

NEA'S PREMIERE MAGAZINE

September
2021

GET
DOWNTOWN
FESTIVAL

Featuring
Vikki McGee

MUSIC
NEA Musician
Highlights

AGRICULTURE
Its Role in NEA

NEA SENIORS
Special Section

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From the Manager



I love every edition of Premiere – truly. But I must say this is a terrific issue. Maybe each month this publication is getting better and better. If that’s the case, I believe it’s because the more you look for good news, the more of it you will find.

We highlighted a few agriculture stories this month – one of which covers the impressive Carolyn Samuel and the growth of a business.

There are a few musical features, some of them fitting into a larger story that is the result of the most fun I’ve had writing in some time.

And since we covered Paragould Progress in our August edition, we covered Jonesboro Progress in this one. Reading that one before I laid it on the page made my heart swell with pride because there are people in our community working really hard to make the “progress” that is a part of the City of Jonesboro’s slogan a reality.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as I did curating it. And I hope it inspires you to continue building community.

We will continue to search for the good news in NEA and something tells me we will continue to find it.

Lindsey Spencer

Manager of Creative Content



Glen Sain

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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
Linda Lou Moore |
manners@paragould.net
Bethany Davis |
bethanyfdavis@gmail.com
Jenny Brown |
jbrown@paragouldschools.net

content manager/designer

Lindsey Spencer |
lindsey@mormediainc.com

advertising sales team

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



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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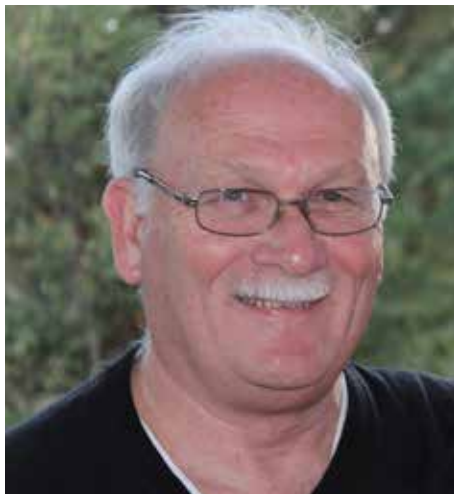
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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



We're trying for the second year in a row to have our 50-year high school class reunion, having lost out to Covid protocols the first time around. By some strange series of events I wound up on the planning committee and I'm really hoping I can contribute something worthwhile since I didn't do much of that during our high school years.

When one of my friends learned of my committee status, he asked: "You ever wonder what life would have been like if you'd said yes instead of no, or no instead of yes, or just walked away altogether?"

I do. The events surrounding my first date with a particular girl I had seen on campus could have changed my life totally had I just accepted that she turned down my initial request and had I then just moved on to something else. I first noticed her when I was a senior and, having heard she had broken up with her boyfriend, asked her to be my homecoming date.

That took great courage on my part, since I had never been to a homecoming dance -- or any kind of dance -- nor had I taken part in all the hoopla surrounding the annual celebration. Most years, on Homecoming Friday night, I was in a high school gymnasium at one of the county schools, taking ground balls and batting practice.

She had to tell me she and the boyfriend had patched things up, so she couldn't go with me. I actually felt a sense of relief because if she'd said yes I had no idea how to proceed from that point on. Do I have to buy her a dress? Does this mean we're engaged? Will I have to wear a tie?

Anyway, she let me off the hook and I again planned to pull out some baseball gear and head to the gym. My sister, who graduated the year before, was in town on Homecoming Assembly day and wondered if she could accompany me to the event; I was happy to have her alongside and we sat near the top of the bleachers in the Paragould High School gym. Shortly before the action was to begin, I saw the pretty little blond I had asked out walking in front of the seats. As I stared and had thoughts of what might have been, she made a sharp right turn, climbed the five or six steps to where Kathy and I were seated, and said, "Do you want to take me to homecoming?"

I wasn't truly prepared to give an answer, feeling much like I did in Mrs. Dale's English class when out of the blue she asked a question and then said, "Richard?" and I had absolutely no idea what the question was, what I was supposed to have read, or how much time was left in the class period. Anyway, on this homecoming pop test I shrugged and said, "Sure" and the cutie said to call her and she'd give me all the particulars. My sister sat there amazed, stunned that such a gorgeous girl would just walk up to me and basically ask me out, and with a look of incredulity said, "Does that happen to you often?"

"Oh, yeah, all the time," I said, lying with great skill and wondering inside what I was supposed to do now. I had a date. That night. With a beauty. How does this work? What are my responsibilities? Will she want to go take some ground balls? Can she hit?

Later in the day I called her and she said since she was in the band I would need to pick her up about four in the afternoon. Seemed quite early, but what did I know? She called back in a bit, totally embarrassed, and said she'd given me the wrong time. I needed to be there at five, she said apologetically, and I agreed and continued wondering how this crazy night would unfold. When I showed up at her house, her dad greeted me and escorted me to the family room and we sat there trying to make small talk, as much as a 17-year-old kid and a building contractor can. I kept waiting for my date to come walking in but when, about 35 minutes into the mostly-silent family room session I heard the hair dryer blowing somewhere down the hallway, I knew I was not in for an immediate rescue.

At long last -- long, long, long last -- she came into view, long blond hair looking perfect, as did everything else, and she apologized for having told me yet again the wrong time to pick her up. It should have been six. She said she'd been nervous, and I wanted to say, "You're nervous? I don't even know which hand you throw with!"

We enjoyed the whole date night and, I suppose, I could have thanked her and then written her off as a ditzzy blond after all the mix-ups and her delayed acceptance of my date proposal, but I found I liked her right away. I asked her out for the next night to see if she maybe knew how to tell time and could be ready when she told me she would be, and she was right on schedule. This past May, the former Cindy Hollis and I marked 48 years of marriage.

How would my life have been different had I said no instead of yes? It would have been much less fun and I would have been the one who missed out on the most.



LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

I don't watch a lot of television, but I can't get enough of the Apple series, *Ted Lasso*, a fictional story about a Division II NCAA football coach who finds himself coaching a Premier League soccer club in England. Throughout his first season, Coach Lasso is rejected, ridiculed and dismissed by everyone, from fans, to media, owners, and even his own players. Rather than getting even, Coach Lasso remains patient, poised and forgiving throughout it all. In one of my favorite scenes, we see why he is able to remain calm in the midst of the criticism.

He shares of a time when he came across a Walt Whitman quote, "Be curious, not judgmental." As Lasso pondered its meaning, it dawned on him, "All the fellas that used to belittle me, not a single one of them were curious."

They thought they had everything figured out. So they judged everything. And they judged everyone. But if they were curious, they would have asked questions."

As I see it, one of the biggest problems we face in the world right now is not Covid-19, mask mandates, a stressed economy or corrupt government. It's the inability to be curious and not judgmental. We think we have everything figured out, and so we judge everything and everyone. We speak with certainty, and without empathy. If someone disagrees with us, we see them either as an idiot or evil. And we make sure to express that opinion on social media.

I wonder how the world would be different if we cultivated what Albert Einstein referred to as a "holy curiosity."

What if instead of making pronouncements, we started with questions? What if we followed the example of God in the Garden of Eden? Even after Adam and Eve fractured the entire world through their sin, the first thing out of God's mouth was not a statement, but a question (Gen 3:9)?

This is not a call to lay your convictions aside. It's a call to be a human made in the image of God. To hold firm to the truth, but in love and humility.

To take to heart what Jesus' brother, James, encourages us to do by remaining "open to reason," peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy. Or in the words of Walt Whitman, to "Be curious and not judgmental."



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PET *of the* MONTH

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BY JASON STEPHENS

Wainwright and Holliday, aka “The Boys,” came into our lives when they were just six weeks old. They are brothers. When my husband, Scott, went to get Wainwright (fawn color), he found him and Holliday (white with spots) cuddled up together. When Scott picked up Wainwright, Holliday looked up with the saddest look – needless to say, he brought both home. That was nine years ago.

Yes, as you can tell, they’re named after St. Louis Cardinal greats Adam Wainwright, Yadier Molina, and former Cardinal Matt Holliday.

We are told they were Boxer-Lab mix, but we later found out their momma was a pit mix; but no matter what they are we love them. Our fur “bubbies” are full of love and have taken on each of our personalities. Wainwright-Molina is laid back, calm, and easy going just like his daddy, Jason. Holliday is full of life, always on the go, and will not sit still just like his daddy, Scott. Their likes are: walks, going for rides, treats, going to see Mamaw in Mountain Home, French fries, spa day with Ms. Summer and lots and lots of cuddles. Holliday is Jason’s sous chef – he loves to sit by his daddy when he is cooking dinner, but Wainwright isn’t far ... he likes to lie in front of the door in sight just in case something falls to the floor or if Jason sneaks them a bite. Their dislikes are: shots from the vet (sorry Dr. Miller), baths, and being bothered by flies (who likes those anyway?).




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“ We had hardly recommenced our work, when P. cried, “Look out! The bear!” At the first word I had seized my rifle. The bear was down the tree like a flash of lightning; to fire, drop the gun, out knife, and at him, was the work of an instant for each of us; but he slipped off like an eel from between us, and our knives had nearly found a distant sheath; so exactly had our shots fallen together, that neither knew the other had fired.”

This story, recounted by German explorer Frederic Gerstaecker in his book “Wild Sports in the Far West,” occurred somewhere in Northeast Arkansas around 1840. Arkansas had been granted statehood in 1836 and Gerstaecker ventured into the woods of Arkansas about that time to explore and detail his experiences. One thing Gerstaecker found in his travels was an abundance of black bears, which verified the unofficial nickname of “The Bear State” hung on Arkansas in the early 1800s.

Black bears were a prominent part of the Arkansas landscape when the early explorers entered the land. This abundance was very important to these explorers and the early settlers as the bears provided food, pelts and bear oil, a very valuable commodity to early settlers.

As the state was settled, the natural resources, including black bears, became heavily used and by the late 1800s most wildlife populations had experienced a significant decline. In the early 1900s the bear population reached a low of around 30-40 animals with most of these found in the southeast part of the state in the White River National Wildlife Refuge. But, in the years that followed, Arkansas made history with one of the most successful reintroductions of a large mammal in the history of conservation.

Black bears were protected by season closures and in 1959 the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission began a restocking program. Bears from Manitoba and Minnesota were transported to Arkansas and released in remote areas that provided good bear habitat, mostly in the Ozark and Ouachita mountains. The bears fared well in the habitat and bear hunting resumed in Arkansas on a limited basis in the early 1980s.

Estimated at 7,000-8,000 animals, the bear population in Arkansas is doing well. In 2020 the number of bears taken by hunters set a record at 665 animals. Much of the bear hunting in Arkansas is controlled by a quota system, which ends the season when a certain number of bears are taken from an area. This quota can vary from year to year based on data gathered by biologists.

The bears of Arkansas are one of the most aggressively managed game species in the state. The impact of hunting on the populations is one factor, but one of the other major reasons bears are intensely managed are the many human/bear interactions. These are not cases of bears being aggressive toward people, but typically the impact of bears on property. Trash bins, city dumps, bird feeders, livestock food sources and deer feeders tend to be very attractive to the curious nose of a black bear. Once a food source is found, a bear is not the most delicate of diners and they tend to destroy anything that hinders their food access. They will also return repeatedly if food remains available.

The hunting seasons help curtail this problem by keeping the populations in check, but the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission also does trapping of bears that become a “nuisance” outside of the hunting seasons. The trapping program benefits the location by removal of the bear, but it also gives AGFC staff a chance to take biological samples from the captured animal, thus providing valuable information for the black bear management program.

In addition to biological samples, some of these bears are radio collared which allows the movement of the bears to be tracked. These radio collars provide a unique opportunity for biologists as the tracking of these collars is often used to locate female bears in their dens.

These “den surveys” play a vital role in bear management. Bears in Arkansas typically enter a den in early winter, once food supplies dwindle, and they stay there until food supplies reappear in early spring. While in the den, the bear’s body undergoes some unique changes, but one thing that occurs at that time is the birth of baby bears.

Biologists can use the tracking devices to locate female bears in their dens. Once located, the bears will be anesthetized for a short time while the momma bear and cubs are given the once over to check the health status.

My family and I were able to tag along with our bear guys to a den in the Ozarks a few years ago. The mother bear had denned in the base of a large, hollow tree. The biologists drilled a small hole in the tree and were able to administer anesthesia to the mother



CHUCK LONG

Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

bear with a syringe attached to a short pole. Once the mother was asleep, a chainsaw was used to access the den area. There were three bear cubs, each weighing about six to seven pounds. The cubs are not anesthetized in the survey process and it is a very unique experience to get to handle the cubs while the biologists do their necessary work.

Data, including weight, sex, color and other measurements that would be an indicator as to overall health was collected and, within thirty minutes, the cubs were returned to the mother’s side. The anesthesia was beginning to wear off as we left the area.

Three cubs are somewhat unusual as bears in Arkansas most often have only one or two every other year. But that is why the den visits are a valuable part of bear management as they give biologists a clear, hands-on picture of how the populations are faring across the state.

The reintroduction of black bears in Arkansas is a true success story. An animal that once thrived, but was then decimated, has now repopulated in many of its former habitats. The population of bears also give hunters a unique opportunity to pursue the bruin on either public or private land. For more information on bears or bear hunting in Arkansas, pick up a copy of the Arkansas Hunting Guidebook or check the regulations at agfc.com. Make plans to spend some time in the outdoors of Arkansas this fall and I hope to see you out there!





HEALTH & THE CITY

WITH DR. BETHANY DAVIS

Neuroplasticity: Practice Creates Change

Feeling stressed? Overwhelmed? Anxious? Let me be the one to tell you, you are not alone. Being overwhelmed is something that has not only popped up frequently in my life recently, but also in the lives of several people I know (and don't know). I receive Instagram messages and texts weekly, as well as see people in person, who are currently expressing these overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious feelings. Between the pandemic, the busyness of summer, school starting back and everything else between, it is easy for these feelings to creep into our minds. They are emotions everyone experiences. Even if you project that someone doesn't experience them, they do; they probably just don't talk about it. Let me restate: Everyone experiences these feelings.

Now that we've established that these feelings are very normal, let's talk about how we can successfully rebound from them. I am no master of this, but can say that over the years I am able to cope with the above feelings more successfully than I once could.

Hebbian Theory of neuroplasticity was introduced in 1949, and thousands of research articles since that time have been published to back up its validity. Physiologically, the theory states that neurons that wire together, fire together. In simpler terms, you have the ability to change your brain by re-wiring the neuronal pathways in which information and behavioral patterns are carried. If you were an athlete or artist, this principle would translate from your coach to practice, practice, practice something until you've mastered it.

While we once thought patterns were

hardwired into our brains, we now know they are softwired. You have the power to change old habits, although it's not easy to change this softwired information. The athlete, musician, or writer who has spent hours mastering a task, art, or book is very aware it is not easy. The person beginning an exercise routine or changing a diet also knows this brain software update is not easy.

Overwhelming emotions are part of the ebb and flow of life. We can't escape them – they are a part of the human experience. One day you can wake up to feel on a mission, enthusiastic, and empowered. The next day you may feel anxious, wondering what the point is, overwhelmed with your to-do list, or maybe feel like you aren't doing enough. Let's first establish that these emotions are inevitably going to arrive. The acceptance they will arise helps us prepare for when they do. When they do come up, how do we deal with them?

First, uncover the root, the trigger. Why am I feeling this way? How long have I been feeling this way? What am I lacking inside of me or what boundary am I not setting that makes these emotions come up for me? Is there a pattern? A source? Is it work, school, a friend, a relationship? When we know the source of the overwhelming emotions, it assists us in tackling them and helps us target what we might need to cut out of our lives.

Next, pull out your self-care tool belt of things that will help shift your energy. We are already aware of the tools that can be utilized when we're feeling down: meditation, exercise, sleep, calling a friend, being in nature, screaming into a pillow, saying no to things. What works for you? What pulls you out of a funk? You need to be aware of these tools. Write down in a journal or in the notes app on your phone

tools that work for you. You need to know them so well you can pull them out of your arsenal when you need them. It's important to remember certain tools might work better for one situation than another. If I am personally feeling overwhelmed, sometimes I need to meditate, while other times I need to listen to something inspiring. Sometimes I need to go for a walk, or sit and cry it out, or call a friend. Other times, I need to be completely alone. Each triggering situation often calls for a different tool, so don't force it. Trying to paint with a hammer or hammer with a paintbrush simply won't work.

Let your intuition guide you to the right tool in that moment.

Okay, great! You have your tools and know what triggers them. You're as ready as you can be. But the most critical part to making real change in the moment is being able to use these tools at the time you need them. This ties us back to Donald Hebb's theory. Re-wiring old habits and incorporating these tools in the moment requires practice, practice, practice. It's easy to read this article and think of how you are going to react to a certain situation in the future, but it's an entirely different exercise to use those tools when you're mad at yourself for overeating, when you've snapped at your co-worker, husband, or child, or when you feel as though you're never on top of things no matter how much you get done.

So how can we practice using our tools? When you're feeling these overwhelming emotions, separate yourself from them. Remember that an emotion is not your identity; you are a human being, who is experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression. If you must think of your emotions as a different person standing next to you, then do just that. Once you've separated your emotions from your identity, pull out the tools in your belt and use them. Even if you only take one swing of the hammer onto the nail, you still pulled the hammer out and used it. This means the next time you use that hammer, you may be able to take two swings, eventually driving the nail in completely. Through practice and neuroplasticity, you'll learn to not yell at a co-worker or numb your emotions with food, but maybe to take a walk instead. Our brains are remarkable.

Finally, have grace for yourself if you feel this way or if you don't use the tool successfully. Remind yourself the past is done, the future is in your control. You can change every single second of your future by finding and using your personal tools, and re-wiring old habits into new ones through practice, practice, practice.



MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

WHY NO WHITE SHOES AFTER LABOR DAY?

Fall has arrived and the question often asked is:

“Why are you not supposed to wear white shoes after Labor Day?”

Does it have to do with fashion or practicality?

It’s probably a little of both.

“No White After Labor Day” came onto the American fashion scene at the turn of the 20th century. Labor Day is thought of as a seasonal transition. The summer season ran from Memorial Day to Labor Day. So, it made fashion sense that spring and summer styles called for lighter weight fabrics and lighter colored clothes. Then, fall and winter styles called for heavier weight fabrics and darker colored clothes.

IS THIS A FASHION FAUX PAS OR PRACTICAL ADVICE?

Although not wearing white shoes after Labor Day may seem capricious, there may be some logic in the original warning. Fall and winter bring inclement weather. Rain, sleet and snow are messy. Years ago, before there were paved streets and roads, dirt and gravel streets and roads were common. During the fall and winter months, wearing white shoes proved to be a problem when walking on unpaved muddy streets and roads. Under these circumstances white shoes were almost impossible to keep clean. Hence the origin of the warning:

Don’t wear white shoes after Labor Day!

Today, however, wearing white shoes after Labor Day no longer rings true. According to The Emily Post Institute, “Wearing white after Labor Day makes perfect sense to do in climates where September’s temperatures are hardly fall-like. It’s more about fabric choice today than color.”

So, although wearing white linen in winter may be a little chilly, wearing white or cream colored heavier fabrics during fall and winter is appropriate. White is now a year-round color.

Quote of the day:

“Fashion changes, but style endures.”
– Coco Chanel

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



Jessica Richardson, LCSW Co-Founder

Everyone deserves a safe and affirming space to explore emotions and work toward personal goals. Feeling ostracized and isolated can lead to feelings of anxiety, sadness, and get in the way of achieving one’s full potential.

I help people work through past and current events that negatively impact their overall well-being, while focusing on all facets of the individual. As a practicing therapist for over 13 years, I have experience with children, adolescents, and adults.

Addressing your mental health should never be stigmatized, and should instead be applauded. Reach out today.

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National Teach Ag Day: September 16, 2021

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

National Teach Ag Day is a holiday created in order to encourage education in agriculture and recognize the very important role Ag teachers across the nation play in providing this education to students and, furthermore, help to encourage students interested in the agriculture field to follow their dreams. You may be wondering, "But how does this pertain to veterinary medicine?" Well, agriculture has played, and continues to play, a huge part of why I became a vet and, I'm sure, has to most who have become vets.

Growing up, I always wanted to be a vet. Never wavered. But, I always thought I would do large and small animal medicine. I am now strictly small animal and am happy as such, but there is a huge need for large animal vets across the nation. Large animal doctoring is labor-intensive work, much more so than small animal. There are late night calls to help pull breech-birth calves, horses that colic, vaccinating and deworming herds, breeding of large animals, and various other jobs and tasks.

Across this great nation, there exists this shortage of vets. Ask anyone with large animals or any food production animals, and they'll tell you large and food production animal vets are tough to come by. Having a drive and passion for agriculture and the need to want to help your community is critical for large animal vets, plus the ability to do some hard labor.

Our Ag teachers play a critical role here, but not just with vets; they play a large role in the kids who grow up to be the animal farmers, row-crop farmers, and the technology side of agriculture -- pesticides, herbicides, and genetic engineering.

There are so many opportunities in agriculture and agriscience available! This area of education can be overlooked, and that is so sad to me, because it is this area that feeds our great nation.

It is the mission of the National Teach Ag Campaign "to raise awareness of the need to recruit and retain high quality and diverse agricultural teachers, encourage others to pursue a career in teaching agriculture and celebrate the positive contributions that agriculture teachers make in our schools and communities."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Donald "Bud" Kennedy and Dr. Bill Humphrey (retired) at Arkansas State University for playing such a vital role in my education and the education of my peers and many other students ahead of me and who came after me. Thank you!

For more information on National Teach Ag Day, you can visit the website at www.naae.org. If you are reading this, go thank an Ag teacher for helping play such a vital role in educating our youth in agriculture and in keeping this great nation alive!



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The Gold Together event scheduled to take place at Craighead Forest Park on September 11th has been altered.

“Gold Together Arkansas is celebration of Courageous Kids who have battled Childhood Cancer,” said Jennifer Clay, Development Manager for the American Cancer Society. Jennifer expanded on the reason for canceling the event despite other events with ACS carrying on – this event was especially designed for families and kids. “We raise funds to support childhood cancer research, education, advocacy and services, as well as cancer prevention efforts targeting children. Because of the rise of COVID-19 cases in our area, and out of extreme caution of keeping our un-vaccinated children safe, we made the decision to cancel our in-person celebration on September 11th. But, childhood cancer hasn’t stopped – so neither are we!”

Gold Together Arkansas still needs your help!

SUPPORT COURAGEOUS KIDS



Donate online by visiting
[GOLDTOGETHERAR.COM](https://goldtogetherar.com)

You can also still sign up for a team and be a voice in the fight against childhood cancer.

On September 28th, Northeast Arkansas will work together to raise \$100k in a day for Gold Together Arkansas. Follow the American Cancer Society on Facebook & Instagram for the latest updates. More details, as we learn them, can be found on [EXPLOREMORNEA.COM/GOLD](https://exploremornea.com/gold)



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Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

This has been, perhaps, the loneliest year of my life. Covid lockdown aside, becoming a parent simultaneously made me the center of attention but more often than not put me away in the corner.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Miriam Kirmayer said in a recent Instagram post, “Loneliness has less to do with being alone and much more to do with the experience of feeling unseen.” I came across this at the end of a particularly hard week and was grateful to finally have the words to explain how I’ve been feeling since giving birth.

My first few weeks postpartum I was taken care of, without a doubt. Family filled our house, urging me to nap, stocking the kitchen with freezer meals and paper plates. Two a.m. phone calls were, blessedly, answered by my mother who slipped on her house shoes and came over to help. Friends were eager to receive daily photos of my wrinkly new baby.

But as Eva grew and became established in our family unit, I felt as if I was fading away. I was always tucking back into a spare room to breastfeed. My husband slept through the night without a clue how many times I was up in the nursery. Lunches, dinners and Friday night get-togethers were always offered to us, but it all felt different and I couldn’t put my finger on it.

After reading those wise words from Dr. Kirmayer, I realized what it was. I was surrounded by my loved ones but I thought I was completely alone because I felt unseen. There was the standard “How are you?” with every conversation but I wasn’t sure if it was small talk, or a true inquiry. So I kept my emotions to myself.

I learned to stop talking about the sleep deprivation. Because, really, who wanted to keep hearing that over and over after a year? The check-ins tapered off. Offers to help dwindled. And I can’t blame anybody, truly. Most parents get the hang of this after a while. Their babies sleep and are happy a majority of the time. They can return to work and a new type of normal. This hasn’t been the case for me. But I am working on myself daily to learn when to ask for help, and to be honest when somebody does ask how I am.

There have been many, many days when my friends or family have gathered together on their own outings while Eva and I remain at home. When that loneliness strikes during these times, I’ve begun looking at her and telling myself I’m not alone. She sees me, she knows me. This is just a season that will pass, but for now she is my best friend.

Art & Stroll



Brittany Baney, Laura Darter and Tara Lawless

Artists, crafters and vendors gathered in Downtown Paragould for Art and Stroll 2021 on August 21. Sunny skies greeted visitors as they shopped a large selection of art, handmade items and food, while local musicians sat up along Pruet Street for entertainment.



Never miss out on the fun happening in NEA. Keep up with local events like festivals and live music by visiting

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Maggie and Lincoln Wolfe, Jonna Manley



Downtown After Hours



Brenda Reddick and Mary Turner



Downtown Paragould's Downtown After Hours hosted its final evening of the season with Spencer Herren performing for the finale.

Each event brought a band to the stage, food trucks to Pruett Street, and later shopping hours for many businesses. There are still plenty of fun events coming to Downtown Paragould, including the Get Downtown festival to take place September 24th and 25th. More information on page 28.

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



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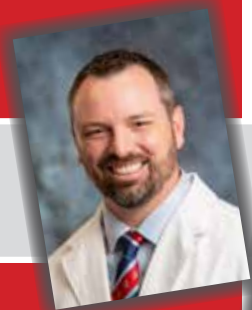


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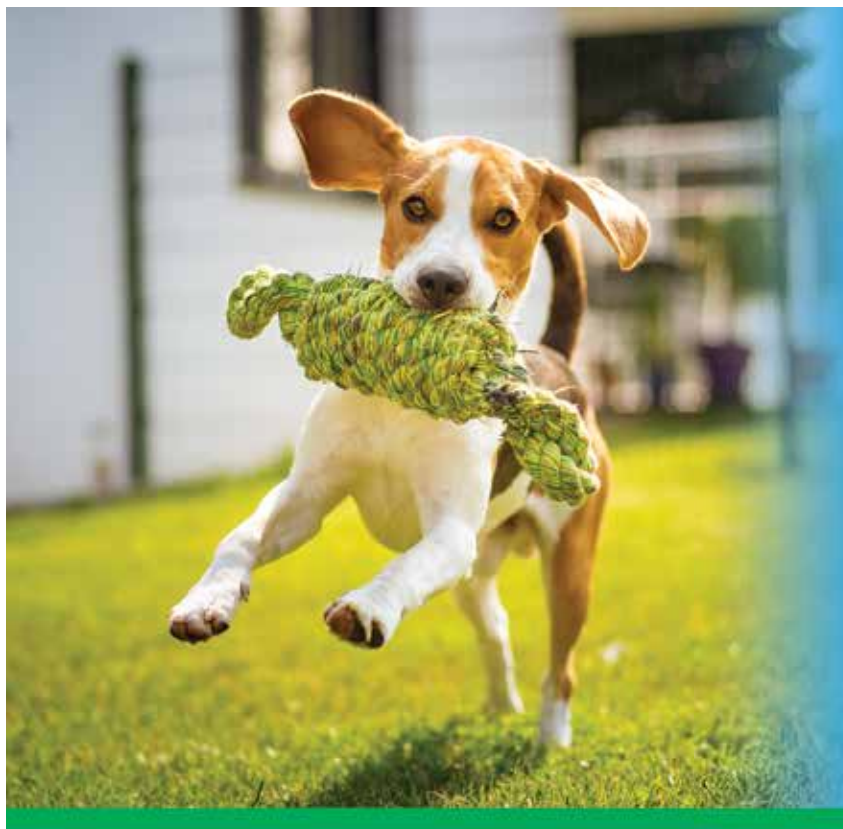


The Smoking Skulls Motorcycle Club staged its 10th Annual Ride For Knowledge in late August, setting up at the Greene County Fairgrounds in Paragould.

The Ride for Knowledge is a school supply fundraiser “where we raise monetary donations and school supplies for kids right here in Paragould! In the past we have also been able to donate things such as a Mac computer and gift cards to purchase shoes and other items for children in need,” the club’s promotional material states.

This year’s event included live music from an assortment of artists, including Justin Penter & The Sweet Mother Maybelle Band; Marybeth Byrd; Eric Johanson; and the Marty Ray Project. The club also partnered with the 870 Cornhole group to host tournament action, with funds collected helping out for the fundraiser.

There were vendors, food, a live auction and plenty of fun as the Smoking Skulls, participants and guests enjoyed a day of giving back to the Paragould community.



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Rose, Jeremiah, Bud, John and Wavetta wait for Justin Penter to take the stage.

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Music Under the Stars

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

One thing Greene County residents are known for is a collective community spirit, a willingness to lend a hand when neighbors find themselves in need.

A number of young people associated with the Greene County 4-H program banded together -- literally -- to raise money for an elementary school student and her family as they contend with a serious health issue. Labeling their venture Music Under The Stars, county 4-Hers staged an outdoor concert and collected donations to be handed over to the family of 7-year-old Allie Randleman, a Greene County Tech student and fellow 4-H member.

Allie entered LeBonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis in late May, dealing with a rare disease called HUS. HUS attacks the red blood cells, brain, and kidneys, leading to renal and lung failure for Allie, who spent just over three weeks in the Pediatric ICU. In early August the 4-H band Sand Creek set up stage on a vacant lot next to Unico Bank on Kingshighway in Paragould and performed for an appreciative audience, encouraging guests to visit the concession stand and drop donations for the Randleman family into the provided receptacles.



The Campground Clovers



Gwen and Luke Woods

The fundraiser was a true community effort. Along with the many 4-H volunteers, the efforts of Unico Bank, which provided the space for the concert and set up an account for donations to the Randlemans in addition to making a sizable donation, were immense; the trailer used as a stage and decorated with stuffed animals was offered by the Paragould Childrens Homes; MOR Media provided air time on its radio stations for the band to promote its goals and encourage listeners to attend the concert and leave donations, letters of encouragement, or a teddy bear for Allie. While the band performed, the Campground Clovers 4-Hers manned the concession stand.

Shona Howe, the band’s manager, said just about everyone who knew of Allie’s situation wanted to help in some way “but people just didn’t really know what to do. When we found out she was in 4-H, well, that was all she wrote. She’s our little sister.”

With a playlist of more than 15 selections, Sand Creek had the audience members singing along, tapping their feet to the beat and enjoying an evening of excellent entertainment. Band members performing include Bradlee Money, Payton Howe, Rayce Delre, Wesley Watkins, Hudson Inman, Ethan Tripp and Ella Murray. Musicians not present for the event were Halle Cooper, Kinzie Mitchell, Brooks Vangilder and Nathanael Adams. Adult leaders in addition to Howe who were involved include Lance Blythe, who is over all 4-H groups in the county; Beth Spaunhorst, event manager and accountant; Gary Money, sound manager; and Paula Norman, with the Campground Clovers.

Allie’s lungs are healed and her kidneys are slowly improving, but she has chronic kidney disease and a long road of recovery ahead. According to Shona, the community’s combined effort raised \$5,000, over and above donations deposited directly by teachers and church members.

Howe said the music “is our platform. It’s something we can use to help people,” mentioning canned food drives for Mission Outreach and the Children’s Homes. “We can help any people in need,” she said. “That’s what I like about it.”

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BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

When studying the aftershock of the COVID-19 pandemic, most people are focused on businesses such as restaurants or airlines, which certainly have experienced a sharp decrease. Yet they may not think about the impact on agriculture, which touches so many facets of our everyday lives, especially in Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri.

The Coronavirus represents a great misfortune for the farm economy, just as weather disasters and trade wars do. Consumers might mistakenly think farmers and ranchers are doing well, since local grocery stores have so many empty shelves. But already farmers have seen a dramatic drop in demand from food service, restaurants and schools and universities. America can't afford to lose farms and ranches, especially now that we're more focused than ever on the security of our food supply chain. Make no mistake, the pandemic has put a dent into how farmers go about their business.

Chuck Taylor of Lafe farms 3,100 acres in Clay and Butler counties, producing rice, soybeans and corn. He said an aspect of the COVID dilemma the average consumer may not consider is that farmers are having difficulty finding tractor parts to repair their machinery, just as auto dealers are suffering the same fate.

"First of all, it's just plain hard to get them," said Chuck, who has been farming since he was 13. "It's gotten a little outrageous. I went to get a shaft that they used to stock and can't anymore, and last year it was \$34 and now it's in the \$140 range.

"It's the same with fertilizer and diesel fuel and chemicals. They blame it on not having enough people to work. I forget the numbers but it's something like 180 million people would rather stay home on unemployment. Well, that affects us."

He said except for the business part, farm work has pretty much been normal. Trying to visit offices is different when farmers aren't allowed to go inside to conduct transactions, or have to drive around to a window at the back of the building to have any interaction with office workers. He said policies differ from place to place, where some will allow you no contact whatsoever and others are more lenient. "Some make you fill out paperwork every morning saying you don't have any symptoms," he added, "but maybe soon we'll be back to normal."

Like Taylor, Bryan Huber of Jonesboro has spent most of his life in the farming industry. "I grew up in and lived around farming all the time," he said.

"At 2 years old I was living in a farm house and I'm 68 now. I've been involved with it my whole life."

Bryan farmed in the Northeast Arkansas area for all that time but in 2017 stepped away from the day-to-day grind and leased out his 1,000 acres. He still has to stay in touch with the industry, however. "We raise mostly rice and soybeans," he said.

"I would say as farmers we had no choice but to go ahead and do what we had to do to deal with this thing. I heard of a case where a worker got COVID and they had to let him off for a few days and then not let him in the tractor or in a truck with someone else. So if you have to isolate a worker, that changes the way you do things, for a while at least.

"And as far as workers, the help issue has always been there. I don't know how much all of this affects us right here, but I hear that being said ... that it's harder to find people to work now."

Chuck said he began at a young age because he knew it was what he wanted to do. Starting right after high school, he worked for the same boss until 2011, when he retired; at that time, Chuck bought out his 950 acres and now farms them with his son, Cody.

"We actually turn ground down," Chuck said. "You can get so big that you don't do a good job. We stay plenty busy. There are still parts I love and still enjoy; we're just in a different time with this thing. Having Cody helps. I wouldn't be afraid to give it to him when it's time to let go."

Bryan said he keeps an eye on the market but "I'm not as up on things as I once was. I'm just a landlord now, thank goodness. But I know what they're saying when they talk about not being able to get parts. I've been trying to get a tail light for my 2018 truck for two or three weeks, and they say they can't get one. Everything's a little different right now, but farming is still a pretty good life, considering."



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Support the Red Wolves during Paint the Town Red Week! Hosted annually by the A-State Committee with the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce, Paint the Town Red Week encompasses many things including local businesses featuring red items and painting their windows, as well as the Back the Pack Rally to take place on September 3rd at the Embassy Suites from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. For a full schedule of events and a list of featured red items, visit exploremornea.com/red

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11am: Arkansas Brothers

12pm: The Band TRIPPP

1pm: Black River Rising

2pm: Cory Jackson &

Marybeth Byrd

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GET DOWNTOWN WITH VIKKI MCGEE



MORE GET DOWNTOWN FUN ON
PAGE 69

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

“I can’t remember there ever being a time in my life when music wasn’t always the center of it,” said Vikki McGee, who will take the stage at 5:00 p.m. for the Get Downtown Festival on September 24th.

“Mom says I was singing before I was talking. When I was about 9 or 10 years old, my gift for Christmas was a record player and it was on! My uncle lived next door to us and had a huge selection of 45s and albums, so thus began my love of every kind of music. From Led Zeppelin to Otis Redding to Merle Haggard, a variety, which I continue in my performances to this day. I have never stuck to one genre, I love it all.”

Vikki says she saw at an early age how happy music makes people, growing up around cookouts where her family would gather to play music: her great-grandfather a legendary Cajun Fiddler and great uncle a legendary guitarist. Seeing how music brought people together, Vikki knew she wanted to spend her life making music. At 14, Vikki saved up for her first guitar and she’s been playing ever since.

As of late, Vikki and her partner (in music and in life), Sonny Campbell, have been eager to get back to recording music and to performing.

“Music brings people together and that is so important, especially since we have all experienced [COVID-19],” Vikki shared, after discussing getting back into the

swing of things. “Although we couldn’t get together, we were able to still keep people together through music. Your entire mood can be changed by a song. Music is inspirational, it moves people, both in soul and in body. I have seen music bring people to tears, make them laugh, make them dance like nobody is watching them and they don’t care if anyone is.”

Vikki believes we define ourselves culturally through music. Of Cajun descent herself, she is moved to her soul when she hears that style of music, and believes in trying to stir that same movement through her own.

“A couple of years ago, Sonny and I had the opportunity to travel to South Carolina to perform three of our original songs, at the largest Black Heritage Conference in the U.S. and then later in Northwest Arkansas for another conference, which was a vastly different focus and yet they both embraced our lyrics. Music crosses cultural lines and borders,” she said.

At the Get Downtown Festival, Vikki’s music will be played to an entire community, but it will also bring together another important group of people: Vikki’s family. Her son, Jacob, and daughter, Kierra, will join the band and the great Tony Spinner will also take the stage.

“We have played joint shows with Tony over the past few years occasionally, and typically it can be a music lover’s

delight,” Vikki said of playing with a long-time collaborator and friend. “In fact, I was recently asked, ‘When will you be playing with Tony again?’ So here it is, the time has come!”

Of playing for the Get Downtown Festival, Vikki said she’s excited.

“Someone told me at an early age that whether your audience is two or two thousand you treat it the same,” she shared. “So, whether I am doing a small house concert or a festival, such as Paragould’s Get Downtown Festival, I plan to lay it all out there and give it all I have. It’s a gift that God has given me; gifts are meant to be shared, and I don’t take it for granted.”

Proceeds from the Get Downtown Festival benefit the Greene County Future Fund which tackles projects like the 8-Mile Creek Trail.



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September 24th - 25th
 Get Downtown Festival
 Downtown Paragould
 Two Days



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



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BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE



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When Chris Ray was 12 years old, he went to church in Tyrnza with his grandmother and great-grandmother. Afterward, he would return to his great-grandmother's house and sit down at her piano, and try to pick out the melody of the hymns he heard.

"I would go straight to it while I still had the songs fresh in my mind," he recalled. From the piano he moved on to her acoustic guitar and picked his way up the fretboard to play the church songs. Then came the harmonicas. Today, Ray's main instrument is the electric lead guitar, and he has also added bass to his list.

Ray said he was involved in sports throughout high school and hoped to play at the college level, but music became his priority in his late teens.

"My first high school rock band was able to play for a school dance in the original Nettleton High School basketball gym," he said. "I was a junior in high school at the time. Elvis had previously played a dance in that same gym way back in Elvis' early days."

After that gig Ray auditioned for a country music teenage group in Jonesboro, with 9-year-old fiddle player LaKonya Smithee. Smithee's mother was the band manager and moved the group to Nashville. Ray enrolled at McGavock High School and spent his time playing at historic venues in the area.

"The country great Johnny Rodriguez was close friends with our band manager and he came to our house in Nashville, and played and sang with our band right in our living room," Ray said.

Ray has spent his career exploring various genres of music aside from country. When he was 16, he played in a Bluegrass band on a Mississippi radio station, and when grunge hit the scene in the '90s, he joined a heavy metal band that performed in Washington and British Columbia. Classic and Southern rock also worked their way into Ray's list of talents, and he is currently in the country band Joe Bateman and the 870 Boys.

Recently, Ray said he was privileged to play at the Old Soldiers Reunion in Mammoth Spring, honoring living veterans in the area. He also performed at

the 2nd annual Local Festival in Jonesboro. After more than a year of COVID-19, he said it was "very rewarding to be out playing an event and to be providing entertainment for the area residents."

But the most rewarding venue he played was Community Fellowship Church in Jonesboro.

"My son Justin was the praise and worship pastor at CFC at the time. The praise team had an electric lead guitar player slot come open, and my son asked if I could fill in one Sunday morning," Ray said.

That one morning led to Ray's playing with his son Justin every Sunday for the next six years.

"I made the right decision," Ray said of choosing music in his teens. "Music has been so rewarding over the years, from getting to play with and meet some very talented individuals, to playing alongside my son for six years on a praise and worship team. I also was able to make a few dollars along the way. For all of this, I'm very grateful and blessed."



Top 3 tips to get your home ready for the fall market!

1

- **Create curb appeal!**
- **Clean gutters, trim landscape, and remove leaves**
- **Freshen paint on the front door and shutters**
- **Add a fall wreath and front doormat**

2

- **Less is more!**
- **Declutter and depersonalize**
- **Ensure easy walkways to each door and closet**
- **Open curtains/blinds and turn lights and lamps on before showings!**

3

- **Add a little spice!**
- **Add a light fall scented candle**
- **Turn on gas or electric fireplace for extra coziness**
- **Leave festive treats for buyers**



BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

Jonesboro is one of the top five largest cities in the state and in the coming months, it is set to grow even more with exciting new businesses and developments. From coffee and craft beer to retail and entertainment, residents will have plenty to do on a relaxing evening or fun Saturday night.

Perhaps one of the most infamous spots in Jonesboro, the old Indian Mall, is getting a facelift this year. The lot is a redevelopment planned by Ted Herget, owner of Gearhead Outfitters, and Chris Gamble, of Gamble Home Furnishings. Eleven businesses will join the two largest stores, including restaurants and retail.

"We're just trying to offer a higher end place," Herget said. "There's a void in Jonesboro for high end retail centers."

Herget said Gearhead's number one store was located in the Mall at Turtle Creek, and after the 2020 tornado destroyed that property, other tenants have been looking to move back into the market. With that need, Herget is aiming to bring retail back to the region. Herget said they hope to get the best out of the mall, along with some new concepts.

"We want to get a product mix where you can eat, shop and play," he said, calling the development a mini-lifestyle center.

The project will bring jobs and sales tax revenue to Jonesboro, all while being a unique idea instead of a cookie cutter center. Herget said people might travel to other areas and wonder why those experiences aren't available in Northeast Arkansas.

The Mall at Turtle Creek was the easy place to go for everything on your shopping list. Herget said many people didn't realize how much they used that until it was gone. He hopes the new center will bring those essential services back to life.

After a long day of shopping, continue the evening at the former Anderson's Exxon at the corner of Flint Street and Huntington Avenue. The lot, originally built around the 1940s, will house a combination of food trucks and entertainment areas including games for kids, and an all encompassing food and beverage entertainment complex.

Taking the place of the old service bays will be a bar, dining and bathrooms. Outside under the gas canopy, patrons can enjoy covered seating with an entertainment stage and fire pits. Barbecue, Brazilian, pizza and wings, Mexican and dessert foods are all in the process of moving in. Coffee, gourmet hot dogs and nutrition tea and shake vendors will be available at the back of the property.

Story Coffee House will also join the West End Neighborhood in the coming months. The coffee shop began as an idea of Bethany Davis and friend, Lindsey Spencer, running by the building on Gee Street. The co-owner spent years dreaming of opening a coffee shop and next spring her dream will come true.

"We are creating a very zen, beautiful space for people to connect, spend hours studying, and be creative as well," Davis said. "We don't have enough places in Jonesboro where people can stay hours at a time, eat healthy foods and spend time inside or outside. We are creating that and it is so much fun."

Davis said with more businesses like this, the more people will want to stay in Jonesboro. In turn, the community will become more diverse, open and beautiful.

Aside from all the coffee she plans on drinking, Davis said she is excited to meet new people and hear their stories, and to deepen the connections the community has, as well as designing "a place that people will want to stay and be."

Also on Gee Street is the brand new Native Brew Works. Co-owned by Dustin Hundley, Jackson Spencer, Ellen Hundley and Heath Gammill, the business is a long-awaited micro-brewery and restaurant. All four co-owners have lived in and traveled to larger areas such as Memphis, Tulsa, St. Louis, Chicago, Atlanta and Denver, and experienced a culture they wanted to bring back to Jonesboro. With the opening of the brewery, they have been able to do just that.

"It's supposed to be casual and fun, and attract people that feel the same way," said Gammill. He explained the experience of Native is about family and community, and opening the business on Gee Street plays into that.

"People mistake 'old' for 'danger,'" he said. "It just hasn't been touched in a while. It's a great spot."

Over the months of preparing the space, Gammill has had the pleasure of taking visitors on tours and showing them the vision the team has. He said people want the opportunity to walk their dog on a Sunday and hang out in the grass with a craft beverage and good food.

One visitor said he remembered when Gee Street was much different, but he could now imagine new things in the area. "It's really fun to see that come to fruition," Gammill said. He added that Jonesboro has such a diverse community that is fun to celebrate, and it's what he hopes to do with the experience of Native.

>> Learn more about this micro-brewery, the entrepreneurs it took to get it going, and the art of craft beer in an upcoming issue of *Premiere!*



If staying in with a good book sounds better than going out, bookworms all across the state are in for a treat later this year. Currently an online storefront, Verb Bookstore is set to become the first and only mobile bookstore in Arkansas. Owner Sari Harlow is renovating a 1971 Airstream Overlander (named Vera) to take Verb to markets, festivals, neighborhood events and anywhere else people need books.

"I've always loved books and dreamed of owning my own bookstore, but it always seemed like a far away fantasy reserved for retirement or the sudden death of a rich, mystery relative," Harlow said.

After talking with a friend about a coffee shop that began as a mobile business, Harlow said the wheels literally started turning.

"In the last few years with the tornado taking out the bookstore in the mall, and another local store going out of business, the need for an independent bookstore in Northeast Arkansas continued to grow, and the stars aligned for Verb Bookstore to be born," Harlow said.

Harlow's driving force behind her business is bringing books to communities that might not have access to them otherwise. She said while small towns in the region can't support a bookstore year round, readers in the communities still deserve service as much as readers in larger areas.

"Even within the Jonesboro city limits there are areas that desperately need access to the ideas, adventures and knowledge you can only get from books," she said.

Harlow also hopes to build connections between community members, as bookstores are "magical places where differing ideas and conflicting viewpoints can come together to learn from one another in the greater pursuit of knowledge." Verb will present the Booktoberfest Book Fair on October 16 at Native Brew Works for a nostalgic book buying event. (See Page 27)



Brick and mortar businesses aren't the only new happenings in Jonesboro. The "One Jonesboro - Connectivity Master Plan," or One Jonesboro Trail System, is more than 46 miles of pedestrian trailway encompassing and connecting areas of the city.

"In addition to providing a safe place for people of all ages to commute, exercise or just enjoy some fresh air, the trail is intended to spur demand to redevelop property in opportunity zones," Jonesboro chief administrative officer Brian Richardson said.

He explained each area has unique challenges that limit demand. For example, areas that deal with flooding would have a flood mitigation component where retention areas could also serve as water amenities.

"Other areas may struggle to grow small business opportunities due to limited customer traffic," Richardson said. "The trail would help usher potential customers right to these areas."

Pocket parks, trailhead areas and educational walks are all new infrastructure efforts of the trail. A Veterans Crossing will also honor local veterans for their service. "There are several developments being planned in Jonesboro right now that are incorporating trails into their designs that could connect directly to this system," Richardson said. "This type of shared vision will only add to the viability and success of the trailway."

Richardson added he hopes the proposed system is an inspiration for communities on how a trail can address multiple challenges, while also providing safe transport for pedestrians. With so many new options available, NEA residents are sure to have upcoming weekends packed with fun. Keep up to date with these businesses and more at neapremiere.com.

Stay Tuned for more Jonesboro and Paragould Progress features in future editions of Premiere.



Another Downtown spread is coming next month! In our October edition, we'll be launching a spread that will run monthly highlighting Downtown Jonesboro. We want to welcome these businesses to NEA's Premiere Magazine, The Good News and the People Making it Happen.

And stay tuned, because soon our sister publication, Explore MOR, will be highlighting Downtowns in Northeast Arkansas and all the dining, shopping, and entertainment each has to offer!

#supportlocal
#ExploreMORnea



ROOTS



THE FOA



BUFF CITY



COMPASS ROSE



HONEY HUSH



GROUNDED



A MUSIC STORY

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

One of the most exciting things to happen when writing is to find a story start to take on a life of its own. The pursuit of a story can be like going for a walk. Sometimes it's so dang hard to get out the door and every step seems difficult; you're walking just because you know you need to but honestly, it's a drag. Other times the air is just right, the sun is shining, and there is this feeling propelling you forward. You end up seeing interesting things all over and even discover side streets worth exploring that weren't on your original route.

This story is the second kind. I set out to write at least one story about music and ended up finding several stories along the way. What's really cool is just like the streets during a walk, all of these stories are connected and if after reading you decided to take your own "walk," I'm sure you'd find many more tales, or side streets worth exploring, yourself.

I arrived one Thursday evening at the Recovery Room to meet a friend for a drink. Two big smiles greeted me as I walked in the door: One belonged to my friend Chelsey, who already had a cold beer in front of her, and one belonged to my friend Nancy Owens.

Nancy is the sister of the business's owner and known by many for many different reasons – a fitness instructor, a barista, and a talented musician – to name a few of them. Whatever avenue one knows Nancy through, everyone who knows her at all would likely call her a friend. Her warm smile and sunny disposition make you feel welcome even if you've only just met.

Nancy greets me as I walk to the table where Chelsey sits. I hug my former teammate before turning to Nancy about what I want to drink.

I sit down to catch up with Chels and we order another round as we wait for the music to begin. You see, we've chosen Thursday for a reason. Chelsey is also a fan of Nancy's and we have mentioned several times over how we need to visit the Recovery Room on a Thursday evening for Open Mic Night. This evening we've finally made this happen and in addition to talk about training and enjoying some refreshments, we are also looking forward to hearing some music.

When the first performer takes the stage to sing a classic, "My Girl," I am already glad we've come.

When a girl from the next table over cheers him on, I can't help but smile. Another musician takes the stage and his style is totally different and completely interesting.

I smile again when the girl who was rooting for the other singer takes the stage. Lexi Caplener rocks it, literally. Vincent Holden is next and he is followed by William McCauley. This is when I spot the story.

As Vincent and William begin to play together, I feel as if I have been compelled to start writing. When Lexi hops back on stage to join them, it's like being on that walk I may or may not have actually wanted to take, and yet I'm on the sidewalk admiring the breeze. The breeze is their music, drifting through the coffee house and filling it up. If I were on a walk, my friend Chelsey asking if we should order another beer is like noticing the sun is setting and I want to be outside to watch the entirety of it. So, we stay and the gears in my head are turning as the story springs to life in my mind.

When Nancy takes the stage, I smile up at her, my friend, and am in wonder at this beautiful thing she is creating.

ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

NANCY OWENS

Nancy Owens has always loved music. She grew up singing and playing music with her brother at church. Nancy went on to pursue every kind of musical opportunity she could – taking voice lessons and later majoring in music. A professional theater actress for many years in New York City, Nancy is comfortable on a big stage, but she's at home on a small one, too.

Perhaps this is what led Nancy to open the Recovery Room stage on Thursday nights to anyone who wanted to grace it. As things began to open up earlier in the year, Nancy and the Recovery Room family began to discuss what they wanted to come back to.

“Pre-COVID, we had spent quite a bit of money on local bands that are very popular and very well-known and we weren't quite ready to go back to spending a lot of money on evening music, or packing the room full, so we were looking for inventive ways to put our toe back in the water in the evening,” Nancy shared. “We had agreed to do a benefit for the Hope House, which is a day shelter for the homeless. That evening all of the artists that were performing were on stage together and it was a bit of a roundtable and there was such a lovely sense of community that night. We looked at each other and I said, ‘I wish we could do this again.’ And one of the other musicians said, ‘Can we come back next week?’ I was like, ‘Absolutely!’ So, all of the sudden it went from a one-time event to, “I think this could be something special.”

All of a sudden, something special did happen.



A handful of artists came back the next Thursday, and the next. Each week artists trickle in to take the stage, some are new artists testing out music they've just written and some are long-time music lovers who haven't stood on a stage in some time just looking to express their creativity again.

“It has blossomed into, not just artists who do this all the time, but also community people who are looking for a place, a safe spot to try something out or to feel adventurous or to get back on stage when they haven't been on stage for a long time,” Nancy explained, adding she loves to learn why each person loves music and what their style is.

“I love it when people tell their stories. You learn a lot about people.”

Because each person has a totally different background, each artist also has a totally different style. One person may get up and sing something from a musical and the next may be singing rock and roll.

“There's something really special about that shift from style to style and each person sharing just a little bit of themselves in a way that creates an intimacy and a community,” said Nancy.

Whether imagined or real, someone else's or their own, each person who steps on the stage is sharing a story, and still, they are all part of the same evening, a bigger story.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

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ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

LEXI CAPLENER

"I like the exposure to other talent and acts and also the regulars. It allows experiences where we all randomly join in and create magic."

- Lexi, on why she enjoys Open Mic Night at the Recovery Room.





ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

VINCENT HOLDEN

"I frequent a lot of open mic nights, even in Memphis, and I just enjoy playing. I've been in bands in the past, but because I work I don't get as many opportunities as I did in the past. I just enjoy coming out and expressing myself through music."

- Vincent, on why he enjoys Open Mic Night at the Recovery Room.

THE FOUNDATION OF ARTS

The Foundation of Arts in Jonesboro offers music classes and musical opportunities for all ages. Musicians might take the stage in a musical or perform at a First Friday Concert on the plaza – or both.

"Music plays a role in shaping a community simply by bringing people together to share something beautiful in common," said FOA Director Kristi Pulliam. "Music can elevate us to share the simplest and most complex emotions - and reminds us that we have a common humanity. In times like these, having something in common is so important."

The FOA is also offering a new series called Originals, Live from the Forum.

"All of these options offer our community several ways to enjoy music and get involved with your community," Kristi shared. I reached out to the FOA in search of a musician to highlight and they returned to me two names, one of which was Adria Hyde. The other, Cory Jackson.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



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ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

ADRIA HYDE



“Adria is a new find for the FOA,” Kristi Pulliam shared of the musician they recommended I reach out to for a music feature. “She is a rich talent in that she is a visual artist as well as a talented musician.”

I reached out to Adria about meeting and she said she’s usually at The Recovery Room on Thursday nights for open mic night if we wanted to meet there. A grin came to my face as I typed back: Meeting there will be perfect.

Just one week after discovering a story I didn’t know I’d be writing, I sat down across from Adria Hyde and considered that maybe these metaphorical streets were leading to the same destination.

“Back in January or February, I finally decided, I mean I’ve done some performances, but I decided to launch,” said Adria of her recent big step into the music industry.

“I go back and forth to Nashville a lot because I work for an organization called the Stars Foundation. They’re amazing. So, I came back from that experience and thought, I really want to start a singer songwriter round.”

Adria described what she’d witnessed in Nashville where several artists take the stage together and bounce off of each other’s energy and creativity. It took some time due to the regulations at the time, but as things opened up, Adria saw an opportunity.

“At the same time I was trying to establish this, I was organizing an event for the Sure Foundation,” Adria shared, and I was unaware that two of my stories were about to overlap, like streets meeting at an intersection.

“What they are doing is opening up Hope House, a day center for the homeless that fills the gap – if they leave the Salvation Army and they have to spend a certain portion of the day being connected with services, well most people in that situation don’t know where to go or how to do that, so the Sure Foundation wants to fill in that gap and connect them with services, showers, laundry, and mental health help. They needed funding, so I organized a benefit concert. I’d sang [at the Recovery Room] before on and off a bit for the last couple of years, so we hosted an online concert here.”

Though the concert was canceled due to a snowstorm, by the time they were able to put it on they were also able to have a real audience, plus an online livestream. The concert raised five hundred dollars to help the Sure Foundation with supplies and startup costs.

“Amanda Emerson, who is spearheading Hope House, said, ‘Nancy, I looked at all those people on stage tonight and you can just tell, that they love this and they

miss this,’” Adria recalled.

“So, I said, well I’m going to tell y’all I’ve been trying to establish a singer-songwriter night.”

Of course, this is where the light goes off on in my head and I think back to Nancy’s telling me this very story in this very room only through her perspective.

“Nancy is amazing,” Adria said, going on to share how Nancy said they could open the doors and the stage to artists every Thursday evening. Adria was not present the evening I first attended open mic night and so I told her of watching a few different artists – William McCauley, Lexi Caplener and Vincent Holden – get on stage together for a song. It was that moment, though Adria wouldn’t know it until later, that spurred these stories within a story.

I needed to ask Adria her thoughts on why this Thursday evening thing is so important to her and to other artists, though I was certainly already drawing my own conclusions.

“I’ve talked to a lot of people in the area and they talk about making sure people pursue their interests,” Adria said thoughtfully. “We don’t really have those paths for people to pursue music. We make sure we feed our pipeline for doctors and for engineers and scientists. But if you step into an elevator, you hear music. If you drive your car, you have your radio and there’s music. If you walk into any lobby in a big city there’s music. [Music] is everywhere and I feel like it’s just as important to nurture people who are creative. Because without music, what are we? It’s our way to express ourselves. So I think it’s vital to continue to grow that. It not only rewards the person who’s listening, it also rewards the person performing. They feel like their voice is heard.”

ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

CORY JACKSON



When I sat down at the Recovery Room that first Thursday night, I took note of the slide show playing on the TV. I mentioned aloud to my friend, "Hey there's Cory."

A photo of Cory and his wife Sarah presumably enjoying a morning coffee was being used as part of the slides illustrating what all the business has to offer. The last time I spoke to Cory was just a few months ago as he loaded up his car after playing a concert on my own porch. Cory is family of a dear friend of mine so I've asked the well-known musician twice now to fit a small concert in our yard into his busy schedule and both times he's graciously agreed.

When I noticed him in the slideshow, I didn't yet know the full musical story about to unfold over the next week, but I was not the least surprised when the FOA suggested him as a musician to highlight.

Many in Northeast Arkansas know of Cory for his time on *The Voice*, but many too know him for entertaining communities in this area further back than that.

"Cory has always been an amazing performer and supporter of the FOA," said Kristi Pulliam. "We've loved him for years!"

So has much of the community and for more than just his incredible voice – Cory also has a stage presence about him that makes you feel a part of the performance itself. Cory's comfort with the stage surely stems from being on plenty of them; his early for music started early and really grew.

"I would say my love for music really began when I was pretty young. We went to Branson, Missouri, when I was growing up and we always went with my grandparents. I remember going to Silver Dollar City and loving bluegrass music. I also loved this group called the Haygoods. I just, I wanted to play saxophone," Cory said with a laugh. "That's really where it started."

Cory drifted away from music for a bit, pursuing sports throughout school. But his love for music was reignited.

"My grandpa retired from the heating and air business, he played guitar at home and said he wanted me to play with him. I told him that if he'd help me pick

out my first guitar then I would," Cory said.

Cory has been known to showcase his talents in a variety of ways, even serenading seniors when COVID-19 hit and many were confined to their own smaller spaces. He's spent many evenings playing at the Foundation of Arts, too.

"I'm really thankful to the Foundation and the whole team there, they've been such a big support, before and after *The Voice*," Cory said. "I really owe it to them and my fans for giving me more opportunities to play in Jonesboro."

Speaking of fans, as we wrapped up the interview a young guy passing by stopped to shake Cory's hand and tell him that he loves his music. And speaking of Cory's music, he has a new single out this month: "Put Some Country in Your Country."

We want to encourage Cory and all musicians to keep telling stories by making music – after all, sharing stories can be like walking the roads of our neighborhood and we just might find more of them are connected than we ever realized.

OUR SAVANNAH



BY RICHARD DRUMMETT



Savannah performing in 2019.

Savannah Morris says it's actually a good thing to be a little nervous before a performance. She recalls one evening when she didn't have the jitters prior to singing on The Ultimate Oldies tour and "it was not a very good performance for me." But all public appearances, all levels of pre-performance tension and stress, pale in comparison to her triumphant and emotional walk across the Collins Theatre apron in mid-July of this year.

"Let me tell you ... I never thought I would step foot on stage again," Savannah said, thinking back on a year that has seen her look death right in the face and still come out swinging, a year that has taught her to appreciate so many things in her life, regardless of how small they may have seemed at one time.

Her physical difficulties have been well documented. She was teaching music via Facetime when she started experiencing chest pains so severe she feared she was having a heart attack and called an ambulance to transport her to the hospital emergency room. "Tests didn't show a heart attack," Savannah said, "and they said I possibly had GIRD and they discharged me. Test results were clear ... they had no idea. The pain persisted for months and nobody could diagnose what was wrong. I had so much pain and it was moving around in my joints. Then I got COVID in July and I almost died. I literally ... almost ... died, and I was thinking, 'Why? I'm young and healthy.' Someone even asked if I might have leukemia and I said no."

The pain continued and by October she was in the ER for the third time and yet not even extremely powerful drugs relieved her pain. She said, "I told my mom even if it's cancer, I at least want to know what is wrong with me." It was only after a battery of examinations -- biopsy, MRI, CAT Scan -- that the word came down: Cancer.

"When I was diagnosed last April, -- April 27th, I remember that date very well -- on Mom's birthday," she said, "they said I most likely had a very rare form of leukemia. Definitely cancer ... I was in complete shock. But I got with my family and we cried and said we had to fight this thing. I think I actually calmed them down instead of them calming me and I finally accepted the fact that I had cancer and then before we could even get anything started my Covid test came back ... positive! I said, 'You have got to be kidding me.' That was more shocking than knowing I had cancer. I thought I might have to go to the Covid wing but the doctor said he believed I didn't have Covid but that there were still traces of the antibody since my having it in July."

After enduring large amounts of chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant in January of this year, immense discomfort -- some expected and some not -- followed in the form of extreme depression and anxiety, long stretches of sleeplessness, a rash all over her body and more, an awful lot for a rising star to confront. "I would lay there for 12 hours with no sleep and no answers," Savannah said. "I'd been very nervous, very anxious, and I had to be very sedated just to knock me out so I could sleep. I'm 28 and I've got cancer? That's all I could think about.

"As some of the meds started to get pulled off the list, I started recovering. My hair started growing back. I was able to focus. And that's when I realized I really, really missed music. I missed hugs and I missed performing with my family."

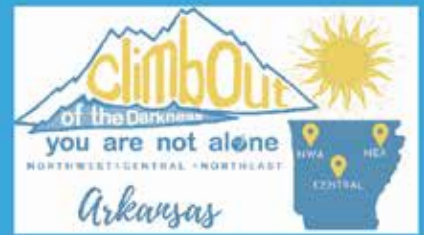
That's the short version of a journey that found her sitting in the car outside the Collins on July 17 while her family and Ultimate Oldies mates performed inside, "... waiting for the word from Dad to come on and I was actually more nervous than I had ever been before. I had not performed in so long. The radiation really took a toll on my lungs and one of the hardest things was to breathe under control and have the strength to do it."

Once she entered the theatre undetected by the audience, she looked at her musical family -- not just her parents and brother, but all cast members -- and panic set in. "I was so nervous, so excited," she remembers, "but I thought I was going to pass out. My brother was by my side and had me by the arm and I told him he had to tell me joke to get my mind off things. He made me laugh but I couldn't help thinking, 'What if I can't sing? What if all I can do is cry?' But it was one of the most exhilarating performances of my life.

"We kept it a surprise as long as we could. None of the cast or crew even knew but at about halfway through Dad had to tell them because I still can't be around unvaccinated people. But it was so good to be back on stage, with my people and my family. That day, that night ... I loved everyone who was there. And that was the very first time my fiance had seen me perform live on stage. It made it extra special that he was there."

She teamed up with brother Sam and parents Craig and Donna to belt out Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4" and, suddenly, cheers and tears replaced fears. Throughout her ordeal numerous Paragould people had referred to her not as Savannah Morris, but as "our Savannah," sending cards, letters and get well wishes, prompting her to say, "Prayer is absolutely the best thing. I know so many prayers went up on my behalf, and I am so truly grateful to each and every one who took the time. I love my Paragould people. That's why it was one of the greatest performances of my life."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



NEA Climb Out of the Darkness for Postpartum Support International-Arkansas September 18, 2021

Climb Out of the Darkness is the world's largest event raising funds and awareness for the mental health of new families operated by Postpartum Support International.

Funds will help Postpartum Support International-Arkansas through:

- Education and Support Materials
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- Facilitating Community

This year's event will be virtual due to increasing COVID-19 cases.

Donate to the NEA COTD 2021 Event
COTD-2021.causevox.com/team-nearkansas

Questions?
NEA Climb Out of the Darkness
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She is now back to teaching music lessons more often via Facetime because, "I still don't need to be near a lot of people and, certainly, kids. I have had none of my childhood vaccines ... they were all wiped clean during the transplant. I'm capable of catching anything right now. But I can teach multiple students this way and it's wonderful. Live performances I will keep at a minimum until next year."

And looking back on this experience? "What a ride!" she said, managing a laugh. "On a scale of one to a hundred ... I feel like 110. I am so happy and I know it's because now I know how it feels to be at the bottom. Those were the darkest days of my life. You can't experience true happiness without being at the bottom so I am now gung ho. I really want to help people by telling them my story. I'm back to work and it's awesome. I'm recording a duo with my brother called "The Lonesome Road" and have a single coming out soon. What a change, what a difference ... but I'm back in full force, Baby!"

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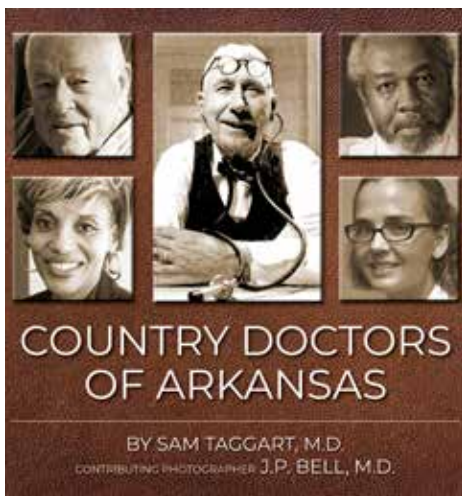
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Paragould's Own Dr. Vern Ann Shotts Featured in "Country Doctors of Arkansas"

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

After a tumultuous year for healthcare workers, the public has found a new type of respect for doctors, nurses and everyone in between. Arkansas doctor Sam Taggart recently took a deep dive into the lives of rural physicians, and one of Paragould's own is featured in a brand new book.

"Country Doctors of Arkansas" was published by the *Arkansas Times* in June and Dr. Vern Ann Shotts was interviewed along with others throughout the state about their time in healthcare. Shotts said she was flattered and surprised that Taggart wanted to interview her.

"Vern Ann is really smart," Taggart said. "She ended up doing what she wanted to do."

He added Shotts was the first female physician in Greene County, as well as the first pediatrician. She was also able to bring services to the area that had never been offered before, such as an easier way to draw blood from a newborn.

"It was a trailblazing experience, both rewarding and difficult," Shotts said. "Years ago I also recommended our hospital begin rapid testing for diseases such as respiratory syncytial virus and rotavirus. AMMC actually began this testing earlier than other regional hospitals."

This is a common theme Taggart explores in his book: Doctors bringing exceptional service to their small towns. One doctor, a cardiovascular surgeon, returned to work in Nashville just because that's what he wanted to do, Taggart said. He added that doctors are like priests of technology, bringing new equipment and techniques to these rural areas.

"People trust their family doctor, country

doctor, to be there when they should be and to do the right thing," Taggart said.

Like others that Taggart interviewed, Shotts is dedicated to her practice and patients.

"Talking with families and helping them make the best healthcare decisions for their particular family is so important," she said. "Sometimes I almost feel like I am a part of the family after caring for the children and watching them grow and develop over the years, and that is very special to me."

Shotts doesn't just provide medical care to the community. She also proposed the Build a Bike Program adopted by Paragould Schools, where children learned to build, maintain and ride a bike. Another program, Red Hot Salsa, taught elementary school children the salsa dance. The week ended with a salsa dance party that promoted self-esteem, exercise, the love of music and dance.

"I like thinking outside the box to enrich children's lives any way that I can," she said.

Taggart knew he wanted to document people like Shotts after his own time in medicine. He knew many men and women practicing in relative obscurity, known only to their patients and colleagues, who were there from a person's first to last breaths. Taggart believes an individual's life becomes others' history. "I didn't want them to go unnoticed," he said.

The book began as a series of interviews recorded from 2016-2017 and expanded into written word exploring physicians in the first 150 years of the state's existence. The second half of the book covers modern doctors from 1945 on.

Taggart knew he wanted to be a doctor from the time he was around 12 years old, and he has been writing since he was 17.

"I never knew if I would write well or poorly," he admitted, adding that in his 40s he finally began writing classes, and wrote for the public by the 2000s.

When reading Taggart's book, Shotts said the public will see the human side of physicians.

"We have families similar to some of our patients and we have to juggle schedules and priorities," she said. "Even though I practice in a rural area, I strive for excellence every day in delivering modern healthcare to my patients."



PREMIERE

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48

**Growth:
Carolyn Samuel**

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**Nightwing
Band**

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**Foster
Grandparent:
Brenda Smith**

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GROWTH

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

Growth is a part of life and a part of business – especially if you’re in the business of growing food.

Carolyn Samuel grew up in Lepanto around the business of farming. She used to ride her family farm regularly and observe the growing crops. After graduating high school, she attended the University of Alabama where she earned a degree in Commerce and Business Administration. From there she headed to Memphis and worked in retail as a buyer before meeting her future husband, Alvin, when they were a part of the same wedding party.

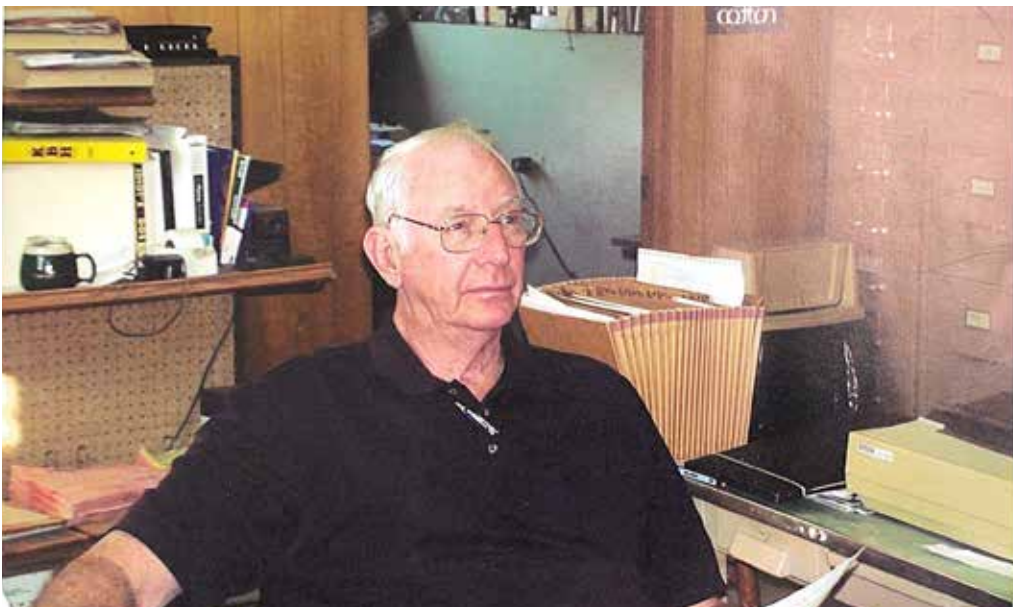
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Married in 1957, the couple added three girls to their family and often rode the farm together. It wasn't until after Alvin's passing in 2014 that Carolyn would join the business in an official capacity, but she was more than ready to handle the job.

Alvin would surely be proud of his partner: Carolyn stepped up to make sure the business, and therefore the crops, continued to grow. At the time the company was still ginning cotton but in the fall of 2014 Carolyn decided to close the gin as cotton was not profitable at that point. She also opted to close the custom fertilizer section of the business.

Turning away from the things that would not help sustain the business, she instead invested the company's efforts in leasing out land to grow rice, corn, soybeans and peanuts.

"Peanuts have become quite the crop, and quite the product!" Carolyn said with a good natured laugh. "Peanuts are farmed quite differently from the other crops in that it requires specialized equipment. It's been interesting. It's been a very good crop for us."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50



LEFT ABOVE: The late Alvin Samuel sits at his desk.

LEFT BELOW: Carolyn Samuel sits at her desk at the current Alvin Samuel Gin Company Office.

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Over the years Carolyn has seen and acted on the need to change the business model in order to keep up with the ever-changing need for varying resources. Her ability to adapt has kept the Alvin Samuel Gin Company thriving, even though they don't gin cotton anymore.

"Agriculture has been a major part of the Mid-south for generations," Carolyn said. "While the economies have all changed, agriculture is still a basic part of it. Though crops change, agriculture as a whole is essential."


Industry has boomed over the years and Carolyn acknowledged the importance of this while adding that agriculture is still one of the most important things supporting our nation.

"I think many need to understand that [agriculture] is still a part of our basic economy and that we are an important part of feeding this country and feeding the world. We need to do a better job of telling our story," she shared.

As for the story of Alvin Samuel Gin Company, Carolyn says their growth would not be possible without the many hardworking individuals that make it up. "We have excellent producers who are good stewards of our land. They use up to date farming methods and technology," she said. "And our office employees are a tremendous help in our business with all of the information and records that we are expected to file."

As the business she leads has grown, she has also watched Greene County and Paragould grow, too, and she says being a part of this community is a pleasure.

"This business is over a hundred years old," Carolyn shared. "Alvin's family ties, really, started in the mid 1880s. It's been a pleasure to serve Greene County and be in the gin business and the auxiliary business we had with it. We are pleased to have been a part of Greene County for over 100 years. And we look forward to future generations. Alvin was always so proud of Paragould. We're both proud of Paragould. Paragould has grown so, since we married in 1957! He was vitally interested in Paragould, of course, and a part of the community. We always wanted to be good citizens and do our part in the development of it. We are pleased to be here and to see Paragould continue grow."




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FIBROMYALGIA

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic health condition that causes pain and tenderness in your soft tissue and muscles. It can also lead to generalized exhaustion and mental distress, like depression and anxiety.

Fibromyalgia is often misdiagnosed as an arthritic condition, but it doesn't cause the same joint damage or inflammation as arthritis.

Researchers theorize that people with fibromyalgia are more sensitive to pain because of the way their brains and spinal cords amplify pain signals.

What are the symptoms of fibromyalgia?

Each person reacts differently to fibromyalgia. Though it's similar to arthritis, fibromyalgia affects soft tissue, not the joints. Often, a pain signal misinterpretation in the brain causes pain. The most common symptoms include:

- Memory loss*
- Chronic fatigue syndrome*
- Chronic inflammatory response syndrome*
- Morning stiffness*
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)*
- Insomnia*
- Tenderness throughout your body*
- Muscle pain, twitching, burning, or tightness*
- Anxiety and depression*
- Bladder issues*

You can develop fibromyalgia at any age, but it's most often diagnosed during middle age. You may be at greater risk of developing fibromyalgia if you have lupus or rheumatoid arthritis.

There's also some evidence of a genetic link to the chronic pain condition, which means your risk of fibromyalgia may be greater if it runs in your family.

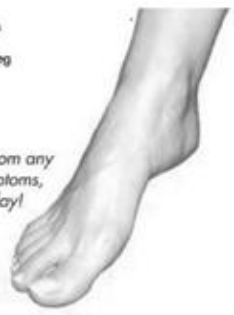
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10 Ways to Save on Medicare Covered Prescription Drugs

BY ADAM COOPER

Medication costs can be a very large expense for many people and that's why it is very important to review and re-evaluate your plan each year. I think it is safe everyone wants to spend as little as possible on medications so here's a list of 11 ways to save money on your Medicare covered prescription drugs.

1) Shop your plan every year between October 15th and December 7th, also known as the Medicare Annual Election Period (Open Enrollment). If you have a Medicare Advantage plan that includes prescription coverage or if you have a stand-alone Part D plan, you need to review and re-evaluate your plan every year. This is because these plans are on an annual contract with Medicare. The monthly premiums, the formulary (list of covered medications), and tier levels can change affecting what you pay when buying prescription medications.



2) Look into the Part D Senior Savings Model that's new for 2021. Insulin is expensive and can fast-forward you into the "donut hole" (coverage gap) which increases costs. A new insulin savings program was implemented to help with insulin costs. With specific participating plans you may be able to get insulin for no more than \$35 per fill all year long.

3) Use generics prescriptions over name brand prescriptions if possible.

4) Use a "preferred" in-network pharmacy if your plan utilizes them. In general, you must get your prescriptions from a pharmacy that is in-network with your plan and some plans have special contracts with specific pharmacies that give you a lower co-payment amount compared to "standard" pharmacies. Call your plan's customer service number or your local Medicare specialist to find out which, if any, pharmacies in your area are considered "preferred".

5) Use your plan's preferred mail-order service. Many plans offer lower costs when using their preferred mail order service and you may get a 90-day supply of medications.

6) Call different pharmacies to find the best price. Some plans have a deductible phase which means you are responsible for 100% of the cost of your medications until the deductible has been met. This is especially true for name brand prescription medications and you'll find each pharmacy will charge a different amount for those medications and sometimes there is a significant difference.

7) Look into prescription drug discount programs. Again, your plan may have a deductible and instead of paying the retail price for medication you may be able to find a better deal by using a prescription discount program. Many of them can be found online.

8) Talk to your doctor about separating your combo medication. A combo medication is when two medications that are commonly prescribed together are actually combined into one pill. Sometimes a plan may place the

combo med on a higher tier level than the two medications by themselves in turn costing you more. This is not always the case but it does happen from time to time. Call your plan and ask them to look up the tier of your current combo med and then ask what tier each of those medications are on individually. If it saves you money, talk to your doctor about writing the prescriptions separately.

9) Apply for "Extra Help." Based on income, some people qualify for financial help toward prescription drug costs as well as lowering monthly premiums. On page 87 of the 2021 "Medicare and You" guide book published by CMS, you will see the income and resource limits.

If you feel you may qualify for these benefits you can contact Social Security or a trusted advisor to apply.

10) Enroll On Time. Many people don't realize until it's too late and have been assessed a Late Enrollment Penalty because they didn't enroll into a Part D prescription drug plan when they were first eligible. Your Part D plan can be attached to a Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage with Prescription Drugs/MAPD) plan or offered as a stand-alone plan. There are some exceptions like if you continue working and your group insurance includes drug coverage that is considered at least as good or better than what Medicare offers. Also, if you have VA or Tricare coverage or receive "Extra Help" then you will not be penalized.

The owner and founder of Senior Healthcare Insurance, Adam Cooper is a local, licensed independent insurance agent who has been working with Medicare beneficiaries since 2006. He is not employed by or part of any government agency. For any questions you may have, you may contact him directly by phone or text at (870) 215-3136.

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ROCK, OF AGES

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Their descent to the basement practice area is taken a bit more gingerly than it would have been in years past and the accompanying grunts and groans are to be expected, as are the mandatory one-liners about old age and its pitfalls; after all, these are four men in their 60s and 70s and even getting situated to start a run-through of songs to be rehearsed seems to take a bit longer than in the good old days.

But once the first chord is struck, time does an about face and the only age that matters is the one when rock and roll music was exploding across the continent and these guys were right in the middle of it, knocking out tunes to appreciative audiences with some of the most popular bands of their time. Playing together now as Nightwing and rehearsing for a late August fundraiser at the Collins Theatre, the foursome -- Paragould's Andy Fulkerson along with Sonny Hunt, Eddie Ross and Scott Snellgrove of Jonesboro -- hoped to bring their act billed as

"high-class rock and roll" to life in front of faithful rock fans ready to relive the golden era of music along with them.

Each found singing and playing to his liking at an early age and each has harvested a fondness for the fascination they produce, carrying them through decades on a magic carpet woven of friendship, talent and love of the show. When asked if he could give a reason why they still love to play after decades in the spotlight, vocalist and bass player Snellgrove, 71, said, "Why? Why do people breathe? It's not just something to do; I get something out of it. It has its rewards. This is a good group of folks."

He and Ross, the old man of the band at 72, are both quick with a quip and have been playing together since 1969, laughing now about stories like playing a gig where they had to be enclosed in a chicken wire cage with orders not to exit it. Seems the club owner was weary of breaking up fights between male patrons

who were tired of their dates fawning over band members. They remember the early days of playing locally at EJ's when the crowds were nonexistent, then churning out tunes for 15 consecutive weeks before standing room only audiences. They've played in front of crowds large and small, in venues classy and classless, but the important part is: They play.

"I like playing smokey bars," Ross, the drummer, said. "They're more fun, the people are more loose."

"Music has just been a major part of my life. I don't like to listen to it, I like to play it. It's what I fell in love with when I was very young and what I've managed to stay in love with."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

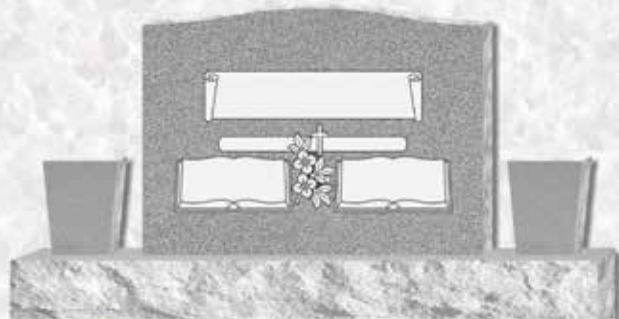


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All four sing and when they toss out the names of bands they have starred in, area music buffs can get chills: The Heat, Steelwind, Tony Spinner, The Bar Boys, Just Us, The PF Flyers, The Tuesday Blues, Nightwing ... bands that packed houses and spawned faithful followers regardless of where they landed. Keyboardist Fulkerson, 70, said this band had its origin "in about 1987. I had recorded a couple of sets at EJ's back in those days. I found these old audio tapes -- analog tapes -- and I determined over time I wanted to send them off and have them digitalized. I got them back and it reminded me just how good this band was. We decided to do a benefit for the Collins and at first thought we'd livestream it amid the health crisis but then things began to settle down and we decided to do a live show. Three of the four were in the original band. But a couple of guys had to bow out and we brought in Sonny Hunt. Almost everyone knows Sonny Hunt, for sure."

The lead guitarist and baby of the group at 64, Hunt is known as a tremendously talented player on the circuit and said he hopes he is worthy of that reputation. "It really amounts to having a lot of friends

here in Jonesboro," he said. "The guitar thing ... a friend will call me up and say we've got a guitar player who can't make it; can you sit in? And I get my guitar and go. When they call you in on something like that it's interesting and you're probably going to have some fun. If they call, I'm pretty much going to go and you learn a lot and you have a lot of fun, even if you don't know the band that well. I even wound up playing country once, and I have no idea how that happened."

He, Fulkerson and Ross all said sports were on the to-do list early in life but they were pulled to music for various reasons at various ages. "Girls ... that helped a lot," Fulkerson said, "but I've always liked music even before. When I was a little kid and taking piano, I listened to albums. I started piano lessons in grade school, then I got into football in junior high; baseball was my game of choice but I was a lot better at football. Then the Beatles came along and I wanted to play drums but there was another guy in the band, Teddy Hoke, who was a better drummer than me so I played guitar -- this was in Just Us -- and since I'd had piano lessons I moved over to there. I quit football after the 10th grade and it was music after that.

I've got a little studio room downstairs in my home with a couple of keyboards in there and I write some stuff and record, mainly to amuse myself. I play music to some degree almost every day."

Ross recalls a picture of himself as young as 2, "... with Mom's wooden spoons, beating on stuff. I told my parents I wanted a drum set when I was really young, but they said 'no' to the drums and signed me up for piano lessons with Ms. Gunn. You can figure how that went, a 9-year-old with music tucked under his arm, walking down to the basement of the high school. I quit and said, 'Drums', so they got me a guitar. Only I'm left handed so everything was upside down; they hired a guy to give me lessons and I hated it. When I was around 12 they relented. I was caddying at Fox Hills and came home to a drum set. They moved them into the back room and closed the door and I would turn on my hi-fi and play along with the music. At 9 p.m. our neighbor called and said, 'Please make him quit,' so from then on I could play from 3:00 until 8:45."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60



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For Snellgrove, it's been almost a lifelong thing. "Man, I've always liked it," he said. "The first I really remember was hearing The Big Bopper and 'Chantilly Lace.' I thought he was saying, '... with a bony tail, hanging down.' I thought maybe he was singing about a dinosaur. Then I found out it was 'ponytail.' After that it was Elvis.

"A friend and I in the third grade or fourth grade, or it might possibly have been the second, he played guitar and I played guitar and we knew about the same number of chords and we could play 'Tom Dooley' and 'Davy Crockett.' We played for the PTA one time and we had on costumes that made us look a little Robin Hoodish, but we had our real clothes on under and when we finished they clapped and I ripped my costume off and ran back out and did 'Hound Dog' and I was hooked. I gave 'em an encore. I had gotten my first guitar when I was 6 or 7 and I kept on. In the 8th grade we decided to have a little band. I was on guitar and Danny Jones was on drums and we entered a talent contest at Annie Camp, and we won! That was pretty cool and cheerleaders coming up and hugging your neck ... all that stuff kind of contributed to this band thing. I was in a band called The Golden Eagles; why we were the Golden Eagles, I don't know, but later we shortened it to just Eagles, not to be confused with those guys out in California. They're The Eagles and we were just Eagles. This all started before the Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, which was the next week or the next week after the talent show. And then, it was bam! This is it. Music has been the biggest part of my life. I've had jobs and

businesses and a lot of other things but music is it."

Hunt "tossed around the idea of sports but was drawn to drumming and wanted to play at about age 8 or 9. I would take Mom's kitchen knives out on the concrete and bend them up. I played until I was 15 or 16 and then got in a band with a guy who was a real good guitar player. I hung around and he taught me some stuff and then I started playing guitar pretty much anytime I could, anywhere I could. I was lucky to get in with Tony Spinner. I've known him since the early '80s. We recorded and did some stuff together and even did some stuff overseas, probably in 2004. We were in Amsterdam and we stayed in some of the smaller towns. Everywhere we went it was good. And then Tony split off and did his own thing and I split off and did mine, and then the virus thing hit."

Snellgrove was in the Esquires from "probably '65, '66, to '67. We had a record that charted on Billboard and Cashbox called 'Sadie's Ways.' I was in the Tuesday Blues and the PF Flyers, the original bunch from the '80s. Our big claim to fame was during the Hands Across America we were the Coca Cola band in Little Rock. Clinton was governor and he pulled up in his limo and stopped to listen. The great thing, though, is the experience with friends. You get together again and rekindle all that stuff and you go, 'This is pretty good.' Or, sometimes pretty soon you remember why you quit that band in the first place."

But quit playing? Never.

"I've always said I want to die playing music," Ross offered, "really ... die playing music. Just not today."





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SEPTEMBER IS Healthy Aging MONTH

Healthy Aging is not just the avoidance of a disease or disability, but also includes maintaining a high level of physical and mental functioning as well as being able to enjoy productive activities.

Some type of chronic diseases may be inevitable as we age, but good self-management can protect our quality of life, as well as minimize complications and increase longevity.

10 Common Chronic Conditions for Adults 65+

QUICK FACTS



80%
have at least 1
chronic condition



68%
have 2 or more chronic
conditions



Hypertension
(High Blood Pressure)
58%



High Cholesterol
47%



Arthritis
31%



Ischemic/Coronary Heart Disease
29%



Diabetes
27%



Chronic Kidney Disease
18%



Heart Failure
14%



Depression
14%



Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia
11%



Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
11%

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Chronic Conditions Prevalence State/County Table: All Fee-for-Service Beneficiaries.

Foster Grandparent

Barbara Smith



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BY LINDSEY SPENCER

For Barbara Smith, serving as a Foster Grandparent may be as much for her own benefit as it is for the kids.

“I enjoy all of it,” she said of her role which includes spending time at school each day greeting kids, reading with them, eating with them, going outside, doing art, etc. After retirement, Barbara wanted something to do with her time that would bring socialization and give her the opportunity to give back. Her impact is certainly felt by the kids who benefit from having another adult figure in their lives who is simply there to hang out with them and show them they are cared for.

Barbara encourages men to get involved as the boys especially love having foster grandfathers around. She said if someone likes children and wants a reason to get out of the house, the Foster Grandparent Program is an excellent opportunity, and that everyone in the program is wonderful to work with.

As for the kids, Barbara said “I love them and they love me.”



CONTINUED ON PAGE 66

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The East Arkansas Area Agency on Aging appreciates its volunteers for its Foster Grandparents program.

Volunteers help out in the local daycares, head starts, and elementary schools by being mentors and immediate tutors. Remember when you were in school and how the teacher had to try to keep all the kids on the same level and address any issues that arose? The FGP would be an extra set of eyes in the classroom and is an immediate resource to help Jimmy write his name, to help Susie study for her spelling test, and to help Bailey to make friends.

This next school year will be extra special transitioning back to the classroom from virtual learning. And this program benefits everyone it touches. The kids have someone extra to help them out, or just for a hug or a pat on the back.

The teachers have an extra set of eyes in the classroom and have someone who can focus on the ones struggling academically or have issues focusing, or needing lots of encouragement and direction. It benefits the grandparents by providing them a way of helping out the community and there is a small stipend (if they meet income guidelines) and mileage reimbursement.

If you have any questions or if you know someone who might be interested please call 870-930-2240 or email wadams@eaaaa.org.

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Staying Healthy As You Age

BY KARAN SUMMITT



1. Keep routine physician appointments and regular screenings. This includes eye and dental care as well as medical care.

2. Take ALL medications as directed. Discuss unpleasant side-effects with physician and DO NOT discontinue unless ordered by doctor. If cost is a factor, look into assistance programs.



3. Reduce the risk for falls in your home with clear pathways and grab bars. Use walking aides as prescribed by physician. Falls are the number one cause of deadly accidents in seniors.

4. Protect yourself from illness and disease. Get vaccinations, wear masks if your health is already compromised by a chronic disease and practice good hand hygiene.



5. Get adequate sleep each night.

6. Stay connected to others.



7. Eat a healthy diet—plenty of fruits and vegetables whole grains, lean proteins and less sugar.

8. Move as much as possible! Movement helps to prevent falls and reduce chronic disease complications.



9. Find purpose and joy in living despite unwelcome changes in life.



10. Keep your faith in God strong. Faith and connection to a church family have been proven to help seniors cope better and live longer.





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Happenings



BRTC is proud to congratulate Christina Derbes, BRTC instructor of nutrition and dietetics, on earning her Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Rutgers and passing the certification exam to become a registered dietitian.

“My passion is food safety and security,” Derbes said, “and according to the CDC, 16.2% of the population lives below the poverty level. I want to help educate individuals so that they understand how to shop better to improve their health.”

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Friday - Saturday 1PM - 10PM

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2021 Kids' Events

September

September 3

First Friday at the Forum with Eric Edwards

When: September 3 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Rotary Centennial Park in front of
the Forum Theatre in Downtown
Jonesboro

Info: The Foundation of Arts
Facebook Page

September 24 & 25

Get Downtown Festival

When: September 24 and 25


Where: Downtown Paragould

Info:

getdowntownfestival.com

MORE

For more kids activities please
visit exploremornea.com/kids



Taylor Swink settled into her lawn chair in her own fashion while listening to musical selections at Music Under the Stars. Taylor, 8, is the daughter of Shiena and Mike Swink of Paragould.

Next Month

Breast Cancer Awareness



We'll bring you stories of survivors and also tell you all you need to know to take part in local supportive activities.

Spooky Fun



October means Halloween and all the scary stuff surrounding the season. Find out where to go and what to see in next month's Premiere.

Fall: Events, Fashion & More



Plenty to do and plenty to see in October ... and we'll even tell you what to wear. Check out our next issue.



Guidance to keep you growing in the right direction.

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