



# Newton County Times

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\$1.00

## Jasper Advertising and Promotion Commission still suspended

By **JEFF DEZORT**  
Newton County Times

**JASPER** — The Jasper City Council met Monday, June 16, and voted to continue the suspension of the Jasper Advertising and Promotion Commission (JAPC) until further notice. It also voted to table a proposal from the Newton County Chamber of Commerce which had

proposed to offer its tourism and marketing services to the city for the year at just over \$10,000.

The council did, however, approve using the remaining JAPC funds budgeted this year to expand the hours of operation of the city's Little Buffalo River Visitors Center (LBRVC) on Spring Street. The money, a little over \$21,000, will be

moved into payroll and be used to extend the current center director's working hours to 30 hours per week allowing the center to be open to the public six hours a day, five days per week. A portion of the funds will also be used to pay the salary of a part-time worker so the center can be open on Saturdays.

When the JAPC was authorized by the city council in 2020,

it came with a stipulation — that after five years the council would examine and evaluate the commission's work and weigh the program's benefits to the city's economy.

At the council's regular meeting last May, Mayor Michael Thomas said it was time to see if the JAPC is self-sustaining and if the commission is reaching the goals that it set out for itself.

When the JAPC was initiated it was done without the support of a local sales tax levied on the sale of prepared food and lodging to fund tourism and local development. Referred to as a "hamburger tax," this is an additional tax to regular state and local sales taxes.

The JAPC would raise

See **JAPC**, A2



Members of the Jasper School District Board of Education visit with its long-range planning consultant Aliza Jones via internet at its regular meeting held Monday, June 15. Jones reported to the board that the state has approved more than \$8 million dollars in partnership funding to build a new K-12 school in Kingston. **JEFF DEZORT/STAFF**

## State approves funding for new Kingston school

By **JEFF DEZORT**  
Newton County Times

**JASPER** — The state has approved more than \$8 million dollars in partnership funding to build a new K-12 school in Kingston. Unfortunately, that is only about half what a new school will cost and the Jasper School District Board of Education could be on the hook for the other half, or maybe not.

There is a lot in play, but it cost the school board nothing when it voted to authorize Superintendent Dr. Candra Brasel to sign a letter of acceptance for the funds at the board's regular meeting held Monday night, June 16.

The board met with its long-range planning consultant Aliza Jones during the meeting. Jones, from Academic Facilities School Consulting, visited remotely via internet to report to the board that its application for partnership funding is officially approved. The state will meet \$8.2 million of the estimated cost with the school district providing \$8.1 million, contingent on the passage of a millage increase currently unknown. That information will have to be provided by the

school district's financial adviser, Jones said.

There is no commitment on the school district's part if the agreement is signed no later than the July 16 deadline. The state money is already approved. The school district can rescind its acceptance of it if a millage increase fails, or for any reason the school district deems it is unable to follow through with the deal.

Jones said the Education Division rated the existing school as 11th in the state needing to be replaced. The school is qualified for demolition as it would not be worth any amount of money trying to bring it up to current safety standards. However, the school can "move along as we are," as it is as it does have new HVAC, electrical systems and some other improvements, Jones said.

Jones said if the school district doesn't accept the state's offer it will fall out of line and the funds would be given to the next district. Funding has been getting more restrictive as the amount of partnership funds being granted have become less every year and fewer projects are being funded. Jones noted a school accepting the funds has up to 4 years to spend them. Jasper would have until May

2029.

The next school election isn't until next spring. Construction time is estimated between 12-18 months. That leaves little time for an election campaign. Board support for the new millage would have to be 100%, history shows, Jones emphasized.

And there is the rub.

A new state law goes into effect in August. It will allow a consolidated school to break away from its consolidated school district.

Arkansas Act 919, passed in the 2025 legislative session, is primarily about the formation of isolated school districts. It allows small, isolated schools to detach from larger districts and potentially re-establish themselves as independent districts. This act effectively redresses unintended consequences of the Public Education Reorganization Act of 2003, which had led to the closure of many small schools due to consolidation.

Since Act 919's passage, Rural Special and Timbo schools are proposing to break away from the Mountain View School District. More recently,

See **FUNDING**, A2

## Dozens of stolen items recovered, arrest made

From the Newton County Sheriff's Office

Newton County Sheriff Glenn Wheeler said his office has received several theft reports in recent days. Deputies began investigations and soon developed a suspect which led to a traffic stop. In the vehicle were a couple of stolen items.

Joshua Len Smith, aged 40, was taken into custody for driving on a suspended driver's license and transported to Newton County Sheriff's Office. A subsequent search warrant was served and led to the recovery of numerous stolen items and other items believed to be stolen. These items were valued at several thousand dollars. Also located were various items of drug paraphernalia and multiple marijuana plants, both inside and outside the residence. Smith was additionally charged with numerous counts of felony theft by receiving, theft of property, breaking or entering, manufacture of a class VI controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a schedule iii controlled substance and being a habitual offender. A judge set his bond at \$10,000, cash only.

See **ITEMS**, A2



A search warrant was served and led to the recovery of numerous stolen items and other items believed to be stolen. If you have had items stolen and haven't contacted the Newton County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Wheeler encourages you to do so. **NEWTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PHOTO**

## IRS exemption For Community Matters approved

Staff Report

Community Matters of Newton County, a coalition of faith-based and non-profit organizations serving the people of Newton County, has received exemption from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3).

The tax exempt status was confirmed via letter from the Department of the Treasury.

Donors can deduct contributions they make to Community Matters under IRC Section 170. The coalition is also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts, according to

the letter that will be held as record to help resolve questions on Community Matters' exempt status.

The application was filed last April 4. Community Matters members meet the fourth Thursday of each month, at 10 a.m., at the Jasper Methodist Church Fellowship Hall in Jasper.

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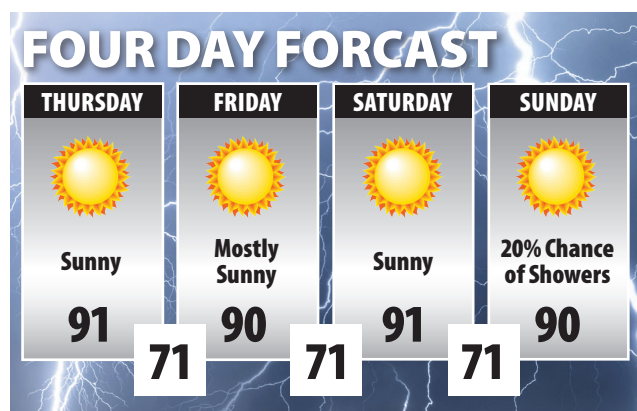
**OBITUARIES**  
Dennis Brasel, 91  
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**TODAY'S DEALS**  
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- Books on Main
- Dixie Outfitters
- Frenzy
- Good Guys Pizza
- Harness Boots & Shoes
- Hatchets Axe Throwing
- King Caskets
- Los Ebanos
- New Beginnings
- Sassy Wags
- The Tacky Cactus
- The Wave Tanning Studio
- Townhouse Café
- Yamaha of Harrison
- Western Sizzlin

Go to **Newtoncountytimes.com**



## FUNDING

From Page A1

Bruno-Pyatt School patrons are investigating breaking away from the Ozark Mountain School District that is composed of Bruno-Pyatt Elementary School, St. Joe Elementary School, the Western Grove Elementary School and the Ozark Mountain High School at Western Grove.

Act 919 was discussed by the Jasper board at its last meeting held May 22. Kingston and Oark schools are isolated.

Brasel said a petition is required having 350 signatures of registered voters or no less than 51% and present it to the board. There's a lot of speculation on how it would work, the super-

intendent said, particularly how the petitioning school would be financed. "Until the rules and regulations are written, everyone is just guessing." No minimum enrollment is addressed in the law.

Directors from Kingston said they don't doubt enough signatures would be gathered.

Would voters in other parts of the district agree to help pay for a school that might not be part of the school district? Could a newly formed Kingston School District absorb the debt?

In the meantime, the board is working to determining what the wealth index might be for that district, as well as what the Kingston school's share of existing debt would be.

## JAPC

From Page A1

advertising and promotion dollars by charging fees and admission to public events and attracting donations through the non-profit Jasper Arkansas Foundation that was formed in 2023. No other city revenues can be contributed to the JAPC.

The JAPC, composed of a majority of individuals representing the city's business community along with some representation from the city council, met last April and accepted the resignation of its paid director Lisa Duet. Duet was the third JAPC director in five years. Thomas said with the position vacant, now would be an ideal time for the council to conduct its mandated review of the JAPC.

In order to do so, he called for a temporary suspension of the JAPC halting further activities. JAPC would continue to pay its bills and plan for a previously announced Independence Day event. Thomas said he would ask the sitting commission members to continue to serve as committee members during the review process. The LBRVC would not be affected by JAPC's suspension, the mayor added.

The council members have been allowed to take their time to conduct interviews, review JAPC records and finances in order to make a recommendation to either dissolve the commission, allow it to proceed as it has been doing, or to go forward with some changes being implemented. Members of the council and the commission met last June 3 and it was the consensus of those

present to allow the suspension to continue until further notice.

That was the report given at the June 16 council meeting that had been set for 5 p.m. The time of the regular monthly meeting was moved up due to council members' plans to attend the Arkansas Municipal League summer conference and training sessions that will be held during the council's regular meeting time.

At last April's meeting, Newton County Chamber of Commerce Director Toinette Madison was in attendance and made a short presentation to the council offering its tourism and marketing services to the city for the year at just over \$10,000. Madison returned to the council June 16.

Thomas estimated \$4,300 would still be available in carry-over from the JAPC budget, and he thought he could siphon an additional \$5,000 or more from the Parks Department's budget and supplies budget to raise the \$10,000 to enter into the agreement with the chamber of commerce.

While Council Member Todd Parker said he would like to give the chamber's proposal a try, he felt it would not be wise to use money already budgeted, especially with the tourism season already well under way.

Madison said she understood the council's predicament and would report the council's decision to the chamber board. Council Member Darrell Davis, noting the absence of Council Member Bobby Keeton, proposed to table the matter. It was made into a motion and approved by Parker, Davis and Council Member Leslie Murphy.

ing to identify others." If you have had items stolen and haven't contacted the Newton County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Wheeler encourages you to do so. "We may have items that we get back to the rightful owners."

Sheriff Wheeler further stated "the investigation is still ongoing and we have additional suspects that can probably expect a visit in the near future."

# ARDOT crews compete in annual Equipment Operators Rodeo

Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) crews across the State came together Thursday, June 12, to compete in the 2025 Equipment Operators Rodeo.

This event allows crews to put their equipment skills to the test. Each competition category was designed to reinforce real-world safety practices in a controlled, hands-on way. The Rodeo is one of the ways the Department keeps crews sharp while also increasing safety awareness of employees working in or around heavy machinery.

ARDOT employees are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in operating the heavy equipment they use daily to maintain the State's Highways and Interstates. Crews were tested for precision, safety awareness, and efficiency in seven key equipment categories: Lowboy Truck, Tandem Axle Dump Truck, Single Axle Dump Truck, Tractor/Mower, Backhoe, Motor Patrol, and Skid Steer. Competitors enter individually and represent the ARDOT district they work in.

2025 ARDOT Equipment Operators Rodeo Results

### Lowboy Truck

First Place: John Harvey – Dis-

trict 2

Second Place: Tyler Phillips – District 5

Third Place: Tommy Bull – District 8

### Tandem Axle Dump Truck

First Place: TJ Pulley – District 1

Second Place: Tony Ruhl – District 10

Third Place: Brad Brown – District 1

Single Axle Dump Truck

First Place: Kirk Fossler – District 5

Second Place: Jon Carter – District 8

Third Place: Kyle Jones – District 1

### Tractor/Mower

First Place: Rodney Armstrong – District 1

Second Place: Colt Holland – District 8

Third Place: Travis Swanson – District 9

### Backhoe

First Place: Chad Foster – District 9

Second Place: Stephen Norris – District 5

Third Place: Will Ring – District 10

### Motor Patrol

First Place: Nick Rushing – District 5

Second Place: Nathan Daniels – District 9

Third Place: Ryan Wages – District 7

### Skid Steer

First Place: Larry Logsdon – District 4

Second Place: TJ Pulley – District 1

Third Place: Jon Carter – District 8

### Crew Winners

First Place: District 5

Second Place: District 1

Third Place: District 9

The top two winners in each individual category will advance to represent ARDOT at the Southeastern Regional Equipment Operators Rodeo in Lexington, Kentucky, later this fall. This regional competition brings together top operators from multiple states (thirteen) for a multi-day showcase of equipment agility and knowledge.

# St. Joe woman arrested on multiple charges

### Staff Report

news@harrisdaily.com

ST. JOE — A Searcy County woman was held in the Searcy County Detention Center with a bond of \$10,000.

Thirty-two year old Kelly Kiss of St. Joe was arrested for first-degree endangering the welfare of a child, second-degree domestic battery, third-degree endangering welfare of a child, aggravated assault and six counts of cruelty to

animals.

The Searcy County Sheriff's office deputies were called to a St. Joe residence where a domestic dispute was in progress between two females.

They interviewed the victim, who had stated that she was involved in an argument with Kiss. Kiss, who was reported to be intoxicated at the time of the first argument, pushed the victim causing her to fall and step on a one-year child.

At that point the victim left the residence.

Later, the victim returned back to the residence and the pair began to argue again. During the argument, Kiss reportedly spanked a three-year old child on three different occasions. The mother of the child left with the child.

As the argument progressed, it turned physical. Kiss reportedly struck the victim in the leg, scratched her face, slammed her head

against a wall, pulled her hair and choked her.

The victim stated that Kiss shoved her head into a toilet while continuing to choke her.

According to reports, Kiss denied that any altercations occurred. However, deputies saw physical evidence to disprove her statement.

Deputies also discovered that Kiss had thrown six baby chickens into a fan killing five of those and severely injuring one.

# OMSD rescinds \$19.2 million partnership grant

### By JEFF DEZORT

Newton County Times

WESTERN GROVE — The Ozark Mountain School District (OMSD) Board of Education met in regular session Thursday night, June 19. It received some good news, but it went for naught.

The school district had previously applied for a state education department partnership grant to help finance construction projects leading up to building a proposed new district-wide K-12 school. The board's long-range planning consultant, Aliza Jones from Academic Facilities School Consulting, met with the board remotely via internet to begin the meeting. She was happy to report the application is officially approved with the state pledging \$19.2 million for the project.

However, the school district is unable to meet its matching share as a millage extension request failed to receive voter support in last May's school election.

There was little the school board could do at that point. Superintendent Jeff Lewis, attending his final board meeting as superintendent as he had submitted his resignation effective at the end of his contract on June 30, put the situation in perspective at the end of the meeting. "The Ozark Mountain Board voted to rescind the project which means the \$19.2 million we would receive as partnership funding will be returned to the state and our partnership project will be re-addressed in 2028."

The school district sought to continue the school tax levy of 36.5 mills which includes 25.0 mills specifically voted for on-going general maintenance and operation and 11.5 mills voted for debt service previously voted as a continuing levy pledged for the retirement of existing bonded indebtedness. The existing 11.5 debt service mills now pledged for the retirement of existing bonded indebtedness, which debt service mills will continue after



## OZARK MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

retirement of the bonds to which now pledged, will be a continuing debt service tax until the retirement of proposed bonds to be issued in the principal amount of \$3,625,000, and which will mature over a period of 30 years, and will be issued for the purpose of refunding the District's Refunding Bonds, dated June 1, 2012; replacing multiple roofs; renovating and creating office space and secure entry ways at certain buildings; renovating bus garage; and constructing, refurbishing, remodeling and equipping other school facilities. The surplus revenues produced each year by the debt service millage may be used by the District for other school purposes," the ballot read.

The OMSD electorate apparently disagreed with the proposal as the measure failed 236 votes for and 362 votes against.

Lewis said Thursday night that the board wants to continue pursuit of the millage extension. "Once that is accomplished they will look at another building project."

Just as early voting began last May 6, a town hall meeting was held at the Eros Community Building. The meeting was called by Tommy Dean Johnson, who serves as a justice of the peace on the Marion County Quorum Court. He said he did not call the meeting as a county official, but only as a concerned citizen. He was joined at the meeting by Bruce Emerson, a poultry farmer who lives near Pyatt.



**The Ozark Mountain Board voted to rescind the project which means the \$19.2 million we would receive as partnership funding will be returned to the state and our partnership project will be re-addressed in 2028."**

**Jeff Lewis**  
Superintendent

From the perspective of Johnson, Emerson and others, the extension of the 11.5 mills constituted a new tax.

Emerson called the 11.5 mills previous and 11.5 mills going forward "sleight of hand." When that bond expires a new bond is going to be written for 30 years. That's a new bond. The old one would sunset in 2028 and it would be gone. He said the bond is being extended so the school district can refinance debt.

The elephant in the room, however, is the questionable future of the Bruno-Pyatt Elementary School. Speculation is that the school will be closed by the school district because only around 27 students are currently attending classes there and the campus is operating at a deficit of approximately \$436,000 using last year's M and O expenditures and this year's salaries of employees.

An informational letter and a survey were sent to the school's parents asking if they would leave their child in the district if the Bruno-Pyatt campus was to close. About half the surveys indicated the students would stay.

## ITEMS

From Page A1

Sheriff Wheeler said, "people work way too hard to have people stealing their hard-earned stuff. I'm glad my guys were able to quickly run these things down and recover a lot of property. We have been able to contact several of the owners of the property and are work-



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# Join the senior center and celebrate the elk festival

The Newton County Senior Center will be open during the annual Buffalo River Elk Festival June 27-28. It is a nice place to cool off in between festival events.

The center serves lunch Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. — 12 p.m.

Those who are 60 and over can dine in at the center for a \$4 donation. Under 60, dine for \$8.60. Cary out meals for everyone is \$8.60. All meals include 8 ounces of 2% milk.

**Menu**

June 26-July 2

**Thursday** — Breaded shrimp, French fries, broccoli florets, hushpuppies and pineapple and bananas.

**Friday** — Baked chicken, cornbread dressing, spinach, dinner roll and berry cup.

**Monday** — Chicken cob

salad, pasta salad, crackers and tropical fruit dream.

**Tuesday** — Reuben sandwich, onion rings, side salad and grapes.

**Wednesday** — Roast beef au jus, cheesy potatoes, green peas, dinner roll and banana creme pie.

## Annual Heydenreich / Tennison Pig Roast

The Annual Heydenreich/Tennison Pig Roast will be held on Saturday, July 5, at the Deer School ABC Building.

Potluck at Noon. Please bring a covered dish. Meat will be provided.

Come visit with family, friends, and neighbors.

If you need further information, you can contact Tina Heydenreich Caraway at 870-577-0519 or Vernie Heydenreich at 870-704-9182 or 870-428-5882.

## Buffalo River Partners organizing middle river cleanup

The Buffalo River Partners are organizing a middle river cleanup for Thursday, July 10 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Tyler Bend.

Volunteers will meet at the Tyler Bend Pavilion to kick off the second river clean-up of the year. The Middle River cleanup will target the 5.5 mile stretch from Tyler Bend to Gilbert. Buffalo River Outfitters will provide a limited number of canoes, and those will be allotted to the first people who sign up. You may also bring your own canoe or kayak. Please bring your own lunch, drinks, and whatever tools you think will be needed!

Please register on the BNRP website to let us know you are coming and to find further details. Here's the link: BNRP events registration.

# SAFER INTERNET MONTH: New safety rules for a new online world

From the Arkansas State Police

LITTLE ROCK — “Children as young as seven are being targeted online, and we’re seeing a sharp increase in sextortion cases involving minors,” said Sergeant Corwin Battle, Commander of the Arkansas Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. “Last year in Arkansas, there were 169 sextortion reports. Already in 2025, Arkansas has received 170 sextortion reports — exceeding last year’s total, with half the year still ahead. The threat is real, but it’s different from what many of us grew up worrying about.”

The ICAC Task Force is encouraging parents, caregivers, and the entire community to enhance their strategies for child safety. This call to action coincides with Safer Internet Month in June and follows the nationwide initiative Operation Safe Online Summer (SOS).

Operation SOS was a coordinated national initiative conducted throughout April 2025, spearheaded by the ICAC Task Forces working with federal partners to address the technology-facilitated exploitation of children.

Despite the passage of the REPORT Act, the number of cyber tip reports remains high, with a concerning rise in certain types of online exploitation.

Nationwide, there are over 19,000 reports of sextortion involving minors each year. In comparison, there are only about 350 to 400 child abduction cases by non-family members, and about 1,000 confirmed child sex trafficking cases reported annually. The most common platforms for this activity are Snapchat and Instagram.

The shift to end-to-end encryption on major tech platforms has made it more challenging to de-

tect and report harmful content, placing a greater responsibility on parents, caregivers, and young people to recognize and report suspicious activity. To help families navigate today’s digital landscape, the Arkansas ICAC Task Force is sharing updated safety rules for kids:

**Old Rule:** Don’t talk to strangers in public.

**New Rule:** Don’t talk to strangers online—even if they seem friendly or say things you like.

**Old Rule:** Never get into a car with someone you don’t know.

**New Rule:** Never click on links or accept friend requests from people you don’t really know.

**Old Rule:** If something feels wrong, find a trusted adult right away.

**New Rule:** If something feels wrong online, tell a trusted adult immediately.

**Old Rule:** Don’t share your home address or phone number.

**New Rule:** Don’t share personal details like your school, hometown, or photos online.

**Old Rule:** Don’t take candy from strangers!

**New Rule:** Don’t accept gifts, money, or promises from people online—no matter how good it sounds.

The Arkansas ICAC Task Force urges all parents, educators, and community members to stay alert, stay involved, and help keep Arkansas’s children safe both online and off.

If you encounter suspicious online activity or potential threats, report them to local law enforcement or the Arkansas State Fusion Center at (501) 618-8001.

Contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

Together, we can make the Internet a safer place for every child.

# Jasper Pioneers Homemakers meet

By BETTY STIVERS

The June 11 meeting of the Jasper Pioneers Extension Homemakers Club was conducted by President Betty Stivers.

Tracy Lindsey led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Stivers gave the devotion.

Roll call was answered by what we were most look-

ing forward to this summer.

Lindsay, director of Tetelestai House of Boone County was the guest speaker. Tetelestai House is a faith-based nonprofit organization with a heart for the incarcerated and those impacted by incarceration, she said. It has served Boone and Newton

counties since 2013. Tetelestai is the Greek translation of the last words Jesus spoke on the cross when He said, “It is finished.”

John 19:30. The ministry helps women meet their needs when they leave incarceration by providing them with a place to stay, assist them in getting a job, finding a church home and

even work towards getting back custody of their children. The website is <https://www.tetelestaihouse.org> for more information.

A brief business meeting was held. Members recorded a total of 133 volunteer hours for May.

Terry Edwards and Stivers were the hostesses for the meeting.

## WHAT’S GOING ON

**Attention Newton County residents**

• To obtain your 911 address please contact the Newton County addressing office at 870-446-2966 or come by Monday — Friday 8-4:30. The office is located upstairs of the courthouse.

**ASP DL testing facilities**

• At each facility written exams are given from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and the skills exam is by appointment times only. Jasper – The 1st Tuesday of the month. Newton County Sheriff’s Office, 300 North Spring Street.

**Jasper Kiwanis Club**

• Meets 11:30 a.m. on Wednesdays at the Ozark Cafe. Al-Anon Meeting

• Support group for family and friends of alcoholics. The Jasper meeting now meets via Zoom every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information and Zoom ID, call 479-857-8281 or 870-446-2402.

**Narcotics Anonymous Meeting**

• Meeting in a rotating format on Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. at the Newton County Library. Conducted by Better Together Recovery, 230 south Stone Street, Jasper. [bettertogetherrecovery@gmail.com](mailto:bettertogetherrecovery@gmail.com) 870-446-2983.

**Community Matters**

• A group representing churches and non-profit organizations serving Newton County meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 10 a.m., at the Jasper Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. The group will meet next on June 26.

**Campbell Edgmon Post 93 Auxiliary**

• Meets the fourth Thursday of every month at the Legion Hut in Jasper from 4-6 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is June 25.

**American Legion, all you can eat pancakes and waffles**

• Scrambled eggs and sausage patties, biscuits and sausage gravy, along with coffee, milk, and orange juice. Only \$8 on the first Saturday of every month, starting at 7 a.m., at the American Legion Hut in Jasper. Served by Boy Scouts from Jasper/American Legion Troop 446. The next breakfast will be Saturday, July 5.

**Jasper Community Garden**

• Meet on the first Monday of each month at the Jasper United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall at 5:30 p.m. The next meeting is July 7.

**The Newton County Quorum Court**

• Meets the first Monday of each month at the courthouse beginning at 7 p.m., unless the first Monday is a holiday, then the quorum court meets Tuesday. The next meeting is Monday, July 7.

**The Newton County Master Gardeners**

• Meets at 4:30 p.m., the second Tuesday of each month at the Newton County Extension Office, 504 W. Court Street, Jasper. The location changes occasionally. The next meeting will be July 8.

**Western Grove City Council**

• Meets the first Tuesday of the month. The council meets at 7 p.m., at the Western Grove City Hall. The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 8.

**The Newton County Local Emergency Planning Committee**

• Meets the second Monday of each month at the Jasper Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, at 10 a.m. The next meeting will be Monday, July 14.

**The Newton County Friends of the Library**

• Meets at noon on the second Monday of each month at the Newton County Library. The next meeting will be July 14.

**The Deer/Mt. Judea District Board of Education**

• Regularly meets the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Location alternates. The next meeting is July 14 at Deer.

**The Newton County Hometown Health Initiative Coalition**

• Coalition of groups and individuals working towards improving the health and welfare of Newton County citizens. Regularly meets the second Thursday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Jasper Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. The next meeting is July 10.

**Newton County Animal Welfare**

• Regular meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month from 5 to 6 p.m., at the Newton County Library in Jasper. The next meeting is July 15.

# ASP confiscates illegal narcotics

From the Arkansas State Police

In less than 24 hours, Arkansas State Police (ASP) Troopers seized over 300 pounds of illegal narcotics during two separate traffic stops.

On June 19, at approximately 1:45 a.m., Troopers stopped a 2025 Toyota Camry for a traffic violation on Interstate 30 eastbound near the 65-mile marker in Clark County. Upon searching the vehicle, Troopers discovered 13 boxes containing over 150 bottles of illegal Promethazine. The driver, Latarash Davis, 48, and the passenger, Derrick Wells, 25, both of Memphis, were

arrested and taken to the Clark County Detention Center, where they were booked on possession of drug paraphernalia, unauthorized use of a vehicle, and unlawful sale and delivery of depressants/stimulants.

Later that same day, at around 11:45 a.m., Troopers stopped a 2025 GMC Acadia on I-40 eastbound near the Arkansas/Oklahoma state line for a traffic violation. A search of the SUV revealed more than 177 pounds of methamphetamine in duffel bags and boxes. The driver, Bryan Huckeba, 41, and the passenger, James Gilley, 47, both from Georgia, were arrested and trans-

ported to the Crawford County Detention Center. They were booked on felony charges of trafficking a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

“These seizures underscore the persistent threat posed by drug trafficking along Arkansas highways and the vigilance of Arkansas State Police Troopers in combating the flow of illegal narcotics,” said ASP Col. Mike Hagar. “These seizures not only disrupt the supply of dangerous drugs but also serve as a warning to traffickers that Arkansas State Police enforcement remains highly active and coordinated in its interdiction efforts.”

## Newton County Times

## State Capitol Week in Review

From SEN. BRYAN B. KING

LITTLE ROCK – Due to its growing popularity, legislators allocated an additional \$90 million to Educational Freedom Accounts.

The chief financial officer of the Education Department said that without the additional funds the state would not be able to make first quarter payments before the upcoming school year.

The governor proposed and the legislature approved the creation of Education Freedom Accounts in 2023, phasing in the program over three years. The 2025-2026 school year will be the first in which all students are eligible, and the number of families applying for the accounts shows that it is very popular.

Education Freedom Accounts provide families who home school, or who send their children to a private school, with 90 percent of the amount that state government and local school districts would spend for each pupil enrolled in public schools. In the 2025-2026 school year that will be \$6,864 for each student who is eligible for an Education Freedom Account.

According to the state Education

Department, it has received applications for more than 44,000 students, and almost 40,000 have already been approved. About 28,000 applications are from families who send their children to private schools and 16,000 are from families who home school their children.

The legislature anticipated higher demand for Education Freedom Accounts and earlier this year approved Act 1017, which set aside the additional \$90 million for the program.

Earlier this year the legislature increased funding for Education Freedom Accounts from about \$97 million to about \$187 million. Last week's allocation of \$90 million will bring the total amount of funding to \$277 million for the upcoming school year.

School Insurance

In the 2025 regular session the legislature created a sustainable, new system of property insurance for schools, higher education institutions and state agencies. It was the result of several years of work.

A legislative subcommittee approved the creation of a captive insurance plan last week that would

hold rates unchanged next year. Deductibles next year for schools will be \$25,000 if they have less than \$100 million in insured assets. For school districts with more assets the deductible will be \$50,000.

State agencies will have a deductible of \$250,000. A consultant's report cautioned that schools and state agencies can expect deductibles to increase the following year.

The state Board of Finance has approved the plan. Another state agency, the Department of Shared Administrative Services, will operate the insurance program, known as a captive plan. The state will operate the program as if it were its own insurance company.

The governor and lawmakers have been shoring up school finances with one-time disbursements, after they had experienced rising costs for property insurance. Last fiscal year the state provided \$11 million to help pay for higher insurance premiums that were driven up by claims after severe storms. Consultants reported to lawmakers that rates had tripled from 2021 to 2024, in large part due to wind and hail damage.

## Newton County TIMES

P.O. Box 453, Jasper, AR 72641  
870-741-2325

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jeffd@newtoncountytimes.com

## YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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## Raising the bar for border security and immigration enforcement

After years of crisis and chaos at the southern border thanks to reckless open-border policies, the Trump administration and GOP-controlled Congress are committed to border security and enforcing immigration law.

To continue that important push, we are crafting measures that bolster the tools and resources needed to maintain what is now the most secure border in American history. The turnaround to reach this point is undeniable.

In just 6 months, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Department of Homeland Security – as well the Coast Guard and even elements from the Department of Defense – have worked tirelessly to regain operational control along our borders while combating the influx of drugs and human trafficking. Rather than facilitating the deluge of migrants and asylum seekers into our country, they are now empowered to stop it.

As a result of the new administration's strong policies like ending catch-and-release and designating dangerous gangs and cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, Border Patrol is reporting staggering declines in the number of illegal immigrants attempting to cross our southern border today.

This May, CBP reported 8,725 encounters representing a 93 percent drop from the nearly 118,000 at the same time last year. Further,



JOHN BOOZMAN  
U.S. SENATOR

no illegal immigrants apprehended at the border were temporarily allowed into the U.S. last month when in May 2024, an estimated 62,000 border crossers were allowed to enter our country. Between January and May 2025, over 8,000 pounds of deadly fentanyl – an illicit drug responsible for over half of overdoses across The Natural State in 2022, were seized.

Failing to control our border or enforce federal immigration laws and policies puts Americans at risk. We saw the tragic consequences on numerous occasions, spurring action to equip law enforcement with more authority to protect communities from the threat of criminal illegal immigrants.

In fact, the first law President Trump signed in his second term was the Laken Riley Act. I was proud to cosponsor this effort to help spare more potential victims from suffering harm at the hands of violent unlawful migrants by ensuring they do not roam freely.

These efforts are not just good policy. They are popular with the

American public, a majority of whom overwhelmingly support strong, secure borders.

Senate Republicans are working to fund this important priority with a package that unlocks and allocates \$175 billion in necessary funding to hire more ICE and CBP agents, expand detention capacity, finish the border wall, update border surveillance technology and invest into state and local law enforcement partners.

America is a nation of immigrants and should remain welcoming to those who want to achieve the American dream through the lawful process. Throughout the last decade, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has naturalized nearly 8 million legal immigrants from around the world to enjoy the rights and honor of American citizenship.

But we are a nation of laws. Ignoring or undermining them, including forfeiting control of our borders and refusing to faithfully undertake immigration enforcement, leads to deadly, damaging outcomes. The last four years were unacceptable in addition to being a tremendous disservice to citizens and immigrants alike.

I am pleased that Congress and the executive branch are wasting no time to correct these failures. We look forward to soon providing even more support to the men and women carrying out the responsibility to execute real border security and protect us all from the vulnerabilities of immigration lawlessness.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Medicaid Cuts: A threat to every Arkansan

Today, Arkansas hospitals face significant challenges. Analysis from the most recent Medicare Cost Reports data shows that over 40% of Arkansas hospitals and more than 70% of rural hospitals operate at a loss in our state. When hospitals are not adequately reimbursed for providing care, they are forced to reduce services and staff.

Evidence of the current financial strain on Arkansas hospitals is clear: we are down to just 33 hospitals that deliver babies. Only 24 of our 75 counties have a hospital with a labor and delivery department. The closure of even one more would place an unsustainable strain on the remaining facilities that deliver babies and further diminish access to specialized care for moms and babies.

The budget reconciliation bill, H.R. 1 — known as One Big Beautiful Bill Act 119th Congress — recently passed the United States House of Representatives and is now under consideration in the Senate. This bill threatens health care in Arkansas. The Congressional Budget Office projects that 8.6 million Americans will lose Medicaid coverage over the next decade if this legislation becomes law. You might think this won't affect you, but it impacts every citizen in our state and our fragile health care system.

Medicaid ensures coverage for more than 880,000 Arkansans, with children and the elderly making up the largest percentage of those enrolled. Chances are that you, your family, or your neighbors have a loved one who is eligible for and currently receiving Medicaid and is at risk of losing that coverage. An increase in the uninsured rate in our state will directly impact hospital finances.

When more Arkansans lack coverage, hospitals bear the cost of uncompensated care. Arkansans who lose Medicaid will still need health care and will turn to our already overburdened emergency departments for services, increasing wait times for all patients, whether insured, uninsured, or covered by Medicaid or Medicare. Patient care in emergency departments often is more extensive and requires more costly treatments that drive up health care bills. Hospitals are forced to absorb significant uncompensated expenses. When expenses outpace revenue, hospitals are left with no choice but to make more cuts.

We cannot afford to lose more service lines. Hospitals that are already operating at a loss and have already cut services and staff could face closure, leaving Arkansans with decreased access to health care.

It is no secret that Arkansas ranks near the bottom for health care costs mainly because our reimbursement rates for Medicaid, Medicare, and commercial insurance are the lowest in the nation. For Medicaid, specifically, the federal government has allowed certain health care providers — like hospitals, nursing homes, and ambulance services — to participate in supplemental payment programs to at least partially offset Medicaid underpayments.

If the bill passes the Senate as is, these supplemental Medicaid rates for hospitals will remain locked in at the current rate. This legislation unfairly penalizes fiscally responsible, low-cost states like ours by capping rates at the current level, while rewarding high-cost states, such as California and New York, with a higher percentage. As prices for supplies, employees, and pharmaceuticals continue to rise, hospitals will have no way to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to keep up. Unlike other industries, hospitals cannot simply raise prices when governmental payers control more than half of our payments.

As it currently stands, the reconciliation bill will unfairly punish our small state. We urge Arkansans to speak up and let our Senators know that losing coverage and access to hospital care is unacceptable.

Bo Ryall  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
ARKANSAS HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

## A Bicentennial Reflection: Honoring a charge worthy to be remembered

This week marks the 200th anniversary of the only quote which rests in the House of Representatives, just above the Speaker's rostrum, serving as a weighty reminder of the significant duties and obligations for every legislator in the House of Representatives.

On June 17th, 1825, Daniel Webster was joined by another notable figure honored within the walls of this very same chamber: the Marquis de Lafayette. Webster and Lafayette were both in attendance for a memorial of the Battle of Bunker Hill in which more than 200 surviving Revolutionary War veterans were in attendance. Webster was to deliver the dedication speech and Lafayette was to lay the cornerstone for the monument to memorialize the war.

Monuments usually stand to encourage reflections of the past, but Daniel Webster's speech was a challenge to look toward the future. Mr. Webster's oration included the quote which now hangs in the House chamber and says, "Let us develop the resources of our land, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote all its great interests, and see whether we also in our day and generation may



BRUCE WESTERMAN  
U.S. CONGRESSMAN FOR  
ARKANSAS'S FOURTH DISTRICT

not perform something worthy to be remembered."

Looking up at this quote from Daniel Webster perfectly outlines the role each legislator plays in Congress – to develop our nation's resources and utilize the vast opportunity which they present. As a licensed forester and engineer, and someone who has dedicated a large portion of time to stewarding the resources of our land in a way that can be conserved, honored, and appreciated for generations to come, this call has always made perfect sense. The tireless work done in the House Natural Resources Community proudly embarks on championing these very ideals, and it is a privilege to serve on such an integral committee.

Upon the founding of our coun-

try, our forefathers crafted something so unique and monumental – establishing a way of life which, in that age, the world had never known. And over time, institutions and ideals were established which inspired watchful nations. Our forefathers drafted the blueprint for a modern-day democracy, and every generation since has taken up the mantle to preserve and defend it. While his original audience may have only been a few hundred people on a field in the middle of summer 200 years ago, that number continues to grow with each generation. As his audience now, in 2025, he calls us to promote our nation's great interests to see whether we – in our day and generation – may do something worthy to be remembered.

History's watchful eye is witness to the decisions that are made in the House chamber and the work done in the halls of Congress. The legacy and mission we have inherited as a legislative body remains as true now as it did in Daniel Webster's time. And we must never lose sight of the call to develop our nation's resources, build up our great institutions, and make the work we do in our own day and age something worthy of being remembered.

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**Deaths**

**Dennis Brasel**, 91, of Jasper, died Sunday, June 22 (2025). Visitation will be 5-7 p.m., Wednesday, June 25, at Coffman Funeral Home in Jasper. Funeral will be 11 a.m., Thursday, June 26, at the First Assembly of God Church in Jasper.

**Yolonda Mallory**, 78, of Compton, died at her home, June 20 (2025). Burial will be at a later date in the Fayetteville National Cemetery. Arrangements and cremation under the direction of Coffman Funeral Home of Harrison.

**David Wayne Powe**, 67, of Western Grove, died Friday, June 20 (2025). A celebration of life will be announced by Coffman Funeral Home of Harrison.

*The Newton County Times is pleased to publish death notices of reasonable length at no charge to the family. Expanded obits, with more detail and information, may be purchased as paid advertising through a funeral home or by calling Amanda Furr at the newspaper at (870) 743-0623.*

**OBITUARIES**

**Yolonda Mallory, 78, of Compton**

Yolonda Mallory, 78, of Compton, died at her home, June 20 (2025). Burial will be at a later date in the Fayetteville National Cemetery.

Arrangements and cremation under the direction of Coffman Funeral Home of Harrison.

The daughter of the late Alfred and Vesta (Stone) King was born May 9, 1947 in Sacramento, California.

She first moved to Arkansas in 1967, she began a long military career that pulled her away from the state, including her time in Germany. After retiring from the military, she returned to Arkansas in 1998, where she remained until her passing.

Yolonda was a US Army Veteran and was part of the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg. She had achieved the title of Master Blaster, logging over 264 jumps.

She was preceded in death by two sons, Raymond Lee Sims and Donald Ray Sims; three brothers and a sister.

Yolonda is survived by her children, Donna Saul and Ronald (Rose) Sims; a sister, Florence Beabout; nine grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and many relatives.



**Dennis Brasel, 91, of Jasper**

Dennis Wayne Brasel, 91, passed away peacefully from this life on June 22, 2025, at Jasper, Arkansas, Newton County, where he was born on March 15, 1934, to Doy and Oza Mae (Carter) Brasel.

Dennis attended school in Jasper until his senior year, when he joined the United States Air Force in 1953, serving for four years during the Korean War. He was an aircraft mechanic. He finished high school in Keflavik, Iceland, in 1955. After returning to Newton County in 1957, he went to work for the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Division, on the Ozark St. Francis National Forest, Buffalo Ranger District, for 32 years. He was registered in timber sales contracting, timber management, and was a registered land surveyor on this job for 22 years, along with a lot of other jobs on the Buffalo.

Dennis was a member of the Jasper Masonic Lodge No. 21 F & AM for over 50 years.

Dennis loved the Lord, his church, all his family, his church family, and all his many good friends. He loved to go to deer camp years ago with his son, Dad, and all that was at the camp. He loved to catch Rainbow Trout in the streams and lakes in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. He will truly be missed by all who loved, knew, and enjoyed his dry sense of humor.

Dennis is survived by his wife Lura Jean (Pierce) Brasel of 66 years and 9 days, his son James Paul and his wife Shelly Brasel, 3 grandchildren, Chelsea Dee Jean Brasel, Holden Dean and wife Lexus Brasel, and Lauryn Deshae and husband Lane Houston, 2 great grandsons, Joshua Dean Brasel and Benaiah James Houston, 1 great granddaughter April Ledford, his sister, Cynthia Faye Monday, 7 nephews, 3 nieces, and many dear friends and loved ones.

Dennis was preceded in death by his parents, one brother, John Buddy Brasel, one sister, Ruby (Brasel) Hamilton, two nephews, one niece, his daughter-in-law, Deanna (Wilson) Brasel, and many other family members and friends.

Visitation will be 5 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at Coffman Funeral Home in Jasper, AR.

The funeral service will be 11 a.m. on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at the First Assembly of God Church in Jasper with Pastor Steve Holt officiating.

Pallbearers will be Holden Dean Brasel, Lane Houston, Richard Unwer, Donald Simpkins, Wayne Patton, and Rick Reddell.

Memorials may be made to Newton County Senior Center, 100 E. Clark St., Jasper, AR 72641, and the Jasper Christian Food Room, 504 Court ST., Jasper, AR 72641. The family would like very much to thank the providers from Countryside Nursing and Rehab of Newton County and Legacy Hospice for their love, kindness, and support.



**Two fatally injured in crash**

Dayari Anahi Cifuentes, 26, and Florida Ochoa, 18, both of Green Forest, were fatally injured in a two vehicle crash in Carroll County, according to Arkansas State police.

The crash happened at 9:05 a.m., Wednesday, June 11, in Green Forest.

The two women were occupants of a Toyota vehicle in which a minor female, also of Green Forest, was injured.

Kasi Smothers, 36, of Green Forest, was the driv-

er of a 2015 Ford vehicle and was injured, according to the report filed by Trooper Sean R. Palmer.

The Ford was westbound on County Road 814. The 2020 Honda, being driven by Ochoa, was negotiating a curve when it crossed the centerline into the westbound lane. The Honda collided head-on with the Ford.

The injured were taken to North Arkansas Regional Medical Center in Harrison.

**David Powe, 67, of Western Grove**

David Wayne Powe, 67, of Western Grove, died Friday, June 20 (2025). A celebration of life will be announced at a later date and a more detailed obituary will be added soon.

The son of Louis and Gussie (Rester) Powe was born in Bogalusa, Louisiana, Oct. 29, 1957.

Survivors include his wife, Bobbie Jean Powe and son, Glen Joseph Breland (Chelsea); stepson, Brandon Alex Breland; and grandchildren, Ariannah Breland, Aurbey Breland, and Nyas Ray Breland.



**Church DIRECTORY**

**YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL HOMES OF WORSHIP**

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Sun. School 9:30 a.m. • Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m. • Wed. Adult & Children Bible Study 6 p.m.  
Craig Villines, Pastor

**COMPTON**  
**COMPTON BIBLE CHURCH**  
Sunday 11 a.m. service time.  
Pastor David Day • 870-577-1985.

**COMPTON COUNTY LINE**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Sun. School 9:30 a.m. • Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m. • Wed. 7 p.m.  
Steve Emerson, Pastor • 688-2415

**COWELL**  
**FIRST PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF COWELL**  
- Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 5 p.m.

**DEER -**  
**DEER BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
Bible Study, Wed. 6:30 p.m.  
428-5005

**DEER CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
Sun. Bible Study 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 6 p.m. • Kelly Woods, Preacher

**EVERTON**  
**LIGHTHOUSE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH**  
154 Hwy 206/Everson Rd. • Sunday School 10:30 a.m. • Worship 11:15 a.m. • Rev. Jerry Marshall, Pastor

**HASTY**  
**HASTY HOLINESS CHURCH**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • worship 11 a.m. & 6 p.m., Angie & Richard Bower, Pastors • 870-429-6122

**JASPER**  
**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
Sun. Bible Study 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. • Wed. Bible Study 6 p.m.  
Anthony McCutcheon, Preacher • 446-2978

**FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD**  
Sat. Prayer 7 p.m. • Sun. School 9:45 a.m. • Worship 10:45 a.m. • Sun. Worship 6 p.m. • Wed., Royal Rangers, Missionettes, Forgiveness Youth Group, Worship 7 p.m.  
Brother Steve Holt, Appointed Pastor • 446-2921

**FIRST BAPTIST**  
Sun. School 9:45 a.m.  
Worship 11 a.m. & 6 p.m. Wed. 6 p.m.  
Jimmy Dale Huskey, Pastor • 446-5442.

**JASPER METHODIST CHURCH**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m.  
Tue. Men's and Women's Bible Study Groups 9 a.m.  
Byron Mann, Pastor 870-446-2089

**NEWTON CO. COWBOY CHURCH**  
Sunday 5 p.m. • Newton Co. Fair Grounds • 870-291-9417

**TROY WALKER GRACE FOR LIFE MINISTRY**  
Sun. Worship 10 a.m.  
American Legion Hall, Jasper

**JASPER CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
Sun. School 9:45-10:45 a.m. • Worship 10:45-11:15 a.m. • For information: 391-1595

**LOW GAP FULL GOSPEL CHURCH**  
Services: Sunday 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.  
Wednesday 7 p.m. • Phone 870-861-5855  
Pastor Kelvin House

**JASPER SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**  
Worship: 9:30 - 11 a.m.  
Sabbath School 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
Pastor Ross Harris • 446-2122

**LURTON**  
**ASSEMBLY OF GOD**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. • Evening service 5 p.m. • Youth & Children's Wed. 7 p.m.  
Stan Taylor, Pastor

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Sunday worship at 10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday youth activities at 6:30 p.m.

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Kenneth Campbell, Pastor • Troy Royce & Paul Martin, Assistant Pastors

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**MT. SHERMAN ASSEMBLY**  
Sun. 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 6 p.m. • Wed. meal 5:45 p.m. • Services 6:30 p.m.  
Raymond White, Pastor • 861-5560

**PARTHENON**  
**Buffalo Church**  
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Pastor Austin Williams

**CHURCH OF GOD SEVENTH DAY**  
Sat. Services 11 a.m. • Wed. 6 p.m. • 1.5 miles • Diamond Cave Rd. • Jason Overman, Pastor 446-5736 or 446-2352

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Minister, Randall Chronister

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Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 6:30 p.m. • Wed. 6:30 p.m. • 446-5627

**PIERCETOWN NEWTON COUNTY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Sunday School: 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. • Wednesday Evening 6:30 Children and Youth ministries • Andrew Campbell, Pastor 434-5988

**SHILOH**  
**SHILOH UNITED BAPTIST**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. • Every 4th Saturday 7:30 p.m., Jerry Liggett, Pastor

**VENDOR**  
**BIG CREEK ASSEMBLY OF GOD**  
Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Worship 10:50 a.m. and 6 p.m. • Wed. 7:00 p.m. Bible study, youth & children's ministries  
Phil Pittman, Pastor 434-5517

**LOG HALL COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m. & 6 p.m., Jim Bohannon, Pastor • 434-6217

**WAYTON**  
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Sun. School 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m.  
Bible study 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month.  
Anthony Newboles, Pastor

**WAYTON FREEWILL BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Sunday School, 10 a.m. • Worship 11 a.m., Pastor Tony Taylor

**WESTERN GROVE ABUNDANT LIFE UPC**  
Wed. service 7 p.m. • Sun. Worship 10 a.m. & 6 p.m., J.W. Daniels, Pastor

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**Omaha boy killed in motorcycle wreck**

**Staff Report**  
[news@harrisonsdaily.com](mailto:news@harrisonsdaily.com)

RIDGEDALE, Mo. — Late Friday afternoon a young man was killed in a motorcycle wreck two miles north of Ridgedale, Missouri.

Three vehicles were involved in the wreck that claimed the life of an 18-year old man with an Omaha address. The Missouri State Troop D has not released the name of the victim or those involved in the three-vehicle wreck.

A 2024 Mazda CX30 was traveling westbound on Estate Drive driven by a Harrison woman when she tried to stop for another car.

The motorcycle was following the Mazda and struck the car. The rider of the motorcycle was then struck by a 2020 Jeep Cherokee that was driving east.

The motorcycle rider was pronounced dead at the scene by the paramedics on the scene.

Damage to the motorcycle was listed as totaled while the Cherokee had moderate damages and the Mazda had minor damage.

The fatality was the 51st this year in Troop D. Troop D is located in the southwest corner of Missouri and consists of 18 counties. The headquarters for the Troop is in Springfield, Missouri.



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**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN**

# Two times a captain

By BARBARA LEROY

Ambrose R. McPherson fought for both sides during the Civil War, serving as a captain in both the Confederate and Union Army.

He was born in Alabama, Aug. 17, 1830, but in 1848 came north to Carroll County, Arkansas. He married and started raising a family.

In 1860 he was farming in Jefferson Township in southwest Newton County. When Arkansas seceded, he was one of the organizers of Company E, 14th Arkansas Infantry, the only Confederate company organized in Newton County. He enlisted at Yellville, July 17, 1861, to serve one year.

He was elected captain of the company by the men. He fought at the Battle of Pea Ridge in March 1862 and marched with his company to northwest Mississippi after the battle.

In May the Confederate government ordered that all military units be reorganized. Ambrose chose to resign his commission and go home, about a month or so before his enlistment would have been up. He returned home.

It is likely that he kept in touch with the men of his former unit, many of whom deserted when they found out their terms of enlistment had been extended from one year to the duration of the war.

In January 1864, Union officials were forming a new company of volunteers in Newton County. They asked Ambrose to be the captain of Company E, 2nd Arkansas Infantry, and he accepted. He in turn convinced several of his former comrades in arms to join as well.

Why did they change sides?

They were given a bonus of \$100 for enlisting, which had to be a factor. But they were also told that they would spend most of their time “on scout” in Newton and surrounding counties, protecting their families. He and his company did just that for the majority of their time in service.

Ambrose was honorably discharged June 21, 1865 “to accept a civil appointment.” He had been appointed county judge and probate judge for Newton County by the governor. He held office for two terms, then became a justice of the peace.

In 1869 he became a minister in the Primitive Baptist Church.

After the death of his wife, he moved to Logan County Arkansas, where he lived with his brother. He died in Magazine, Arkansas, Aug. 20, 1914 and was buried in Old Union Cemetery there.

Barbara LeRoy is the author of “Which Side Were They On?,” a 302 page book listing biographical sketches of the Newton Countians who were involved in the Civil War, available for sale either in the Bradley House Museum or by purchasing online at [www.newtoncountytar.com](http://www.newtoncountytar.com). The book sells for \$33.

**EXTENSION CORNER**

# Mental health tips for farmers, farm families facing stress

By REBEKAH HALL  
U of A System Division of Agriculture

With the uncertainties of weather and global economics, compounded by geographic isolation, farmers and their families are often immersed in high-stress situations that people in other walks of life don't understand.

“When you're a farmer, a lot of the typical advice that is given to nonfarmers for managing stress isn't applicable,” said Brittney Schrick, extension associate professor and family life specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

“You can't just take a vacation. You can't just get a different job. You're at the mercy of the growing season and the calendar,” Schrick said. “For people who go into agriculture, it's a calling just like anything else. And often, what is suggested to these folks is to just quit or leave this behind, and that's not really an option.”

Schrick said it's important for farmers and their families to seek connection with friends — and mental health professionals — who understand the world of agriculture.

“I hear that there is sometimes a disconnect between well-meaning family and friends, and with professionals, who are not familiar with the culture,” Schrick said. “That can be an additional stressor: constantly having to explain why you can't just go away for the weekend. Try to seek someone out who understands the agriculture world, because if they don't, they're likely not going to be as helpful.”

In addition to climate and economic uncertainty, Schrick said “isolation is a major factor for farmers.”

“Often, farmers experience geographic distance from their peers,” Schrick said. “You're in a smaller community to begin with, and in very rural areas, farmers live even outside of that community. So, everything takes longer, and you have to go further to do everything. This adds up in gas costs, the time it takes away from work you could be doing on the farm and the toll this can take on farmers

and their families emotionally — it can get lonely.”

Identify the problem, get creative with solutions

With many factors beyond farmers' control, Schrick said it's important to “identify your major stressor and then look at all of the available resources to make decisions based on what you can utilize.”

Schrick said the following steps can help break down that process:

- Make as much of an exhaustive list of your resources as you can. Write all of them down so you can see the options in front of you. Especially when managing things like finances, it can be helpful to see all of your avenues laid out. Even if you've used a resource before, or never considered using it, include those too.

- Assess all the options by gathering relevant information and discussing it with someone you trust. Even if they don't have a say in the final decision, a trusted friend or family member can be a great sounding board.

- Be open to trying something new. For example, getting a professional to look at the books can be incredibly helpful. You don't have to hire them full time but paying for an hour or two of their time to help organize things can make a big difference.

- Use your extension connections — not just your county agriculture agent, but also your family and consumer sciences agent. They can help you brainstorm new ways to manage your family's home budget or market your business to a new audience.

Schrick said a crucial warning sign for stress becoming difficult to manage is changes in a person's behavior.

“If someone is not acting like themselves — such as sleeping a lot or not at all or eating a lot or eating very little — any change from their normal self, that's what you need to pay attention to,” Schrick said. “Watch out for each other and pay attention to these changes. If you notice your friend is having to refill the beer fridge more frequently or refill their pain medications sooner than in the past, it doesn't hurt to ask them about it.”

Farmers should also be aware of

“what their bodies feel like when they're stressed,” Schrick said. “People who have a tendency to be self-sufficient, like farmers, might not notice how things are affecting them because they're used to feeling stressed. But maybe your stomach has been hurting a lot, or you've been having more frequent and worse headaches, or having a really hard time managing your diabetes lately, when it's been fine before.”

“Chronic stress does truly damaging things to the body, so if you can take a breath and notice, ‘Wow, this isn't just a normal feeling,’ that can go a long way to preventing things from getting worse,” Schrick said.

Physical and emotional symptoms of stress can include:

- Back or neck muscles tense and aching
  - Breathing short or labored
  - Low energy and body fatigue, tiredness
  - Difficulty with sleep
  - Getting angry easily
  - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
  - Anxiety, panic feelings
  - Withdrawal, isolation
- Relationship symptoms of stress can include:
- Communication difficulties
  - Conflict with family members
  - Verbal or physical outbreaks
  - Lack of satisfaction
  - Strained interactions

Schrick said she was recently part of a panel that focused on farmers' mental health, and several attendees agreed that one person speaking up about their issues can often trigger this same admission from their peers. By recognizing and sharing one's own struggles, finding empathy and understanding within your community can be the first step to managing this stress.

“One of the things that came up multiple times was how one person having the courage to admit that they're struggling can start a snowball of people feeling more comfortable to share their own struggles,” Schrick said. “If someone is willing to be the first person to say, ‘Y'all, this is hard,’ everybody else can say so, too.”

**AS LIFE GOES BY**

By ELAINE LAUNDERVILLE

My bookclub is reading the book, “All the Colors of the Dark,” by Chris Whitaker. I thought the club was meeting last week and I couldn't go. Turns out it is this week and I will be able to attend. The book is mesmerizing and suspenseful! It was really good and I couldn't wait to see how it ended. When I got it I was surprised it was 595 pages long.

I couldn't go to bookclub last week (thinking it was the date) because Amanda injured her right arm and had to go to Urgent Care. It is not good to not be able to use your arm if you are a massage therapist. Hopefully, she will be better soon.

It seemed like I watched the Hogs play baseball a good portion of the

week. We played some good games even though we lost to LSU twice, but won games with UCLA and Murray State. Wehiwa Aloy won the Golden Spike Award. Gage Wood pitched a no-hitter the first time since 1960, and has happened only three times in history. Gage pitched 119 pitches in the game!

Saturday, Jackie and I picked up the TTT campers from the Rogers High School parking lot. The camp sends the kids home on a big greyhound bus. We have two girls we send from Garfield and we have two girls from Springdale who are picked up at their high school. The four girls met and were taken to the Dairy Queen in Lowell for a treat. Four of our TTT members and the four girls enjoyed sharing their activities for the week.

Earlier in the week, Jackie and I played bridge at the Springdale Senior Center on Monday and Tuesday. It won't be long until the new Senior Center will be ready for us to meet there. I think it will be finished in July-August.

I watched the Grammy Greats on Friday evening. It was a look back at some of the songs that had won the Grammy Award Song of the Year. Gayle King and Mickey Guyton hosted the evening with the stories behind the songs. Loved it!

Have a great week. Stay cool. The weather is really getting hot! Some gardens are producing. Jackie is already getting green beans, tomatoes, and cucumbers. I am sure others are getting good things to eat, too.

**COMPTON**

By MATTHEW PIPER

Last week: Garland Matlock reports that the fishing derbies, which were held in May, were well attended. Thank you to those who supported the fishing derbies, and to the sponsors of the derbies, which included the American Legion from Jasper, the County

Line Baptist Church, the Compton 4-H Club, and the Compton Volunteer Fire Department. There are so many people in the area who support the Volunteer Fire Department and the fishing derbies each year.

The Compton Community Association held a 50/50 raffle to raise

funds for the Community Association. The winner donated the funds back to the Association. For more information about how to donate to the Compton Community Association, please contact Paulette Jech, Karen Fancher, or Darlene Cullen.

We had a good visit a couple of weeks ago with Barbara Burge Robinson and Linda Allred Johnson. Linda is the daughter of Mary Jo Edgar Allred and the late Charlie Allred. Mary Jo is a first cousin to my late grandfather, Joseph Edgar. It was nice to see Barbara and Linda.

The Father's Day luncheon will be held at the New Hope Full Gospel Church after morning services on Sunday. There will be no evening services on Sunday.

This week: Addi and I were happy to host the wedding of my brother and his new bride on Saturday evening, June 14. The ceremony took place in our back yard, with the reception at our home. About 25 family and friends attended. We wish them all

the best.

The Father's Day luncheon at the New Hope Full Gospel Church was well attended last Sunday. Wesley Sparks was honored as the oldest father. Cody Burks was honored as the youngest father. A drawing was held for three prizes. Willard Villines won a cooler, Caleb Dye won a brisket, and I won a nice water hose. We appreciate our pastors for all they do for the congregation.

I spent the day on Tuesday with my grandmother, Barbara Edgar Bartlett. We cleaned 123 ears of corn that day. Someone asked me how I freeze my corn. I always blanch it in hot water for five minutes, then put it in ice water until it cools. I lay it out on a towel to drain and then cut it off the cob. It made 25 quart bags of cut off corn. My cucumbers have come on in a hurry. I have been canning bread and butter pickles and a few sour dill pickles this week. I also canned some tomatoes this week. We will eat well this winter.

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## EDUCATION ON *Koen Interpretive Trail*

By **JEFF BRASEL**  
jeffb@harrisdaily.com

*This is the first of a four part series on hikes in the Ozark Campground area.*

**E**RBIE — As school begins in seven weeks, there is a small trail that will offer a great experience for hikers of all ages. Between Erbie, Pruitt and Jasper is the Koen Interpretive Trail. The trail is a great way to educate visitors on nature in the Ozarks. This area of the forest trail was established in 1985 and it was first designed as a fitness trail. However, as members of the various organizations worked on the project, it was converted to an educational trail. There were many native and non-native trees in the compacted area. The trail is a hard paved surface that allows for an easy hike that is also a wheelchair trail. There are many spurs to the trail. A good half mile will cover each of the different legs of the walk. While on the walk, there are 24 signs that identify trees along the paths. The trees include: Black Cherry; Winged Elm; Red Mulberry; Common Persimmon; White Ash; Shortleaf Pine; Mockernut Hickory; Pitch Pine; Eastern Redbud; Black Walnut; Loblolly Pine; White Pine; Tulip Poplar; Honeylocust; Southern Red Oak; Black Locust; Flowering Dogwood; Sycamore; Hackberry; Boxelder; Chinkapin Oak; Sassafras; Eastern Redcedar; and Serviceberry. This

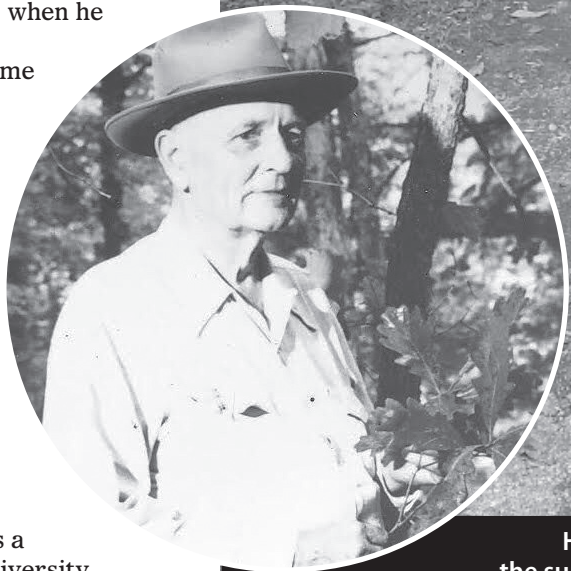
area is a good way to spend some time either after work or during the day. There are many picnic tables at the parking area that can allow families to spend time in a complete outdoor adventure or for school groups to have lunch on a day trip. There are information kiosks along the way and benches to allow visitors to rest if needed. The Koen Trail is named after a Bellefonte resident. Henry Koen was known as the Ozarks Father of Forestry. Known as Uncle Henry, Koen was born in Bellefonte in 1877. He received his first appointment to the Forest Service in 1913. The Forest Service had only been established for eight years when he joined the group.

In 1922, Koen became the forest supervisor for the Ozark National Forest. He held this position for 17 years before moving to Atlanta, Ga. to join the southern regional office of the Forest Service.

He only stayed in Georgia for four years before moving back to Arkansas.

During his time of retirement, Koen was a consultant for the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He also served on several committees that included the Keep

See **TRAIL**, A8



Henry Koen served as the supervisor of the Ozark National Forest from 1922 to 1939. Koen, who was born in Bellefonte, served during the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. **JEFF BRASEL/STAFF**

## Déjà LSU: Arkansas falls in Omaha

By **Otis Kirk**  
nallensports@att.net

OMAHA, Neb. — Arkansas had its chances against LSU on Wednesday night, but it appeared the Omaha jinx continued for them in the ninth inning as they fell to the Tigers 6-5 to conclude the season.

Arkansas (50-15) took a 5-3 lead into the bottom of the ninth and appeared to be on the verge of forcing a winner-take-all game on Thursday. However, the Hogs shot themselves in the foot bringing back memories of the loss to Oregon State in 2018. Dave Van Horn talked about the disappointment with the loss.

“First off, congratulations to LSU,” Van Horn said. “Man, they’ve got a great team. They just kept fighting. We kept fighting. They took the lead. We came back, took the lead. Then they got us. It would have been nice to win the game, get to tomorrow, see what happens. But that’s baseball. It’s a crazy game. Seen it all, I think.”

“But I feel like we played as hard as we could. Third day in a row. Really wanted to play a fourth. Hoping to get to the weekend. But it’s just the way it ended up. But proud of our team. It’s hard to say goodbye. I’m not good at saying goodbyes anyway. Great team, fun team, hard-working team. And probably just “team.” Man, they were a team. You could tell by how emotional they were after the game.

“It was a lot of heartbreak, maybe because we lost the game but honestly probably because the season’s over and they don’t get to be around each



Razorback junior pitcher Justin Thomas Jr. sits quietly in the outfield after their heartbreaking loss to LSU at Charles Schwab Field in Omaha, Nebr. **CRAVEN WHITLOW/NATE ALLEN SPORTS SERVICES**

other every day. So proud of them. Proud of the University of Arkansas.”

Cole Gibler struck out pinch hitter John Pearson to start the bottom of the ninth. Derek Curiel then hit a ball toward second base, but Reese Robinett went for it instead of covering his base. He fielded and tried to throw to Gibler only to throw it away allowing Curiel to get to second base. It was ruled a single and then a throwing error allowing Curiel to take second. Ethan Frey then walked to put runners on first and second

with one out.

Steven Milam hit a grounder to Wehiwa Aloy at shortstop. Aloy appeared to have an easy double play that would have ended the game. Instead Aloy opted to throw to third baseman Brent Iredale to get the lead runner for the second out. That would immediately come back to haunt the Hogs. Luis Hernandez hit a line drive to left field that appeared to be a catchable ball. However a

See **RAZORBACKS**, A8

## SEC announces Arkansas’ basketball opponents

By **UA Communications**

FAYETTEVILLE — The Southeastern Conference released the men’s basketball home and away conference opponents for the 2025-26 season. The Razorbacks will play each of the league’s three Tigers — LSU, Missouri and Auburn — twice during the regular season, once at home and once on the road.

As for the teams Arkansas will face once, the Razorbacks will host Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A&M and Vanderbilt while playing at Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Ole Miss, Mississippi State and Oklahoma.

League play tips off on Saturday, January 3, and runs through Saturday, March 7. Each SEC team plays the other 15 teams at least once

during league play. Three teams will be played a second time during the schedule — two of which are permanent opponents and one that will change each year.

The SEC Tournament returns to Nashville, Tenn., as Bridgestone Arena will host the event from March 11-15, 2026.

See **HOGS**, A8

## It is a Final Four finish

**L**ast week I had high hopes for Arkansas baseball. I spoke of the verbs that have been made from athlete’s last names.

My hopes was that we wouldn’t create any new verbs from last names unless they were positive ones.

Gage Wood created a very positive verb. I hope one day that one of my grandsons throws a Gage.

Wood tossed a no-hitter against Murray State. He had 19 strikeouts during the game.

Get that right, it was a no-hitter in the College World Series. Only two other times had that happened it was more than 60 years ago when college only used wooden bats.

In the professional and college ranks, that is the most strikeouts with a no-hitter. This will not happen again. That was a moment.

The darlings of the College World Series was Murray State. They were the little engine that could. They have an 800 seat stadium. Arkansas could have 11,000+ at a game. They have more than 800 people on the wait list for season tickets.

I didn’t want to play Murray State. I didn’t want to be the ones to eliminate them. Their coach, Dan Skirka, held an emotional press conference after the game. He referenced a quote from Tom Hanks in A League of Their Own — “there is no crying in baseball.”

Skirka was very emotional when he discussed the end of the year after the Arkansas loss. We have some very emotional Arkansas photos in today’s edition of the paper



**JEFF BRASEL**  
SPORTS@NEWTONCOUNTYTIMES.COM

See **BRASEL**, A8

# Six Hogs earn Phil Steele Preseason All-SEC Honors

By UA Communications

FAYETTEVILLE — Highlighted by Fernando Carmona and Kam Shanks' first-team selections, six Razorbacks earned preseason All-SEC honors from Phil Steele.

Carmona and Shanks earned All-SEC praise at the offensive guard and punt returner positions, respectively. The duo also garnered preseason All-America honors as Shanks was selected to the first team and Carmona checked in on the second team. In addition to Carmona and Shanks, Cam Ball was named second-team All-SEC as a defensive tackle, while offensive tackle Corey Robinson II and punter Devin Bale collected third-team recognition, and linebacker Xavian Sorey Jr. was named Fourth-Team All-SEC.

Carmona was an integral part of the Razorbacks' offensive line in 2024, starting all 13 games while helping Arkansas average 459.5 yards of total offense per game, which ranked 10th nationally. The Las Vegas, Nev., product also pass-protected for an aerial attack that ranked 18th nationally with an average of 274.7 yards per game. Behind Carmona, Arkansas registered two of its top 10 single-game total

yardage outputs in program history in 2024. He helped pave the way for 673 yards of total offense (314 passing, 359 rushing) while not allowing a single sack during the Razorbacks' dominant 58-25 win over Mississippi State (Oct. 26) and 687 yards of total offense during a 70-0 season-opening win over Arkansas-Pine Bluff (Aug. 29).

Shanks arrives in Fayetteville after spending his first two seasons at UAB. As a redshirt freshman in 2024, the Prattville, Ala., native was the most electrifying punt returner in the nation. Shanks led all FBS players in punt return yards (329), punt return average (20.6), and punt return touchdowns (2) while being named a finalist for the Jet Award, which honors the most outstanding return specialist in college football. In addition to serving as a return man, Shanks turned in two 100-yard receiving games, including a nine-catch, 119-yard receiving performance at Army (Oct. 12) and a career-high 153 receiving yards and three touchdowns against Tulsa (Nov. 2).

Ball started all 13 games as a redshirt junior in 2024 while registering a career-high 47 tackles, including four for loss and 1.5 sacks. The Atlanta

product also tallied two quarterback hurries and a fumble recovery. He registered five tackles and a quarterback hurry during the Hogs' Liberty Bowl win over Texas Tech (Dec. 27) and a career-high seven tackles, including one for loss in the regular-season finale at Missouri (Nov. 30). Ball also played a significant role in the Razorbacks' 58-25 win at Mississippi State (Oct. 26) with a fumble recovery, three total tackles and an assisted sack.

Robinson arrives in Arkansas for his redshirt senior season after transferring from Georgia Tech. In 2024, the 6-5 305-pound offensive lineman saw action in 12 games while starting the final seven games of the season. Robinson helped pave the way for Georgia Tech to rush for 186.8 yards per game, which ranked third among all ACC teams. He was part of an offensive unit that posted three 500-yard performances, including a 563-yard effort against No. 2 Georgia (Nov. 29). Robinson's 91.2 pass-blocking grade, according to Pro Football Focus, led all Power 4 offensive linemen and ranks fourth in the FBS.

Bale made an immediate impact during his first season as a Razorback in 2024. He

punted 41 times for 1,855 yards while registering a 45.2-yard punting average with 11 punts downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line and 11 punts of 50+ yards. His 45.2-yard punting average would have ranked in the top 15 nationally if he had enough punts to qualify. Bale had punts downed at the 2-yard line and 1-yard line, respectively, against LSU (Oct. 19) and Oklahoma State (Sept. 7) during the 2024 season while registering a season-long 66-yard punt during a 19-14 win over No. 4 Tennessee (Oct. 5).

Sorey was among the league's best linebackers in 2024. During his first season as a Hog, he started all 13 games and led the team with 99 total tackles (40 solos, 59 assists) while tying for the team lead in tackles for loss with 9.5 in addition to registering two sacks, an interception, a pass breakup and three quarterback hurries. He ranked sixth in the SEC in tackles per game with 7.6 and led Arkansas in tackles during five of the Razorbacks' 13 games.

Arkansas kicks off the 2024 season on Saturday, Aug. 30 when they welcome Alabama A&M to Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium for a 3:15 p.m. matchup on SEC Network.

## RAZORBACKS

From Page A7

diving Charles Davalan failed to catch it after slipping and the ball shot away from him allowing two runs to score and Hernandez stand on second base and the game tied at 5 with two outs. Van Horn went to the bullpen and brought in Aiden Jimenez who had pitched three innings Tuesday night throwing 41 pitches. Jimenez opted to pitch to Jared Jones who singled to center field to plate Hernandez ending another Arkansas season.

The decision to pitch to Jones was a little surprising. With Arkansas leading 3-2 in the bottom of the eighth, Jones hit a Gibler pitch over the fence in right field with two outs to tie the game at 3.

"Right on right, I don't think so," Van Horn said of pitching to Jones. "We didn't feel like that it was something we needed to do. Hindsight is 20-20. We could talk about all the ifs and butts until we're sick of each other."

Justin Thomas Jr. continued his hot hitting in the top of the ninth. With one out, Robinett singled and Iredale doubled to put runners on second and third. Thomas then singled to left field plating both Robinett and Iredale for a 5-3 lead.

It was a scoreless game until the top of the fourth. Ryder Helfrick led off the inning with a solo blast over the fence in deep center field for a 1-0 lead.

That lead held up until LSU plated two runs in the bottom of the sixth. Landon Beidelschies was outstanding in the start. He pitched five innings. Beidelschies allowed three hits, two runs, one walk and fanned nine. However, in the bottom of the sixth Beidelschies allowed a double and then hit a batter to start the inning. Van Horn came and pulled him putting in Gabe Gaekle.

Gaekle then forced a ground out and struck out a hitter. After an intentional walk to Josh Pearson loaded the bases LSU went to a pinch hitter. Jake Brown, hitting for Chris Stanfield, singled to plate a pair of runs to go up 2-1.

The Razorbacks regained the lead in the top of the eighth. Thomas led off with a single. Davalan reached on a fielder's choice. With one out, Wehiwa Aloy singled to left field. Both scored and the Hogs had the lead temporarily.

Gaekle, who had thrown 90 pitches in six innings on Saturday night, returned to throw 51 pitches in three innings on Wednesday. He allowed four hits, one run, walked a pair and fanned four. Gibler (3-2) took the loss. He pitched 0.2 inning allowing two hits, three runs, walked one and fanned a hitter. The Hogs four pitchers struck out 14 and issued four walks.

LSU used four pitchers as well. Jacob Mayers (2-0) got the win. He worked 0.2 innings allowing just one hit and striking out two. Zac Cowan started and was followed to the mound by Jaden Noot and Chase Shores before Mayers. LSU's pitchers combined to strike out 11 Hogs and walked none.

The Razorbacks finished with nine hits while LSU countered with 10. The Hogs stranded six runners while LSU left eight on base. Van Horn has talked all season about this team being special and repeated that on Wednesday.

"This is one of the top teams I've ever coached, on and off the field, just being around them," Van Horn said. "It's funny, I've been doing it for a while and people will say things to me like, you know the kids have really changed over the years. I always say, no, they haven't. They're good. They just want to know that you care about them."

"Yeah, that's tough, man. Kids are good, man. I love being around them. That's why I do it."

## BRASEL

From Page A7

after the Final Four loss, but The Associated Press had one of a Murray State player after the 3-0 loss to Arkansas.

He was on the infield scooping up dirt and putting it in a water bottle. That was an event that he will remember the rest of his life and one that he will share with his kids. Murray State will not be back to the College World Series next year.

Arkansas has the chance to get back to the CWS every year.

I will not get into the bottom of the ninth and all the mistakes that were made by 19-, 20- and 21-year olds. I feel bad for them and yes, there could be some verbs made out those mistakes.

Every year, I want to start the season being an interested Arkansas fan, but not get emotionally

attached. Every year, I am unsuccessful.

Maybe I should use the unemotional attachment as a New Year's Resolution. I have been very good with my resolution from last year and again this year. I have not called a single person an idiot all year long. Last year I only called a Verizon customer service representative from a foreign land an idiot for my only time in 18 months.

I am going to be a Gage in my attempt at not getting emotionally attached to my Hogs.

That makes three top four finishes for Arkansas in the last week. Both track teams were top notch and then the Diamond Hogs.

Jeff Brasel is the sports and managing editor and general manager of the Newton County Times. E-mail him at [sports@newtoncountytimes.com](mailto:sports@newtoncountytimes.com) or follow him at [X.com/jeffbrasel](https://www.facebook.com/jeffbrasel).



JEFF BRASEL/STAFF

## TRAIL

From Page A7

Arkansas Green Committee and the Arkansas Resources and Development Commission. He passed in Bellefonte in 1965.

To reach Koen, travel south on Highway 7. The exit will be 2.2 miles from the center of the new Ponca bridge. Turn right on Newton County Road 2500.

Travel on this road for .5 of a mile. There will be a sign on the right.

## HOGS

From Page A7

### Arkansas 2025-26 SEC Opponents

#### HOME GAMES

Auburn  
Kentucky  
LSU  
Missouri  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Texas A&M  
Vanderbilt

#### AWAY GAMES

at Alabama  
at Auburn  
at Florida

at Georgia at LSU at Ole Miss at Mississippi State at Missouri at Oklahoma

Under the new scheduling format, this will be the second-straight year Arkansas will face both LSU and Missouri twice as SEC-designated "permanent opponents." Auburn is the third team Arkansas will play both home and away. Texas was that third team last season.

Arkansas and LSU have met for a home-and-home series in all but two seasons since the Razorbacks joined the SEC for the 1991-92 season. The Razorbacks and Tigers only met once in 2013 (in Baton Rouge) and just once in 2015 (in Fayetteville). Arkansas leads the Tigers 40-32 since the Razorbacks joined the SEC. Since Arkansas joined the SEC, the Tigers are the Razorbacks' most common SEC opponent with 72 meetings followed by Mississippi State (61), Alabama (60), Auburn (60) and Ole Miss (59).

Arkansas and Missouri will

be playing a home-and-home series for the 14th consecutive year. The streak coincides with the number of years since the Tigers joined the SEC (2012-13). Arkansas leads the all-time series with Missouri, 36-28, and leads 17-10 since Mizzou joined the SEC, including wins in eight of the last 10 meetings.

The last time Arkansas and Auburn met twice during the regular season was the 2017-18 campaign. Auburn upset the #22 Razorbacks in the first meeting, 88-77 on Jan. 6, 2018 in Auburn, and Arkansas returned the favor with a 91-82 victory over #14 Auburn in Bud Walton Arena (2/17/2018).

Arkansas will make its first trip to Norman since the 2011-12 season. The Sooners won that meeting, 78-63 on Dec. 10, 2011. Overall, Arkansas is just 3-8 in games played in Norman. However, the teams have only meet a total of five times in Norman since the 1998-99 season, a span of 27 years.

For just the second consecutive year and the fourth time since Texas A&M joined the SEC (2012-13), Arkansas and

the Aggies will meet just once in the regular season. Texas A&M is Arkansas' most common opponent with 170 games played in the series since the Hog's first year of basketball (1923-24). Arkansas leads the all-time series with the Aggies, 108-62, and own a 13-11 advantage since A&M joined the SEC. The home team has dominated the series over the last 14 seasons as Arkansas is 10-1 versus the Aggies at home and Texas A&M is 8-3 versus the Razorbacks in College Station.

If history is an indicator, the home schedule sets up well for Arkansas. The Razorbacks are 23-6 all-time versus Auburn in Fayetteville, 8-10 versus Kentucky, 25-8 versus LSU, 21-10 versus Missouri, 12-6 versus South Carolina, 12-5 versus Tennessee, 47-22 versus Texas, 62-15 versus Texas A&M and 16-5 versus Vanderbilt.

As part of a scheduling quirk, Arkansas will be making just its sixth trip to Mississippi State since the 2015-16 season. The teams have played in Fayetteville eight times over the span.

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## Jasper board approves parental leave policy

Staff Report

Arkansas schools offer up to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for eligible public school employees under the LEARNS Act, with the state and districts sharing the cost. This policy applies to birth, adoption, and foster care placements. While the state offers to cover half the cost of a substitute teacher, districts still bear the cost of the teacher's salary while on leave, which may deter some from participating.

The Jasper School District Board of Education approved several policy changes last month, but Superintendent Dr. Candra Brasel said she withheld the Parental Leave Policy to give the matter more thorough consideration. In the end, she said, she decided to follow the policy recommended by the Arkansas School Board Association (ASBA).

If the district were to veer away from the ASBA policy the district would be on its own if there were any litigation that would come its way, she reasoned.

Highlights of the policy were marked in red on the handouts given to the board.

An employee shall be eligible to take paid leave under this policy if the:

Employee has not been disciplined for any leave abuse during the past year prior to the need for leave.

An employee shall only be eligible for a total of 12 weeks of paid parental leave when the parental leave is due to the adoption of a child, and the adoption is following the foster placement of the same child in the employee's home.

Any day during the academic year designated as a day when academic classes will not be held, including holidays, shall not be counted when calculating:

- A. The 12 week from the cause for leave; or
- B. The total number of days approved as parental leave.

The above reads the same for both classified and licensed personnel.

## Personnel movements made in OMSD

Staff Report

One almost needs a program to keep up with Ozark Mountain School District personnel.

Superintendent Jeff Lewis resigned effective the end of his contract on June 30. The school board interviewed four applicants in a special meeting in May. They were Bryce Harrison, Edwin Butterworth, Jess Knapp and Misty Tabor. Knapp, who is the current principal at Bruno-Pyatt Elementary and St. Joe Elementary schools, was selected for the assignment and will move into the superintendent's office July 1.

Other moves were approved by the board at its regular meeting Thursday night, June 19.

Nichole Cunningham will resign from the school district Federal Programs position effective July 18. BillyJack Jarett will resign as



Jess Knapp

tech assistant effective June 30.

New hires include Gary Jackson bus driver and Patricia Hull, Level I maintenance at Western Grove.

Reassignment or additional duties approved by the board are Jeri Redding, assistant principal at St.

Joe and Bruno Pyatt to Principal at St. Joe and Bruno-Pyatt.

The board also appointed Bart Beaver as a school board member. Beaver ran unopposed for seat 7, but he was not sworn in by the deadline.

Other members are Travis Freeman, Andy McCutcheon, Travis Dixon, Allen Glidewell, Jason Smith, and Donald Morris.

Before the June meeting adjourned, Lewis asked to say a few words. He thanked the board members for their support during his time as superintendent acknowledging there were ups and downs throughout. He parted the meeting shaking hands with each of the directors.

Lewis is returning to the coaching ranks as he accepted a job in the Harrison School District for the 2025-2026 school year.

## ARTA Grant Recipient

Sandy Allen, third grade teacher at Oark School, has been awarded the Parsons-Burnett Scholarship Grant in the amount of \$2,000 — a competitive and well-deserved honor! This scholarship is funded by memorials and generous donations from members of the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association, dedicated champions of life-long learning and public education. Allen's success reflects a continued commitment to furthering her education in service of Arkansas's public school children. The presentation was made by Randy Laverty. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



## Jasper school board retains current officers

Staff Report

The Jasper School District Board of Education elected to continue its current slate of officers: Joel Brasel as president, Stacy Root as vice president, and Quentin Rylee as secretary and legislative liaison. Other board members are Garrett Davidson, Kevin Hasty, Jim Randy Laverty and Lisa Snow.

The board is required to reorganize following the annual school elections.

Act 503 of 2025 mandates that school boards transition to terms of either four or six years with the terms staggered to ensure that, as nearly as possible, an equal number of board seats are up for election at every school board election, which will only occur in even years. Board members currently serving will see their terms adjusted to expire according to specific timelines laid out in the act.

Superintendent Dr. Candra

Brasel said she checked with an Arkansas School Board Association lawyer for clarification on what the new law's effect will be on the Jasper Board which earlier voted to go from five to six year terms.

There will be four school board seats coming up for election in the spring of 2026. This will result in unbalanced terms. Following the election those four board members will draw lots to balance the terms. One of those board seats would be up for election

again in 2028, according to the lawyer.

Important election dates:

Aug. 14, 2025: candidate signature petition circulation opens.

Nov. 3, 2025: Candidate filing prior opens at noon.

Nov. 12, 2025: Candidate filing period closes at noon.

Jan. 1, 2026: Deadline to publish proposed budget.

March 2, 2026: School Board Election.

Nov. 3, 2026: Run-off election.

## D/MJ to destroy special ed records

Outdated special education records prior to June 2019 from the Deer-Mt. Judea School District are slated to be destroyed July 5, 2025. Students who were served in special education programs or parents and guardians of served students can review and request the records before they are destroyed.

State and federal guidelines state these records are to be maintained for six years after a student no longer receives special education services, or if the records are no longer needed to provide services.

Special education records from the Mt. Judea campus are available for pickup, upon request, at the Mt. Judea Administration Building. Contact Malory Lackey to request a pickup of the special education file, or for any questions regarding records. 870-434-8240.

Special education records from the Deer campus are available for pickup, upon request, at the Deer High School office. Contact Lindsey Taylor to request a pickup of the special education file or for any questions regarding records. 870-428-8104.

## Jasper board does some housekeeping

Staff Report

The Jasper School District Board of Education did some housekeeping chores when it met in regular session on Monday night, June 16.

Among the less lengthy tasks on the agenda were:

- Approval of the school district's 2023-2024 Legislative Audit report.
- Approved the purchase of student school supplies for

the 2025-2026 school year.

- Approved out-of-state trip request from the Oark School to attend the National BETA Convention, June 22-28, in Orlando, Florida and The Jasper Drug Free Community Youth Coalition to travel to Springfield, Missouri, June 17 to record a video public service announcement at the KY3 television studio.

The board retired into executive session from 7:25 — 8:59 p.m. to discuss personnel.

In open session the board:

- Accepted resignations from Craig Villines, Kingston agriculture-vocational teacher, effective June 16 and from Nicole Bellinger, Kingston lunchroom manager, effective June 10.
- Approved the new hiring

of Amy Bottoms, Kingston lunchroom manager.

- Approved transfers of Amber Davis, from Jasper High School teacher/lead teacher to Jasper School District career coach; Katie Warren, from Oark Elementary School teacher to Oark counselor and Deborah Graves, from Oark interventionist to Oark Elementary School teacher.

## Bass anglers representing OMSD in national championship

Jacob Campbell, son of Josh Campbell and Christy Watson and Jake Zemlik, son of Scott and Francis Zemlik, captured 2nd place for AYBN Arkansas Youth Bass Nation state championship in the state of Arkansas June 1, at Anchor Point marina, Bull Shoals Lake. Jacob, a senior and Jake, a junior, were representing Ozark Mountain School District in Newton County. The boys were leading the tournament after the first day of fishing, but fell short on the second day putting them in 2nd place with a total weight of 26.12 pounds. Next level of bass fishing for Jacob and Jake will be competing at Clark's Hill Lake in Georgia for the High School BASS national championship July 31 through August 2. Public support is appreciated. If you would like to donate text Josh (team captain) 870 688 3242 or Tracy (school coach) 870 391 6699. There has been an account set up at First Community Bank in Harrison. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



## A reminder from Jasper Cemetery

Flowers and ornaments that you want to keep must be removed from the Jasper Cemetery by July 1. If they are not removed by those that placed them, the Jasper Cemetery board will remove them.

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**Education**



**ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-MOUNTAIN HOME** seeks applicants for a Marketing and Digital Media Coordinator.

Responsibilities include general office activities related to marketing and public relations and graphic design work for ASUMH and the Vada Sheid Community Development Center. Minimum requirements include a high school diploma, one year of related education and/or technical training, and three years of related experience. Preferred individual will have proven abilities in Microsoft Office, social media management, and graphic design using relevant software, including Adobe InDesign and PhotoShop. Duties include updates to websites, photography and photo editing, videography and video editing, social media site management, designing brochures, postcards, flyers, invitations, forms, posters, newsletters and logos, and occasional service at special events. Ideal candidates will have excellent IT skills, especially with design and photo-editing software; exceptional creativity and innovation; excellent time management and organizational skills; accuracy and attention to detail; an understanding of the latest trends and their role within an educational environment; and a professional approach to time and deadlines. Excellent communication skills and use of grammar a must. This position will ultimately become responsible for content updates to the ASUMH website for all areas. Associate's Degree or Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Design or Digital Design preferred, plus 2 years related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience. Compensation includes an annual salary commensurate with background and experience, and a comprehensive benefits and leave package.

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Compensation includes an annual salary commensurate with background and experience, and a comprehensive benefits and leave package.

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**YARD SALES**

**Baxter County**

**GARAGE SALE, 1220** Hall Court, Friday June 27th and Saturday June 28th, 7 AM - 4 PM. Antiques, household items, clothes, shoes, men items such as ladders, jack stands, jumper cables, and etc.

**YARD SALE, JUNE 28, Saturday**, 1218 Meadowcrest Drive, 8 AM to 3 PM. Multi party sale. Don't miss it! Go-Pro, Nintendo DS, household items, home decor, Cricut Bundle, scrapbooking supplies, Kirby, vacuum, air mattress, twin XL bedding. Lots of clothes and miscellaneous.

**Boone County**

**MULTI-FAMILY GARAGE SALE** Fri and Sat 27th and 28th 7am. 1648 Cody Ct. Ridgeway Meadows. All size clothes, men, women, children, some new Shoes, Fishing jig, 94 Ranger Boat & Motor, Electric Grill, Queen headboard, rails, Bar stools, New Totes Mens,stuff, Household stuff

**YARD SALE WEATHER** permitting Sat the 28th 8-12 Old Farm Rd south. Look for signs. Local Craft benches, cherry, walnut etc. Palmetto AR with case and Mags. 1994 For Ranger Many other items

**AUCTIONS & ESTATE SALES**

**Baxter County**

**UPSTAIRS / DOWNSTAIRS ESTATE SALE**  
 Wednesday, June 25  
 Thursday, June 26  
 Friday, June 27  
 10:00am - 4:00pm

House is full - name brand furniture, signed artwork, several different patterns of dishes, tools, lamps, and more!

1802 Brentwood, Mountain Home. GPS should get you there but there will be signs!

Check out pictures on FB at Upstairs/Downstairs Moving & Estate Sales.

**LEGALS**

**Legal Notice**

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF NEWTON COUNTY, ARKANSAS PROBATE DIVISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF JEFFRY M. HENTON, DECEASED**

NO. 51PR 2025-17

**NOTICE**

**LAST KNOWN ADDRESS OF DECEDENT:** 164 Christopher Drive Panama City, FL 32413  
**DATE OF DEATH OF DECEDENT:** March 27, 2024

All persons having claims against the estate must exhibit them, duly verified, to the undersigned within six (6) months from the date of the first publication of this Notice, or they shall be forever barred and precluded from any benefit in the estate. Claims for injury or death caused by the negligence of the Decedent shall also be filed within six (6) months from the date of first publication of the notice, or they shall be forever barred and precluded from any benefit in such estate.

THIS NOTICE first published on the 18 day of June 2025.

**CHRISTOPHER M. HENTON, ANCILLARY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ESTATE OF JEFFRY M. HENTON, DECEASED**

If you need to reach a large geographic area with your advertising message, then give us a call at **The Regional Classified Marketplace**. Your ad will be placed in the classified sections of 4 regional newspapers including The Baxter Bulletin, The Harrison Daily Times, The Newton County Times and The West Plains Quill.

# Buffalo River Elk Festival

## JUNE 27-28

**Staff Report**

**T**he Buffalo River Elk festival will be held Friday and Saturday, June 27-28, on the Jasper square. For the 26th year, this festival will celebrate the successful reintroduction of elk into Newton County and the Buffalo National River area. Attractions include drawings for elk hunting permits, kids' fishing derby, a Dutch oven cook-off, the Arkansas State Elk Calling Championship, arts and crafts, live music and other forms of entertainment. The festival is the official stage for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's drawings for its yearly Arkansas elk hunt permits. In addition, there will be drawings for three on-site elk permits. Registration for these exclusive permits will be Friday afternoon from 1-4 and on Saturday from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. in the Little Buffalo River Visitors and Convention Center on the north side of the square. Drawings for elk hunt permits begin at noon on Saturday and are held every hour on the hour until 5 p.m. when the drawings for the on-site permits are held. Only people who attend the festival in person will be eligible for the on-

site permit drawings. Eighteen permits will be available for public draw through online applications this season. Six of those permits will be either-sex tags and 12 will be antlerless-only tags. Winners will be notified via email and phone once the draw is concluded. Youth fishing derby Children up to 12 years old may participate in the fishing derby at the Little Buffalo River. Just show up at Bradley Park with your fishing pole and favorite bait at 8 a.m. Saturday. There is always a ton of prizes even if the fish aren't biting. The Arkansas Game & Fish Commission will stock a short section of the river with catfish of various sizes. Prizes are awarded in a variety of categories. 2025 Buffalo River Elk Festival Dutch Oven Cook-off Dutch oven cooking enthusiasts are cordially invited to participate in the festival's annual Dutch Oven Cook-off on Saturday at the Harp Realty office on state Highway 7 South in Jasper. Cash prizes will be awarded for the top three overall winners: 1st Place - \$300 2nd Place - \$200 3rd Place - \$100 Category winners for Bread, Main Dish, Des-

sert and Showmanship will receive medallions for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. The crowd-favorite People's Choice Award winner will also receive a special prize. Cooking begins at 9 a.m. sharp. Arkansas State Championship Elk Calling Contest This contest with divisions for all ages is held on Saturday. Registrations begin at noon at the Official Festival Tent. Competition begins at 2 p.m. on the festival stage. The contest is hosted by Newton County's Phillip Vanderpool, nationally recognized for his record book hunts for the "Hunter's Specialties (HS) Outdoors" series. In recent years, Phillip has experienced success producing the industry acclaimed digital and web-series "Dominator 365." He continues to pursue a variety of game animals throughout the country. Talent Show Show off your musical or other entertaining abilities at the talent contest. It is Saturday, June 28 at 11:30 a.m. Contestants are needed. Sign up, now, at the Little Buffalo River Visitors and Convention Center in Jasper. Buffalo River Elk Festival, Inc. is a 100% volunteer, non-profit organization.

## 2025 Schedule of Events

**Friday, June 27, 2025**

8:00 Little Buffalo River Visitor's Center Opens	Harp Realty
10:00 AM Festival Opens - Main Stage	10:00 AM Opening Ceremonies - Main Stage
11:00 AM Kids activities - Main Stage	10:15 AM
11:00 AM Drawing for free hourly raffles -Main Stage	11:00 AM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage
12:00 PM	Stage
12:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	11:00 AM C
1:00 PM On-Site Elk Permit Drawing Registration at Little Buffalo River Visitor's Center 1-4pm	11:00 AM Fishing Derby Ends at Bradley Park
1:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	12:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage
1:15 PM	Stage
3:00 PM Drawing for the 2 p.m. free raffles (so we don't interrupt the music) - Main Stage	12:00 PM Fishing Derby Awards - Main Stage (Must be Present to win)
3:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	12:00 PM Elk Calling Contest Registration ON our website OR the Official Merch tent
3:15 PM	12:30 PM
4:00 PM Registration for on-site Elk permits closes for the day	12:45 PM
4:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	1:00 PM Dutch Oven Cook-off - Harp Realty Judging begins followed by "Tasting the Vittles"
5:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	1:10 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage
5:00 PM	1:15 PM Arkansas State Championship Elk Calling Main Stage
6:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage	2:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage
6:45 PM	2:00 PM Arkansas State Championship Elk Calling Contest continues (winners announced) - Main Stage
8:30 PM	3:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles - Main Stage

**Saturday, June 28, 2025**

7:00 AM Running with the Elk - Lost Valley Canoe & Lodging, Ponca sponsored by Kiwanis	3:00 PM Running with the Elk Winners Announced - Main Stage
7:00 AM Pancake Breakfast American Legion Hut	3:15 PM
8:00 AM Kids Fishing Derby Registration Bradley Park	4:00 PM On Site Permit Draw Registration ENDS
9:00 AM Fishing Derby Begins - 9-11am in Bradley Park	Little Buffalo River Visitor's Center
9:00 AM On-site Elk permit registration until 4 PM Little Buffalo River Visitor's Center	4:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles
9:00 AM Premier Dutch Oven Cook-off begins	5:00 PM On-site Elk Permit Drawing Last Permit Drawing of the Day - Main Stage
	5:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles
	5:05 PM Shotgun Shell Drop (if we are able to have it)
	5:15 PM
	6:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles
	7:00 PM Drawing for free hourly raffles
	7:00 PM
	8:00 PM Drawing for free and paid RAFFLES - Main Stage
	8:45 PM Whistlin' Dixie - Main Stage - Southern Rock to Red Dirt / Outlaw Country
	9:50 PM Fireworks - Seen from square Remember to bring a chair!

# Election commissioners decertified

By HANNAH HERRERA  
Hannah.Herrera@harrisondaily.com

Democrats and Republicans are typically on the different sides of any issue. This is quite the opposite case for the three Searcy County election commissioners and their thoughts on being decommissioned.

In a recent meeting, the Arkansas elections board decided that the election commissioners of Searcy County had potentially broken a law and decided to decommission the three.

In November, Searcy County commissioners used paper ballots to count the election and was the only county in the state to do so. The commissioners had stated that paper ballots are what the people of Searcy County had wanted. “We held a town hall. We had both the Democratic and Republican commissioners at the time, and a few JPs (justice of the peace),” said L.C. Ratchford, a Democratic election commissioner. “It is what the people wanted.”

The county decided to lease

audiovisual equipment from the company Arkansas Voting Integrity Initiative (Avii) to show anyone in the building how they were counting each vote. “Transparency to see the ballots was important,” stated Laura Gross, a Republican commissioner of Searcy County.

During election night, 40 individuals were divided into tables of four people. One person was the enunciator. Another person watched the paper ballot to verify the enunciator read the ballots correctly. Directly across the table were two individuals that tallied the count as the ballots were read. As each of the individuals tallying the ballot reached the fifth vote, they were required to say, “tally” to ensure that there were no discrepancies in the count. Ratchford stated that the counting they did manually came out to be 100% correct when all the ballots were scanned.

Kenneth Weekley, a Republican election commissioner for Searcy County, had stated that the three commissioners

from the county were “without a doubt” targeted for using paper ballots.

When asked if the state has any rules against renting certain equipment, Gross has stated the only rule was that the county could not accept donations. “We signed a contract with a company to lease the equipment for \$100. It was an open agreement for any county that wanted to use paper ballots,” said Gross. The commissioners felt as if the state elections board had a problem with the dollar amount that was spent.

Ratchford stated, “We are a poor county, we need to save the money where we can.”

Weekley added, “We determined it to be a fair market value.”

The commissioners stated that as they were sitting in Little Rock for the meeting of the Elections Board, they were told they could not make a noise or they would be removed from the meeting.

All three commissioners felt as if the state elections board

did not have any evidence of improper actions done. “I spoke with an election monitor and she told me that there were some irregularities, overall it was good,” said Ratchford.

Weekley was upset that the elections board never had a definitive answer on what was wrong with what they did. “The board kept saying, ‘it was always possible they might have broken the law,’ not that we did.” Weekley went on to say that the board seems to think any complaint that is brought to the board is “guilty until proven innocent.”

“We saw it with Drew County,” stated Weekley. The incident that Weekley was referring to was an incident where election workers were issued letters of caution because they had asked a man to remove a politically inclined pin.

The Searcy County commissioners stated that the only thing that they would have changed is how long the counting took. “We were wanting to speed that up for next year,” said Gross.

The commissioners were proud of the work that they did. “We did the best we could,” said Gross.

“I have a clear conscience,” stated Ratchford. Weekley was in agreement with his fellow commissioners.

With the de-certification, the trio will not be allowed to work in any election capacity for the next 14 years. All three commissioners stated they would not contest their decertification. To contest would be an expense out of their own pocket. “The board has already made up their mind. Nothing we say will change it,” stated Weekley.

“I think it is a travesty that we can be removed by a non-elected board without due process,” stated Ratchford.

“They (the state elections board) have a lot of power with no oversight,” commented Gross.

The state election board has a meeting scheduled for July 16 to hear from a poll worker that was decertified in a previous election.

# Men plead guilty to illegal paddlefish snagging

By U.S. Attorney's Office  
Eastern District of Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK—As summer fast approaches, many will be heading to the beautiful lakes and rivers across the Natural State to enjoy time with family and friends.

While taking advantage of these outdoor opportunities, it's important to remember to be safe, responsible, and mindful of federal laws that govern our public lands and waters. Failure to do so can lead to serious consequences, as evidenced by the recent conduct of four Arkansans now facing serious penalties for the illegal snagging of paddlefish.

In March 2025, four Arkansans pleaded guilty after being charged with multiple federal violations stemming from a three-year,

multi-agency investigation led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service into the illegal snagging of paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) from the Little Red River in the Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge located in White County.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Joe J. Volpe imposed the sentences on Matthew “Cole” Harken of Conway, Andrew Jennings of Searcy, Dakota Wilson of Russellville, and Steven Lawrence of Jacksonville, who all pleaded guilty to federal violations concerning the illegal taking and transport of 29 paddlefish over an approximate three-year period, resulting in fines and restitution totaling \$14,190.00.

The investigation revealed that the men were illegally snagging the paddlefish to collect their eggs, which are commonly referred to

as “roe.” Not unlike salmon, paddlefish are migratory in nature, traveling many miles to reach their spawning grounds every year. Paddlefish are also prehistoric, growing at slower rates, and a 40-pound paddlefish may be up to 50 years old. Paddlefish feed on plankton located in the water which makes them unable to be caught using conventional methods of fishing, such as bait and lures, requiring them to be snagged or netted. The Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge contains areas where paddlefish migrate to spawn annually. During spawning season paddlefish are full of roe which is highly sought after and valuable as caviar both domestically and internationally.

“We are extremely proud of the Officers of United States Fish and


Wildlife Service Division of Refuge Law Enforcement and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission whose devotion to the protection of our natural resources made this investigation successful,” said Patrol Captain Brandon Bland, who supervises U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Refuge Law Enforcement operations in Arkansas.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Refuge Law Enforcement with assistance from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Katie Hinojosa.

Let this serve as a reminder: enjoy Arkansas's natural beauty, but do so with respect for the law, the environment, and one another.

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