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November
2020

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Andrew Brown
PHOTOGRAPHY

 870-316-1030  Andrew Brown Photography

 andrewbrown182@gmail.com  @andrewbrown182



From The Manager... LINDSEY SPENCER

“

Lindsey Spencer – that’s my name now. Typing it into the header of this page felt strange and also wonderful. It made me think a lot about my family: the family I was born into, the one I’ve just married into, and all those I consider family despite lack of blood relation or paperwork.

If you’re an avid reader of Premiere, you’ve previously seen my name in this magazine as “Lindsey Mills” and I just wish changing my name legally was going to be as easy as typing it differently in these pages ...

“Family” is also our theme for this month, so after a wedding and preparing the content for this issue, I’m certainly all up in my “feels.” I’m thankful for this community that is like family. I’m thankful for the MOR Media family.

From speaking to the volunteers who go above and

beyond to serve this community, to writing up the stories of the family-owned businesses who are striving to create something beautiful – this issue also marks exactly one year since I began laying out the pages of this magazine and perhaps the only thing to say is “thank you.”

Premiere readers, I wish I could express to each and every one of you how thankful I am for you. I suppose that’s what this is, a thank you to each of you. Thank you, readers, for supporting the good news and the good people who make it happen. Thank you to every person to ever be featured in these pages, for giving back to your community. Thank you, advertisers for making the good news possible. Thank you, Dina for trusting me with your magazine. And thank you Richard, for helping me hold it all together.

I hope this issue fills you with gratitude, too.

”



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870.236.8546 | 1301 US 49 | GLENSAINFORD.NET

publisher/advertising sales

Dina Mason |
dina@mormediainc.com

contributing writers

Richard Brummett |
brummetr34@gmail.com
Caitlin LaFarlette |
caitlin_lafarlette@hotmail.com
Chuck Long |
Charles.Long@agfc.ar.gov
Jared Pickney |
jared@fellowshipparagould.com
Bethany Gallimore |
bethanyjseaton@gmail.com
Karole Risker |
karole17@hotmail.com
Debbie Haas |
debbie.haas@yahoo.com

content manager

Lindsey Spencer |
lindsey@mormediainc.com

graphic design (advertising)

Taylor Dickinson |
graphics@mormediainc.com

advertising sales team

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

cover photographer

Amy Reeves |
amyreevesphotography@yahoo.com



PREMIERE is a publication of MOR Media, Incorporated. Editorial, advertising and general business information can be obtained by calling (870) 236-7627, faxing to (870) 239-4583 or e-mailing to dina@mormediainc.com. Mailing address: 400 Tower Drive, Paragould, AR 72450.

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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



While I've never actually witnessed a dog whistle being used, I am familiar with the basic concept. When the human user blows forcefully into the tiny slender tube, people hear absolutely nothing while the dogs' ears are alerted because the whistle sounds at a frequency level beyond the range of human hearing, one perceptible only to the animals.

This is the same frequency my voice adopts when I try to talk into a restaurant's drive-through speaker because my lips are moving but the words apparently can't be heard by mere mortals.

It has become such a comical interaction between me and the voice inside the box that I often listen to that person's response and just turn to face the people in my vehicle with my palms facing upward and my head shaking back and forth in an "I have no idea" manner. In fact, until this Covid thing hit I refused to use a drive-through; I would walk inside and place my order face to face, and then have them sack it up so I could take it home with me.

Now many dining areas are still off limits and I have to use the mechanical box of misunderstanding instead.

This is a typical conversation between me and the speaker:

Me: I would like a cheeseburger with mustard and pickle, a double cheeseburger with lettuce and mayonnaise and one large order of fries, please.

Them: Okay; that's a cheeseburger, a chicken sandwich and an order of fries, right?

(This is where I turn to the others and raise my palms, and shake my head.)

Me: No. I didn't order a chicken sandwich. I just want the two burgers and the fries.

Them: Oh, sorry. So that's two burgers and

two orders of fries?

Me: No, I only want the one order of french fries.

Them: And one burger?

Me: No, two burgers and one order of fries.

Them: Oh, okay, two burgers, one order of fries and a chicken sandwich?

Me: Sure.

Sometimes it works this way, where the person on the other end of the airwaves seems to have a word quota they have to use up before quitting time, so they toss them in there rapid-fire before I can finish a sentence:

Me: I would like a cheeseburger with ...

Them: Do you want the combo meal?

Me: No. Just the burger, with mustard and pickle. Then I also want ...

Them: So you want a hamburger, not a cheeseburger?

Me: No, I want a cheeseburger with pickle and mustard and I want ...

Them: What kind of drink?

Me: I don't want a drink. I want the cheeseburger, and I want ...

Them: What do you want on the cheeseburger, sir?

Me: Pickle and mustard. And I also want ...

Them: Will there be anything else?

Me: Yes, I'm doing my best to get to that. I want the cheeseburger with pickle and mustard and a double cheeseburger with ...

Them: Do you want the combo meal with that double cheeseburger?

Me: No, thank you. Just the double cheeseburger with lettuce and mayonnaise, and a large order of fries.

Them: And not the cheeseburger?

Me: Yes, the cheeseburger and the double cheeseburger and one large order of fries please.

Them: Okay, I have a double cheeseburger with lettuce and mayonnaise, one large order of fries and two cheeseburgers with pickle and mustard. Right?

Me: Sure.

Them: Will there be anything else?

Me: I have no idea; you tell me.

Even more often is this:

Them: May I take your order?

Me: Yes. I'd like a cheeseburger with pickle and mustard, a double cheeseburger with lettuce and mayonnaise and a large order of fries. (Tension is mounting with each ensuing word spoken without interruption, like nervously walking over a rickety bridge one anxious step at a time.)

Them, responding in perfect static: That's a scratchy-watchy jimmy-jabber and a frickyfracky something-something. Is that right?

Me: I'm sorry, I didn't really understand you. (Again, I'm looking at my passengers for help, much to their amusement.)

Them: That's a jick-jacked scooby rooby and a frazzle-dazzle something-something; is that right?

Me: Sorry. I still have no idea what you said.

Them (very slowly and loudly): That's a buzzin-zippin, ...stymie ticker ... and a pattywhack ... something-something, RIGHT?

Me: Sure.

It's just me; if my wife yells out the order across me from her side of the vehicle, everything comes out fine. But when we let me be in charge, it's sort of like opening Christmas presents when we get home, anxious to see what we got this time. I know what I ordered yet I have absolutely no idea what actually went out through the speaker.

And I'm pretty sure the last time I tried, I heard a couple of dogs bark.



LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

“If we lie to the government it’s a felony, but if they lie to us it’s politics.” So said the world renowned political commentator, Bill Murray.

Now that’s meant to be a funny quote. But it represents the way most of us think of politics. Whether it be because of fake news or an abuse of power, many view the government as this dishonest and broken system that uses people like us for the personal gain of corrupt politicians.

Add that to the fact that we no longer know how to disagree with those on the other side, and you get a country that is exploding with outrage, name calling, hate, violence, venom, slander and self-righteousness.

To believe differently than I makes you either an idiot or evil. Or at least that’s what the culture tells me.

The temptation is to either become

A-Political (withdraw from politics) or All-Political (everything is a political issue). Jesus calls us to be Appropriately Political. With that in mind, here are five key principles from Jesus to help us engage politics.

1. Jesus is political but not partisan. In other words, Jesus is not a Republican. Nor is he a Democrat. Therefore, to believe a person has to be one or the other in order to be a Christian is to confuse a political party with the Kingdom of God.

2. Allegiance to Jesus’ Kingdom determines our dedication to country. Our allegiance to Jesus needs to shape our commitment and responsibility to our country, and not the other way around.

3. The way we talk about politics is as important as what we believe about politics. The Bible says very little about who you should vote for, but it says a lot about how you should engage in

conversations with others. Engage all conversations with love, empathy and respect. We are to be quick to listen and slow to speak. This applies to social media.

4. The best political action you can take is to be involved in a church that believes Jesus is King. You can do little to change America. You can do a lot to change yourself. You can also partner with a church that seeks to be salt and light in the community. That’s how you make the biggest difference.

5. Political involvement is our duty but Jesus is our hope. Our future hope, security and happiness does not rest on an earthly candidate. It rests on the shoulders of Jesus. Go read Isaiah 9v6.

Jesus is the Eternal King. His government will know no end. Therefore, no matter what happens in the election, the best is yet to come for those who place their hope in Jesus.


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SCARECROW SHUFFLE

From October 10 to 24 Main Street Paragould invited community members to the Scarecrow Shuffle in Downtown Paragould. The perfect way to enjoy the beautiful weather, residents took to the streets with their families and friends for a safe, social-distancing activity to visit the scarecrows posted along the streets and in local business windows.

Selfies taken with the scarecrows could be submitted on Facebook to give participants the chance to win 100 DownTown Dollars. People were also invited to vote for their favorite scarecrow by liking its image on Facebook.



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Paula Long

NEA Baptist Holds 12th Annual ShareHope Walk for Remembrance

On a beautiful Saturday morning at NEA Baptist, families gathered to celebrate the lives of little ones we've lost during the 12th Anniversary ShareHope Walk of Remembrance. ShareHope's Walk for Remembrance and Hope is an event for anyone who has experienced a pregnancy or infant loss, as a way for family and friends to remember the babies who have gone too soon.

The speakers, and singer Cory Jackson, did an amazing job directing the event and supporting those families and their special morning with time spent with others who understand the struggles each has been through.

The ShareHope Walk of Remembrance is a part of several months' worth of activities celebrated during the Season of Hope, an initiative of the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation. Together families are celebrating hope with friends, co-workers, and community members.

Hold onto the memories of today - forever.



218 A Union St.
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 Amy Reeves Photography



Sounds Like..Christmas (already?!)

BY SARA BROWN

A playlist for November

It's November, and everyone knows what that means: Thanksgiving is fast approaching! There really aren't all that many Thanksgiving songs, so since our friend Jill @ 99.3 has started playing Christmas music, a Christmas-themed playlist seemed appropriate. Get ready to start decorating your tree, and when you do, turn this rockin' playlist up loud!

1. Step Into Christmas – Elton John

You probably don't think of Christmas when you think of Elton John, but this song is just a fun one. It's cute and energetic; it'll get you in the Christmas spirit in no time flat, and that's why it's the perfect song to start off this playlist!

2. Blue Christmas – Elvis Presley

This song is a classic, and no Christmas playlist can succeed without it. It introduces us to that melancholy feeling you get when you spend your first Christmas without your sweetheart. It's really a sad song, but its sadness helps those of us who love Christmas to really cherish the happiness the season can bring.

3. Jingle Bells – The Statler Brothers

This track really emphasizes a good, old-fashioned country Christmas with its quick banjo picking and tight harmonies. It's sure to get you excited to see what Santa is going to bring you, and who knows? It might even inspire you to actually go out on one of those sleigh rides!

4. Christmas Eve – Kelly Clarkson

You'll want to get up and start dancing when this track comes on. It turns the holiday into a party, and with the right amount of decorations and lights, turning this song on really would make it a party!

5. Little Saint Nick – The Beach Boys

There are undoubtedly those who don't think that surf rock and Christmas mix, but the truth is, they absolutely do. This song is a window into a warm, sunny Christmas, and when it starts to get cold, that really doesn't sound too bad! Turn this one up loud while you're decorating!

6. All I Want for Christmas is You – Mariah Carey

What Christmas playlist would be complete without this one? It's fun, it's bouncy, it's got all the makings of a fun pop song with just the right amount of Christmas flair to keep it sounding fresh every single year!

To be continued...



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PET OF THE MONTH

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BY DONNA GIBSON

Pawley came to us about a month after we lost our 13-year-old Shih Tzu, Sundae. She was rescued through ARC Angels for Animals. We fostered her and her sister for a weekend, and decided to keep Pawley. (No worries, all the siblings went to great homes.)

Pawley's breed is a Dorkie. She's half Yorkie and half Dachshund. She is FULL of spunk and cuddles. We call her "Pawley Punkass" as she is very independent and is not afraid to hang with the big dogs.

Our best guess is that she was born around the first of July, so we will be celebrating her birthday on July 4th.

Pawley loves belly rubs, being outside, playing fetch, stealing socks/shoes, going to "school" and feigning innocence.

She dislikes bath/nail time, brooms, vacuums and hair dryers.

Favorite treats: Bully Sticks, Cheerios and baby carrots.




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College Tips by a College Student



BY SARA BROWN

Wouldn't you know it – we made it through midterms! There's one stressful thing checked off of our to-do lists. However, if you're like me and you're starting the painstaking process of applying to graduate schools, there's another monster lurking in the shadows for you to deal with: the dreaded standardized test. That's what I'm going to be giving you tips on this month. If you're not currently applying to graduate programs this year, but plan to be in the next year or so, read on. This info will serve you well even early on in your preparations. The specific test you'll take differs from others depending on what programs you're interested in, but nearly every field of study requires that you take one. For my field, I had to take the Graduate Records Exam (GRE), but other common exams include the GMAT, LSAT, and MCAT. These tips are going to be tailored toward the GRE, but they may help you out on those other exams as well.

Tip number one: Seek out all the free prep material you can find. For the GRE, I found several websites that offered free practice questions and practice tests, other websites that had lessons and videos on GRE-topics and tips, and even a really handy GRE vocabulary flashcard app.

Tip number two: Know your math formulas and vocabulary words. The GRE has three subjects it tests you on: Quantitative Reasoning, Verbal Reasoning, and Analytic Writing. You absolutely will not get through this test without knowing your math formulas (and when to use them) and having a very strong vocabulary. It's easy to find resources online that will help you strengthen both of those skills.

Tip number three: Accept the fact that you will not be able to answer every question. No question is supposed to take longer than a couple of minutes to solve, so if you find yourself struggling extra hard with a question, and you will, because there's no way you are going to be an expert on every single GRE-concept, skip it and come back to it at the end of the section.

Tip number four: Be mindful of tricks. The GRE intentionally tries to trip you up with answers that seem right, but aren't. In math, this typically involves having answer choices that match an answer you would get if you used the wrong formula to solve the problem. Always make sure you are paying attention to the problem and you know which formula to use.

And finally, tip number five: Remember that you can only do your best. This may not be as good as you hoped to do, but there is more to the GRE than just your knowledge of the content. Having to drive to a testing center can cause you to walk into the test a little more fatigued than you normally are, which can affect your performance. Being in a different environment than you were in when you were studying can affect your performance. The amount of sleep you got and the quality of the breakfast you ate can also affect your performance. I took my test at home and had several technical difficulties that made the situation more stressful than it would normally be if not for Covid-19. Could my scores have been higher had those things not happened? Maybe, but maybe not. I'll never know, but it doesn't matter because I know I did the best I could given the circumstances.



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10th Annual Paragould Ladies Cup

The Paragould Ladies Cup began in 2010 with 16 players. Lisa Jarman and Ellen Rogers began the tradition, and Lisa continues to be a team captain each year.

The tournament, formatted in the traditional Ryder Cup style, celebrated its tenth year at the Paragould Country Club this year on October 9 and 10. This event brings women together in the community to engage in a good game of golf as they support each other's teams and make a weekend of it.



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Jennifer Futrell, Dacota and Destiny



Lynda Dickinson
and
Louise Moore

Project Paragould Hosts Outdoor Craft & Vendor Fair

Project Paragould put on an outdoor craft and vendor fair on October 17 at the Greene County Library and included original artwork and crafts from local vendors, as well as BBQ competition.



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My watch said 11:00 a.m. I had been in the stand since before daylight and was feeling the need to get down, find some lunch and stretch before the afternoon hunt. I quietly ejected the slugs from my Remington 870 and then slipped my haul rope around the stock and carefully lowered my shotgun to the forest floor.

As I stood to loosen my muscles before my descent, I heard leaves rustle on the next ridge. It soon became evident it was the sound of a trotting deer headed in my direction. I scanned the hillside and caught a glimpse of antlers and then it hit me, my gun was on the ground. I grabbed my haul line and retrieved the shotgun. I excitedly, but quietly slipped the slugs back into the gun. In a matter of seconds the deer came through the bottom below my stand and in an instant he was beneath me. I aimed, fired and the deer jumped and ran out of sight, but I heard the telltale sound of a crash on the leafy forest floor. I was shaking too much to safely descend, so I sat for a moment and then eased down the tree and made my way to the buck.

This buck was a first for me in Greene County and it verified the story of the white-tailed deer in Arkansas, and particularly Northeast Arkansas, as a success in the annals of conservation.

Deer played a vital role in the survival of the pioneers in early Arkansas. Just after Arkansas became a state in 1836, a German author named Frederick Gerstaecker travelled extensively through the state observing the lifestyles of the locals as well as the flora and fauna. In his book "Wild Sports in the Far West," he relates the abundance of wildlife. Gerstaecker said, "I was now in Arkansas. Game seemed to abound. Flocks of wild turkeys filled the forests as thick as partridges in Germany, and deer were equal-

ly plentiful; in one day I saw several herds of ten or twelve each." Many others recorded the fact that Arkansas had an abundant supply of wildlife that seemingly could never be exhausted.

Yet unlimited hunting, mostly for the sake of a dollar, decimated the herds of deer as well as most other game. By the early 1900s the state had reached all-time lows for most of its large game species and many concerned sportsmen saw that something needed to be done. Local action began in the late 1800s, followed by legislative action in 1915. Senator J.M. Futrell of Paragould was instrumental in the formation of a bill which set up the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, with D. G. Beauchamp, also of Paragould, serving as the initial chairman. Along with setting up the Commission, Act 124 also included a host of game laws including seasons, limits, and other restrictions. That effort began the ball of conservation rolling across Arkansas.

"A Survey of Arkansas Game," authored in 1951 by Trusten Holden, stated the number of deer in Arkansas in the 1930s was at a low of around 500 animals. Early Commission efforts focused on regulations to control harvest and allow those deer to repopulate. Restocking efforts of white-tailed deer followed and the road to recovery was becoming brighter.

Deer populations in the Natural State slowly rebounded. In 1950, hunters took about 4,000 deer and by 1960 that number had risen to 15,000. But, in the '60s and '70s, a deer was still considered a rare sight in Northeast Arkansas. Most hunters who wanted to chase deer headed south to Hamburg or Monticello or into the Ozarks around Hardy, Norfolk or Sylamore. Though the numbers were low, a few diehard hunters continued to pursue white-tails along Crowley's Ridge. Seasons and methods were very limited, and that allowed the herd to continue to grow.

By 1970 the statewide deer kill had topped 25,000 and jumped to over 45,000 by 1980. The numbers in Northeast Arkansas and Greene County were beginning to rebound as well. Seasons in NEA were expanded with limited opportunities given to hunters with a shotgun with slugs or a muzzleloader. The core populations in Greene County were along Crowley's Ridge, but deer slowly began to repopulate the river bottoms of the Cache, Black and St. Francis rivers.



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

In 1987, the statewide harvest of deer exceeded 100,000 for the first time and has steadily climbed from that point and now exceeds 200,000 each year. Greene County has followed suit with deer harvest rates exceeding 1,000 in the late '90s and now in the neighborhood of 2,000 per year. The resurgence in the white-tailed deer populations has been a true success for the landscape of our state and for our hunters as well. The statewide population is now estimated to be over 1,000,000, an amazing transition from the 500 animals that inhabited the state only a few decades ago.

But with that increase has come some issues. Deer/car collisions have been on the rise with Arkansas ranking in the top 15 states of the likelihood to hit a deer with a vehicle. Farmers, gardeners and homeowners have issues with deer in crops, vegetables and landscape plants. There is also the possibility of disease in the population due to the close proximity and crowded conditions of deer in certain areas.

And that is where the responsible hunter comes in. There is more opportunity for hunting deer in Arkansas than any other time in our history. Liberal seasons and limits allow hunters to chase deer over a long period of time and with a variety of methods.

Hunting provides a great way to relax, get away from the hustle of society and put some wonderful organic meat on the table. If you are currently a hunter, thanks. If you have not hunted in a while or want to get out for the first time and see what it is all about, please check agfc.com for seasons, limits and licensing requirements as well as other information. If you have specific questions, drop me a line at charles.long@agfc.ar.gov and I will be glad to help. I hope to see you out there!



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Crossbow Hunting Expert: Barry James

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When it comes to talking about the outdoors -- and particularly about crossbow hunting -- Barry James is just like the products he promotes: He's ready to fire when the opportunity presents itself.

Officially, James is a Pro Staffer for TenPoint Crossbow Technologies but what he really is is a fellow who loves the outdoors and regards time spent there to be about as good as it gets. "I don't sell crossbows, I help promote the brand," he said. "They pay me, basically, to run my mouth. My wife of 41 years says I have a PhD in talking."

But his words are worth hearing. He feels a connection with the outdoors is a good way for people to escape the stress of everyday life, and he feels his fondness for the crossbow has led him to build a connection with those in his audience. By his estimation, he speaks to about 100,000 people a year while holding sessions related to crossbow use, safety and expectations.

"I've been with TenPoint thirteen years as a pro and it will soon be 47 years behind a crossbow for me," James said. "I travel to Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee holding promotional shows at places like Bass Pro, Mack's Prairie Wings, stores that carry TenPoint bows. I go to the section of the store that has TenPoint bows and stand there and help the establishment sell their crossbows. There may be other brands there, too, but I can show the customer -- if the facility provides an indoor range -- how to help them set up the bow and sight it in. I promote safety Number One, above all. I talk with all ages, from the young to senior citizens. I call it a full-time part-time job. From August to mid-September is my busiest season. I'm available for anyone regardless of the brand. I can show them things I have picked up in 47 years and how to be more accurate. But I'm also a fanatical hunter."

He said when crossbows became legal in Arkansas in 1973 his father purchased one for him. "I tried compound bows but that wasn't for me," James recalled, "and a true

love affair was instilled in me as a boy. My father and I shared many campfires and deer hunts together. I learned life lessons I still use today."

That's the kind of thing he hopes to pass along to others when they attend his mini-seminars. "Some who come are just starting, some are getting back into it and some have a physical disability where a crossbow allows that individual to participate in the great outdoors without having to draw back like a compound bow," he said. "Our cocking mechanism allows anyone to cock the bow with lots less pressure. I deal with a lot of ladies and seniors and I explain to them that as far as the technology is concerned, we have gone from Fred Flintstone to George Jetson."

He is aware some bowhunting purists consider the crossbow a lesser form of archery but he also knows his weapon of choice has great value to the user and to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. "When Arkansas legalized the crossbow for archery seasons the so called 'war' between

crossbow hunters and compound bow hunters was on," he said. "They thought the crossbow would diminish the deer herd because it was too easy for everyone to use. The crossbow is now legal in 28 states without having to have a disability permit. A very organized committee met with the Game and Fish Commission and now every state around Arkansas allows crossbows in archery season. In recent years the crossbow has increased in the percentage of use and has helped increase the harvest. It's a tool that helps. Arkansas' deer population is estimated at more than a million. Ninety-eight percent of my hunting is now crossbow. It's my preferred choice of weapon. I started the love affair with it with my dad and the fire is still burning as hot now as it did then.

"The crossbow has limitations. But to deliver the most lethal and accurate shot, that's what crossbows do. They allow for proficiency in the woods. I advocate 'know your weapon,' what it can and can't do. A plus is that you don't need as much practice as with a compound or recurve bow," saying in about six months one can become proficient.

All of that information, however, is secondary to James' true ambition. He wants to help people understand the wonderful and therapeutic opportunities awaiting them in Arkansas' outdoors realm. "Arkansas has 3.8 million acres of public land," he explained, "and for a \$25 fee you can hunt it all. My goal is to use the crossbow as a ministry, to get those not in the outdoors to get in the outdoors. You find a peace and serenity and connect with the Great Creator.

"I often say when I'm in the outdoors I have a front row seat to the greatest church of all ... it allows one to realize there is a greater being than us. Watching a sunrise or sunset is a time of serenity and peace that can't be purchased. Every hunt, I consider a success whether I kill anything or not. I get to experience the freedom provided by those who serve and are serving, allowing me to participate in this great thing."

James is ready and willing to speak to individuals or groups and said interested parties should call him at 870-476-7702 or email him at poppabear1130@yahoo.com.

"There is no charge, no fees whatsoever," he said. "As you probably figured out, I love to talk."

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Photo from 2019 Duck Classic

NEA Baptist's Annual Duck Classic

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

NEA Baptist's Annual Duck Classic is set for December 10 and 11.

Kim Provost, event coordinator for the Duck Classic, said the fundraiser has continued to grow for the past 18 years since it began, and is now the largest fundraiser for NEA Baptist every year, as well as the largest outdoor fundraiser in Northeast Arkansas.

"Thanks to the support of our sponsors, attendees, and teams – we continue to grow," said Kim.

The Duck Classic consists of two days, the first taking place at First National Bank

Arena and the second a duck hunt that takes place around the area.

On the first day, a silent auction, live auction and food get the fundraiser started. Proceeds help the hospital fund the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation, founded in 2001, consisting of six different programs:

Center for Good Grief – Provides grief counseling, seminars and support to those who have lost a loved one.

Center for Healthy Children – Education for children struggling with obesity to help them live active and healthy lifestyles.

Hope Circle – A community offering hope and support for families living with life changing illnesses.

Medicine Assistance Program – Helps patients who can't afford access to the life-saving medications they need.

ShareHope – Helping those who have suffered a miscarriage find support amidst the grief.

Wellness Works – A 12-week program for individuals living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cancer, and COPD.

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Those in attendance might leave with an item from the auction and a smile on their faces after a fun evening, but also a better understanding of what the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation can accomplish with the funds raised.

“The hunt helps reach people from all over,” said Clint Parton, Guide Coordinator for the hunt. Clint’s role is to organize locations, guides, and hosts. Between 25 and 30 teams usually participate, with registration usually filling up before the deadline.

On the morning of December 11, teams will rise early and leave their homes – or their stays – to get to their land in time for dawn. Each hunting location is within a 60-mile radius and the land and hosts are paired randomly with teams. When daylight breaks, the hunt is on and the excitement settles in as teams seek to shoot the limit.

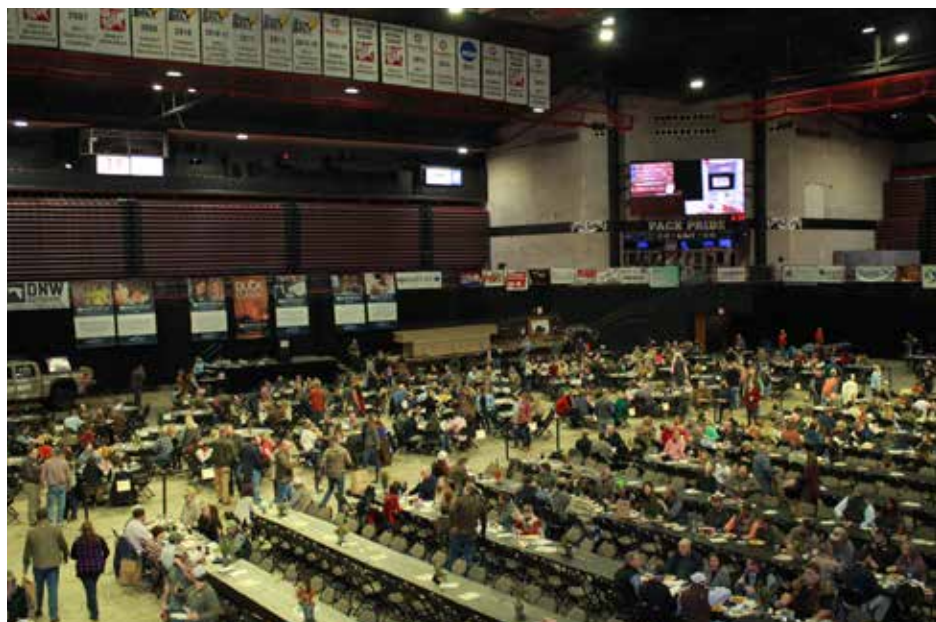
At noon, the hunt is over, and the spoils can be counted.

“We have one of the best duck hunting areas in the entire country,” said NEA

Baptist Director of Marketing, Ty Jones. “There’s a national draw for duck hunting in this area.”

If you would like to attend the Duck Classic event at First National Bank Arena this year, tickets must be purchased in advance at duckclassic.com or at DNW Outdoors. Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Photo from 2019 Duck Classic



More Info

If you are interested in volunteering your land for a future hunt, contact Clint Parton at Clint.Parton@simmonsbank.com or call him at 870.926.2890.

Visit duckclassic.com for more information regarding the event.

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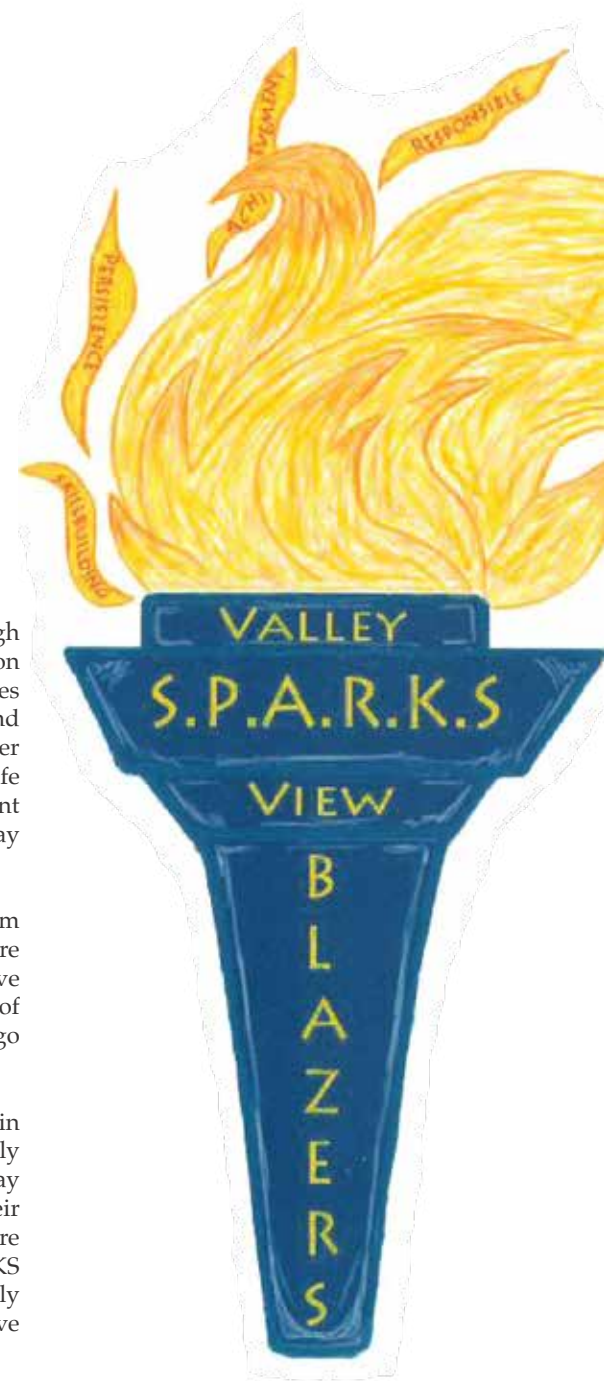
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Get Better.

Food Bank Volunteers the Valley View Blazer SPARKS



BY LINDSEY SPENCER

It takes many hands and a lot of simple acts to make big things happen. The Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas and the Valley View Blazer SPARKS both have firsthand experience with a little help going a long, long way.

Made up of young students, with the help of their teacher leaders, the Valley View Blazer SPARKS have helped serve the Food Bank by donating their hard work. A little bit of time, often, has made a tremendous difference.

“Since August of 2019, the Blazer Sparks have packed approximately 29,465 meals for those facing hunger in Northeast Arkansas,” Vicki Pillow, Director of Development at the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, shared. “They’ve also helped the Food Bank raise over 202,000 meals by volunteering at our annual Fill the Food Bank Food and Fund Drive.”

The Blazer SPARKS (Skill building, Persistence, Achievement, Responsible, Knowledge, Success) is a group of students within the Special Education Department at Valley View Schools. The group is led by self-contained teachers Kelly Green and Tina Golden.

The group is part of the OWL (Opportunity Work-based Learning) program designed

to help transition students from high school to adulthood. Special education students in the program work for places such as Truck Patch and Walgreens (and earn a wage for their efforts) and volunteer with the Food Bank to give them real life experience and learning in an environment that teaches them skills they can one day use to support themselves.

“The program is designed to give them opportunities to learn and to be more independent,” Kelly explained. “We’ve been volunteering at the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas since 2015. We go every month.”

The students and teachers have stood in cold weather to help fill the trucks. Kelly says everyone involved goes in one way and comes out a totally different way, their hard work giving as much back or more than they gave themselves. The SPARKS receive a lot of help themselves, so Kelly explains it feels especially good to give back.

“It’s truly been a blessing that we can help someone else – we get out more than we put in,” Kelly shared. “My kids know that. It changes the way they feel about themselves. They know they are doing good. We give so little but change the lives of so many forever.”

Kelly said it’s amazing that one of the biggest takeaways is even when someone can’t do the same as someone else, their work is still valuable. Someone might not be able to use both hands and another may not have use of their legs, but they



are still able to contribute and the work put in matters – especially now, with many more facing hunger in the current climate of the pandemic.

“We can always do SOMETHING to help someone else in need,” Kelly said. “For us, it makes our kids and ourselves feel proud. If we can do this, anyone can do this.”

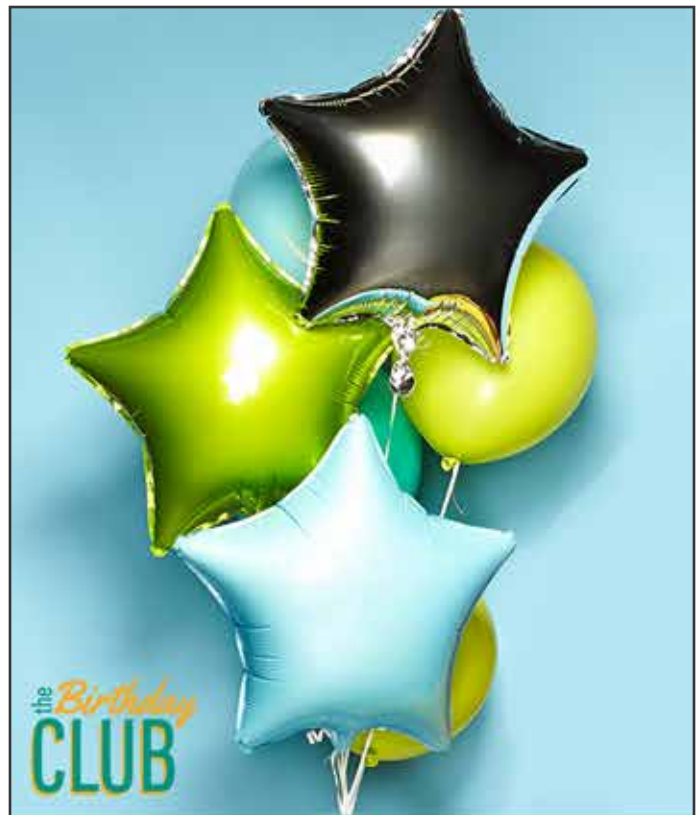
The Valley View SPARKS encourage everyone to get involved with the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas.

“I can tell you the Food Bank has been a great place to volunteer – encouraging, kind. We’re good workers because they’re good to work for,” Kelly praised. She commented the Food Bank staff has a playlist specifically for the SPARKS kids.

“It changes your life and it changes the life of other people,” Kelly said. “When you’re a blessing to someone else, you get that warm feeling in your heart.”

More Info

Learn how you can support the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas on Page 32



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Tennis Success

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Successful athletes know one of the keys to winning in team sports is the need to develop with teammates a bond that resembles family, an almost innate sense of knowing what the other will do in a given situation.

Nowhere is that any truer than in tennis doubles, where the fast-paced action requires immediate reaction and a confidence in one's partner that comes only through hours of work, hours of learning, and hours of becoming a "family" unit.

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Paragould High School seniors Blaine Wood and Cole Edwards recently capped off an undefeated conference season, going 9-0 through the 5A-East schedule. The lifelong friends agree their closeness off the court translates into victories on it.

"I feel like four years' of experience just helps us know each other," Cole said of their tennis success. "But we grew up playing baseball together and just kind of know each other. We know what the other one is going to do."

"Me and Cole go way back to elementary school days as best friends," Blaine added. "I enjoy doubles way more than singles and wanted him to be my partner. Through the years, with all the experience we have together, you just know the other guy pretty good."

Having tried singles play and deciding it was "not our thing," according to Cole, they modeled their games after the doubles team of Derek Shollenbarger and Jonah Treece, upperclassmen at PHS. The current duo put in the necessary hours on the court -- on their own -- to develop a winning formula.

"They were the doubles team and were

real good at the net," Blaine said of the older Rams' teammates, "and we watched them and wanted to be good like they were. That's who we really looked at."

He and Cole and other doubles players from the school came out three or four nights a week to work on skills and practice hitting. "We enjoy trying to make each other better," he said.

Service placement, covering the lines and dominating play at the net are all vital to doubles success but communication is as important as any of those skills. Knowing how your teammate reacts to particular shots determines how you prepare yourself for the next play to come your way. "It's like a mental thing," Cole said. "He has a slice serve, so I know where it's going to go and what kind of return to expect."

"He's just the opposite," Blaine said of his partner. "He has a hard serve and they have to try to reach out and poke it, so we know what's coming most of the time and know how to play the net and return it."

With their high school season now finished, the two look back at the year with pride in the unbeaten conference slate and thankfulness they got to play at

all. "Shocked that it's over but just glad we got to play," Blaine said. "Had Covid come along a little later we probably wouldn't have even got to have a season."

Neither plans on pursuing the sport in college but both said they hope to stick together and play some tournaments in the coming years. Blaine looks at the tournaments and area adult leagues as a way to stay in touch with PHS teammates and friends, while Cole has an even more personal goal: "Keeping the doubles team alive," he said with a nod of the head and a smile.

Blaine is the son of Chad and Starla Wood while Cole's parents are Mike and Tammy Edwards.

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Food Bank Volunteer Brinda LeGrand

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

Brinda (McKinney) LeGrand has been making a difference in the Northeast Arkansas community for some time, but with the current state of our tumultuous circumstances, her work is perhaps serving more people now than ever.

“It is sobering to see the needs surrounding food in Northeast Arkansas,” Brinda shared. “Over 5,000 people in Northeast Arkansas receive weekly food assistance and that number is growing due to the COVID-19 environment. More people are in need of food.”

A nursing instructor at A-State and a Paragould resident, Brinda serves on the board at Mission Outreach – the homeless shelter in Paragould – and volunteers much of her time with the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. Her dedication to helping feed others comes from her recognition that the Food Bank is a very important part of the community because it reaches out and fulfills the needs of so many.

“We routinely get food from the Food Bank and there are times when it would be impossible to provide for those in need without them – they make it so easy to volunteer and donate,” Brinda shared.

People can find themselves in a place of food insecurity for many reasons. Someone who has never needed it before might suddenly find themselves in a position where they do. This understanding led Brinda to want to serve those in need. Her work began when the Food Bank started doing some outreach through local grocery stores.



Brinda acknowledged with admiration in her voice the work of the Food Bank and the sheer volume of food that goes out to people who need it. Her awe led to an invitation for friends to join her, and they began meeting at the Food Bank to stuff boxes. Brinda said it's a fun way to get together with friends and other like-minded folks and make a difference at the same time.

"One of the things I like about volunteering there is the different age groups involved," Brinda shared. "I couldn't ask for better folks to work with."

Brinda stressed that in the current environment everyone – including volunteers – must do their due diligence to protect themselves and others, but also that the need is greater now than ever so the Food Bank is still accepting groups of volunteers. Guidelines are followed, like spreading out the assembly line and sanitizing regularly. And during a time when we are so worried about our health, it's important to remember one way to maintain health is to maintain a healthy diet. The Food Bank helps get food with the nutrients we all need to those struggling to get it themselves.

As we enter into a time of year where we are often reminded to give thanks, many are thankful for people like Brinda who give back to them so their families can press on. Her dedication, time, and energy are appreciated by those she serves and those who work beside her.

"We are so grateful to have volunteers like Brinda who not only donate their time to help us carry out our mission, but do so with such an uplifting attitude," said Jennifer Hannah, Outreach Coordinator with the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. "Brinda constantly leaves things better than she found them. She is always eager to help, whether it's packing boxes or helping with nutrition classes."

Brinda encourages community members to volunteer for the Food Bank.

"It is vital that people get involved in the mission of Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas," Brinda insisted. "It is easy to sit back and think someone else will do it. Whether you show up to help pack boxes for distribution, join in the distribution efforts, or go online and donate, there is a way for you and your friends/family to get actively involved. Our community needs you. The food bank needs you. Individual families need you. If you are looking for something worthwhile to get your family and friends involved in, this is it! Don't put off your decision to get involved. Go online or call the Food Bank today to see how you can make a difference for your community. Together we can assure everyone in Northeast Arkansas something to be especially thankful for this holiday season -- nourishing food."



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Photo taken at Newman's Farm

Family Owned Business: Roots

Family owned, family operated, and family oriented: Roots Restaurant takes family very seriously. Owners Karl and Paula Lowe opened their restaurant over a year ago in Downtown Jonesboro and have been serving up a delicious blend of Ecuadorian and Southern inspired food since.

To this husband and wife duo, family means a lot more than its dictionary definition. "Family is the two of us in the kitchen every day," said Karl. "It's not just our immediate family, but our business family, too. When [customers] come to eat, they're not just guests, they're family. We know many by their first names. It's about a sense of belonging. The word family is important to us; it's not lightly used."

This family driven restaurant wants every person through its doors to feel at home, and for their dining experience to be more than just a meal because time around the dinner table can and should be full of good food, good conversation, and good memories.

"Part of the idea of Roots is to bring a learning experience to the meal," Paula explained. "We want you to know where your food comes from and what you're eating."

This thought process and the work it takes to achieve high quality, local ingredients, translates into incredible tasting food that invites guests to linger, talk, and experience the meal, rather than simply consume it. "Fine dining – it's not just 'let's make it look good,'" Paula went on. "It has to have a sense and a meaning. Every plate has a thought behind it."

With such attention paid to the food, it's no wonder it brings people together, and helps the Roots team achieve its goal of crafting something that embodies the mission of tying together kitchen, culture, and community. By blending their cultures – Paula is from Ecuador and Karl from right here in NEA – the pair believes they and others can learn a lot about one another.



It's no secret this year has been difficult for many businesses, especially smaller businesses in the service industry. But just as many have been brought together through the unusual circumstances, Roots has noticed its connection with community grow tighter.

"If it wasn't for our family of patrons, we wouldn't be here," Karl said. "We have some of the most amazing customers. I've been really blown away this year. Customers come in to make sure [we] are taken care of. The community is such an amazing part of why we're still here."

They're also thankful for the farmer families they partner with to bring local food to their menu that changes with seasons.

"Our farmer families – they go out of their way to help us because we care about what they do and they care about what we do," Karl

Karl, Paula, and their son Liam will be welcoming a new member to the family soon, expecting the arrival of Liam's younger brother in early December.

Read more about the unique blend of cultures that defines the style of their tasty menu by checking out our previous Restaurant Insight with Roots in January of 2020.

Plus, get the advice from these pros for prepping the Thanksgiving meal by checking out their input in Explore MOR's "Tips from Northeast Arkansas Chefs for Preparing the Thanksgiving Meal" at exploremorenea.com/eat

Join the Roots family by visiting them at 303 S. Main St. in Jonesboro. Enjoy an ever-changing menu adapted by these expert chefs who draw from regional and cultural inspiration to present food that is sure to delight the taste buds and encourage community.



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Family Owned Business: Gearhead Outfitters

It's a big family, and like many who grow over the years, it now sprawls across part of the country. Distance and size don't hinder the bond, though, and as the company grows so does its passion and commitment.

Gearhead Outfitters got its start in 1997 when owner Ted Herget decided to start selling gear out of a friend's living room. Falling in love with the mountain lifestyle after living in Colorado, he decided to bring the atmosphere of a gear shop he loved so much back to Jonesboro where he was raised. The name comes from a nickname for those who love to have all the gear: mountain gear, ski gear, cycling gear, etc. Twenty-three years after its founding, you'll still find Ted and his wife, Amanda, working the floor to help outfit customers for adventure.

"A unique characteristic of Gearhead is that, even though we're growing, we still have a small-town community heart," Amanda said. "Our teams care about the communities where they live and eat and shop and spend time, and that connection

is something really special. As we grow, that doesn't change and so we know that no matter where we go, we will work to make the outdoors more accessible with the best gear and service we can offer."

The store isn't just family owned, though; it's a family that grows with each new addition to the team, each customer served, and each store opened.

The growing company has some big news this year, too. The company recently announced a rebrand of Uncle Dan's Outdoor Store in the Chicago area. After acquiring that chain of outdoor stores last year, the team felt it this was the right time to expand the Gearhead name and family to the Midwest. They also recently announced the development of the old Sears building on Caraway and Highland.

With a mission to help others live active, fulfilling lives, as the Gearhead name and company grows, it continues to pull more and more people, adventurers, outdoor lovers and "gearheads" into their big family.



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Family Owned Business:

The Recovery Room



Photo By Andrew Brown Photography

Everyone needs to recover sometimes, and for this family-owned coffeehouse and bistro on Main Street in Jonesboro, the goal is to be an extension of people's living room where community members can gather, relax and recover.

Ben and Tracy Owens, owners of this local favorite, both come from families who have passed down scrumptious recipes. Since the start of the pandemic, the business has refocused its efforts on the coffee shop and bakery side, and with this attention been

reminded of perhaps the most important aspect of the business: Creating a space that feels like home.

"We use a lot of family recipes," Tracy said, adding that many of these items are what remind customers of their own homes. One such item is the Hello Dolly.

"Hello Dolly is one of the first items I was able to make with my mother. She was a great cook. When I go through recipes, I can almost hear her saying things to me. I guess it just brings back memories and I hope people experience that when they come here. I hope when they take a bite of something it takes them back home."

Tracy said Ben's mom is a great cook, too, and some of her recipes have been added to the Recovery Room's menu as well. Perhaps it is these baked goods that make Recovery Room regulars feel at home, or perhaps it is the increasing familiarity of walking in and seeing a friendly face – perhaps someone behind the counter or maybe someone you know sitting on the couch. Or maybe, it's the fresh smell of coffee that stirs a warm feeling.

Being part of the Jonesboro community and creating a space where people feel comfortable means a lot to both Ben and Tracy, and to Ben's sister, Nancy, who can often be found at The Recovery Room working and chatting with guests.

"Recovery Room is one of my favorite happy places," Nancy said. "At some point every day, I look around and think how fortunate we are to connect with people and create a little relaxation, comfort, or just some yummy vittles."



In addition to coffee and baked goods, The Recovery Room also offers breakfast, lunch, and regular Happy Hour Specials.



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Family Owned Business:

Gotay's

Custom Jewelry

It's all about family at Gotay's Custom Jewelry Design – and not only because the business is family-owned. Gotay's is all about family because family is the influence, the inspiration, and the reason.

"It's not just a jewelry store," said Nelson Gotay, who has been custom designing jewelry for 50 years now, and has served, in some cases, three generations of customers. "I try to create heirlooms for families."

Gotay's career got started with an apprenticeship in New York City and has taken him around most of the country before landing him in Jonesboro, where he's been now for 16 years. Gotay's mission with each piece of jewelry is to create something beautiful, and for each customer, the goal is to give them something that will stand the test of time.

"Most important to me is creating family heirlooms," Gotay explained. "Creating a piece someone gets to wear and purchase with the intent that when they're finished with it, they're going to pass it on to someone else. I've had the privilege of working with sentimental pieces and that means a lot – they trust you to create something for them. It's important for me to interpret what's important to them, what means the most to them."

He says the process looks different every time, from start to finish. Some customers may come in with a diamond or a stone they purchased or one that has been passed down to them. Some want something for their wedding and others to mark a significant date or memory. From there, it is Gotay's job to bring the customer's vision to life. Sometimes this means a drawing on paper and sometimes a mock up on the computer or even a real model.

Gotay asks himself, "How do I bring all



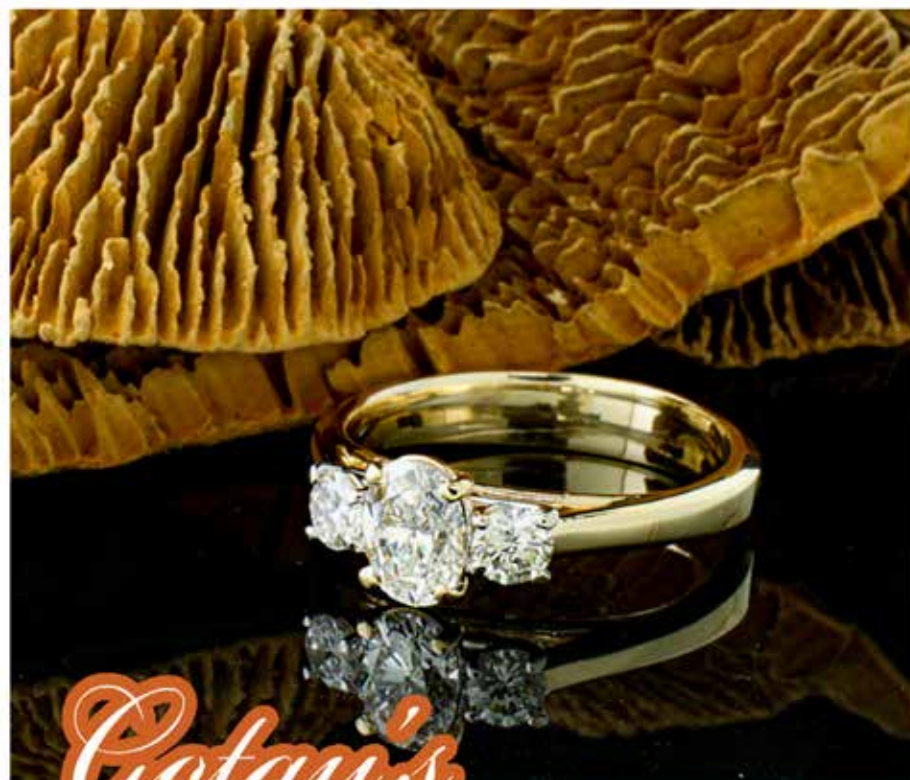
my years of experience to make it the correct way and also give them what they envision? Is this something they saw online? Something they imagined? Something Grandma wanted? [I'm] trying to make a piece that will last generations."

With this in mind, Gotay draws on his knowledge of good design and also on what the client wants in order to begin working on a piece that will stand out among others. Gotay says it's his job to understand what the client wants to do and then "design out" any potential problems.

He explained if the customer doesn't like it, he's failed.

"It's a challenge, but it's a gratifying challenge," he said. "They have to instantly realize [what they are holding] is different. This is somehow better than the average piece."

Creating things for families, both those he works for now and those that will surely inherit his stunning work, Gotay says is the best part of the job. "It is so gratifying," he shared. "So rewarding."



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Family Owned Business:

Laubach Storage

Laubach Mini Storage has been around since 1984 and perhaps it is the 36 years in business that makes it a trusted name in Paragould. The company started with 60 storage units and increased to an impressive 555 units in 2004.

Today, the business is still family owned – and operated.

Michelle Barnes, the Vice President of Operations, helps run the business her

parents started years ago. Michelle said community is everything to the business: It's what they invest in and what brings people back to invest in them, too.

"Community is our family and we are grateful for the Northeast Arkansas family," Michelle said.

The business gives back to the community in a variety of ways and perhaps the biggest is where they spend their own dollars: with local schools and

the Boy's and Girl's Club. All marketing purchases are also always made with local businesses.

Michelle said much of their business comes from referrals and repeat business.

"The reputation of being in business – with any business that's been in business for over 35 years ... it says a lot," Michelle said. "I think it speaks for itself."

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'Tis the Season

Christmas Tree Farms in NEA

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

Imagine walking into your home and smelling Christmas. It smells ... green, fresh, like winter and yet it also seems warm. Perhaps cookies are baking – or at least it smells like they are, candles can fool the nose – mixed with the earthy scent of trees. There's a difference in the musty smell of a synthetic tree pulled from a box that lives in the attic and the scent of a tree that spent its life growing roots before it was brought into your home. In your house, it will serve its purpose as a place to hang your family memories, a place to string the lights and set your thoughtful gifts beneath, and a spot to gather around.

There are a few options to select a real Christmas tree here in Northeast Arkansas and a few more on their way in coming years. Put on a sweater, load the family in the car, and check out one of these local Christmas tree farms.



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Crow's Nest Farms

Kimberly Dale planted 1500 Virginia Pines on her farm in February of 2017. Though most of those still need some time to grow, Kimberly shared Crow's Nest Farm will open for business this year by bringing a batch of pre-cut trees to Downtown Paragould.

These trees, Frasier Firs, will travel from North Carolina to be available on the corner of N. Pruett and W. Poplar streets. The pop-up Christmas tree store will open the Friday after Thanksgiving and will remain open on Fridays and Saturdays in the late afternoon until it gets dark and until they sell out.

Next year, Crow's Nest Farms plans to open to the public for guests to visit, select and cut down their own trees. The farm located on Campground Road (GR 628) will have a Christmas store and Nigerian dwarf goats.

Kimberly said there are other benefits of purchasing a live tree; aside from the delightful smell, it's good for the environment. As trees are cut down, they are replaced and replanted every year.

"Everyone is looking for different natural habitats and things in nature to help them connect," Kimberly said. "It doesn't matter where you get your tree, but there's a whole list of things that make getting a real tree a good idea: supporting local and it's good for the environment."

Support this local farm and check out what they've got in store for coming years: Visit their website, crowsnestfarms.com, or Facebook page to keep up and get regular updates on their hours for this season.



Christmas Tree Plantation

Located closer to Jonesboro, the Christmas Tree Plantation is one of the oldest Christmas tree farms in the state. It was established in 1980 and located at 171 CR 468, and Rocky Clements bought the farm in 1992. A classic "choose and cut" farm, The Christmas Tree Plantation is all about family tradition.

"We're well into our second generation of customers," said Rocky, who recalls the magic as a child of going out and searching for the perfect tree.

The farm has a fire pit and the air is usually filled with carols. Hot chocolate is served to help aid the chilly temps, but the cold is part of the fun and makes bringing the tree back to its cozy new home all the more special.

The Christmas Tree Plantation believes in keeping it local, keeping it green, and keeping it real. They'll open the Friday after Thanksgiving and be open daily following. On the weekends, they are open daylight hours and on weekdays from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.



Cornbread Corner Christmas Tree Farm

With the aim of being open in four to five years, Cornbread Corner Christmas Tree Farm was launched this year when Jacob White planted 2,200 trees on a few acres of his family's farm.

Bonnie View Farm, where the Christmas trees were planted, has been in Jacob's family for a long time. When his dad married into the family, Jacob said he enthusiastically took up working on the land. "He was country before country was cool," Jacob said with a laugh.

It took an entire month to plant the Virginia Pines. Work began in February and lasted until March; both Jacob and his dad have full-time jobs. The desire to take on such a large project was born of a love for picking out the biggest tree for their living room when he was growing up,

and now wanting to bring that excitement and tradition to many more on his own family's land.

Jacob said the work of planting trees is the most difficult thing about getting the farm up and going. While it doesn't take a whole lot of capital, he explained, the amount of labor and sweat equity it takes are massive. The effort will likely pay off, as the trees are expected to grow between 12 and 18 inches per year. In a few years, the trees will be ready to go home with some families.

Scattercreek Berries

Soon, a local attraction for berries and pumpkins will also offer Christmas Trees.

Jimmy Williams, along with his parents Frank and Jackie, has spent eight years farming their land. What began as an idea to plant some blackberries has turned into a project to bring families together.

The first blackberries at Scattercreek Berries were planted in 2012. The farm opened for selling in 2014. With the addition of strawberries, which are prime in the spring, and pumpkins, which bring people in in the fall, Christmas trees seemed like the natural next step for making the most use of their space.

Scattercreek planted several hundred trees in March of this year and hopes they will be ready in three to four years. A store is also in the works, with the goal of offering a hay ride to the back 40 where the Christmas Trees are.

Lately, the farm has been as busy as ever with the addition of the trees and the berries selling out before they can even make it to the Farmers Market.

"We can't begin to tell people how grateful we are for their support this year," said Jimmy.

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Greene County Master Gardeners Receive Awards

Each year the University of Arkansas state master gardener program has awards it presents according to the nominees sent in by the individual county programs. They compete with other programs over the entire state.

This year The Greene County Chapter's nominees for Friend of Master Gardeners-Business and Friend of Master Gardeners-Individual were chosen for the year 2020. (They were nominated in 2019.)

The Master Gardener's Friend of Master Gardeners-business went to Lowe's of Paragould, with Rhonda Bottoms receiving the award from Berni Kurz, who is head of the Master Gardener program in Arkansas.

The Friend of Master Gardeners-Individual went to Sue McGowan. Kurz traveled to Paragould in order to personally present the awards. Normally, winners would have been invited to the State Conference and awards presented

in front of all the chapters and members attending; however, because of Covid 19, the state conference which was to be held in Jonesboro had to be canceled. The names and pictures of the State winners were revealed to the entire state by means of Zoom on September 28.

This is a great honor for the local nominees and also for the Greene County Master Gardener program, and the Greene County Extension office.

More Info

For more information about the Greene County Master Gardeners and how to get involved, visit the Greene County Master Gardeners on Facebook.

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Community in Action



BY BETHANY GALLIMORE

Two neighborhoods have come together this year to help keep Jonesboro clean and green. In October, the Fisher Street Community in Action group and the Scenic Hills Neighborhood Association partnered with Jonesboro city organizations to give Jonesboro the “clean sweep” it had been missing since spring.

“It’s all about cleaning up,” said Judy Casteel, president of the Scenic Hills Neighborhood Association. Casteel sees helping her neighbors deal with trash and litter as a vital service to her community,

and one with lasting impacts. In past years, she’s seen the cleanups bring thousands of pounds of waste — from everyday litter to mattresses, televisions, microwaves, suitcases, vacuums, patio furniture, and more — out of Jonesboro neighborhoods and into proper disposal solutions. “It’s a question of safety, and a question of pride,” Casteel said. When a neighborhood regularly removes litter and unwanted objects, “It’s healthier, it’s cleaner, it’s more attractive, and it fosters a much stronger sense of well-being for everybody,” Casteel said.

Cleaning up has become a family affair for Casteel, who was joined by her daughter Elizabeth Cline and grandson David Cline at the Scenic Hills cleanup. Elizabeth said the cleanups can be particularly impactful for low-mobility residents or those without reliable transportation: “This is a great opportunity for people who can’t afford or don’t have the transportation or physical ability to take it to the dump,” she said. “Not everyone can haul something away in their car; this is an easy way to help people get rid of their stuff.”

David, a senior at UALR who traveled back to Jonesboro from Little Rock for the cleanup, sees volunteering with the events as a way to improve his family’s community: “It’s just a good thing to do to help clean up the area.”

The neighborhood cleanups typically involve services for residents including curbside pickup of large waste such as appliances or furniture, drive-through drop-off for mid- and small-sized waste like old garden equipment or portable furniture, organized drives for litter removal, and for the volunteers, hot dogs and donuts to celebrate the event. This year, the cleanups originally scheduled for spring were postponed until fall to protect volunteers and residents from the Coronavirus pandemic. Even with the change in plans, city officials and residents are grateful the cleanups have been able to happen.

Excess trash and litter can lead to a slew of problems for a neighborhood, said Mike Tyner, Director of Jonesboro Code Enforcement. Roadside litter can clog storm drains and visible trash can deter future residents from moving into an

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area. While Code Enforcement works to address these concerns year-round, Tyner much prefers to work with community organizers to create proactive approaches to waste and litter management. "The cleanups provide us an opportunity to get out in the community, meet folks, and build better connections," he said.



Lisa Tedder at Fisher Street Cleanup

For neighborhood cleanups, the work of Code Enforcement begins early: In the weeks leading up to the event, officers distribute flyers and work with residents individually to address any code concerns and create a plan for them to take advantage of the cleanup event. The focused nature of neighborhood cleanups allows Code Enforcement to assist residents with moving unwanted or problematic trash to the curbside or dumpster for removal, and to accept large items without the usual dump fees. "It makes a big difference," Tyner said. "It gets rid of a lot of trash and blight; it provides a no-cost opportunity

to dispose of large, bulky items; and it reduces overall strain on city resources."

Jonesboro Sanitation also plays a substantial role in the cleanups, offering support through staff, vehicles, and dumpsters. Ronny Stanback, a route supervisor for Jonesboro Sanitation, has seen community-led cleanups play a large role in the vitality of an area. "It helps with beautification and gets more people moving in. More people will move in when they see a neighborhood is clean and kept up," he said. Stanback, who has worked for Sanitation for over 30 years, appreciates the educational opportunities and the community-building power of neighborhood cleanups. "Events like this bring people together, people who wouldn't normally be together," he said. "We get to meet with some of the citizens out there, and they get to learn about our jobs. It's about building community relations; when we get to come out like this, it's a good thing."

Although the neighborhood associations have been collaborating with the City of Jonesboro branches for several years, this year, the local organizations were joined by the newly-formed Jonesboro Beautification Commission (JBC), a volunteer-based commission dedicated to making Jonesboro "clean, green, and beautiful."

At the Fisher Street and Scenic Hills cleanups, JBC volunteers helped community members unload trash at the pick-up sites and helped the neighborhood associations pick up litter from roadways.



Cindy Thyer at Fisher Street Cleanup

Commission chair Beverly Parker, a lifelong Northeast Arkansas resident and retired healthcare professional, began neighborhood cleanup in her own community off Harrisburg Road. The good results she found through the small steps of keeping her own yard clean while picking up litter inspired her to take her passion to the city level. Now, as the chair of the JBC, she hopes to encourage others to keep their own spaces clean and take pride in their communities. "We live in such a beautiful area here, and we have so much going for us, that to have it fouled with litter breaks my heart," she said. For Parker, changing common attitudes about litter and trash may not be easy, but will be essential to creating lasting beautification. "It's just going to take people who are concerned about the way their area looks. That can help tremendously in cleaning up the city," she said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50







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Cutting down litter is just one part of Parker's environmental concerns. She's also interested in helping community members and families learn more about proper recycling, limiting single-use plastics, and creating more green spaces within the city. "We just have to think more broadly about what we're doing to our environment. We really need to think about how that's impacting our environment, and think about the environment we're leaving our children," she said. For Parker, habits that start in the family can easily grow to impact the community, and she hopes the steps encouraged by the JBC will grow to make positive changes in the wider Jonesboro community.

For those interested in volunteering or creating their own neighborhood cleanup, the JBC and other city volunteers encourage others to start with small steps, and to join forces with others as often as possible. "Keep your own space clean," Casteel urges. Then, help a neighbor clean their areas, too. "We all have to work together," she said. "Neighborhood associations are a great way to do that. We're all communities within larger communities."



Scenic Hills Cleanup

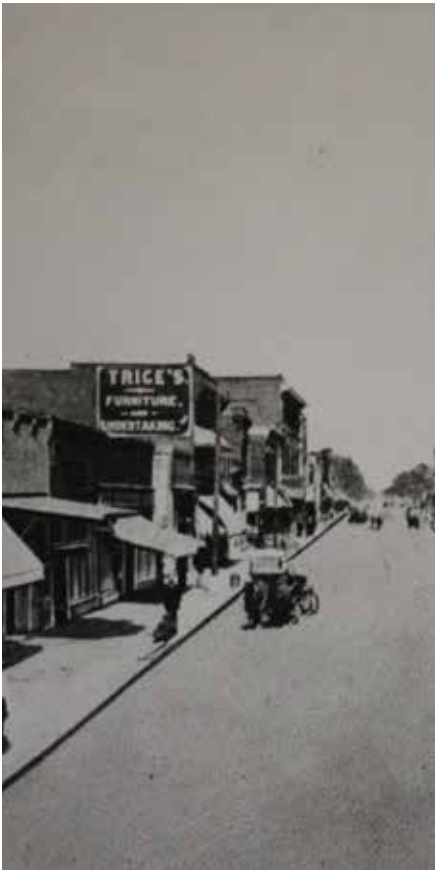
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Then & Now



Your Story. Our Story.

We want to share photos of our community and the transformation it has made through the years in our Then & Now Issue for January 2021.

Old buildings, old homes, community events, historical sites and much more.

Share your photos with us for the chance to see them featured in this landmark edition of NEA's good news and the people making it happen.

Submit Your Photos

Email your photo submissions and information about what's in it and when it was taken to lindsey@mormediainc.com



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Ribbon Cutting for U.S. Highway 412 Bypass

On October 9, 2020, Governor Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas joined members of the Arkansas Highway Commission and Greene County and Paragould officials for a ribbon cutting ceremony to honor the opening of the U.S. Highway 412 Bypass.

A sunny day marked the long-awaited opening of the strip of road that connects Highway 49 and Highway 412. After three years of slow progress due to wet seasons, drivers can now enjoy a drive along this newly opened roadway.



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Jennifer Rollings



Happenings



The Greene County Master Gardeners announce the awarding of their 2020 annual scholarship to Kyleigh Ryan Threlkeld. Kyleigh is attending the University of Arkansas where she is majoring in agricultural business and crop sciences. Dave Freeze from the Extension Office, and also the GCMG adviser, is presenting to Kyleigh.



Dr. Brad Baine, Black River Technical College's Vice President of Academic Affairs, was recently elected Vice President of the Arkansas Deans Association founded in 1970. Dr. Baine was elected in September of 2020 and will serve through September of 2021.



Alexandra (Allie) Rodery Rouse, J.D., M.P.S., has been named Arkansas Community Foundation's director of Planned Giving. Recently passing over \$442 million in assets, the Community Foundation offers tools to help Arkansans protect, grow and direct their charitable dollars.

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AMMC Announces Employee Awards



Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (AMMC) has named Tina Perry as 2019 Employee of the Year, and Huston Bowden as 2019 Manager of the Year. The awards are the highest honors bestowed on a hospital employee each year. These individuals were chosen from among 700 employees for the honor.

Employees are nominated by their hospital peers, based on setting the standard for excellence by exemplifying AMMC's four pillars – People, Service, Quality and Growth.

Tina has worked for AMMC for 28 years as a Paramedic, but most of the time you can find her working in the Emergency Department.

Huston has worked for AMMC for 29 years. He holds the position of EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Director, where he manages ambulance bases in Paragould, Rector, and Corning.



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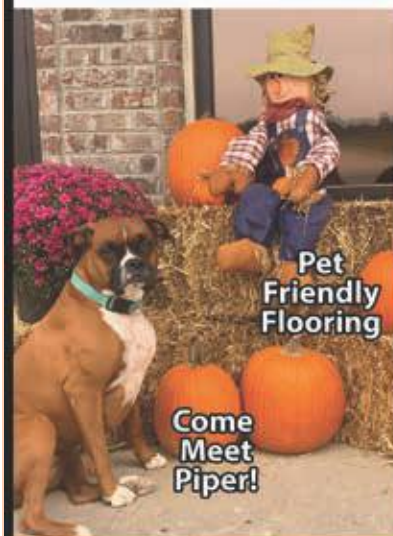
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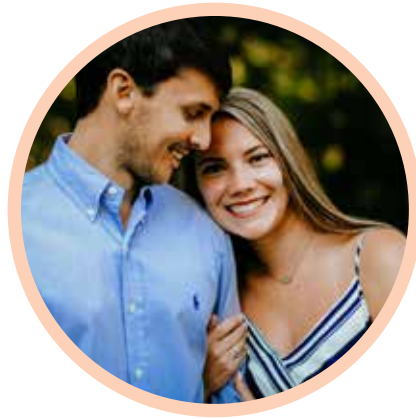
ENGAGEMENTS

Kaitlyn Weaver and Jody Hawkins

Kaitlyn Weaver and Jody Hawkins have announced their plans to be married on May 22, 2021, at The James Ranch.

Kaitlyn is the daughter of the late Lynn Weaver and the late Lisa Knight and Jody is the son of Joe and Suzanne Hawkins.

Photo by Caitlin Paige Photography



BIRTHS

Kamryn Elizabeth Cline

Proud parents Brendan Cline and Carla Eaton of Paragould welcomed newborn, Kamryn Elizabeth Cline, into the world on October 9, 2020.

Kamryn was delivered at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, weighed 7 pounds, 5 ounces and measured 18 and 3/4 inches long.

Kamryn is also welcomed by sibling Karter Eaton and grandparents Mark and Jamey Eaton and Tammy and Mark Cline.



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We asked, you nominated: Teacher Spotlight on Mrs. Jennifer Wray of Valley View High School

Sponsored by Intersect 311 and Explore MOR



Our sister platform, Explore MOR, partnered with Intersect 311 to give away a free “Staycation” to a deserving educator. The community was invited to submit teachers deserving a break and we asked, “Why are they awesome?”

The selected winner, Mrs. Jennifer Wray of Valley View High School, was chosen based on the comments of multiple supporters who rave about her kindness, her dedication, and her spirit. Mrs. Wray has been teaching for 19 years and is the FCCLA Advisor at Valley View. Her colleagues and students had many wonderful things to say about her.

“Mrs. Wray is such a selfless person,” said Ashley Roberson, the Junior Advisor for the FCCLA Club. “If you need her, she is there for you to do whatever, whenever. I can talk with her about anything and she talks me through whatever I have going on. If I need help with my schedule or a class, she assists me. If Mrs. Wray is helping me with a project she always goes above and beyond to make sure that project is perfect in the end. The majority of her free time goes towards her students and she loves every second of it. If you know Mrs. Wray, you love her very much.”

“Mrs. Wray is an amazing teacher!” Taylor Blalock raved. “She is so charismatic and fun! She always goes out of her way to

make sure everyone is included and having a good time. She’s constantly finding new fun labs to teach in her classes. Mrs. Wray isn’t just a great teacher, she’s all around just a wonderful and caring person. You can come to her about anything and she’ll be there to help you. She’s always offering great advice and makes it known she’s there to help! Even if you need help outside of the classroom, she will almost always stay after school to help someone. She’s always putting others first and deserves something for it! Mrs. Wray almost never misses a day from school, and even then she does events with school on weekdays and weekends. She deserves this staycation for the hard work she does and continues doing!”

“Mrs. Wray has always put her students before herself,” shared Lonnie Ervin Jr. “Mrs. Wray always wants her students to thrive for success at all times. She’s loving, sweet, and outstanding. I could go on and on about Mrs. Wray.”

Putting her students first and going above and beyond seem to be what Mrs. Wray is known for.

“Mrs. Wray goes above and beyond to make sure that every student is happy. She stays after school to help everyone that needs help. She has made our [FCCLA] chapter one of the most active chapters in the state,” Madison Goad said. “She never

does anything half way, and she always seems to be at the school helping someone or working on something for FCCLA and her classes. She is the most hardworking person that I have ever met.”

Mrs. Wray, with emotion in her voice, told us when we delivered her certificate what she loves most about her job is the students who make a difference in her life.

“At the top of my list for why I like to teach is the connections –” Mrs. Wray paused to wipe away her tears and jokingly chided her students for making her cry. “Being able to make an impact because of the topics that I teach, it does open up the possibility for students to be more open.

“Students will come talk to me if they have issues or problems, they’ll openly come to me. It’s the students. Every opportunity that I’ve had with my students, a lot of the interactions, I’ve been fortunate to have them tell me, ‘That’s made a huge impact on my life,’ but I want students to know the same amount of impact occurs in my life.”

Congratulations to Mrs. Wray and a big thank you to everyone who participated in nominating some incredible teachers in Northeast Arkansas. A bigger thank you to educators everywhere who strive to teach and inspire their students.

Stay Tuned

Christmas Traditions



Traditions our community, families, friends and businesses celebrate year after year - and how they might look different for 2020.

Christmas Spirit and Where to Find It



We're searching for Christmas events and jolly-filled places across NEA so we can share all the fun with you.

NEA Seniors



NEA Seniors Special Section featuring the good news and resources for senior citizens and their families.

Pictured: Kenneth Swan

On The Cover: Brinda (McKinney) LeGrand
Photo By: Amy Reeves Photography

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