

SANTA'S PRAYER

*The Reason for the Season*

NEA'S

PREMIERE

NEA'S HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

REDWOLVES MAKING HISTORY

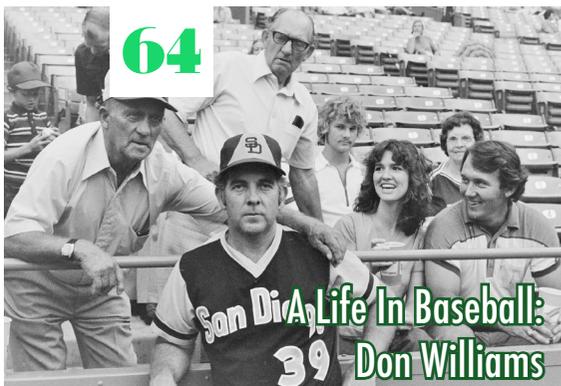
SPECIAL SECTION: NEA SENIORS

Mrs. C  
MAGAZINE

December 2023

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Original Cover Photo by Jessica Rosa, Holiday Photo Magic  
Christmas Magic by Gabby Powell

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# From the Publisher

December! Where did this year go? All the “time flies when you are having fun” and “it flies faster the older you get” is all true! Publishing NEA Premiere is very fun, and we all must admit we are getting older!

Santa “Steve” Cause has graced our cover since 2017 and we are so grateful for his spirit of Christmas we share with our readers. I have listened to him tell Santa’s Prayer at our annual Fast Glass Corvette Cub Christmas party and every year I say we should share that with our radio listeners on Christmas Eve.

I love to share family holiday traditions and I hope this becomes one as we invite you to gather your family around a radio (ok, you can tell Alexa to play Jill @ 99 dot 3 and she will) each top of the hour from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Christmas Eve because we finally got it

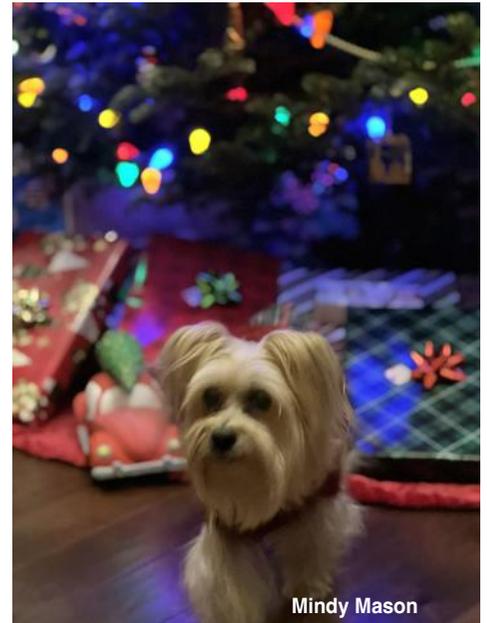
recorded! Follow along with the story on page 24 and be sure to post a picture of your new family tradition on Jill’s Facebook page ... you never know what prize Jill has in store!

I hope you read this edition and make lots of plans to celebrate this season. The Premiere family is happy to gather activities for you and your family to create lasting memories of a joyous Merry Christmas. From cutting your tree down at a local Christmas Tree Farm to participating in or watching all the community parades, to light shows and live nativities, we want to see how you celebrate.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and as always, Thank You for doing your part to spread “the Good News and the People Making it Happen” in Northeast Arkansas!

*Dina Mason*

Publisher



Mindy Mason

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# FIRST NATIONAL BANK COMMITTED TO DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD



Continuing on its commitment to the community that it has called home since 1889, First National Bank announced its “Home” initiative that aims to revitalize its downtown Paragould campus and areas surrounding it.

To kick off the mission, the bank will form a public-private partnership with the City of Paragould to restore the 100-year-old “Power Plant” facility located on East Poplar Street in Downtown Paragould. First National Bank has agreed to provide \$2 million in funding to convert the plant into a unique event venue. With the contribution, the bank will receive naming rights to the facility. Upon completion, the venue will be known as The Station powered by First National Bank.



The building was originally constructed as a pump house for City, Light, and Water in 1923 and began serving a dual purpose in 1938 when the first generators for the City Light Plant were installed. The plant was the town’s generator and created power for the city during the early years of its existence. With its renewed power coming from a commitment between city officials and the bank, The Station powered by First National Bank will be a multi-use event facility with auditorium/theater-style seating for over 700 people or nearly 500 people in a banquet-type accommodation. There will be an outdoor area that includes an amphitheater with lawn seating complete with dressing rooms that will allow the venue to host festivals, Downtown After Hours, and a variety of entertainment and community events. The existing structure will receive a significant overhaul while preserving the characteristics that made the building so unique. The City of Paragould will work to manage and maintain the property as well as oversee construction of

 **THE  
STATION**  
POWERED BY  **First National Bank**



the new space.

“This is a historic and monumental time in the city of Paragould. This project enjoys the largest umbrella of collaborative partners to ever work together to see a project through. That collaboration is matched with the largest financial commitment to ever be received by the city,” said Paragould Mayor Josh Agee. “First National Bank has made a commitment to making Paragould a community built for the future. Today’s announcement powers Paragould into a new era with renewed energy and enthusiasm. We will look back on today as a turning point for generations to come.”

In addition to The Station, First National Bank released conceptual plans for a complete re-design and investment in its Downtown Paragould campus. The bank will give its existing customer service office a face-lift and interior upgrade while also removing some older structures to make way for more green space, better traffic flow, and safer, easier access to company buildings. More details on this project will be released soon. First National Bank has

operated from Downtown Paragould since 1889.

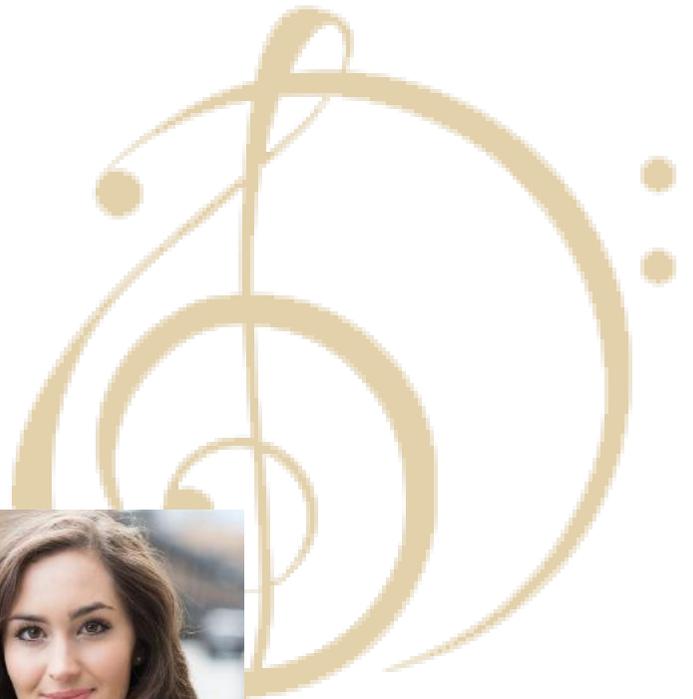
“First National Bank was born here in Downtown Paragould 134 years ago. Since then, we’ve grown from here and are still running a much larger, but still locally-owned, bank right here in our hometown,” said First National Bank Chairman Will Brewer. “This investment is about more than just putting our name on a building; it’s about giving back to our home.”

First National Bank has 23 locations in Arkansas and Tennessee and a total asset size of \$2.3 billion. It started as Bank of Paragould in 1889 before being granted a national charter in 1903 and changing its name to First National Bank. Despite substantial growth in that time period, the bank has never forgotten its roots and still maintains signature You 1st Banking service in each of the markets it serves.



# DELTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOLIDAY CONCERT

On Sunday, December 10, at 2 p.m. in Riceland Hall of the Fowler Center in Jonesboro (201 Olympic Drive), Dr. Neale Bartee and the Delta Symphony Orchestra will present a Holiday Concert featuring guest vocalists Perry Harper, Maddie Bowden Smith, and Nancy Owens. Join us for a memorable afternoon of holiday classics and an audience sing-along led by Santa Claus. Tickets are \$20-\$35 and can be purchased at <https://www.deltasymphonyorchestra.org/tickets> or by calling 870.761.8254. Group rates are available for parties of 10 or more.



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# GET RICH WITH RICHARD BRUMMETT

Christmas has always been one of my favorite holidays and remains so, even though my viewpoint has changed. When I was young my happiness was twofold: One, I didn't have to go to school; and, two, I got presents. Today my joy comes from having my children and grandchildren around me, watching their faces as they open gifts.

I remember those childhood days when my grandparents, Jack and Audie Burton, felt it necessary to give me some little something for Christmas. I knew they didn't have much and certainly didn't expect presents from them, but every year one of them stuck a folded up five dollar bill into my hand and when it was time to open gifts on Christmas morning, there would be one from them under the tree. The problem was, they were quite out of touch with what young people considered "cool" presents and I had to feign delight at some toy or game that went out of style about the same time my flat top did.

They used to tell stories of what they got as Christmas gifts when they were children, things like apples, pecans, oranges and, maybe on the really good years, socks or scarves. Times were a lot tougher for someone born in 1900, as Grandpa was, and any little thing was appreciated. As it should have been. As it still should be.

One year I got a little cap pistol, along with a roll of caps, from them but neither of the grandparents apparently knew Mattel had come out with the Fanner 50, a handgun that actually fired little gray "bullets" that could knock over certain lightweight objects or possibly put your sister's eye out. You could also stick a green circular cap on each individual bullet so that when you fired the gun, you heard the "bang" and saw smoke. That's what I wanted, not the outdated little thing that looked like it belonged to a 1940s private eye and was doomed for a life lived in the bottom of my toy chest.

Another year they gave me a Woolly Willy, a piece of cardboard with a clear plastic shell covering a cartoon sketch of a guy's face, and you could move metal filings around with a magnetic wand to add features like hair, eyebrows and mustaches. I knew it cost 29 cents because I had seen it on the shelf at the Ben Franklin store, and I had to bite my tongue to keep from telling them someone had already invented the Etch A Sketch, quite a step up from Willy in technology.

But even at that early age I understood the important part was that they loved me enough to want to give me something and I

treasured those thoughts. I get it even more today because I'm the grandparent, and I have no idea what my grandkids are talking about when I ask them what they'd like to have as a present. My two older grandsons often are willing to settle for a movie and that seems simple enough until you go the movie-buying place and realize they have about three thousand on display, in no logical order, and you have to spend hours looking at titles that make no sense to you. If you ask for help in finding the specific film you seek, you're apt to get, "I dunno; if we got it, it'll be over there" as an answer. And if you do finally find it, your momentary feeling of success is dampened by the fact that it doesn't cost \$2.50 as you expected, but \$39.99 instead. In comparison, my entire wardrobe costs about \$39.99.

During the weeks leading up to Christmas, my wife and I begin to ask the younger ones in the family what they'd like to have and even when they sit in my living room and tell me point blank, I still don't know what they're talking about. Last year after they had gone home it went something like this:

Wife: "What did David say he say he wanted?"

Me: "Something about a PS-2."

Wife: "What the heck is that?"

Me: "I think it has something to do with a psychiatric evaluation. Seems like I remember that from my days as a mental health worker."

Wife: "Why would he want us to get him a psychiatric exam?"

Me: "I don't know; maybe his insurance won't cover it."

Wife: "What about Kegan?"

Me: "Something about an X in a box. All I can figure is, he wants us to make a list of things we are willing to buy and then draw a little box beside each, and then he'll put an X in the box next to the ones he likes."

Wife: "You're sure he didn't say Xbox?"

Me: "No, I'm pretty sure I heard him say X in a box."

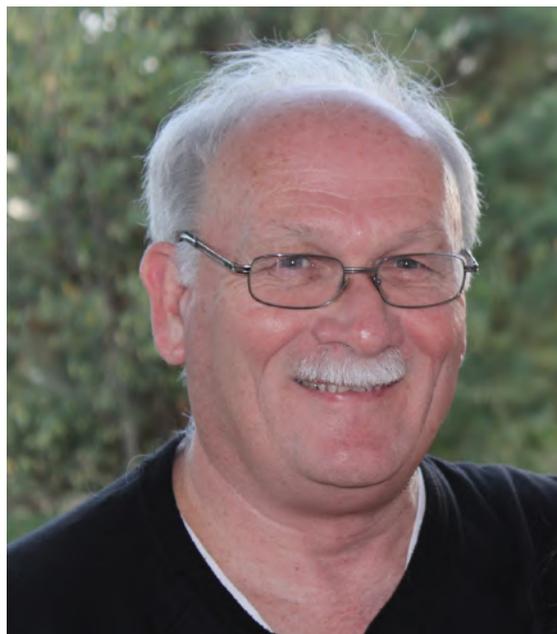
Wife: "That makes no sense."

Me: "Well, you're really going to flip when you learn Roxie Jo wants a new eye patch."

Wife: "Ipad, maybe?"

Me: "I don't think so. I guess she got something in her eye at recess. Pretty sure she said eye patch. That's what I heard, anyway."

So, I hope the grandkids are good at pretending they like what we bought, just as I was back in the day. I can say without a doubt whatever their gifts turn out to be, they were purchased with love and good intentions. I can't help it if I'm out touch with what's cool.



# PET

*of the*

# MONTH

**SPONSORED BY ARPETS HOSPITAL**

BY RACHEL STEELE

**M**y husband and I work at Williams Baptist University, and a student asked us to adopt her pet so she wouldn't get in trouble for having a cat in her dorm room. We adopted El and we immediately fell in love with her. She plays fetch like a dog, loves cuddles and scratches, and is super curious about the gravity of objects.

Want to see your pet featured in Premiere? Submit your pet via our Facebook post each month! Follow NEA Premiere Magazine to stay in the know.



## Crockpot Hot Chocolate



### Ingredients:

- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 6 oz dark chocolate
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder or coffee powder
- Toppings of choice: marshmallows, whipped cream, a drizzle of caramel, a handful of extra chocolate chips

*Cook on low for 2 to 3 hours or on high for 45 minutes to 1 hour, Whisk often.*

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# LIKE FATHER, *Like Daughter*

BY GABBY POWELL

When it comes to the holidays, we often think of family get togethers and memories being made; however, this father-daughter duo has a different way of growing closer together. Drake and Audrey Wallace are doing things most of us only read about: Tough Mudders.

Tough Mudders are endurance-centered obstacles courses that test the mind and body. And of course, they are muddy! Drake began his Tough Mudder career about 10 years ago when he embarked on a fitness journey that would change his life. His first obstacle course series, Warrior Dash, hooked him into the growing sport. Drake has completed around 45 obstacle course series, with about 35 of them being Tough Mudders. He has traveled as far as Laughlin, Nevada, and Atlanta,

Georgia, to compete, but it would be my guess that his most recent run in Nashville has been one of the most memorable.

At the end of October 2023, Audrey Wallace completed her first ever Tough Mudder obstacle series in Nashville. She has been rooting for her dad on the sidelines for years, traveling with him to be a part of his race pit crew. However, it wasn't until she turned 13 that she was able to compete alongside him. The two completed the short distance, 5k Tough Mudder, and there are no signs of turning back.

"I'm super proud of her," dad, Drake says. "I'm proud that, one, she did it and finished it. And then that she enjoyed herself enough that she wants to do more."

One characteristic of Tough Mudder events many may not know is that most are not competition runs; they are completers events. Drake encourages anyone interested in these races to go for it.

"Everyone's goal is to get everyone across the finish line," he said. The community made through these events is one that is hard to match.

While this may not be a tradition every father, daughter, mother, or son can get into, it does prove one thing. Memories can be made in countless ways, and there is nothing stopping you from fulfilling your goals. Find some way to connect with your family this holiday season, whether it be baking a pie or playing in the mud.



*Glen Sain*  
God Bless Our Troops

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# UPCOMING JONESBORO AND PARAGOULD ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADES



The 76th Annual Jonesboro Christmas Parade, hosted by The Foundation of Arts, is set! Join us on Friday, December 1, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. for a night of cheer. This year's theme is "Merry Melodies," so be sure to do a recap on all your Christmas tunes before going! (Hint, hint! Catch some 24/7 Christmas Music on Jill@99.3!)

Main Street Paragould presents the "12 Days of Christmas"

parade! Join us on Tuesday, December 5th, at 7:00 p.m. to view the festive floats driving through Downtown Paragould. Be sure to get there early to secure your spot and see Santa float by!

As we go through pictures and memories from last year's parade season, these are two we can't wait to see again! For a full list of NEA parades, visit page 31! Be sure to smile and wave when you see us go by, for you just might be featured in the magazine!

*You're Invited*

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## Holiday Service Opportunities & Resources



**Dec. 4th**

2nd Annual Gingerbread House Competition  
Visit Habitat for Humanity of NEA  
for more information  
Story Coffee House  
5:00pm - 8:00pm

**Dec. 9th**

Toys for Tots Giveaway  
Toys, Santa & Elves, hot cocoa, & more  
Paragould Masonic Lodge  
11:00am

**Dec. 14th**

Mitchell Funeral Home  
2nd Annual  
Candlelight Service  
6:00pm  
1520 Highway 49N  
Paragould

**Dec. 21st**

Annie Camp EAST Feast  
Warm meal, free to public  
Annie Camp Cafeteria, Jonesboro  
5:30pm - 7:30pm  
To make time or monetary donations, email  
annicamp-jhs@eastschools.org

**Dec. 23rd**

3rd Annual Community Holiday Meal  
Brenda's Table Emergency Food Charity  
The Parsonage, Jonesboro, AR  
Free to Public  
11:00am - 2:00pm

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# ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY REDWOLVES MAKING HISTORY

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE



“Red Wolf Reign” was the theme of this year’s Arkansas State University Homecoming game, and the crowned queen certainly showed the composure of royalty after receiving her title.

Out of the five women nominated for court, Alandria Maddox (nominated by the Arkansas State Magic: The Gathering Club) took home the title of queen at the Red Wolves vs. Coastal Carolina game on October 21, with Lawson Davis next to her as king. Maddox wasn’t just on the field for a court nomination, though: She serves as the ASU band’s first African-American female drum major, and immediately jumped into the halftime show after being crowned.

“The thought swirling around in my head when my name was announced was, ‘We did it,’” Maddox, a junior history major, said. “By ‘we’, I mean everyone who played a small or big role in making that moment possible. I tell people all the time that I didn’t do it alone, and I also never just did it for myself. I did it because I saw it as another opportunity to represent myself, those who believe in me, and to spread some light in the midst of whatever darkness one may be encountering. We all need something to give us hope, and that’s all I was aiming for.”

Maddox added women tend to wear so many different hats and the moment of her winning queen and running to conduct the band was a visual representation of that.

“Just within that moment, I was me as an individual, a student, a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a niece, a friend, a drum major, and then a homecoming queen,” she said. “It’s incredible to think about from that perspective.”

Maddox began her drum major journey at Jonesboro High School at the end of her sophomore year and served her junior and senior years of high school. She said having amazing and supportive band directors has been a key factor in her success from then on. While the role isn’t the same level of responsibility in high school as in college, Maddox explained both times her band directors encouraged her to give it a try because they thought she had the personality, leadership skills, and conducting technique to fulfill the position.

The 2023 homecoming queen said at times she feels a lot of weight is on her shoulders by serving the community as a role model to people of all ages. She has set the standard of how she wants to be

# WILLIAMS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY ONCE AN EAGLE, ALWAYS AN EAGLE

BY GABBY POWELL

Eagles from all generations arrived back on campus at Williams Baptist University for the annual Homecoming festivities. Whether they graduated from Southern Baptist College, Williams Baptist College, or Williams Baptist University, each share a Christ-centered education from a close-knit institution.

Following the Homecoming parade and pep rally from the day before, the Williams Baptist University Band and Singers group performed classic hits for their families and guests at the Homecoming Chorale concert

and gala. Not only did the university’s basketball teams compete that afternoon, but the men’s soccer team also competed in the AMC Championships. While the team did fall short to a talented opponent, alumna got to relive and revive their own memories of cheering on their school.

The 2023 Williams Baptist University Homecoming court was nothing less than sharp dressed. Tate Isaacs, of Ash Flat, and Madison Knight, of Albany, Louisiana, were named the 2023 Homecoming King and Queen. Tate is a senior member of the

WBU baseball team, and Madison is a senior member of the WBU softball squad.

For the 2023 Homecoming events, WBU also wanted to celebrate the achievements of its alumna. Samantha Wooldridge was named the 2023 Outstanding Young Alumni Award for her dedication to the healthcare field and community. In 2015, Samantha transitioned to healthcare education. She instructed new nurses and medical assistants for two years before conquering a new challenge by venturing into clinical informatics.



One recipient of the 2023 WBU Distinguished Alumni Award is Jerry Clements. Jerry graduated from Southern Baptist College in 1966. He has taught, coached, sold insurance, operated a rental business, and much more since his time at SBC. In the early ‘70s, he transitioned from coaching to pastoral work.



Photography submitted by Arkansas State University

represented, and it takes work to maintain that role.

“Nevertheless, I am extremely grateful, blessed, and amazed to be in both positions and as you can see from the videos, I’m not your ordinary queen,” Maddox added.

Maddox lives by striving to be the best she can be, which, she says, can get a person pretty far.

“As a drum major, it truly warms my heart to see the band members who put in so much work every week have a moment that they can just enjoy. Where they can feel seen, heard, and appreciated,” she said. “Being on that podium, in my dress, in my tiara, was that moment. As drum major, I strive to represent these lovely people well and I think I’ve done a pretty good job thus far.”



Photography submitted by Williams Baptist University

The second recipient of the 2023 WBU Distinguished Alumni Award is James Moore. After graduating from Williams Baptist College in 2001, James has impacted countless lives as an educator. From second grade to special education, he has shown that every child has immeasurable opportunity.

James also found a platform on YouTube, where he has become a national brand ambassador for Little Debbie and participated in a Mr. Rogers makeover for Arkansas PBS. Under his YouTube handle, Busvlogger, James has become a prominent advocate for Arkansas.

# Radio Works!

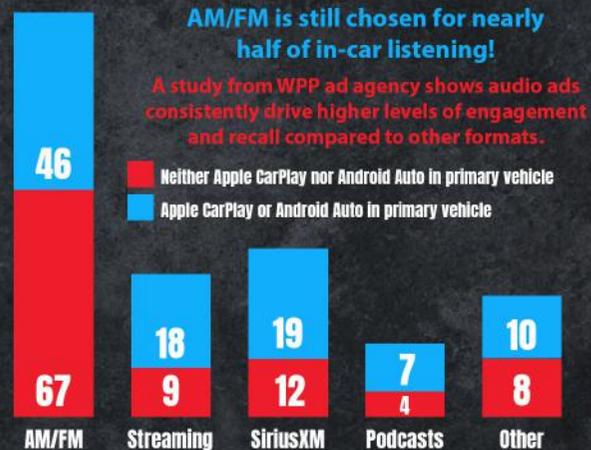


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# MOORE on MANNERS

WITH LINDA LOU MOORE

## 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 # I 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

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.

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.

### PROBLEM # II 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 # III 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

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# PARAGOULD SCHOOL DISTRICT MARCHING THROUGH HISTORY

The Paragould High School Pride Marching Band is now the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association's state champions for Class 5A for the 8th consecutive year. In fact, the band is undefeated at state and has won every year since its inception, the only program that can boast this accomplishment!

Their 2023 production entitled "DAVID" told the epic story of David vs. Goliath and featured music by Bonnie Tyler, Foreigner, Mariah

Carey, Scorpions, Queen, and Destiny's Child. The Paragould Pride won its 51st, 52nd, and 53rd Overall Grand Championships since 2008 at various marching competitions throughout Arkansas and Tennessee this competition season.

Director of Bands is Paragould alumnus Richie Williams. Assistant Directors include Carlis Serna, Ethan Andrews, and Zach McCullough. Additional staff includes CJ Slatton, Erin Straub, and Matt Hardin.





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# NOTIX

**December 18 - January 4**

**Monday - Friday**

**Attractions Open at 1 p.m.**

**Christmas Eve  
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**Christmas Day  
2 p.m - 10 p.m.**

**New Year's Eve  
1 p.m. - 1 a.m.**

**New Year's Day  
1 p.m. - 10 p.m.**

*2*

**Don't miss pictures  
with Santa on Dec. 2!  
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.**





# THE ADVENTURES OF

BY VICKI McMILLAN



**G**ood morning, it's Lester again, full of Thanksgiving turkey and dressing! December is here and another year is in the books -- almost! We still have the best part to go: Christmas! Hanging with friends and family, beautifully decorated churches, midnight service, great food, and, of course, PRESENTS make this the most wonderful time of year. At least that's what the TV tells me!!

This end of the year business both fascinates and scares me. Years are important to all of us, but especially us scrappy little pound dogs. Folks used to say for every one human year, a dog is 7 years older. But that has been debunked by some scientist who obviously loves cats. Now there is a CHART (kinda like the BMI) that calculates dogs' ages. I'm not willing to give away my age or weight, but let's just say according to this chart, I am past ready for Medicare and should have my affairs in order. What do cat-loving academics know, anyway??

Speaking of anniversaries of sorts, I traveled with Mac to his 50th High School Class Reunion -- go Booneville (MS) Blue Devils! I will say he looked pretty fit compared to the other football players. And he didn't dye his hair, so that was a plus. It looked like they had some decent looking hot dogs, but, alas, I was not allowed one.

We then traveled on to Biloxi, Mississippi, just in time for the 50th anniversary of the fishermen from Ocean Springs who claimed, while fishing on the Pascagoula River, an alien spaceship with "blinking blue lights" landed and took them aboard for a "medical examination." They stated they were "conscious but paralyzed" during the encounter.

Later, they were returned to their fishing hole unharmed. This, of course, generated a lot of media attention. Both men wrote books and were guests on talk shows. And now 50 years later, Ocean Springs has a festival complete with folks dressed as aliens in all colors -- although we all know aliens are only green. I wore my cone of shame and my green rain coat, and I must say -- I looked sharp. We danced to good 1970's music and ate some really good food. And thanks to some alien drink, Vicki actually gave me a hot dog!!

Now, if you want to learn about some real aliens, go to Roswell, New Mexico. We went there last year and trust me, you won't leave there denying or accepting alien life. In 1947 a spaceship (or weather balloon) landed on a ranch just outside of Roswell, and the controversies began. Local law enforcement vs. the US government. Air Force Pilots vs. the USAF. BUT Roswell is a really cool place that totally embraces whatever crashed on that ranch all those years ago. There is a great museum on UFOs and ETs, and dogs are allowed inside! You can travel to see the spot of the crash, and with the files from the incident declassified for the past 20 years, you can read all about it. You can get inside a mock-up of an alien spaceship and check out the local industry that remakes out-of-service 747s. And green milkshakes -- they got 'em, plus any other space-themed food you want. It's definitely worth the trip. Just remember when you get there, PHONE HOME!

I'll sign off now. I'm looking for some mistletoe to hang, with that cute Doodle down the street in mind. My best wishes for a blessed holiday season!

Your favorite elf,  
Lester

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## CHUCK LONG

Avid Outdoorsman  
Retired Outdoor Educator

# Make Your Own

## HOLLY JOLLY HOLIDAY MEMORIES

**D**ecember is one of my favorite months! The Christmas season provides opportunities to gather with family and friends, build wonderful memories and celebrate the birth of Jesus. The outdoors provides lots of opportunities in December. It might be hunting, fishing, or just enjoying the outdoors while hiking or taking a scenic drive. December weather can be interesting as it can be warm and ideal for a light pullover one day, while the next might require a toboggan, gloves and snow boots. December has a lot to offer, and I have lots of grand memories from Decembers past.

As a youngster I looked forward to the break from school for the holidays and the opportunity that provided in spending time at my grandparents' homes. Mama Blanton spent many hours preparing homemade goodies to stock the "candy room" and fill various Tupperware containers with homemade Chex party mix. Grandmother Long was ready at a moment's notice to prepare a breakfast of eggs, milk gravy, brown and serve rolls with a cup of instant coffee on the side, no matter what time we were leaving to go hunting.

I liked to hang out with my Papa Blanton in the duck blind on the St Francis River, but also hoped I would get home in time to join Granddad Long as he followed the beagles around chasing cottontails. If they were busy, my cousin Steve Faulkner or my friend Ronnie Pigue and I would find some doves or other game to chase in the local fencerows and fields. At night we would shop through the pages of the JC Penney and Sears catalogs for race cars, baseball gear and GI Joes. For serious shopping, however, we turned to the pages of Cabelas, Wing Supply and Knutson's Decoys, trying to find the latest and greatest gear that would help us add more game to the bag each day.

Many of those memories remain fresh, but I look at each new December as an opportunity to add to that memory bank. Duck hunting

is one my favorites. If the weather conditions are right, the first big migration of mallards makes its way into Arkansas around the tenth of December. A blizzard across the Northern Plains during that time frame will send big greenheads our way and can provide some of the best duck hunting of the year. It's hard to beat a little duck calling, whistling wing beats and the smell of gunpowder on a cold, clear December morning.

As much as I like to duck hunt, I enjoy all the other outdoor activities December has to offer. Deer hunting can be good on those cold, clear December mornings. It can be as satisfying for a deer hunter as it is for the waterfowler.

There are also plenty of small game options. Squirrel hunting is often overlooked in December, but it is a great time to be in the woods chasing bushytails, especially with a tack driving .22 rifle. Rabbit hunting, especially with a pack of beagles, is a great way to enjoy an afternoon.

One other hunting option is predator hunting. This sport has grown over the last few years and many hunters like chasing coyotes, foxes, bobcats and even coons with a call. It's not only a great way to enjoy a day, but also to eliminate predators from their prey.

There are also fishing options. If we happen to have a relatively dry fall and our rivers remain low, the crappie, bass, walleye, sauger and even catfish can provide lots of fun on the waterways. Trout fishing along the White or Spring River is also excellent during this time of year. One great side benefit: There is little competition on the waterways and the peace and quiet is very relaxing.

If you want more of a wildlife watching approach, December offers great opportunities. By the middle of December, there will probably be more bald eagles in Northeast Arkansas than at any other time of the year. Arm your vehicle with binoculars or a spotting scope and camera and head to

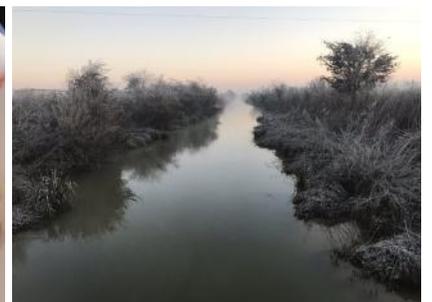
Delaplaine, then over to Lake Ashbaugh, to Peach Orchard, to Knobel and then up toward Corning and there should be some eagles along that route. Look for concentrations of waterfowl, especially snow geese, and the eagles will be close.

Another great thing about a vehicle tour during that time of year is the increased visibility. Old home places, barns as well as natural features and wildlife that might have been previously obscured by leaves will become much more visible.

Would you rather just stay home? Fill up a bird feeder with sunflower seeds and enjoy the variety of finches and sparrows that will stop by for a snack.

All the outdoor opportunities in December are great but, as I said earlier, one of the best things about December is the family time that comes with the holiday season. Our family and friends like to cook and we are always looking for an excuse to get together and enjoy good food and good times. Some nights it will be a feast on the wild game that has been taken, but it might also be pot roast, vegetable soup, BBQ or some other family favorite. We also like desserts and Christmas snacks and the house is often filled with the smell of apple pie, yellow cake with Aunt Carolyn's icing (check with my mom for the recipe) or the pungent aroma of homemade Chex party mix. The holiday season is a grand time.

I wish each of you the very best for this holiday season. I hope you will take some time to enjoy the great outdoors, spend time with family and friends and celebrate the Christmas season and the birth of our Savior. I cannot end without a quote from our favorite Christmas movie. In the words of the Grinch, "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store, maybe Christmas means a little bit more!" I hope your heart grows two sizes this year and that you have a wonderful holiday season. I hope to see you out there!



# FOUNDATION OF THE ARTS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Foundation of Arts in Downtown Jonesboro wants to celebrate the Christmas holiday with you and your family. Join the cast and crew for the presentation of "A Very Merry Christmas" on December 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th to dive into all the Christmas season has to offer. This FOA production is sure to warm your soul and put you in the holiday spirit while featuring music and dance from local talent.

For event and ticket information, visit foajonesboro.org or visit their Facebook page! We hope to see you at the Forum Theatre in Downtown Jonesboro for this production!



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# Lessons LEARNED IN Motherhood

BY CAITLIN LAFARLETTE

During our nightly struggle to put Eva to bed (yes, every day still), I tend to get very overwhelmed. How am I supposed to give my toddler the attention she needs and wants while trying to clean house, spend time with my husband, or just sit and relax? And how am I supposed to do that with a new baby in the mix?

To be honest, I'm scared.

I'm scared I won't be good enough; a good enough mother or wife. I love this season of life I am in but I watch others do it so effortlessly and wonder why I can't keep up. Add on a new family member arriving in a few weeks and, well, the anxiety is overtaking the excitement at this point.

I also have to worry about dividing my love between my two children. I know my heart will grow to allow space for more of that love, but until baby gets here I can't

understand it. Will Eva understand her sister needs more care and attention those first few weeks? I don't want her to feel as if I'm ignoring her or pushing her to the side. As it is now, I can't even talk on the phone without her chattering nonstop for my attention.

I'm doing what I can now to prepare for the birth. Cooking freezer meals, scheduling who Eva will stay with those first few nights, setting up diaper/feeding stations. Anything that will take off even the tiniest bit of stress when we first return home from the hospital. I want to be able to devote all my focus on welcoming this little one into our lives and watch Eva create a special bond with her sibling. There are at least a few things I can be in control of at this moment, so I'm taking advantage of it. Hopefully this gives my mind the space to be free of any worries when our new addition finally arrives.

Things are about to look a lot different in the Kenney household. Eva's baby sister will join us this month and the three of us are having a multitude of emotions.

My husband is excited for newborn snuggles, Eva is ready to help with feeds and diaper changes, and I'm feeling all of that plus wondering how on earth I'm going to survive with two kids.

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▶▶ Holiday Performances



▶ **Dec. 2nd**  
Collins Community Choir  
Christmas Concert  
Collins Theatre - Downtown Paragould  
7:00pm

**Dec 8th-10th**  
Live Nativity with Live Animals  
Rector First General Baptist Church  
6:00 - 8:00pm

**Dec 10th**  
Holiday Concert  
Delta Symphony Orchestra  
Riceland Hall - A-State Fowler Center  
2pm

**Dec. 15th-18th**  
A Very Merry Christmas  
The Foundation of Arts - Downtown Jonesboro  
Dec. 15th at 7:30pm; Dec. 17th at 2:00pm  
Dec.16th & 18th at 6:00pm

**Dec 17th**  
Choral Christmas Concert  
Paragould First United Methodist Church  
7:00pm



Never miss out on the fun happening in NEA. Keep up with local events like festivals and live music at [exploremorenea.com/community-calendar](http://exploremorenea.com/community-calendar)

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# SANTA "CAUSE"

## *Prayer on Christmas Eve*

**S**tart a new family tradition by gathering with friends and family around the radio this holiday season to listen to the reading of Santa's Prayer, written by Warren Jennings. The prayer is voiced by Paragould's own Santa "Cause."

Catch the reading on Jill at 99.3 at the top of each hour from 6:00p.m. to 11:00p.m. You can also listen online at [neajillradio.com](http://neajillradio.com), or just tell Alexa to play Jill at 99 dot 3!



**T**he sleigh was all packed, the reindeer were fed,  
But Santa still knelt by the side of the bed.

“Dear Father,” he prayed, “Be with me tonight.  
There’s much work to do and my schedule is tight.

I must jump in my sleigh and streak through the sky,  
Knowing full well that a reindeer can’t fly.

I will visit each household before the first light,  
I’ll cover the world and all in one night.

With sleigh bells a-ringing, I’ll land on each roof,  
Amid the soft clatter of each little hoof.

To get in the house is the difficult part,  
So I’ll slide down the chimney of each child’s heart.

My sack will hold toys to grant all their wishes.  
The supply will be endless like the loaves and the fishes.

I will fill all the stockings and not leave a track.  
I’ll eat every cookie that is left for my snack.

I can do all these things, Lord, only through You,  
I just need your blessing, then it’s easy to do.

All this is to honor the birth of the One,  
That was sent to redeem us, Your most Holy Son.

So to all of my friends, least Your glory I rob,  
Please Lord, remind them who gave me this job.”

BY WARREN D. JENNINGS

# PARAGOULD SCHOOL DISTRICT ENTREPRENEUR DAY

The PSD ALP 7-12th grade students made a comeback with the PSD ALP Entrepreneur Day on Monday, November 13, 2023. This is the first year many of these students have gotten to participate, for the last Entrepreneur Day was in 2019. A total of 22 businesses and 51 gifted and talented students participated this year. Mrs. Sarah Cooper, 7-12 GT Facilitator, would like to thank all of the students for their hard work, research, and participation. The day was an amazing success.

Mrs. Cooper thanks the six judges from the community who took time to help: Linda Glickert (Retired GT Teacher from PHS), Allison Hestand (Paragould Chamber of Commerce), Dean Inman (Fidus Global), Dina Mason (MOR Media), Jason Weber (PJHS Business/EAST Teacher), and Alec Wilkinson (IT from GCT). The judges evaluated the overall business displays, products, digital commercials, and the digital and verbal elevator pitches.



**1st Place Overall Team:**  
Bee Essence-Eden by Treece and Anna Horner  
The girls made a lip balm product using beeswax from Eden's dad's bees. Locally sourced, locally made. What a creative and ingenious product! This team has what it takes to build a great business!



**2nd Place Overall Team:** Scrub-A-Dub Scrubs by Bella Hollis, Ava Anderson, Kallie Jackson  
These young ladies made organic lip and body scrubs and added delightful smells using essential oils. Creativity and aesthetic design shown through their product and presentation.



**3rd Place Team Overall:** Tanghulus Strawberries by Darren Brockett and J Edgar  
This is a delicious treat of candied fresh strawberries that is a snack originated in China. This team also sold fresh fruit kabobs. It was a crowd favorite and sold out quickly!

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# HOPE FOUND'S INAUGURAL BREWING HOPE COFFEE FESTIVAL

The Inaugural “Brewing HOPE” Coffee Festival, hosted by Hope Found, was a smashing success. The coffee festival was held in the Glass Factory of Downtown Jonesboro, on Nov. 11.

The event featured local coffee shops such as The Bearded Sergeant Coffee Co., Urban Organics, The Ridge, Story, The Caffeinated Cow, Shadrachs, IV Kings, and more. Along with the vast selection of coffee blends, festival attendees were treated to samples of baked goods from local bakeries. Local craftsmen and women also presented their

goods at the event. Some included handmade mugs from Field and Light Design Co. and custom graphic items from AlienClownThings & KT Crochets.

“I thought it was a cool idea ... a unique fundraiser that we don’t already have in this area; and double whammy, it can raise funds for our nonprofit,” said Megan Brown of Hope Found of NEA. “All funds from this will support the non-profit and our mission.” Ticket sales, business sponsorships, and vendor reservations all contributed to the \$15,000 raised.

Those attending the event were able to sample roasts, purchase coffee beans, and even vote on their favorite drip coffee and specialty coffees. The organization seeks to “Educate and help survivors of human trafficking,” said Breanna Phillips, the Treasurer of Hope Found of NEA. Megan adds, “We’ll hopefully have it next year too.”

Hope Found strives to fight human trafficking, bring education on the subject to the community, and serve survivors’ needs. If you would like to learn more on Hope Found and their mission, visit [hopefoundnea.org](http://hopefoundnea.org).



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Best Drip Coffee Winners



The Busy Bean  
Best Specialty Coffee Winners



Megan Brown, Co-Founder, Board President, & Executive Director

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!





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Photography contributed by Hannah Risker and Gabby Powell



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# Oh Fudge...

BY KATIE COLLINS

As usual, it's a hectic time of year for most people. It's hard to keep track of every holiday event you've said you would attend or make a treat for and there's all sorts of family, friend and work obligations that might include baking or making something. So, when you panic around 6:15 p.m. on a random night in December this year, just take a breath, make a quick run to the store for two very simple ingredients, and whip up a batch of this super easy fudge that will be ready in a flash. It takes longer for it to chill in the fridge than it does to make it!

Some tips: You can use creamy or crunchy peanut butter, depending on your preference, but I'd stay away from the "natural" peanut butter that has the layer of oil on top. Stick with regular consistency frosting, rather than the "whipped" variety. You can also add extras – baking chips, sprinkles, nuts – whatever sounds good to you! I haven't tried it, but I have heard you can also make this with hazelnut spread and frosting which sounds great, too!

## 2-Ingredient Peanut Butter Fudge

### Ingredients:

- 1 regular size jar peanut butter (around 16 ounces)
- 1 16-ounce can frosting (flavor of your choice, I used cream cheese)

### Directions:

Combine the peanut butter and frosting in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave for 1 minute. Stir together until thoroughly combined. Pour into a 9x9 square pan (a disposable pan is great if it needs to travel), smooth out and put in the fridge to chill and set. Cut into squares and serve. Store leftovers in the fridge.



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## ▶▶ Holiday Parades in NEA



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Dec 1st</b><br/>Jonesboro<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Friday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 2nd</b><br/>Piggott<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 5:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 2nd</b><br/>Lake City<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 2nd</b><br/>Manila<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 2nd</b><br/>Bono<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:30pm</p> <p><b>Dec 2nd</b><br/>Cardwell, MO<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 7:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 3rd</b><br/>Rector<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Sunday at 1:30pm</p> <p><b>Dec 3rd</b><br/>Brookland<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Sunday at 2:00pm</p> | <p><b>Dec 5th</b><br/>Paragould<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Tuesday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 5th</b><br/>Walnut Ridge<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Tuesday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 7th</b><br/>Pocahontas<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Thursday at 5:30pm</p> <p><b>Dec 9th</b><br/>Cash<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 9th</b><br/>Swifton<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:00pm</p> <p><b>Dec 15th</b><br/>Trumann<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Friday at 6:30pm</p> <p><b>Dec 16th</b><br/>Monette<br/>Christmas Parade<br/>Saturday at 6:00pm</p> |
|---|--|

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 12/2 - Saturday at 7pm, Collins Community Choir - Christmas Concert  
 12/8 - Friday at 7pm, REZA Illusionist  
[www.rezalive.com](http://www.rezalive.com)  
 12/10 - Sunday at 2pm, Rhonda Vincent Christmas  
[showpass.com/rhondachristmas](http://showpass.com/rhondachristmas)  
 12/16 - Saturday at 7pm, A Time to Dance presents:  
 Joy to the World  
 12/21 - Thursday at 7pm, Fox Country Christmas  
 12/31 - Saturday at 7pm, Mad Hatter presents:  
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**Merry Christmas!**

# SAVE THE DATE

## DOWNTOWN PARAGOULD EVENTS



*Dec. 1st*

6:00 p.m.

Centennial Park Lighting  
Main Street Paragould Event  
Downtown Paragould



*Dec. 5th*

7:00 p.m.

12 Days of Christmas  
Christmas Parade  
Downtown Paragould



*Dec. 8-9th*

5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Enchanting Nights  
Carriage Rides, Santa, & more!  
Downtown Paragould



*Dec. 16th*

7:00 p.m.

Joy to the World  
presented by A Time to Dance  
DT Collins Theatre



*Dec. 17th*

6:00 p.m.

Chancel Choir's Christmas Concert  
First United Methodist Church



*Dec. 31st*

7:00 p.m.

Comedian, Shelly Belly  
presented by Mad Hatter  
DT Collins Theatre

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

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# HEALTH *Matters*

## KARAN SUMMITT

Retired Health Educator  
25 years educating people of all ages on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. She teaches and writes with a passion for sharing simple, doable strategies that make better health possible for almost everyone.



### The Holiday Bulge

In the weight loss business, we refer to the weeks between Halloween and New Year's Day as National Overeating Season. The average American can gain anywhere from five to 15 pounds in those nine weeks. Unfortunately, despite our best January intentions, the pounds are difficult to re-lose, often becoming a permanent reality on the scales.

Holidays bring unique challenges for managing a healthy diet. The opportunities for celebrating abound, and we give ourselves permission to indulge in foods unique to the season. These treats, typically low in volume and high in calories, consume our calorie budget faster than you can say Kris Kringle. Leftovers linger, mocking our attempts to take "just one bite."

If the holiday foods themselves were not enough of a challenge, shopping, travel and multiple events leave little time for exercise. The formula always holds true -- extra calories plus less activity equals inevitable weight gain -- and in record time during the holidays!

Holiday eating does not have to be a choice between abstinence and indulgence. By implementing a few strategies, you can save hundreds of calories, maintain weight, protect good health and still enjoy the foods that make this time of year special. Here are a few such strategies:

- ◇ Be intentional about planning low calorie days in the weeks leading up to and surrounding the holidays. Calories saved today can be spent tomorrow.
- ◇ Be intentional about physical activity. Every calorie burned goes toward weight you won't gain.
- ◇ On the day of the meal, resist the tendency to skip meals. This leads to being ravenous by mealtime and a false security in thinking we have plenty of calories to spend.
- ◇ As your contribution to the meal, take healthy options and learn how to reduce the calories in favorite recipes. Recognize the calorie pits — for instance, a slice of pecan pie can have twice the calories of pumpkin pie. Choose white meat turkey over dark meat and go easy on the gravy.
- ◇ Stay hydrated on no-calorie beverages to help increase a sense of fullness. Increased fluids will also be important to offset the higher sodium content of many holiday foods.

- ◇ Let portion control work for you. Take bigger portions of lower calorie dishes. Leave smaller spaces for richer dishes.
- ◇ Eat slowly, savoring each bite. Give your stomach time to signal your brain that it is getting full.
- ◇ Practice smart environmental control. Serve from a buffet line instead of putting food on the table at arm's reach. Give leftovers away. Wear something tight around your middle. When you cook, chew gum to discourage mindless nibbling.
- ◇ Get moving after the meal is over. Not only will you burn off calories and get away from the food, but research also indicates glucose levels are as much as 25 percent lower when we take a slow walk after a big meal. Grab a family member and get outside!

Celebrating with others and looking forward to traditional meals is a part of what makes this time of year so enjoyable. As enjoyable as those times may be, there can be serious dangers to holiday eating. Traditional meals left out for hours provide a perfect opportunity for bacteria growth. The sugary confections and carbohydrate dense treats can cause glucose levels to soar. The discomfort of overeating can mask the normal signs of heart problems, making patients at risk think chest pain is simply a case of bad indigestion.

Holidays are as much about family and friends as they are about the food. Relax and enjoy the fellowship, sample your favorite foods and remember to protect your health. Eat to live instead of living to eat, even during the holidays!



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



IT Services for the Modern Workforce

# HAPPENINGS

## NEW APPOINTMENT FOR THE CITY OF JONESBORO



Jeremy Biggs has been selected the City of Jonesboro’s new Director of Grants and Community Development.

Biggs brings 13 years of grant writing expertise and public service, the past seven as executive director of the non-profit Court Appointed Special Advocates in the state’s Second Judicial District.

Biggs has written and been awarded grants from federal and state governments, as well as a variety of other non-profit and private foundations. “There were strong candidates for this position, but Jeremy has not only a great reputation in Northeast Arkansas but experience that is unmatched,” Mayor Harold Copenhaver said. “We have made some key hires in our leadership roles, and with the fresh talent in our grants department, I think Jeremy and this team will be great together.”

## HYTROL SPONSORS ARKANSAS STEM COALITION THINK TANK



The Arkansas STEM Coalition recently held a STEM Think Tank session at the A-State Cooper Alumni Center. Attending the event were an array of educators and community leaders all focused on the goal of supporting STEM

education to encourage and prepare students for STEM centered jobs.

Hytrol’s Chief Development Officer, Phillip Poston, said, “I am pleased to have the opportunity to present at events such as this and represent the Hytrol family. Our company was built on ingenuity and strives to foster future generations of problem solvers. It is both important and fun to network with representatives from all sectors of the community on the importance of STEM.”

Christy Valentine, Hytrol’s Manager of Academic Partnerships, served as a panelist for the event and covered the Arkansas STRIVE initiative which also seeks to help connect educators and business. Other discussed topics include the importance of STEM education to local businesses, how to prepare students for STEM careers and what STEM skills are in high demand.

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## ARKANSAS METHODIST MEDICAL CENTER APPOINTS CEO

Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (AMMC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Brad Bloemer as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).



Bloemer most recently served as Chief Financial Officer at AMMC. Prior to AMMC, Bloemer served as CFO at Henry County Medical Center in Paris, TN, CFO at Murray-Calloway County Hospital in Murray, KY, and Missouri Delta Medical Center in Sikeston. Additionally, Bloemer served as interim CEO at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, Henry County Medical Center and Murray-Calloway County Hospital.

“We are thrilled to welcome Brad Bloemer as our new CEO,” said David Neighbors, Chairman of the Board at AMMC. “His leadership skills, industry knowledge, and passion for healthcare will be instrumental in driving our mission to provide quality healthcare to our community.”

## ARVEST FOUNDATION MAKES DONATION TO CITY YOUTH MINISTRIES



The Arvest Foundation recently donated \$15,000 to City Youth Ministries to build community garden beds to help children learn basic gardening skills.

The nonprofit plans to use the community garden to help children enrolled in the organization’s after school program learn life skills such as caring for the fruits and vegetables they grow. The children will be able to take home the fruits and vegetables to help provide essential needs for their families.

“City Youth has been an integral part of the Jonesboro community for more than 20 years, providing essential support to families in need,” said Kevin Hufstедler. “We are thrilled to present this grant on behalf of the Arvest Foundation and partner with City Youth in their efforts to make a difference in the lives of local children.”

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# JONESBORO'S ANNUAL VETERANS DAY PARADE

BY GABBY POWELL

A clear, sunny Saturday morning will make you extra thankful for the men and women who have, are, and will serve this amazing country we call the United State of America. While watching the Color Guard lead the Downtown Jonesboro Veterans Day Parade with our flags held high, it was nearly impossible to not swell with patriotism and respect.

Service men and women from all branches participated in the parade, ROTC ( Reserve Officers' Training Corps) and JROTC marched alongside, and of course veterans from all backgrounds were highlighted in the event. Several school bands serenaded the attendees along the roadside, and Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts walked with signs of appreciation. A multitude of classic cars, motorcycles, and a World War II Jeep motored by as well.

While at the parade we took a short time to show our appreciation to veterans everywhere, and we'd like to challenge you to do so every day. From everyone here at MOR Media, Inc., thank you for your service and God bless the United States of America!



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Greene County Tech vs. Batesville	1.9
Paragould vs. Nettleton	1.16
Greene County Tech vs. Paragould	1.26
Paragould vs. Searcy	2.2
Greene County Tech vs. Valley View	2.9
Greene County Tech vs. Searcy	2.13
Paragould vs. Greene County Tech	2.23

# VETERANS SUPPORT GROUP FIRST RESPONDER CATFISH DINNER

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Veterans and First Responders -- and their families -- were treated to hearty meal on a November Saturday when Paragould's American Legion post teamed up with the Veterans Support Association to provide a free fish dinner.

With JROTC members from Paragould and Greene County Tech high schools assisting, the service organizations served 150 plates to the

honored guests. The fried catfish meal with all the trimmings -- staged at the Masonic Lodge -- was just a way of saying "thank you" for services rendered both past and present.

The "Feed The Vets" meal marked the 11th time the veterans' groups have provided the free dinners out of respect for those who have served and for those still serving the Paragould community.



*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

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# POWHATAN STATE PARK 2024 FIRST DAY WALK

**P**owhatan Historic State Park will host a First Day Hike tour of the historic town on Sunday, Jan. 1, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., starting at the 1888 Powhatan Courthouse. Participants will learn about the history of photography and the story of Powhatan through pictures before taking the tour of the town.

Space is limited and reservations are required. The tour is \$5 plus tax per person ages 12 and up and \$3 plus tax per child ages 6 to 12 years. Children under the age of 6 are admitted for free.

For more information, contact Zachary Elledge at zachary.elledge@arkansas.gov or 870-878-6765.

Powhatan Historic State Park exists to preserve and interpret the cultural landscape and heritage of Powhatan's civic, social, economic, religious and community legacy. The park welcomes visitors to tour its historic structures, museum and landscape Wednesday through Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. To learn more, visit [www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/powhatan-historic-state-park](http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/powhatan-historic-state-park) or call 870-878-6765.



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# GREENE COUNTY FINE ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS CHICAGO

BY STEPHANIE COOPER

Chicago the Musical, a production from the 1970s, draws inspiration from the 1924 trials of Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner, housewives accused of murdering their husbands. Adapted from a 1926 play by fellow journalist Maurine Watkins, who covered both trials for the Chicago Tribune, the musical captivates with its flashy and sultry portrayal of Roaring Twenties style.

Designed to highlight humor and irony, Chicago the Musical serves as a satirical piece, offering audiences a chance to relax and enjoy a good laugh. In the third week of November, the Greene County Fine Arts Council presented its rendition of this Hollywood-famous show at the Collins Theatre, a production delayed by three years due to the COVID shutdown. The wait proved worthwhile, delivering a performance featuring some of NEA's finest voices and a simple, classic set that transported the audience back in time.

Director Jer Allen, with meticulous casting, assembled one of the best shows witnessed at this historical theater. Beyond the polished

and engaging singers, the play's standout element was the blacked-out, scaffolded band on stage. Musical Director Jeremy Wortham led a live band positioned on custom band

risers, immediately capturing the crowd's attention from the first note. In just a couple of hours, the Collins was transformed into a captivating, sultry, and comical Jazz Club.



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# DOWNTOWN POCAHONTAS NOVEMBERFEST

BY GABBY POWELL

Sitting alongside the beautiful Black River, Historic Downtown Pocahontas hosted the annual celebration on November 4th. The 12-hour, packed festival included live music, food, a beer garden, a fun Kids Zone, and a haunted tour.

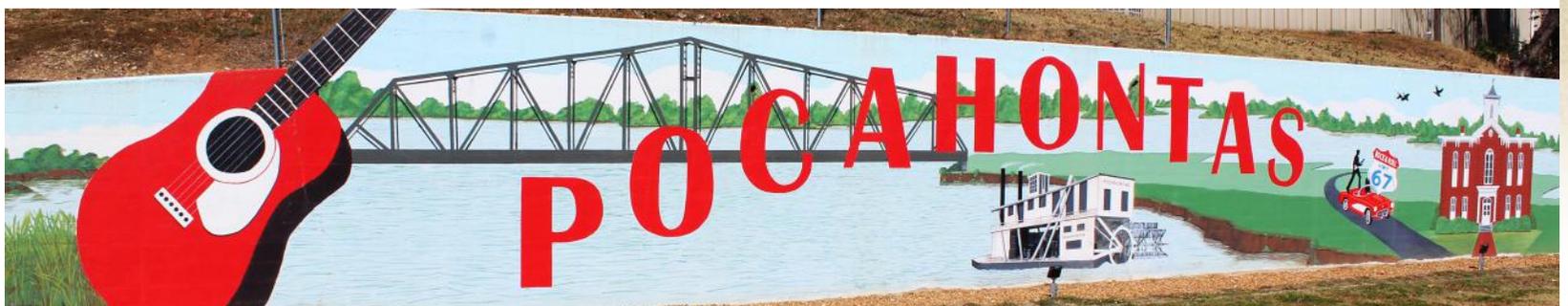
The day full of fun was made just a little better with the perfect weather. Families and friends gathered to start on their Christmas shopping from local vendors. From handmade jewelry to specially made décor, there was something to find for everyone.

My favorite part about this festival was its center being the beautiful historic courthouse. The square was full of kids playing and parents laughing, reminding me of the generations of memories that have been made there. Food trucks and merchants surrounded the courthouse, much like I imagine the

first markets of the town to be.

My husband and I got to visit the local bookstore, Timeless Books, and what surprised me most was that the owner had a cart of free books sitting outside her door. That's right, free books sitting right outside a store where they want you to buy the same things. It was this sense of genuinely wanting to serve the community that I found throughout the entire event. The hard work and preparation definitely showed through!

To end the festivities Arkansas natives Marybeth Byrd and Cory Jackson performed hit covers while people filled their cups and sang along. Some tried their luck on the mechanical bull, while others got their spooky on by walking the haunted tour. All in all, we will definitely be coming back to this festival, and we hope to see you there!





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# TWELVE DAYS OF PAW-mas

WITH DR. KRISTIN SULLIVAN



On the first day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a check-up with my favorite vet!

- » Check-ups to perform a wellness exam are key to ensure that your pet is healthy and the best way to detect diseases early! It is important to get your pet a yearly check-up, but twice yearly exams are recommended.

On the second day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a preventive to keep the bugs and worms away!

- » Heartworm, intestinal parasite, flea and tick prevention are so important to ensure that your pet stays parasite-free. Heartworms are a major problem in this area since they are transmitted by mosquitoes -- keeping your pet on an effective preventive is key.

On the third day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me updated core vaccines to keep me healthy and disease free!

- » Vaccinations are a simple way to ensure that your pet does not become infected with a highly communicable or contagious disease. Rabies vaccines are an absolute must, but are only regarded as a legal vaccine if they have been administered by a licensed veterinarian.

On the fourth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a vet-approved enzymatic chew to keep my teeth clean and gumline happy!

- » Oral health is very important -- as issues of the mouth and teeth can affect all other organ systems. A complete oral exam is part of a complete physical exam.

On the fifth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a day of fun at the PAWliday Inn to socialize with my friends!

- » Daycare is an easy and wonderful way to socialize your pet. Socialization is key to help prevent certain types of anxiety. Pets that go to daycare tend to get along well with other dogs, are less nervous at their vet visits, and also are more accepting of new people.

On the sixth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me wellness blood work to ensure that my organs are all healthy and strong!

- » Wellness bloodwork is a must! Physical examinations give a ton of information, but it does not always indicate internal organ function. Wellness panels are recommended once yearly in adult pets and twice yearly in senior pets.

On the seventh day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me exercise at the dog park to help keep my weight healthy!

- » Exercise is not only good for our muscles and ensures that our weight stays healthy, but also makes us feel better! Exercising your pet also provides great mental stimulation -- this is very important in working breeds that need the exercise or can otherwise develop anxiety and destructive behaviors.

On the eighth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a puzzle treat toy to keep me mentally stimulated and busy!

- » Have a pet that paces or just has a hard time getting all their energy out? Try a puzzle toy! Your pet can smell the treat, but it takes them time, skill, and patience to actually get the treat/kibble out of the puzzle toy. A brain exercise for pets!

On the ninth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a complete and balanced diet that is scientifically proven and not a brand new trend!

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» Ask any vet, complete and balanced diets that are scientifically proven are key! Find a new trend online that a celebrity home-made in their kitchen but they have no experience in the animal industry except for loving their pet? Probably avoid that one. Raw diets? Did you know there is scientific proof that feeding your pet a raw diet is directly related to antimicrobial resistant bacterial strains that are now causing urinary tract and other types of infections in people? It's true ... and scary. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

On the tenth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a day at the PAWliday Inn PAW-Spa to keep my coat clean and mat-free!

» Pets that shed need once to twice monthly baths in order to help reduce shedding of hair and dander -- it's not a cure but it does help! Ask about the De-Shed Bath. Long-coated breeds need regular grooming appointments to prevent issues such as severe matting, ear hair impactions, and ocular infections that can be caused by hair.

On the eleventh day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a soft and cozy bed to curl up on and rest for Santa PAWs!

» A cozy place to rest is key to good sleep and overall health. Got a pet that destroys beds? There are indestructible (which are less quickly destructible to certain dogs) and cots that are an option for those that tend to tear up their bed as soon as they are alone with it.

On the twelfth day of PAW-mas, my PAW-rents gave to me a safe and fun new toy to play with in the house!

» Playing with toys is important to keep us active and engaged! It is also a wonderful way to bond with your pet.

Wishing you and yours a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!



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5:00pm - Midnight
- Nov. 26**  
Monette Christmas Tree Lighting & Caroling  
Downtown Monette  
5:00pm
- Dec. 1st**  
Centennial Park Lighting  
Downtown Paragould Centennial Park  
6:00pm
- Dec. 2nd**  
2023 Downtown Joy Fest  
Union St., Downtown Jonesboro  
3:00pm
- Dec. 2nd**  
Manila Christmas Tree Lighting  
Downtown Manila  
5:00pm
- Dec. 8th - 9th**  
Enchanting Nights  
Horse Drawn Carriage Rides  
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5:00pm - 9:00pm

*Merry Christmas  
& Happy Holidays!*

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**PREMIERE**

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WINTER 2023

**62**

**Pets with Benefits**

**60**

**A Better Way:  
Pam Wicker Dlggs**

**64**

**A Life in Baseball:  
Don Williams**



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# BUNGALOWS CELEBRATES WITH VETERANS

The residents of The Bungalows at Jonesboro celebrated Veterans Day by attending the 2023 Veterans Day Parade in downtown Jonesboro. The fall weather was perfect for showing our support and patriotism for our veterans and local children, youth and businesses who participated in the parade. It did everyone's heart good to get out and show our support for our great country. God bless America!



## I depended on Cornerstone Caregiving almost daily.

**Robert, Tulsa**

During the most difficult time in our lives, Cornerstone helped my wife, Debbie, and me with the most challenging responsibilities. As Deb's Alzheimer's worsened, I depended on Cornerstone almost daily. What a welcomed break from the routine they provided. Cornerstone was there, hands on, to the very last moment of Debbie's life, literally. God bless Cornerstone.

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## THE HOLIDAYS

# PLANNING, BOUNDARIES, & INVITATIONS

BY ST. BERNARDS PASTORAL CARE DIRECTOR MEGAN MAYEUX

**W**e plan many things during the holidays: Events. Gatherings. Meals. Travel. Shopping. Gifts. Budgets (hopefully). Time. Moments to pause.

These are all good, and they all require planning. Some require quite a bit. If we get honest with ourselves, however, we admit how we often devolve into chaos. In the middle of crowding our personal space through sending and receiving invitations, we should remember to plan our boundaries, too.

I love boundaries. They help us say, "Yes!" to what we hold most important and give grace to decline what drains us physically, emotionally or spiritually. Failing to establish boundaries, in fact, creates a ripple effect. Our families hold tension, maybe even open conflict. Unwelcomed anxiety builds. Even our pets share and reflect our instability!

Unfortunately, a common misconception

is that boundaries dictate what we can and cannot do. Boundaries are not limitations. Rather, boundaries help us know what we should and should not do. They safeguard our priorities, keeping us open to invitations that fill our souls. We each have cups we pour into others. If our cups do not receive, however, we cannot keep pouring. Boundaries help us fill our cups.

For example, I love church, especially around the holidays. I place a boundary that protects my ability to gather with the people of God. I need them, and they need me. Together, we pour into each other.

I also place boundaries around things that draw me toward peace.

I relish a good campfire. There is something special and calming about a wood-burning flame, heating the air around me, giving subtle hints of smoke. For those of us more

inclined toward indoor activities, we might prioritize playing a game, reading a good book or listening to music. My mother threw herself into baking because it filled her spirit. In turn, she poured into others with love and delicious homemade goods.

In II Corinthians 1:20, the Apostle Paul writes, "For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God."

Ultimately, Jesus is the one invitation we need. He offers the only real answer to busyness, our Shalom that guides us toward rest. When we accept Him, we receive His gifts because they are good, and His promises are true.

In Jesus, we find our plans. Our boundaries. Our invitation: Him.

Amen. Let it be so.



**Lindsey Hagood**  
Owner/Founder

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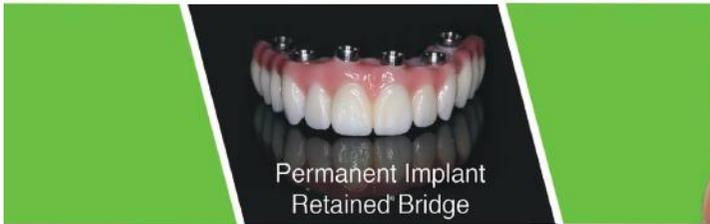
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Dr. Ronald South, MD  
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Leqembi works by targeting and removing beta-amyloid, a protein that forms plaques in the brain. By reducing these plaques, Leqembi slows down the cognitive decline associated with the disease. While it is not a cure, a Leqembi study showed individuals to perform better cognitively and enjoy a higher quality of life. In fact, Leqembi met every endpoint in the study favorably. Its ability to slow down the progression of the disease provides an opportunity for patients to maintain their independence and quality of life.

The approval of Leqembi by the FDA offers new hope for individuals diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and early stage Alzheimer's. While Leqembi represents a significant step forward, the significance of early detection and prevention cannot be overstated. Incorporating healthy lifestyle choices such as regular exercise, a balanced diet, and mental stimulation, can help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Regular visits with your primary care provider are important. Diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, heart disease, and increase in age are some of the factors known to increase the risk of Alzheimer's dementia.

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Our short-term rehabilitation program is designed to help patients recover from recent hospitalizations as quickly as possible. Physical, speech, and occupational therapy services are offered with individualized plans for recovery. A spacious therapy gym is staffed by experienced professionals ready to work with each patient. Our short-term care community also helps with transitioning back to life at home, including in home therapy options.

At St. Elizabeth's Place, our long-term care program is designed to provide a warm, comfortable home where you or a loved one can receive the care and assistance needed. Our facilities include comfortable day spaces and leisure areas. There are planned activities daily for a wide range of interests, and community outings are often taken to fulfill the sense of adventure in our residents. Our gardening club provides a unique opportunity for residents to work with their hands in growing plants in our dedicated gardening areas.

St. Elizabeth's Place also offers a secure community for people needing specialized memory care. This community offers a quiet atmosphere and a compassionate staff that is specially trained in memory care. Our goal is to help our residents maintain their independence and increase their quality of life in a warm, homelike atmosphere.

St. Elizabeth's Place accepts Medicare and some Medicare replacement policies, while also providing assistance in applying for Medicaid. If you or a loved one are recovering from a recent hospitalization or need long term care services, please stop by for a personal tour or give us a call at 870-802-0090.



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# Preserving a Culture of Service

BY GABBY POWELL

## MITCHELL FUNERAL HOME

What attributes come to mind when thinking of Mitchell Funeral Home's history of 100 years in business? Steady, compassionate, trustworthy, respectful. These are just a few characteristics of Greene County's oldest family established funeral home. For decades, the funeral home has served Northeast Arkansas and surrounding cities with top quality funeral arrangements and services.

Randal L. Mitchell had a vision to provide the area with personal care in 1923. The Mitchell family established its reputation as a leader in the business by overcoming various obstacles ... from branching out to an additional funeral home in Rector in 1936, to handing the torch to Randal's son, Richard M. Mitchell in 1967, and then to the grandsons Robert "Bobby" Mitchell and Richard "Dick" Mitchell in 1998.

Bobby became sole owner of the business in 2011, and for the next seven years he and his brother continued the aspirations of their grandfather. The Mitchell family sold the business to the current owner, Billy Curl, in 2018. As a graduate of the Northwest Community College School of Mortuary Science, a licensed funeral director in three states, and over 30 years in the industry, Billy understands the importance of respect to the community. He has continued the Mitchells' legacy of traditional, personal, and meaningful funeral service.

As a retired Army helicopter pilot, Billy Curl wants to continue to serve by giving back to his service men and women. Mitchell Funeral Home offers a 5% discount to veterans, as well as

emergency service workers. The locally owned funeral home is also proud to share that third-party financing is now offered for its services. This is new to the business, and the Mitchell Funeral Home community is excited to be able to ease the financial burden during already troublesome times.

One may wonder what the Mitchell family and Billy Curl's secret to success is. Every owner, past and present, of the business would most likely tell you it is the wonderful staff and community that has led to their century of success. Being a part of the families and holding true to the values set in place by Randal Mitchell has brought a relationship many other businesses just do not have. The strong relationship between the business and community was put to the test during their hopscotch of locations, but now that the business is established in its new building on Highway 49 North, it can focus more on service to the individual families of the area.

In 2022, Mitchell Funeral Home held the first Candlelight Service for families it had served that year, as well as any families who had lost a loved one in the community. Families were given an honorary ornament to place on the Tree of Remembrance. This year's Candlelight Service will take place on Thursday, December 14th at 6 pm. The Mitchell Funeral Home family invites anyone who has lost a loved one, whether services were provided by Mitchell's or not, to come be a part of the special night.

For more information on the Candlelight Service or to view Mitchell Funeral Home's complete service list, contact them by phone at 870-236-7765.



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*~Billy Curl*

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# THE PROS & CONS OF MEDICAID

## ASSET PROTECTION TRUSTS

**W**ith the costs of Long-Term Care continuing to escalate, more and more seniors are looking to take proactive steps to protect hard earned assets. A Medicaid Asset Protection Trust (MAPT) is one option a person may consider to protect their assets from Medicaid and nursing homes or long-term care. A MAPT is an irrevocable trust created during your lifetime. The primary goal of a MAPT is to transfer assets to it so that Medicaid will not count these assets toward your resource limit when determining whether you qualify for Medicaid benefits.

However, creating an irrevocable trust comes with a certain lack of control over the assets you transfer to it. Before making such a significant decision, consider some pros and cons to see if this long-term care strategy is right for you.

### Benefits of a MAPT

#### You Can Still Benefit From the Assets of a MAPT

Although transfers of assets to a MAPT cause you to relinquish your ownership and control of them, the finality of the arrangement is not as harsh as it sounds. In creating a MAPT, you select a person (trustee) who manages the trust assets for your benefit. So, if you transfer investment accounts to the MAPT, you can still receive the income generated from these investments. If you transfer your home, you can still live there. In exchange for giving up control of your assets to a MAPT,

your assets no longer count against you for Medicaid eligibility purposes.

#### Your Assets Are Safe From Medicaid and Other Long-Term Care Creditors

Once your assets are in a MAPT and other criteria are met, Medicaid can't seize them or ask you to spend them down to pay for your nursing home or long-term care costs. These assets also are not subject to Medicaid's estate recovery program. As a result, your heirs can benefit from the assets without the interference of Medicaid or liens it could otherwise file against your estate after you pass.

#### You Can Choose Your Beneficiaries

A MAPT also functions as an estate planning tool. This is because you can designate who receives what remains of the trust upon your passing. The beneficiaries you choose will receive the assets per the terms of the trust agreement, and the chances of a probate court getting involved are diminished. In addition, you may be able to retain what is called a "limited power of appointment." This allows you to change who the beneficiaries of the MAPT will be, should your wishes or family circumstances change.

#### Assets Are Protected From Your Beneficiaries' Creditors

Even though you can designate a MAPT's beneficiaries now, those beneficiaries do not have full access to the trust's assets because

of how it is structured. This also means their creditors do not have access to it. And, if your child is a beneficiary and is going through a messy divorce, neither does their spouse. You can also designate how bequests to beneficiaries can be used.

#### Protection From Capital Gains Taxes

A properly drafted MAPT preserves the full capital gains tax exclusion on the primary residence (currently \$250,000 per spouse). Later, when a person's beneficiaries sell the home, it would be valued at the market price at the date of gifting and not at the original purchase price. This can avoid or significantly minimize the capital gains tax that your heirs may owe.

#### Drawbacks of MAPTS

##### Timing Is Everything

For a MAPT to function as intended, it needs to be created in advance to avoid the Medicaid lookback period. In most states, this is five years for nursing home or institutional care. In some states, there may also be a lookback period for community Medicaid care (home aides, local programs, etc.). If less than five years have elapsed since you created your MAPT, you may still be responsible for some or all of your long-term care costs until sufficient time has passed.

##### Income From MAPT Is Countable by Medicaid

Although assets in a MAPT may not be "countable" by Medicaid toward your

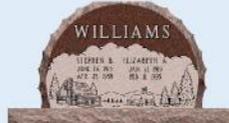


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resource limit, these assets may still generate income. If this income is payable to you, it may cause you to exceed the income limit permitted in your state. If this happens to you, you may have other options, such as utilizing a pooled income trust, or may decide you will contribute partially toward your care.

**Giving Up Control Is Non-Negotiable**

A trust will not qualify as a MAPT if you retain control other than the limited power of appointment that may be permitted in your situation. You must accept that a person you select to act as trustee will manage from the trust, distribute funds and income from the trust, and also be the effective owner of the assets. In addition, creating a MAPT but not transferring assets to it is ineffective. You need to fully commit to the concept for it to benefit you.

**Setting Up a MAPT Can Be Costly**

Creating and implementing a MAPT is a complex legal task requiring many hours of work and expenditures made on your behalf. In addition, because MAPTs are tied to individual state and federal laws, the expertise of a qualified Medicaid attorney is essential. You should expect that this expertise comes at the cost of several thousand dollars or more. However, your potential savings could be exponentially greater for you and your family. For this reason, the price is often well worth it.

**Potential Effects on Care**

It's important to realize that while the MAPT strategy is designed to preserve assets and wealth, it assumes a person will rely on Medicaid to pay for a portion of their care. However, Medicaid does not cover all facilities. For example, many assisted living facilities are not licensed as assisted living programs and

only accept private pay residents. Thus, relying on Medicaid could affect the choice and quality of care a person may receive.

The pros and cons discussed above are not exhaustive, and there may be other ones that apply to your situation. Investing in a MAPT is a highly fact-specific process, and MAPTs are not suitable for everyone.

You should speak with an elder law attorney in your area to discuss how a MAPT may affect other benefits you receive, your overall estate plan, its tax consequences, and whether it is right for you.

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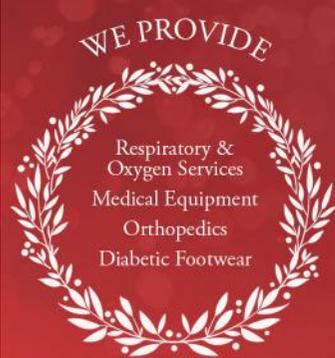


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# A BETTER WAY

## Pam Wicker Diggs

BY KARAN SUMMITT

When Pam (Wicker) Diggs graduated from Arkansas State University in 1979 with a degree in sociology her goal was employment as a juvenile probation officer. That early career path took a few turns, but eventually Pam ended up on the other end of the age spectrum -- working with senior adults instead of youth. Years down the road and ready for retirement, it's hard for Pam to imagine working in any other field.

Immediately after college graduation, Pam was hired by a local bank. She transitioned from there to help out in her parents' sporting goods store. The move to long-term care came with a simple request in her Sunday School class. A church friend mentioned the need for a social services director at Paragould Nursing Center (PNC). Pam took the bait and went for an interview.

She talked about her first experience walking through PNC and the impact it had:

"I had only been in a nursing home one or two other times. We were touring the behavioral unit hall, reserved for elders with mental health conditions. It was mealtime, and as we passed one door a dinner tray came flying out of the room, barely missing my head. I left thinking there was no way I could work in that environment. Later that night, I couldn't stop thinking about what I had seen and experienced, and I realized that there's got to be a better way. I wanted to make a difference for these folks. I saw loneliness and depression, but I also saw laughs and smiles, and I wanted to be a part of creating happy times for these folks."

Pam's career in long-term care would be defined by that simple intent to make "a better way" for elders.

She began working as PNC's Social Services Director in 1986, eventually earning her administrator's license in 1999. From late 1999 until 2008, Pam worked as an assistant administrator, interim administrator and/or facility administrator at nursing homes in Jonesboro, Gosnell, Blytheville, Newport and Walnut Ridge, helping with new start-ups, total renovations and quality improvements.

In June 2008 Pam made her way back to

PNC, now known as Belle Meade. Owned by Southern Administrative Services, the facility was on track for an entirely new concept in senior living, group care in family-style cottages. Pam took little convincing. She was back home in Paragould, and the cottage concept was a perfect fit with her initial commitment to find a better way for elders in long-term care.

Pam's career path is marked with accomplishments. She has served on the Governor's Relations Committee in the Arkansas Office of Long-term Care. While under her watch, Belle Meade won the Governor's Quality Award in 2014 and was recognized by the Center for Medicare Services as a 5-Star facility that same year.

Personal accomplishments include opening a new nursing facility in Gosnell "from the ground up." Pam remembers going to work that first day with an office that had a card table, lawn chair, cooler and phone. While at Newport, she oversaw a \$1.3 million renovation throughout the facility.

These accomplishments stand in the shadows of overseeing the construction and implementation of The Greenhouse Cottages at Belle Meade. Pam remembers attending a conference introducing the greenhouse concept and realizing, "This is the better way I've been looking for since day one!"

Six years after their completion, Pam still bubbles over with enthusiasm, talking about the impact cottage-style living has had on elders and their families. Each resident has a private room and bath, meals are served family-style and living areas invite elders to relax in a home-like setting. Large front porches encourage outside living, and consistent staffing in each cottage allows elders and employees to know one another intimately. The home-like atmosphere lends itself to greater family involvement. Currently, the waiting list

for immediate residents is 80 people. Since opening in 2017, two more cottages have been added to the initial nine homes. The eleven cottages include a secure home for elders with dementia and an on-site rehabilitation cottage.

As rewarding as it has been, Pam's career in long-term care also has had challenges. The industry is one of the top five most regulated industries in the world, and keeping up with regulatory changes is an ongoing task. Staffing has always been a struggle, but recent years have pushed it to a peak. Traditional nursing home care increasingly competes with other senior care options, making financial viability more uncertain.

Other changes include the complex medical needs of modern-day elders. Many are very frail by the time they become residents, requiring more specialized care and treatment options. Family expectations are higher. Busy lifestyles have made facility care more of a necessity than it once was when elders lived out their last years in a relative's home. The family members may be busy, but they still want to be involved and informed about a loved one's care.

As challenging as these issues are, they pale in comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on senior care. Pam simply admits, "It was a nightmare." Changing quarantine





guidelines, a frail, highly-at-risk population and staffing issues took an already stressful situation to new levels. In hindsight, Pam believes the worst choice during the uncertainty of the pandemic was the emotional impact on elders when they could not be with their families. She said the lack of human contact was just as emotionally devastating on elders as the risk for COVID-19 was on their physical health.

Looming retirement helped Pam reflect on the things that have brought the greatest satisfaction during her thirty-six-year career in senior care. She said, "I know I've made a difference in the lives of these precious elderly people, not in big ways but in the small things that matter -- things like smiling, laughing and praying with them. I've had the opportunity to mentor younger adults and keep some from walking away from their life's calling when things were a little tough, and I've been able to give others an opportunity to grow professionally. Both of my parents lived in long-term care before they passed away, and I've been able to empathize with families and

understand the struggle of caring for ailing loved ones. God has blessed me. I can't think of any place I've worked where I didn't have a great staff. I can't take credit for it all because their support helped me. The things we've achieved, we've done as a team."

Matt Hartley will step into Pam's shoes as the next administrator at The Green House Cottages of Belle Meade. He spoke of Pam's good reputation in the community and her high standards, not only for her staff but for the long-term care industry as a whole. He writes, "Pam's strongest takeaway is her faith. We pray every morning during our department head meeting, and every time we have a difficult situation she will make comments such as, 'God will get us through like He has so many times before.'

"A nursing home is usually the resting place between life and death, and families tend to struggle with this time. Pam is able to talk to these families and assure them everything is going to be okay, and the elders are in good hands. These talks are difficult, and she

handles it well.

"Pam is one of the most selfless individuals I have met. She will always put others before herself and gives until there is nothing to give. At the end of the day when there is a problem we work on it until we come up with a solution that is best for the elder, elder's family and the facility. Mrs. Pam is not only my mentor, but she is also my friend. Her famous quote at the end of every meeting is, 'Go forth and do good.' She has lived by this quote and done so much good in long term care. She will be deeply missed here by all."

Born and raised in Paragould and a 1975 graduate of Paragould High School, Pam has been married to Franklin Diggs for almost 45 years. Their extended family includes daughter Shae Murphy and her husband Jeff, along with two grandchildren, Haley and Reed. Pam's goals for retirement are simple. She plans to enjoy not being on call 24/7, a slower pace of life and spending time with the grandchildren, simple pleasures Pam can adopt as her own "better way!"



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# NEA HUMANE SOCIETY PETS WITH BENEFITS

BY DR. AMY SCHMIDT, NEAHS ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, & LISA TRAVATHEN, NEAHS WELFARE INVESTIGATOR & COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), spending time with animals can provide many benefits to people, especially seniors. The benefits of animal ownership include positive impacts on one's mental, physical, and social health. Pet owners' mental health improves from interacting with animals because pets reduce someone's stress and their likelihood for loneliness; additionally, pets can decrease anxiety levels, PTSD symptoms, and the risk of depression. People with pets have more of a reason to get out of bed in the morning because they know that someone is depending on them for care. Similarly, seniors stay physically healthier longer if they own pets. Pets keep their owners active, and this is especially true for dog owners who often need to take their pets for walks or at least take them outside for potty breaks. Pet ownership has also been

seen to lower blood pressure, reduce the presence of physical pain, and lower the risk of complications due to heart disease. In an emergency, dogs may even alert their owners to a house fire or a burglary, keeping them aware and safe from harm. Additionally, pet owners enjoy a healthier social life than non-pet owners as they can easily connect with other animal lovers; pets often serve as conversation starters for their owners, and they also can provide a common interest between people. Even seniors who live alone but who have pets can interact with and talk to their animals, who don't judge them and who offer them unconditional love.

Ultimately, seniors with pets in their home are generally happier and enjoy a better quality of life than those who do not. Because of these benefits, some nursing homes and assisted living facilities allow residents to move their pets in with them instead

of rehoming them. Residents of facilities that don't allow live-in pets can still enjoy pet visits from individuals with certified animals or from organizations that regularly provide that service to their communities. Such interactions are beneficial for the animals, as well, allowing them to socialize with new people in environments other than their own homes.

Northeast Arkansas Humane Society's Community Outreach Coordinator, Lisa Trevathan, has taken shelter dogs to various facilities, including the Bungalows, Liberty Park, Ridgecrest, St. Elizabeth's, and Lakeside in Lake City. Other shelter staff look forward to tagging along on the visits, which are consistently a big hit for residents. However, the ones who enjoy these visits the most are the dogs who get to go. Pictured are a few of the NEAHS fur-kids visiting with residents of the Bungalows in Jonesboro.



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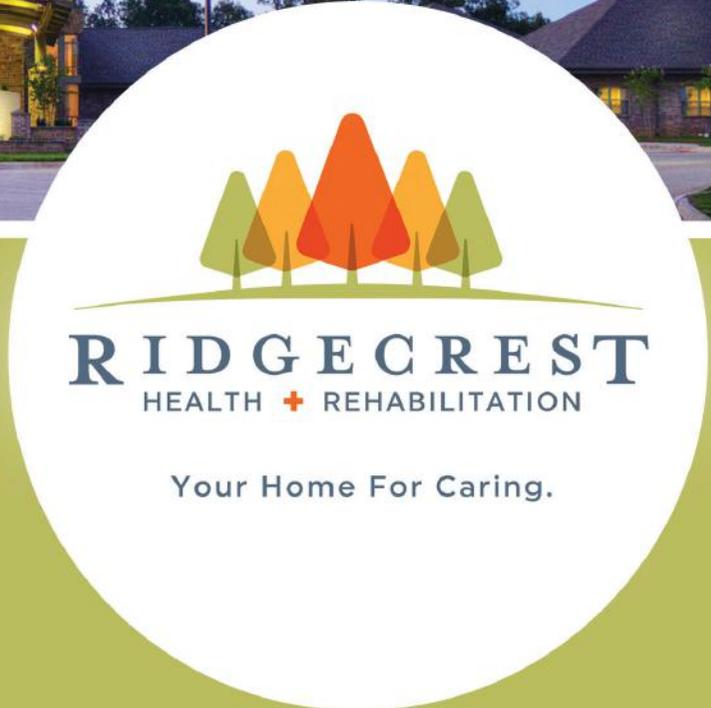
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# A LIFE IN BASEBALL

## Don Williams

BY KAROLINE RISKER

**D**on Williams stayed in the game of baseball for 67 years, acting as a minor league ballplayer, coach, scout, and as a senior advisor to the Kansas City Royals ball club. The only thing he didn't get to do was play in the major leagues; a stint in the Army during the prime of his career derailed his plans. Still, this player who was born on Christmas Eve, compiled a career batting average of .272 with 47 home runs and 513 RBI in his 1,247-game career. He batted right, threw right, and favored shortstop, though he also played second base. Considered a good hitter, he was better on the infield and liked the defensive part of the game, and came away as the only player in the Texas League to make the All-Star team at two different positions in two different years.

Though Don came from an athletic family (his dad, two uncles and a brother played) his official relationship with baseball began in the 10th grade when he played for the Greene County Tech Eagles. He went to a St. Louis Cardinals' tryout camp and was told to come back as a senior. He graduated in 1955 at the age of 17 and in 1956 was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers to a minor league contract. The Brooklyn Dodgers became the Los Angeles Dodgers two years later and it was with their organization that he transitioned from a player into the roles of coach and manager. In 1969 he went with the San Diego Padres as a scout, then worked as a major league coach from 1974-80 with San Diego. He was Ozzie Smith's first infield coach, a player Don describes as a "good friend and a good person and a hard worker." That sounds typical of the ballplayers he worked with whom Don described as "high class, hard-working athletes who worked hard at their trade and were outstanding people."

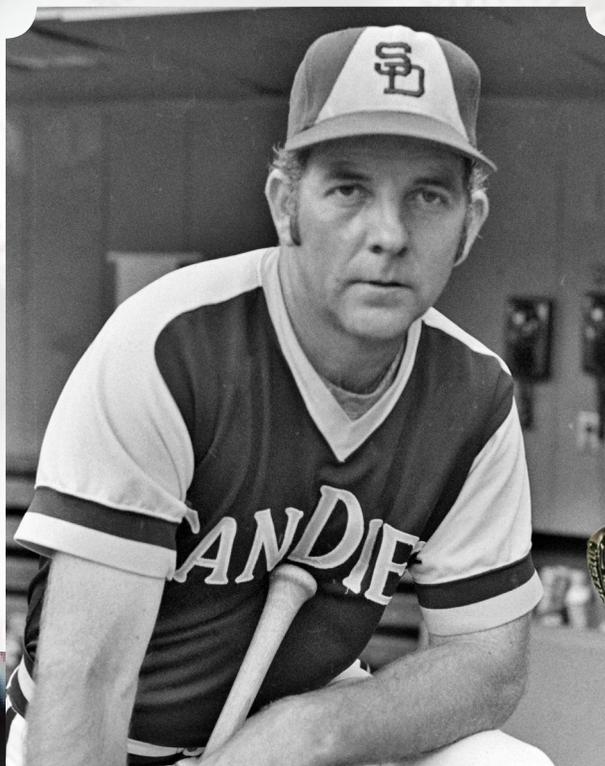
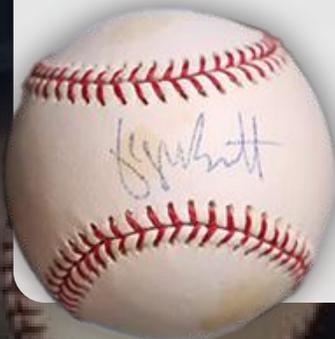
Don's favorite role was coaching. "I always liked defense, and liked showing players how to play the game, especially the infield," he said. Don served as first base coach his first year, third base his second and third years, and was later an advance scout. He describes being a coach as a position where you are under a lot of pressure and have to make tough decisions. "The runner

makes a difference," said Don. "Some are good, some are timid; you have to know your players."

Scouting was another transition, a decision that was made for him. The Atlanta Braves and the Royals both wanted him to scout, his strong point after he got out of the uniform. He traveled by air and car to games, favoring tournaments at the high school level where you could see several boys play. He looked at their ability, as well as their willingness to play. "It's not just performance," he said. "It's how well they swing the bat, their strength, how they throw the ball, how they run. It's not how many hits, but how they hit." He was on the road in season (mid-February through June) on average 15 days of the month. He noted he didn't always get the players he wanted, depending on how the draft fell. Even so, Don came away with wins in that department as well, signing David Nied, Gary Eave, Esteban Yan, and Steve Simpson. He also signed Dave Winfield, a "super athlete" who was 6'6" and weighed 230 pounds. Dave was drafted in three sports by four leagues and became an outfielder for the San Diego Padres in 1973; he was later inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame.

Through the years, Don was supported at home by Marianne, his wife, and children Briget, Tom, and Jamie. "You have to have an understanding family because you have kids moving schools, and the wife has to be able to spend a lot of time alone with the family," he said. But, he added, the kids were happy to go the ballgames, meet the athletes, and hang out with the kids of the ballplayers. They even got to fly on the planes with the players during the World Series. "It was wonderful," said Briget. "It was so much fun to see behind the scenes and meet the players. We thought it was fun and cool when we went to see the ballparks. It became our normal. It was definitely different, but fun." Their son even got to be the bat boy for a while. Though Don grew up in a baseball family, none of his children ended up playing, which was okay with him. "I wanted them to be happy," he said simply.

Don came back to Paragould when he retired to be with family and because he likes it here. His





parents, Nolen and Nina Williams, were from Beech Grove.

To be an elite athlete, Don says you have to have physical ability, adding that a lot of the game is also very mental. You have to be smart with baseball instincts and to be able to take the good as well as the bad. The good ones fight through the bad, he added. His best advice: "First of all, you have to have desire, you have to love the game, and you have to be willing to work hard."

"I had fun," Don said of his six plus decades' love of the game.



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# COPING WITH THE WINTER BLUES

BY KARAN SUMMITT

**F**all 2023 checked all the boxes for a perfect season. Autumn can be a time of exceptional beauty, milder temperatures and beautiful sunny weather, a welcome relief from the miserably hot and humid days of Arkansas summers. Sooner than we like these pleasant temperatures give way to the colder, cloudier and shorter days of winter. Except for a periodic snowfall, winter can be a dismal time of year.

That thing we refer to as the “winter blues” is a cold-weather ailment as common as runny noses, chest congestion and the flu. It can affect anyone at any age but seems to especially be hard on older folks. Puttering around the yard or garden and impromptu trips to town get replaced by long-and sometimes lonely-days at home with little to do but stare at the television.

For some, the winter blues lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression that lasts for a season, typically the winter months, and goes away during the rest of the year. Symptoms of SAD are the same as those

of depression. They can vary in severity and often interfere with personal relationships. Unusual fatigue, a pervasively sad mood, loss of interest, sleep difficulty or excessive sleeping, craving and eating more starches and sweets, weight gain, feelings of hopelessness or despair, and thoughts of suicide are all symptoms of SAD. If your winter blues reach this level of severity and have occurred over at least two winter seasons, you may have SAD and should discuss it with your physician.

For the rest of us, winter weather, especially after the holidays, can trigger a milder reaction. Like the cartoon character walking around with a rainy cloud over his head, we feel like we’ve caught an extended case of the blahs. If this sounds like you, don’t feel alone. As many as 10%-20% of Americans admit to feeling the winter blues, with at least 6% of us having symptoms that meet the criteria for Seasonal Affective Disorder.

If your feelings mirror the milder, don’t-feel-like-doing-much-of-anything category of winter blues, there is good news. A little effort

can make the winter months easier and more productive, a time of year you don’t have to dread. We can’t do much about the weather, but we can make those long days inside count for something. Here are a few simple ideas that can make a big difference in chasing away the cold weather blahs!

- 1. Light Therapy:** During daylight hours take in as much light as possible. If the weather permits, get out of the house each day, even if it is just to get the mail or take a stroll around the neighborhood. Open the curtains and sit by the window. A bird feeder you can watch from inside is a great idea. Another easy switch is changing your light bulbs to daylight bulbs instead of yellow tones. You will be amazed at how bright the inside of your house becomes with this one simple change.
- 2. Eat Healthy:** Yes, it matters. If you are looking for comfort foods, try healthy soups instead of high-carbohydrate sweets that lead to highs and lows in



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blood sugar levels. A side benefit of a healthy winter diet is the boost it will give your immune system. You may want to add a multi-vitamin pill during the winter months as another added precaution for avoiding illnesses.

- 3. Pick a Project:** Make those long days inside count by working on a project. Organize family photos, clean out and organize closets or begin a journal of your life to pass on to your children and grandchildren. They may not be interested now, but it will be a family treasure someday. The feeling of accomplishment that comes from reaching a goal is a great blues chaser!
- 4. Stay Connected:** Get out as much as possible to attend social events, church, family get-togethers and other activities. Have people in for a meal if you are able to cook. Facebook is a great way to stay in touch, but nothing is better than face-to-face contact or hearing someone's voice. Take time to call a friend or family member, especially someone who may be struggling with their own version of the winter blues.
- 5. Stay as Active as Possible:** Keep to a schedule. Long, lonely days can lead to short naps that interrupt a good nighttime sleep routine. If you can't get out of the house, try to move around or do chair exercises that protect strength and agility. Being active has a wonderful side benefit of producing serotonin — the "happy hormone" that helps restore mental equilibrium.
- 6. Stay Hydrated:** The cooler temperatures can have us slacking off on water intake. Consistently choosing hot drinks like coffee instead of water ups the caffeine intake, a natural diuretic. Good hydration is as necessary in winter months as it is in hot weather, helping our body fight off fatigue and digestive ailments. Plenty of fluids are especially necessary if you succumb to a cold, stomach virus or influenza.
- 7. Enjoy the Simple Pleasures:** When the weather is warmer, we tend to stay busier. Winter gives us a good excuse to live life at a slower pace and do some of the things on our to-do list that get shoved aside during the rest of the year. If you have a fireplace, grab a good book and relish some quiet time spent reading each day. Keep a good tea, coffee or variety of hot chocolate on hand for a mid-afternoon snack. If you love to bake, make something to share with others — and take it to them. Count your blessings each day and record them in a journal. If you are a person of faith, spend extended time in prayer. Write a note to someone who may need a pick-me-up worse than you do! Reframing winter as a time to rest and recuperate may be just what is needed to counteract winter doldrums.

At some point between early December and the end of February winter blues will likely be a reality for most of us. Snow days may bring a welcome relief, but by early March Arkansans are ready for the welcome sight of jonquils, forsythia blooms and tiny pink flowers on Bradford pear trees. Three months of the year is a sizable amount of time to waste on feeling blue, especially as we age and begin to count time in what we have left to live. If the winter blues have their hooks in you, take aim this year and fight back!

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# THE GALLERY AT 120

## MARIANNE WILLIAMS EXHIBIT

BY RICHARD BRUMMETT

Because of issues with her health, Marianne Williams “just doesn’t really like to get out anymore,” her daughter Briget said, but more than 50 pieces of her artwork, crafted over decades as a teacher and talented artist, have found their way into the public eye thanks to the good folks at the Greene County Public Library.

Marianne is the Spotlight Artist in The Gallery at 120, a viewing room at the Paragould library suitable for displaying the many paintings dear to her heart and selected for public viewing and/or purchase. “So many people took lessons from Mom,” Briget said, “and remember her from school as their teacher or from workshops she held. And people often ask, ‘Does your mom still paint?’ Now they can come view her work and buy some if they’re interested.”

Born and raised in Wisconsin, Marianne fostered a love for art from an early age. She attended Arkansas State University and earned a Fine Arts degree, and later completed a Master’s Degree in Art Education. She taught in schools at Blytheville, Stanford and Delaplaine, and instructed future teachers at ASU in elementary art forms in addition to leading and participating in area workshops.

Now 82, Marianne has a lifetime of art to share with friends and family. Having recently moved to Paragould from Beech Grove, she sat with loved ones and helped choose exactly which pieces she would loan to





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the library. "When she and Dad moved in from Beech Grove, these were all either in their house or in storage," Briget said of the collection. "First we put them up in their garage, sort of a display of her own she could walk around and look at, and we put some in the house."

"Then the library called one day and we brought about 54 up there. Mom had so much fun. She sat with us and we put a name, number and tab on each one. We'd say, 'Oh, this one, we love it!' and she'd say, 'I hate it!' and we'd all laugh and then pick something else. But doing it brought back so many memories for her, and her mind was crystal clear looking at her art."

According to Briget, Marianne's favorites are "a series of oils from Wisconsin, her birthplace, and anything 'Beech Grove.' They won't be sold; either a cousin has claimed them or we've claimed them. Oils have been her favorites through the years, though, for sure" although she also enjoyed working with watercolors, sketching, pottery and abstract pieces.

Briget credits good friends Connie Whitman, Assistant Director at the library, and former teacher Rena Jackson with getting her mother's work put in front of the public; the many pieces of art will remain on display until January of 2024. "Connie and Mom did workshops together long ago," she said, "and Rena knows our family from teaching at Tech over the years. They kind of put it together."

"I think it's special because it's like recapping her lifetime of work. Every piece, sitting there with her, and seeing how it held memories for her while we were choosing them. I'm glad Mom is getting recognized. She's done a lot with art and likes to share it. I'm happy people can see it and see what she's done and enjoy it."

Marianne is married to former professional baseball player and coach Donald Williams (his story appears on pages 64-65 of this issue) and is mother to daughters Briget and Jamie, and son Tom.



Photography by Stephanie Cooper





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# Next Month

## Holiday Happenings



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## All Things NEW



With a new year comes progress, new traditions, healthy habits, and more!

## Special Section



Getting married in 2024? Be sure to pick up the January 2024 edition for new deals, steals, and planning tips on all your wedding needs!

An advertisement for Heath Funeral Home. The top half features a circular logo with a tree and the text 'Heath Funeral Home' in a large, elegant script. Below the logo, it says 'American Made Caskets | Prearranged Funerals | Personalized Services'. A green banner with white cursive text reads 'May the love of Christ fill your hearts & give you peace this Christmas.' The bottom half shows a nativity scene in front of a brick building. At the very bottom, contact information is provided: '321 W. Garland St. Paragould, AR 72450 | heathfuneralhome.com | 870.236.7676'.

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An advertisement for Affordable Medical. The top half features the text 'MERRY CHRISTMAS' in large, red, serif letters. Below it, it says 'From Paragould's only locally owned DME company'. The company name 'Affordable Medical' is written in large, black, serif letters, with a red heart shape behind the word 'Affordable'. Below the name, it says 'Home Medical Equipment & Supplies'. The bottom half features three columns of contact information for different locations: JONESBORO, PARAGOULD, and WALNUT RIDGE. The background is white with colorful Christmas lights and snowflakes.

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