

NEA'S

PREMIERE

MAGAZINE

December
2021

*Comfort
& Joys*



ALLAN BALTZ
Mullet Champion

**LIGHTS, TINSEL
MAGIC**
Enjoying the Holidays
in NEA

NEA SENIORS
Special Section

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Cover Photo by Lindsey Spencer
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Featured Kids: Heidi Harrell & Wrenley Clay



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From the Manager



Christmas seems to come at us faster and faster – decorations hit store shelves, the lights get put up, special events are planned, ugly sweaters are bought, cookies are made, cookies are eaten, families gather and then, it seems as if in a blink it is time to pack it all away. The ornaments come off the tree. The wrapping paper gets discarded or recycled. The cold continues but the spirit of the holiday feeds.

This year and every year, my Christmas wish is for us all to hold on to the magic of the season as long as possible. I hope you leave the tree up and keep the stockings on the hearth as long as you please. I hope you keep flicking the Christmas lights on and keep baking things to share with your co-workers. I hope you don't get tired of Christmas music, and that you keep binging Christmas movies long after December 25th.

I hope you continue to celebrate anything and everything that brings you and your loved ones both comfort and joy.

As always, we cover stories of good news in this edition of Premiere. And per usual for the time of year, we cover upcoming festivities and ideas for enjoying the season. I hope these stories spark both comfort and joy.

Merry Christmas NEA. We look forward to more good news in the new year.

Lindsey Spencer

Manager of Creative Content

Glen Sain

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GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT



One day I stepped into line at the supermarket behind a young man, a woman and an older gentleman. It soon became apparent the older man was having difficulty checking out; each time the young lady at the register swiped his card for payment, it was declined for insufficient funds.

She kept apologizing and the man seemed unsure of what to do from that point forward, so the checker asked us all to move to the next aisle over in order for her to help us before returning to the older man. As the shoppers in front of me followed her directive, I walked up to the senior shopper and offered to pay for his groceries. He didn't have that much anyway, and I was in a position to help. He said I didn't have to do that and I said, "I know I don't *have* to, but I would like to if you'll allow me." He nodded an "okay" and the checker mouthed, "Thank you," as a tear rolled down her cheek. The female shopper seemed unfazed by the whole scene while the young man, most likely a college student, said to no one in particular, "He's buying that old man's groceries!"

When we were finished with the transaction, the elderly man said, "I wish I could do something for you," and I told him before too long he would have an opportunity to do something nice for someone else, and if he would do it then he could consider us all even. "I will," he promised, and as I extended my arm for a handshake he pulled me close and whispered as he hugged me,

"Bless you, young man."

The female shopper left without so much as acknowledging anything out of the ordinary had happened, the checker embraced me and again thanked me and left a couple of tears on my shoulder, and the college kid came over, excitedly high-fived me and said, "Dude, that is the most awesome thing I've ever seen!" and immediately got on his phone and began relating the story to someone.

I didn't help the man for any sort of recognition. I helped him because it was the right thing to do and what affected me most was the reactions of others: One person cried, one was oblivious, one was overly excited, one was thankful and I was puzzled, wondering on the way home exactly when performing an act of simple human kindness became such a big deal, such a rare occurrence that people seemed to be in awe of it.

One night last month I left a meeting in Jonesboro and again stopped by the supermarket there to get an early start on some of the Thanksgiving meal shopping, fearing needed items might be stuck on a freighter somewhere when needed. While pushing my cart up one aisle I came face to face with an exquisitely dressed gentleman; he was a black man wearing an expensive looking ensemble, a perfect blend of brown and black threads, topped off by a black fedora. He looked so impressive I wanted to compliment him on his attire. But I didn't. I hesitated because I got a case of the "what ifs." What if, instead of accepting my compliment for what it was, he thought I was being sarcastic? What if, being black, he didn't like white people and didn't want my assessment of his outfit because I read about stuff like that happening all the time? What if, without trying, I caused a scene right there in the middle of the canned foods section?

So I just nodded to him and said, "Good evening" and he nodded back and we continued shopping. In a few minutes we crossed paths again when I needed to stroll in front of him and said, "Excuse me" and he said,

"No problem" and I hurried on by, then when I made it to the checkout station, there he was again at the end of the shortest line so I pulled in behind him. He acknowledged my presence, I nodded in recognition and then I stayed six feet back, just as the signs on the floor instructed me. He checked out, then pushed his cart slightly out of the way while the lady at the register began ringing up my groceries. My new "friend" paced back and forth a bit and I feared maybe his card had been declined for some reason and he was waiting for an "official someone" to come help solve his problem. I wondered if I should intercede.

But when the checker rang up my final item, one making my total purchase right at \$178.00, the sharp dresser reached across my cart, swiped his card and punched in his PIN number, and then headed out the door. I was taken aback, then recovered to ask the checker, "Did he just pay for my groceries?"

"He sure did," she said, and I had enough time only to shout, "Thank you, sir!" and he raised an arm and waived as he exited, never even turning to look back. I was stunned; those things don't happen to me. "You know," I said to the checker, "there are a lot of kind people in the world; we just don't hear enough about them." She agreed and I added, "Most people think Santa wears a red suit but tonight, he was wearing a really nice brown jacket and a black hat."

I actually got emotional on the way home, thinking of what a kind gesture a complete stranger made, and feeling ashamed that I did not tell him how impressed I was with his suit, how embarrassed I was at assuming his card must have been denied, how wrong I was to let race enter into my assessment of things. Sometimes, people are just nice and that shouldn't come as such a shock to us but when I found the shoe on the other foot, I wasn't sure how to react. However, I do know if I'm able to find out who the man is somehow, he will get a big hug from me since he has helped me understand things a lot better.



LIVING A Better Story

BY JARED PICKNEY

Christians around the world are now celebrating the Advent season. Advent is a time of waiting. A time of waiting for God to break forth in this world and offer hope and healing. And everyone, no matter who you are or where you come from, is waiting. We are waiting for peace. We are waiting, in the words of John Mayer, for the world to change. We are waiting for some form of normalcy to return. We are waiting for a job. We are waiting for a romantic relationship to begin. We are waiting for our health to be restored. We are all waiting, and oftentimes, it feels like we are waiting in the dark.

But this is where Advent begins.

The season of Advent begins in the dark, but it does not end there. In the words of the prophet Isaiah in reference to the birth of Jesus, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Or in the words of John in his Gospel, when Jesus became flesh, "Light shined into the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

This is the good news of Advent, that God works in the dark. And if God works in the dark, life is possible when it is dark.

Life is filled with problems and pain, difficulties and disappointments, and therefore, some of you feel like you are

sitting in darkness right now. If this is where you find yourself, be encouraged! The darkness you feel today will not have the last word. The anxiety you feel today will not have the last word. The uncertainty you feel today will not have the last word. Why? Because the light has shone into the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

In the words of Wendell Berry in reference to the Advent season, "It gets darker and darker and darker and then Jesus is born." Some of you think because it is so dark God must be so far. The reality is, the darker it gets the closer God's coming is. So don't lose heart.

Place your hope in Him.

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Get Better.

Comfort, maybe; but joy is for all

BY JOEL PHILHOURS

Only an old Accounting and Finance Business Coach would write a preface for a themed article related to Christmas. My professional responsibility requires me to examine the reliability and validity of this month's topic, using a process of independently investigating and verifying its choice, to know whether it is fair and free of fraud. Be that as it may, I hope you enjoy my take on "Comfort and Joy."

An Audit of "Comfort and Joy"

The phrase Comfort & Joy is forever linked to the Christmas story. (Not *A Christmas Story* – that's about a boy and "an Official Red Ryder carbine action two-hundred shot range model air rifle" BB gun.) We likely have images of shepherds "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," being suddenly terrified by an angel, bringing them tidings of comfort and joy. Am I right?

I'm not sure of its origin but I'm certain it's not Biblical. The Apostle Luke is the only disciple who mentions the shepherds. Luke 2:10 reads: "And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke doesn't mention the word "comfort" at all. So, my conclusion is the complete phrase of "Comfort AND Joy" isn't Biblical.

Then where did it come from, who wrote it, and when? It's generally accepted the phrase comes from the 15th Century Christmas carol, "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" where "tidings of comfort and joy" are the refrain of every verse. The author of the carol is unknown and it appears "Comfort" was tacked on 1,500 years after Luke wrote "Joy" into the Bible.

Since it's believed GRYM,G was written over 500 years ago by someone we don't know, here are some fun facts about it:

"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" is the only song mentioned in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Because of its singularity, it is the Christmas carol of the title.

What about the placement of the comma? It's not between Ye and Merry, where grammar rookies like me would place it. No, the comma sits between Merry and Gentlemen. What the what???

The "what" is that words change meanings over the centuries. Rest may have meant "to keep" and merry meant "strong" or "mighty," like Robin Hood's "merry" men. The title is not about happy fellows being urged to rest; it may be seen as a reassurance God will keep these men safe and strong through Christ because Christ has been born on Christmas Day. If you agree with this logic, the title becomes "God Keep Ye Mighty, Gentlemen."

But more important than getting into a fistfight over the placement of a punctuation mark is pondering the meaning of the words. Think on this verse as you celebrate Jesus' birthday:

God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray;
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy ...

Professional Judgment, Legal Judgement, and Personal Opinion on C&J-

COMFORT. Noun – a physical state with freedom from pain or constraint.

In truth, it means very little. It has no qualities of its own and is almost entirely defined by words that are the direct opposite of itself, multiplied by negative-1. Comfort is "the absence of discomfort." Comfort isn't a positive – it's simply an absence of a negative. Achieving comfort is never the goal. The goal is eliminating or overcoming specific discomforts so we can move on to the things that are more important. My professional judgment is the "feeling of Comfort" is the prelude to higher, more productive activity.

JOY. Noun - a feeling of great pleasure, delight, and happiness, caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure; elation.

The Bible says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" and tells us real joy comes from God and is ours forever. The joy found in God's presence transforms and regenerates us. The Apostle Paul called joy a "fruit of the Spirit." Many of us might recognize the phenomenon of inexplicable intense gratitude for life that can catch us off guard. That is joy, pure joy. It cannot come from comfort alone.

I believe the feelings of joy come when experiencing our purpose in life. For me, joy comes from a total involvement in "something good, big, or powerful" while completely forgetting the self. Joy comes from activity (mental or physical), not passivity. I find tremendous joy in being totally exhausted after winning a game, completing an important project, helping a client turn a business around, or seeing my wife, kids and grandkids reach their goals. Sure, I get tired, we all do. But it's a "good-tired."

Another new year is upon us. Once again, we are all hoping and praying that "next year will be better than this year." The last two years have indeed been a challenge. Fighting the troubles of the mind and working to control those uneasy feelings is difficult and it's getting old. Clear your mind of the negatives and create the comfort you need to create higher, more productive activities. Keep fighting the fight. Keep setting and achieving your goals! But even if you don't find "total comfort" and you don't reach all of your goals, don't let the situation steal your joy.

So, here are my tidings: Great joy is there for the taking. It has nothing to do with comfort. And as Luke's angel said: It is for all people.

MERRY CHRISTMAS NORTHEAST ARKANSAS!!!

PET *of the* MONTH

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BY AMBER GILL

Memphis is a seven-year-old White German Shepherd. We rescued him when he was nine months old. He had to have surgery due to a health issue, but has been fabulous ever since. His nickname is Boobear Babycakes Sugarbritches!!

He loves to ride, play ball and swim at the lake. Memphis has a special talent ... he can spell!!!! You can't say or spell R-I-D-E. He knows! He is a very picky eater and doesn't care for peanut butter, fruits or veggies. Cheese is his favorite.



Happy Holidays, furry friends!

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The cold, windless morning carried the occasional barks and yips of the anxious beagles along the ditch bank with a clear ring. Even the snorts and wheezes of the dogs' working noses were audible. The hounds worked hard and finally flushed the rabbit from its hide and the cottontail zigged and zagged in and out of the tangles on the ditch bank. The rabbit was in and out of the thickets and evaded our guns, and soon dove back into thick cover. Though we usually hunted for several hours, we called this hunt short and headed home. It was time for a holiday feast!

Food was a very important part of my youth, even more during the holidays. The morning of that rabbit hunt, Mama Blanton was already up and working in the kitchen when we left for our short hunting expedition. The smells as we left the house at dawn told us she was preparing a holiday meal that would rival any Five Star restaurant, a feast that would satisfy our stomachs and hearts.

Like most children, holiday time meant two things – time away from school, and presents. The time away from school allowed me to spend that time outdoors and the presents were hopefully a few things that would enhance that outdoor experience. But as I have grown older, I have come to realize why both my grandmothers worked so hard in preparation of holiday meals and the importance of family time those meals provided.

Most of our holiday meals are traditional with turkey or ham, but we also like a rib roast or seafood on occasion. Regardless of the main course, some form of wild game always graces our table. Duck, deer, pheasant, quail, and rabbits have made appearances on the menu. Though not traditional for most folks, it has been part of our holiday meals throughout my memory.

Ducks, most often taken from the St. Francis River bottoms by Papa Blanton and Uncle Ted, were a mainstay on the table during my youth and that continues to this day.

Fried duck breasts are a family favorite. To prepare, cut the duck breasts across the grain of the meat, dividing each breast into

three to four finger sized pieces. Beat one egg thoroughly and mix in with the sliced duck. Season the meat with a little seasoned salt and a touch of black pepper. Mix again and then add just enough flour to make the coating on the meat sticky, almost like wet glue. Fill the bottom of a skillet with enough oil to float the pieces and set on medium to medium high heat. Once the oil is heated, roll the sticky meat in dry flour and drop into the oil. Turn as needed; it should take five to six minutes to cook.

Once done, remove from oil and drain. Milk gravy made from the drippings is a staple as well. This same recipe will work great with pheasant, wild turkey and even rabbit.

Another option for waterfowl is roasting the whole duck. Ducks prepared for this would have to be cleaned whole with the skin intact. Coat the cleaned duck with olive oil and rub in a favorite seasoning. Place in the oven on a cooking dish that will catch the fat as it cooks off and roast at 350 for about one hour, or to an internal temperature of 140. I like to cook mine covered for the first 45 minutes and then uncover and cook for about 15 minutes to crisp the skin. This is excellent served by itself, but many add this cooked duck to dressing.

Deer was most often absent from most tables in my early years, but with the growing deer herd in Arkansas, that has changed. Deer can also be prepared in a variety of ways. The above mentioned method of frying will work for deer, but there are other options.

One easy recipe utilizes an intact deer backstrap. Take a whole deer backstrap and cut it into portions that will fit in a skillet, preferably an oven friendly skillet like cast iron. Coat the backstrap portions with olive oil and sprinkle on a generous amount of Montreal Steak Seasoning (or any favorite steak seasoning). While the oven is preheating to 400 degrees, bring a skillet to a medium high to high heat on the stovetop. Place the whole chunk of backstrap in the skillet and let the meat sear, rotating until all sides are seared, usually about five to six minutes. Once the meat is seared, place it in the oven for about 12 -15 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 135 degrees. Remove meat and wrap tightly in foil and set aside. Add two cups of beef broth to the hot skillet and about a tablespoon of rosemary and let simmer until its starts to reduce, stirring frequently. Cut the heat and set aside. Remove meat from foil, slice thinly and put meat back in the warm mixture in the skillet.

Another great holiday option for deer is a kabob. A simple marinade for deer meat can be made with one cup of brown sugar, 2/3 cup of catsup, 1/2 cup of soy sauce, two teaspoons of ginger, five to six cloves of finely chopped garlic, 2/3 cup of white vinegar and 1/2 cup of olive oil. Mix thoroughly and pour



CHUCK LONG

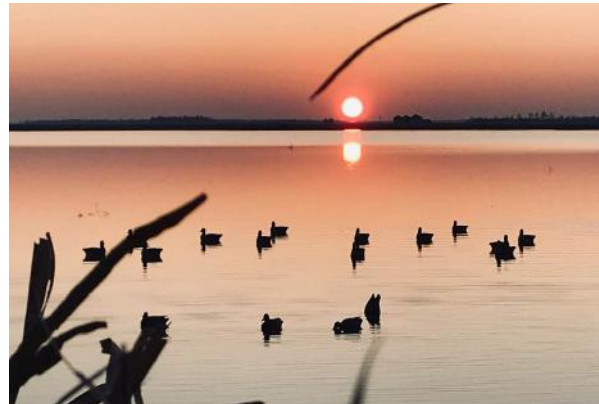
Regional Education Coordinator Northeast Education Division Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

over small chunks of venison and let sit in the refrigerator overnight. Remove and place the meat, along with pepper, onions and chunks of pineapple on skewers and grill for about twenty minutes.

I am very fortunate to be in a family that has a long tradition of excellent cooks. I thoroughly enjoy time in the kitchen throughout the year, but the meal planning and cooking add another great layer to the holiday festivities as we celebrate. The wild game traditions allow us to use what we have taken throughout the year in that celebration with our families.

If you do happen to hunt, incorporate some wild game into the holiday table. If not, find a friend that might spare a little deer or duck to add to the feast. Regardless whether you do or not, I hope you have a wonderful holiday season and a very merry Christmas!

Take some time to get outdoors during the holidays and I hope to see you out there!





HEALTH & THE CITY

WITH DR. BETHANY DAVIS

As I wrap up my last article of Health and the City, I look at all of the topics I've covered under the "health" umbrella: mental health through normalization and awareness of mental health disorders, an introduction to meditation, and the effects of neuroplasticity; physical health for your body and your pelvic floor, healthier eating choices, and trying new ways of exercising; and finally, emotional health through loving yourself, setting intentions, and cultivating a journaling practice. I feel as though I have checked all of the major boxes. However, that is quite a lot of boxes!

Taking care of yourself is no small feat. In an attempt to balance family and work life while also keeping up with the never-ending demands of society, self-care is a task that can seem absolutely daunting at times. All three of the aforementioned categories of health are the first to be neglected when we have an endless to-do list and others to care for. Trust me, I know!

To conclude this column, I'll share a bit of my journey in life and with self-care. From a very early age, I began going through the motions of society. I checked all of the boxes in order to make sure I pleased everyone around me. You want me to be at that party even though I'm exhausted? I'll be there, I need to network anyways. You need me to spend my one night off of work being there for you? Done, I need to be a good friend. You want me to eat at that restaurant even though

that food upsets my stomach? Okay, I will eat there because I don't want to be any trouble. These are just a few examples, but I scrambled from one event to another, one homework assignment and task to the next, one city to another just to make an image for myself and to make sure everyone around me was pleased with me. And it worked! I was loved, appreciated, and told I was going to go on to do big and great things.

I would then come home at night anxious and absolutely exhausted. I would snap at my family and those close to me. I wasn't present, and truly, I wasn't happy. I was doing what everyone else wanted me to do, not what I needed to do or what felt right or good.

I am not sure when the shift began to happen (probably after I started doing yoga), but over time I began to realize self-care is not selfish. It is quite the opposite, in fact. Saying no to something does not make you selfish – and if a person holds it against you, that is on them, not on you. Very slowly, not all at once, I started to incorporate little things into my life to take care of my health. To my surprise, once I started incorporating a few of these aspects under the health umbrella into my life, my relationships became deeper, my body became leaner, my digestive issues went away, and my view of myself and what I was doing in my life became much clearer. I was actually living and not in autopilot mode.

It was only then that I realized how much of life I was missing out on. I don't HAVE to eat that food, I don't HAVE to go to that event, and I don't HAVE to drop everything for everyone else all of the time if it disrupts my health. Doing all of these things is a good way to look back on those parts of your life and realize you pleased every single person, except you. And honestly, what is the point of life if you aren't happy and satisfied in the day to day?

The great thing is that if this hasn't happened for you yet, there is no time but the present (literally). You can choose, right now, to start incorporating a few health practices into your life. You can grab a journal at the store and write down one thing you are grateful for at the end of each day. You can pause in your car before going into work to meditate for two minutes. You can choose to buy just three organic fruits and vegetables at the grocery store the next time you go to diversify your microbiome and regulate your gut health. You can set a timer and walk just two minutes every hour at work, or do a plank on a park bench or at the airport (who cares what others think!). You'll know what to start with - your body has an exceptional way of telling you what is right for you in any given moment, you just have to be still enough to listen to it below all of your other thoughts that fill your head.

Changes in your health do not have to be these radical shifts that happen overnight; in fact, in order to be sustainable they really shouldn't be. Changes in lifestyle are made by being present in the moment and making a decision for yourself right then. Then, you just do it over and over again.

I'll leave you with my favorite quote from Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City*, which inspired the title of this column. "The most exciting, challenging, and significant relationship of all is the one that you have with yourself." I hope this column shifts your mindset on health and all it encompasses. Take care of you, be present, and be authentic. Sending love.



MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

PROBLEM #2: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

QUESTION:

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

ANSWER:

Generally speaking, when giving gifts to co-workers or office associates, the price range of gifts is determined by agreement. This price range helps everyone to stay within a comfortable budget. Exceeding this price range can make other co-workers or associates feel uncomfortable.

Giving gifts to friends and relatives is often more difficult if there is no stated or implied price range. Finding out the recipient's interests, likes or dislikes can help you find an appropriate gift that is within your budget.

PROBLEM # 3: RE-GIFTING

QUESTION:

Is it appropriate to "Re-Gift?"

ANSWER:

This depends upon the situation. There is one school of thought that says you should never "re-gift." There are, however, other authorities who say "re-gifting" can be done if in good taste. In other words, when re-gifting, no tacky, used, dirty or broken gifts.

In the *Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette* by Nancy Tuckerman and Nancy Dunnan, the re-gifting dilemma is addressed in the following way: "It's not uncommon to receive a present which is either identical to something you already own or is something you have no need for. If this happens, there's no reason not to pass the present on to someone you feel would appreciate it. You can put the present in an unmarked box or wrap in tissue paper and put it in a decorative gift bag. Best not to use the present's original box or the box of another store on the chance the person you're giving the present to decides to return it and asks you for the sales slip."

Quote of the day:

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

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

THE PROBLEMS WITH PRESENTS

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

PROBLEM # 1: THE UNEXPECTED GIFT

QUESTION:

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

ANSWER:

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



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Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

I always thought sleep deprivation was the hardest part of having a child. Turns out that actually comes second (for me, at least.)

As we have settled into somewhat of a routine a year and a half after bringing Eva home, I've found the toughest roadblock has been keeping my marriage strong. I had heard all the common bits of advice about a baby being the real test of a relationship. But hearing and experiencing are two very, very different things.

At first, it was typical problems such as whose turn is it to change the diaper or make the bottle? Once my husband and I ended up with an assembly line type of routine with diaper, pajamas and sleep sack, the chaos seemed to settle. I missed spending time with him, but it was a true joy being able to parent with him.

Eva got older. And began sleeping less. I disassembled the crib and made my husband drag the spare mattress into the nursery so I could sleep on the floor with her. The sea green and cream walls have been my home for over a half a year. Instead of my husband's snoring keeping me awake, it's the cries of my daughter. Our evenings, once spent in front of the television or just talking about our day, now consist of tagging in and out of the nursery as Eva wakes every hour.

I have been in survival mode for most of this year. I missed my husband but didn't really think about it. Until I started shying away from his hugs and getting angry with him more often than not, I never realized there was a problem. We were so focused on Eva and making sure I got the breaks I needed that our marriage fell to the back burner.

RSV hit our household this October. It was two straight weeks of no outside help with Eva, and half of that time I was sick myself. I was at the end of my rope, on the verge of breaking. We jumped at the opportunity to send Eva to her grandmother's for a night the moment we were able to. My husband and I dressed up and went out for drinks and dinner, and came back to an empty house, finally enjoying conversation that didn't revolve around our daughter.

It was less than a 24-hour break. But it was enough of a reset for us to fall in love again. We work better as a team and even though it took me a few months to understand, I finally saw that in order for us to be the best parents possible, we have to nurture our marriage. Eva will always come first, of course. However, I am seeing just how important it is to take care of each other.



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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



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Veterans Day Parade



A Veterans Day Parade took place in Downtown Jonesboro on November 13th in celebration of the holiday (November 11th).

Community members lined Main Street in front of the courthouse for a presentation followed by a procession of vehicles, floats, and marching bands.

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





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Christmas with MOR Media Inc.

We sure do love the Christmas season, and it's probably easy to tell by looking at each of our platforms. We want to remind you of a few places you can find either comfort, or joy, or both this holiday season. All of our content is FREE to the consumer thanks to the support of our advertisers.

Merry Christmas, and happy new year.

-The MOR Media Team



Explore MOR NEA *Christmas Festivities*

Visit [exploremornea.com/
community-calendar](http://exploremornea.com/community-calendar) for an up to date list of upcoming festivities in NEA.

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Explore MOR NEA
Christmas Cocktails

Check out our feature on exploremornea.com by visiting the "eat" page for 5 Christmas Cocktails to make this holiday season.



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Allan Baltz is USA MULLET CHAMPION

Eleven-year-old champ donates his winnings to help foster kids.

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

The mullet is back in style, and the business in the front, party in the back hairdo has made waves in Northeast Arkansas through the actions of an 11-year-old boy.

Allan Baltz was named the winner of the USA Mullet Championship Kids Division in October after receiving more than 25,000 votes through social media.

Family friends originally learned of the mullet competition and passed the information along to Allan's mother, Lesli. She showed Allan a photo from the competition, but said he wasn't

interested and didn't think he could beat the contestant in the photo. Days passed and more friends sent the family information. Allan changed his mind when he realized prize money was involved.

"He instantly said, 'Okay, I'll do it so I can give the money to kids in foster care,'" Baltz said.

Voting began in mid-September as kids around the country submitted photos of their hair, and results were announced on October 13. Baltz said she was proud of her son when he decided to join the contest.

"It never crossed his mind that he could use prize money to buy a new bike or game. He instantly thought to give back," she said.

Allan won \$2,500 and decided to split his earnings between Together We Foster and Project Zero. Baltz said during the contest, several community members donated to the organizations as well.

"Last we heard, there had been approximately \$3,500 donated between the two," she added. "Plus Allan's prize money made a total of \$6,000."

While Allan said it felt “weird” to win the contest, he was happy for the children he helped with his donation. His story quickly spread to media outlets such as *The New York Post*, “Good Morning America” and “The Kelly Clarkson Show,” bringing awareness to the fostering system. He will join the Jonesboro Christmas parade as Grand Marshal, and Together We Foster named the Craighead County Clothing Closet after him.

“I wanted to donate it because I was in foster care and I know what it feels like to not have a family,” he said.

In 2013, Baltz and her husband opened their home in Jonesboro to help children and families through foster care, but didn’t believe their role was ever to adopt.

“A year and several placements later, we met the twins,” she said. “It was our first time taking more than one child at a time, but the expectation at the time was they would stay for only a few weeks until a relative placement was approved. I remember being so nervous and saying to Derek, ‘It will just be two weeks. We can handle anything for two weeks.’”

Seven years later, Allan and Alice remain part of the Baltz family.

“I am in awe of his heart and how his story has inspired so many people to start playing a role in the foster care crisis,” Baltz said.



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Christmas with Pets

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN

Christmas time is here! Like so many of you, I love Christmas. I get excited just thinking about all the beautiful decorations and light displays, listening to Christmas music, and visiting with family I don't get to see as often as I would like.

The other part of me - the part I try to ignore when I am purchasing said decorations - remembers I need to be careful where I put all of them. Not only do we have a toddler very interested in trying to get his hands on all the decorations, but we have one young dog named Ralph that is quite mischievous. Ralph moves a mile a

minute and I have to watch him like a hawk.

Thinking and preparing myself for this holiday season got me thinking about sharing with all of you wonderful readers some common holiday decorations that can pose a threat to pets. Ergo, Christmas with the pets.

Of course the first one that springs to mind, which should come as no surprise, is the Poinsettia. The quintessential Christmas holiday plant. While it is widely known you should keep your pets away from this plant, most do not know exactly why. The reason is the leaves of the Poinsettia produce sap that is toxic and can be irritating to the lining of the upper GI tract (esophagus and stomach). Typically, if a pet ingests a small amount, then they should make a full recovery, but nausea, vomiting, and abdominal discomfort are common. There are certainly other plants that can make a pet sick if ingested - holly and mistletoe. Be sure to keep these out of reach as they can cause severe GI signs.

Next batter up: Tinsel. While great at adding shimmer to a tree, it can wreak havoc in a pet's GI tract. Cats are the usual suspects in this category - they just love to pull it off the tree and chew on it, eating large portions and sometimes an entire strand in one swallow. The tinsel can get caught in their intestines and can create a sort of blockage - one end gets caught, but the other doesn't and this has an

accordion-like effect on their intestines which, as I have witnessed, is quite painful to the patient and almost always requires surgical intervention.

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

Last on the lineup, people food. OK - not really a decoration, but many of us keep treats such as cookies, candy, and other scrumptious holiday snacks out to enjoy, and pets try to indulge in them as well. 'Tis the season for holiday spirit, not an emergency vet visit. To put it simply, ensure to keep these out of reach.

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

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EDGAR ELECTRIC INC.



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Robbie Mullins is such a good guy his neighbors don't even mind it when he gets lit; in fact, they look forward to it.

That's because when the Paragould resident hits the "on" switch his neighborhood lights up like a Christmas tree, which is his goal to begin with. "This year alone I have added 40-50,000 lights," he said. "I will have 75-80,000 lights, probably. But the neighbors up and down the street have been really supportive."

The rule pretty much is, if it's stationary it's going to have lights strung around it: trees, cars, bushes, the house, the deck, the air conditioning unit, his shop ... all is fair game as Mullins goes all out to bring holiday joy to any and all who choose to drive by his residence. "Currently I have the largest display in Paragould," he said, "but it's not about that; it's about showing my creativity.

I get called Clark Griswold a lot. But mine is a display instead of just basic Christmas lights on a house. It's a broad spectrum. Something that might tickle one person, like an old car, might not be it for another. I will have a tribute this year to the military. And there will be lots for children to enjoy."

His reference to Griswold, the central character in National Lampoon's *Christmas Vacation* film, seems appropriate. He likens his display to "a house on fire" once it's all lit up, and he has even found himself accidentally reenacting some of Griswold's bumbling, stumbling episodes. "Oh, yeah, I've had about all of his goofy mishaps," Mullins said. "I've done about all of them. I've fallen off the ladder, I've hung onto the gutter, I've been shocked every year in some fashion, I have knocked out all the power out here.

"But, I try not to be boring, to be

creative. What can I drag up this year? My girlfriend, Dianna Edrington, was raised up in the neighborhood and she helps out ... when I let her. I like to do it all if I can, really. This is my way of showing the community how to do something for everyone. What drives me is that little kid who might be disappointed if I don't do it."

Now 52, Mullins said it takes him roughly 70 hours to complete the display and it isn't as easy as it was when he was younger, partly because he keeps trying to make it bigger and better each year. "I got smart when I started putting it together starting in September," he said. "I was out until midnight; and the transition to LEDs has allowed me to add so much more. Now you get more bang for your buck. I would rather hang them at night so I can back up and see what it looks like, but you have to sleep sometime."



While most viewers simply drive by his residence at 800 Hillview Drive, turn around at the end of the street and return for a second look, this year visitors can be a part of the display. "I have selfie stations where they can use their cameras or phones and there will be props," Mullins explained. "Most typically people drive by; this year they can pull in for a photo. There's a Cousin Eddie scene, reindeer and Santa Claus, the disc Clark made, the chair and the squirrel ... quotes from the movie

for selfies. You can make Christmas cards out of them."

You can also help raise money for a good cause. There is a patriotic-looking piece set aside, designated as a spot for visitors to make donations, with funds collected going to the Area I Special Olympics. Mullins said he felt over the last few years the growing interest in his light show could also be a way to help out worthy organizations. "It is just something that was on my mind for three or four years, to do something good for the community," he said. "We do it through an interview process. Last year we gave to the Military Order of the Purple Heart; we raised \$2,000. The lights are on roughly 35 days and there's no charge, and sometimes people will drive up during the day and say, 'We love what you're doing, here's some money to help.' There are several ways of people wanting to do it to be able to."

Mullins said he started tinkering with light displays when he was "about 12 and it's just grown. I had

a couple of different influences. On Court Street there was this house with blue lights every year. It really fascinated me and someone has brought that back. And another was Disney World as a child, The Electric Light Parade. I saw what lights could be at night.

"It costs more and more every year because I try to outdo what I did last year. But I love it. It's a way to make a difference, to do something positive. I guess I will just keep doing it until my body tells me I can't."

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Thursday December 9th, Enchanting Night from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. Carriage Rides & Santa visits from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. Santa at Vintage Rental Depot.
Saturday December 11th, Cocoa Crawl from 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Christmas in Northeast Arkansas

The entirety of Premiere Magazine is always about sharing good news in our community – and that’s possible because community members are always making good news happen – but there’s something extra special about the holidays. Individuals and organizations go out of their way to spread cheer and inspire joy.

Small towns and big cities across America are lighting up their trees, hanging wreaths on their doors, and planning special events. In our humble opinion, some of the spirit of the holidays shines especially bright in Northeast Arkansas. We’d like to highlight where and when you can enjoy the Christmas festivities this year.



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NEARBY

DECEMBER 3RD & 4TH
Old Fashioned Christmas
Downtown Batesville
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Old-Fashioned Christmas 2021 will be held in historic Main Street Batesville on December 3-4. This event will celebrate Christmases of the past.

The weekend will include caroling, events, tours, performers, and vendors along Main Street.

Downtown Paragould

"Downtown Paragould merchants work hard to prepare for the holidays and they do it for you! We have lots of fun activities to offer year-round, but December events are our specialty! You can find horse-drawn carriages, Santa, Christmas lights, parade, fun shopping, and more. It's a lot of fun and we hope you enjoy it. Come see us, Downtown."

DECEMBER 2ND

Christmas Tree Lighting
Centennial Park
6:00 p.m.

Christmas Carols courtesy of 4-H kids, First United Methodist Church, and St. Mary's Catholic Church Carolers

DECEMBER 4TH

Holiday Traditions
& *Holiday Market*

Downtown Paragould

*See Downtown Paragould's Facebook Page for updates

10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Carriage rides and Santa visits. Plus: Santa will be at Something Sweet!

DECEMBER 4TH

Forever Christmas
The Collins Theatre

Join the Collins Community Choir for its very-first performance as they present Mac Huff's arrangement of "Forever Christmas."

Christmas means so many things to so many people - tradition, humor, sentiment, and even glitz! "Forever Christmas" is a spectacular revue covering all aspects of the Christmas holiday. The chorus is under the direction of Crystal Aronson. Tickets will be available at the box office before the show. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and senior citizens.

DECEMBER 7TH

Paragould Annual Christmas Parade
Downtown Paragould
7:00 p.m.

This year's theme is "Winter Wonderland" – Sponsored by Southern Bank.

DECEMBER 9TH

Enchanting Night
Downtown Paragould
4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Carriage rides and Santa visits – Santa will be at the Vintage Rental Depot.

DECEMBER 10TH - 12TH

Greene County Fine Arts Council Christmas Shows

The Collins Theatre

GCFAC presents "Svetlana's First Christmas Away from Home" and "Yes, Santa, There Is a Virginia" at the Collins Theatre.

DECEMBER 11TH

Cocoa Crawl
Downtown Paragould
2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

MSP purchases mugs and sells them for \$10.00, merchants make and serve hot chocolate, cider, mulled wine, cookies, candy, whatever. Santa will be at Something Sweet.

MORE EVENTS ON PAGE 33

Happy PAWLidays
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Be sure to stop and see us during all of the holiday festivities Downtown this season!



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Downtown Paragould

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- Christmas Parade
- Holiday Traditions and Market
- Enchanting Night and Cocoa Crawl!

For more information on dates and times, check us out on FB

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DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD EVENTS



December 2
 Christmas Tree Lighting
 Centennial Park
 6:00 p.m.



December 4
 Holiday Traditions &
 Holiday Market
 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



December 7
 Christmas Parade
 Downtown Paragould
 7:00 p.m.



December 9
 Enchanting Night
 Downtown Paragould
 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



December 11
 Cocoa Crawl
 Downtown Paragould
 4:00p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



December 31 & January 1
 The Ultimate Oldies
 The Collins Theatre
 7:00 p.m.

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

explore DOWNTOWN JONESBORO



THE Nutcracker
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Oyster bar |
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December 4th & 12th

Brunch
Roots
10:00 a.m. to 2:20 p.m.



December 4th

Joy Fest
Downtown Jonesboro
4:00 p.m.



December 5th

The Tarkingtons: Christmas Celebration
The Foundation of Arts
4:00 p.m.



December 10th

The Nutcracker Ballet
December 10th-12th & 17th-19th
foajonesboro.org



December 10th & 18th

Christmas Cabaret
The Recovery Room
7:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.



December 31st

New Year's Eve Party
Roots
rootsrestaurant303.com

More events on Page 33. Never miss out on the fun happening in NEA; visit exploremornea.com/community-calendar for an up to date listing of events across Northeast Arkansas.



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Christmas in Northeast Arkansas

Downtown Jonesboro

DECEMBER

Christmas in The West End
**West End Neighborhood Adjacent to
Downtown Jonesboro**

Drive around the West End Historic Neighborhood to enjoy the decorated homes before or after enjoying special events downtown.

DECEMBER 2ND

Jonesboro Christmas Parade
Downtown Jonesboro
7:00 p.m.

Christmas in Toyland

DECEMBER 4TH

Joy Fest
Downtown Jonesboro
4:00 p.m.

A festival of all things Christmas hosted by the Downtown Jonesboro Alliance at Union and Monroe. Opening Night: Broadcast Live on the Tubetown channel. Hosted by Craig Rickert, Allison McDaniel and Christie Matthews. JoyFest begins at 4:00 p.m. with a holiday performance by The Foundation of Arts and holiday songs by The City Youth children. The Tree Lighting ceremony will begin with a holiday-themed Broadway concert from The Link Theatre Company, featuring Matt Cavanaugh and Jenny Powers among other NEA talents. Cory Jackson's Acoustic Christmas Concert will begin on the Hytrol Stage with the lighting of the 64-foot tree provided by Ritter Communications. Enjoy a ride on the Nice Pak & DJA Ferris Wheel, stroll through St. Bernards' Snowflake Lane and do some Christmas shopping in Barton's Christmas Village. Visit the Century 21 Wright Pace Realty Santa Station and take a picture with Santa as well as in the life-size Gearhead Snow Globe! The kids will love riding the train on the Farmers and Merchants Holiday Train Lane, ice skating in First Community's Ice Skating Rink, and visiting the animals at the Craighead County 4-H Petting Zoo.

DECEMBER 5TH

Downtown Shop & Stroll
**Buff City, Gearhead, The Recovery
Room and More**
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Grab some coffee and check out pop up vendors at The Recovery Room, then continue shopping for the holidays at local businesses. See each business for promotions.

DECEMBER 7TH

Bourbon Dinner Bottle Exchange
Roots Restaurant
Mallory Smith Christmas Cabaret and dessert flight. Tickets are \$16.

DECEMBER 14TH

Ecuadorian Wine Dinner
Roots Restaurant

DECEMBER 10TH

Christmas Cabaret
The Recovery Room
7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 18TH

Christmas Cabaret
The Recovery Room
7:00 p.m.

Christmas Cabaret with Nancy Owens. Three course meal. Reservation only. Call 870.520.6006 to claim your spot.

DECEMBER 23RD

Holiday Dinner
Roots Restaurant
Special dinner menu at Roots Restaurant in Downtown Jonesboro. Visit rootsrestaurant303.com for reservations.

MORE IN JONESBORO

DECEMBER 5TH

*Delta Symphony Orchestra
Christmas Program*
Riceland Hall, The Fowler Center
2:00 p.m.

The Delta Symphony Orchestra plays fun selections with a narrator and sing-along led by Santa Claus himself. Ring in the holiday season with traditional favorites, Sleigh Ride and Dance of the Toys. A special feature will be Christmas at the Movies, including Frozen and The Polar Express.

ALL OF DECEMBER

Christmas at the Park
Joe Mack Campbell Park
Sunday through Friday
5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Christmas light display in Jonesboro. Times may vary on holidays.

NEARBY

DECEMBER 1ST - 12TH

Christmas in Wilson
Wilson, Arkansas

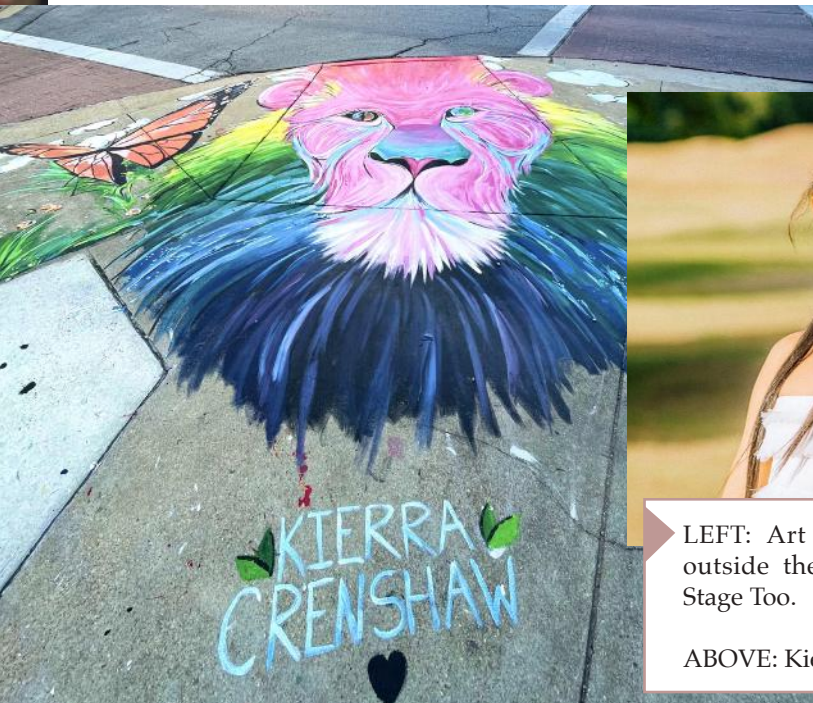
Sixteen special Christmas events over the course of 12 days. Visit exploremornea.com/community-calendar for more info on specific events.

The Foundation of Arts
BRINGING

Joy

to Sidewalks in Downtown Jonesboro





LEFT: Art by Kierra Crenshaw outside the Foundation of Arts' Stage Too.
ABOVE: Kierra Crenshaw

BY LINDSEY SPENCER

In the November edition of Premiere, we ran a “Jonesboro Progress” highlight about the color arriving in Downtown Jonesboro. The article said the color is all thanks to the Downtown Jonesboro Alliance and its partnership with polish, a marketing agency – but there’s actually more to the story. The photo run with this feature was actually a piece of sidewalk art created by artist Kierra Krenshaw as part of efforts from the Foundation of Arts to bring vibrant art to Downtown Jonesboro.

The Foundation of Arts, well known in the community for making art readily available, offers classes and live performances, hosts festivals and concerts, and is actively looking for ways to bring quality entertainment and culture to Jonesboro.

The sidewalk art is one project among many opportunities with the FOA for artists to express themselves and bring their ideas to life. The project began as a discussion with Mayor Copenhaver when the FOA suggested Downtown should have some uplifting color on its sidewalks.

“[The mayor] said he would support that wholeheartedly,” said Kristi Pulliam, Artistic Director at the FOA. “He asked if we could take care of getting some good stuff throughout downtown on the sidewalks. I created a short presentation that was used at a downtown meeting to hopefully garner some support for the project, and several business owners were excited about the idea.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



ABOVE: Art along Huntington (between Church and Main) by Caroline Pulliam, using the handprints of kids in FOA art class.

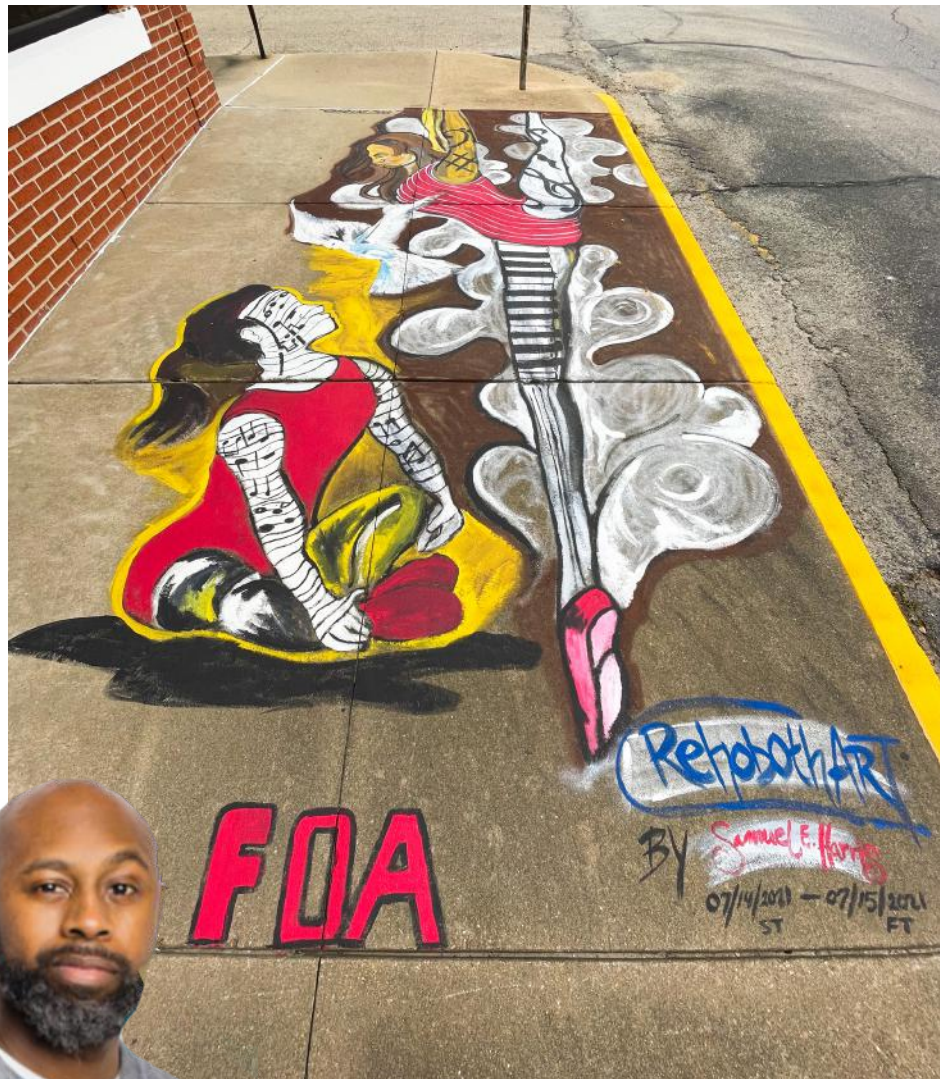
LEFT: Caroline Pulliam with her art outside the Foundation of Arts (on a sidewalk along Church Street).
RIGHT: Art along Church Street, by Caroline Pulliam, inspired by the FOA’s production of Les Misérables.



The project was under way mid-summer of 2021. Artists presented what they would like to create by submitting ideas to the staff at the FOA and after approved, the FOA provided the materials needed for their work.

“It’s been so fun to watch the work pop up,” Kristi said. “And we’re not finished - more is coming to downtown!”

Mary Housewright with Access Group Inc. will be doing a project on the corner of Huntington and Main, and The Foundation of Arts is still accepting conceptual designs. For more information on getting involved, artists can email Kristi at kristi@foajonesboro.org



Other works:

Art by Caroline Pulliam – a work inspired by Les Mis along Church and a dancer on the sidewalk outside Gearhead Outfitters.

Find them all, snap pics and post them on social media tagging the Foundation of Arts.



LEFT: Samuel Harris

ABOVE: Art by Samuel Harris at the intersection of Monroe and Union.

★ ADMIT ONE ★	 <h1>Souper Sunday</h1> <h2>WEDNESDAY</h2>	<h2>A PICK UP EVENT</h2> <p>SOUP BAKED GOODS SILENT AUCTION</p> <p>PRE-PURCHASE ONLINE AT WWW.JONESBOROHABITAT.COM</p>	 <p>Habitat for Humanity® of Greater Jonesboro</p>	
	<p>WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM</p> <p>EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON RED WOLF CONVENTION CENTER</p>			
				★ ★

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Together We Foster, launched in 2019, serves all of NEA with visit centers and clothing closets. The closets are completely free to foster parents and foster children, and DCFS staff has 24-hour access to help fill any need a child may have at any hour.

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A LAST MINUTE

Gift Guide FOR HER

Let's talk about gifts. The holiday season is often a time for giving to those we love. As the years go on, studies show that shoppers are doing their Christmas buying earlier and earlier. In other words: If you're just starting, you're late. Don't worry, we've got a few ideas for where to find some last minute gifts for the special people in your life. What you see here are suggestions, but the real gift (from us to you) is that at each of these store suggestions, someone can help you pick out the perfect gift for the person you're shopping for. Remember to shop local this holiday season; here are some ideas on where to do so.



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Comfort & JOYS

BY KAROLINE RISKER



I heard a talk last week and the speaker started with, “We’re not okay. None of us are okay.” She was referring to the toll the last year and a half has taken on everyone and gave us permission to feel “not okay,” at least for those few moments. There will be another talk next month, right in the middle of the season of holiday joy. You might think the event is awkwardly placed, unnecessary even. But sometimes comfort and joys can happen right together.

So, let’s focus on what gives us comfort, not just for those experiencing a significant loss, but for all of us who lived through 2020 and the disappointment that has been 2021 as we strive to have a more normal holiday season, comfort being anything that gives us contentment, relief, or enjoyment. After all, we are not just mending the wounded, but making our loved ones (including ourselves) feel cared for.

Let’s start with comfort bedding and fabrics. Believe me on this one — buy a heated mattress pad. Sure, you have a heated blanket, but are you warm from underneath? There is something so very cozy about getting into a preheated bed that works even better than that big dog you have that sneaks onto your bed at about 10:00 every night. Most pads have dual control so you get to pick exactly how warm you want to be.

Speaking of bedding, try a goose-down comforter. They can be layered, or serve as the main blanket. And yes, something that light and soft can be surprisingly warm. Another suggestion

is a weighted blanket. The pressure of the blankets puts your autonomic nervous system into rest mode and can help some of the symptoms of anxiety, giving you an overall sense of calm. There, I feel comforted already.

Comfort clothes have long been a staple and why not? We are dressed for hours and hours and we should feel comfortable during those hours. I am in no way whatsoever an athlete but I could have sworn I could do anything “sporty” in some comfy pants I ordered online, and look good doing it, too.

Finally, let’s turn to food, a magical comfort if there ever was one. May I first suggest vegetable soup. This one is a warm hug going down and it’s as easy to make as it is delicious. Round it out and make it a meal when you pair it with cornbread (try 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix with 1 box Jiffy cake mix and add the ingredients in the recipe to each to make sweet cornbread).

Going caroling, looking at Christmas lights, and baking holiday fudge are great things to do in December, but maybe those fall more on the Joy side. For Comfort, consider something more reflective and contemplative. Getting outside to a local park is usually a good idea, and there are several in the area. Crowley’s Ridge State Park (2092 AR-168 North) is perfect for hikes in the woods and walking around the lake. Take the kids to the playground and you can easily make an afternoon of it.

VEGETABLE SOUP

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- 1 large potato, peeled and diced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 cup corn
- 1 cup peas
- 1 cup green beans, chopped

- 2 vine tomatoes, diced
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups V-8 juice

Instructions

In a large stock pot add the olive oil over medium heat and sauté the onions, celery and garlic for 4-5 minutes until translucent. Add in the rest of the ingredients and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for 30 minutes.

Harmon Park (309 W Northend Ave) is another nice park to walk around in, and it even has a dog park. The Paragould Community Center (3404 Linwood Drive) is another beautiful place for a long walk.

If you need to listen to someone talk about the struggles of Covid-19 consider attending a special service, a Service of Grief and Hope, at First United Methodist Church on Tuesday, December 14, at 5:30 p.m. in the church sanctuary (404 West Main Street). A professional will give a talk and there will be people available to listen, if you need it. The church will also have Christmas Eve services at noon, 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. I find that candles, an organ playing Christmas hymns, sitting near a lit tree, and taking communion, can offer great comfort.

Hopefully some of these things have helped bring you solace. And yes, it’s okay to need solace at Christmastime. After all, we’re not okay. None of us is okay. And that’s okay.

PEACH COBBLER

For the peaches:

8-12 medium ripe peaches peeled and sliced (or 2-3 cans of sliced peaches)

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup brown sugar

2 teaspoons flour

½ teaspoon cinnamon

⅛ teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon lemon juice

½ cup butter melted

For the cobbler:

1 cup flour

½ cup brown sugar

½ cup granulated sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

For the Cinnamon-Sugar Topping

3 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon cinnamon

Instructions

In a large mixing bowl, add prepared peaches and all of the peaches' ingredients except the butter. Toss to fully coat the peaches in the mixture.

Pour your melted butter in a 9"x13" baking dish.

Dump your peach mixture over the butter.

Bake for 10 minutes in a 425°F oven.

While you're waiting for your peaches to cook a bit, mix up the ingredients for the cobbler and topping. In a separate small bowl, mix topping ingredients, and quickly stir to combine. Set aside.

In a large bowl, add all of the cobbler ingredients and whisk to combine.

When your peaches are ready, take them out of the oven, and pour cobbler batter over the peaches. Then top with the cinnamon-sugar mixture.

Bake for 25-30 minutes in a 375°F oven, until cobbler is cooked through and a toothpick comes out clean.

Serve warm. Top with ice cream, if desired.

(recipe taken from www.thegraciouswife.com)



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Tinsel IN THE TREES

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

The magic of Christmas is coming to Paragould with Tinsel in the Trees, an interactive experience for people of all ages.

“Tinsel in the Trees is a nature walk under the stars in the woods, trailing through a holiday world of creative displays, lights and sculptures,” creator Casey Cox said.

The best part? It’s all handcrafted. The self-guided walk, only \$10 per person, opens December 9 at 5:00 p.m. near Cornbread Corner, where Cox hosted Nightmare Forest for Halloween in 2017. In fact, Tinsel in the Trees began as a Halloween project that didn’t quite work out, so Cox moved on to Christmas.

"I used to help curate haunted attractions," he said. "One thing I always heard is that people wish they were able to stop and look at the props. So why not give it a try that way?"

Cox added that after a year of cabin fever, backlogged creativity and turning 30, he decided it was time to get back to the drawing board. "Several think tank sessions later, here we are, I guess you could say from 'ghoul' to 'glitter,'" he said.

Cox and his team, Joshua Hudson and Mackenzie Davis, got to work on the winter wonderland walkthrough in mid-October, leaving not even two months of planning. The list of volunteers is growing, Cox said, but the experience was visually curated by himself.

"If this year's response is well perceived, then you can consider this event only the beginning of a much larger vision," he added. "I am hoping the future will prove to show more artists have interests in being involved."

Cox also said live caroling performances are planned, and possibly acoustic music throughout the trail, featuring local talent. He also hopes to add more nights to the schedule.

Aside from showcasing the simple beauty of Christmas, Cox wants Tinsel in the Trees to benefit individuals in Northeast Arkansas.

"My hope is that this provides a future creative platform for the talent in the area to dream big, think big and create big," Cox said.

"Too often, creatives are stifled, toned down or limited and simply put, that's not creativity. That's coloring inside the lines."

Cox suggested visitors review FAQs at www.tinselinthetrees.com before attending, due to potential weather cancellations.

More information, including directions and a complete list of dates, can also be found at www.facebook.com/tinselinthetrees.



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This is a tradition carried on by many to start the Christmas season, so come join us as we are pleased to present to you ... The Nutcracker! Tickets are \$19.00 for reserved seating, \$15.00 general admission.

Photos by Harter Photography



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**Whittle a Little:
Gerald Lamb**

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**Continual
Home Run:
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Whittle a Little

Down a gravel road in Marmaduke, a pigeon loft sits in a back yard, birds cooing inside, and Gerald Lamb sits on his front porch steps whittling wood.

Lamb, 82, picked up a knife and some sticks in 1970 after seeing a vendor at a craft fair demonstrating his carvings. Lamb thought he could do the same type of woodwork in a slightly different way to make flowers. Soon enough, he was creating bouquets to gift people for their birthdays.

“I whittle a little bit each day on the flowers,” he said, noting he can finish flowers in a few hours after finding the right type of wood, and an entire bouquet is completed in a few weeks.

Lamb primarily uses sumac wood but will collect other types in order to create different colors for the flowers. To find the sticks, he simply drives down the highway and searches the side of the road. He is currently crafting a bouquet made from gumballs, acorns and pine cones his sister gathered together. When he is finished he plans to coat it in polyurethane to preserve each piece and give it a glossy look.

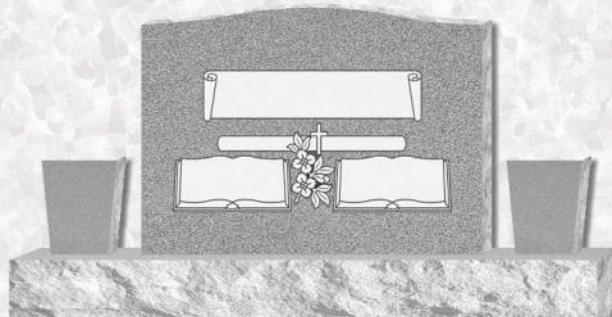


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This year, Lamb entered his wooden bouquet in the Greene County Fair and took home a first prize ribbon. He is proud of his work, showcasing each sculpture in a glass vase, but he emphasizes he uses his hobby as a way to keep him busy since his wife, Donna, passed away in 2020. Though he has a workspace in his garage, complete with a dog at his side, Lamb prefers sitting on the porch steps to work, enjoying the weather.

“It’s so relaxing and it just occupies my time,” he said.

Over the years Lamb whittled flowers for Donna, who enjoyed pigeon racing, and eventually branched out into other mediums. He made her a heart and arrow from barbed wire for Valentine’s Day one year, and he also creates sculptures from horseshoe nails. Lamb said he became depressed after his wife’s death, but working with his hands has helped pass the time, and helped him work through the grief.

Despite putting hours into each handcrafted bundle, Lamb doesn’t sell his items. Instead, he gives them to people who he thinks will enjoy them.

“It gives me kind of a blessing to whittle stuff for people who appreciate it,” he said. “People who like stuff I make, it just does me good to give it to them.”

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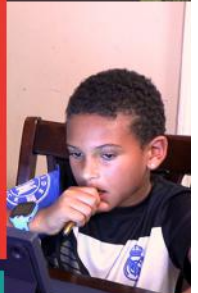
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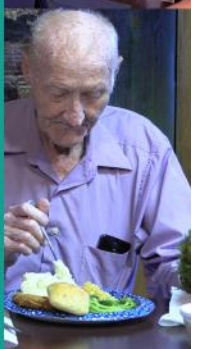
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BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

Walking into the BEES Senior Citizens center in Paragould on a Tuesday or Friday morning, you will hear a group of seniors simultaneously teasing and cheering each other on as they toss bean bags.

The bean bag baseball team has existed for well over a decade, created before Director Carol Fleszar joined the center in 2010. She joins in on the games but stands by to keep score and hand out medals for home runs.

The Stingers play in district tournaments, and a state tournament is held in Jacksonville.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56

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“When we all come together, all the other counties in Northeast Arkansas, there’s like 15 teams,” Fleszar said.

She added the Stingers won the state tournament in 2019, and while there was no competition in 2020 or 2021, they hope to return next year.

Though the BEES are competitive, calling out jests like any other sports team, they are also supportive and gather for a fun time. The team has become a way to make friends and socialize. Member Betty Harpole said her favorite thing about the team is “being around everybody, listening to everybody laugh and talk.

“We all get so close,” she added, saying they have even come to know each other’s families.

Harpole said if there are Paragould seniors who are lonely and looking for someone to talk to, the center is a good place to visit. She is one participant who has played the longest, after joining in 2013. She originally came to the center for line dancing but after a friend asked her to play baseball a few times, she decided to come.

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In addition to bean bag baseball, Harpole said participants can also play Bingo, put together puzzles and even shop at the boutique.

"There's just all kinds of things here for people to participate in," she said.

Aside from the camaraderie the team enjoys, the sport also naturally serves as a form of exercise.

"It's so good for them," Fleszar said. "We've had some ladies who were really weak, and they started coming and their strength got better."

Fleszar said when the center fully opens back up, any senior over the age of 60 is welcome to join the Stingers.

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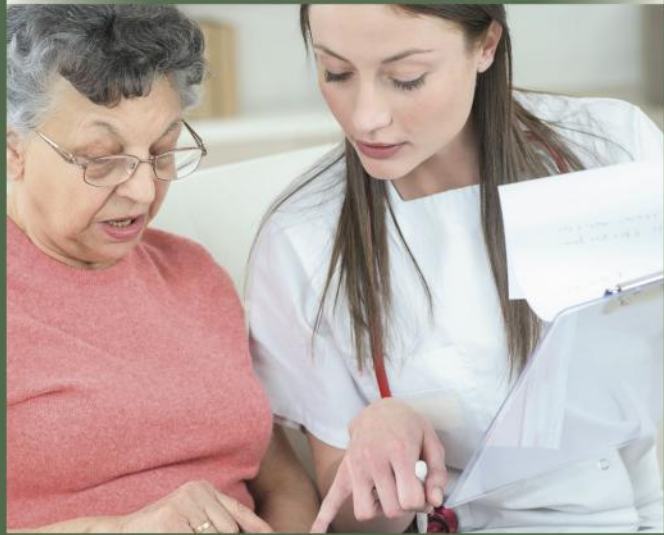
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John J. Pershing VA Medical Center Celebrates National Caregivers Month



In honor of National Family Caregivers Month in November, the John J. Pershing VA Medical Center (VAMC) hosted a special Holiday Cooking Demo virtually for caregivers of veterans.

"This year for our annual Caregiver Appreciation Month, we wanted to share our brand-new teaching kitchen with our caregivers," said Caregiver Support Program Coordinator, Vicki Burns.

Staff members at the VA medical center were so excited about the event, they invited Dr. Colleen Richardson, Executive Director of VA's national Caregiver Support Program to join them and were delighted when she accepted the invitation. "This is a huge honor," Burns said. Richardson is a clinical psychologist and a Navy veteran who served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Caregivers of veterans provide so much for our local heroes, and they serve their country in a special way, so this month and this event are all about honoring and appreciating them," Burns continued.

"You really are the hidden heroes," Dr. Richardson acknowledged during the event, adding that caregivers sacrifice on so many levels to serve those who have served the country.

A cooking demonstration, hosted by registered dietitian BriAnne Riggins followed the special remarks. We took notes to share what we learned with Premiere readers – details on page 59.

Healthy Holiday Cooking Tips



- Eat something small before going to a gathering rather than over-indulging.
- Use assertive skills to pass, say no, or insist on a smaller portion.
- Keep a low calorie drink in hand to sip on.
- Focus on the social aspect rather than simply waiting to eat.
- Incorporate physical activity by making a point to walk around and move about.
- Contribute a healthy dish.
- DON'T deny yourself something you really want. If it brings back memories or is a dish you particularly love, eat it. Simply take your time with it – appreciate its texture, the flavor, the memories. Often this helps a smaller portion be satisfying.
- Healthier substitutions:
 - Sub whip cream for chilled fat free milk
 - Sub half of what a recipe asks of oil with apple sauce
 - Sub egg yolk for egg white
 - Sub salt with savory seasoning like pepper, coriander, ginger, or onion powder



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Honored



BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Troy Rimmer has seen a lot in his 99 years of life but one thing he says he didn't see coming was his induction into Greene County Tech's Veteran's Hall of Fame.

"Well, no, that one surprised me," said the Paragould resident and U.S. Army veteran. "I knew they inducted somebody every year, but I didn't know it was going to be me. I wasn't expecting it at all."

Rimmer was one of three inducted by the local high school this year at its annual Veterans Day Program, joining David Specking and Clarence "Eugene" Prince as honorees. The Paragould Fire and Police departments provided an escort from Rimmer's home to the school for the special ceremony, making his day even more memorable. "Oh, yeah, they took real good care of me," he said. "They did it up right and I got a couple of nice plaques. I'm real proud of them." He also received a congratulatory letter from U.S. Senator John Boozman.

While he admits he's not going to win any footraces anytime soon, Rimmer is amazingly sharp for someone nearing 100.

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He's affable, personable, and his sense of recollection right on point. Raised during The Great Depression, he said he was working on a farm in Phillips County -- as he had done for most of his life -- when the news of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor came through. He wanted to enlist right away but before he was able to see that through he was drafted into service. "That was in February of 1942," he recalled. "I was 20 years old when I was drafted, 21 when I went in. There was several from Arkansas that went in at the same time and I met some at Little Rock and there was four of us ... we went all the way through, from 1942 to 1945, and all came back. We all came back and later on we knew how rare that was ... that we would all make it back."

As a member of the 442nd Signal Corps Battalion, Rimmer was in the middle of some of the most vicious fighting encountered in the Pacific Theater of Operations. At the Battle of Luzon, a land battle that resulted in a U.S. and Filipino victory, more than 8,000 Americans lost their lives, as did over 150,000 Filipinos and more than 200,000 Japanese soldiers ... the highest net casualty battle U.S. forces fought in the entire war.

In the amphibious invasion of Leyte, Rimmer and his fellow soldiers found themselves the target of heavy fire as they made repeated attempts to reach land. "We were pinned down on Leyte in the Philippines and they used a smoke screen to allow us to get in," he said. "The enemy couldn't see us because of the heavy smoke but they kept strafing us with planes and then we went in. The infantry went in ahead of us. We stayed in a foxhole for a couple of days with the shells going over us.

"You grow up fast out there, no doubt about it. Some guys could handle it better than others.

A lot of men who came back got into drinking real bad, but I would tell their loved ones, 'Don't be too hard on him; you don't know what he's been through.' I even had some trouble when I got home and drank too much, but then I said to myself, 'This is not right' and I gave it up. Some couldn't. Like I said, some can handle it better than others."

During his time in the jungle warfare, Rimmer's ears got infected and seriously damaged his hearing. Upon his return to civilian life, he found it difficult to gain employment because of that condition. "I applied for a job at steel mill, but I failed the physical and was turned down," he said. "I told the guy I needed a job bad and he asked me if I could drive a truck. I told him I could drive anything with a steering wheel and they put me in a semi. I stayed long enough to earn a pension, 30 years. I was gone a lot but I earned top wages. It's a tough job when you've got kids, though. I had three from my first marriage but my wife just up and left me with them. Then I got married again and she had two kids, and we had one together. That's six kids in all!"

He said work was hard to find because "when I first got out of service there was nothing. They figured we wouldn't work anyway, so they wouldn't hire us. That's when a lot of guys started to drink too much, and I did too. But now, the VA treats us pretty good. We have lots of support we didn't have back then.

"Work was all I'd ever done. My dad was a sharecropper so we moved about every year, went to where the work was. During The Depression, I worked on the farm for 75 cents a day, 10 hours a day. I didn't have a problem working but it was real hard for some of us to find a job."

Rimmer looks back on the war years as a growing experience for him and many others. One of his sons was a Marine in the Vietnam era, and he said of him, "He thought he was tough but he found out he wasn't when he got to be a Marine. Well, I grew up a lot when I got in there, too. You have to become a man pretty quick in a war.

"But I'd tell young people today if they think they can handle it then there's nothing wrong with it (joining the military). You can make a good pension if you stick with it and you'll learn a lot in a hurry. I grew up a lot when I got in there, too. I sure did."



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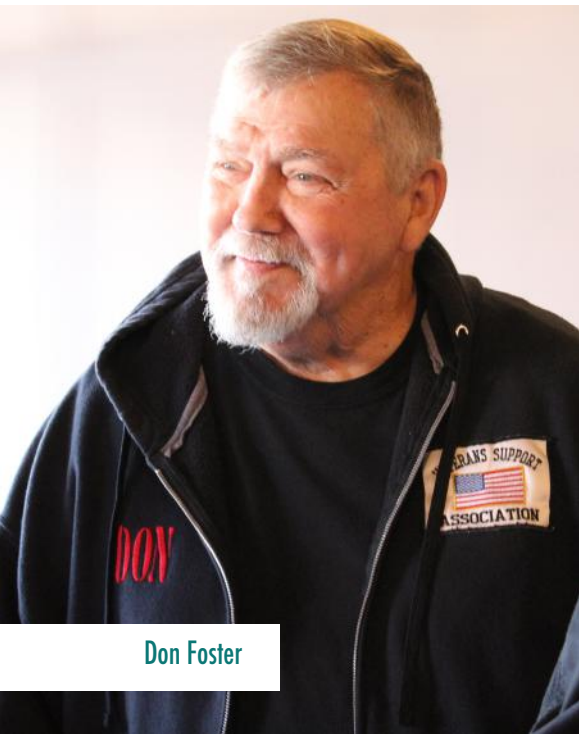
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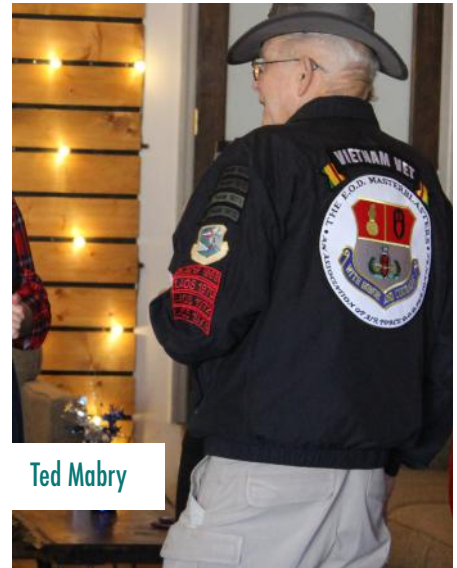


Don Foster



Downtown Paragould hosted coffee for veterans on Veterans Day – November 11 – at The Crossing in Downtown Paragould.

Photos Submitted By Main Street Paragould



Ted Mabry



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When the Holidays Aren't Happy

BY KARAN SUMMITT

For most of us the upcoming holidays trigger images of joy, laughter and family reunions. We sing, "It's the most wonderful time of the year" and look forward to the mayhem of frantic shopping, overstuffed tummies and garbage bags filled with torn wrapping paper.

But for others, the holiday season is a time of prolonged torment. At best, loved ones are too far away to come home. At worst, they will never come home, and loneliness becomes a constant companion the year round. This time of the year only magnifies the pain.

Trying to make it through the last two months of the year when your heart is hurting isn't easy, especially when aging begins to win the battle with good health. Limited mobility, physical pain and dreary days would be a challenge all by themselves.

Some things are worth noting. Being lonely may feel isolating, but there are others who suffer from the same emotion. What you see on television isn't reality for everyone. Grief during the holidays may exist because of death, but it can also be brought about by relationship changes, empty nest or financial strains. It is possible to experience loneliness even when surrounded by loved ones.

Coping with sadness during the holidays is more than keeping a stiff upper lip until January 2nd rolls around. A determined attack

on loneliness may not make it disappear, but it can help us find the strength to fight despair when painful feelings come.

Here are a few ways to fight those lonely times:

1. Allow yourself to grieve. Missing someone we love or dealing with unwelcome changes is hard. Expressing that grief aloud or writing it down in a journal can be very therapeutic. Accept the grief and loneliness as a normal part of life, not as a sign of weakness.

2. Look for others who are having a hard time during the holidays. Their reasons may be different from yours, but they will understand the sadness. Call, send a card or spend time together doing things that are enjoyable to both of you.

3. Let go of expectations and responsibilities you don't feel up to handling. Pressure for the holidays to live up to past memories or trying to take on big projects can add anxiety to the stress of loneliness.

4. Create new traditions. Sometimes shutting the door on the past as it was and finding new ways to celebrate can be a bridge to better coping.

5. Keep a blessing box. Even when you least feel like it, write down the good things in your life and keep them in a box, jar or container that allows you to see the list as it grows.

Despite dark circumstances most of us have many good things we can treasure.

6. Practice healthy strategies that work for you. Keep busy. Laugh often. Volunteer. Pamper yourself. Stay off social media. Avoid the things that offer temporary relief but come back with a kick of guilt later -- overeating, too much alcohol and pain-numbing drugs, just to name a few.

In reality, grief, sadness and lonely times are seasons of life everyone will experience. The holidays may magnify these emotions, but they are an opportunity to build resilience, find new coping skills and offer comfort to others. If your feelings are overwhelming and nothing seems to ease the pain, reach out for help. Tell someone you love and trust, a doctor or a professional counselor. There are those who care.

The holidays will pass and you will get through this. An ancient verse that reads, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" is a promise of hope.

Verse reference is Psalm 30:5

Karan Summitt is a Health Educator with St. Bernards Community Benefits and a Navigator for the Congregational Health Outreach program.

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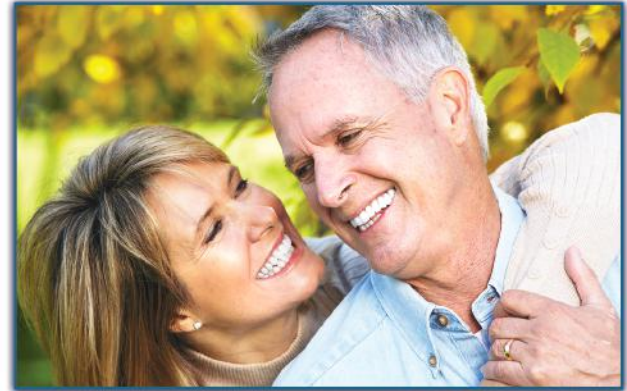
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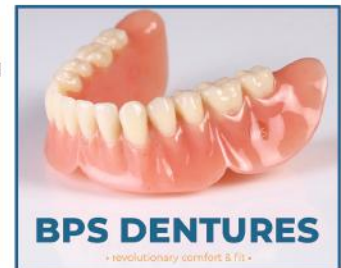


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Making the Right Choice for Senior Living

BY TARA PIATT

For most older adults, a late in life move to a retirement facility is part of a healthy aging plan, although it's sometimes extremely hard to get started. Choosing the right residence and planning for the move are so important and should be decided based upon an understanding of your personal needs. Your starting point is to assess your situation and personal health concerns.

What is my Situation?

According to Debbie Farrell, Administrator and Community Director of Chateau on the Ridge in Paragould, you must take into account what your total monthly expenses are. These include what you may be paying for in taxes, insurance, groceries, lawn care and landscaping, cleaning of multiple bedrooms for space that may not be in daily use, and costs of general upkeep and repairs that may cause unneeded stress on you. Farrell says, "When you factor in those costs, the price of an assisted living facility can be comparable to what you're already paying out each month."

Being realistic about your finances and budgeting are essential when creating a

long-term care plan. It's very important to financially prepare for any health issues that may occur in your future. If you need more detailed information on long-term care, the National Institute on Aging can help get you started in the right direction. You can access the NIA online at nia.hih.gov and click on "Health Information" in the menu. This will take you to an A-Z health topic listing where you can click on "Financial planning and protection."

What are my Health Concerns?

If you are beginning to have health complications that may not be suited for the current layout of your residence, you may want to work with your doctor or care team and factor these issues into your senior living plan. Assessing your functional abilities that you need for daily activities, medical concerns, and cognitive concerns should be realistically determined before deciding what your next life stage should look like. If cognitive issues are a concern, you will need to choose an aging plan with personnel who can work with you or your loved one.



What do I hope for in my new Social Life?

Social interaction has been proven to provide health benefits such as a sharper memory, longevity, and increased emotional and physical health.

Consider hiring a professional Move Manager

Once you have made the decision for your next living arrangement, you may want to hire a move manager to help downsize your current possessions, and prepare your current home for sale or rent. A good move manager can also take a floor plan from your retirement facility, use software to help determine what items will fit your apartment, and make your new living space homey and comforting without being overcrowded. They can also provide specific services to help you with your relocation and transition, relieving you of the stress of doing it all yourself. You deserve to have the next phase of your life as happy and worry-free as possible. You've earned it.

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HAPPENINGS



Arkansas Methodist Medical Center Foundation and Pepsi hosted the 26th annual Foundation Golf Tournament on Thursday, October 21, at the Paragould Country Club. Over \$60,000 was raised to benefit programs and services provided by the AMMC Foundation.



The Greene County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting on November 8th to recognize the new solar plant located in Paragould.



NEA Baptist Memorial Hospital received an "A" Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade for fall 2021. This national distinction recognizes NEA Baptist's achievements in protecting patients from harm and error in the hospital. "We are so proud of our 'A' score and of our hard-working team members who earned it," said Sam Lynd, CEO and administrator of NEA Baptist.



BRTC's traditional registered nursing (TRN) students donated nine duffel bags filled with personal care items to Children's Home, Inc., a children's shelter located in Paragould. Nine children will not only receive essential personal care items but also gain a storage container in which to keep their personal belongings when traveling to and from the shelter.

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Info:

downtownparagould.com/events

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Next Month

Then & Now



Then and Now photos of NEA. Want to see your old photo recreated? Email lindsey@mormediainc.com to submit your photo for the chance to be featured in the January 2022 edition of *Premiere*.

Taking On the New Year



Things to do, staying healthy, and embracing 2022.

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