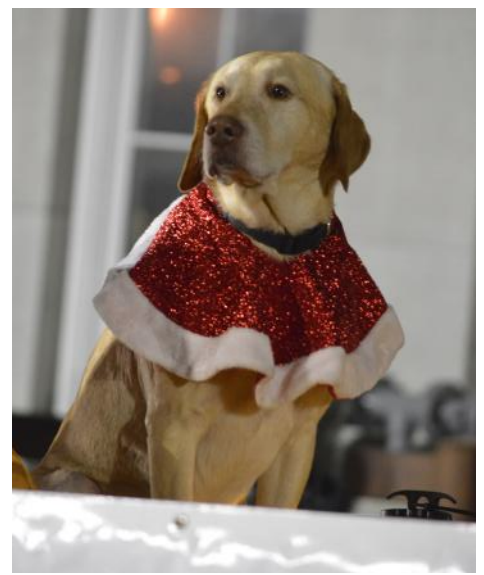


# Parades

Spread Cheer Throughout NEA



PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT AND SHELBY RUSSOM





# A Christmas Carol

## GCFAC Presents Holiday Classic



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Greene County Fine Arts Council presented A Christmas Carol on December 6th-8th at the Historic Collins Theatre in Downtown Paragould.



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# DSO *Holiday Concert*



Neale Bartee



Cindy Hagen, Christy Appleton, Claudia Shannon, Linda Gaither



Mark Young, Adam Young

The Delta Symphony Orchestra held its annual Holiday Concert on Sunday, December 8th, in Riceland Hall of The Fowler Center on the campus of Arkansas State University. Dr. Neale Bartee conducted the performance, which included a variety of Christmas classics, including "Mary Did You Know," "Ukrainian Carol," "Sleigh Ride"

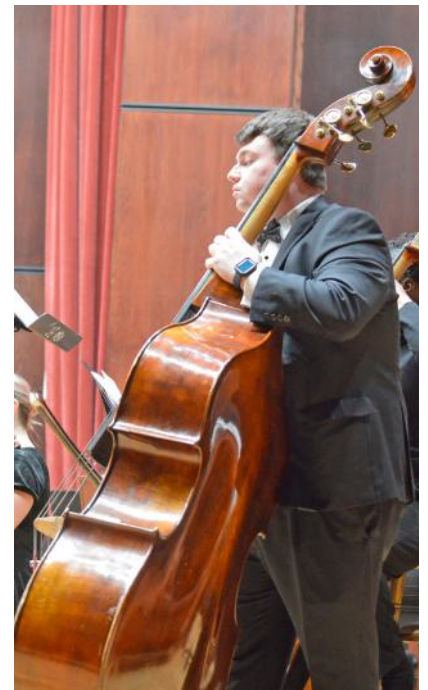
and "O Holy Night." Guest performers were Bethania Baray-Harrison, Quaine Hogan and Jenny Powers. Local students joined Bethania during one performance as a preview for the Young Artist Concert set for February 23rd. The event concluded with a Christmas carol sing-along led by Santa Claus and children from the audience.



Bethania Baray-Harrison



Emily Hay, David Reed, Karen Ladd





# Yes Virginia, *There is a Santa Claus*

SUBMITTED PHOTOS BY ANNA GANONG



## FOA PRESENTS MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET



The Foundation of Arts presented Miracle on 34th Street November 21st through 24th at The Forum in Downtown Jonesboro. The Christmas classic brought cheer to audiences as the verdict came in ... Santa is real!





# Cocoa Crawl



Ashlyn Duncan, Erin Shelton

Main Street Paragould held its annual Cocoa Crawl on Saturday, December 14th, with several businesses in Downtown Paragould participating. The event gave residents and visitors to the city a chance to take advantage of discounts from participating merchants during the final weeks of Christmas shopping, while also enjoying treats, such as hot cocoa, mulled cider and chai tea.

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NEA'S **PREMIERE**  
MAGAZINE

# Through the Looking Glass

## JONESBORO JA CHARITY BALL

Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro will host its 54th Annual Charity Ball, Through the Looking Glass: A Mad Gala on February 22nd at Embassy Suites Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center. Cocktail hour and registration begin at 5:30 p.m. with program, dinner and live auction beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Put on your formal attire and enjoy a date night for a cause. Have your picture taken on the Honda of Jonesboro Red Carpet. The Gaming Room will open at the close of the Live Auction with poker, roulette, craps and a new game called Rock Paper Scissors. The Gaming Room Prize Pack features a Big Green Egg grill and accessories. The Austin Cook Hole-in-One game is back this year with a Golf Prize Pack including rounds of golf at Ridgepointe Country Club and a private party at Divots Golf Lounge.

The Century Finance Silent Auction is packed with vacations, gift baskets, fly fishing, art and more. You do not have to be present to bid, just text Charityball2025 to 44834 to browse the silent auction items online and place your bid from February 22nd through February 23rd at 10 a.m.

This year's Raffle Drawing features a 30A Beach Vacation sponsored by Brooksie Hartness of Image Realty. Raffle tickets are only \$10 and can be purchased from any JA member or by messaging the JA Facebook page

leading up to the event. One winner will be selected by random draw and does not have to be present to win. The Charity Ball Live Auction will feature packages ranging from a Sissy's Log Cabin shopping spree to duck hunting in Argentina, so come ready to Bid, Bid, Bid.

Bring your dancing shoes to hit the dance floor sponsored by Cavanaugh Auto Group. City Mix out of Memphis will bring the party to life on the Tommy's Car Wash Stage with contemporary pop/hip hop/R&B and all your favorite classics. After Hours kicks it up with DJ Spence & Suspense Entertainment ready to take you down the rabbit hole.


All proceeds of Charity Ball support the 12 service projects of JA of Jonesboro in Craighead County. Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro is a 501c3 non-profit organization operated entirely by volunteers who donate over 3,500 service hours each year to children and families in the community. Since 1958, JA of Jonesboro has donated over \$1 million in scholarships and endeavors to brighten the lives of children through our mission of Caring Hearts, Helping Hands and Changing Lives.

Tickets are \$175 per person and can be purchased by texting Charityball2025 to 44834. Follow Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro on social media for more details leading up to the event or email charityballpr@jajonesboro.org.

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# *Formal Affair*

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# Wedding Announcement



PHOTO BY SHELBY JONES

## Meet Mr. and Mrs. Tyler Cribbs

Congratulations to Tyler Cribbs and Kayla Ullrey on their marriage on November 9, 2024. They exchanged vows in a ceremony at the Paragould Community Center.

The bride is the daughter of Vernon and Brandy Ullrey of Paragould, and the groom is the son of Laura Cribbs.

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# DON'T MISS THESE

## *Upcoming Events in NEA*



### NYIT Pickleball

*January 15th*

Join NYITCOM and St. Baldrick's on January 15th at the Red Wolf Convention Center at Arkansas State University for a pickleball tournament to raise money to help conquer kids' cancer!

From 5:15 p.m. to 9 p.m., participants and spectators will have fun while raising money for cancer research.

Donate in person or online at [stbaldricks.org](http://stbaldricks.org).



### DU Banquet

*January 18th*

Join Craighead County Ducks Unlimited at 5:00 p.m. on January 18th at the Embassy Suites in Jonesboro, for the DU Banquet, which will feature a raffle and auctions. The event will also feature the new 2025 Ducks Unlimited merchandise!

Tickets can be purchased online, and proceeds will benefit the conservation efforts of Ducks Unlimited. For more information, visit the Ducks Unlimited website.



### Polar Plunge

Dive into cold water for a cause at the Paragould Polar Plunge! Register to jump on-site or online. You can also support your favorite plunger by donating!

Proceeds will benefit Special Olympics. The date will be announced soon, so be on the lookout for updated information on the Special Olympics Arkansas Area 1 Facebook page!

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!

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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAPPENS HERE: WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

While living in Nashville and interning at Ancora TN, formerly End Slavery TN in 2009, Hope Found Executive Director Megan Mitchell Brown learned about an online interactive case map that pinpointed locations where human trafficking cases had been identified in Tennessee.

Fast forward to 2022, she remembered this case map and thought it would be a great idea to have it as a visual in her presentations so people could see how many cases were happening in Arkansas.

Two area students helped to make this happen. Anna Grace Burton and Christen Conway were connected with Hope Found through their EAST teacher, Lorenzo Balderas.

“The opportunity to work with Hope Found came about after I finished my “Jonesboro



*Students support Hope Found of Northeast Arkansas in the fight to end human trafficking by creating a case map to educate the community.*

Christmas Light Display Map,” which was a finalist in the EAST Conference “Mapping App” competition in 2023,” Anna Grace said. Mr. Balderas asked the students if they would like to meet with Megan to help create a map of human trafficking cases in Arkansas.

“I already had a little bit of experience with mapping so I figured I would at least meet with Mrs. Megan and go from there,” Anna Grace explained. “After that, I started the map as my EAST project and I was constantly thinking about ways to improve it even when I wasn’t in class.”

These maps will help Megan when presenting to community businesses, organizations, and classes – but they made an impact from the very start of their creation.

“Before working with Hope Found I heard of trafficking but didn’t really know the depth of it and all the major components to trafficking,” Christen said. She went on to say it taught her a lot about how to recognize



the signs of trafficking herself - knowledge that can help protect her and her peers. “This project also makes me feel a little more safe because I know the tactics of traffickers and when I notice that I can avoid a situation that I shouldn’t be in.”

“Before working with Hope Found, I knew of human trafficking but I didn’t truly understand how serious of an issue it was and how local it was,” Anna Grace shared. “In the process of making the map, I realized that human trafficking wasn’t just a thing in movies or scary stories in the news, it was happening as close to me as a couple of streets over my whole life and I never knew it.”

In the fight to end human trafficking, knowledge is power and the more individuals know about how it happens, the more we can join together to keep it from happening.

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# HAPPENINGS

## AMMC PROJECT HOPE RECEIVES DONATIONS FROM PSD, PEP

Arkansas Methodist Medical Center's Project Hope recently received support from the Paragould School District and the Paragould Emerging Professionals.

Project Hope provides breast cancer awareness services and free mammograms to those in need.

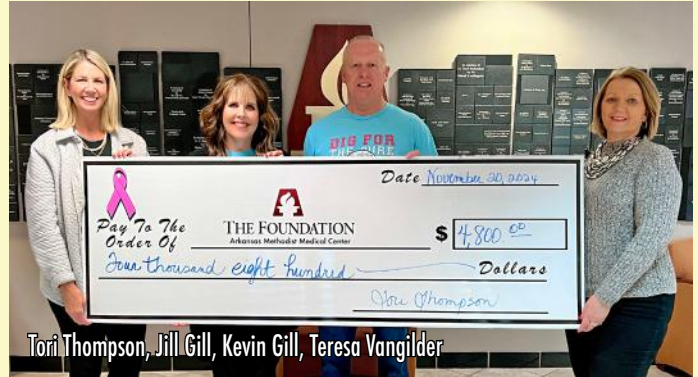
Paragould School District raised money for the project through its Dig for the Cure event and donated \$4,800 to AMMC's Project Hope. Since 2013, Dig for the Cure has donated \$57,863 to AMMC's Project Hope.

Kevin Gill and Jill Gill, Dig for the Cure coordinators, presented the funds to AMMC Foundation Director Tori Thompson and AMMC Foundation Assistant Teresa Vangilder.

In addition, the Paragould Emerging Professionals donated proceeds from their annual Chili Cook-off to AMMC's Project Hope.

PEP members Drake Williams, Whitney Gultner, Alyssa Blakeny, Millie Wade, Chanda Matheny and Jason Matheny presented the donation.

For more information about Project Hope, contact AMMC at 870-239-7000.



## ST. BERNARDS CELEBRATES OPENING OF MATERNAL LIFE360 HOME

St. Bernards Medical Center in Jonesboro held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 25th to celebrate the opening of the first Maternal Life360 HOME in Arkansas to provide services to women with high-risk pregnancies.

"Opening the first Life360 Maternal HOME in Arkansas marks an important milestone, and it builds on our statewide focus on improving the availability and quality of care for pregnant women and babies across our state," said Department of Human Services Secretary Kristi Putnam. "We're grateful to St. Bernards for leading the way, and appreciate our many other partners around the state who are working to implement this program so more women can benefit from these services."

Life360 HOMEs are an innovative program that support women with high-risk pregnancies through home-visiting services during pregnancy and for up to two years after birth. The intensive supports available through this program are aimed at improving health outcomes and health-related social needs like food security and housing, and as a result, the long-term health and well-being of women and babies.

The St. Bernards Maternal Life360 HOME will serve women who are enrolled in Medicaid benefits in Craighead County. A second Life360 HOME at White River Medical Center in Batesville is expected to open in the near future, and will serve women in Independence County, and additional Maternal Life360s are expected to follow in other hospitals around Arkansas.



"St. Bernards has a mission 'to provide Christ-like healing to the community,' and we cannot have healthy communities without healthy moms and babies," said Emily McGee, St. Bernards Vice President of Nursing and Women's & Children's Services. "For far too long, our state has struggled with challenging maternal health outcomes, especially in Eastern Arkansas. Through our Pregnancy Clinics and free healthcare services and education, we are improving outcomes throughout our service area. Still, we recognize a need to provide ongoing services that go beyond prenatal care. By partnering with Parents as Teachers, the Maternal Life360 Program helps us provide care for up to years postpartum, helping women adjust to motherhood and children get healthy starts. We appreciate Governor Sanders and the DHS team for their leadership planning and action to help families."

# JONESBORO UNLIMITED RECEIVES GRANT FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK

Jonesboro Unlimited has been awarded \$2 million through the Arkansas Site Development Program in an announcement by Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC).

Jonesboro joins 12 other communities in the state that received funding to enhance industrial sites, increasing their readiness for job-creating economic development projects.

“Jonesboro Unlimited is grateful for the opportunity to partner with the State of Arkansas to improve the readiness of our industrial properties,” said Mark Young, JU president and CEO. “These funds will be used to provide industrial water service to over 600 acres in the Craighead Technology Park.”

Under Governor Sanders’ leadership and in partnership with the Arkansas State Legislature, AEDC developed and announced the Arkansas Site Development Program in June 2024. Eligible recipient locations are industrial sites of at least 30 contiguous acres of land, listed on the Arkansas Site Selection Database, and



owned or optioned by the applicant.

“Strong communities with competitive industrial sites are essential for winning economic development projects, and the Arkansas Site Development Program will play a major role in equipping our state’s communities to win,” said Clint O’Neal, AEDC executive director. “The Arkansas Site Development Program is the first

program of its kind in our state, and it is an important step that will help us continue to secure economic development projects in the years to come. This program would not have been possible without the support of Governor Sanders, the Arkansas General Assembly, and the local communities that applied for funding – we appreciate their support and look forward to continued success.”

# BRTC’S SINGLETON GIVES GIFT OF GAMING TO CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

Black River Technical College Academic Advisor and ADA Coordinator Zachary Singleton has been spreading a little happiness to patients at Minnesota Children’s Hospital.



Singleton and his brother sold their late father’s house in 2024. After the funds were split and Singleton received his portion he decided to put some of the money toward brightening someone else’s day. He did his research and found an organization called Gamers Outreach.

Gamers Outreach is “a charity that empowers hospitalized children through video games.” The charity realizes that staying in a hospital can feel isolating, especially to children, and can take away key childhood moments. Once he was connected with Gamers Outreach Singleton was given a list of pediatric hospitals that were able to take donations. He had originally planned to give to Arkansas Children’s Hospital, but they were not able to take donations at the time. However, there was an option that caught his eye, Minnesota Children’s Hospital.

“I donated to the Minnesota Children’s Hospital in memory of my dad,” Singleton said. “Years ago I made a few trips with him to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to get some tests done for him. Those were some of my favorite times with him.”

With his donation Gamers Outreach was able to send the hospital a fully equipped gaming cart, including a Nintendo Switch, controllers, and games. He was given an update from the hospital after the

donation arrived and was told the cart was already very popular.

Even though he was not able to donate to any Arkansas children’s facilities, Singleton still found a way to make a donation close to home. Being BRTC’s ADA Coordinator he knows how important it is for all students to be given the same opportunities to participate. Singleton donated a PlayStation 5 Access Controller to the BRTC Esports lounge on the Pochontas campus. The controller allows for multiple configurations and extra devices to be added to it.

“I wanted to make sure everyone who attends BRTC can enjoy playing video games as much as possible, and this controller will allow them to do that,” Singleton said.



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# Next Month

## Progress



From small towns to big cities, the communities in NEA have been busy developing a variety of projects.

## Kids Play



Read about how different youth programs are preventing dying arts from becoming things of the past.

## A Formal Affair



Whether preparing for a wedding, prom or other formal occasion, you won't want to miss this special section.

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The store will close in January

We will continue our online shopping with [ShopGSGifts.com](http://ShopGSGifts.com) but will close the store after a Big Sale starting January 3rd

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*Downtown Paragould*



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