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PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

April
2021

**NATIONAL
VOLUNTEER
MONTH**

Elizabeth Kimble

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The Volunteers Who
Make a Big Difference

HOME & GARDEN

Special Section

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32

WHAT'S INSIDE

17 Event Recap
Polar Plunge

35 CRSP:
The Carmacks

22 St. Bernards NICU
Kelly Welch

36 CRSP:
Patty Camp



34

30 Crowley's Ridge
Nature Center
Elizabeth Kimble

38 CRSP:
Collin Hester

32 Little Green Thumbs
*Health, Wellness, and
Environmental Studies*

39 CRSP:
Donna and David Jones

34 CRSP:
Mary Buchman

47 Special Section:
Home and Garden



36



47

ON THE COVER

Page 30

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JELENA VETETO

NMLS# 629680

VP | REGIONAL MANAGER

jelena.veteto@firstcommunity.net

KATIE INGRAM

NMLS# 882845

VP | MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR

katie.ingram@firstcommunity.net

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From the Manager



Volunteer work has certainly looked much differently over the past year, but its necessity has not ceased, and those willing to work toward what they want to see have not quit. April is National Volunteer Month and in celebration, we are delighted to share stories of those who give freely and graciously of their time to improve our community.

Both Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists pop up frequently – because they show up physically to serve so many places in NEA. Plants and parks are a recurring theme as we enter into spring. We hope these stories highlight both mature minds and young hands, leaders and groups, individuals and organizations.

Volunteers are essential to providing beautiful and clean spaces in our community, and to making opportunities more widely available for all. We aim to provide both inspiration and resources in these pages. For more information on volunteer opportunities across the area, visit our sister publication, exploremornea.com for a list of ideas on how you can give back to NEA.

This April issue also features a special Home & Garden Section that includes stories on everything from buying and/or selling a home to designing it perfectly to suit your style and needs inside and out. We consulted the experts, of course.

We hope your April is full of sunshine and that any rain is followed by flowers. Thank you for supporting NEA's good news and HAPPY SPRING!

Lindsey Spencer
Manager of Creative Content

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publisher/advertising sales

Dina Mason |
dina@mormediainc.com

contributing writers

Richard Brummett |
brummettr34@gmail.com
Caitlin LaFarlette |
caitlin_lafarlette@hotmail.com
Chuck Long |
Charles.Long@agfc.ar.gov
Jared Pickney |
jared@fellowshipparagould.com
Sara Brown |
saraeb22@yahoo.com
Linda Lou Moore |
manners@paragould.net
Bethany Davis |
bethanyfdavis@gmail.com
Jenny Brown |
jbrown@paragouldschools.net

content manager/designer

Lindsey Spencer |
lindsey@mormediainc.com

advertising sales team

Dina Mason | dina@mormediainc.com
Perry Mason | perry@mormediainc.com
Brian Osborn | brian@mormediainc.com
Justin Hetler | justin@mormediainc.com
Natalie Harrell | natalie@mormediainc.com



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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



Each time the month of April rolls around I spend a lot of time thinking about my dad. For many years the opening of the major league baseball season landed somewhere in the week of April 12, which was his birthday, and he took great pride in the fact that he and baseball shared a marquee day. Many times when someone asked him when he was born he would answer, "The same year Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs." For those not up on their baseball lore, the year was 1927 and I have no idea if that is why Dad loved baseball so much or not, but I know he did and I know my fondness for the game now serves as the eternal conduit from my heart to his.

I vividly recall when I was 4 years old and Dad came home from his workday at the hardware store and told me to follow him outside. That day he presented me with my first baseball glove -- which I still have -- and he began teaching me how to catch a throw and how to toss it back to him, and later on how to field grounders and fly balls. From the moment I slipped that glove onto my hand I never wanted to be anything but a baseball player and I'm pretty sure if the St. Louis Cardinals called me tomorrow and expressed interest in signing me I would hurry in for immediate surgery on my right shoulder so I could once again throw and head on over to the plastic surgeon for a fat-ectomy in order to drop the extra 40 pounds I'm carrying around, make one more stop for some new contact lenses and then point my truck north and hit the gas pedal.

Dad was great at working baseball into everyday life situations. The reason I have never smoked a cigarette nor tasted alcohol is because when I was 9 he asked me to never sample either, adding "especially if you want to be a ballplayer. These things (pointing to his cigarette) will kill you; and there's nothing good about alcohol. It's ruined many a player."

Check. No smoking, no drinking. He also would talk me through difficult situations by using baseball analogies.

When I was struggling with some school-related issue he would say something like, "Well, that's just like facing a really tough pitcher. He may get you the first two times you bat, but if you hang in there and figure out what the problem is you just might get him the next time." He said a lot of the trials we face in life are "just like a bad hop. You may flub that first chance but if you settle down and concentrate on the next one, you might turn a double play and everything will be all right."

He was right and I can't tell you how many times I've watched someone fall to pieces over one of life's little mishaps and all I can think is, "That's only one play; get the next one and move on."

In his playing days Dad was a catcher by trade and followed that path to a very brief minor league career. He explained to me the importance of that position, the need to always be thinking two steps ahead of the other team. For instance, he said, if they had a runner on first base he was already thinking through all the possibilities: Would he steal? Would the other manager try to bunt him over? Would they hit-and-run? And considering all those options, he was already positioning himself to be in the right place with the proper footwork for whatever transpired. He carried that philosophy over into his calling as a traveling salesman, preparing for sales calls by figuring out ahead of time the excuse a buyer might give for saying "no" and already having

a comeback prepared. More than once I saw him put that plan to work and walk out with a nice sale and even that became a baseball-like challenge to him. He considered each sales call a time at bat, and his goal was to "get a hit at least one out of every three times. If you hit .333, you're going to make some money," just like in the big leagues.

We watched games together and liked to discuss the finer points of the sport, why something worked or didn't work. We simply enjoyed the time we had sitting there together either in the bleachers or in the comfort of the living room in front of the TV. Then cancer jumped into the middle of things in the summer of 2006 and by late November he was gone. He spent most of those final days in a nursing home and I stayed with him each night until he fell asleep and I guess it's fitting that the last words he was able to say came as the Cardinals finished off a World Series championship.

I lost him a few short weeks after that but only in the physical sense. He's with me in spirit, not only each April but each day as his baseball-like approach to life dwells inside me. I don't fall apart over the bad hops, I don't cry too much when I strike out; I just figure I'm going to get another chance and maybe it will turn out better. Just like Dad always said it would.

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LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

Can I have a future worth getting excited about? In the midst of all the brokenness and times of uncertainty? In a world with Covid, death, divorce, shootings, corrupt politicians and all kinds of dysfunction? The question is, can I, in the midst of the pain and the sorrow and unanswered questions of life, lift up my head and discover hope over the horizon?

The truth is that this life is hard. We all sin. We all get sinned against. We hurt others and are hurt by others. We have seasons where we feel as though we have been body slammed by life. Eventually we suffer to the point that we are weakened, and then we die.

Eat your kale. Cut out your gluten. Do yoga or crossfit or both. But one day, we are all going to draw our last breath on earth.

That's the bad news. The good news is that thanks to Jesus, our death can be much more like a gardener than executioner, freeing us up to experience the life we have been longing to live. A life where we will no longer find ourselves filled with shame, fear and guilt. A life where all sad things will come untrue.

This is why every year Christians around the world celebrate Easter. It serves as a reminder that just as Jesus Christ experienced a death, burial

and resurrection, we too, who hope in Him, will experience a death, burial and resurrection. As a result, we will be just as we are now, but with all the sin and imperfections rinsed out of us.

This is why we say, despite what you have been told, that God is not asking you to settle for anything. Rather, He is inviting you to stop settling. He's not offering you some consolation prize. Rather, He is holding out for you, by His grace and mercy through Christ, the future you are longing for.

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I guided the fourteen foot Duracraft as carefully as possible down the channel of the St. Francis River. Hidden logs, stobs and rootwads waited just underneath the water surface to grab the lower unit of the 9.9 Johnson and it was my intent to avoid them and enjoy a day of fishing. A nice logjam lay just ahead and I knew there had to be some channel catfish hiding in its shadows so I eased the boat toward the bank and cut the motor. I gingerly made my way to the front of the boat to tie a rope to a limb to keep me in place while I fished.

The boat coasted toward the limb but without warning it made a solid stop. Before I knew it I was in the water. Luckily it was less than waist deep and I was able to gather myself and scramble back into the boat. I suffered no injuries but my pride was a little hurt.

Each year in Arkansas, there are many boating accidents that happen much like the one I just detailed. Somebody is out hoping to enjoy a nice, peaceful day on the water and then something goes awry. Someone could end up in the water, a collision with an object or with another vessel occurs or some other unforeseen incident happens. For the most part, these accidents are minor, but as is evidenced by data from 2020, some of these accidents end up with property damage, bodily injury, or the worst case scenario, a fatality.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission recently published the 2020 Boating Accident Year-End Report and the data shows 2020 as being a perilous year for Arkansas boaters. There were 75 reported boating accidents in 2020 with an estimated property damage of almost \$300,000. In association with these accidents, there were 13 deaths along with 35 injuries.



Due to storied events rekindled in songs like “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” or movies like “Perfect Storm,” boating accidents are often associated with bad weather, rough water and unforgiving conditions. But in Arkansas and most inland states, that is not the case. Most accidents happen under calm, clear conditions. Accidents most often occur in the summer months on weekend days, in the afternoon when the weather is very nice.

Another common misconception about boating accidents is that they are often caused by young boaters operating in an unsafe manner. Though that does happen on occasion, the statistics show that each year older ages are more often involved in the accidents. In 2020, for example, the average age of the operator was 43 years old, while the average age of a fatality victim was 51. Thirty of the accidents were caused by operators with over 500 hours of experience on the water, while 27 were caused by those with less than 20 hours of experience.

One statistic that does hold true to popular thinking is the location of boating accidents. Crowded lakes do produce some of the highest rates of accidents with Greers Ferry at the top of the list in 2020 with 11 reported accidents. Other bodies of water that boast large boating crowds also tend to follow suit in the accident stats. Lake Hamilton, Bull Shoals Lake and Lake Norfork each had at least four accidents. White River, which is heavily boated up and down its length, led the way in flowing waters.

Alcohol does play a role in a handful of accidents each year, but enforcement efforts have curtailed the number of boaters on the water while under the influence. Operator inexperience and inattention were at the top of the list in causes of accidents in 2020.

I do not share all these facts, figures and bad news to keep you off the water, I simply want my friends and family to be safe while on it. We all get on the water to enjoy the great outdoors, so please take steps to ensure each outing is as safe as possible.

Life jackets should be at the forefront when thinking of what it takes to be safe. Choose life jackets that fit each individual and that are comfortable, not just a jacket to meet the legal requirements. A life jacket is of no help if it is not worn. There are great options on the market as comfortable life vests come in a variety of fabrics and styles.



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

If a traditional life jacket is too bulky, another option is an inflatable jacket. Inflatables are becoming more common, especially among fishermen. A couple of notes on those - if they are the only jackets in the boat, they must be worn at all times and can only be used by those 16 or older. One other piece of equipment required on certain boats is a U.S. Coast Guard approved throwable personal flotation device. Often referred to as a “seat cushion,” these are required for boats 16 feet or longer but are a good idea on any boat.

Fire extinguishers are required if the boat has an enclosed fuel space. A sound producing device like a whistle or air horn is required on all boats, including jet skis, operated on federal waters. One other note, new in 2021, is that plugs must be removed from all boats once they are taken out of the water. This will help decrease the spread of invasive species.

There are also other safety requirements but these can vary depending on waterway and size of boat so please consult the 2021 Boating Handbook to find all the requirements. This book can be found at many license dealers or Arkansas Game and Fish Commission offices or Nature Centers. The regulations are also available at agfc.com.

To get the lowdown on all the boating requirements, consider taking the online Boater Education class that is offered at agfc.com. Not only will this provide great insight into boating in Arkansas, this class is required for anyone born on or after January 1, 1986.

Whether fishing, skiing or just enjoying some lake time, I hope 2021 offers lots of opportunities to get on the water. Have fun on our wonderful waterways, be safe, and I hope to see you out there!



PET *of the* MONTH

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BY ALLISON HITCHCOCK

We adopted Liam on March 3, 2020, at 11 weeks old from the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society in Jonesboro. He is lab mixed with Great Pyrenees.

He is the biggest lap dog ever (weighs 103 pounds but thinks he's a chihuahua in size!); he's super playful, sweet, and loving. He loves going to Unleashed Doggy Daycare in Brookland, going on walks, swimming, chasing birds and playing fetch. He really enjoys bath time and being brushed.

He gets excited for warm weather because that means more outside time, hikes, and lake trips.

His favorite dog treats are duck feet.



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Sounds Like...

A playlist for April

BY SARA BROWN

a Fresh Start!



Now that spring is sprung and winter weather is behind us (hopefully!), the warm sun and blue skies feel like a fresh start of sorts, and the best way I can think to celebrate a fresh start is with some fresh tunes. Here's a playlist of some of the freshest tunes released in recent months.

Cookies & Cream - Ruen Brothers

This tune just screams warmer weather fun! Bouncing from '60s surf rock vibes to modern sounds, to '80s flavors, you'll never be bored. Turn it up and start dancing; it'll leave you feeling fresh and new!

Heat Above - Greta Van Fleet

This track truly feels like the start of something new - it feels like the beginning of a journey of sorts. With a powerful vocal and its classic but somehow still modern feel, you're going to want to turn this one up loud!

Pretty Places - Aly & AJ

This is a song I think sounds best in a car on the way to who knows where. It certainly has a "new beginnings" feel to it just like the previous song, but quite a bit lighter. Be careful that it doesn't make you go ahead and jump in your car and go - you'll definitely want to!

King - Lilith Czar

This track is tough, in the best possible way. Hard rock guitars and a wailing vocal will energize you and leave you feeling more confident than ever. If you ever needed a sign to stand up and fight for yourself, this track is it. Crank it and do your thing.

Away - New Angeles

This track is pure rock, and it'll have you up on your feet dancing before you know what hit you. With blaring guitar, pounding drums, and tight harmonies, you'll want to turn this up a little too loud - just don't get in trouble!

California Dreamin' - Dirty Honey

While its lyrics make it seem like the antithesis to a "fresh start," this fresh tune still has a "new beginnings" sound to it (you may just have to ignore the lyrics!). It's everything you love about classic rock with a pinch of modern flair - an irresistible combination!

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HEALTH & THE CITY

WITH DR. BETHANY DAVIS

An important subject that receives only the lightest touch in the majority of medical degrees is mental health. While this critical subject is certainly built into the curriculum, it is only briefly discussed and not necessarily in an applicable way. Depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, etc., are often only illuminated in the form of definitions, slide shows, and vague recognizable symptoms. General health care providers are not always trained in how to discuss mental health issues in an effective way, and while this is rapidly changing in many medical programs, it is something that has been neglected in our educational system. There's much that doesn't get talked about.

So, let's talk about it!

I am not a mental health expert and do not claim to be, but I am educated on mental health disorders and what they are. In working with patients, I understand the heavy influence one's mental health can bear on its physical health. I, myself, have suffered from what society would label a mental illness. At 23 years of age, I suffered from almost a year of moderate depression. Unsure of my career, my marriage, my stances on morality/faith, I honestly just did not want to get out of bed some days; and I didn't. I certainly didn't feel I could talk to anyone about it, either.

I am not reminiscing on my time of

depression to receive sympathy, but simply to bring it up in conversation. Typing my feelings out on the computer or speaking about them has always provided me one thing: a form of freedom. When we discuss something difficult to discuss, whether it be in the form of writing or conversation, we let go of its control over us, bit by bit. The more frequently we call out this hidden fragment of self, the less shame or guilt that is felt around it. If we can approach a mental health issue more routinely, we can own it, control it, and harness the power it once had over us. Most importantly, the more we prioritize the topic of mental health in routine conversation, the less stigma it will bear.

I very much admire Kerri Washington's interpretation of therapy. She considers therapy as "a gift I give myself. The way I have a trainer for my body — therapy is my mental trainer." She chats in a recent podcast about seeing a therapist as a routine act, such as a massage, manicure, workout, or a drink with friends. A necessity. She believes discussing mental health issues with someone isn't just something you do once, but a constant in life as a form of self-care.

A large take-away from her standpoint on therapy is the regular upkeep of mental health. This could be accomplished if we would normalize it as a topic of regular conversation.

As a society, we should be having more open and honest dialogues with friends,

family members, colleagues, and members of the community about things we suffer with in life.

How do we do that?

The simple, yet arduous answer is to muster up the bravery to initiate the hard conversations. Is it scary? Of course it is! Fear will always be there when you are growing and expanding yourself as a person. Marie Forleo states it best: The antidote to fear is taking action. Just as one can give 100 speeches and still be nervous, it gets a bit easier each time.

If anxiety, fear, eating disorders, mood disorders, panic attacks, depression, insecurities and embarrassments were all discussed openly, frequently and without shame or judgment being tied to them, we would understand people in our very own circles also share these issues, and they may not be considered disorders as much as a commonality many people partake in at certain times of life.

The more often we discuss these critical topics, the more we normalize them. The more we normalize them, the better we can handle them. To quote the Minimalists, "You may have been taught the Pythagorean theorem in high school, but you probably weren't taught to have uncomfortable conversations." We are required to teach ourselves this vital life skill and the way we learn is through practice.

One must choose who to have these uncomfortable conversations with, when the right time to have them is, and how to display empathy during those discussions. I am not here to tell you who that is or when that could be since that will differ for every single person. I am simply here to encourage you to sequester the courage to have the uncomfortable (which then become comfortable) conversations.

As we begin to have these challenging talks in our communities, friend circles, medical schools, and families, we will begin to realize that mental health topics that carry isolation and shame may actually set us free when discussed in an open, welcoming space. Let's normalize it.



College Tips by a College Student



BY SARA BROWN

We're finished with mid-terms! With just over a month left before the end of the semester and final project and final exam deadlines rapidly approaching, it's easy to get overwhelmed with everything you have to do now. It's easy to stop taking care of yourself as adequately as you need to, it's easy to neglect some of your more trivial needs, and as a result, your health, both physical and mental, can start to suffer during this part of the semester. It happens to the best of us, and there are ways to get through it.

Tip number one: Get enough sleep. I know, with all the work you have to do, it can be hard to get everything done and get enough sleep, but sleep is important. Everyone always says you need at least eight hours a night, and that's true, but it isn't always feasible. My tip: Try to get six hours of sleep per night. It's likely not quite enough, but it's much better than getting only two or three. The more well-rested you are, the better you'll do in your classes.

Tip number two: Eat breakfast. Again, I know, time is limited when you're in college, especially at this point in the semester, but breakfast is one of the best ways to start a productive day. When we're hungry, we stop paying attention to what's going on in class and start focusing on the fact we're hungry or the time on the clock, waiting for class to end so we can get lunch or get a snack. Once class gets out, you realize you missed just about everything that happened during that class. The best way to avoid this is to get some breakfast in you before you leave your house or sign onto Zoom. Even a handful of cereal or a toaster waffle is better than nothing – just grab something on your way out the door or before you sit down.

Tip number three: Get organized. Take a few hours over a weekend to get things organized. Organize your workspace: Take anything that

doesn't help you while you're doing coursework off your desk, put the things that you use often within arm's reach, and decorate the workspace however you like to make it feel more positive and happy. Organize your life too: Keep some kind of planner to write down the things you have to work on (paper or digital), make a weekly schedule of what you're going to work on at what time, and stick to it. Organization is key to helping you keep up with everything you have going on and getting it done.

Tip number four: Take time for yourself. This is a tip I've shared with you many-a-time in past months' tips, but it needs to be said again (and again!). When you spend all your time working on your assignments, writing papers, and taking exams, you get burned out pretty quickly, no matter how interesting the subject matter may be. Burn out leads to poorer quality of work, and that's the last thing you need with the semester approaching its close. Even if it's just 15-30 minutes a day, take some time to do something you enjoy. Take the time, it'll be worth it.

And finally, tip number five: Take a moment to sit back and take a deep breath if you need. With the rapidly approaching deadlines and final exams, the stress can start to get really overwhelming. If you find you're getting too overwhelmed or panicked while you're working on something, take a moment and sit back, then take a deep breath or two (or as many as you need) and calm yourself down. That panic will only fog your brain and make it harder for you to think through whatever it is you're panicked about. Look away from the thing you're working on, take some breaths, and come back to it once you've calmed down a little. Be good to yourself through the next month and a half or so. You're doing the best you can, and I know you're doing great!

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Heartworm Awareness

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

April is heartworm disease awareness month. Heartworm disease is something I could spend hours talking about, and sometimes do because of how often it is diagnosed in this area. Instead of going into all the medical details, I will instead just focus on the main points of the disease.

•Dogs cannot catch heartworms from other dogs. Because they get this disease from mosquito bites, it takes a mosquito with an infective larvae (meaning a baby heartworm that has matured inside the mosquito until it is ready to move to its doggy host) to infect a dog. This makes the mosquito the intermediate host -- or, middle host, and it is required for the lifecycle to continue.

•Heartworms are spread by mosquitoes. A mosquito carrying an infective larvae bites a dog and regurgitates the infective larvae into the dog. This is where their heartworm preventative comes into play. A dog on a preventative will have the medicine it needs in order to kill the heartworm at this point, when it is traveling under the skin. Dogs that are not on preventative: The mosquito travels under the skin and toward the heart as it develops into an adult.

•Heartworm preventives can only kill the infective larvae when they are traveling under the skin; this is why it is important to not miss a dose! Those pesky mosquitoes we saw come out during the winter months on the numerous warm days we experienced still have the ability to spread the disease. Dogs that do not stay on a preventative year-round are still very much at risk of contracting this disease.

•Heartworm preventives cost much less than heartworm treatment. Heartworm preventives that contain moxidectin are, at this time, the most effective in preventing heartworm disease in this area. There are many heartworm preventives on the market, but they are not equal in their ability to prevent this disease. We live in an area of the nation that has, in my opinion, way too many mosquitoes and so we have way too many cases of heartworm disease.

•Dogs that have heartworm disease still need prevention. If they already have the disease, why would they need prevention? I hear this question often. It's because each mosquito bite a dog endures through the course of its life has the potential to pass

a heartworm to the dog, and if that dog is not on a preventive, then that is a lot of worms that will be making a home in that dog's heart. With more and more worms residing in the dog's heart, that leaves less and less room for the blood to flow and creates a lot more work for the heart. If they are on a preventive, even if we are not doing treatment, at least we will know we are preventing them from getting more worms in their hearts.

•Cats get heartworms, too! Cats are what are called a Dead-end Host. This means they can get heartworms, but the disease cannot be spread from them. In other words, a heartworm that lives in cat will not thrive as well as in a dog and cannot reproduce to aid in the spread of the disease. They can, however, experience disease from these nasty worms, such as a cough, chronic bronchitis, and sudden death.

•Finding trustworthy information about heartworms, especially on the Internet, can be tricky. I always recommend a reliable source; in this case it is the American Heartworm Society. It has a webpage that has a ton of information, as well as a chart explaining the life cycle.

I hope this information is helpful and beneficial to you and your pets! For more information about heartworm disease and how to best protect your pets, reach out to your veterinarian or contact me at ARPets Hospital.

Hope everyone has a happy and healthy spring!





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A-STATE PIC(K)S

The A-State Committee with the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting a monthly photo contest in which participants are invited to [pick] their favorite [pic] within a given category and submit via the post found on the Chamber's Facebook page.

March's theme – "A-State Supporting Business" – yielded this winning photo submitted by Ashley Snider.

April's theme is "Sporting Events." Submit your photo by commenting on the post found on the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce's Facebook page. The winner will be given a prize sponsored by a local business and will have their photo run in the May edition of Premiere.

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MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

PARK ETIQUETTE

FOLLOWING THE GOLDEN RULE

Spring Has Sprung. This month's April issue of Premiere Magazine highlights the state and local parks of Northeast Arkansas. Tips from the experts encourage us to practice park etiquette and to follow "The Golden Rule." Treating other visitors and park staff as you would have them treat you makes for an enjoyable experience.

PARK ETIQUETTE

Stay on the paths (unless indicated otherwise) and leave trees, shrubs, flowers and

wildlife undisturbed, so that others may enjoy them too.

Always carry out what you carry in and dispose of your trash appropriately, including anything left by your pets. (Dog lovers should check out the new dog park at Harmon Play Field in Paragould.) Respect the privacy of other visitors.

Be considerate when using your cell phone so as not to disturb others.

Stay on designated roads or parking areas.

Set up camp in only the designated areas.

Abide by all posted signs and barriers.

Check park guidelines about bringing pets.

Try to make your campground or cabin reservations in advance. Contact the park in advance to see which areas or services are open.

MAKE IT EASY:

Check out the parks' websites to find out important information such as: an Overview, Photos, Amenities, Reviews, Tips, Q&A and COVID Updates.

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

>>>LOCAL PARKS:

Check out area parks and what they offer at exploremornea.com/play

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Jonesboro/ASU Polar Plunge 2021



On March 13 the NEA Fair Grounds hosted the annual Polar Plunge (this one combining the Jonesboro and ASU plunges normally held separately) to raise awareness and funds for the Special Olympics Arkansas.

It was an overcast morning with temps in the 50s but the water was still quite chilly in the tank provided by the fire department.

The event raised more than \$9,000 which will help provide opportunities to more than 19,000 Special Olympics athletes and young athletes across the state.

Learn more at specialolympicsarkansas.org



Justin Hetler of MOR Media



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



OPTIONS in Paragould

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When Valerie Long says the decision by Options On Main regarding the opening of a Paragould office was a leap of faith, she's not exaggerating.

As Executive Director of the Jonesboro faith-based pregnancy resource center, Long said in order to branch out to the Paragould area "God was going to have to make it happen. We rely on churches, private donors and local businesses that are passionately pro-life and understand our pro-life ministry. We get no government money."

So how, in a time of handling a national pandemic that has seen many businesses fail or cut back drastically on personnel, can it make sense for Options to be starting a new clinic in Paragould?

"We just felt like it is God's work," Long explained, "and He will sustain us; He will see us through. We were determined to be faithful in it no matter what."

In early March, Long was in town to hold a training seminar, educating volunteers on how to help out in the much-needed efforts Options makes to provide services to women and couples dealing with unexpected pregnancies.

They offer free and confidential sessions on adoption agency referrals; adoption information; abortion information; community support; maternity and infant supplies; medical referrals; pregnancy testing and options; support for men and much more. Ultrasound scans are used to confirm the presence of a viable, uterine pregnancy but not to determine gender or diagnose abnormalities. The goal, according to company literature, is for each person to leave the office "feeling empowered to make the best choice regarding your pregnancy. We never financially benefit off of your decision and can discuss your options with absolutely no pressure."

Options does present abortion as a possibility while not endorsing it. Long said the mission is to help women develop a parenting plan. They try to help clients connect with resources, including jobs and food assistance, offering empowerment classes on paying bills and managing money. As a faith-based organization, Options promotes the Embrace Grace program, enabling clients to "plug in" to a church.

Plans for the additional office sprang up when Lifehouse Ministries in Paragould made the decision to close its doors.

"They approached us about three years ago," Long said, "and said there was very much a need in the community for a center, and wondered if we would be interested in opening one."

Long said in addition to her being fairly new to her leadership role in Jonesboro, the timing was not the best but Options administrators still "put pencil to paper and then asked, 'Are we supposed to do this? How do we make this happen? What's it supposed to look like? Our name? A new name?'"

The best advice we got was to duplicate what we have in Jonesboro, in Paragould. Forty years of experience in this capacity influenced our leaders to feel we should just copy and paste what we already had." The Pregnancy Resource Center has been in existence in Jonesboro since 1980.

Talks began with information-gathering meetings but then the Covid virus hit and things hit a pause. However, Paragould people continued to express enthusiasm for the project and it headed forward in spite of the pandemic.

"People continued to be so giving to our organization," Long said. "They would just say, 'What do you need? How much money? What can we do?'"

"But I just want to say I am so impressed with the Paragould community," she added. "They have been behind us every step of the way and have overwhelmed us with kindness. They encouraged us enough that even though we didn't know for certain if we had the support of even one church or one business or what, we would put our trust in God and here we are opening up in Paragould. We have had unbelievable response. Churches have reached out to us, people have reached out ... it has been an even and seamless move."

The Paragould clinic is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located at 322 South 12th Street in former offices of dentist Terry Wilkins. Shiela Binkley is the Clinic Manager and can be reached at the office by calling 870-215-0774.

"I was looking for a place to house a Paragould office," Long said, "and I just kept coming back to the office where Dr. Wilkins was for many years. The Women's Clinic is right across the street ... it just seemed to be the place. And even though there was no money to be hiring new people this turned out to be the largest year in giving we have had in 41 years. We are bound to be good stewards of the money God has entrusted us with."

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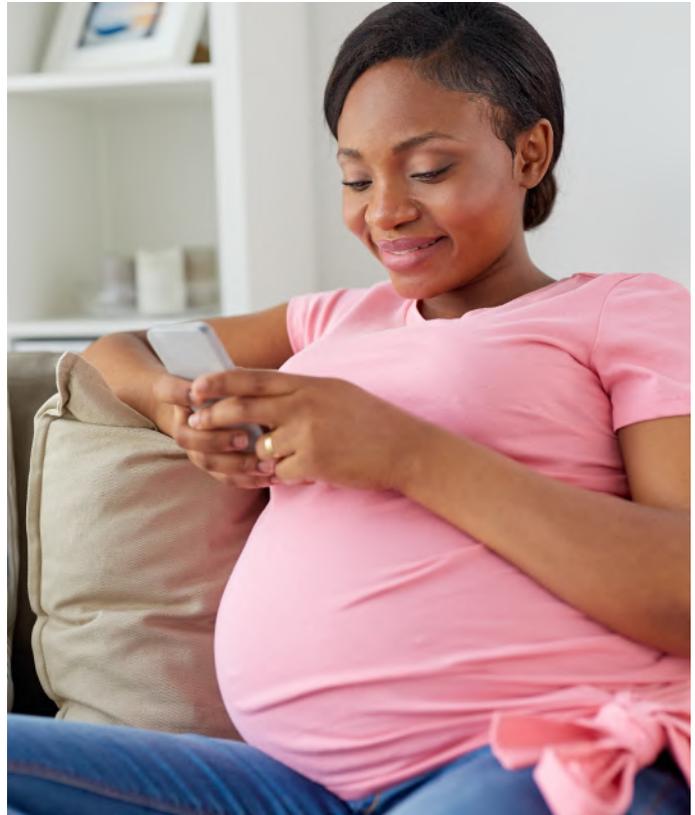
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Expecting Mothers

What to Expect



BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

When those little lines show up on a pregnancy test, many women feel everything from elation to worry. Pregnancy allows around nine months to prepare for an entirely new life but with so much information available, it can quickly become overwhelming.

For 24-year-old Mollie Burnett, one of the first concerns she had after finding out she was pregnant was what education was available due to the pandemic.

"I know it's necessary for me to be as educated about birth as I possibly can so I can feel more in control of what happens to my body and my baby," Burnett said. "My hospital isn't offering any classes due to the pandemic so I'm having to find other ways to get education."

Instead of heading to the hospital for in-person childbirth classes, Burnett is looking to different social media accounts for information on breastfeeding and various types of birth. She has also participated in an online class about pain during childbirth and how to cope.

"I've also taken recommendations for books," she added. "A couple of books that I've gotten and really enjoy are 'What to Expect When You're Expecting' and 'Ina May's Guide to Childbirth.'"

Burnett is due in August and has also hired a doula to provide her with education and support during her pregnancy.

"The more educated I am, the less terrified I feel. Support and encouragement are something I thrive on," Burnett said. "The closer I get to the end of my pregnancy, I will need all of the support, encouragement, love, peace and help that I can get."

Maggie Wolfe, 28 and due in May with a baby boy, initially had concerns about miscarriage when she first discovered she was pregnant.

"I have always had it in my head that women almost always miscarry their first baby," she said. "I was honestly just waiting for it for the first few weeks."

As her pregnancy progressed, however, Wolfe questioned if she was really ready for a baby since it happened much quicker than she was expecting. She is now preparing by reading every paper her OB gives her twice over, and like Burnett, purchased "What to Expect When You're Expecting."

"I type all my questions and weird symptoms into a note on my phone for my next OB visit," she added. "My chiropractor has been helping me, too, with symptoms in between doctor's visits."

Due to COVID, Wolfe also will not be able to attend in-person prenatal classes but has found online education through St. Bernards.

As she gets closer to her due date Wolfe wants to know what to expect, such as the registration process and how a vaginal delivery compares to a C-section.

Expecting parents can find more support and resources online through organizations such as Lamaze, What to Expect and Motherly.

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A

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St. Bernards' NICU the only one in region, providing critical care for local families

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

Caring for babies is a precious job and Kelly Welch possibly has the most precious of all as a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit nurse for St. Bernards.

Welch moved from Denver, Colorado, to Jonesboro and started out as a labor and delivery nurse, but in 2012 she decided to switch things up by joining the NICU when it opened. It is the only NICU in the region and has given care to more than 1,500 families.

"I just wanted to be a part of that," she said. "I love taking care of the babies."

Welch added she also loves working

with NICU parents and educating them on the entire process.

There are a range of situations that can lead to a baby's being placed in the NICU but Welch said premature births are the most common. Babies delivered at full-term might be admitted for respiratory distress, infection or a meconium delivery. While these circumstances can be stressful, Welch said the NICU team works together with the parents to make their time at St. Bernards easier.

"We really encourage our parents to be involved in their babies' care and see their babies as much as they can,"

she said. In addition, lactation support is offered for breastfeeding mothers.

Welch said she feels what sets St. Bernards apart from other NICUs is how family oriented and supportive the team is, and each member wants the same outcome for every baby.

"I think it's great that we have a NICU that allows people to stay closer to home," she added. "I think that's one of the best things about our NICU."

There have been too many special cases for Welch in the past 10 ½ years, and she said so many families have touched her personally.



"They're all special," she said.

Aside from care in the NICU, St. Bernards offers general support for expecting and new parents.

Baby State, an event that offers baby related education and registration for a free car seat, is currently suspended, but the hospital is still offering online events, such as childbirth and breastfeeding classes.

"It doesn't really matter what type of service you're getting," Mitchell Nail, Media Relations Manager for St. Bernards, said. "Having that home base is an incredible resource."

Nail added until parents get into a scenario such as having a baby in the NICU, they don't realize the toll travel can take on them. Having the NICU at St. Bernards provides families peace of mind.

"Whatever we can do to ease the burden on a new family, that's why we have the NICU," Nail said.

And when it comes time for a baby to be discharged, Welch said the experience is bittersweet.

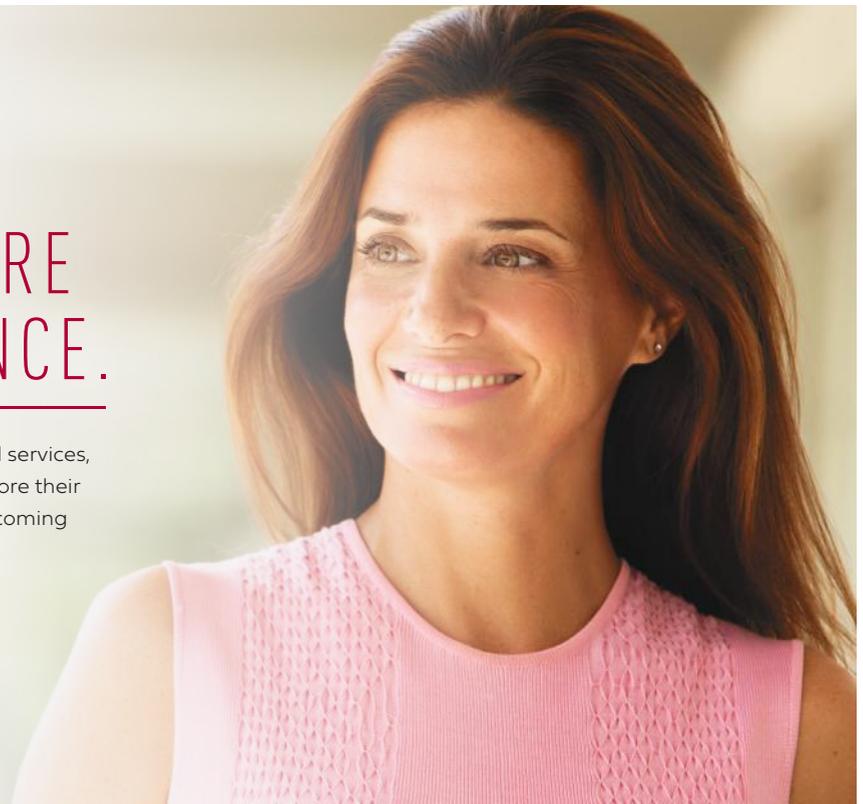
"We love our job, we love our babies, and because of that it's easier to get up and leave our own families," she said.

Welch and her coworkers are happy for the babies and their families when they go home, but she said they do miss them even though they know they are going where they should be.

"That's the reason we do it," she said.

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CASA Turns 25

BY JEREMY BIGGS



Unfortunately, more than 600 children in Northeast Arkansas were victims of abuse and neglect last year. These children were placed in foster care by no fault of their own and faced many unknown and difficult situations.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) recruits, trains and supports volunteer advocacy for children in foster care throughout Northeast Arkansas. CASA volunteers develop relationships with children and families in an effort to determine what is in the child's best interest.

Volunteers gather medical, therapeutic, and educational records to ensure all the child's needs are being met. They also work closely with attorneys and child welfare to provide the best opportunities for children to prosper. Pre-service training is provided to all new volunteers and CASA staff work closely with all volunteers to assist them in their case work. Volunteers give approximately eight hours of their time every month.

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More CASA volunteers are needed in order to serve 100 percent of children in foster care. You can be the silver lining in a child's story by becoming a CASA volunteer or donating to CASA. For more information, visit neacasa.org or call 870-333-5039 to learn how you can get involved.



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CITY BEAUTIFUL COMMISSION

Serving Paragould

BY JENNY BROWN

You may have noticed a peaceful prayer and meditation garden in the Linwood Cemetery with a life-sized Angel monument or the detailed mural in downtown Paragould. These are projects that were funded and maintained by the City Beautiful Commission. It is exciting news for the Paragould community that the commission has begun monthly meetings again due to an increase in interest and board membership.

The revamped initiative will bring about opportunities for residents to actively participate – to varying degrees – in

making Paragould an even more beautiful place to call home.

In March, a meeting took place to discuss upcoming projects and plans for moving forward. City Beautiful Chairperson Susan Youngblood, Mayor Josh Agee, and other board members talked about plans for breathing new life into the City Beautiful Commission, including ideas for new projects and for revisiting previous ones.

Such projects include a new Tree Board that could benefit the city in several ways, including promoting the health and

beauty of the trees on public property. The Tree Project will be led by John White in partnership with the City Beautiful Commission Board – which will also serve as the Tree Board. By protecting the city's trees, the Tree Project aims to help contribute to cleaner air, water, and preserving homes for wildlife. White would also like to see Paragould become a part of Tree City USA.

By becoming a member, White believes Paragould will be taking a proactive approach to keeping the trees on public property in good health. Joining the Tree

Project will also provide volunteer opportunities, as organizations will be encouraged to give back to the community by helping care for the health of the trees. Some of these organizations might include Scouts, various Civic Clubs, and 4-H. Another way White believes the Tree Project will be good for the city is it would provide a connection to the Arbor Foundation that helps provide public education on the planting of trees through their campaign entitled, "The Right Tree for the Right Place." The board would like to debunk the idea this tree project would tell private landowners what they could or could not plant on their property, but rather it will apply to the trees on public property and ensuring they remain in good health. The mayor is hoping to make a Tree Proclamation for the city of Paragould on April 30th, Arbor Day, this year.

Another project discussed was the city's Yard of the Month project. The city recently allocated \$40,000 for a renovation of the city's webpage. The webpage is now completely interactive and has a new design. The board discussed the Yard of the Month being displayed on the city's website. If you'd like to submit a name for yard of the month, you can contact any City Beautiful Commission board member. You may even submit your own name if you'd like!

Currently, the Commission is also looking to touch up the paint on the mural downtown, and taking submissions of artists who may be interested in possibly brightening the colors and putting a sealant over the mural to protect its beauty and quality.

The City Beautiful Commission will now be meeting monthly on the 4th Thursday of the month at City Hall, and includes the following members: Mayor Josh Agee; Susan Youngblood -- Chairperson; Vicki Griggs --Treasurer; members Bonnie Hamilton, Linda Glickert, John White, Donna Knight, Neal Adams, Aaron Camp, Kevin King and Wayne Ellenberg.

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Crowley's Ridge Nature Center Volunteer Coordinator

ELIZABETH KIMBLE



BY LINDSEY SPENCER

If you've spent much time at Crowley's Ridge State Park in the past few years, you are probably familiar with Elizabeth Kimble. A nature enthusiast and wildlife lover, Elizabeth recently transitioned to a role with the Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center where she serves as an Education Program Specialist and the Women Outdoor Network (WON) Coordinator for Northeast Arkansas, in addition to her role as Volunteer Supervisor.

As a program specialist, it's Elizabeth's job to provide educational programs for school groups, civic organizations, scouts, and the general public. It's also her passion: Elizabeth loves helping others learn about the outdoors and connecting with other people who love the outdoors.

A team of three educators works for the park, striving to promote hunting and fishing to youth, provide hands-on outdoor skills, and provide a place for networking with like-minded individuals. The educators do this by developing workshops and seminars that relate to a variety of activities aligning with the mission of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.



In her role as WON Coordinator, Elizabeth leads a community of like-minded women in Northeast Arkansas. WON was created as a safe place to sharpen outdoor skills and the women get together to share ideas and experiences.

And as Volunteer Supervisor with the nature center, Elizabeth recruits, organizes and supervises volunteers at the facility. You could say she wears a few hats.

The Nature Center, established in 2004, is one of five throughout Arkansas. It is the second largest in the state with over two miles of hiking trails (most of which are paved, making them ADA and stroller accessible), two native plant gardens that support local pollinators, and a three level, 17,000 square foot complex. The center features an exhibit area, observation tower, meeting rooms, Discovery room, auditorium and gift shop.

The center draws attention to the unique topography, natural history, and wildlife of Crowley's Ridge and is home to several live education animals, offering insight into each of their specific habitats. Two films, one on the formation of the ridge and the other about exploring Arkansas outdoors, educate visitors about Northeast Arkansas and the rest of the state.

Funded by the 1/8 conservation sales tax, the center is also made possible through the volunteers who dedicate their time to keeping it clean and making events possible. Volunteers help with special events, gardens, trail work, animal care, media articles, and various other tasks.

Because of the nature of the center, there are special guidelines to accepting volunteers. Applicants are screened, given a background check, must be 18 or older, and are approved by the division chief.

But don't let that scare you away: Working with the nature center is quality experience for those who need volunteer hours and also for simply connecting with other, like-minded outdoor enthusiasts. And the work provided by volunteers is essential to having a terrific place for learning, and playing, in our area.

Volunteers like the outstanding team of NEA Master Gardeners, who help maintain the native plant garden and the butterfly garden, help make the nature center's free programming possible. Elizabeth and others at the Nature Center do not take for granted all that is possible due to those who dedicate their time to helping: "Volunteers are really the backbone of any organization or facility like this being successful."

If you're interested in volunteering, reach out to Elizabeth at elizabeth.kimble@agfc.ar.gov

Little Green Thumbs

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

When you walk into the Health, Wellness, and Environmental Studies Magnet School you'll likely see students gazing out the windows to one of several courtyards. During class time, you might also find them learning in the courtyard: Watering plants, collecting eggs, or hanging out with the school's resident bunny, Mopsy.

Years ago, Jonesboro Public Schools wrote a grant for magnet schools in the elementary system allowing each to adopt its own theme and make the necessary changes and improvements to hone in on that with students. This was the start of the Health, Wellness, and Environmental Studies Magnet School. The school includes student-maintained gardens, a STEAM lab with resident critters, and a nutrition lab where students receive hands-on demonstrations in a real kitchen and learn to cook with the things they've grown.

Melinda Smith, now the gifted and talented instructor and science coordinator for 3rd through 6th grades, was brought on to help establish the magnet school and has ever since been helping students gain real world knowledge by learning in a hands-on environment.

"We developed one big garden that has evolved over the years," Melinda said, acknowledging they have done a lot of things right and a lot of things wrong over the years as they have worked to expand their own knowledge to become better educators and provide a better learning environment.

The school features two courtyards, allowing green space in between the hallways, with 16 raised beds and three little greenhouses. The school also houses a garden-to-kitchen classroom offering five prep tables and a commercial oven

among other equipment that provides students an environment to cook with the things they grow – and taste them, too, of course!

The school has certainly grown its garden, and in the process, it's also growing young minds.

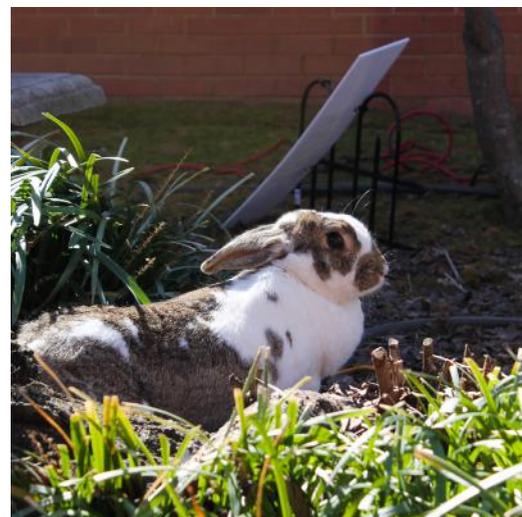
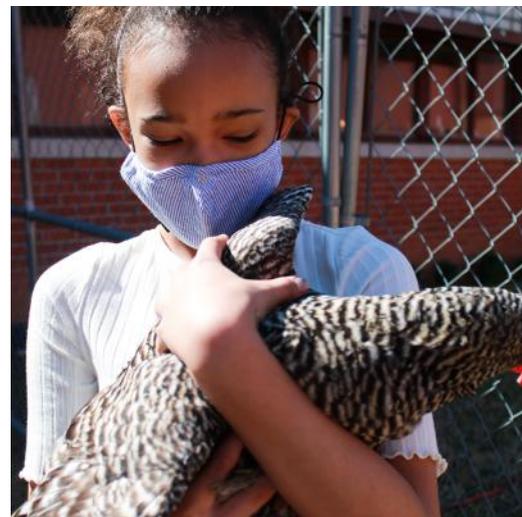
Focus for planting is on things the teachers can do lessons with: cabbage, lettuce and peas. The herb garden includes sage, rosemary, thyme, parsley and mint. "Our planting schedule is very rigid," Melinda said.

This April, the school will sell many of the plants – as they do every year to help raise money. The plant sale will take place on April 16 on the school grounds and is open to the entire community. The funds raised help purchase more learning materials as the school continues to shape its health, wellness, and environmental endeavors.

Another huge help to the school is its partners, like Renee's Garden Seed in California which donates all their seed every year, and Jim Long of Long Creek Herb Farms who helps answer any and all questions when it comes to growing a successful herb garden. The school also has a strong relationship with the Master Gardeners who help plant some seeds that little hands simply can't plant – they require more precision.

"We couldn't do it without our partners," Melinda said.

The Master Gardeners are happy to volunteer their time helping keep up the gardens. After all, growing young minds isn't so different from growing plants and in the case of this school, they're one and the same.





Mary Buchman

& THE EYES AND EARS OF CROWLEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Crowley's Ridge State Park Superintendent Mary Buchman calls them "our eyes and ears." They are volunteers, people who appreciate the value of the state park and want to keep it attractive for visitors from far and near.

"We can't do everything perfectly every day," Buchman said of the park's paid staff members, a number which sits at nine full-time people when at full strength. Right now it's at six, all charged with overseeing more than 300 acres of park. "If I'm over here in this area all day, I might be blind to something that's going on over there in that part.

"The volunteers will come to me and say, 'A toilet needs to be cleaned over here,' or 'There's a dog off its leash over here,' and we appreciate it. We can't look at everything every day. Like I said, they are our eyes and ears."

Crowley's Ridge State Park features log and stone structures constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, group lodging on one side of the park and five more family-friendly cabins on the other, 26 campsites, picnic areas, hiking trails, pavilions, a 31-acre fishing lake, and a 3.5-acre swimming area. It's easy to see why dependable volunteers mean so much to the park staff.

"They help with picking up trash, with our planter boxes, with the pioneer garden," Buchman said. "So many ways. Their volunteer hours equal a valuable monetary donation."

The superintendent even began her career as a volunteer, having grown disenchanted with her original plan of being a college history professor and following her husband, Aaron, to Paragould in relation to his job. Before long she was volunteering at Powhatan State Park. "Soon it turned into a part-time job," she said, "and then that turned into a bigger part-time job and then a full-time job. So, I understand the importance of dedicated volunteers."

She called her predecessor at Crowley's Ridge, Elizabeth Kimble, an excellent coordinator of the volunteer program and she hopes "we're moving forward with it and not getting lost. She was such a good 'people person' and really has the program going strong. I'm trying to follow her lead and keep it moving in the right direction. We have a great group of volunteers."

Those interested in helping on a volunteer basis are asked to fill out an application and if they join the program they log their hours at the park office or online. "They'll say, 'I worked one hour today doing this,' or 'Spent today working on this.' We have an email list and if something needs attention I can ask if anyone has time to help out. Maybe a large Girl Scout group is coming and I'll ask if anyone can show them around while we're busy with something else. Then at the end of the year we have a banquet and name our Volunteer of the Year."

Those interested in getting more information on the volunteer program may call the park office at 870-573-6751 or stop by at 2092 Hwy. 168 North just outside of Paragould. The Visitor Center is currently open until 5 p.m. daily.



the Carmacks

Some people have preferences or areas of expertise where they feel more comfortable when volunteering at Crowley's Ridge State Park. Leah Carmack has a totally different outlook.

"My degree is in Agriculture," said the CRSP volunteer worker, "so everything alive is my specialty."

As a member of the Northeast Arkansas Master Naturalists, Carmack is part of group that adopts state parks and helps keep them beautiful and presentable to the public. Since she doubles as a 4-H sponsor she usually takes her kids along on park outings, helping them earn program

volunteer credits as well. "I like to start off walking," she said, "and I take the kids and we hike. I'll just have a Walmart bag clipped to my belt loop and we'll pick up everything we see that doesn't belong there."

Carmack said Crowley's Ridge is in a good location, close to Master Naturalists who are eager to help. "We have a trailer with chainsaws and loppers and we just go where we're needed, when we're needed," she offered. "You've got to be a 'yes man' when it comes to the park ... just whatever they need you to do."

Even away from the park, as it turns out.

Her husband, John David Carmack, learned from the previous Park Superintendent -- Elizabeth Kimble -- that an online tool for volunteers to log their hours worked would be helpful so "he went home and made one and had it ready for her the next day. He's the tech guy; he saw the need for it and fixed it."

That attitude of lending a helping hand doesn't go unnoticed by park personnel and Carmack said they are "very good to express their appreciation. I can't wait to be able to get out there more, when the weather is better. I love seeing people enjoy our park. They seem to take better care of it when they enjoy being there."



Patty Camp

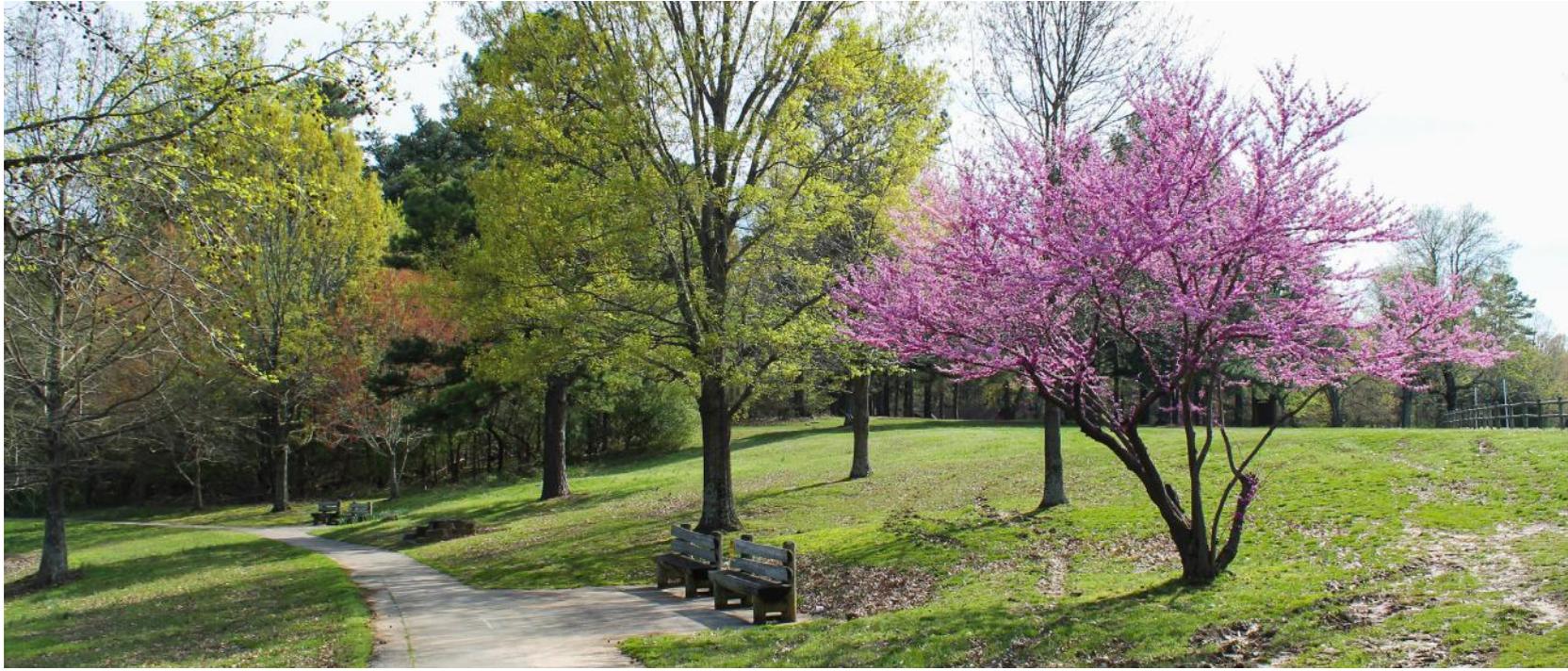
When trying to gather information about volunteer work efforts at Crowley's Ridge State Park, almost everyone you speak to gives you the same answer: You really need to talk to Patty Camp.

Camp, a retired school teacher and administrator, brings a "let's get it done" attitude to projects she embraces and the Arkansas State Parks system is better for it. She and her late husband, Jack Howe, were part of the charter group for Northeast Arkansas' chapter of Arkansas Master Naturalists and parks in its coverage area are the beneficiaries of time well spent by Camp and numerous other volunteers.

"I've always enjoyed walking at the park," she said of CRSP, noting she logged just over 1,000 miles of walking last year. "Jack and I, because of the way we worked, really liked to get outside and enjoy nature. I retired in 2012 ... 2013 ... and the chapter started in 2012. Through it we enjoyed learning more about nature and things around us. We started in helping out at the parks and then when he got to where he couldn't do anything we named him Official Supervisor. He was a real social person even though he would tell you he was introverted. Jack could wiggle a conversation out of anyone and he helped us develop important relationships."



Photos Courtesy of Patty Camp



The Arkansas Master Naturalist program, according to its website, strives “to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Goals -- To develop and support an effective and efficient statewide Master Naturalist volunteer service network which strives to:

1. Improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management.
2. Enhance existing natural resource management, education, outreach and research activities.”

Members are volunteer educators, citizen scientists and “stewards of the environment striving to protect and preserve Arkansas’ natural beauty.” The NEA chapter members serve as volunteers in the parks and natural areas in the delta region, along Crowley’s Ridge, and in the area west of Crowley’s Ridge. Parks included in its coverage area are Davidsonville, Crowley’s Ridge, Lake Frierson, Lake Charles, Powhatan, Jacksonport, Hampson Museum, the Parkin Archaeological, Village Creek, and Mississippi River state parks, and the Forrest L. Wood Nature Center.

“The first year we had to walk into a park and introduce ourselves, and they would say, ‘Who?’ They didn’t know us,” Camp said. “We started with specific programs at particular parks; now they call us and want to know what we can help with.”

She is known as a strong leader and organizer and has been instrumental in returning the Paragould park’s Shiloh Cemetery closer to original form, saying it had fallen into such disarray that “I was just appalled. It did not look like a cemetery. I did some research and pulled some photographs to see what it used to look like and some of us started trying to put it back together.”

It is the oldest cemetery in Greene County and the final resting place for Benjamin Crowley, whom Crowley’s Ridge is named after, as well as other original settlers. According to the history books, when the Methodist Episcopal South Church led by missionary Reverend Isaac Brookfield and Crowley burned, the accompanying cemetery was neglected and markers were lost. Many visitors are aware the large monument near the park’s main pavilion marks Crowley’s grave site, but the fact that the surrounding area was once a cemetery escapes most.

“It was there as part of the church, but the church burned,” Camp said. “The CCC built around it and included it as part of the park. They put up a fence, a sign and a monument but the headstones and markers disappeared over time.” The Civilian Conservation Corps, between 1933 and 1937, laid out the cemetery and surveyed the county’s oldest residents to recreate the list of settlers buried there.

Camp said funding had been allotted for improving the site but last year’s Covid issues caused money to be lost and “set

things back. I want to get it done. We’re almost finished with the monument restoration; Jamie Butler repaired the top and replaced rocks from the bottom to the top. Mark Clark is doing work on the historical marker. Park personnel will allocate time to put the fence back -- it will look like the rest of the fences in the park -- and the original sign had a list of the names of all buried there; 1870 might be the last one interred. We’ve had a replica made of the sign; we had plans for the original sign but I don’t know how far we can go with that. Hopefully we’ll get cemetery markers back up in the spring.

“Under the circumstances, I think we’ve done a good job but when we’re done and you’re standing out there, I want you to feel like you’re standing in a cemetery.” She also wanted to recognize the expertise of David Jones in producing new signs to identify the area as a cemetery and said there have been some talks of holding a Decoration Day when all is completed.

While it may sound as if that particular project dominates her time, Camp said when she’s at the park she “will do whatever needs doing,” including helping with workshops, cleaning up walking areas and leading seminars and she still visits other parks in her role with the Arkansas Master Naturalists. “When I see something that needs to be done, I want to get it done,” she said. “If I have to make some calls to get it fixed, I’ll make calls and we’re going to get it completed. Everyone who knows me, knows that’s just me.”

Colin Hester



While Colin Hester's volunteer work at Crowley's Ridge State Park is a benefit to many, he says a big part of it also "is for me."

He can be found at the park most Sunday mornings, enjoying his usual habits of "a couple of miles of walking and a couple of miles of picking up trash. I am affiliated with the Arkansas Master Naturalists, the Northeast Arkansas Chapter, and part of the service is volunteering. This is an easy way to get my volunteer hours in at the park."

Hester said he grew up near the state park in the Walcott area but moved on to Rolla, Missouri, to attend college. After earning his doctoral degree he wound up in Cincinnati, where he developed an even deeper love for parks and the outdoors. "I was gone away for twenty-odd years," he said, "and when I was in Ohio I fell in love

with the many state parks and city parks and national parks. I also realized how nice Crowley's Ridge is as a natural resource. I have very fond memories of the area."

Also adding to his interest in Crowley's Ridge upkeep is the fact that one of his relatives is buried there. "My great-great-grandmother is supposed to be buried out there," he explained, referring to the Shiloh Cemetery situated adjacent to the popular and historic pavilion. Having been overlooked for some time, it is now on the list of projects to be updated at the park. "When we were growing up as kids, we were always told she was buried out there, so that is a source of pride for me.

"When I'm out there I just clean up as I see needed," Hester added. "I think the park is such a valuable resource. I enjoy doing it; it is such a beautiful place."

Hester was also instrumental in starting up a Facebook page called Friends of Crowley's Ridge State Park where visitors are invited to post photos and impressions of their experiences there. "I started that with Elizabeth Kimble (previous Park Superintendent) and it caught on," he said, "but I have since backed out of social media." He also was once the moderator for the Missouri Nature Lovers group and saw that grow to 100,000 followers, adding to park lovers' entertainment.

So connected to the park is he that his wedding was planned to take place there in late March. "It's just a really neat park," he said. "I enjoy just about every aspect of it."



Donna & David Jones

The husband-wife team of Donna and David Jones spends a lot of time volunteering at Crowley's Ridge State Park, and she says their involvement is "purely selfish: We enjoy being outside and we enjoy helping out at the park, so it is perfect for us."

Donna said the two of them most often just walk into the Superintendent's office and say, "What do you need us to do? We've helped with group activities, we've helped with cleanup where it's needed, we have the Heritage Garden there by the CCC Building that we keep cleaned up and weeded, we've chaperoned the Halloween Hayride every year and helped with the Fishing Derby ... really, just whatever they need us to do."

She said their love of the outdoors makes the volunteer efforts "a fun thing to do because we love the trails and we love the park."

A member of both the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, Donna spends a lot of time helping beautify the surroundings. David put his talents to use on much of the signage in the park, working on markers for trails that will help in the educational activities for kids and taking on the task of making signs for the Shiloh Cemetery project that is designed to revamp that area. "David made the sign on the cemetery entrance and the directional signs," Donna said.

"It's not just a beautiful park, it's educational," she said. "We have helped with some of the craft projects to help get the kids out to the park ... they've had pumpkin painting, people who came out to talk to the kids on various subjects, Trail Day, the New Year's Day Hike ... there's always something going on and sometimes we just say, 'Tell us what you need.' But, like I said, it's selfish for us. We love being outside and being out there."



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CLEANING UP

Brad Baine and Son Isaac Cleaning Up: One Piece of Trash at a Time

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Doctor Brad Baine's official title is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Black River Technical College in Paragould. But he says his dad often reminded him that that was just a fancy name for school janitor.

Perhaps that's why recently he and his younger son Isaac, 13, took it upon themselves to stage a cleanup campaign for parts of Paragould, simply to make the area look better for spectators. "Honestly, when I would take him to school every morning," Brad said, "he and I would both notice the sides of the road and all the trash people had just thrown out. He's very observant and he said, 'Man, I see trash everywhere, on both sides of the road.' And we noticed it as well when we drove around town. So we just decided to do something about it."

Picking out a nice couple of days on which to work, the two of them headed to areas they designated as needing a good cleaning and spent a few hours tidying up. "We were overwhelmed by the quantity of what we saw," Brad said. "But we enjoyed some good conversation and people would come by and honk at us and we got to spend a little bonding time.

"It allowed us to have some pride in what we were doing, to instill some pride in our efforts. We hope to go back and do it again as time allows. We tried to stay safe and not go on any of the main highways. We started on Rockingchair Road, because that's on our typical path to Greene County Tech Intermediate School in the mornings. But we hit 358 and Pruet's Chapel Road, and Morgan Street, because we go to church there and had noticed it needed picked up too. And when I'm going to work at Black River I notice areas that could use a lot of work." They stayed only on public roadsides, avoiding private property.



Isaac said the litter “sort of aggravated me. I noticed it and wondered, ‘Why would anyone do that?’ When he said we could go pick it up, I said, ‘Let’s do it.’ So we did.” He indicated the influence of his upbringing played a role in his desire to do something positive, giving credit to his parents.

Brad said he posted their efforts on Facebook hoping to “inspire others to help our city look beautiful. We weren’t doing anything special ... just picking up trash. But when I worked at the city pool as Pool Manager, (Parks Director) Pat Austin said, ‘This area always needs to look nice.’ I guess I learned then we need to keep our city clean.”

He’s proud that Isaac was willing to jump in and help, performing a community service simply because it’s the right thing to do. “It doesn’t take a lot of resources,” Brad said, “just a trash bag. I’m glad my son took some pride in doing it. I let him do all the hard work; I can carry the trash bag no matter how heavy it gets. I just wish more people would stop and think before they throw their trash out on the side of the road. If we’re going to have a nice-looking town, someone is going to have to pick it up.”



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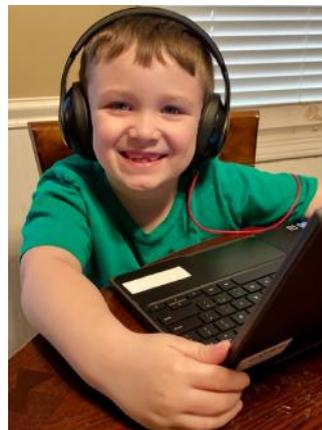


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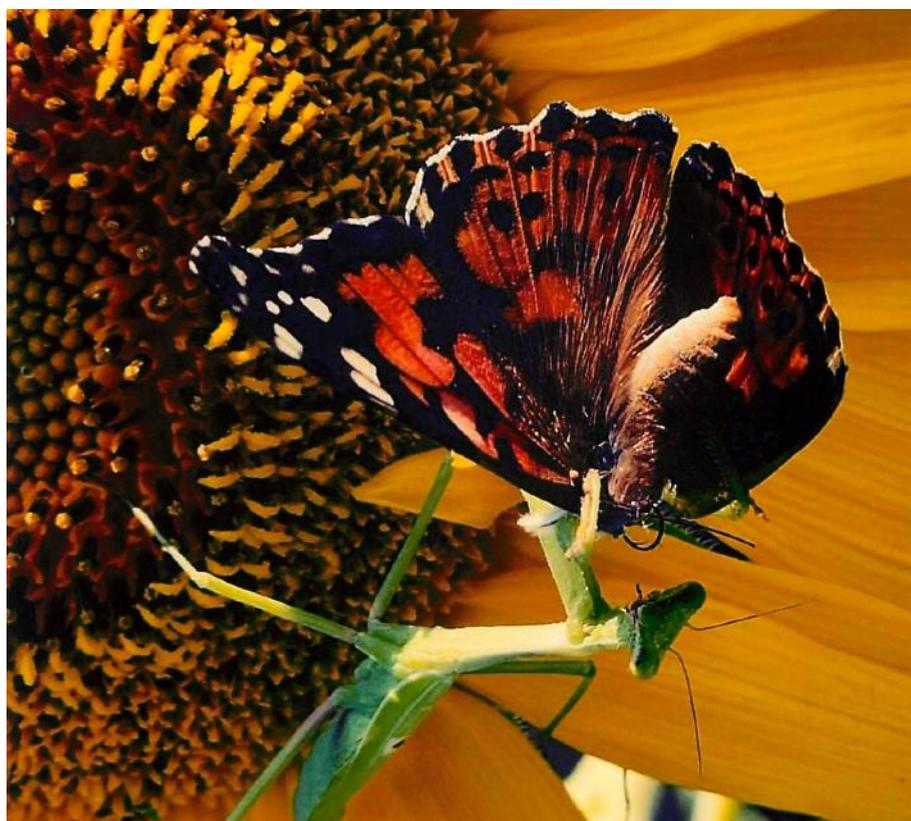


4-H Photography Contest



The Ross Foundation 4-H Photography Contest asked us to be the judge of entries in four separate categories: Color Living, Color Non-Living, Black and White Living, and Black and White Non-Living.

We were delighted by the honor and impressed by the young photographers so we decided to share the winning photo from each category.



Category: Color Living
1st Place: Joseph Haywood - 11 years old

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Category: Color Non-Living
 1st Place: Will Exum, 16 years old

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Category: Black and White Living
1st Place: Joseph Haywood - 11 years old

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Category: Black and White Non-Living
1st Place: Conley Hunt - 17 years old

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Charity Ball 2021



The Junior Auxiliary's Charity Ball, a virtual event for 2021, raised over \$100,000 through its virtual auction in February. "I am happy to say that this year we made our goal of raising \$100,000," said Sheri Walker, Charity Ball Chair for 2021.

"We actually exceeded our goal and profited around \$101,000. The event itself went fairly smoothly. It was bumpy trying to turn things toward an all virtual event but, in the end, it all worked out and we raised money to help supplement for next year's projects."

Many of JA's projects from the past year were "well under budget this year due to the limited amount of time to be able to be in the schools,

but a good prediction can be said that we may have more children that need our help within our projects this next year. The vaccine gives us hope with lowering the COVID cases in Craighead County that we are going to be able to go into the schools in September and take in some more students in the tutoring and mentoring programs, which will call for a little more within the project budgets. We are all looking forward, and staying positive, that Charity Ball 2022 will be held as an in-person event and we will all get to gather together again. Who knows, maybe we even learned a few things to implement in future years because of this year!"

A promotional advertisement for Kimono Japanese Steak House. The background is a collage of images: a plate of colorful sushi, a bar with bottles, and a hibachi grill with flames. In the center, there is a yellow triangle containing a black silhouette of a woman in a kimono. Text elements include: "Grill available after 4pm Mon-Thurs and available all day Fri-Sun!" in the top left; "Call 870.240.8887 or Visit our Facebook Page" in the top right; "SUSHI BAR • FULL BAR" below that; "ASK ABOUT OUR PRIVATE HIBACHI ROOM FOR MEETINGS OR SPECIAL OCCASIONS" in the middle right; "Sushi Specials ASU \$12.95 Kamikaze \$13.95" in the bottom left; "KIMONO JAPANESE STEAK HOUSE" in large yellow letters across the center; "Don't forget: Mother's Day is SUNDAY MAY 9TH" in a yellow box at the bottom center; "Paragould PREMIERE AWARD WINNER 2020" in a starburst graphic on the right; "TRADITIONAL JAPANESE FAVORITES AND INNOVATIVE SPECIALTIES" at the bottom left; and the website "kimonosteakhouse.com | 2708 Linwood Dr. | Paragould | 870.240.8887" at the very bottom. A Facebook logo is in the bottom right corner.

HOME & GARDEN

48 INTERIOR DESIGN

52 SPRING CLEANING

54 BUYING & SELLING

58 LAWN & GARDEN

INTERIOR *Design*

TIPS FROM PROFESSIONAL DESIGNER: MICHAEL BOLDING

It's important to Michael Bolding to help clients design a space they will love. Michael, who has been an interior designer for 25 years, specializes in eclectic interiors both inside and out. He can help with everything from lighting layouts, plumbing fixtures, driveways and complete home living – all of these aspects coming back to how your home functions and looks.

Getting a space just right is no easy feat: Everyone has their own preferences. Not to mention, everyone's home size, family size, needs, pets, etc., all differ. So where to start and what's most important to think about to get the perfect space for your home? We asked Michael about what needs to be considered when designing a space and want to share his expert tips with you.



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▶ Consider the Needs of the Space, & Who Will Be Using It

"I always ask the client about their needs for the room and how many people they are wanting to seat as well as if they have children or pets so that I can choose the right furnishings and fabrics to accommodate them," Michael said. He strives to make sure the flow of the room compliments the client's ideas for its intended use. Seating arrangements are a major priority – is this a reading room or a television room or something else? – and Michael says it's essential to getting the entire function you desire from a room.

▶ Make It Yours

The space needs to be your personality and not the designer's.

"All my jobs are completely different in style," Michael shared. "To me, that is what a designer is: Someone to help you make it yours in every aspect. So many designers, their work looks the same in every home and that is not a good example of doing your job."

Michael loves doing any and all jobs available because it allows him to see everyone's own unique style and incorporate that into their everyday lives.

▶ Color & Light

"The style of the client is very important, so it's essential to ask questions about what they like or don't like," Michael says.

Necessary lighting for the household can be determined by a number of things: Is it contemporary or traditional styling? What kind of color or tone will the lights give off?



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Plants in the HOME

BY BETHANY DAVIS

Whether one is growing a small garden in planter boxes or simply caring for a few succulents in a window seal; whether one lives in an upper east side Manhattan apartment or a sizeable home; whether one introduces them into a workspace, coffee shop, studio, or restaurant; there isn't a soul who can deny the beauty and grace that live plants can oh-so-effortlessly provide to a space. Flowers are striking, colorful, bright. But houseplants live as a companion in your home for months to years as a sustainable gift to yourself or to others. Their simplicity speaks volumes.

Aesthetically, plants provide peace of mind. An empty room can be significantly enhanced with the abundant life they carry. Requiring little work, they are an inexpensive investment that serves us visually, heightening our mood, increasing our positive energy, and providing a more relaxed and calm feeling to our moving minds. They soothe us, just by being.

Plants enhance our health, offering us oxygen and absorbing our carbon dioxide, a simple, circadian flow of energy taken for granted every day. They purify our air, diminish our stress, and improve our health, just by being.

Plants bring us the simplicity of providing a living object with care and love, a critical connection with nature in our modernized and separate homes. It is a meditative practice to water plants on certain days of the week, knowing you are nurturing a life cycle. It's a mindful pause from our mid-week busyness. Although it may not seem so, this short pause and beautiful act of caring for something has a profound domino effect in the relationships we have. They remind us that if we remember to take care of and nurture ourselves and others that steady growth will occur, just by being.

Plants serve as a reminder that less is more. One doesn't need an abundance of plants to feel their energy; a simple few will do. It creates a superior sentiment in life if one has fewer items in the home but owns items that carry greater value. Plants are minimal, lovely, and an indispensable cue to pause and reflect on the exquisiteness of the small things.





Decorating Your Home

"The thing I find most important when choosing decor for your home is to start with a plan," Jodie Vines, owner of Simplicity Home Store advised. Simplicity, a local and family-owned business, aims to keep the customers top of mind by providing personal service and affordable, quality home decor: "Choosing a style and colors are important before getting started."

Simplicity Home aims to keep its customers in mind: "We strive to provide personal service as well as affordable quality home decor."



Spring CLEANING

BY TARA PIATT

It's been proven that a messy and unorganized home can be very stressful for the person living in it. Clutter can cause such grief that people have been known to develop depression simply by living in the clutter that's built up around them. And, since we've had a year of working from home during the pandemic, the clutter has an even larger impact on us.

Now that things are beginning to open up and get back to normal, it's time to evaluate the items we live with. Spring cleaning can remake your overworked home back into your oasis. But, before you can do a proper cleanout, it's important to declutter your personal spaces, beginning with your most lived in ones.

A simple way to achieve home nirvana is by practicing the 5S system.

Sort

We've all heard about dumping our entire set of dresser drawers onto our beds, sorting through everything, and placing each item in one of three piles ... keep, sell or donate, and pitch. Daunting for sure but if you do just one drawer at a time and set a say, half-hour time limit, you can work in smaller segments. By keeping it simple and only cleaning one or two drawers at a time, it may take a few days, but your sanity will still be intact. Certainly keep the things you wear often. Other items you may want to put into a tote or box for your next garage sale or donate to your favorite charity or church, (don't forget to get a receipt for next year's taxes!) then trash the rest.

Shine

Wipe out the drawer to eliminate any dust, fuzz or other ick. (If you're working in your kitchen, the crumb factor comes in here and just use a gentle soap solution to clean the drawer or cabinet.)



Standardize Sustain

Now, you might need to purchase or create some kind of organizational product to help keep everything in its proper place. There are so many different trays and organizing tools available at most any price point. Walmart, Target, Amazon, Dollar Tree and many others have great ideas for this purpose.

Straighten

Now ... time to put your keeper items back into the drawers in an organized, and even labeled way. Put the items you use most toward the front or top and the ones less needed in the back or bottom.

This is probably the most important of the 5S's. We all (me included) find that when a favored item goes on sale (for me it's shoes and pots and pans), I tend to over-buy, because my thought is, "Hey, it doesn't ask for anything to eat, so why not buy a lot of it in case I need more someday?" This is where we get into trouble. We only have so much space, but we will over-fill it with our bonus items. Sustaining our declutter and cleanout process means controlling the urge to overbuy what we want, thus making next year's Spring Cleaning process so much easier. As one favored item has served us well and needs to go into the trash can, only then do we go repurchase that item.

BONUS "S":

Simplicity

This is where the mental health comes in. When it's easy to find exactly what you're looking for and your time is cut by not having to fumble through your stuff to either get ready for the day or make dinner, your life gets better. Simple as that.

I think I've riled myself up just a little ... I'm feeling empowered to go hit up my shoe closet and pots and pans cabinet! Good luck to you and here's to a wonderful Spring.

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BUYING & SELLING A HOME

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Buying a home is an exciting, and potentially overwhelming, endeavor. As exciting as it is to have one's own space, there are many steps before opening the front door with your own key and moving stuff in.

Image Realty was founded in March of 2009. They pride themselves on providing hands-on and exceptional service to ALL buyers and sellers and currently rank #4 in Northeast Arkansas in sales volume.

"We have grown tremendously over the last twelve years, now with three locations in Paragould, Jonesboro, and Corning to better serve our clients," said Whitney Felty.

Image Realty offers a diverse group of 24 brokers/agents. Several agents have continued in their education by adding designations such as Certified Residential Specialists, Graduates of the Realtor Institute, and Seller Representative Specialists.

"We also have agents who specialize in first-time home buyers, military purchases, and commercial/residential building," Whitney said. "Our office is team oriented. Our on-staff marketing team, administrative assistant, and closing coordinators free up our agents to focus on dedicating themselves to getting out and serving the community we love. Our team may be small, but we get BIG results!"

We consulted Whitney on what to think about and what to expect for first-time and experienced buyers, and sellers.

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BUYER ADVICE

When it comes to buying a home, what is the first step?

We always recommend starting with getting your financials in order. With how intense the market is right now, you do not want to be left in the dust by not being prepared when you find your dream home.

Step one is PRE-APPROVAL!

We suggest checking with at least three different lenders on what their current interest rates are, what type of loan programs they provide, and what type of down payment you would need for each loan type.

This will help you plan if you're ready to buy now, what an offer may look like when you're ready, how much an estimated payment could be, and what you may need to save up for a down payment.

What do you think the most important aspect is when it comes to a decision on the home and why?

Each person has their own unique "most important aspect." It is important to sit down with your agent at the very beginning of your home buying journey to talk about your reason why and what exactly you are looking for. We start by looking at the three most common aspects: size, location, and price. From there we narrow down the things that are most important to you.

Why do you feel it's important to go through a Realtor? Or, how do y'all make the buying process easier?

When it comes to buying and selling there are so many reasons to have an agent or broker represent your best interest. Having an agent searching daily for you can help you find a

property before it hits the market. They will also have great referrals for you of home inspectors, termite companies, moving companies, painters, or anything you may need along the way.

Having an experienced agent also provides someone to negotiate on your behalf whether it is during the initial contract, during inspection repairs, or if an appraisal goes wrong! When selling your home, we do everything we can to make your life easier. We will start by touring your home with you, making a plan for showings, preparing your home for professional photos, and establishing a marketing plan with you. Our main goals during this time are marketability and your safety. From there we will coordinate showings, feedback, negotiations, termite inspections, home inspections, appraisals, repairs, and closing. All while providing you information on where we are in the process without you having to lift a finger.



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SELLER ADVICE

When it comes to selling your house, what is the first thing that needs to be done?

The first thing that needs to be done when selling your home may vary depending on your unique situation, however there are some simple fixes that have a large impact. Interior decluttering, deep cleaning, and de-personalization will allow buyers to visualize themselves living in your home. Exterior updates such as painting your front door, power washing, and installing outdoor lighting will help to increase your curb appeal instantly.

What is something that may surprise sellers?

It may surprise sellers how much behind the scene work goes into selling your home.

A few things that a home seller may not realize that we as a company do is help

you prepare your home for the market, such as recommend a home stager or help you rearrange your home to show off the best features. We obtain utility, deed, plat, house plans, restrictions, survey information on your property to provide to buyers.

We verify loan information, buyer financing alternatives, review appraisals if needed, and help provide all of the Arkansas real estate paperwork involved. We may let your pets outside while you're at work and there is a showing at twelve, because the buyers work night shift. We may meet the termite inspector in the snow at your vacant property three hours away. We verify the buyers on your million-dollar home have the funds and are pre-approved before stepping foot in your home! It is a lot of work, but luckily it is our job.

Do you have any staging tips?

Focus on the rooms that count when it comes to staging! Living area, master bedroom, and kitchen are the MOST important rooms! Open all blinds, drapes, and anything that keeps light from getting in. Natural lighting creates a cozy and comfortable feeling for buyers. Rearrange furniture to flow through the home. Make sure there is not furniture in front of doors, walkways, or areas that buyers may want to view. Lastly, make sure you don't forget the outdoors! Simple additions like rocking chairs, a welcome mat, and a hammock with fun pillows can go a long way.



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More info on page 43



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GARDENING

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

We are in the time of year where many of us become much more ambitious about improving our lawns and gardens. Sunny skies and warmer temps coax us outdoors to rake the yard, plant flowers, and perhaps even begin making plans for a total landscape makeover.

It becomes easier to envision ourselves hosting block parties or inviting the family over for a pool party.

But there's a lot of work that goes into getting the garden showcase ready. And where to start?!

Whether you're a first-timer hoping to add some flair to your new home, or perhaps a seasoned gardener looking to step it up a notch this year, NEA has options for all your lawn and garden needs, and the pros available to help you improve your space until it's everything you dreamed it would be.

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Beginning Gardeners

If you've just bought a new home – or maybe recently found the motivation to add a garden to your outdoor setup – and are brand new to gardening, here are a few tips for getting started. Shop with your eyes, make a plan, then buy.

It's easy to get excited about all the greenery and beautiful colors to fill your garden, but not all plants are equal in terms of care and ease.

"Most beginner gardeners should visit their local garden center and start to familiarize themselves with the types of plant material that grows best in their location," advises Larry Vickers, owner of All Scapes in Jonesboro. "Make a list of things they see that they like, ask questions of the qualified nursery staff, and go online and research some of the things they are interested in. It is often best to start with the simple foundation plantings that will create the backdrop for the design, and then continue to build on that until the final desired results are achieved. Gardening in general is a continual learning experience; the more you learn, the more you want to try."



Beginning gardeners should plan to visit a local nursery and "window shop" first. Talk to the employees and ask questions about what plants make for excellent starter plants and which ones will complement each other – you don't want to pick out one thing that needs dry soil and tons of sand while another loves water, and plant them side by side. Nor do you want to plant too much too close together and see some of them take over while the others flounder.

"Everyone wants instant gratification but you've got to think about what that plant is going to do," said Neal Adams, owner of Adams Nursery in Paragould.

Take the time to shop around, then go home and sketch out your space and what you think you'd like to plant. Planning can be the fun part! So dream big but then purchase materials, pots, and plants accordingly.

Advice from a Pro

The first thing to decide is if you want to dedicate some real estate. You need to decide if you're going to kill off the grass, amend the soil and have a true garden that is in the ground. Kill the grass off so you don't fight Bermuda grass for the coming years in your garden. Make sure it's a little higher, add some topsoil so that it's higher than the area around it; you don't want it to be a pool that holds water. And then you're probably going to need to amend the soil. It's probably going to need some organic matter in it. Especially in this area, our soil tends to be heavy clay soil so you might need to do Peat Moss, Humus and definitely fertilizer. If you want to do raised beds, they'll take up some real estate but you won't have to amend the soil as much. Just construct them and fill them with soil.

Some plants will do fine in pots – most herbs will grow just fine in a pot on a balcony. Tomatoes and cucumbers can grow in large pots, too.

-Neal Adams, Adams Nursery

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Advice from a Pro

The first thing to consider is what the goal for the area will be. How it will work with the design and style of the home. Long term, how will the space be used? What direction the landscaped area will be facing, such as North, South, East, West. Will it be a Sun or Shade environment? What type of soil conditions will you be working with? Also, how will the maintenance be handled, something that the homeowner will keep up with, or will they be hiring someone to take care of the landscaping for them? A good designer can help advise the client in the proper space planning and size considerations for the chosen material. Many clients prefer to have the bulk of the initial work installed professionally and enjoy having smaller areas left that they can add to themselves with pops of additional spring or fall color.

-Larry Vickers, All Scapes

Preparing for the Season

When is the time to start preparing your garden? Depends on what you're planting.

Some things can be planted as soon as it starts to get warm because they can handle a frost if the temps do plummet. Some will need to wait until spring has truly arrived.

At Adams Nursery, early in the season the first greenhouse you walk into is full of the things okay to plant early in the season. This makes it easy for you to shop everything in sight knowing they can go in the ground ASAP. As the season progresses, you can pretty much shop the whole center and plant what you want, but as we said before: Plan ahead so your ground is ready when you arrive home with your plants.

Local experts can help you set up your garden by walking you through the full shopping experience at local nurseries, so ask plenty of questions and even take notes.

If you're a do-it-yourselfer, there's definitely some tools you'll want in the shed to help get your lawn the way you want it and to care for it through the season.



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Must-have Equipment:

- Water hose
- Rake
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- Trimmer (Weed-eater)

Visit Farm Parts in Paragould for your lawn and garden essentials – why? Because their customer service can't be beat.

"We have a combined of over 75 years of experience between us," said Jacob Pierce of Farm Parts. Extensive product knowledge is essential when purchasing high-quality equipment to take care of your outdoor space. Farm Parts can help you get your season started with new lawnmower blades, grease, lubricants, filters, etc. Get your mower serviced now!



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Brittany Murray, co-owner of Rouge Spa and Salon, has been an esthetician for 10 years. She specializes in Hungarian facials, eyelash extensions, and body waxing.



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HAPPENINGS



Black River Technical College, through a newly formed partnership with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), will offer a for-credit hunting course in the Fall of 2021. Introduction to Hunting will introduce the tradition and sport to beginner-level or new hunters.



Blaine Wood signed to play baseball with Williams Baptist University on Dec. 15. The PHS senior plays shortstop and pitcher. He plans to pursue a degree in secondary education, math, and coaching. He is the son of Chad and Starla Wood.



Express Employment Professionals of Northeast Arkansas earned top honors at the staffing company's annual International Leadership Conference: the Jonesboro and Paragould Express offices received the Board of Directors Award for excellence and achievements in innovation, sales, recruitment and placement as well as the Gold Circle of Excellence and Top 50 Sales Team Awards, which recognize top performing offices in the Express system.



Dana Bradford, Black River Technical College's Corporate & Community Education Coordinator, has agreed to serve on the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce Workforce Development Taskforce. The taskforce called "Develop Paragould" will strive to create a successful workforce development plan that will create a pipeline of skilled workers for Paragould industry and integrate the plan into a future innovation center located in Paragould.



Paragould Light Water & Cable (PLWC), in partnership with the Economic Development Corporation of Paragould (EDC), broke ground on a 1.5 MW solar power plant. The building of a solar plant for the city of Paragould has been a long-term goal of previous mayor, Mike Gaskill, the EDC Board and the PLWC Commission. Photo courtesy of Nathan Knight.



Anchor Packaging, LLC, a leading U.S. manufacturer of foodservice packaging, together with Mayor Josh Agee, community leaders, and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, celebrated the groundbreaking of a 90,000 square-foot, \$21.5 million expansion to its Paragould manufacturing facility, which will bring 45 new jobs over the next 30 months.

ENGAGEMENTS



Lindsey & Blake

Lindsey Box and Blake McClanahan have announced their plans to be married on June 12, 2021, at The Glass Factory in Jonesboro.

Lindsey is from Paragould and is the daughter of Bobby and Tina Box. Blake is from Wynne and is the son of Cara Kay Copes and Mark McClanahan.

Photo by Bryanna Irvin



Catherine & Ryan

Catherine Elyce Hankins and Ryan Mitchell Baldwin have announced their plans to be married on May, 15 2021, at Miramar Beach in Destin, Florida.

Catherine is from Paragould and is the daughter of Ryan and Ashley Hankins and Joy Robinson & Ashley Burton. Ryan is from Paragould and is the son of Mitchell and Letitia Baldwin.

Photo by Hailey + Alan Photography



Savannah & Garrett

Savannah Marie Davison and Garrett Lee Hall have announced their plans to be married on November 6, 2021, at Finch Baptist Church.

Savannah is from Paragould and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brandon A. Davison. Garrett is from Paragould and is the son of Mr. And Mrs. Jackie W. Hall

Photo by Jeryn Orick



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BIRTHS



Valyn Raine Fletcher

Proud parents Casey and Isha Fletcher of Paragould welcomed newborn, Valyn Raine Fletcher, into the world on January 26, 2021.

Valyn was delivered at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces and measured 19.5 inches long.

Valyn is also welcomed by sister, Gwynn Fletcher, and grandparents Jack and Lisa Fletcher, Greg and Tina Reese, and Derek Cummings.

Photo by Whitney Vassar Photography



Jett Jameson Wall

Proud parents Jared and Vanessa Wall of Paragould welcomed newborn, Jett Jameson Wall, into the world on February 12, 2021.

Jett was delivered at St. Bernards Medical Center, weighed 8 pounds, 10 ounces and measured 21.25 inches long.

Jett is also welcomed by siblings Baylee and Ryder Wall, and grandparents Ernest (Bud) and Carol Johns, Kerry and Cindy Hodge, and the late Jimmy Wall.

Photo by Melissa Donner

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2021 Kids' Events

April

April 3

Green Fest

When: April 3rd from 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Where: Downtown Jonesboro

Info: Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce on Facebook

April 12

Take and Make: Cotton Swab Cherry Blossom Paint

When: Monday, April 12 (All Day)

Where: Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library

Info: @ccjpl on Facebook

Stay Tuned

As events continue to be rescheduled, canceled, and altered, please check Premiere's Facebook page or exploremornea.com for updates as we do our best to keep you informed!

The Davis boys were front and center at Crowley's Ridge State Park on a recent sunny day, taking advantage of the many fun opportunities provided. Everett, Masen, Beckett and Ayden are the sons of Tommy and Brooke Davis of Paragould.



Next Month

Community Role Model



While collecting votes for the Jonesboro Premiere Awards, we asked our readers to nominate a community role model for the May cover.

National Foster Care Awareness Month



May is National Foster Care Awareness Month and we look forward to shining a light on the importance of the system and how it can change lives.

Jonesboro Premiere Awards



And the winner is....
Stay tuned!



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