

NEA'S

# PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2025

A photograph of two women standing in front of a stone wall. The woman on the left is older, with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. She is holding a framed certificate from Greene County Tech School District that recognizes Norma Davenport. The woman on the right is younger, with long brown hair, wearing a white blouse with blue floral embroidery and white pants. She is holding a framed certificate from the State of Georgia that recognizes her for K-6 Special Education. The text 'TEACHING TRADITION LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER' is overlaid in large, stylized letters across the middle of the image.

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LIKE DAUGHTER**

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BACK TO SCHOOL  
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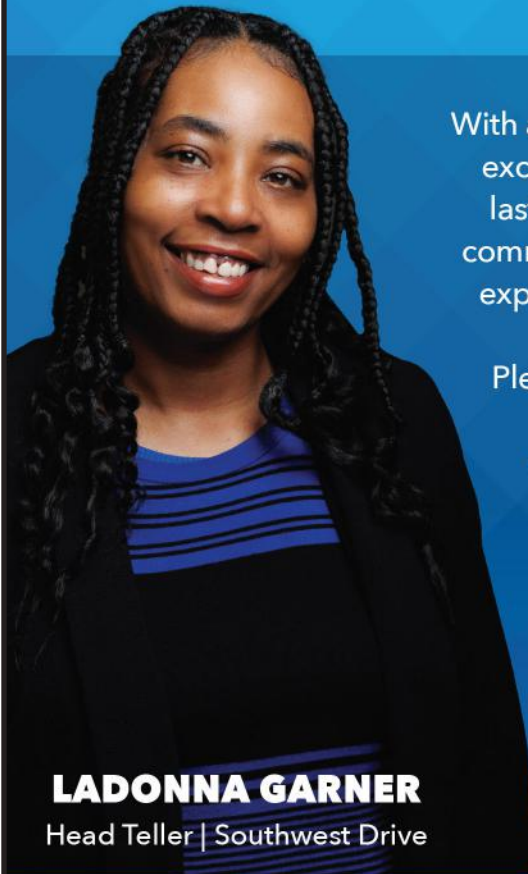
ON THE COVER -

Mother and daughter Norma Davenport and Jenna Craft have both dedicated their lives to teaching, and both were recognized for that dedication during the past school year.

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Cover Photo by Richard Brummett

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# From Us to You

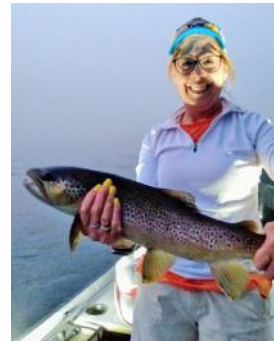
I would like to take the opportunity to say "thank you" to Gretchen and congratulations on completing your first year! Gretchen brings so much to the creation of this monthly publication and her team spirit and enthusiasm is unmatched and a breath of fresh air at MOR MEDIA, Inc.

If you didn't know that I love to fish, you must not read this column, and we must not be friends on Facebook. Someone said, "You do not look like a fishing kind of gal" at an office professional event and I thought – "You should see me in fishing mode." And as you see from this picture --- I do look like the fishing type of gal.

Maybe we shouldn't "judge a book by its cover" and stereotype anyone. People are multi-faceted and that is what makes them interesting. I would say I know how to dress the part — professional when needed and all in between. It did dawn on me that Shawn Cox, our guide on the last several White River trips, may think I only have one outfit — it is my lucky fishing outfit, and it worked this time! Apparently, it is my Lucky River Fishing Outfit because it did not work on my Costa Rica fishing trip!

Fishing, for me, is a relaxing hobby but I take my tactics (and success) seriously. I love trout fishing on the White River because it takes

skill, but it is fun and I get to apply strategic tactics, but I also practice patience. Early mornings on the White River are beautiful and serene, and, on this trip, I landed a 20-inch brown trout before it was even fully daylight.



When we chose this as our theme along with Back To School, I wasn't sure of the relationship but there are so many lessons to learn from fishing, I believe every child should go at an early age and as often as possible. Patience, finesse, the thrill of success and the agony of defeat with the addition of an enjoyable experience regardless ... and so many other lessons.

Let's go fishing!

*Dina Mason*

Dina Mason  
General Manager & Publisher  
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Each year has 365 days, 52 weeks and 12 months, which means, of course, 12 editions of NEA's Premiere Magazine! With the publication of the August 2025 edition, I mark the completion of my first year as content manager for Premiere and look forward to continuing forward now that I have that experience under my belt.

It almost seems like fate that my anniversary date should fall as the new school year is set to begin. There is always extra excitement around NEA as both K-12 schools and colleges come back to life after the summer break. We are excited to get to feature two of NEA's outstanding teachers, a mother and daughter duo, as they join their fellow educators in preparing to go back to school.

Our August edition also celebrates the last of the lazy days of summer as we focus on fishing. When we chose that theme, we had

no idea the different directions the fishing topic would lead us, but we quickly discovered that in addition to being a fun way to pass a Saturday, fishing also has a major impact on the region in a lot of different ways.



I hope you enjoy this final edition of my first of what I hope are many years to come sharing the good news of Northeast Arkansas and the People Making it Happen.

*Gretchen Hunt*

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# Triple Swing Dinner

## SUPPORTING ST. BERNARDS

Ultimate 80s was the theme for the St. Bernards Advocates Triple Swing Dinner on Friday, June 20th, at the St. Bernards Auditorium. The event, which paired with a golf tournament to raise money for the St. Bernards Heart and Vascular Programs, included a catered meal, games, a live auction and other opportunities to give.



PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT



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# Delightful Coconut

BY KATIE COLLINS

This is one of my favorite types of desserts – it just checks all the boxes. It's easy to adjust the size, easy to adjust the flavors. The original recipe is made in a 9x13 pan with chocolate pudding, and that's a great version. I may get in trouble for not making that size and bringing it into the office, but I wanted to attempt to make a smaller version and change the flavors a bit.

By the time I got to the final result, well, I didn't really feel like sharing! If you want to go with a 9x13, just double everything. This crust is my absolute favorite, and I might increase it a bit next time, even for the smaller pan. I'm also considering trying this crust for a cheesecake – stay tuned! In the meantime, enjoy this 4-Layer Coconut Delight!



## 4-Layer Coconut Delight

### Ingredients:

- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup pecans, finely chopped
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 8-ounce container Cool Whip, thawed (half for the cream cheese layer and half for the top)
- 1 3.4-ounce box instant coconut pudding
- 1 ½ cups whole milk

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line an 8x8 baking pan with parchment paper or non-stick foil. Mix melted butter, flour and pecans together, press into the pan, and bake for 12-15 minutes. Let cool on the counter.

Mix cream cheese and powdered sugar together until smooth. Stir in half of the container of Cool Whip and spread on the cooled crust. Mix pudding and milk together until smooth and well combined. Chill for 5-10 minutes, then spread on top of cream cheese layer. Top with the remaining Cool Whip. Garnish with toasted coconut. Refrigerate for at least four hours or overnight, then serve and enjoy!

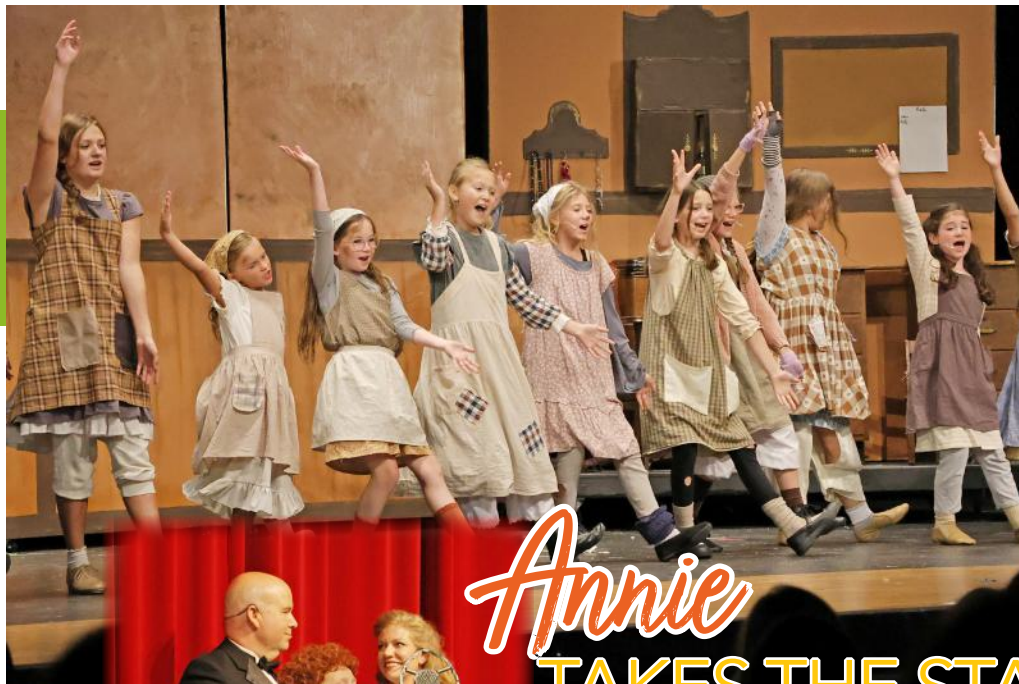
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# Annie TAKES THE STAGE

The Greene County Fine Arts Council delighted audiences with its production of Annie July 17th through 20th at the Paragould High School Auditorium. The musical featured a large cast with orchestral accompaniment. For information about other upcoming shows find the GCFAC on Facebook.



PHOTOS BY SHELBY RUSSOM



Look for more photos from this event on the Premiere Magazine Facebook page.

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BY ESTRELLA BELTRAN

# KEEPING ARKANSAS WILD

## *A New Face in Fisheries Science*

For many Arkansans, fishing is a weekend tradition or a peaceful pastime. For Hae Kim, it's both a way of life and a full-time career. As a fisheries biologist for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), Hae plays a vital role in monitoring and managing the aquatic ecosystems of Northeast Arkansas, ensuring they remain healthy and accessible for future generations.

But his journey to this role didn't start in Arkansas.

Hae was six years old when his family immigrated to the United States from South Korea in 2000, settling in Virginia on the coast. Fishing was already in his blood — his father and uncles fished back in Korea, and the family found familiarity in casting lines in American waters. "Fishing was something we knew how to do, even in a new place," Hae said. "We didn't know much about the U.S., but fishing we knew how to do."

The family's love of fishing eventually turned into a business: a seafood restaurant. Between the restaurant, working at a fish market, and spending time outdoors, Hae soaked up everything he could about fish — how they behaved, what they ate, and how to catch them.

That early interest evolved into a full academic and professional career. Hae pursued a degree in fisheries science at Virginia Tech, where he discovered the science behind fish populations, regulations, and sustainability. He worked on tidal rivers and invasive species, including blue catfish in Virginia's estuaries, and later on young sturgeon in the Mississippi River. His graduate work took him from West Virginia University to Missouri State University, following the mentorship of a key professor and deepening his focus on freshwater systems.

"I started out thinking I'd do marine work," Hae said. "But once I started learning about freshwater fisheries — especially electrofishing and hands-on fieldwork — I was hooked."

### What a Fisheries Biologist Actually Does

As one of the AGFC's biologists for the Northeast district, Hae is responsible for managing lakes and rivers across 10 counties. His work includes everything from electrofishing (stunning fish with electricity to safely catch and study them) to analyzing fish otoliths, or ear bones, which hold growth rings like trees and reveal a fish's age.

"By knowing how old a fish is and how fast it's growing, we can build models and decide things like length limits or bag limits," Hae

explained. "It helps us make science-based regulations to keep fisheries sustainable."

Some days are spent out in the field; others involve analyzing data, maintaining equipment, or answering questions for the public. "You wear a lot of hats in this job — biologist, mechanic, teacher, even part-time plumber," he laughed. "But that's part of the fun."

Since starting in May 2025, Hae has focused on learning the region's waters and understanding the unique characteristics of each lake and river system. One highlight is Lake Poinsett, a reservoir near Harrisburg that recently underwent a full renovation. The AGFC drained the lake, rebuilt habitat structures, and restocked it with fish, giving the ecosystem a fresh start.

"It's like hitting a reset button," Hae said. "Now the fish are thriving, and the lake's in better shape than ever."

The Community Fishing Program, which provides stocked fishing opportunities for kids under 16 and adults over 65, helps provide a more unique opportunity for those age brackets. The AGFC also stocks trout in the White River system in Northwest Arkansas, drawing anglers from across the country and boosting local economies.

"Good natural resources don't just help the environment — they support small towns, tourism, and livelihoods," he said.



### Fieldwork in Action: Sampling with Science

One of the most effective tools in the AGFC's fisheries toolkit is electrofishing — a method used to temporarily stun fish so biologists can safely catch, identify, and measure them before releasing them back into the water. Hae and his team use electrofishing boats equipped with generator-powered electrodes that send a controlled current through the water.

The mild electric field stuns nearby fish just long enough for biologists to net them and record valuable data like species, size and health condition. This method is especially useful for studying fish populations in lakes and rivers, helping the team determine what species are thriving, which ones might need help, and whether current regulations are working. It's gritty, hands-on work that combines field biology with tech, and it's crucial to understanding how Arkansas's fisheries change over time.



Hae said he hopes people understand the value of public land and water, and how management efforts — like setting regulations or stocking fish — aren't just bureaucratic red tape. They're what make fishing and hunting in Arkansas so accessible, so abundant and so uniquely American.

"In Korea, hunting and fishing are different — less access, fewer wild places," Hae says. "Here, the public owns the land. That's something really special."

While he's still new to the position, Hae is eager to dive deeper into river systems on the western side of his district and continue helping local anglers get the most out of their waters. He sees outreach — especially to kids and first-time anglers — as a big part of the job.

"You can't protect what you don't love," Hae says. "That first time a kid catches a fish in a backyard pond? That moment might shape their future. Maybe they'll end up like me."

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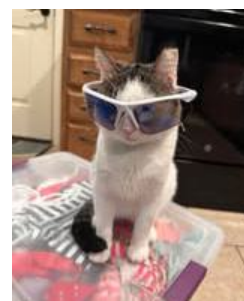
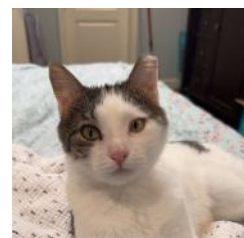
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# PET *of the* MONTH

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BY LAUREN ROWE

**W**e adopted Teddy in March of 2025 from Something Pawsitive. He was picked up with a colony and taken in to be fixed through Ozzie's Legacy. They noticed how much he loved people and did not want to let him go back outside; that's how he ended up at Something Pawsitive. I took our autistic daughter there to see the cats -- she loves cats -- and I noticed how much Teddy took to her compared to some of the other cats. Needless to say, we ended up bringing him home the same day. He's a little over a year old. He loves ham when we make our sandwiches for lunch. He's great at keeping the flies down inside the home. His favorite napping spots are the bathroom sinks and beside our 8-month-old baby boy. He loves everyone and is not shy at all. He will even sit in a chair at the table when we eat and watch us!



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# NEA Game Fest

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Over 400 attendees gathered for the ninth annual NEA Game Fest held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center on July 17th-20th. The convention featured a wide array of tabletop games, including board games, miniature games, role-playing games and collectible card games.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Friends of the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library. At press time, organizers were still calculating the final total raised at the 2025 event, but said this is expected to be their biggest fundraising year yet. The event previously raised \$11,230 in 2024.



PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT






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# FISHING TOURNAMENT *Is A Family Affair*

BY GRETCHEN HUNT

For Brookland residents George and Kristi Young, the opportunity to create a catfish tournament a decade ago has turned into an event that draws anglers from across the country to try their luck fishing in the mighty Mississippi.

George has always had an interest in directing



a catfish tournament on the Mississippi River, and when the Bass Pro Pyramid opened in 2015, his longtime friend and outdoor television host Bill Dance thought it would be the perfect opportunity to begin the Mississippi River Monsters Catfish tournament in Memphis.

"The opening of The Pyramid got the ball rolling," Kristi said. "The first ever Bill Dance Mississippi River Monsters (MRM) Catfish Tournament was born in September 2016 at the Memphis Bass Pro Pyramid."

She said George has loved catfishing his entire life. "He has always fished for all species of fish," Kristi said. "He wanted to introduce a catch and release trophy catfish tournament to catfish anglers. He felt there was a need for this type of tournament, and with the support of Bass Pro Shops, he felt like the time was right and he could make it happen."

George and Kristi, MRM owners and tournament directors, worked tirelessly to make sure the tournament was a success, and this year's event will mark the 10th anniversary of what has become a nationally-known tournament.

"We have anglers from as far west as California and over 30 states participate in our tournament," Kristi said. "Each year, MRM Memphis, gives away over \$100,000 worth of cash and prizes. Not to mention our yearly non-profit benefit auction that provides thousands in monetary donations to Miss Marley Wilbanks." Marley is an 8-year-old with Kippel-Fiel Syndrome.

MRM expanded its offerings in 2023 with the addition of the Bill Dance Mississippi River Monsters Mega Bucs tournament in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

"Last year, was the largest catfish tournament payout in U.S. history, with first place going to Paragould natives Daryl and Jason Masingale and Mississippi native David Coughlin," Kristi said. "They won \$100,000 cash as first prize ... over \$275,000 worth of cash and prizes were given away last year in Vicksburg to the top catfish anglers in the country."

While the Youngs were setting up for the annual Mega Bucs Tournament in Vicksburg on July 26th and 27th, they were also making preparations for the 10th annual Bill Dance Mississippi River Monsters Tournament at



the Memphis Bass Pro Pyramid on September 13th.

The Young family works together to make these events family centered. "The goal is bringing the outdoors to all ages," Kristi said.



"We love the anglers, and we love seeing the monster catfish found in the Mississippi weighing in excess of 75 pounds."

More information can be found at [www.mississippirivermonsters.com](http://www.mississippirivermonsters.com) or on Facebook.



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# Opening Morning Memories

BY CHUCK LONG

GOOD TIMES IN THE OUTDOORS



Time seemed to move slowly. The last few minutes before daylight plodded along like a turtle on a leisurely stroll to a waterhole. I wanted to check the time on my phone, but I knew that would arouse the curiosity of the local mosquitoes and make it more difficult to fend them off. The dry cornstalks rattled slightly as Neema, a German Shorthair, wiggled her nub of a tail in excitement for a new hunting season. The horizon slowly brightened to the east and birds began to fly. Guns began to pop and the smell of gunpowder filled the air. Another hunting season was upon us!

I have been fortunate to be a part of many opening mornings in my sixty years on this earth. There is something very special about that first day of hunting season. Spending it with friends and family, taking a few doves, watching some football and an afternoon nap are all traditions for that day. That morning also builds anticipation for all the seasons that will open throughout the fall. It's the kickoff to lots of opportunity and my favorite time of the year.

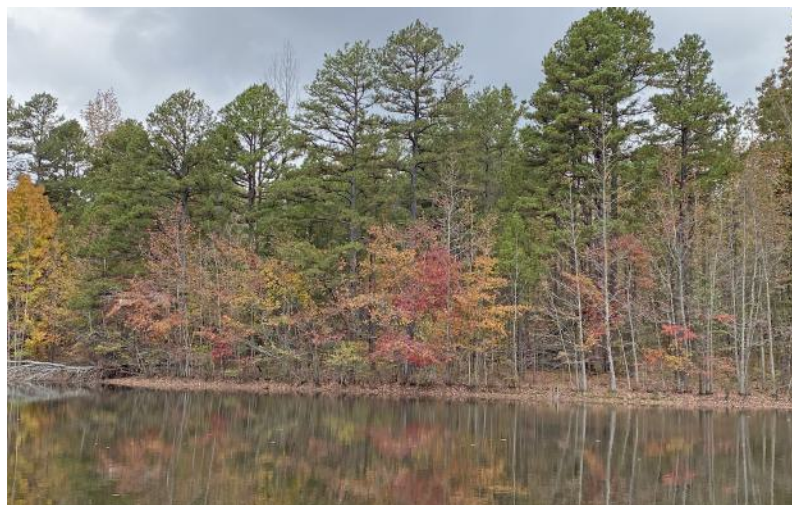
When Arkansas hunters think about a hunting season "opening day," most thoughts go to dove hunting. Northeast Arkansas is blessed with some great dove hunting opportunities. Lots of river bottoms to provide nesting habitats, lots of cropland to provide food and an ample supply of water sources contribute to a strong dove population in NEA. We also have a large number of hunters who hit the fields to chase doves. Here are a few things to remember to make the chase more successful.

Scouting is a key in a successful dove outing. I will spend countless hours and burn lots of fuel traveling the roads in search of doves. Cut grain fields are a favorite for both doves and hunters, but I also like to find areas where doves might water or loaf. Small water holes can be a great hunting location, especially after the birds have been pressured a bit by hunters. Small patches of layout ground that provide a place for doves to sit in the open and peck around for seeds are also a great option. Look for congregations of doves on power lines, tree lines or graveling in the road and then watch where they go and plan accordingly. One key note – most of the dove hunting is on private ground; please ask permission and treat the land with respect.

Squirrels are also a popular pursuit early in the hunting season. We are blessed with some great locations in NEA, with some of the better hunting being on public land. Black River WMA, Sunken Lands WMA, Scatter Creek WMA and Harold Alexander WMA near Hardy can all provide excellent squirrel hunting. Maps for these areas can be found at agfc.com. Scout these areas a bit and success should follow. Look for squirrels around stands of hickory early in the season and then transitioning to oaks later in the year.

One of my favorite tools for early season hunting is a squirrel call. One of the bellow type calls that imitate the excited bark of a squirrel can be invaluable in locating squirrels in the very leafy environment of early season. The call can also be used to entice a curious bushytail into the open for a clear shot.

Squirrel gear can be very simple. A game bag and shotgun are all that



is needed. Good boots, a compass, bug spray and some maps will also help. One tip – I like to wear an orange hat while squirrel hunting. The woods can be thick and it will help a bit with safety. Sometimes a downed squirrel can be hard to find on the forest floor and the orange hat can be laid on the ground to mark the area where the animal fell, helping with the retrieval.

There are plenty of other things to do in the fall. Deer stands can be readied, duck blinds brushed or decoys painted. Outside of dove hunting, one of my favorite things to do in the fall is to hit the water and go fishing. A cool morning on a river lined with red, orange and yellow leaves is a special place. The crowds and heat of summer are gone, the air feels fresh and clear and the fish are hungry.

NEA is blessed with some great options for fall fishing. Rivers are my favorite with Current, Eleven Point and Black being at the top of the list. A small crankbait or soft plastic can produce lots of bass. A small black and chartreuse jig fished in eddies around cover can catch a few crappie. Nightcrawlers on the bottom will catch a wide variety of fish.

One tip for fishing a river, especially in the fall, is to look for an eddy. These areas where the current is blocked can be loaded with crappie. The falling leaves can provide the location of an eddy as they float



down the river. Look for a place where the leaves gather and do not move and fish likely structure nearby.

Local lakes can also be great during the fall, especially for flathead and channel catfish. Bank fishing with stink bait or cut bait can be good for channels. Flatheads are more likely to be caught on live bait. Rod and reel fishing can be good, but passive techniques like trotlines, limblines or jugs can really produce, especially in some of the bigger lakes.

Fall is a wonderful time of the year. As we languish through the heat of the summer, thoughts of cool mornings, falling leaves, migrating waterfowl and football games help us survive. Those days will be here before you know it so plan accordingly, and I hope to see you out there!

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

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- **Medical Emergencies:** Travel protection will help with coverage for medical expenses that your regular insurance may not.
- **Travel delays or lost luggage:** Travel protection will help cover extra expenses like meals, hotels, and essentials if flights get



*Stephanie Hancock*

delayed or luggage is lost.

Overall, travel protection gives you peace of mind. Having it assures that you're financially protected, giving you the green light to fully relax and enjoy your trip.

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## Are the free physicals sufficient or should I schedule an appointment if my child plans to participate in school athletics?

Free physical screenings are most of the time sufficient for sports physicals for school.

You should always follow up with your primary care provider if they find something on that screening exam.

Also, it's a great idea to have regular checkups with your primary care provider annually. This keeps the door of



*Dr. Melissa Wright*

**Family Medicine  
Physician at AMMC  
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communication open between your primary care provider and you.



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## What are some ways to reduce stress?

Numerous studies have demonstrated the link between stress and health problems. Ulcers from overwork and anxiety are only one of the many conditions of this sort. Researchers have added hypertension, migraine headaches, heart disease, even cancer to the growing list.

For many of us, the causes of stress are obvious. They are all around us in our modern, high-pressure society. Financial concerns, demands at work, personal problems, traffic, pollution, diet, noise, are among the contributing factors. While it is hard to change the world, or escape from it, there are a number of things which each of us can do to relieve personal stress and minimize some stress related health problems.



*Dr. John Bibb*

Exercise, such as non-competitive walking and running, can help. It's also important to have quiet time — reading, meditating, listening to music, just being with your family. At the same time, a regular chiropractic adjustment can relieve the displacements caused by stress and help reduce the stress itself.

## I am thinking about listing my house, should I get a home inspection?

Home inspections are a normal part of the selling process. Buyers generally conduct a home inspection once an offer has been accepted. If there are problems discovered, this is the time for more negotiations (a fix or a price reduction as an example).

A seller can possibly avoid this by having a preliminary home inspection prior to listing the property. This can show buyers that the house is in good working order.



*Sandra Kelly*

If a problem is discovered during this inspection, it would give the seller time to fix it before the buyer's inspection. If a problem is discovered and the seller is not going to fix it, be sure to disclose it to the buyer.



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# Celebrations!

## Dick Hefner

Dick Hefner celebrated his 90th birthday with a large gathering of friends, colleagues and family on July 13th at the Paragould Community Center. A longtime principal at Greene County Tech High School, he is also known for his work training dogs. The birthday celebration included 10 different speakers, music and a special recognition from the Arkansas State Legislature, which was presented by State Representative Jeremy Wooldridge.



## Katherine Smith

Katherine Smith danced her way into her 100th birthday celebration as she got her wish to dance down Pruett Street in Downtown Paragould, surrounded by family and friends on July 18th. A native of Rector, she moved to Paragould at the age of 14 and started work at Hart Cafe on Pruett at the age of 17. She also worked at the spinach processing plant and the Ely Walker Shirt Factory before retiring from Emerson Electric after 34 years of service. City officials closed a block of Pruett to allow her to safely fulfill her birthday wish. She concluded her birthday celebration with a party that evening at the Greene County Library.



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# Like Mother Like Daughter

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

If people referring to Norma Davenport and Jenna Craft say “like mother, like daughter,” that’s a good thing. Both members of the mother/daughter duo were named Teacher of the Year at their respective schools during the past school year.

Norma, a fifth-grade math and science instructor and preparing to start her 36th year as a teacher, was selected by her peers as Greene County Tech’s top teacher in the Intermediate building. “Each year we’re given a ballot and we write down who we think the Teacher of the Year should be,” Norma explained. “I really don’t know what all they base it on, but I do want to say ‘thank you.’ I was surprised and I was also very sad. I had gone home sick that day and wasn’t there to hear about it until later.

“I got a plaque and from Walmart, our Partners in Education, I got a goody bag. But this is for the Intermediate Building only. All of the teachers voted on as Teachers of the Year on all the campuses will be considered for another award for the entire district later.”

Just down the road in the Brookland School District, Jenna was following Mom’s lead. “It was definitely a surprise,” she said, after earning the award as the K-6 Special Education Teacher of the Year. “I got a plaque and flowers, and they handed it out at Awards Day after they had given all the kids their awards and announced them. I was just in shock. I might have cried a little; I definitely did after I heard my mom won her award too. It was really neat.”

Jenna will be starting her eighth year as a teacher and serves Brookland Primary in special education and kindergarten resource. She said special education is “a little different, but as a teacher, like everyone else, you have to always be ready to learn something new. Don’t get stagnant. There are always going to be changes.”

For a veteran teacher like Norma, mandated changes sometimes mean straying from the norm and require leaving old habits behind, but for the most part she says they are merely a means of keeping up with progress. “Changes good or bad?” she considered, “... a little of both. There are so many. I know children know a lot more today,” adding that the electronic age has aided in maturity for most students. “The electronics have definitely changed education. We are very electronic. We have a lot in the classrooms and our testing is done that way, and I still remember when they were first bringing a TV into my room and now we have Smartboards. We’re in a completely different era of teaching.

“I’m probably teaching my favorite age group now. I taught first at the old East Elementary and I did K-through-5 remedial math, and language development for kindergarten. Then I taught 3rd grade at



the old campus and now 5th grade at the Intermediate. I think I like the older kids better, now that I’m older.”

Jenna also finds the electronic age one of the major changes she has experienced in her years in the classroom. “When I was in school I didn’t have a Chromebook or a computer, which every student has now,” she said. “But technology can be a good thing. Also we have a stronger focus in special education on inclusion, pushing our students to be included in the general classroom more. That has led to a lot more collaboration with the general education teachers, and that’s a good thing.

“A few years ago the IEP was to be included in the general classroom and we’ve come up with more strategies to meet the needs of the students, and at the same time we do all we can to help them be successful in the classroom. I may be with one to help him stay on task or I may pull one aside to help individually more. That way, they’re still in the classroom getting their needs met.”

She said the rewards of teaching far outweigh the frustrations and finds “there are so many different ways to meet needs. Just since I’ve been out of high school, education has changed so much in ways to help the individual student. When I was in school, I didn’t care that much about instruction. It wasn’t easy for me, it was a struggle. But I’ve watched my mom be a teacher my whole life and that let me know I wanted to be one.

“And, of course. I really love having her guidance. The first couple of years especially I needed her help ... a lot.”

Norma takes great pride in knowing her daughter is considered one of her school’s top teachers, and feels her own recognition is actually more a reflection on teamwork. “It’s definitely an honor,” she said, “but we do a lot as a group and work together. I am the lead math teacher and, to me, this confirms that we’re doing something right.”

The award from her peers also connects closely to the pride she feels in being a part of the GCT system. “I started kindergarten at Tech,” she explained, “I graduated here and it’s the only place I’ve ever taught. It really is home to me.”

I’ve watched my mom be a teacher my whole life and that let me know I wanted to be one.

— Jenna Craft

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# Hoxie. The First Stand

## 70 YEARS OF COURAGE

BY GABBY POWELL

**R**oughly 70 years ago, a small railroad town was in the middle of a historic moment that many are not aware of. When the average Arkansan thinks of school integration their mind will go to Little Rock Central High – which was indeed another influential school integration event.

However, Hoxie Public Schools made the bold decision to integrate in the summer of 1955, two full years before the Little Rock Nine. While it was not the first school to make this step forward, they would be the first to face backlash to the extent of national opposition and legal prosecution.

On July 12, 2025, Hoxie the First Stand – a non-profit committed to sharing this story – held an event open to the public to commemorate the first day that all children were welcome together at Hoxie Public Schools. Guest

speakers and panelists discussed with community members their first-hand experiences, the impact on various generations, and the importance of preserving Hoxie's stand for what was "right in the sight of God." Those participating included Ethel Tompkins, Dr. Rodney Harris, Milton Smith, Dr. Ed Salo, Yvonne Barksdale Taylor, Dr. Gregory Hansen, Gwen Green and many more.

Along with these discussions and an update on progress toward the Hoxie The First Stand Museum, the event hosted the first public showing of "Right in the Sight of God," a documentary by Terrance Ward. The documentary tells the story of Hoxie's integration from multiple perspectives including the students, parents, school board and community as a whole.

To learn more or become involved, visit [hoxiethefirststand.org](http://hoxiethefirststand.org) or email [hoxiethefirststand@gmail.com](mailto:hoxiethefirststand@gmail.com).



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# Get Rich

WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



Flying is not something I do all that often, maybe once or twice a decade. I have fallen into a very serious relationship with my couch and my television and, to be honest, don't go much of anywhere anymore. I sort of survive in about a 30-mile circle and I've found it's not necessary to book a flight to Jonesboro.

If I am taking a trip of any distance I prefer to drive and take in scenery I may be seeing for the first time. Sometimes I'll pull over and take a photograph of an interesting subject, and I've found that airplane pilots are hesitant to pull over and let a fellow use his camera. So, I usually drive.

However, last month I went to Texas for a week and started that journey with a flight to Houston in order to meet up with my college roommate, so we could then drive to Abilene and visit our old coach. I drove to the airport in Memphis and was greeted almost immediately by a worker for Southwest Airlines, wondering if I needed any help acquiring my boarding pass.

"Is it that obvious?" I asked, and she said it wasn't, it was just that I had luggage in one hand and a piece of paper with numbers and such on it in the other, and she wondered if she could be of service.

I told her she could since I had shown up early just in case I was not able to speak to an actual living, breathing human being in this high-tech society I'm now a member of, and if punching and swiping things on a computer screen proved to be more than I could handle in time to make my flight I would, indeed, need assistance.

"Do you want me to show you how to do it, or do you just want me to do it for you?" she asked, and again I sort of figured my pitiful old man appearance led her to know the answer already.

"If you show me, we're going to be here a while," I told her, thinking back to the sixth grade when Mrs. Sybil Hill was so determined to have me understand a math problem that she made me take an empty cardboard box down to the refrigerator beside the office, put in the number of both white and chocolate milk boxes that corresponded to the problem in the book, and return to her desk to "work it out" with her help.

The rest of the class got all excited, thinking we were getting a bonus milk break in the middle of the class period, and I felt like a moron sitting at the teacher's desk moving milk cartons around like a game of swollen checkers.

The recess bell rang while I was doing my milk math, and Mrs. Hill made me stay with her until I came up with the correct answer and, on top of that, she made me take all the milk back to the ice box. I didn't like her or milk for a long time afterward.

So, I told the attendant to just work her magic and in a matter of seconds I had the necessary piece of paper that would allow me to

fly away. When I got to the security check station, a woman looked at my driver's license and took my photograph, then pointed me to a long, twisty line just up ahead. I made it through the scanner without setting off any alarms and my carry on bag didn't have any bombs or prohibited items in it, so I got to go sit with the rest of my crowd at Gate 2.

It was here that I sort of lost faith in humanity. We were told numerous times that our particular flight would have open seating, but it would be necessary for us as passengers to balance things out; not everyone could sit up front, some would need to go toward the back.

That seemed pretty simple to me and once we began boarding by groups, I continued to hear the same admonition blaring out of the airline speaker: Some of you will need to move to the rear of the plane. Once I stepped inside, I understood why. Row upon row of passengers were clustered together near the front of the plane while the back was almost empty.

Shoot, I understood the message several minutes ago and certainly had no problem telling a flight attendant I would be happy to move to the rear area and did so, eventually having a row of three seats all to myself. A young man flying for the first time sat right in front of me and wound up with a row of his own as well, and our takeoff was delayed almost a half hour because it finally came down to airline people having to beg a bunch of those front row types to move back a few in order for us to fly safely.

I don't get it. Did those people who just had to be at the front think rows 1 through 20 would arrive in Houston quicker than all of us "back of the bus" folks? As soon as we landed, the frontal crowd immediately stood and began taking their bags down from the overhead compartments, even though the pilot had asked us to remain seated for a while.

The first-time flier in front of me, taking a cue from the aforementioned travelers, also hopped up and started getting his stuff. I told him he might as well just have a seat, because no one was going anywhere for a while and even when traffic did start moving, no one was going to be able to pass anyone in a two-foot-wide walkway.

When our turn to exit finally arrived, the attendants thanked us repeatedly for helping them out ... when all we did was try to do the sensible thing.

Richard Brummett is a journalist with more than 50 years of newspaper and magazine experience. He enjoys writing to help people bring their stories to life, and hopes through his monthly Get Rich column to help put a smile on readers' faces.

# Fostering Makes a Difference

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

DOGust 1ST



The dog days of summer are far from over here in Arkansas, but this doesn't just have to mean that the days are long and hot! August 1st is also known as DOGust 1st, and DOGust 1st is the universal birthday for dogs in shelters. Bearing that in mind, did you know that humane societies, animal shelters, rescue agencies and other animal facilities are in constant need of not only dog and cat food, but of people willing to foster or adopt these animals?

There are innumerable ways that both people and pets benefit from fostering. I want to discuss some of these ways, as well as common myths about fostering, in this DOGust issue.

Fostering animals, first and foremost, helps to save more lives. Fostering is temporary, but it does help to buy that animal some precious time until its FURever family can be found. By opening your home to an animal in need you are taking that animal out of the shelter, which opens more space for other rescued animals and puts them in a home and out of a kennel. This allows for more human interaction and a great deal more socialization. The importance of socialization is not just true for the foster pets, but for your other pets as well.

Fostering pets can also help you to determine what kind of pet would work best for your family and lifestyle. Certain dog breeds have a lot of energy to burn, whereas many cats are much more laid back and fairly self-reliant. By fostering animals, you can best determine, through experience, which pet will fit in best.

Having pets helps to teach children a number of values, including responsibility and selflessness, and is also the best way to educate them about animals. The responsibility of having and caring for a pet

also helps children to build self-esteem through increased self-worth and independence.

One of the main reasons to foster, which is often not thought about, is that by fostering you actually drastically increase that pet's chances of true adoption. When you foster, you get to know that pet's personality better than anyone. As you get to know them and share this information with others, it helps to track down exactly what kind of family or environment this pet would thrive in.



I don't want to overlook the common misconceptions about fostering. By only covering the positive points, and not addressing all of the myths, I would do a disservice. Probably the biggest myth is "there are plenty of people, they don't need me to help" — this couldn't be further from the truth. They could always use more foster families; the families that already foster may have no more space.

Another common myth: "I'm not qualified to do that" or "I don't have any experience with animals." The only true qualification one needs is to care for the animal. As far as questions go with caring for them, well, there is a large community of people that would be happy to help you and answer any of your questions. This community includes the agency/facility where the animal came from, other rescue agencies in this area, veterinarians and veterinary staff, as well as a number of other animal groups and online resources.

The last myth I want to discuss is the "foster fail." While the word fail has a negative connotation, it is actually a positive thing. Foster failures occur when the family that is fostering also adopts because that pet fits into their family. While this does happen (enter my



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## BACK TO SCHOOL

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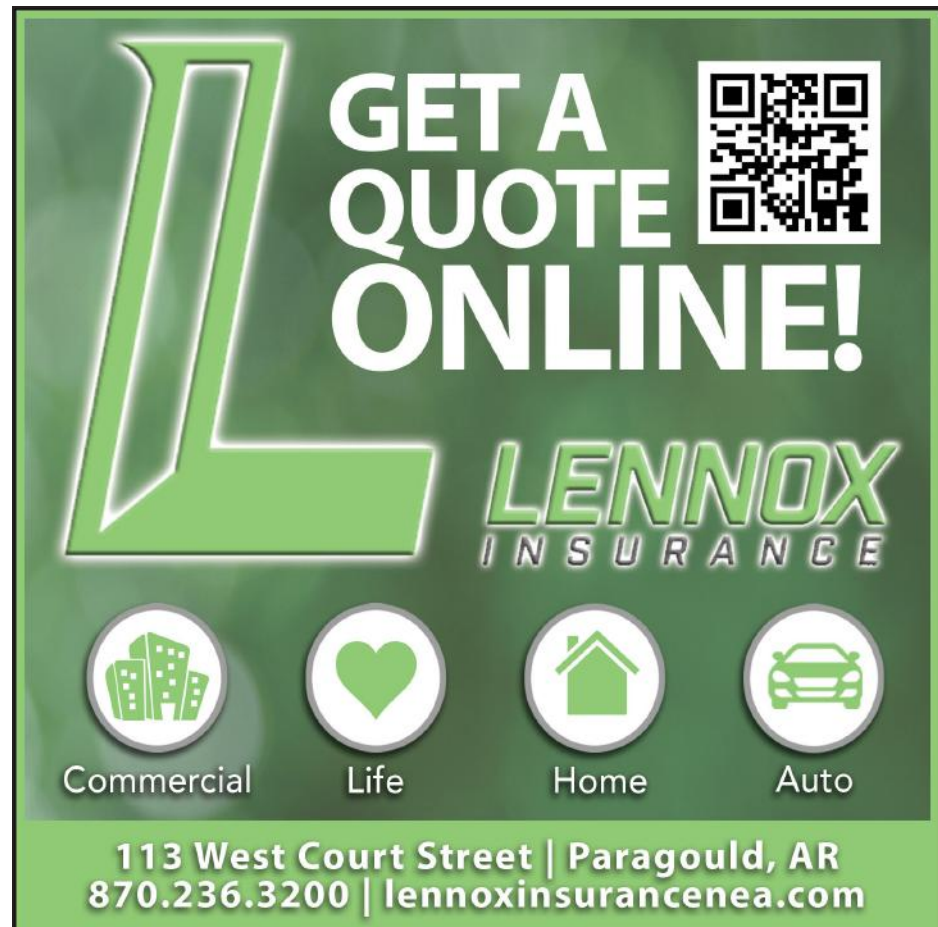
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very own "Bowski"), most foster families recognize their valuable work and know the importance of being the foster family to help them transition from animal shelter, to a home setting, and finally to their FURever home.

I hope this article helped to debunk some of the misconceptions about fostering, and hopefully offered some outlook on the wonderful things we gain from fostering animals in need. If you are interested in fostering, or if you have more questions or simply want to help, please contact any of your local animal shelters or groups to find out how you can help! Happy DOGust!

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



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## Book Launch

### THE HEART OF GREAT MEDICINE



As part of its yearlong 125th anniversary celebration, St. Bernards Healthcare hosted a book launch celebration on July 9th in the St. Bernards Community Room. Written by Sister Johanna Marie Melnyk, Vice President of Mission and Ethics and Archivist for St. Bernards, “The Heart of Great Medicine: 125 Years of St. Bernards Healthcare,” features the history of what started as a small hospital and grew into a regional medical center. The book also includes several never-published photos.

PHOTOS BY GRETCHEN HUNT



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# THE ADVENTURES OF

# 🐾 Lester 🐾

BY VICKI McMILLAN



A hoy, mates! Lester, here, in the air-conditioned house! In my opinion, hot weather is good for only one thing: fishing. Be it, trout fishing on the White River, deep sea fishing in the gulf or throwing in a hook at Reynolds Lake, fishing is good for the soul, because every ripple tells a story.

Vicki sometimes takes the grands and me fishing. If you are 16 or under and /or a dog, you don't need a fishing license in Arkansas. Ol' Lester will just tell you - it warms my heart watching them fish. Sometimes the smallest catches bring the biggest smiles.

My first fishing adventure was just a few weeks after I was paroled from the Jonesboro Dog Jail. Big (my rescuer) carried the family, including ME, to Biloxi, Mississippi, to go deep-sea fishing. We chartered a boat called Miss Hospitality and headed south in the Gulf of Mexico.

Vicki, the history nut, told me stories of how dogs had sailed the world for centuries. After hearing all of her stories, I was glad I was not expected to kill rats, untangle fishing nets, or be on guard for pirates.

I was able to bask in the sun and watch all kinds of boats working.



The shrimp boats were my favorites, dragging those huge nets behind them.

The five of us made a decent haul that day. We caught several Spanish mackerel and three red snappers. We saw a bull

shark, and I thought I heard the music from Jaws!

The captain said if we caught the shark, he would have to cut the line because those sharks were aggressive. As a 15-pounder, I thought this was an excellent policy. We had a nice picnic on the boat and great snacks all day.



As the sun set and we headed back to the harbor, I felt warm (of course, it was Biloxi in the summer) and happy. I was out of the Dog Jail and given treats on demand.

Little did I know, this would be the first of many adventures I would share with my new family.

If you make a trip to Biloxi, try out the Miss Hospitality in the small craft harbor. If fishing is not your thing, Biloxi has several great museums including the Ohr-O'Keefe art museum and the seafood industry museum (sounds dorky but it's really cool). Also casinos abound on the coast, so try your hand at the penny slots.

Until next month, may the wind ever be in your favor,

*Lester*



August 2025 Premiere | 27

# Health Matters

BY KARAN SUMMITT

## THE BEST MEDICINE



At some point, usually during the summer, I bring up a familiar subject and look for ways to present it in a fresh light. I once heard in a marketing presentation that if you want someone to remember a product or idea, they will need to interact with said product seven different times in seven different ways. We hear, we see, but it takes repetition and creativity for us to remember and buy into something new.

I'm not sure what number we are on, but this month's health column falls somewhere in that "seven," and the idea I'm throwing out is simple: We are what we eat, and among food groups, fruits and vegetables provide some of the best medicine to protect and restore our health.

Science is backing up mom's old adage to "Eat your veggies!" Researchers at the University of Florida say it's time to treat fruits and vegetables not just as food but as medicine. In a recent article published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the group makes a convincing argument that fruits and vegetables play a crucial role in preventing chronic diseases and improving public health.

The problem is only one in 10 adults in the U.S. consumes the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The authors go on to advocate focusing on nutrient-dense produce such as berries, leafy greens and carrots.

It can be a hard shift for our typical American diet. Backyard gardens are not the necessity they once were and many people live in congested urban areas with no space for homegrown produce. Fruits and vegetables take time to prepare and are not always readily available, especially at commercial food establishments. Many see the cost as prohibitive, though that is debatable if food dollars are being spent on less nutritious choices.

But what gives fruits and vegetables the clout to be considered medicine? Most of us know them to be a good source for vitamins and minerals that are essential to healthy body functions. For anyone who has experienced



painful leg cramps due to a potassium deficiency the simple solution is to eat a banana or a baked potato -- both of these are great sources for that particular nutrient.

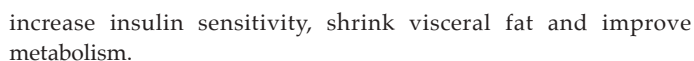
However, there is another benefit to these powerhouse foods. You may have heard the word "antioxidants," but do you know what they are and how they help prevent disease and restore health?

Antioxidants are compounds that protect and repair cells from damage caused by free radicals. Many experts believe this damage plays a part in a number of chronic diseases, including hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), cancer and arthritis. Free radicals can also interfere with our immune system, making us more susceptible to colds, flu and other infections.

Here are a few examples of how antioxidants act as medicine:

- Pears contain polyphenols like quercetin and chlorogenic acid that can reduce blood pressure, shrink body fat, improve energy balance and reverse metabolic syndrome.
- Strawberries contain polyphenols such as ellagic acid and anthocyanins that can decrease insulin resistance in obese persons to improve metabolism.
- For those with a high amount of "bad" LDL cholesterol and stubborn abdominal fat, monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) in avocados can be a help.
- Blueberries help reduce body weight,

Eat a rainbow				
Fruit and vegetables nutrients by color				
WHITE	YELLOW	RED	PURPLE	GREEN
Immune system Healthy colon Prevents ulcers Lowers cholesterol Healthy heart	Healthy heart Lowers cholesterol Healthy joints/tissues Supports eyesight Prevents Cancer	Healthy heart Decr. blood pressure Skin protection Helps cell renewal Prevents Cancer	Healthy heart Healthy blood vessels Helps memory Anti-aging Healthy urinary system	Improves digestion Supports eyesight Healthy bones Immune system Prevents Cancer



These benefits happen when fruits and vegetables become a daily, consistent part of our life. It's not a once-a-week or once-a-month juice cleanse, but consistency. To get the highest medicinal benefit, these foods need to become a non-negotiable part of our daily diet.

Fruits and vegetables may not be cheap, but neither are prescriptions. I don't know about you, but I'd rather spend my dollars at the grocery store instead of the pharmacy. Let food be our medicine ... and let that medicine be delicious, nutritious fruits and vegetables!

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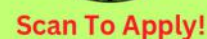
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We also unveiled The Skin Club, our brand-new monthly membership designed to help patients maintain healthy, radiant skin year-round. Members enjoy a HydraFacial each month and VIP 15% discount on all skincare products.

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# Archie Johnson *Fishing, Fellowship & Fun*

BY KARAN SUMMITT

Talking with Archie Johnson is more than a conversation — it's an experience. The deep laugh that precedes almost every story will have you "on the edge of your seat" as the old saying goes — you just never know what he might say next. Good friend Gary Cremeens describes it like this: "Archie is one of the few people I know who could sit in a room by themselves and have a good time. It's an honor just to be invited to listen and join in on the fun!"

The source of that humor runs deep in Archie's family roots. Laughter is always a staple when the Johnson/Hyde bunch gathers. When I asked Archie if I could do an interview with him about fishing, his answer was quick and typical. "Shoot yea," he piped back, "that's two of my favorite subjects, talking about fishing and myself!"

A love for the outdoors is another common family thread. Archie was born in Idaho, and one of his first memories centers around trout fishing in the cold clear streams of that state. "From the time I could hold a pole, I was fishing. With us, hunting and fishing is just a part of everyday life," he said.

Grandpa Hyde introduced Archie to net fishing in the murky waters of Big Slough Ditch. He would stretch the nets near the riverbank and secure them, then have the grandkids wade into the shallow water and shake the bushes along the water's edge. The fish would scatter, getting trapped in the nets. Archie remembers the many times they would catch, clean, cook and eat the fish on the riverbank immediately after pulling them out of the nets.

It's those memories of good family times in his own childhood that made Archie want to pass a love of the outdoors to his sons and grandsons. "There's nothing like spending time with family and doing something everyone enjoys," he said, "and there's nothing better than having a successful day of hunting or fishing and reliving the story



the rest of your life!"

Like others who enjoy hunting and fishing, Archie admits there is something about the outdoors that is addictive. "It's peaceful, relaxing and helps remove a lot of stress from everyday life," he said. "There's no prettier place on earth than trolling down a river close to nature. Almost every time I go, I see something different in God's creation."

Archie recalls an experience that has stuck with him. It's not unusual to spot an eagle in the wild, but most of the time the bird will fly off if humans get too close. He remembers the day he came near a nest and the eagle took off down the river channel. As Archie watched, the eagle suddenly circled around and came back to fly alongside the boat, giving Archie an up-close look at the majestic creature. In a rare moment of seriousness Archie simply said, "To see an eagle this close in flight was amazing!"

Net fishing once helped Archie supplement his family income. He would "run the nets" and have folks waiting to buy the fresh catfish as soon as he got back to town. Financial stability and retirement brought a new opportunity for all that catfish -- hosting meals for others. "All the things I do with fish," Archie says, "allows me to feed others at a decent cost and bring people together, something everyone seems to enjoy."

Some seven years ago, Archie started a monthly community dinner after he and a cousin caught a large batch of catfish and decided to get

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rid of it by hosting a Tuesday fish fry. After that first effort Archie was hooked. Over the years several of those in attendance have passed away, making the meals even more special to those who are still able to attend. Along with the fish, Archie serves up a generous batch of laughter, stories and good old Southern teasing.

Around 20-25 are in attendance each month, and the leftovers are shared with shut-ins and homeless folks. Archie's enjoyment for these luncheons is echoed by those who attend. Comments include words like these:

- "It's a great way to connect with people I know but don't get to see very often."
- "On one Tuesday of the month, Archie is my favorite nephew! Seriously, he helps anybody and everyone."
- "I'm not a big fish-eater, but I'd come just to hang around with the guys that I know but don't get to be with anymore. It's always a great time!"
- "It's the fellowship, not just the fish. I spend a lot of time alone and don't get out as often as I once did, so being here with others is very special to me. Archie is always looking for folks to include. I can see the joy he has in doing this for others."

Archie's love of fishing and feeding a crowd goes well beyond the monthly Tuesday feasts. Each year he and middle son Chris, a baseball coach at Greene County Tech, do a fish fry for the entire GCT coaching staff and administration. In February, Archie and Chris host a fundraiser for the baseball team. They donate the fish and fixings, and the baseball athletes sell, pack and deliver the plates.

Other fish frying efforts include cooking for the Children's Homes, Inc. annual Homecoming in September, church gatherings and family reunions. It's safe to say that Archie's love for catching all that fish is matched by the joy of sharing his bounty with others.



Underneath that loud laugh and outgoing exterior is a heart as big and loud and giving as his personality. Archie would tell you he got it honestly. It's a family tradition as strong as his love of the outdoors and one he intends to pass on down to the next generations.



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8/9 - Saturday at 7:00pm, Nightwing Classic Rock, [www.showpass.com/nightwing2025](https://www.showpass.com/nightwing2025) or at the door

8/16 - Saturday at 2:00pm & 7:00pm, Mic Drop Kids Edition, Presented by Act II Performing Arts, pay what you can at the door

8/22 - Friday at 7:30pm, Zach Rushing "Not So Rich and Famous" Comedy Tour, Presented by Mad Hatter, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zach-rushing-in-paragould-ar-tickets>

8/23 - Saturday at 7:00pm, Chad Garrett and Friends, tickets \$15 at the door

8/25 - Monday at 7:00pm, Bluegrass Monday, Presented by KASU, [kasu.org/tickets](https://kasu.org/tickets)

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- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
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| <b>Learn to dance</b>        | <b>Practice gymnastics</b> |
| <b>Enjoy a meal</b>          | <b>Be creative</b>         |
| <b>Browse the books</b>      | <b>Pet a cat</b>           |
| <b>Meet for drinks</b>       | <b>Admire the murals</b>   |
| <b>Walk your dog</b>         | <b>Host a party</b>        |
| <b>Strike a pose</b>         | <b>Get a massage</b>       |
| <b>Get a facial</b>          | <b>Watch the trains</b>    |
| <b>Shop Farmer's Market</b>  | <b>Shop a boutique</b>     |
| <b>Work out</b>              | <b>Eat outdoors</b>        |
| <b>Participate in events</b> | <b>Share a sweet treat</b> |
| <b>Play games</b>            | <b>Go to the theatre</b>   |
| <b>Get married</b>           | <b>And More ....</b>       |

More information about Downtown Paragould can be found at [downtownparagould.com](http://downtownparagould.com).

# SAVE THE DATE UPCOMING EVENTS

August 9th

6:00-9:00 p.m.

Moonlight Madness  
Participating Merchants  
Main Street Paragould Event

August 14th

6:00 p.m.

Singo Bingo  
Skinny J's  
Main Street Paragould Event

August 16th

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Street Splash  
Downtown Paragould  
Main Street Paragould Event

August 25th

7:00 p.m.

KASU Bluegrass Monday  
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# Kids Play

in NEA



**25 Years of Fishing**  
Oak Grove Elementary  
Continues Tradition

**BACK TO SCHOOL**  
AUGUST 2025

A PUBLICATION OF MOR MEDIA, INCORPORATED

# C.A.S.T. For Kids

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

**I**t might be fair to say there's something fishy about Mindy Tritch. And about lots of her family. And about many of the people she hangs out with.

As organizer of Arkansas' first C.A.S.T. (Catch A Special Thrill) for Kids Foundation program, Mindy brings her love of special needs individuals into the hearts and minds of all who volunteer or participate in the fishing event, and she's proud of how it has grown in a short period of time.

"We learned about C.A.S.T. for Kids when we were in Florida at a Bassmaster event," Mindy explained. "We heard one of the pros talk about it and the director talked and he added the words 'anyone interested in special needs fishing' and I was led to it and wanted to bring it to my hometown. Now we have a director who lives in Arkansas and we have been named the number one event in the nation."

According to information supplied by the C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation, the program enriches the lives of children with special needs, supports their families, and strengthens communities through the sport of fishing. They empower families and communities to celebrate children with special needs, making them feel valued and loved.

The C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation is a public charity formed in 1991 to join volunteers who love to fish with children who have special needs and disadvantages for a day of fishing in the outdoors. The Foundation became an official 501(c)3 in 1994 and currently hosts C.A.S.T. for Kids events in 26 states.

Spreading a positive message that kids with disabilities can accomplish anything, the events are accessible for all disabilities, and are made possible through national and local sponsors – people who want to make a big difference in the lives of children with special needs



Mindy Tritch, Reesie Tritch, Tasha Pillow



thus strengthening their community. Since 1991, they have hosted over 1,500 events.

"I had a cousin with special needs, Anna Pillow, and she's one of the reasons I wanted to be involved," Mindy said. "I just have this great heart for special needs kids. Unfortunately, Anna passed away before we got to host our first event, but she was a driving force behind my involvement."

Her children – sons Hudson and Fisher, and daughter Reesie – are all actively involved and exhibit the same spirit as their mom, tying a love for helping others in with an obvious religious upbringing.



Along with Tasha Pillow, the co-leader of C.A.S.T. for Kids locally, Mindy seeks out volunteers and sponsors for the fishing events staged at Paragould's Reynolds Park. "All the volunteers and sponsors are the ones who make it happen," she said. "It costs \$4,400 to put the event on, and we need at least sixty to seventy volunteers to make the day flow. The kids get to catch a lot of fish and they love going out in the boat, but it requires adults to go with them. Some fish from the shore and we feed all of them breakfast and lunch, and we're honored to do it. But it takes others in the community to make it work, and we are



very blessed in Paragould to have so many willing to help.”

Mindy said the program is free to all participants and is open to “kindergarten to whatever age special needs individuals. Forty kids sign up and pre-register and they all get a shirt, hat, pole, tackle box of goodies and a plaque. They absolutely love it, and for many it’s the first time they’ve ever caught a fish. It doesn’t matter if it’s just a tiny little fish, their faces light up and they want their picture made with their catch.”

Tasha said she considers it “a blessing to be a volunteer. I highly recommend it to anyone. We will have flyers out



advertising our events and anyone who wants to should get involved. It touches your heart. I couldn’t believe all that it takes to make it work until I got involved. It takes a lot.”

As for how to take the first steps toward getting involved at any level, Mindy says to call her at 870-450-0251 or reach out via email at [mtritch1@gmail.com](mailto:mtritch1@gmail.com). Interested parties may also look at the C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation website to learn more and have questions answered.



“We will be doing our sixth event in the spring of 2026,” she said. “We host it every year at Reynolds Park and we welcome all the help we can get. And, you will be blessed.”



Hudson Tritch, Fisher Tritch, Case Agee, Austin Agee

## Fishing Brothers

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

There’s no surprise that Mindy Tritch’s sons have developed a love of fishing, since she has taken the lead in promoting the C.A.S.T. For Kids program.

Brothers Hudson and Fisher Tritch have taken a liking to both simple days on the water by themselves as well as team fishing, joining up with others to represent the Crowley’s Ridge Christian Homeschoolers in competitive fishing events. Brothers Case and Austin Agee, along with Tucker Mans and Braydon Cullum, form a group making a name for itself on the state fishing scene.

Mindy said she introduced Hudson to fishing at an early age because “fishing is a lifetime sport. We went to multiple Bassmaster events and got to travel the country following Bassmasters around and watch them and participate and learn. One time a pro, Brandon Palaniuk, walked him around and introduced him to other pros and it kind of hooked him, and we haven’t looked back since. In the world of fishing you can talk to the pros who are millionaires and they’ll take you on the boat and don’t care about who you are or where you’re from. Hudson even got to be a Boat Marshal once. It’s just something he really took to.”

Hudson said competitive fishing is much like any other sport in that one must learn to use proper techniques, and how to adapt when changes are necessary. “You have to know what to look for,” he said, mentioning different areas of the water where fish are most likely to be. “Everything matters with fishing. You have to look at everything in a wider range. The thing about fishing is, you have so much water to cover. You have to pay attention to detail. You look at a tree in the water that’s bigger or one that’s smaller and figure out which spot the fish like that day.”

He said recently he was fishing with what seemed to be an appropriate bait or lure only to discover upon making a change to another that the fish preferred the latter. “It didn’t make sense,” he said, “but after I changed bait I caught forty or fifty fish in two hours.”

Fisher said another bonus of being on the fishing tour is that “you’re getting to spend time looking at God’s creation. It’s a good day, even if you don’t catch any fish.”

Continued ➡

The three teams of local fishermen represent the homeschool co-op on the Arkansas Youth B.A.S.S. Nation, competing in events statewide and all have found success. Hudson said, "We get to travel the North/South trail, in the north for the most part, and fish the four main events at Bull Shoals, Norfork, Greers Ferry and Table Rock. You're trying to catch the five biggest fish, eight hours at a time.

"I qualified for the high school championship on Lake Chickamauga and got to say I was in the top 200 fishermen. The Agees were ninth in the state and won Big Bass and I've had like six second place finishes. I was third in the Children's Homes C.A.S.T. For Kids at Norfork and I was three-quarters of a pound from winning the whole tournament."

An adult must accompany each angler in the boat, and Mindy is more than happy to volunteer. "And I'm the only mom out there," she said with a smile, "but I love it. We get to see God's painting every morning."

The next season will kick off on September 14 at Greers Ferry and all involved say they are looking forward to the challenge. "Just getting out there, trying to come up with the highest five-fish total. It's pretty great."



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# DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE ANXIETY? HERE ARE SOME SIGNS

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**A**nxiety in children is not always a bad thing. Dr. Jayne Bellando, a child and adolescent psychologist for 34 years, said it's normal for children to have some anxiety. Being able to handle day-to-day worries helps them to become resilient and confident when bad things happen or to handle the daily stresses of life.

But there are warning signs that point to unhealthy anxiety. It can be difficult for families to identify this because children often can't explain their anxiety and tell them they are in distress.

"Many times for children, we see changes in their behavior rather than them being able to tell us with their words," Bellando, who has worked in the Dennis Developmental Center at Arkansas Children's Hospital (DDC) for 16 years, said.

Here are some examples of ways anxiety can show up in young children:

- More fearful
- Excessive crying, afraid of separation
- Consistently not wanting to go to school or

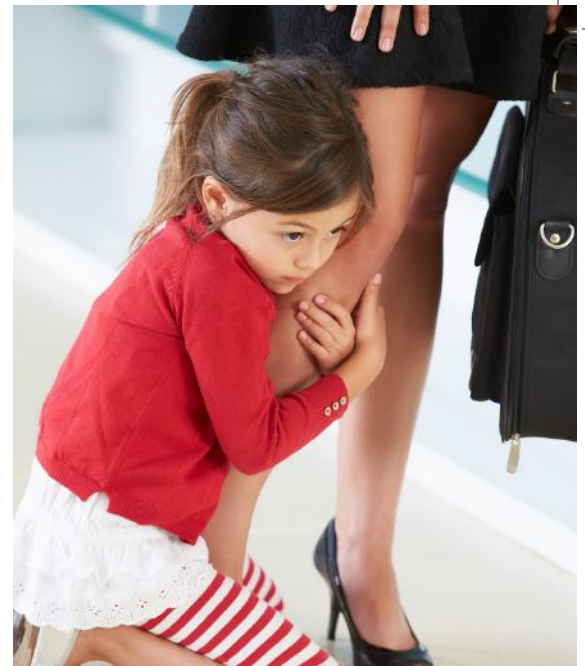
sports practices

- Reverting to bedwetting
- Nightmares
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Stomach ache
- Headaches
- Not interested in favorite activities

Some signs of anxiety can be more challenging to pinpoint. School-age children might say they are feeling "sad" or begin drawing sad pictures. A child may be unable to immediately tell someone why they are sad. But having conversations with them could reveal what is going on.

"We have to be really good listeners of our children's behavior and observe our environment to try to figure out what's going on," she said. "Adults may need to reassure a child they can talk about anything, then make a gentle space for that to occur."


In teenagers, anxiety is often related to school or friends. Bullying and cyberbullying are big pressures for teens today. Caregivers should be nurturing and open to talking while also



firm with limits and boundaries that keep a child safe. It can be challenging, as teens are more apt to talk to friends than family.

If problems with anxiety persist, a caregiver may consider professional therapy. A child's primary care provider (PCP) can refer a patient to a licensed therapist.

If there is significant concern, take a child to the local emergency department or talk to their primary care physician or a counselor if therapy has already begun.




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# New Lab Opens

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The new Greenway Ag Mechanics Lab at Camp Couchdale in Hot Springs, made possible through a \$150,000 donation to Arkansas FFA from Greenway Equipment, Inc., will provide many benefits for educators and students alike.

Owned and operated by the Arkansas FFA Foundation, Camp Couchdale has long served as a cornerstone for agricultural education and leadership development across the state. The new lab marks a major step forward in enhancing those efforts.



The Greenway Ag Mechanics Lab is designed to serve multiple roles. First, it will act as a model facility for school superintendents statewide, showcasing what a fully-equipped agricultural mechanics shop can look like in their own schools. Second, it will become a key resource

for professional development, providing teachers with hands-on training from industry professionals in a space built for excellence. "This project aligns perfectly with our mission to support the next generation of agricultural leaders," said Bill Midkiff, CEO of Greenway Equipment. "By investing in teacher training and career development at the grassroots level, we're not just building a lab — we're building a stronger future for Arkansas agriculture."

Beyond teacher development, the lab will serve Arkansas FFA students directly by supporting Career Development Events (CDEs), career exploration programs and enrichment activities for students seeking a clear and guided path toward career success in agriculture and related fields.

Eric Hughes, chairman of the Arkansas FFA Foundation Board of Directors, said the grand opening of the lab is a promising step forward for agricultural education in Arkansas. "We are so thankful for Greenway's unwavering support to ensure hands-on learning opportunities for FFA members and cutting-edge training for agricultural educators across the state for years to come."

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# PARENTS AS TEACHERS EMPOWERING FAMILIES

BY SHELBY RUSSOM

Parents are a child's first and most influential teachers. Recognizing this amazing opportunity to shape a young mind, the Parents as Teachers program steps in to help parents learn how to be the best teachers they can be.

Parents as Teachers began with a simple goal – to empower families, build strong communities and create an environment where children are free to learn, develop and grow to their full potential. The non-profit has been working to complete its mission by supporting and engaging parents and caregivers through strategic lessons on child development, positive parenting practices and more.

Janelle Ovunda, Program Supervisor for the Greene and Craighead County chapter of Parents as Teachers, said she first became involved with the program because she recognized the importance of equipping parents and caregivers with knowledge.

Janelle began her time at Parents as Teachers in 2010 as a parent educator and was promoted to supervisor in 2021. "My favorite part of being involved with this program is providing families with the tools they need so they can thrive and develop greater self-sufficiency and independence," she said.



"When the family as a whole is thriving, that young child, when they go to kindergarten, will thrive in school."

Parents as Teachers serves those with children from birth to 5 years old through an evidence-based guidance model. The model consists of five components: personal visits, group connections, developmental and health screenings, connections to community resources and ongoing supervision, all of which encourage success in families.

"It is important for a parent to have as much knowledge as possible to support their child's development, provide their child appropriate guidance, and provide an environment that is nurturing and allows for healthy development," she said.

The Parents as Teachers program aids in creating a strong foundation through research and parental support, but the program has been shown to have other, more unexpected benefits. Janelle said some participants in the program have even demonstrated stronger early literacy and math skills, better identification of developmental delays, increased parent involvement in school and a stronger social support network.

Parents enrolled in the program work with a trained parent educator who completes regular home visits paired with personalized support. These tools help parents closely track their child's milestones and quickly connect with needed services if any delays or concerns arise.

"Parents often do activities together during



visits like reading, sensory play or problem-solving games," Janelle said. "Parents in the program are also provided with monthly group events or field trips with other enrolled parents. This allows them the opportunity to meet other parents and have a place to share experiences and strategies."

This opportunity to meet other parents, paired with the program, has also had a positive effect on those enrolled. "Parents who have been a part of the program have said they have more confidence in parenting, a deeper bond with their child, a better understanding of what is 'normal' and when to get help, and less stress and more joy in their journey as a parent," she said.

Overall, Janelle said she believes they have been successful in achieving their goal. "We were awarded Blue Ribbon Affiliate status in 2022," she said. "This is a special recognition to local programs that meet the highest quality standards set by the national Parents as Teachers organization. We are passionate about providing quality services to our community."

The Parents as Teachers program is accepting volunteers and is currently open for enrollment. For more information, contact Janelle Ovunda at 870-919-3452 or [janelleovunda@icloud.com](mailto:janelleovunda@icloud.com).

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# ARKANSAS SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE DREAMS

SUBMITTED BY ARKANSAS SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

When Stephanie Rock walked across the stage to receive her diploma, she heard one voice above the crowd and applause. "You did it, Mommy. We are so proud of you!" her five-year-old daughter shouted.

That moment meant everything to Stephanie, who graduated from Black River Technical College in May with an associate degree in nursing. It wasn't just a diploma. It was a new beginning for herself and her three children.

It was made possible with help from the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, which is currently accepting scholarship applications for the Fall 2025 semester. Single parents must apply online by September 1st for a chance to receive financial aid up to \$1,600 and support services that help them finish school, pursue a professional career and change the future for their families.

Like so many of the fund's recipients, Stephanie had put her own dreams on the back burner while doing whatever it took to keep things afloat. She spent all of her career as a restaurant server, but after a divorce at 35, she made a bold choice: Go back to school, become a nurse, and build a new life for herself and her children.

That decision led her to the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, which she learned about at school. She had never heard of the nonprofit before, but now says it was the helping hand she needed.

"My nursing program was five days a week, so I was only able to work weekends," Stephanie said. "I was ineligible for any student loans or Pell Grants, so I relied solely on scholarships. The single parent scholarship helped me cover a few bills every semester, which took a big burden off my shoulders."

Since its inception in 1990, the scholarship fund has awarded financial aid directly to students, not their schools, so recipients can spend it on anything — from childcare to gas to tuition — that helps them stay in school.

"A growing body of evidence suggests that financial instability is one of the most common barriers to college completion and that, in many cases, students drop out due to relatively small, unexpected expenses," according to a 2025 study developed by HCM Strategists, a higher education consulting firm, and other experts.

When money's tight, single parents usually put their kids first, and that often means putting school on hold. Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund steps in to help cover everyday expenses so parents can stay in school and finish their education.

Beyond the financial aid, the organization connects students with



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professional development, mentoring, and a supportive community. “The workshops were amazing, and so was getting to know other recipients and supporters,” Stephanie said. “The entire foundation has been so helpful, encouraging, and kind. They make you feel like a special individual, not just some number on a page.”

Surrounded by so many cheering her on, Stephanie knew she could finish her degree. She had done hard things before: This October, Stephanie celebrates 15 years of sobriety.

“I have spent the last 15 years working continuously to turn my life around,” she said, “prove that I am not the same person and show others still stuck in the wrath of addiction that they, too, can achieve all of their dreams.”

With Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund by her side, Stephanie graduated with a near-perfect GPA, passed the NCLEX on her first try to become a registered nurse, and will soon start her full-time nursing career with plans in place to work on a bachelor’s degree next.

Every story like Stephanie’s starts with a moment of courage. If you’re a single parent dreaming of a better future, apply today for a scholarship at [aspsf.org](http://aspsf.org)/apply.

To be eligible, applicants must have a high school diploma or GED, a GPA of at least 2.0, and fall within income guidelines. Scholarships are available for full-time and part-time students at trade schools, community colleges and universities online and on campus.

Last spring, the nonprofit awarded 593 scholarships and stipends totaling \$824,000 across the state. Locally, in Greene County, six single

parents — including Stephanie — received funding, along with another 47 recipients in Craighead County.

With donations from local and statewide partners, the nonprofit hopes to grow the program in the fall to help more single parents move from poverty to financial security through higher education.

Now is a good time to give. Thanks to generous friends, gifts to the scholarship fund are matched through the end of the year. Your contribution, whether one-time or recurring, directly supports single

parents pursuing education and a better life for their families.

“You have no idea the impact you have on single parents and their choice to change their lives,” Stephanie said. “We are breaking so many cycles of poverty, addiction, and the need for government assistance. ASPSF has helped me and so many others achieve their goals and follow their dreams.”



**SAT**

**10**

**11**

**25**



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# Gone Fishing

## OGE Hosts 25th Rodeo

BY SHELBY RUSSOM

For the past 25 years, Oak Grove Elementary School has dedicated an entire day to all things fishing when the school hosts its annual fishing rodeo.

The Fishing in the Natural State (FINS) program, originally named Hooked on Fishing, has been an integral part of the school's activities and curriculum and has quickly become a favorite day for teachers and students alike.

Dr. Morgan Taylor, principal of Oak Grove Elementary (OGE), said since her introduction to the event when she started at the school eight years ago, she has fallen in love with the rodeo and looks forward to its yearly return.

"It's just a big opportunity for families to be engaged in students' learning experience outside of the classroom," she said. "It's more hands-on engagement, and it really just hones in on that family environment of a school."

Prior to the fishing rodeo, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission stocks the OGE pond with as many catfish as possible, ensuring every child catches a fish. Susie Farley, OGE Computer Lab manager and organizer of the fishing rodeo for the past 15 years, said the ability to have an event like this on their own campus is incredible.

"Oak Grove is unique in having their own pond," she said. "Being able to do this with our kids is amazing. There's not another school around us that has this."

Rick Wooldridge of the Greene County Wildlife Club said the club members love having opportunities to be a part of local schools'

conservation efforts. Recently, the club bought and installed a fountain in the pond for both aeration and aesthetics, adding to what OGE calls its outdoor classroom. "This is really one of our core goals to help kids, to bring them up in wildlife. This is a very good thing here."

The idea of the outdoor classroom is near to the hearts of OGE. Recently, they have expanded their efforts to include birdhouses, a gazebo, a butterfly garden and a reading area complete with hammocks. These outdoor areas, including the pond, add the possibility of outdoor conservation and learning activities to the OGE curriculum. Susie said this addition creates a unique environment for students to learn skills like teamwork.

Recognizing that other area schools may not be fortunate enough to have access to an outdoor classroom space, OGE often allows other schools to borrow their pond to create their own outdoor learning experiences.

"We're all about sharing and having the community out here," Susie said.

Community involvement in education and the love of creating new outdoor teaching techniques is exactly what has allowed the fishing rodeo to flourish. Morgan said the event gives her and the OGE teachers a chance to meet their students where they are and discover



more about their interests, outside of the traditional classroom setting.

"This is one of my favorite times of the year because I get to engage with the kids on a more personal level," Morgan said. "Not every student is a straight A student, so it gives students a chance to succeed at things they're interested in and gives them the opportunity to thrive."

Susie and the many faculty, staff, students and volunteers involved in the FINS Fishing Rodeo Program, have grown to deeply love and appreciate everything the rodeo offers, especially the joy it brings the children.

"Look at them, they're all smiling," Susie said. "That's what it's worth."





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SUBMITTED BY KERRI GARRISON, LPC  
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Positive play is necessary for healthy brain development, as it naturally stimulates cognitive skills and teaches problem solving while encouraging creativity. Play helps children learn how to think, share, negotiate, make decisions and make friends. These are important skills for all of us!

There are many types of play that are healthy for children and adults. Imaginative play like pretending, playing dress up, creating art, role-playing or storytelling help children develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and positive emotional expression. Physical play activities such as running, climbing, kicking, jumping or playing outside, reduce risk of anxiety and depression and decrease stress while improving sleep and mood.

Physical activities release endorphins creating a natural mood lifter, thus being a favorite type of play for parents of children of all



ages. Social play encourages skills like taking turns, empathy and cooperation, which are essential for emotional well-being.

Incorporating activities involving textures, sounds and smells (like sandbox play, water play or art) is sensory play and helps children regulate their emotions and improve sensory processing. Organized games and activities with rules are called structured play. This type of play supports self-control, patience and understanding.

Creating a balanced mix of play activities can greatly benefit a child's mental health. Through play, children gain the tools they need to face life's challenges with resilience and optimism, helping them thrive emotionally and intellectually, setting the foundation for a healthy and happy child.



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## TEKSTARZ SUMMER MANUFACTURING CAMP INSPIRING YOUNG MINDS

For more than a decade, students in the Northeast Arkansas area have had an opportunity to learn about local industries and the opportunities they offer during the TekStarz Summer Manufacturing Camp.

Shelle Randall, who serves as a chaperone for the camp along with Lynn Bruner, said the camp was created and uniquely designed for Jonesboro 13 years ago, aligning with Jonesboro Unlimited's strategic goals to support local manufacturing and technology industries.

"TekStarz holds a special place in my heart; it combines my passion for workforce development with the excitement of inspiring young minds and serving our amazing manufacturing and technology companies," Shelle said.

This year's camp served 20 students, all rising 8th-graders, from school organizations around the region. "While every group brings something special, this one was truly exceptional," Shelle said. "They had a fun, lively spirit throughout the week, but were consistently respectful, attentive, and eager to learn. Their curiosity, attitude and enthusiasm show their potential to be great future employees in our local industries."

The camp serves as a talent pipeline initiative, giving middle school students firsthand exposure to the high-tech and well-paying career opportunities available in Jonesboro-area companies.



"Modern manufacturing is not what it used to be; today's facilities are filled with robotics, computers, and advanced technology, offering safe,

clean environments with excellent wages, benefits and growth opportunities," Shelle said.

She said the best way to change perceptions is through experience. "Campers engage in hands-on activities, tour real facilities, and interact directly with employees and leadership, making the world of manufacturing come alive," she said. "Local companies are enthusiastic partners, welcoming campers like VIPs and taking pride in helping inspire the next generation of their workforce."

A signature feature of the camp is the Family Reception, a graduation-style sendoff, held on the final evening, where families gather to celebrate their camper's experience through a highlight video and hear from local manufacturers.

This year, school counselors joined the experience, giving them insight they can share with students and colleagues, as part of a broader effort to involve educators in promoting career awareness. "TekStarz complements other educator-focused programs led by Jonesboro Unlimited, including a popular fall externship where 45 teachers visit manufacturing facilities to bring real-world relevance back to their classrooms," Shelle said.

She also noted that the camp's success is made possible by the unwavering support of local employers, who go above and beyond to create meaningful, memorable, and fun experiences for students. The example for that support was set early, according to Shelle.

"TekStarz Camp would not be what it is today without James Best of Best Manufacturing, a true champion of this initiative from the very beginning," she said. "I'll never forget his words to me early on: 'Shelle, you tell me what you need — anything — and I'll make sure you have it.' That spirit of generosity and partnership laid the foundation for something truly special, and his legacy lives on in every camper we reach."

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## SUBMITTED BY ARKIDS PEDIATRIC DAY CENTERS

Developmental milestones are age-specific achievements that most children reach as they grow and develop, indicating typical progress in various areas like physical skills, cognitive abilities, social interactions and language developments. These milestones serve as markers for caregivers and healthcare professionals to track a child's progress and identify potential delays, allowing for timely intervention and support.

*"A treatment method or an educational method that will work for one child may not work for another child. The one common denominator for all of the young children is that early intervention does work, and it seems to improve the prognosis."*

— Temple Grandin

The following is a brief list of milestones to gauge your child's development. For a complete list, visit [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)

### At 2 months old, does your child:

- Look at a toy for several seconds?
- React to loud sounds?
- Seem happy to see you when you walk up to them?
- Move both arms and legs?

### At 4 months old, does your child:

- Make sounds back when you talk to them?
- Look at their hands with interest?
- Bring their hands to their mouth?
- Chuckle (not yet a full laugh) when you try to make them laugh?

### At 6 months old, does your child:

- Push up with straight arms when on their tummy?
- Take turns making sounds with you?
- Like to look at themselves in the mirror?

- Reach to grab a toy they want?

### At 9 months old, does your child:

- Show several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised?
- Move things from one hand to the other hand?
- Look for objects when dropped out of sight (like his spoon or toy)?
- Make a lot of different sounds like, "Mamamama" and "Babababa"?

### At 1 year old, does your child:

- Play games with you like pat-a-cake?
- Walk, holding on to furniture?
- Call a parent "Mama" or "Dada" or another special name?
- Put something in a container, like a block in a cup?



### At 18 months old, does your child:

- Copy you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom?
- Scribble on paper?
- Try to say three or more words?
- Move away from you, but still makes sure you are close by?

### At 2 years old, does your child:

- Point to things in a book when you ask about it (ex. "Where is the bear?")
- Look at your face to see how to react to a new situation?
- Play with more than one toy at the same time?
- Eat with a spoon?

### At 3 years old, does your child:

- Calm down within 10 minutes after you leave them in the care of family, friends, or childcare?

- Draw a circle when you show them how?
- Ask “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions like, “Where is Mommy/Daddy?”
- Put on some clothes by themselves?

**At 4 years old, does your child:**

- Serve themselves food or pour water with adult supervision?
- Pretend to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog)?
- Say sentences with four or more words?
- Name a few colors of items?

**At 5 years old, does your child:**

- Follow rules or take turns when playing games with other children?
- Keep a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges?
- Use words about time, like “yesterday,” “tomorrow,” “morning,” or “night”?
- Hop on one foot?



If you have any concerns about your child’s development, we’d love to help! We currently serve the communities of Blytheville, Brookland, Jonesboro, North Little Rock, Osceola, Paragould and Trumann.



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# MOORE on MANNERS

## Back To School

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE



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

**School Websites** — Check the school's website for important information.

**Routine** — Establishing an earlier bedtime schedule will help with getting up earlier. Also, giving children time to prepare for the

next school day such as picking out clothes, organizing books, and learning to get up early can make hectic school mornings go smoother. Practicing these routines a few weeks before actually going back to school can get everyone off on the right foot.

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

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

**Study Time** — Introducing children to a study schedule can assist in preparing children for homework and school projects. Playing games that incorporate reading and math skills help children get ready for school.

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

**Activities** — Planning back-to-school activities

or parties gets everyone ready for the new school year and helps make the transition more comfortable.

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

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

## Quote of the Day:

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

- Henry B. Adams

Linda Lou Moore is a certified etiquette consultant. She offers business professionalism and dining seminars for adults, and etiquette and dining programs for children and teens. Contact via Post Office Box 726, Paragould 72451 or at [llmooreparagould@gmail.com](mailto:llmooreparagould@gmail.com).

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# HELPING YOUR STUDENT ACHIEVE SCHOOL SUCCESS

SUBMITTED BY STEWART PEDIATRIC THERAPY

As we head back to school, we want our children to experience success — with learning in the classroom and with social interactions in groups and on the playground. We are going to discuss a few difficulties that are frequently experienced and, hopefully, some possible resources to assist our children to be successful. We are going to discuss sensory routines, language delays and coordination and how they all relate to the learning environment.

Everybody is going to need to get adjusted to the school routine again including teachers, parents and students. However, some children will need more help getting their bodies ready to learn. A significant help to everybody's body, but especially children's, is a good night's sleep. Everyone is going to have a late night here or there, but a regular bedtime that is met most of the time will give a good foundation for sensory and emotional regulation.

A sensory routine in the mornings could also be a very beneficial tool in helping children be more regulated to start their day to help them learn and interact with others. A sensory routine can be especially helpful for children with sensory processing disorders. Some indicators that your child might need a sensory routine:

- They struggle with waking up and moving forward with their day.

- They are irritable or cry a lot when waking up and for a while afterward.
- They bounce off the walls and struggle to slow down enough to eat or get dressed.
- They have a hard time sitting still, playing with peers or learning at school or daycare because of their sensory needs.
- They have a hard time transitioning from the house to school or daycare in the morning.

A few ideas for sensory routines include: dimming the lights a few minutes before the alarm goes off, deep pressure hugs, rocking with a weighted blanket, jumping on the trampoline for a few minutes, bouncing on a physioball or eating some crunchy food items with breakfast. Each child with sensory needs will require an individualized sensory routine, and it might take a few tries to find the best routine.

Another issue is language delays. Language delays encompass more than simply verbal communication. Some children are able to communicate, but then they have deficits with carrying on a conversation, following multi-step instructions or reading/written communication. These delays can cause difficulty with following directions in a classroom, classroom work, interaction with peers, which could all impede success in the classroom. If you suspect language delays, a speech screening could point to ways that could be helped with modification and/or therapy.



Our last topic for today is core strength. You might wonder how strength might factor into classroom learning. Those two things don't necessarily seem to go together. If your child struggles with core strength, they have to work harder to stay upright while in their chairs to learn. If they have to work harder at sitting up and focus on that, they are going to struggle with focusing on the work that they are supposed to be doing — listening, writing, working with others on a project. Decreased strength through the core also goes hand in hand with decreased strength through the shoulders. Strength in the shoulders is necessary for hand and wrist mobility while using crayons or pencils or scissors.

Struggles with core strength or shoulder strength might be noted in PE or on the playground with decreased ability to participate in activities. Other symptoms of poor core strength include slouching at the desk, laying their head on their desk while doing work, wrapping their legs around their chairs, fatiguing easily with upright sitting or playground play. Strengthening through the core could be as simple as doing bear walks or wheelbarrow walking.

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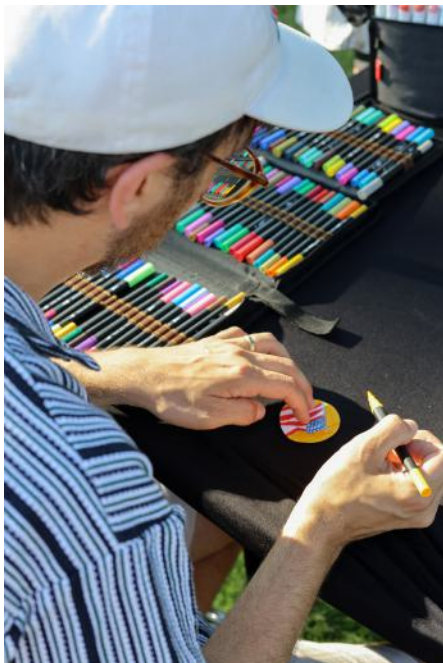
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# 2025 Paragould Fireworks Show



MOR Media, the Paragould A&P Commission and local sponsors joined forces to provide the 2025 Paragould Fireworks Show on July 4th at Rotary Park. The event, which also included food and activities prior to the show, was offered at no charge to the community.



Look for more photos from this event on the Premiere Magazine Facebook page.



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## Paragould Fireworks Show

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Northcutt & Primm Tax Services  
 Elite Senior Care  
 NEA Plumbing  
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 Grand Slam Entertainment

Bradbury Art Museum  
 ASU Department of Art + Design  
 Hiland Dairy  
 Hedge's Portable Toilet Rental  
 NEA Signs  
 Greater Vision Church  
 Watson Ice  
 Summer Splash Aqua Park

# WE HOPE YOU HAD A BLAST!

# DON'T MISS THESE

## *Upcoming Events in NEA*



### Stuff the Bus

*August 2nd*

Visit United Way of Northeast Arkansas at your local Walmart on August 2nd and help students across the area succeed in school! This community-wide school supply drive covers multiple locations throughout seven counties and 20 school districts.

For more details on how to donate and sponsor opportunities, visit [uwnea.org/stuffthebus!](http://uwnea.org/stuffthebus!)



### Street Splash

*August 16th*

Beat the summer heat with the annual Street Splash on August 16th!

This family-friendly and water-filled event takes over the streets of Downtown Paragould with sprinklers, water games and other cool activities from 10:00 am to noon!

For more information on this event, visit [discoverparagould.org](http://discoverparagould.org).



### Paint the Town Red

*August 29th*

Paint the Town Red with Arkansas State University and the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce on Friday, August 29th! Beginning at 5 p.m. on Main Street, this free family-friendly block party celebrating the spirit of Red Wolves football will include something for everyone!

For more information, visit the Arkansas State University website and Facebook page.

*The honor of your presence  
is requested*

## DIAMOND OF THE SEASON: *A Symphony Affair*

A GALA FUNDRAISER BENEFITING  
THE DELTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

*27<sup>th</sup> of September | 6 o'clock in the evening*

**\*optional but delightfully encouraged\***  
Black Tie with Bridgerton Flair  
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Paragould, Arkansas

[deltasymphonyorchestra.org/tickets](http://deltasymphonyorchestra.org/tickets)



DELTA SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA








## TEERING UP FOR THE AMMC FOUNDATION

The 30th annual Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (AMMC) Foundation Golf Tournament will be played Thursday, September 11th, at the Paragould Country Club. This event is one of the longest running golf tournaments in the area and all the funds raised go directly to programs and services at AMMC.

More than 5,000 golfers have participated in the four-man scramble over the years and the tournament has raised \$1 million in funds. Golf tournament proceeds benefit services and needed equipment that ensure AMMC provides the best care for Paragould and the surrounding community.

Donations have purchased items such as diabetes glucose monitors, infant oximeters, equipment for physical therapy, a cryosurgical gun for dermatology, a nursing computer cart and a portable ultrasound. This list just names a few of the many items received through the proceeds of this event. Tori Thompson, director of the AMMC Foundation, said the tournament has made a tremendous impact on community healthcare and the services provided at AMMC.

"I want to ask for your support again this year," she said. "I encourage you to gather up your golf friends and sponsor a \$600 four-person team. You are ensured to have a great time, but you do not have to be a golfer to participate."

Tori said there are also sponsorships still available at the following levels: Corporate - \$5,000; Hole - \$1,000; Tee Box - \$500; Lunch - \$250; and Golf Cart - \$175.

For registration or sponsorship information, please contact the AMMC Foundation at 870-239-7077. Online registration is also available at [myammc.org/events/golf-classic](http://myammc.org/events/golf-classic).



## From Here, We Can Do Anything.

As communities evolve,  
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what our people need,  
wherever that may take us.  
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**CAR SHOW**  
**LIVE MUSIC**



**Liverpool Legends Perform @7:30 pm!**



SCAN FOR  
 MORE INFO!

**Downtown Walnut Ridge, AR**  
[www.lawcochamber.org/event](http://www.lawcochamber.org/event)



## Save The Date

### Beatles at the Ridge

The date is set and the performers are scheduled for the annual Beatles at the Ridge music festival in downtown Walnut Ridge this fall. Festival organizers are encouraging fans to mark Saturday, Sept. 20th, on their calendars for the award-winning free event that draws thousands of visitors each year.

The Liverpool Legends, a Beatles tribute band from Branson, will once again headline the festival. The Legends take the Cavanaugh Chevrolet Rock n' Roll Hwy. Stage at 7:30 p.m., and several other acts will precede them, performing throughout the day.

The music begins on a fun note at noon with the Williams Singers performing choral renditions of Beatles music and other pop tunes. The Singers are the premier choral ensemble from Williams Baptist University in Walnut Ridge.

Dillan Cate, a Northeast Arkansas singer-songwriter noted for his smooth voice and country-rock style, takes the stage at 1 p.m. He will be followed at 3 p.m. by Aaron Headley and his acoustic country performance.

Memphis Jones, with his All Memphis Music Review, returns to Beatles at the Ridge at 5 p.m. Jones is a featured act at BB King's Blues Club on Beale Street, where he performs a history of Memphis music.

About 100 vendors will be set up for the festival, including at least a dozen food vendors. Children's attractions are on tap again this year, as well, and the Abbey Road Car Show will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The festival itself opens at 10 a.m. and runs until the conclusion of the Liverpool Legends' performance that evening.



# Next Month

## Agriculture in NEA



We will be shining a spotlight on the Natural State's largest industry - agriculture - and those who are making a difference right here in NEA.

## NEA Seniors



Don't miss the fall edition of NEA Seniors, including stories about longtime friendships that have stood the test of time.

## Fall into Savings



Be sure to look for special promotions to help you stretch your dollars as we Fall into Savings together!

# Warehouse Flooring

A family of four is sitting on a brown leather couch in a modern living room. A man and a woman are sitting on the couch, and two young girls are sitting on the floor in front of them, looking at a book. The room has large windows and a light-colored wall.

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# HAPPENINGS

## WARD TO LEAD LAWCO CHAMBER

Terrance Ward has been named the interim coordinator for the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, where he began work on July 7th. In that role, he handles the daily operations of the organization.

Already active in the Lawrence County community, Ward is board president for the Wings of Honor Museum and serves on the board of the Hoxie: The First Stand Museum. He also emcees the annual Beatles at the Ridge Festival and serves on the board for that event.



Terrance Ward

"What excites me most is the opportunity to connect people, history and local businesses in ways that drive real progress," Ward said. "I've lived in Walnut Ridge most of my life, and I know firsthand how much potential our county holds. We just need to keep finding ways to unlock it."

Ward, a graduate of Hoxie High School and longtime resident of Lawrence County, says he wants the chamber to lead the way forward for the entire community.

He and his wife, Mikayla, live in Walnut Ridge.

## PARKER JOINS HOPE FOUND AS EDUCATOR

Hope Found NEA has announced Erica Parker as its new Community Educator. In this role, Erica will lead efforts to expand education and awareness programs targeting vulnerable populations and adult professionals through community engagement and digital platforms.



Erica Parker

A Jonesboro native, Erica is a graduate of Arkansas State University, holding a Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communications with minors in Marketing and Graphic Design. Her media and public outreach background will enable her to develop impactful awareness strategies.

Erica has held multiple titles within the Miss Arkansas Organization and champions her platform, VIP: Volunteering is Priceless, which promotes youth service across the state. Outside of work, she is an active volunteer and wish granter for Make-A-Wish, enjoys creating art, exploring the outdoors, and spending quality time with loved ones. She is passionate about making a difference and is proud to be part of the Hope Found team.

To schedule a presentation with Hope Found NEA, please contact Erica at [info@hopefoundnea.org](mailto:info@hopefoundnea.org).

## SALT ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY SUCCESSFULLY PERFORMED AT AMMC

Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (AMMC) is proud to announce a significant advancement in orthopedic surgery. Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Charbel Maroun, successfully performed a scope-assisted lower trapezius tendon transfer (SALT), a rare and highly specialized shoulder surgery that represents one of the only surgeries of its kind to be done in Arkansas.

This innovative technique provides a new treatment option for patients with massive "irreparable" rotator cuff tears – the kind of shoulder injuries that can lead to debilitating pain and restricted motion.

Developed and first performed at Harvard Medical School by Dr. Bassem Elhassan, the SALT procedure is an innovative procedure proven to restore shoulder movement and alleviate pain for over 90% of patients. With its introduction at AMMC in Paragould, area residents now have local access to a surgical technique that has historically been available only in major medical institutions.

"This surgery offers hope to patients who believed their conditions were beyond repair," explained Dr. Maroun. "Bringing this caliber of care to Arkansas is an honor. My mission is to ensure that Arkansans can access world-class treatment close to home, avoiding the disruption of seeking care far away."

The success of the procedure reflects the skill and dedication of AMMC's orthopedic surgery team. The operation was a team effort, with Dr. Maroun working alongside Dr. Henry Stroope, a highly regarded orthopedic surgeon, and David Eubanks, APRN, who



provided integral perioperative support.

AMMC CEO Brad Bloemer praised the effort, stating, "This milestone reflects how combining local dedication with professional excellence can create extraordinary outcomes. AMMC continues to foster cutting-edge innovation in rural healthcare, proving that small-town healthcare can rise to the level of renowned institutions."

For patients dealing with chronic pain and limited mobility due to severe shoulder injuries, this development represents a new chapter of hope. AMMC is proud to be one of the few institutions in Arkansas to offer this innovative treatment.



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