

NEA'S

# PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2024

*Holiday  
Traditions*

**SANTA "CAUSE" SPREADS  
JOY THROUGHOUT NEA  
YEAR AFTER YEAR**

**SPECIAL SECTION: NEA SENIORS  
UNDEFEATED 1974 BULLDOGS REUNITE  
FROM OUR READERS: FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS**

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ON THE COVER -

Santa "Cause" continues to spread cheer throughout NEA as he has become part of many area families' holiday traditions.

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Cover Photography by Knight Productions



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on for the *perfect*  
*present*

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# From Us to You

As 2024 wraps up and we look 2025 in the eye, to say time flies just does not even feel expressive enough. 2025 sounds so futuristic, but here we are.

MOR Media has enjoyed bringing you the Good News and the People Making it Happen in Northeast Arkansas and we look forward to bringing even more stories to our pages in 2025. We have had three meetings to plan the 2025 themes and special editions so be sure and watch our racks or subscribe to our email delivery for Free at [neapremiere.com](http://neapremiere.com)

Remember, we count on you to send us those in your circle who are doing good in your communities. Everyone has opportunities to do good and we want to encourage others by showing those who make that decision to be kind ... do good and contribute to their community.

Here is to a fantastic 2025!

Time has definitely not slowed down with my transition from a daily newspaper to a monthly magazine. It is hard to believe another year is drawing to a close and we have already completed four editions of Premiere Magazine since I joined the staff at MOR Media.

One of our themes this month is holiday traditions, and we were able to share several stories that should put you in the Christmas spirit. But, with no direction from me, we also have several stories that remind us that the holidays are not always the easiest time. As I prepare to celebrate my first Christmas without my mom, I am especially grateful for the words of wisdom shared by these writers.

Our December edition also features our Winter NEA Seniors section. I always love this section because it gives us the opportunity to shine the spotlight on individuals who are doing exactly what our section cover suggests each quarter ... Enjoy Life, Contribute, Make A Difference.

We see these qualities in all ages and that is



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one of the reasons I enjoy covering events for Premiere so much. It gives me the opportunity to see in action and share with our readers the Good News of NEA and the People Making it Happen.

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OPEN A 2025

# Christmas Club

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# Turning the Holidays Upside Down

BY KATIE COLLINS



## Pecan Pie Upside-Down Cake

### Ingredients:

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ½ cup packed brown sugar      | 1 box vanilla cake mix   |
| ¼ cup corn syrup              | ½ cup vegetable oil      |
| ½ cup (1 stick) melted butter | 3 large eggs             |
| 1 cup chopped pecans          | 3 Tablespoons sour cream |
| ¼ teaspoon salt               | 1 cup water              |

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 10-inch bundt pan with baking spray. Set pan aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together melted butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Whisk until brown sugar has almost completely dissolved. Add pecans and mix until combined. Pour in bundt pan and spread in an even layer on the bottom.

In a large bowl, combine the cake mix, eggs, oil, water, and sour cream. Mix until no lumps remain.

Pour cake batter on top of pecan mixture and spread evenly. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Don't attempt to remove it from the pan for the full 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, place a large plate on the top of the bundt pan to invert the cake onto the plate. Let the cake continue to cool, uncovered, until completely cool. Slice and serve. Cover leftovers with nonstick foil and store on the counter.

I think the main reason I prefer cake over pie is that I'm just not a fan of pie crust. So, while I like pecan pie, I tend to scrape the "guts" out of the crust and leave the crust behind. It's not always a good look, but we like what we like. I wanted to find something that would combine the crunchy sweet goodness of a pecan pie with the more preferable texture (for me anyway) of a cake.

This Pecan Pie Upside-Down Cake was just what I was looking for! There's always that scary moment when flipping a bundt cake out of the pan makes you hold your breath a little, and this one was no exception, but you absolutely cannot skip on spraying the pan with the nonstick baking spray. Once I sprayed mine well, I wiped it around the pan with a paper towel to make sure it got in all the crevices. The cake slid out perfectly! Hope you enjoy the holidays and this Pecan Pie Upside-Down Cake!

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# THANK YOU, VETERANS



CDR Michael Huber (USS Arkansas), Brig. Gen. Michael C. Henderson, Jonesboro Mayor Harold Copenhaver



Jerry Miller, Jerry Jett, Larry Griggs



Danny Honnoll, Clay Clayton, Rich Norris

## EVENTS HONOR VETERANS

The communities of Jonesboro and Paragould held special events in November to honor area veterans. Jonesboro hosted a Veterans Day Ceremony on Saturday, November 9th, at the Arkansas State University Military Science Building, and Paragould held a drop-in breakfast on Monday, November 11th, at The Crossing in Downtown Paragould.



Janette Wright, Kenny Wright, Greene County Judge Rusty McMillon



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# PET

*of the*

# MONTH

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BY HALEY MAURICIO

Matilda is a 12-year-old red heeler mix who loves taking naps and having doggy ice cream every night before bed. Lucille is an 11-year-old seal point Siamese who also enjoys her treat before bed. They're both very vocal and not afraid to tell you what they want. They both love being outside. Matilda refuses to go to bed without her pillow and Lucille will literally scream at us for attention. They have a "Tom and Jerry" relationship, but we know deep down they love each other. We got them both when they were first born and have cherished every moment with them.



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

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# A Christmas Carol

## GCFAC bringing classic to the stage

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

A holiday tradition for many is to attend a live production of a Christmas play or a performance of a dance company's rendition of "The Nutcracker." The Greene County Fine

Arts Council is doing its part to keep that tradition alive, presenting "A Christmas Carol" this month at the historic Collins Theatre in Downtown Paragould.

Shani Barnhill, assistant director of the production and secretary of the GCFAC

Board, said community theater is important because it gives opportunities to all. "We have all ages," she said, noting they actually have several children who have been in as many or more plays than some of the adults in the cast. "We have some newbies in this play. We have several full

*A Very Merry Christmas  
& Happy New Year!*



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families in this production. We're open to everyone regardless of gender, race or ability."

Kristin Summers, who is directing this production and is also a member of the GCFAC Board, said community theater is important because it is a place for everyone to fit in. "We are a diverse group of individuals who are welcoming to anyone," she said. "In our cast we have individuals with special needs, we have more experienced individuals, we have younger individuals, we're one great big family."

While there are several who are brand new to the stage, there are also several veteran performers, including Lee Bennett who will be performing the role of Ebenezer Scrooge.

"I just like it," Lee said of why he performs in community theater. "I've been doing this since they did 1776 in 1976." Lee is not only a regular on the stage at The Collins, he has also appeared in the two previous productions of "A Christmas Carol," cast once as Jacob Marley and once as the Ghost of Christmas Future.

"I always wanted this role," he said. "I especially like this character – going from the extremely mean to the joy filled – and how he reminds me of Zacchaeus or Matthew, the tax collector."

Shani said the cast has bonded quickly. "They are really living into their roles," she said. "They truly make the production."



Both Shani and Kristin talked about the unique role of the carolers. "They are kind of the narrators," Shani said. "They also act in it too."

Kristin said one of her favorite versions of the classic tale is the Muppet Christmas Carol. "We are doing this one because it takes our narrators, just like Gonzo, and plugs them into our story," she said.

While Shani advocates supporting all local arts, she said the Greene County Fine Arts Council, and community organizations like it, are unique in that everyone involved in the productions is a volunteer.

"We are all volunteers," she said. "The board members, all the cast, the stage labor,

Continued ➡

It is with mixed emotions we announce a transition with the space at Wildflower Event Venue on January 1, 2025. We were so thankful to be part of our clients' special moments. Such great memories!

First Church Youth have blessed our building every Wednesday night for over a year. We expect even more blessings as First Church will now occupy the space 7 days a week. If you are not connected in a home church, our hope is you give this body of Christ a chance to minister to you.

Thank you to all that supported our small business.

Wade & Cheryl

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all volunteers. They are giving their time to be a part of this production.”

Preparation time for a production is generally eight to ten weeks. For “A Christmas Carol,” the cast and crew had eight weeks to prepare, with rehearsals slated four nights a week.

With nearly 40 in the cast, many of them will also support the production in other ways, along with additional crew members and volunteers. Shani said they are hoping to also involve some high school students who can earn volunteer hours by assisting with the production.

Community theater also provides a great opportunity for people to encourage those who are stepping into these roles, according to Shani. “I think it’s important for them to support youngsters or anyone in our community that wants to show their talent,” she said, while also focusing on the story of “A

Christmas Carol. It’s important to come and just enjoy the show and get in the Christmas spirit and think about the spirit of giving and not be a Scrooge.”

Kristin said one thing the GCFAC is trying to implement is a Pay What you Can performance, which for this show will be on Sunday, December 8th, at 2 p.m. “That allows families that cannot necessarily afford the experiences of the arts to be able to come in to enjoy the show with their families,” she said. “I think that’s a very vital thing to be able to offer in our community.”

Other performances will be Friday and Saturday, December 6th and 7th, at 7 p.m. each evening. They will also do a special performance for local schools and adult development centers on that Friday morning. Kristin said she hopes the community will make the traditional tale a part of their holiday plans.

“It’s a classic – one that just about everyone has grown up with,” Kristin said. “The story of Scrooge really resonates with all of us because we can get so wrapped up in day-to-day life we forget what truly matters.”

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PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT



# Bell Game BRINGS TOWN TOGETHER

**O**n November 8th, if you were looking for someone in Paragould, there is a good chance they were at Paragould High School where the Rams and Greene County Tech's Eagles faced off in the annual Bell Game. GCT won the close game that brought the community together to end the 2024 football season.



Bethany Austin, Hannah Moore, Lilly Craft, Victoria Thompson, Ivie Holcomb



Meredith Baine, Brad Baine, Lantha Garmrath, Brianne Garmrath, John Koy Garmrath



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PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT

# CONNECTING JONESBORO

## *Bike trail, trolleys offer new options*

The community gathered on November 1st to celebrate the opening of the Martin Luther King Jr. Bike Trail that connects Arkansas State University to Downtown Jonesboro. The first protected bike trail in the city, the connector has been in the works for several years. While gathered for the opening of the trail, the city also marked the arrival of the first of several trolleys to be added to the city's public transportation fleet. Both the bike trail and the new trolleys are expected to expand the options for residents to connect to different parts of the city.



Jonesboro Regional Chamber Goodwill Ambassadors check out the new trolley



Daniyal Khan, Andy Shatley, Asher-Givens



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# GIFT IDEAS

## *For The Great Outdoors*



December is here once again! That means it's time to watch Christmas movies, cook great meals and enjoy time outdoors. It's time to celebrate the season with family and friends, reminisce about the passing year and look forward to the new. As much fun as the Christmas season is, one thing that usually dampens the spirit of Christmas is the frustration of purchasing gifts. Some folks search for that perfect gift with the same joy I pursue a whitetail buck, but most I know see little joy in gift shopping. How about a little help? Let's take a quick look at a few gift ideas for an outdoorsman or woman.

Dressing in layers is a great start to enjoying the outdoors and each of those layers offers great gift possibilities. I have become a fan of Merino wool and its qualities of controlling odor and providing warmth when wet. Several brands offer base layers in long underwear or tops. The choices and price points are varied, but usually higher price offers a higher quality of wool that feels a little better on the skin.

Some folks do not like pure wool against the skin, but there are some great wool/synthetic blends that make it more comfortable. Brands like Eddie Bauer, Smartwool, L.L. Bean and Meriwool always rise to the top in comparisons.

Quality socks are a great asset to the outdoorsperson and Merino wool shines here as well. My favorites are Bombas and Smartwool, but there are several other good brands. Thinner socks are great for walking activities or casual wear while thicker, taller socks are great for sitting on a deer stand or under waders.

A new layer of camo is a great gift option. While checking for sizes, pay close attention to the brand and style of the camo pattern. There are many great options in pants and shirts but consider the type of

hunting and the possible conditions of the activity.

On a personal note, one of my favorite hunting shirts is a green, military surplus, long sleeve, button up wool shirt. This style has become somewhat hard to find but they are very durable and provide great warmth for the weight. They are a little itchy, so layering is essential.

Outerwear is a great gift choice as well. Once again, consider the camo pattern and the game that will be pursued. For deer hunters, quiet clothing is very important, so fleece is a great option. For a duck hunter, especially one that pursues mallards in flooded timber, moisture proof, sturdy gear is essential. One important asset I look for in outerwear is a windproof layer.

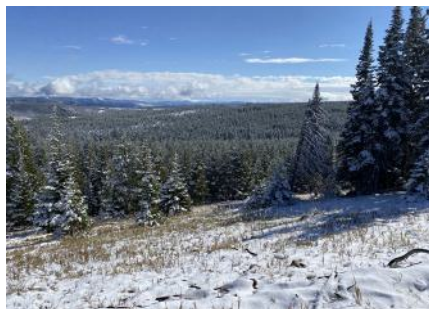
Raingear is essential for that sportsman who will be out there regardless of the elements. Frogg Toggs are affordable, packable and offer a wide range of options. They are very effective at turning the water on a rainy day. There are also several other quality pieces of raingear that cover the range from lightweight and packable to insulated and will make a wet day a little more bearable.

Due to sizing and fit, footwear might be a little harder to purchase, but items like waders for the duck hunter, hip boots for the trapper and sturdy rubber boots for the deer hunter will probably be welcomed. A nice pair of leather boots for the upland hunter or hiker could fill an important need.

Other footwear might include a pair of Croc-like shoes. I have finally given in to wearing those and I like them when I shed my waders for the drive home after a duck hunt, walk to the beach to enjoy the surf or launch the boat for a day on the lake.

## CHUCK LONG

Avid Outdoorsman  
Retired Outdoor Educator



There are many options in the equipment category. One sought after item right now is a backpacking stove. These small, personal stoves are small burners that allow the heating of water used to make coffee or other warm drinks or rehydrate meals. Jetboil, MSR or Soto are a few of the higher rated brands.

A high lumen flashlight or a good knife are also good gift ideas. Gloves, toboggan and a neck gaiter will keep out the cold. Walking sticks are becoming more popular and can be great for someone who likes to cover lots of ground on foot. Shooting sticks or a tripod also makes a great gift.

The stockings are still hung on the mantle at our home and often filled with small, inexpensive items that meet the basic needs of an outdoor lover. Batteries, lighters, waterproof matches and trail markers are some of the basic essentials. A compass is still a valuable tool and makes a great small gift item. A whistle, first aid supplies, and some rope or paracord would also be useful.

And then there are the snacks! Whether homemade or store bought, what would Christmas be without a few snacks. Beef jerky, various chocolate candies, drink mixes for the water bottle, snack cakes, nuts, fruit, and more! Any of these would be welcomed for a day in the duck blind or on the deer stand.

Good luck shopping, take some time to enjoy the outdoors and may God bless you and yours through this holiday season. Our family would like to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas. Christmas seems to be so anticipated, but it is so fleeting that the joy of the season is never realized. Slow down and enjoy the festivities. Then take a little time to get outside. I hope to see you out there!

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# MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

The upcoming holiday season goes hand in hand with gift giving. During this time we usually think of buying gifts for relatives, friends, business associates and co-workers. Buying and giving presents can present problems for even the most seasoned shopper. Here are some frequently asked questions:

## QUESTION:

What should I do if someone unexpectedly gives me a gift and I have no gift to give in return?

## ANSWER:

If someone surprises you with a gift, accept it graciously. Thank the person for the gift and be certain to write a thank you note. Not every gift needs to be reciprocated. If you like, you may return the favor at a later date. During the holidays, when there is often a flurry of gift giving, buying a few extra gifts or having homemade goodies on hand to give can help take the surprise out of receiving an unexpected gift.

## Quote of the Day:

"It came without ribbons!  
It came without tags!  
It came without packages, boxes or bags!"  
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't thought of before!  
Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.  
Maybe Christmas . . . perhaps . . . means a little bit more."

~ Dr. Seuss,

How The Grinch Stole Christmas

## QUESTION:

Is it appropriate to "Re-Gift?"

## ANSWER:

This depends upon the situation. There is one school of thought that says you should never "re-gift." There are, however, other authorities that say "re-gifting" can be done if

in good taste. In other words, when re-gifting, no tacky, used, dirty or broken gifts. In the "Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette" by Nancy Tuckerman and Nancy Dunnan, the re-gifting dilemma is addressed in the following way: "It's not uncommon to receive a present which is either identical to something you already own or is something you have no need for. If this happens, there's no reason not to pass the present on to someone you feel would appreciate it ... Best not to use the present's original box or the box of another store on the chance the person you're giving the present to decides to return it and asks you for the sales slip."

## QUESTION:

When giving a gift how do I determine how much to spend?

## ANSWER:

Generally speaking, when giving gifts to co-workers or office associates, the price range of gifts is determined by agreement. This price range helps everyone to stay within a comfortable budget. Exceeding this price range can make other co-workers or associates feel uncomfortable. Giving gifts to friends and relatives is often more difficult if there is no stated or implied price range. Finding out the recipient's interests, likes or dislikes can help you find an appropriate gift that is within your budget.



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](mailto:manners@paragould.net).



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# GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT

One thing I wish I could have for Christmas is a visit from my sister. Kathy lives north of Seattle now, so our opportunities to see each other are rare but I know at this time of year we would share a lot of laughter if we sat in the same room and relived some of our Christmas experiences.

Growing up, Kathy was the brains of our outfit and I was ... something. She had this great thirst for knowledge and a keenly inquisitive mind; I had a shoe box full of baseball cards and a desire to be a ballplayer, which is why I was so puzzled on summer mornings when I would come in from the back yard, sweaty and hot from playing my imaginary baseball games, and I would find her on the couch reading from an edition of the World Book Encyclopedia. She would actually pick out a particular book, like the letter M, and just start at the front and read about people, places and things.

"Why do you do that?" I asked more than once, and her answer was always the same: "Because I want to know things." I sort of felt that if we had visited the ocean together for the first time she would have rented scuba gear or snorkeled in order to discover what was happening beneath the surface, and I would have been wearing floaties and bobbing up and down with the waves. That's why today if you play Trivial Pursuit with her your job will be to roll the dice while she answers thirty or forty questions in a row, most of them regarding topics you didn't even know existed. She knows stuff.

It was her exploratory nature that forced our mom to hide our presents annually – at one point leaving them at Grandma's house – in order to keep Kathy from discovering them before she had time to wrap them. She found them in the top of our parents' bedroom closet, she found them in the storage room off of the carport, she found them in the trunk of the car. Me? I was shooting a basketball.

Our parents enjoyed playing the whole "Santa brought it" routine while we were young, leading us to believe Jolly St. Nick magically appeared with a bag full of presents and left us some on Christmas Eve. I was cool with that but Kathy wondered aloud how he made it into our living room in the first place, since we never lived in a home with a fireplace and chimney. She was very young when she figured it out, and I think I was about 17.

One year Dad kept both of us

occupied in a back room while Mom washed some dishes, and we were told we needed to get in bed and go to sleep or Santa might just skip our house. We could still see Mom at work in the kitchen and Dad was giving us his speech when suddenly, the front door slammed shut. "That might be Santa right now!" Dad said, and we rushed to the living room to see unwrapped presents sitting there under the tree with all the ones that had been there for days. "Hurry!" Dad said. "Look out the window and maybe you can see him!"

Kathy and I both got to the big picture window as quickly as possible and pulled back the drapes. "I see him!" she said, but I didn't have the same luck. I asked her where and she said he was going over the hill across the street, right beside Patty Jean Staub's house. Dang; I missed him, and it never occurred to me Kathy would just make the whole story up. She knew stuff. It was years down the road before I surmised our parents had a neighbor open and shut the door at a predetermined moment, but I never did know if Kathy really thought she saw Santa or if she was just messing with her goofy ballplayer brother. Or if she was in on the whole thing to begin with.

One year when she filled me in on her latest archaeological dig around the house and said she knew what we were getting for Christmas, I didn't want to hear it. I liked the Christmas morning surprise of ripping off the wrapping paper and seeing what was hidden beneath; Kathy wanted to know things, and she wanted to know answers long before their time. This particular year she had snooped around under the tree, where gifts had already been placed, and realized if she pressed the paper tightly against the present she could read what was on the box inside.



"You want to know what you're getting?" she asked, and I said I didn't. "You sure? I know what it is," she continued, so I gave in to the pressure and let her show me I was getting a tabletop basketball game. It was a gift I was really hoping for and I also hoped I was a good enough actor on Christmas day to feign surprise; the gratitude was genuine, but I missed the joy of having to discover what I was getting right at that moment instead of knowing beforehand.

I know if Kathy could stop by the house this holiday season she would remind me of even more funny episodes of our lives together. I'm sure her take on some of them would be different from mine, because she knows stuff.



PHOTOS BY CARLA WEHMEYER // ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

# DSO Presents Ashley McBryde

**G**rammy award winner and Arkansas native Ashley McBryde was featured during a special Delta Symphony Orchestra concert conducted by Dr. Neale Bartee on October 27th at The Fowler Center on the Arkansas State University campus. McBryde performed her own material, using arrangements by Dr. Tom O'Connor.

The DSO is also making plans for its annual holiday concert, set for Sunday, December 8th, at 3 p.m. at The Fowler Center. The concert will feature Jenny Powers, Quaine Hogan and Bethania Baray-Harrison. For information on the DSO or to order tickets visit [deltasymphonyorchestra.org](http://deltasymphonyorchestra.org).

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# THE ADVENTURES OF

# Lester

BY VICKI McMILLAN



**H**ello, all! Lester, here! In just a few days, Christmas will be upon us. Until then, we'll rush around decorating the house, buying gifts, planning menus and scheduling appointments with our therapists.

As a scrappy little pound dog from Jonesboro Dog Jail, I am feeling a bit nostalgic. Before my Big (Vicki's dad) died and went to heaven, Christmas was a magical time. He would make candy for all of the neighbors, and he and I would deliver it. I would wear my Christmas sweater, even if it was 80 degrees outside. Big would have stacks and stacks of presents, each one bought with much thought of the recipient in mind.

Now, I'm not complaining — ya'll know I appreciate my home, blanket and all that — but Christmas is different at the McMillan house. First of all, there is little baking done. Definitely no candy made. And about presents — well, Vicki and Mac are into giving "experiences" rather than "things." Of course, I am always included and we've done some fun things and seen some very Christmas-y places.

\*Wolf Laurel Ski Resort, NC: Wolf Laurel is a winter wonderland with all sorts of winter sports - skiing, tubing, sledding, etc; and it is near the Appalachian Trail, so you can hike a bit. There are lots of mountains and trees, and usually snow. Asheville is nearby with lots to do there, and the Biltmore to see.

\* Natchitoches, LA: Natchitoches is typically laid back 46 weeks out of the year. The oldest town in the Louisiana Purchase goes all out for Christmas. It is famous for its 40-day Festival of Lights with over 300,000 lights throughout the town and along the Cane River. There's also a boat parade and massive bonfires on the shore. (Fun fact: This is where Steel Magnolias was filmed.) One thing to note: Santa uses whips on the reindeer, which was alarming to Vicki and Jessica.

\*Dahlonega, GA: This small town in Northern Georgia goes all out

at Christmas time, probably better than any other small Southern town. Twinkling lights, horse-drawn carriages all tucked into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains make you think you are inside a snow globe! And Dahlonega is surrounded by wineries so tastings should definitely be on the list! There are tasting rooms throughout downtown, too, so if the Christmas-ness of it all gets to you, stop and have a taste.

\*Louisville, KY: Some folks don't understand why we would want to go to an urban area for a Christmas experience. Go to Louisville and you'll understand! Lights, lights and more lights! In fact they have Lights Under Louisville (in addition to those above ground) which is a 17-mile trek through a cavern all dressed up for Christmas. If you are feeling continental, hit the Paristown neighborhood for its Fete De Noel for a true European feel. And if you get bored with Christmas, go to the Louisville Slugger Factory and Museum and get you a mini-bat. Or check out native Muhammad Ali's museum.

\*San Antonio, TX: If you want to go big, check out the River Walk in downtown San Antonio. Carolers on boats sail the San Antonio River through downtown singing old favorites as well as new tunes. Lights twinkle on either side of the walk and make a magical, twisting path. Also the Fiesta de Las Luminarias offers a look in the Mexican culture of the holiday. And you could always go see The Alamo — you'll never forget it!

Well, folks, I've got to sign off now. I've got to put up the tree and pack my bags. Here's wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Peppermint kisses!

*Lester*

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BY SHELBY RUSSOM

The children gather around the fire to listen to Great-grandma read the Christmas story. As she begins, there's a knock at the door. The door cracks open and the house erupts with shouts of joy and laughter. Who could their visitor be? Why it's Santa "Cause," of course!



Steve Southard has been spreading Christmas joy as Santa "Cause" in Northeast Arkansas for 14 years. To him, Santa is more than a man in a red suit with elves and presents. Instead, he represents a tradition of hope, kindness and years of caring for the community. Southard said his passion for the jolly lifestyle sparked after the devastating loss of his 22-year-old son.

"It developed a hole in my heart," Southard said. "So this, sharing Christmas with these folks, heals my heart somewhat and allows me to share what Christmas is all about."

Southard and his wife, Suzanne, donate the money raised as Mr. and Mrs. Clause to several organizations each year, earning their name, "Cause." Southard said it is crucial to be able to give back to the community and he is delighted to do so. "It's very important to bless others," he said. "Do something nice for someone today. One person can make a difference."

This charitable mindset doesn't stop with Southard – it runs in his family. Southard said his favorite memory of Christmas involves his parents and a loving, helpful heart. "We got a phone call that some kids down the street weren't having any Christmas," Southard said. "So my dad and I, and Mom and all of us gathered up some stuff and took it down there."

Southard said once they arrived at the home, his father knocked on the door and was met by a man who initially refused help, but Southard's father reminded him who the help was truly for. "My dad grabbed him by the arm and said, Look fella, this is not for you, this is for those kids in there and you need to take this," and he took it," Southard said. "That's the kind of heart that my dad and mom shared with us kids."



SANTA'S NORTH POLE PHOTOS BY NATHAN KNIGHT




Along with spending joyful days at Santa's North Pole in Jonesboro, Southard also makes appearances at hospitals, nursing homes, schools, photo shoots and even makes house calls. Some of those households call this Santa back year after year. To Southard, being a part of his community's Christmas traditions is incredibly rewarding, and he values every moment, even the difficult ones.

"Portraying Santa is very emotional," he said. "I've heard and seen some terrible things and then I've seen some wonderful things, but it's

Continued ➡

## SANTA "CAUSE"



Join Jill's holiday tradition of gathering with friends and family around the radio to listen to the reading of Santa's Prayer by Paragould's own Santa "Cause!"

Catch the reading on Jill at 99.3 at the top of each hour from 6:00p.m. to midnight! You can also listen online at [neajillradio.com](http://neajillradio.com), or tell Alexa to play Jill at 99 dot 3!

The sleigh was all packed, the reindeer were fed,  
But Santa still knelt by the side of the bed.

"Dear Father," he prayed, "Be with me tonight.  
There's much work to do and my schedule is tight.

I must jump in my sleigh and streak through the sky,  
Knowing full well that a reindeer can't fly.

I will visit each household before the first light,  
I'll cover the world and all in one night.

With sleigh bells a-ringing, I'll land on each roof,  
Amid the soft clatter of each little hoof.

To get in the house is the difficult part,  
So I'll slide down the chimney of each child's heart.

My sack will hold toys to grant all their wishes.  
The supply will be endless like the loaves and the fishes.


I will fill all the stockings and not leave a track.  
I'll eat every cookie that is left for my snack.

I can do all these things, Lord, only through You,  
I just need your blessing, then it's easy to do.

All this is to honor the birth of the One,  
That was sent to redeem us, Your most Holy Son.

So to all of my friends, least Your glory I rob,  
Please Lord, remind them who gave me this job."

Written by Warren D. Jennings



just a pleasure to be in the public and I've enjoyed it a lot."

The opportunity to make personal visits isn't only impactful for Southard and the charities he provides for, but it's also incredibly meaningful to the families he visits every year. Rebecca Leathers and her family have called Southard to their home for two consecutive years and they plan to have him back once again this December.

Leathers said the first time Southard visited, her heart and home were filled with an indescribable Christmas joy, making even the adults emotional. Now, her Christmas wouldn't feel complete without Mr. and Mrs. Santa "Cause."

"This tradition means everything," she said. "It's come to be the most special thing we look forward to." Leathers said her family, like any other family, has had a lot of Christmas traditions, but having Southard visit quickly became their favorite one. "This tradition has really become the forefront of the season. It has been incredible having our family come together," she said. "Just bringing them together the past few years, has really been the best."

Southard is one of several Santas in Arkansas, but Leathers said she has never met another like him. She said she admires his dedication to sharing the true meaning of Christmas, how much effort he puts into bringing Santa to life and his donations to charities like St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Because of this, Leathers said she and her family will continue to specifically call Santa "Cause" back to their home.

"As long as he's in, we're in with him because there's nobody like Steve Southard in my book," Leathers said. "Meeting Steve and his



precious wife was the beginning of a Christmas tradition I didn't know that we needed, but we have all come to love and enjoy and get so excited for it."

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## The Prankster



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## Your Mom

(ha-)

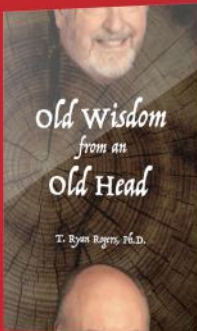
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P.S. Not only for moms  
P.P.S. Not only for Texans

## Your Dad

(or Grandpa!)



What's the #1 thing dads say that doesn't make any sense? (WARNING: Keep him away from page 11!) Who even comes up with this stuff?

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**W**hen I think back on all of my childhood Christmases, every single one of them seemed wonderful. I recall the year Santa brought a Barbie doll, complete with a pink convertible, boyfriend Ken and a shoebox filled with all kinds of Barbie clothes hand sewn by my grandmother Pauline. Another Christmas, my brother Kevin and I awoke to brand new banana seat bicycles. There was the year in my teens when dad gave me a used 1969 yellow Ford Mustang for Christmas. It's one gift I wish I still owned.

Although money was often tight, my husband David and I worked hard to make Christmas a very special time for our own four children. Seeing their delight brought us as much joy as the Christmases of our youth. Our extended family lived close during those years, so the holiday celebrations were loud, happy and seemed to go on for days.

But for many the holidays are bittersweet, perhaps even unbearably difficult. Childhood memories are not as sweet as mine, or recent circumstances overshadow the joy of years past. Muddling through can be a painful ordeal, especially when the wounds are recent. Grief comes in all shapes and sizes and life experiences that can make the holidays hard include:

- the death of a loved one, particularly an unexpected passing or a child's death
- a change in the family unit due to divorce, children marrying, military service, etc.
- not being able to be with loved ones during the season
- failing health that impacts cherished traditions
- family members in emotional, spiritual and/or physical crisis
- overwhelming financial burdens, job losses
- tight budgets that make gift-giving difficult
- an awareness that this holiday may be the last spent with an ailing family member
- estranged family relationships

Some of the above are the normal transitions of life, but others leave gaping holes that seem magnified when compared with the joy we typically associate with holidays. The first holiday season after a major life change is especially hard. A few years ago (in a foolish bout of self-pity) I remember not even wanting to put up a tree because for the first

time, our older children would not be home for Christmas.

The holiday season can feel like a punishment when you're grieving. Seeing other people throw parties and decorate trees or wearing ugly sweaters might make you want to crawl under your bed ... and stay there until January 2. Finding a desire to follow through on the simplest of holiday tasks can be overwhelming.

If you are in the midst of a hard holiday season, grieving is a natural part of the healing process. It is important to acknowledge the emotions you feel and lay down any expectations you may have about being able to control your feelings. Be okay with not being okay when life undergoes a major change.

**There are no rules for surviving holiday grief. Do what you need to do to survive. Honor your loved ones how you need to and do what feels best for your fragile, aching heart. You are missing a huge piece of you, so do whatever you need to do to find a sliver of peace.**

— Angela Miller

Jennifer Fein shares several ideas for navigating hard holidays in a November 13, 2023, Psychology Today post. Summarized below are five of them:

- 1.) **Forgo Tradition.** There may be times when what worked in the past is impossible to recreate, so this may be a good time to try something new - change venues, the menu, the activities, etc. Making this year deliberately different can help to fill the hole left when life changes.
- 2.) **Have an Exit Plan.** If your holidays revolve around going to someone else's home, figure out ahead of time how to leave gracefully if things get too difficult to endure. Don't feel guilty if you decide not to go at all.
- 3.) **Volunteer.** Bringing joy to others in some way is a good way to help us keep our own grief in perspective and may even be a way to honor someone you have loved and lost.
- 4.) **Talk to Somebody.** If the feelings are overwhelming consider talking to a therapist, spiritual counselor or even a good friend who is willing to listen. Bottled up emotions are apt to force their way out when we least expect or want them to erupt.
- 5.) **Don't Feel Guilty if You Have a Good Time.** The holidays may be just what you needed to restore routine or connect with loved ones or



## KARAN SUMMITT

Retired Health Educator

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

even simply to distract yourself, so don't feel guilty. You need every bit of joy, especially when mourning.

A couple of other tips would include stepping back from some of the more stressful responsibilities you may have carried in the past and taking time to give thanks for the good that remains. Intentional gratitude is a powerful tool for helping us balance the hard and uncertain places in life.

For those of us on the other side wanting to support a friend or loved one who is experiencing difficult holidays, our understanding can be invaluable. Most of the things that are truly helpful are common sense. Allow the grief-stricken individuals to own their feelings. Acknowledge their sadness and be patient in listening and comfortable with their tears, anger or other emotions. It is a compliment that they feel safe enough in your presence to let down their guard and share what they feel.

Be practical and ask what you can do to help. They may need some help with shopping, food preparation, childcare or other tasks that their life change now makes more difficult. If money is an issue, you may be able to meet some needs or connect them to community resources. Do this in a way that is respectful of their dignity, especially if financial troubles are a new challenge.

Lay aside your own expectations of how they should act, but also be on the lookout for signs they may need professional help. This is especially important after the holidays - people often plow through the season with a list of things that can keep them busy. When all of that is over, there is a potential for the adrenalin rush to subside and reality to set in - the grieving they may have shoved now makes its way to the surface and they can sink into depression when the cold weather outside mirrors the feelings inside.

Most of all, simply be there for them. True friends know the value of being the one who is "born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). Your presence speaks louder than anything you can say or do.

Whether you are the one who finds the holidays hard to endure or you are the friend who wants to help, hold tight to the hope that things will get better, for most of us the pain will ease with the passing of time, and we can move forward holding on to the best of what was lost. The gift in this will be your own ability to pay it forward and help someone else with an empathetic understanding of their sorrow. In doing so, your own losses find purpose in blessing others.

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# MAGIC ON THE RIDGE



Kayla Drescher, Steve McFall

The Historic Collins Theatre in Downtown Paragould hosted the Magic on the Ridge festival Nov. 14-16. Four magicians, Jonathan Erlandson, Kayla Drescher, Ran'D Shine and Dustin Tavella, were featured at the event.



Kayla Drescher, Joseph Buckley

PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT



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

Dustin Tavella, Tony Case

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PHOTOS BY PERRY MASON

## SERVING OTHERS

### *Community meal continues*

The 7th annual Community Meal was held Saturday, November 16th, at Temple Baptist Church in Jonesboro. The event, which was hosted by local businesses, community leaders and volunteers, provided free meals for all who attended. Organizers said, "Our mission is for everyone to be there for someone."



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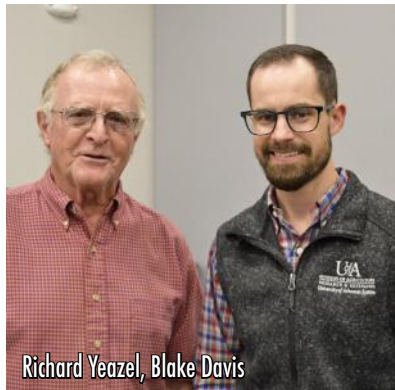
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A large crowd gathered to celebrate the grand opening of the new facility for the Greene County Extension Service on October 29th. Current and former University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture employees gathered, along with community members and elected officials. Attendees enjoyed a catered lunch and were able to tour the new facility that the community will be able to use for years to come.



Richard Yeazel, Blake Davis



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## Celebrating Community Helpers

Paragould School District's Primary School students saw community helpers up close and personal on October 25th at the school's annual Community Helpers Parade. Prior to the parade, the pre-K through first-grade students learned about community helpers, helping them develop a sense of civic responsibility and community belonging. Sara Harris, who works at the Primary School, organized the parade, which was enjoyed by all!



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## Birth Announcement



*Lorenzo David Pantoja*

Lorenzo David Pantoja was born October 20, 2024, at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould to David and Lainea Pantoja. The baby weighed 8 lbs, 3 oz., and was 19 1/2 inches long.

Lorenzo was welcomed by his grandparents, Shauna Norman, David Pantoja, Maria Vowell, Margie Wilson and Blaine Wilson.

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The 14th Annual Souper Sunday was held November 3rd at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Red Wolf Center to raise money for Habitat for Humanity. Organizers announced that \$26,826 was raised toward the group's goal of building more homes in Northeast Arkansas.

The winner of Habitat for Humanity's 14th Annual Souper Sunday, for the third year in a row, was Pastaria 49 with its Italian Tomato Basil. Second place went to The Parsonage's Guinness Beer Cheese & Broccoli, and coming in 3rd place was Pastaria's second soup, Italian Sausage Kale.





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# A PET-TACULAR Christmas

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



Christmas time is here! I love getting to see all of the town dressed up in Christmas lights and decorations, and that includes my house! There is that part of me though, the “Debbie-downer” if you will, that has to remind myself of the possibility of “what happens if my dog eats this,” “what happens if my six-year-old son breaks this by throwing a ball in the house”, and lastly, “is the risk of putting this up in the house worth the investment and the stress of it if it gets destroyed?”

I try to ignore that voice if the item does not scream “Danger!” to me. When I am looking at deco-rations that pose a threat to my pets or my children pose a threat to the decoration, then I nor-mally put that one back on the shelf at the store and walk away. I go through this every year, and I know it was not a wise investment if I am on pins-and-needles every time my son kicks a stuffie across the house, or my wild 2-year-old poodle mix runs and slides while playing with my kids. I’m sure many of us struggle with the same issues. For that reason, I want to discuss some po-tential hazards during the holiday season to pets. If we know what the possible threat is, then we can better prepare to prevent catastrophe.

Of course the first one that springs to mind, which should come as no surprise, is the Poinsettia. The quintessential Christmas holiday plant. While it is widely known that you should keep your pets

away from this plant, most do not know exactly why. The reason is the leaves of the Poin-settia produce sap that is toxic and can be irritating to the lining of the upper GI tract (esophagus and stomach). Typically, if a pet ingests a small amount, then they should make a full recovery, but nausea, vomiting and abdominal discomfort are common. There are certainly other plants that can make a pet sick if ingested - holly and mistletoe. Certainly keep these out of reach as they can cause severe GI signs.

The next things to be aware of are ornament string, tinsel and needles from the live or artificial tree. Ingestion of any of these can wreak havoc in a pet’s GI tract. Cats are the usual suspect in this category - they just love to chew and eat string, tinsel and pine needles - eating large portions and sometimes an entire strand in one swallow. This string (called linear foreign bodies) can get caught in their intestines and can create a sort of blockage - one end gets caught, but the other doesn’t and this has an accordion-like effect on their intestines which, as I have witnessed, is quite painful to the patient and almost always requires surgical intervention.

The Christmas tree itself can pose a threat. Always be sure that wires are hidden and not ex-posed to help prevent a pet from chewing and leading to accidental electrocution. Try to avoid

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low-hanging ornaments to help prevent them being knocked off or broken, as well as accidental lacerations. Edible tree decorations, such as popcorn on a string, may not be such a great idea - this may just be too tempting for a pet to walk away from. Live Christmas trees, while beautiful and fragrant, need water. This water is typically treated to help feed the tree and enhance its longevity to keep it beautiful throughout the holiday season. Your pet may see this as a new and interesting water bowl - best to keep them out of it to help avoid any upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea.

Back to the opening paragraph discussion, always consider placement of your decorations! For example, a beautiful statue that holds a bowl of potpourri or maybe a tasty people treat may entice them to eat the scrumptious-smelling treat and possibly break your item in the process. Try to place the "danger" or "too pretty to get broken" items in areas that the pet, and children for that matter, cannot access or accidentally break.

Last on the lineup, people food. OK - not really a decoration, but many of us keep treats such as cookies, candy and other scrumptious holiday snacks out to enjoy, and pets try to indulge in them as well. 'Tis the season for holiday spirit, not an emergency vet visit. To put it simply, be sure to keep these out of reach. If your pet is not used to the food you want to offer or if you do not know if it is safe, then you can avoid an ER trip and possible bout of pancreatitis by not offering it to them. Give them one of their snacks instead.

I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season and a wonderful new year!



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FAMILY PRACTICE



BY KARAN SUMMITT

For many of us thoughts of the holidays bring to mind beloved family traditions. Repeating the same special rituals, serving up the same special recipes and holding to certain habits year after year will build memories that last a lifetime. The very fact that these traditions exist in a bubble of time over a few weeks of the year make them something adults anticipate as much as our children look forward to a visit from Santa Claus.

Christmas would not be the same without cherished food traditions. They are a part of the continuity that ties generations together. I learned to make holiday treats from my husband's heritage, and I added a few from my side of the family. Now that our children are grown and married, they are contributing their own recipes and when we celebrate, those newer foods are there, too.

Traditional holiday foods tend to be calorie-laden and made in amounts that make constant grazing inevitable. One way to offset all that grazing is to make sure family traditions encompass more than just food. Balancing the eating with activities that create memories can become traditions family

members look forward to just as much as they do Grandma's fudge or Aunt Susie's divinity.

Below are 20 ideas for holiday traditions family members of all ages will enjoy. Repeating them year after year will build memories, strengthen family ties and maybe even burn a few extra calories. I hope you find one or two from the list to incorporate into your family's holiday season.

- 1.) Get a handful of folks together and go caroling. You'll be surprised by how well-received your singing group is, even if you sing out of tune!
- 2.) Recreate photos from past Christmases.
- 3.) Help children make space for new Christmas presents by going through their personal items and gathering up clothing, shoes and toys they have outgrown. Allow the kids to join you in delivering them to a re-sale shop or clothing pantry that exists for a good cause.
- 4.) If you find joy in holiday cooking, walk door to door delivering small gift sacks of treats to the neighbors or visit shut-ins at an



assisted living facility or nursing home.

- 5.) Do something that gets you out of the house on Christmas Day after the meal and gifts. For years, the cousins in our family challenged each other to a game of basketball or football, with the winner getting bragging rights for the next year. Another family tradition might be to attend a movie together.

- 6.) Take a walk after a big family meal with a favorite relative you haven't seen in a long time.

- 7.) Start the "Elf on a Shelf" tradition but tweak it to be about more than just good behavior. Have the elf leave "kindness" assignments for the whole family to enjoy.

- 8.) Turn off the television and take turns reading classic Christmas stories or make it a tradition that the same person reads the same story each year.





9.) Video or record an interview with an aging family member. Have some questions prepared but be flexible enough to allow the conversation to chart its own path. In the hurry of everyday life older family members tend to be overlooked and their life stories lost until it is too late.

10.) Set aside one night each week and watch a favorite Christmas classic movie together. Partner it with a menu plan for each movie that becomes part of the tradition every year.

11.) Create a holiday playlist that your family listens to in the car or at home. Set a date for when the holiday music can begin playing.

12.) Use an advent calendar to count down to Christmas. Emphasize the true meaning behind so many of the traditions we celebrate. A good idea might be to plan a "Bethlehem" meal of traditional Middle Eastern foods such as olives, figs, fish, pita bread, etc.

13.) Start an "I Am Thankful" list with the children. Have them add one thing they are thankful for each day. Turn this into a decoration by having it written on a paper Christmas tree or snowflake that is hung across the fireplace or some other area.

14.) Volunteer your time as a family at a soup kitchen or a food bank that hands out food to families in need or find a giving tree that allows you to sponsor a family or purchase toys for children in need. Go shopping for the items together and donate them.

15.) Start a gift tradition. Create a funny gift that gets passed along each year or play Dirty Santa with regifted items. Another idea for Dirty Santa is to purchase gifts based on a theme.

16.) As a family, write a holiday letter. Have each member contribute one memorable moment from the past year to be shared with

friends and family. Keep the letters in a binder to be read and treasured.

17.) Start a canned food drive in your neighborhood, among co-workers or at your child's school. Ask others to contribute canned and non-perishable foods to donate at a food bank.

18.) Begin a scrapbook just for holiday memories. Each year add photos, ticket stubs, the holiday letter and any other items from that year's events. Just for fun, be sure to take pictures of all those tasty goodies on display and include a group photo of those who could

be together that year.

19.) Measure the kids' height to see how much they've grown. Keep heights on a chart that can be dated with their age, rolled up and saved until the next year. Allow space for the children to jot down significant accomplishments from the previous year.

20. Be open to embracing new traditions. As children grow up and move away from home, what worked when they were small may have to be modified once they are married and have children of their own. New traditions can become as meaningful as the old ones.

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# SAVE THE DATE

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December 2nd

6:00 p.m.

Centennial Park Lighting  
Main Street Paragould Event



December 7th

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Holiday Open House  
Participating Downtown Merchants  
Main Street Paragould Event



December 14th

2:00-6:00 p.m.

Cocoa Crawl  
Participating Downtown Merchants  
Main Street Paragould Event

*A complete listing of all Downtown events can be found under  
"Events" at [downtownparagould.com](http://downtownparagould.com) or  
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A large industrial machine, likely a CNC lathe or mill, is shown in a factory setting. The machine is white and grey, with a red overhead crane visible in the background. The text "Apply Now for an Opportunity in the Metal Industry!" is overlaid in large, blue, outlined letters. The machine has "VETTER" and "Economic S" visible on its side.

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AMMC Auxiliary sees changes,  
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WINTER 2024



# Old Dogs

## Paragould team holds 50-year reunion

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

**T**hey traded a number of good-natured barbs, and they recalled stories of the good old days; there were moments of laughter and a time for photographs, hugs and tears, but the one thing front and center was a meaningful reunion of teammates and a shared love for each other and for a very special time.

Members of the 1974 Paragould High School Bulldogs football team – a club that put together a 10-0 regular season – celebrated 50 years of memories in late October. The day started with a get-together at Skinny J's in Downtown Paragould, then resumed at that night's PHS homecoming game, where the "old Dogs," as some referred to themselves, were recognized at the end of the first quarter. "I guess it all started with me," said event organizer Hal Wyatt. "I just got to thinking that it was going to be the 50th anniversary of that team this fall, and I contacted some teammates on Facebook and said, 'What do you think about getting together?' and everybody went for it.

"We decided to wait until when Paragould's homecoming was held

and got it all worked out," he said, "then started making weekly posts on Facebook. We set up a 1974 Paragould Bulldogs Football Team page and everyone could keep up by looking at it, and then we just got it all worked out."

More than 20 former players, managers and coaches showed up to remember games, plays and even practices, and they took turns sharing some of their favorite stories from that 10-win campaign. The head coaching job had come open before the season began, and Wyatt and some other players went to the school board in hopes of convincing it to hire Bill Keedy as the Bulldogs' next leader. They played for him at the junior high level and, as Wyatt said, entering the 1974 season thought "we had the makings of a really good team that fall. I was the spokesperson but at that age you really don't know what you're doing. We just all signed a petition and then seven or eight players and some adults went to the school board meeting and we told them Coach Keedy knew us and we knew him and we thought he was the best one for the job. The board and Mr. Roberts went into executive

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Mack Thompson, Jennifer Keedy

session and stayed about an hour and a half and voted, and he had the head coaching job."

Getting right down to work, Keedy, Butch Duncan and Johnny Watson formed the coaching staff that piloted the Bulldogs to back-to-back 10-0 regular seasons. It was Keedy's first high school head coaching job before moving on to Sylvan Hills and then Newport in his impressive Hall of Fame coaching career. A majority of the former PHS players remained close to him and his wife Jennifer throughout the years, and were understandably saddened when the coach passed away in 2015. However, Jennifer and the two Keedy children – Kathryn and Billy – showed up at the reunion and reinforced a feeling that circled the room: The coach was special to the team and the team was special to the coach. Jennifer voiced those emotions while surrounded by the team.

"We stayed in contact with both Coach and Jennifer through all those years," Wyatt said. "We had always invited them to class reunions before so it was real easy to contact them and get them interested in coming to this one. And it wasn't hard to get Jennifer to say yes."

Watson, who was an assistant coach during the '74-75 seasons, managed to make the trip to Paragould to revisit the good times with the team, missing the homecoming game at Little Rock Christian where he is the Athletic Director. "It's the first time he's missed a game at a school in 50 years," Wyatt said, "which shows how special our team was. We were a close group. There wasn't any animosity like you sometimes have between classes. We all got along, the way you have to to have a good team; we backed each other up, which had a lot to do with Keedy, Duncan and Watson. We had a really special year."

Wyatt said the old Dogs were very appreciative of the groundwork performed by Paragould Athletic Director Mike Chipman and all others involved to make the night a success. "We called and explained what we wanted to do," he said, "and they were very receptive. They really rolled out the red carpet for us. They did a good job hosting it, and they made us feel welcomed."

For several of the players, the October gathering marked the first time they had seen some of their old teammates in the 50 years since they last played together. "That's one thing that made it so great," Wyatt said. "We had a very special group and it was like we had never been apart. It was a really good night."

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Foundation Board Members: (top) Dan Turner, Kimberly Dale, Susan Williams, Amy Lucius, Julie McHaney, Jason Noel; (bottom) Mary Ann Allen, Kerri Watson, Tracy Brengard; (not pictured) Joe Wessell, Bonnie Hamilton and Whitney Benson.

# GIVING TREE GRANTS

*Funds awarded to local initiatives*

**A**rkansas Community Foundation of Greene County recently held a breakfast reception at the Community Pavilion in Paragould to award grants totaling just under \$30,000 from the Greene County Giving Tree Fund and other foundation funds for various projects and initiatives.

"Local Giving Tree grants, paired with additional Foundation-directed funding make an impact for our community each year," said Kerri Watson, executive director of the Greene County affiliate. "Many of the grants awarded

this year have a common goal of targeting food insecurity in our county. Grants were made to local food pantries and organizations who provide meals and shelf-stable foods to our community members and students."

Two projects focused specifically toward senior citizens were among those receiving grant funds.

B.E.E.S. Senior Citizens Inc. received a grant for \$3,000 to purchase food and food safe containers for home delivered meals.

The foundation's Food Security focus area is aimed at reducing food insecurity and increasing the number of Arkansans who have consistent, secure access to healthy food. Arkansas is ranked second to last nationally in food security, behind Mississippi.

UAMS Center on Aging-Northeast also received a grant for \$3,500 for wandering kits to help individuals with dementia, their caregivers and first responders address dementia-related wandering in their community.

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Kaitlyn Weathers, Kerri Watson

In 2020, 10.1 percent of the 7,600 people in Greene County over the age of 65 were diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. Wandering, a common and dangerous behavior in dementia patients, occurs in over 60 percent of cases. It can result in severe injury or death if individuals are not found quickly. Arkansas' rural geography exacerbates these risks, and many caregivers lack the resources and knowledge to manage wandering effectively.

FOUND (Facilitating Our Understanding of Neighbors with Dementia) addresses these issues by providing wandering kits, including a QR-enabled bracelet, essential for quickly identifying lost individuals with dementia. FOUND supports family caregivers by providing tools and resources to manage dementia-related wandering, easing their burden, improving quality of life and supporting UAMS' mission to deliver patient-centered care.

Grants were also awarded to: Mission Outreach of NEA, Inc., Witt House Paragould First United Methodist Church Food Pantry, Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry, Arkansas Methodist Medical Foundation, Inc., Together We Foster, City of Paragould, CASA of the 2nd Judicial District, Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund and Arkansas Pet Savers.

Arkansas Community Foundation of Greene County makes grants through the Giving Tree program annually and applications are accepted July 10 through August 15. The next grant cycle for the Greene County 21st Century Women's Endowment will be open for applications January 10 through February 15. More information about Foundation grants is available at [www.arcf.org](http://www.arcf.org).

To donate to the Arkansas Community Foundation of Greene County Giving Tree Endowment with lasting local impact visit: <https://www.arcf.org/give-online/>.

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# What You Need to Know

## BIG CHANGES COMING TO MEDICARE DRUG PLANS

SUBMITTED BY ADAM COOPER, SENIOR HEALTHCARE INSURANCE

If you or someone you care about has Medicare, this is for you! Big changes are coming in 2025 that will affect how prescription medicines are covered. These changes could save you money, but they could also mean big differences in how your current plan works. Let's break it down so it's easy to understand.

### What is Medicare?

Medicare is a health insurance program in the United States for people who are 65 and older or have certain disabilities. It helps pay for healthcare, including doctor visits, hospital stays, and medicines. There are different parts of Medicare:

- Medicare Part D: This is the part that helps pay for prescription drugs.

- Medicare Advantage (Part C): These are private insurance plans that cover everything Original Medicare does, plus extra benefits like prescription drug coverage.

### What's Changing in 2025?

In 2025, new rules will affect both Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage plans that include prescription drug coverage. These changes are designed to help people pay less for their medicines, but they may also change how your current plan works. Here are the most important things to know:

1. Out-of-Pocket Cap: Right now, if you have high medicine costs, you could pay thousands of dollars a year. In 2025, there will be a limit on how much you pay out of your own pocket — up of \$2,000 per year. This cap applies to both Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage plans with drug coverage.

2. No More Donut Hole: There used to be a gap called the "donut hole" where you had to pay more for your medicines after a certain amount was covered. This "donut hole" is going away in 2025. This means more consistent costs for your medicines

all year long.

3. Tier Changes and Covered Drugs: Each plan has a list of covered drugs and different "tiers" that determine how much you pay. In 2025, these tiers might change. Some medicines could move to a higher tier, meaning you pay more, or could even be dropped from the plan's list of covered drugs. It's very important to check if your current medicines are still covered!

4. Smoother Payment Plans: If your drug costs are high, new options will let you spread out payments over time, instead of paying all at once. This will help with budgeting month by month.

**Medicare Annual Enrollment: Time is ticking!**

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period ends on December 7th. This is the time when you can review your current Medicare plan and make changes if needed. With all the new changes coming in 2025, it's more important than ever to review your plan, compare options, and make sure you're getting the best coverage.

1. Review Your Plan for 2025: This year, it's very important to look at your current plan to see how it might change. Check if your medicines will still be covered and what your costs will be.

2. Compare Different Plans: Look at other Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage plans to see if another one might offer better coverage for your needs.

3. Be Careful of Scammers: Watch out for strangers calling you about Medicare plans. They often don't have your best interests at heart. Only speak with trusted sources, like a Medicare expert, a family member, or a friend.

4. Ask for Help: If you're unsure what these changes mean for you, get help. Don't make these important decisions alone!



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# AMMC Auxiliary

## *Doing small things with great love...*

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

**P**hyllis Laymon has been a member of the Arkansas Methodist Medical Center Auxiliary for 30 years, having joined when her youngest son graduated from high school and joined the military.

A hairdresser for 50 years, she said that work led to her work with the auxiliary. "One of my customers was a member here," Phyllis said. "She said, 'Phyllis, your youngest son has joined the military, it's time for you to join the auxiliary.' Then she said, 'You know we are looking for a vice president.'"

Phyllis accepted that call and became both a member and the vice president of the organization, a position she now holds again. "This will be my third time around," she laughed, noting she has also served as district chair. "We had 133 members when I joined," Phyllis said as she discussed the effect of COVID on the auxiliary's volunteer force. "We lost a lot of members. A lot of people are still scared to come back. We are always looking for new members."

Phyllis recalled the dedication of longtime member Julia Jackson, who died at the age of 103, but worked with the auxiliary until she was over 100. "She lived on 10th Street," Phyllis said. "Her daughter took the car keys, and she would walk or get a ride."

She also reminisced about Mary Esther Herget, who Phyllis said took her under her wing when she joined the auxiliary back in 1994. "She was a dear sweet lady," Phyllis said. "She always sat at Information and she was always knitting. Every baby got a blanket. When she got older, I told her I wanted a blanket. She said, 'Phyllis, you're too old for a blanket.' But I wanted one to remember her by, so she made me one."

Phyllis said she has never regretted joining the auxiliary because it gives



her a completely different experience from her work as a hairdresser, but is equally rewarding. "I've always enjoyed the auxiliary," she said. "I get to meet new people and I love meeting people."

Phyllis works in the gift shop and also maintains the work schedule calendar for the volunteers in the shop. She said the gift shop, which has been updated with new merchandise, is ready for holiday shoppers and has a lot to offer the community beyond just buying gifts for patients in the hospital, though she said baby gifts are definitely something they make sure to keep stocked.

"We don't charge tax," she said. "We usually stay lower than other places in town on the prices." While the loss of members has resulted in the hours being reduced to 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, Phyllis said they still provide the same service to the hospital's staff, patients and the community.

She said she especially enjoys meeting new people while working in the gift shop. "You never know who is going to come through that door," she said. "Sometimes you can tell they've been up here all night long and they just need someone to talk to. So you give them a smile, let them talk, make them feel better. It makes you feel better too."

In addition to their work within the hospital, the AMMC Auxiliary also strives to impact the community. They award scholarships each June to

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students going into the medical field and are currently holding a sock drive for children in need and will hold a bake sale on December 20th. "We are also adopting five children for the holidays," Phyllis said.

Having just returned from the Arkansas Hospital Auxiliary Association convention in Little Rock, Phyllis said the new Arkansas president Charlotte Jackson chose "Do Small Things with Great Love" for her slogan. According to Phyllis, that is exactly what the auxiliary has always been about.



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# Julius Keeling

## The art of

BY KARAN SUMMITT

At 82 years old, Julius Keeling moves with the strength and confidence of a much younger man. He gives the credit to his love for dancing and a determination to overcome a potentially debilitating health diagnosis. Like most good stories, there are twists and turns along the way, but it is the detours that introduced Julius to all that he loves about dancing.

Born in Mississippi County, Arkansas, as a child Julius moved with his family to Greene County. He attended school through the eighth grade, dropping out to help his dad on the family farm. A few years later while working at Emerson Electric, Julius was drafted to serve in the Vietnam War. He chose Air Force enlistment, earned his GED and trained as an air freight specialist. His four years of Vietnam service included one year in Southeast Asia.

Following four years in the Air Force, Julius returned to Paragould for the next 25 years. A divorce led to relocation in Dallas, Texas, and in an effort to find something to do he enrolled in ballroom dance classes at the Fred Astaire studio. From there Julius attended a series of social dance classes, achieving a gold star certificate.

During his Texas stay Julius was recruited by a friend to join a dance

club. These clubs trained members to perform in dance competitions against other clubs, with the goal of attracting new members. Julius admits it was during his time with these competitive dance teams that the interest in ballroom dance really began to grow. "I got hooked watching the club leader choreograph our dances," he said. "I'm still dancing today and love it!"

Keeling returned to NEA and worked full time at Garlock Industries until 2000. Dancing fell by the wayside during those years. Retirement from Garlock led to part-time work with the Paragould Parks and Recreation Department until 2020 when a bout with Covid-19 led to a 28-day hospital stay and full retirement.

Like many men of his generation, Julius picked up smoking in his younger years, kicking the habit that lasted 40 years. A 2016 visit to the doctor revealed his lungs were at risk for COPD, prompting Julius to give up cigarettes and do what he could to strengthen his lungs. He knew from experience that dancing, along with riding a bicycle, would be good exercise for strengthening his damaged lungs.

"Illnesses are far easier to prevent than to cure, and I didn't want my COPD to worsen," Julius says. "Dance was the activity that appealed to

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me, and it has helped me stay and feel much younger than my biological age." Today, his lung function is eight points higher than it was with the original COPD diagnosis.



To help him regain strength after his bout with Covid-19 Julius began attending line dance classes held at the Paragould Community Center. In 2021 he was asked to teach the class, something he admits was a welcome opportunity. Now into his third year, Julius has expanded the curriculum to include five different dance options.

He heartily recommends the health benefits of dance, especially for older folks. The exercise increases strength and mobility, both of which help with fall prevention and longevity. Dance is low impact, making it easy on the joints. It also gives seniors confidence to move at a faster pace. Dance is just as beneficial for mental health as it is for physical health, forcing the brain to concentrate and utilize memory cells. The social aspect of dancing is good therapy for relieving stress and battling depression.

When sharing his enthusiasm for the art, Julius recalls dances held for many years at the Reynolds Park Building in Paragould. His goal is to provide a local venue in Northeast Arkansas for folks who love to dance. He welcomes a visit with anyone in the community who has a similar interest.


"Dancing is an art," he elaborates. "Some have a natural talent and catch on quickly, while others decide it's not for them. It takes lots of training to learn the steps and to work with a partner, but when that becomes instinctive, individual creativity steps in and beautiful art follows. If you can learn to count, you can learn to dance. People were made to move and dancing is simply walking set to music."

It may be that Julius Keeling's pleasure in dancing is one of the reasons he speaks and moves with a lightness that belies his 82 years and keeps him seeking out those who share that pleasure. His current classes, held in the Community Center Activity Room on Mondays and Tuesdays, include lessons in line dancing, swing, salsa, mambo, rumba and fox trot. Line dance classes meet on Mondays, 10-11 a.m. and on Tuesdays, 2-3 p.m. Couples' dance classes are held on Monday and Tuesday nights from 7-8:30 p.m. All lessons are free of charge to participants. If interested, Julius can be contacted at 870-476-2784. He also has a Facebook page under his name (Julius Keeling) with videos and additional information.

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# FUNERAL PRE-PLANNING

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I'll never forget the first time I bought lunch for my family. I was 8 years old, and my siblings and I were over at our grandparents' house waiting for our parents to pick us up. As they arrived to get us, my grandfather called us over and said, "Take your family out to lunch today." He then reached into his pocket and pulled out a crisp twenty-dollar bill. We were thrilled at the prospect of this sudden role reversal and could not wait to head over to Dairy Queen to treat our family of five to Jim Dandy's, Baby Burgers, hamburgers with slaw/pickle/mustard, fries, and drinks.

While this memory holds a special place in my heart for the lessons it contained about providing for those you love, it is just as memorable today because of the stark contrast it highlights in the cost of living. We've all heard people lament about a time when the price of a hamburger was 15 cents, a Coke cost a nickel, and you could go to a movie for a quarter. Inflation is an ever-present monster that rears its ugly head to erode our purchasing power. Imagine if you could go back in time and make your purchases for today at the prices from years ago. That's one of the main ideas behind funeral pre-planning.

Funeral pre-planning allows you to go over all expenses that might be incurred, well ahead of the time that you are faced with them. Additionally, funeral pre-planning locks in the price of all non-third-party charges. Funeral home service charges, the cost of the casket and vault, vehicle and facility charges, the cost of embalming, and additional merchandise items can all be frozen at today's rates even if the funeral doesn't occur for decades. Payments can be made in a lump sum up front, or can be set monthly at an amount that fits within your budget. So long as the total is paid in full prior to the time when services are required, the prices stay locked in at today's rates.

It's important to know that making a pre-arrangement with a funeral home does not necessarily lock you into that funeral home, as it is held in trust by an insurance company and not the funeral home itself.

While you may no longer be able to buy the Coke for a nickel, the hamburger for 15 cents, or see the movie for a quarter, being able to lock in some prices long-term is one way to combat inflation and provide for your family during a difficult time in the future.



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## Jonesboro Laser Aesthetics Hosts Holiday Party

**J**onesboro Laser Aesthetics hosted a Holiday Party on November 14th at its office, located at 1000 E. Matthews Avenue, Suite E in Jonesboro.

The event, which was well attended, included giveaways, preferred pricing, hors d'oeuvres and drinks.



Karen Flippin, Linda Rodman Martin



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# Making sure your loved one is OK

## RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS

**T**his holiday, while visiting your parents, grandparents, or loved ones, remember that depression ranks among the most common mental health disorders in older populations, and unfortunately, it can be easily overlooked or misdiagnosed. If you recognize any of these symptoms, take time to talk to your loved one. Early intervention is the key to effective treatments!

**Changes in Mood:** The hallmark symptom of depression is a change in mood that lasts for weeks or months. Older adults experiencing depression may report persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness or helplessness. They may appear unusually tearful or express negative thoughts about their lives or futures. This lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed can be misinterpreted as a natural response to aging or loss.

**Physical Manifestations:** Unexplained aches and pains — such as headaches, joint pain or gastrointestinal issues — may indicate underlying depression rather than a specific medical condition. These physical symptoms may not respond to conventional treatments, leading to frequent doctor visits without resolving the underlying issue.

**Sleep Disturbances:** Older adults with depression may have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or may oversleep excessively. Factors such as excessive worrying or physical discomfort may

impede their ability to stay asleep, while excessive sleeping may serve as an avoidance mechanism for unpleasant emotions. These disruptions in sleep patterns can exacerbate feelings of fatigue and lethargy, contributing to the cycle of depression.

**Cognitive Changes:** Older adults may struggle with concentration, memory, and decision-making, all of which may be dismissed as normal age-related changes or early signs of dementia. However, unlike dementia — which is characterized by a gradual and progressive decline in cognitive function — cognitive impairments associated with depression often improve with appropriate treatment. Sudden or significant changes in their ability to perform daily tasks previously managed independently may indicate that depression is a factor.

**Changes in Appetite and Weight:** Some older adults may experience a loss of appetite, resulting in unintentional weight loss, while others may overeat as a coping mechanism. Loss of appetite can contribute to malnutrition, further compromising physical health, while overeating can result in a range of health issues, including diabetes or hypertension.

**Social Withdrawal:** Isolation from family and friends, often due to a lack of interest in social activities, overwhelming fatigue, or apathy, is a common sign of depression.



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

They may perceive themselves as burdens to others, leading to self-imposed isolation. This withdrawal can intensify feelings of loneliness and alienation.

**Risk of Suicide:** The risk of suicide is significantly elevated for older adults. Warning signs may include expressions of hopelessness, feelings of being a burden, or discussions of being “better off dead.” Even in the absence of direct suicidal statements, social withdrawal, abandonment of treatment, or the sudden distribution of valuable belongings should raise alarm.

Depression is very treatable and there are many options available. By remaining vigilant to these potential signs, you can play a vital role in ensuring that the older adults in your life receive the necessary support to manage their mental health and maintain a fulfilling quality of life.

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## Tis The Season...

**T**he leaves are turning, the temperature is dropping, and as many do, we at Redgie Jetton Electric are spending time this season reflecting over the past year. As we look back over 2024, we can't help but to be filled with gratitude. Our customers, employees, and our families have each given us many reasons to be thankful. Being a family-owned and operated business has become increasingly difficult over the last several years, and we do not take lightly the role each of you have played in allowing us to succeed.

Our customers, who feel like family, have reminded us this year, as always, why we do what we do. We are proud to provide power generation to repeat and new customers. This year, we've seen a bit of it all. The young family planning for their future and the elderly couple planning their retirement; the work from home population and those in the marketplace; the forever home and the hunting cabin; and the list goes on. Thank you to all of our customers for sharing a glimpse of your life with us and allowing us to provide you with the peace of mind a Generac generator offers.

Our employees, who show up every day and give their all to their profession, we thank you. Your dedication and commitment to our customers is what keeps us going and we are proud to have each of you on our team.

And lastly, our families. Thank you for another year of wonderful memories, and for supporting us and our business.

Redgie Jetton Electric would not be where we are without each of you, and for that, we are truly thankful. We are blessed to be a local family serving our community and others in Northeast Arkansas in the way that we do. As you spend time reflecting over your year and planning for 2025, it is our prayer that you each be filled with gratitude as you reflect on the blessings in your life.

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# PLAYING FOR FUN

## *Pickleball group open to all ages, skill levels*

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Those wanting to join in on one of the fastest growing sports in America don't have to travel all that far. Several area folks gather each weekday morning at the Paragould Community Center to show off their pickleball skills, regardless of what level they may be.

Kenneth Pegg, who was helping organize the action on one particular morning, said those who show up almost daily aren't necessarily looking to become championship players; instead, they are looking for a fun sport and an opportunity to mingle with others. "It's all about meeting people and enjoying the sport," he said, acknowledging that some participants have the ultra-competitive spirit while others are just there to play and get a little exercise. Players' ages range from young adults to senior citizens and the fitness levels are just as varied.

"If we have 12 people here we try to play 12 games," he said, "so everybody plays with everybody. We're not trying to put together super teams; we just love to play."

He said most folks bring their own equipment, but for those who don't there are plenty of paddles available for use. The Community Center



currently has two courts but plans to add another in the near future, Pegg said, hoping to accommodate the growing number of people who seem to enjoy learning the game. He explained that skill level is not important; what is, is getting to know new people and getting to compete, regardless of how serious or noncompetitive one might be.

"Doesn't matter," he said. "We're just here to have fun."

Most participants arrive sometime between 8 and 9 a.m. and find out who their partners will be, then take to the court for a contest. Play is open to anyone interested, and there is no participation fee.



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# KEEPING IT JOYFUL

## *During the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*

SUBMITTED BY ST. BERNARDS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

The holidays, especially Christmas, can bring all sorts of emotions, both good and sad. While we often have picturesque ideas of how things should look, they usually fall short of our expectations. During this time, joy may seem hard to find. Does joy, however, really depend upon our circumstances?

St. Bernards Medical Center Chaplains Don Martin and Amanda McCall offer wisdom on finding joy in the “most wonderful time of the year.”

**Q: What is one of your most joyous holiday memories?**

Don: I remember being a child and learning about the richness of family in spite of the brokenness around us. My four siblings and I lived with our mother in Michigan at one point. I remember that she intentionally surrounded us with family and would take us down to my grandmother's house in Illinois. One year, when we came home to Michigan, the electricity and furnace weren't working. If you've ever lived up north, you know it was freezing. As a family, however, we all got the fire going together. I remember Mom having all five of us kids sleep right there by the fire, and I remember that closeness. As people of faith, Christ was the center of it all, because He started love. He made the family. He was taking a bad situation and making it good.

**Q: What holiday traditions help bring you joy?**

Amanda: We value being with family whenever it's possible. My husband, daughter and I lived overseas for thirteen years, so we've not always been “home” for Christmas. I also think our joy is multiplied when we can find ways to support and invest in other people, especially during Christmas time. Your Christmas can truly be made much better when you intentionally try and make another person's or another family's Christmas better!

**Q: We think of giving in terms of bringing joy to other people, but how does it help us find joy, too?**

Don: Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” so my wife and I have always instilled the principle in our children and grandchildren to do something for somebody else without expecting anything in return. Christmas is an especially good place to practice giving. When we give selflessly, it helps us see Christ, the one who gave Himself for us; the one creates love and joy. Even in times that are difficult, we can have joy because of Him.

**Q: What other practices help us find joy?**

Amanda: We have to remember why we celebrate - Christ. While it is so good to get together, I try to block off at least two different times during the holidays simply to pause. This intentionality slows my pace, helping me take in the meaning of it all. It also prepares my heart to receive Him even more during this season; to really adore Him. Before I can say, “Yes”, to all my family, friends and coworkers, I must say, “Yes!” to Him.

# Holiday traditions



*Glenda Fields  
Paragould*

There was not a lot of money in cotton farmers' households in the 1940s and '50s so we didn't run out and buy gifts for everyone for Christmas. Gifts were usually homemade items such as aprons, fudge or bread. Or maybe doing a chore for your sibling or an extra help for your parents. But one tradition was we would always get oranges – which we didn't get during the year. One year it snowed so much Dad couldn't get the truck down our snow bound country road, so he slung a tow sack across his shoulders and walked to town. He was nearly frozen when he returned later that evening but we kids had oranges to find on Christmas morning. A simple thing – oranges! Not to us. It meant love, the true meaning of Christmas.

*Readers  
share  
old, new  
favorites*



*Cynthia Coleman  
Paragould*

Our family Christmas tradition is breakfast brunch with our kids and grandkids, usually 15-plus. I cook a big breakfast; gravy, biscuits, chocolate gravy, eggs, bacon, ham and sausage with coffee, eggnog, hot chocolate and juice. After breakfast we open gifts.



*Danielle Lowe  
Paragould*

One of my family's favorite holiday traditions is to explore new Northeast Arkansas Christmas festivities that we have never been to before! Last year we went to Christmas at the Park for the first time.

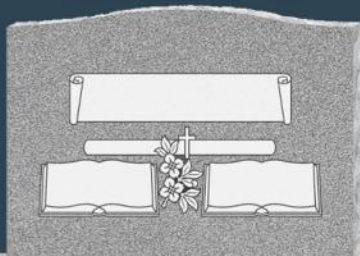
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# DON'T MISS THESE *Upcoming Events in NEA*



Tree Lighting

*December 2nd*

Main Street Paragould will host its annual Tree Lighting ceremony on Monday, December 2nd, at 6 p.m. at Centennial Park in Downtown Paragould to kick off the holiday season.

The public is invited to the free event, which will also include a time for group caroling and local vendors, including hot cocoa and ornaments. The tree is provided by Crow's Nest Farms.



Baby State

*December 5th*

St. Bernards Baby State will be Thursday, December 5th, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the St. Bernards Auditorium, located at 505 East Washington Avenue in Jonesboro.

Prenatal and Birthcare Center experts will be available to answer questions and provide resources for your family's new addition. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 870-207-7300 or visit [stbernards.info](http://stbernards.info).



Joy Fest

*December 7th*

The Downtown Jonesboro Alliance will host Joy Fest Saturday, December 7th, from 4-10 p.m. on Union Street in Downtown Jonesboro.

The free event will include the RightFiber Christmas tree lighting, as well as live performances and a Kids' Zone. Don't forget to explore the local vendors in Barton's Village, where you can find unique gifts and goodies!

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# CHRISTMAS Parades

**December 1st**

Brookland Christmas Parade, 2:00 p.m.

**December 3rd**

Walnut Ridge Christmas Parade, 6:00 p.m.  
Paragould Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m.

**December 5th**

Pocahontas Christmas Parade, 6:00 p.m.

**December 6th**

Jonesboro Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m.  
Trumann Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m.

**December 7th**

Manila Christmas Parade, 6:00 p.m.

**December 8th**

Rector Christmas Parade, 3:00 p.m.

**December 10th**

Swifton Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m.

**December 13th**

Cardwell Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m.

**December 14th**

Cash Christmas Parade, 6:00 p.m.  
Monette Christmas Parade, 6:00 p.m.



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# HAPPENINGS

## SMITH RECEIVES STUDENT AFFAIRS HONOR

Black River Technical College's vice president of student affairs, Jason Smith, J.D., was recently awarded the Dr. Mossie Richmond, Jr., Outstanding Leadership Award by the Arkansas Student Affairs Association (ArSAA).

This award recognizes outstanding student affairs leaders from Arkansas who have made significant contributions to ArSAA.



Jason Smith

The Dr. Mossie Richmond, Jr., Award has been awarded for the past 30 years and is the highest honor an individual can receive in student affairs in Arkansas. Richmond, who served as vice president of student affairs at Arkansas State University, was the first recipient in 1994.

"This award has a lot of meaning to me," Smith said, "My mentors, Dr. Rick Stripling and Dr. Lonnie Williams, both won it many years ago at Arkansas State University."

Nominations for this award must be made by an ArSAA member and selection is based on leadership positions held by the person in professional organizations and specific areas of outstanding service to the association. Smith is the first recipient from Black River Technical College.

## BRTC HONORS KIMBLE WITH ALUMNI AWARD

Elizabeth Kimble, who serves as the education program specialist for the Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, has been recognized as Black River Technical College's Outstanding Alumni for 2024.



Elizabeth Kimble

This recognition is nominated and voted for by BRTC faculty and staff, and is then awarded by Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC).

Kimble graduated from BRTC in 2011 with an Associate of Arts and continued her education at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. At A-State she graduated with a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology and management.

Through her position at the nature center, Kimble has pushed for more community involvement, more public education, and more woman empowerment.

Kimble's dedication has been recognized by many and she has received awards like the "Champion of Women" from the Women's Leadership Collaborative (WLC) and the "R3 Award" from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. She also served on Black River Technical College's Agriculture Program Advisory Committee from 2021 to 2023.

## ALLEN NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

Allen Engineering Corporation (AEC) recently announced Daniel Allen as the company's new customer service manager. AEC, a leading family-owned concrete equipment manufacturer, is eager to welcome Daniel as he represents the third generation of the Allen family to join the company.



Daniel Allen

"Daniel's return to Allen Engineering as the third generation leader symbolizes a legacy of excellence, innovation, and our family's dedication to our customers," said CEO Jay Allen, Daniel's father. "His extensive experience, both outside and within our organization, provides unique insights that make him a valuable asset to our team. As we continue to uphold our family values and drive for continuous improvement, I have full confidence in Daniel's ability to lead us into the future."

Having grown up in the company, Daniel developed a passion for AEC's innovation and dedication to quality. His journey at AEC began at a young age, holding various roles within the company before serving in the Army National Guard. He then attended the University of Arkansas, where he earned a degree in ag business. Daniel returned to Allen Engineering Corporation as part of the AEC Leadership Training Program where he received hands-on experience from each department. After completing the AEC Leadership Training Program, Daniel's motivation and expertise led to his promotion to Customer Service Manager.



Tori Thompson, Brista Hinklin, Jordan Malone, Tray Malone and Teresa Vangilder

## CRC SUPPORTS PROJECT HOPE

The Crowley's Ridge College softball and baseball programs recently presented a donation to Arkansas Methodist Medical Center's Project Hope. The college hosted its annual Project Hope fundraiser on October 12th in conjunction with CRC's 60th anniversary celebration.

Project Hope is a breast cancer awareness program through the AMMC Foundation that provides funding for free mammograms.

"CRC has supported Project Hope for over 10 years and has touched the lives of many in our community fighting breast cancer," Tori Thompson, executive director of the AMMC Foundation, said.

# Next Month

## Fiscally Fit



Check out tips on how to get off on the right foot for the new year when it comes to your finances.

## Fresh Starts



Celebrate new beginnings as we begin a new year. Sometimes the greatest gift is a fresh start.

## Holiday Happenings



Look for photos from holiday events around NEA.

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Ronald Smith, SR., MD  
**Blytheville Clinic**



Allison Swanson, APRN  
**Newport Clinic**



Amy Bailey, MD  
**Pediatrics - Brookland Clinic**



MaryJoanne Umeora, MD  
Tomorrow Potter, APRN • Anna Easterling, APRN  
**Pediatric Clinic**



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