

arkansas living

SEPTEMBER 2023



A Mane Event

**State Horse Show
saddles up for
60th anniversary**

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Plus:

**Miss America talks
clean energy**

**Exploring Jonesboro
4-H Dinner at the Vines
U.S. 71 Scenic Byway**



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Photo by Renew Creative by Shelby Ridgway



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Concern 'fur' Community

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

Electric cooperatives are guided by seven principles, among them Concern for Community.

Recently, lineworkers at Fayetteville-based Ozarks Electric Cooperative demonstrated just that — as well as Concern "fur" Community.

It began when a Fayetteville citizen spotted a potential "catastrophe" — a mama cat and her four kittens hiding inside a pad-mounted transformer — and reported it to a rescue group. Three nearby NWA Community Cat Project volunteers responded to examine the scene.

Getting the "feline" that this was a dangerous scenario, volunteers did the smart thing and called Ozarks Electric Cooperative. Lineworkers Jacob Roberts and Bobby Raymo "pawsitively" saved the cats and the day.

"A call to Ozarks Electric Cooperative produced kitten heroes Jacob and Bobby. They assessed the situation and quickly retrieved the babies," reported the NWA Community Cat Project Facebook page. "As if things hadn't already



COURTESY OF BARBARA AITKEN JENKINS

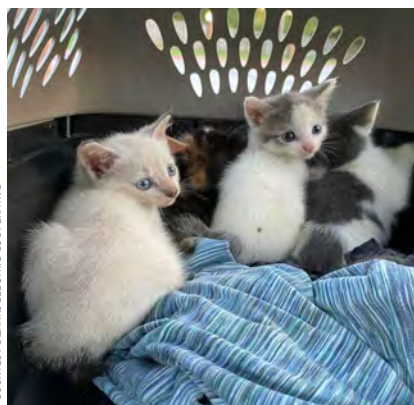
Champion horsewoman Barbara Aitken Jenkins works for Arkansas Valley Electric and wrote this month's cover story.

gone smoothly, mama cat, who must have been watching nearby, showed up and was quickly trapped. The little family is now in the loving care of (a) volunteer foster."

What a truly "purrfect" ending!

Speaking of animals and wonderful cooperative colleagues, we're so pleased that this month's cover story — about the 60th Arkansas State Championship Horse Show (page 8) — was written by Barbara Aitken Jenkins. Not only is Barbara the multimedia specialist for Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative in Ozark, she's a champion horsewoman in her own right.

Finally, speaking of animals yet again, I hope you enjoy this issue of Arkansas Living as much as Romo — our second photo in a series of magazine-loving pets — enjoys his (Reflections, page 29).



COURTESY OZARKS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Ozarks Electric Cooperative lineworkers save kittens found in a transformer.

Jennifer
Jennifer Christman Cia
jennifer.cia@aeci.com

Lost and Found

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

President and CEO of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation



Every year, I make a road trip back to rural Iowa to attend the World of Outlaws NOS Energy Drink Knoxville Nationals. Knoxville has been home to this event since 1961, and it is billed as the most prestigious sprint car

race of the year, with over 100 teams making the trip to compete on a half-mile dirt track.

The track announcer starts the race off with his classic line, "You wanted the best, you got 'em four abreast; often imitated, but never duplicated, the greatest show on dirt." Every year my father-in-law, Dwayne Bonser, handles the tickets and all the logistics, and we get the pleasure of enjoying the "Greatest Show on Dirt" with him and family. I am a Donny Schatz fan, and I also pull for Rico Abreu, but this year, Kyle Larson won the main event and took the title.

Knoxville, Iowa, is a nine-hour drive from Little Rock, so I get plenty of windshield time, with lots of scenery and lots of time to reflect. Driving down the highway watching miles and miles of corn and soybeans took me back to memories of growing up on the farm and life viewed through the eyes of a simple farm kid.

I also got a lot of time listening to the radio, and I heard advertisements for people to sign a petition to save AM radio, since some car manufacturers have dropped AM radios from their vehicles. This, too, took me back to my childhood and memories of my dad sitting in our kitchen, drinking coffee, smoking Pall Malls and listening to the local station, KOKX 1310 AM. I am not sure my dad even knew that FM radio existed.

An episode of "The Waltons" contains this line read by John-Boy Walton as the narrator: "It is always a special moment when you find something that you thought was lost," and this childhood memory is about just that. The main characters of this story are my dog,

Foxy, and my mom's favorite sheep, Heidi.

Foxy was the perfect mutt, and she was the dog we grew up with on the farm. Foxy was always around the house, but one day she went missing and didn't come home that night. We drove the gravel roads and walked the pasture but never found her. However, several days later, she came home dragging a hind leg; she had been caught in a trap somewhere and needed an immediate trip to the veterinarian. Unable to save Foxy's leg, he amputated it, and from that day on, Foxy was a three-legged dog. Foxy recovered fine and was as fast as ever, but she lost the ability to cut and turn fast.

Heidi was a black-faced Suffolk ewe that was my



FLASH ALEXANDER

mother's pride and joy. My mom had other sheep, but none compared to Heidi, and my mom even put a purple collar on her. Foxy became our sheep dog, and she would stay in the pasture and watch the sheep until my dad came home at night and gave her permission to leave the pasture.

One night, a pack of dogs got into the sheep pen and tore up some of our sheep and created chaos. When the dust settled, we realized that Foxy and Heidi were both missing. The next cold and snowy morning, we all set out to find them, searching our farm and some neighboring farms. When I came up over a hill, I was sure I saw them, and I ran to catch them — only I didn't make it. I had failed to notice that I was running straight for a neighboring hog farm's lagoon. The heavy snow had covered the lagoon, and it wasn't until I fell in, ➤

LOST AND FOUND continued on page 6

AECI board elects new officers

The board of directors for Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI), the statewide service organization of Arkansas' electric cooperatives and publisher of Arkansas Living, elected new officers at the AECI Annual Meeting on Aug. 1. They are:

- **Chairman:** David Smith, general manager of Clay County Electric Cooperative;
- **Vice chairman:** Keith Mosbey, vice chairman of the Craighead Electric Cooperative board of directors;
- **Secretary:** Rodney Chapman, general manager of Ashley-Chicot Electric Cooperative;
- **Treasurer:** Emory Austin, president of the Ashley-Chicot Electric Cooperative board of directors.



David Smith



Keith Mosbey



Rodney Chapman



Emory Austin

.....

LOST AND FOUND continued from page 5

covered in muck up to my neck, that I realized what had happened. Cold and smelling ripe, I gave up the search and headed home. Insult to injury was having to wash off outside in the cold before I could come into the house.

Foxy and Heidi were nowhere to be found. The entire family gave up the search at dark and decided that the best thing to do was to see if they came home in the morning. They did not come home. We had about given up hope after a few days, but thankfully the story doesn't end there. This is where the story comes full circle and connects AM radio, three-legged dogs and purple-collared sheep.

We were eating breakfast, and dad was listening to KOKX 1310 AM in the kitchen when the local DJ broke in with a rather unusual announcement: "Hey folks, if anyone out there is missing a three-legged dog and a sheep with a purple collar, they are walking down the middle of Highway 218 out by the drive-in theater." My dad jumped up out of his chair and said, "Get your shoes, let's go." We

"It is always a special moment when you find something that you thought was lost."

fired up the farm truck with stock racks on it and drove to town as fast as we could. Sure enough, there was Foxy and Heidi wandering down the road, about 5 miles away on the outskirts of town. We were able to get them off the highway, loaded in the truck and safely home.

As the corn and lines on the highway continued to go by, I smiled and thought that John-Boy was right — that was a special moment to have found what we thought was lost. Lots of things can be lost, and hopefully, if you have something that was lost, you too get to experience the joy of finding it. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to have patience and wait for the right moment to find it.

This memory also motivated me to sign that petition to save AM radio.

.....

Arkansas Living craves your recipes!

What's cooking, readers?

We always seek your tempting, tried-and-true recipes to share in our Reader Recipes feature on page 34.

While we hungrily welcome all submissions, we'd especially love to receive some autumn and winter recipes! Think comforting casseroles, seasonal soups, savory stews, football favorites, crockpot creations, weeknight wonders, pleasing pastas, dazzling desserts and festive fare.



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

When we print your recipe, we'll send you an Arkansas Living wooden spoon!

There are three ways to submit a recipe:

Mail: Arkansas Living, Recipes

P.O. Box 510

Little Rock, AR 72203

Email: arkansasliving@aeci.com

Online: arkansaslivingmagazine.com

Submissions must include your name, phone number, address and origin of recipe.

Brownie points, so to speak, if you include precise measurements (what size cans, etc.) and if you include a story with your recipe!

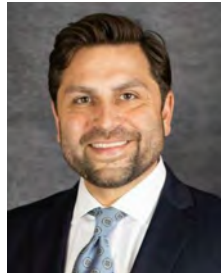
Dismang, Fite named PowerUp Legislators of the Year

Sen. Jonathan Dismang and Rep. Lanny Fite received the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas PowerUp Legislators of the Year awards for their work during the 94th General Assembly.

Presented at the Summer Directors' Conference on July 31, the awards, given by CEO Vernon "Buddy" Hasten, honor lawmakers supportive of the cooperatives' mission of providing reliable, affordable, responsible power to more than 1.2 million member-owners.

Dismang and Fite sponsored the Cost-Shifting Prevention Act of 2023 (SB295), which was signed into law by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders on March 13 as Act 278.

The purpose of the legislation, supported by the cooperatives, is to "ensure fairness to all ratepayers" by addressing the cost shift from solar customers with private net metering facilities to customers who cannot afford or do not want to pay for private net metering systems.



Jonathan Dismang



Lanny Fite

Where Is It?

Welcome back to our hidden object game, "Where Is It?"

In the August issue, we hid a watermelon slice.

Joked one correct reader who found it in a Brandon Burlsworth Foundation photo of Burls Kids: "The little watermelon slice can be found calling the Hogs from a comfy stadium seat at the game on page 16! WOO PIG SOOIE!!!"

In a random drawing of correct answers, the following five winners were selected to receive Arkansas Living tumblers:

Amy Huddleston, Fouke (Southwest Arkansas Electric Cooperative)

Joe Ann Reaves, Rogers (Carroll Electric Cooperative)

Mark Blankenship, Amity (South Central Arkansas Electric Cooperative)

Lita Long, Bismarck (nonmember)

Glenn and Rebecca Kerr, Guy (Petit Jean Electric Cooperative)

In this issue, we've hidden a horseshoe in honor of the 60th annual Arkansas State Championship Horse Show. Don't horse around! Entries must be received by Sept. 15.* Enter via the "Where Is It?" link on the homepage

of arkansaslivingmagazine.com, or go directly to arkansaslivingmagazine.com/contest-where-is-it/.

Or mail in entries to:

Where Is It?

Arkansas Living

P.O. Box 510

Little Rock, AR 72203

(We cannot accept entries by email or social media.)

Include your name, address and electric co-op (if applicable; nonmembers also are eligible), plus the correct page number for a chance to win a mug.

* Due to postal delays, some readers don't always receive their magazines in time to enter. If your magazine arrives after the deadline, submit your entry by the 15th of the following month. We'll send a prize to a randomly selected latecomer! July's winner was: **Lora Brake, Mulberry (Ozarks Electric Cooperative)**.



- Filmed in parts of Dumas, DeWitt, Lake Village, Crocketts Bluff and Stuttgart, the 2012 film, "Mud," features a scene with a First Electric Cooperative lineworker in his bucket truck.
- The word "queue" is the letter "q" followed by four silent vowels waiting in line.
- On sunny days, the Eiffel Tower slightly leans toward the shade.
- If you replace the "w" with a "t" in what, where and when ... you get the answer to each of them.



- Fingernails and continental shifts grow at the same pace.
- Sarcasm spurs creative thinking, according to a 2015 Harvard University study.
- The CIA and U.S. Air Force were both founded on Sept. 18, 1947.
- The Library of Congress reproduces popular magazines in braille, digital audio and large print for citizens with visual or physical disabilities. The magazines are made available to a network of U.S. libraries.

- Dunking an Oreo cookie in milk for three seconds gives the optimal balance of sogginess to structural integrity, according to a study by the University of Utah.



- "Autumn seemed to arrive suddenly that year. The morning of the first of September was crisp and golden as an apple," — J.K. Rowling, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows"

A Mane Event

*State Horse Show
saddles up for
60th anniversary*

BY BARBARA
AITKEN
JENKINS



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY

The Arkansas State Championship Horse Show celebrates its 60th anniversary over Labor Day weekend. The show brings horsemen and women to the Arkansas State Fairgrounds and Barton Coliseum each year to compete for the title of State Champion.

It is unofficially known as the largest open horse show in the world. Horses of all shapes, sizes, colors and bloodlines compete over the fast-paced, four-day event, held this year from Sept. 1-4.

Over 1,800 exhibitors travel to Little Rock each year in horse trailers and campers, and prepare for an action-packed weekend filled with adrenaline, smiles and celebrations, as well as quality time with good horses and even better friends.

It all began when three Arkansas horsemen shared a vision to bring horses and exhibitors to one central location to compete at the highest level.

In 1963, Sonny Noble, Boyce Cook and Trigger Walls each paid \$1,000 out of their pockets to host the first Arkansas State Championship Horse

LEFT The hunter under saddle class competition celebrates the English style of riding.

LEFT The Arkansas State Championship Horse Show begins each morning with the playing of the national anthem and prayer.

Show. Over the next six decades, this event would become a destination for thousands.

Exhibitors compete in 43 classes focused on speed, performance and ranch disciplines.

Neigh-borly competition

Although it is the highest level of exhibitor competition, the State Show represents more to those who attend.

Jerry Fuller of Poplar Grove says the State Show is “like a time capsule and a horse show family reunion.”

Fuller and his twin brother, Terry, started competing at the State Show in the 1960s when they were children, and continued that tradition with their families.

Fuller’s children, Katherine and Kyle, grew up riding and competing in various youth events. Now, Katherine is teaching her 7-year-old daughter, Sadie, the traditions of the State Show.

“It is like a holiday, second only to Christmas, for my family,” Katherine shares.

She continues, “We have our ‘holiday traditions’ in setting up our stalls and getting the horses ready. We enjoy spending time with our friends who we have gotten to know well over the years.”

The Fuller family has won numerous accolades at the State Show, including multiple championships and high point awards in performance, ranch and speed disciplines.

As with the Fullers, the State Show is a tradition for the Neal family of Batesville. The Neal family primarily competes in the speed discipline.

Clay and Amber Neal met as competitive youth exhibitors. Independently, both Clay and Amber were highly successful at the State Show over the years. However, once they married and had two sons, Layton and Cash, they became a powerhouse family in the arena.

Clay says, “Amber and I competed against each other through our youth careers. We now get to see our boys place and win in the same classes that we did 30 years ago.”

Outside of the arena, the Neal family has traditions of their own. “We’re all together at the back of the arena every time before ➤



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY



COURTESY OF THE FULLER FAMILY

TOP Western class competitors like ranch riding and reining celebrate the impact horses have made on American history.

LEFT Jerry and Terry Fuller as children competing at the State Show.

BELOW Lead line is one of the most popular youth competitions.



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY

someone runs. That's just our thing," Amber says.

Cash sums it up perfectly when asked what makes the State Show unique for the boys.

"It's just State," he answers, which loosely translates to "There's nothing else like it."

For Chairman Mike Verkler, the State Show has changed how he and his family spend their time together.

The Verkler family has risen to competitive ranks in classes like barrel racing and pole bending. He has led the statewide association as chairman for the past four years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My first year as chairman was in 2020, and more people told me we could not have a show than those who said we should. However, I was determined not to let the three founding horsemen down by canceling the show. That year, it was reported that Arkansas had the largest show in America and was successful."



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY

Pony class competitions, such as pony pole bending, are designed for exhibitors 10 years and younger.



COURTESY OF THE FULLER FAMILY

The Fuller family and friends celebrate a successful show for Sadie Thompson.



RENEW CREATIVE BY SHELBY RIDGWAY

The Neal family celebrates an incredible weekend of high point accomplishments in 2022.

The State Show is proud to be a nonprofit dedicated to giving back.

Carissa Griffin, the statewide association treasurer, says, "The State Show raises our operating money each year to help produce this show through exhibitor entries, fees and multiple corporate and individual sponsorships. With these collective monies, we have given a generous annual donation to the Arkansas Children's Hospital (over \$131,000 since 2001) and helped support their superior care level for their precious patients. Some of our exhibitors have been Arkansas Children's Hospital patients in past years.

"We have become like family and take care of our family."

The public is welcome to attend the State Show at Barton Coliseum Sept. 1-4, beginning at 7:50 a.m. each day and lasting until competitions conclude. General admission is \$10 each day. Children under age 5 are free. Parking is also free.

Barbara Aitken Jenkins, the multimedia specialist at Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative, is an avid competitive horsewoman. She resides in Scranton with her husband, Cody, and helps manage her family's equine business, Aitken Quarter Horses.

WEB EXCLUSIVE! Read an expanded version of this story at: arkansaslivingmagazine.com

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Crowning Moment

Miss America Grace Stanke speaks clean energy at cooperative conference

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

This year's Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Summer Directors' Conference, held in late July in Hot Springs, included significant pageantry.

One of the featured speakers: Miss America 2023 Grace Stanke. A nuclear engineering student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a zero-carbon advocate, Stanke's topic was "Clean Energy, Cleaner Future."

With an outgoing personality as sparkly as her crown, Stanke, the daughter of a civil engineer, said she became interested in nuclear engineering as a teen, despite her father's warning that the field had no future. "So, I got into the nuclear industry out of spite against my father. ... I was a teenage girl who wanted to stick it to my dad, because I'm a person who, when I see a challenge, I take it."

But what kept her studying the field "is a different story," she said, adding, "The first year, I learned that nuclear medicine is what saved my dad's life twice from Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer. He's alive and happy and healthy and retired because of nuclear medicine."

Beyond the many medical applications, Stanke said, "Then I learned about the power field. ... About 20% of America is powered by nuclear energy; 10% of the globe is powered by nuclear energy. It's clean. It's sustainable. Zero-carbon. Reliable.

"In my mind, why weren't we doing this? Why weren't we using it?"

After all, Stanke said, nuclear is one of the "safest forms of power production that exists today," producing little waste and requiring minimal land, particularly in the case of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

She said, "We need to start having these conversations today about nuclear because this is what we need to create zero-carbon energy that's reliable."

It's a message that aligns with the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas' commitment to a diverse portfolio of energy resources — a Balance of Power in providing electricity to member-owners that is reliable, affordable and responsible.

Since being crowned Miss America in December 2022, Stanke has traveled the country with this mission: "Providing children their first exposure to the word 'nuclear,' establishing new high school curriculums to include nuclear physics, combating the stigma surrounding nuclear energy and assisting in legal issues surrounding the accessibility of zero-carbon energy." It all starts with awareness.

"In 2023, for the first time in over a decade, 55% of Americans say they're open to or support nuclear energy being built," she said. "They want to see new nuclear because it's cheap, because it's zero-carbon, because it's reliable, because it doesn't use a lot of land. People are starting to warm up to it. ... We're at this point of pivotal change."

It's not the only change she is focused on as Miss America.

As Stanke was quoted in her bio as saying, "In addition to helping change public perception of nuclear energy and technology, I hope to inspire youth, especially young girls, to explore STEM and to see that going into these fields, including nuclear engineering, is an option for them." ■



Miss America Grace Stanke speaks at the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Summer Directors' Conference.



Crowned as Miss America last December, Grace Stanke travels the country promoting the benefits of nuclear energy.

COURTESY OF MISS AMERICA ORGANIZATION

JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

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An evening of Vine(s) dining

Dinner at the Vines supports Arkansas 4-H

BY KAT ROBINSON

The C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center is setting the tables for its third annual Dinner at the Vines on Tuesday, Sept. 26. The evening provides learning opportunities, highlights the campus and showcases Arkansas produce and products — all while raising funds for Arkansas 4-H.

Tracy Courage, director of communications for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, says the event celebrates the unique features the Vines Center has to offer.

“Hundreds of Arkansas 4-H members attend camps at the center, but the center is actually used year-round for corporate retreats, leadership and team-building activities and other meetings,” Courage says. “With 94 rooms, a fully staffed kitchen and meeting spaces with Zoom capabilities, we can accommodate large groups.”

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are honored to sponsor this event for the third year.

Director of Corporate Communications Rob Roedel says, “The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are longtime supporters of Arkansas 4-H and the wonderful programs that the organization offers for the future leaders of Arkansas. The Dinner at the Vines event is quickly becoming one of the premier ‘must-attend’ events in Arkansas.”

The evening begins with a special cocktail hour in the Pulaski County Master Gardener demonstration garden, just downhill from the center’s hub. Guests are invited to sample signature beverages and locally sourced hors d’oeuvres while chatting with the gardeners and learning about flowers, fruit and bees. It’s followed by an Arkansas-centric dinner, served beside the lake under the night sky, with music from 4-H alumni members, The Kordsmeier Family.

An auction also provides a lot of entertainment, with



COURTESY OF C.A. VINES ARKANSAS 4-H CENTER



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

ABOVE Patrons dine al fresco by the lake at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center.

LEFT An Arkansas-centric menu featuring locally sourced produce is a highlight of the Dinner at the Vines.

prizes that include weekend getaways, Arkansas Razorback tickets, a dinner for 20, sporting equipment and so much more. There’s even a Bigfoot-themed barn quilt and a weekend stay at the Vines Center during the 2024 solar eclipse among the items up for bid.

This year’s soirée includes a new facet — a dessert auction with sweets provided by local chefs.

“Last year’s proceeds provided funds to add a pavilion on-site that will provide a shady and protected area for 4-H youth to be outside,” Courage says. “Construction is in progress, but the weather hasn’t cooperated, so we’re hoping it will be complete in time for our guests to see our progress.”

Tickets are available at Arkansas4HFoundation.org. Tickets are \$125 each or \$700 for a table of six. If you cannot attend, you can still help by bidding on many items that will be available online the week before the event. ■

A man and a woman are standing on a sandy ledge, embracing each other. They are looking out over a vast, deep canyon with steep, eroded walls of red and orange clay. The canyon floor is filled with green trees and vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The man is wearing a dark tank top, sunglasses, and black shorts. The woman is wearing a dark tank top, olive green shorts, and black sneakers. The overall scene is romantic and adventurous.

There are places in *Mississippi* where the *clay actually molds you.*

Scattered throughout our state, you'll find unique and surprising landscapes that will inspire your sense of adventure. Red Bluff, Mississippi's "Little Grand Canyon," is just one such place. Here, cliffs were sculpted out of the native red clay soil by eons of erosion, creating stunning views of the Pearl River valley below. Discover this and other travel experiences at [VisitMississippi.org/Adventure](https://www.visitmississippi.org/adventure).

#WanderMS



Red Bluff | Marion County, Mississippi

Jonesboro is jam-packed with fun

BY JACK SCHNEDLER

Jonesboro, the state's fifth largest city, is home to **Arkansas State University (A-State)** and a variety of athletic, cultural and culinary delights.

The A-State Red Wolves football team plays three games this month at 33,000-seat **Centennial Bank Stadium**: Sept. 9 vs. Memphis, Sept. 16 vs. Stony Brook and Sept. 23 vs. Southern Mississippi. Meanwhile, fans await the Red Wolves' long-desired football match-up with the University of Arkansas Razorbacks, scheduled for 2025.

Also on campus, musical electricity is in the air at the **A-State Museum** (astate.edu/a/museum), thanks to a lively exhibit that celebrates rock 'n' roll's early heyday in the state's northern Delta region during the 1950s.

"Rockabilly: The Northeast Arkansas Story" sparks interest in stars of this post-World War II genre, including Johnny Cash, Sonny Burgess, Levon Helm, Billy Lee Riley, Conway Twitty and Ronnie Hawkins. These high-voltage legends and others are aptly spotlighted in the headquarters city of Craighead Electric Cooperative.

The first sight for museum visitors heading to the wide-ranging exhibits in the main galleries is a massive relic of the last Ice Age, 11,000 to 12,000 years ago. The skeleton of a prehistoric mastodon, standing about 10 feet tall at the shoulders, makes an eye-catching backdrop for selfies. Arkansas is the site for 20 among the 29 mid-South finds of bones from this extinct species.

A second museum on the campus stages changing exhibitions of contemporary work. Opening at **Bradbury Art Museum** (bradburyartmuseum.org) on Sept. 14 is "Sweet Dreams," a group show "of fantastical, surreal and dreamy contemporary art," and "Memento-Mori," sculptures by Arkansan Michael Warrick. Both A-State museums have free admission and are open to the public.

Brews and bites

Visitors to Jonesboro can enjoy a growing mix of restaurants and entertainment venues. Although package-liquor retailing is still banned in Craighead County, some 70 private-club licenses have been issued for alcohol sales in the city. There's even a brew pub, **Native Brew Works**, 515 S. Gee St. (nativebrewworks.com).

One of Jonesboro's busiest dining and music venues is the original **Skinny J's**, 205 S. Main St. (skinnyjs.com), where the menu features steaks and burgers — and oysters when available. Bands play on weekends, while Wednesday is trivia night.

Steaks and live music are also the focus at **Omar's Uptown**, 301 S. Main St. (omarsuptown.com); **Brickhouse Grill**, 218 S. Main St. (mightybrickhouse.com), and **JTown's Grill**, 2610 E. Johnson Ave. (jtownsgrill.com).

Those with a taste for tacos can get their fill at **Uncle Taco**, 211 S. Main St. (eatuncletaco.com); see full review on page 40. ➤



A skeleton of a prehistoric mastodon greets visitors to the Arkansas State University Museum.



The Bradbury Art Museum on the campus of Arkansas State University displays contemporary art.

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— D., Houston, Texas



Not shown actual size.



Rating of A+

Shadrach's Coffee (shadrachcoffee.com) has six locations across the city. **The Recovery Room Coffee House & Bistro**, 223 S. Main St. (facebook.com/therecoveryroomjonesboro), is a downtown favorite. Barbecue enthusiasts are sure to be in hog heaven this month at the **Downtown Jonesboro BBQ Festival** (facebook.com/downtownjonesborobbqfest) from Sept. 29 to 30.

History and activities

A distinctive downtown work of architecture is **Craighead County Courthouse**, 511 S. Main St. Opened in 1934 as the fifth courthouse at the site, it is the city's only public building designed in art deco style.

Outside the courthouse, a plaque describes the **Battle of Jonesboro**. The Civil War skirmish took place on the courthouse lawn in July 1862. Ranked as a Southern victory, it left seven Union soldiers and one Confederate dead.

Near the courthouse entrance stands the **World War I memorial** "Over the Top," which depicts a doughboy heading into combat. Designed by John Paulding and dedicated in 1920 on Decoration Day (now Memorial Day), it supposedly was the first of its kind erected in a Southern state.

Youngsters who fidget at historical sites can jump with joy at **Ultimate Air Trampoline Park**, 3223 Shelby Drive (ultimateairjonesboro.com). The colorful trampolines are designated for jumpers of different ages and monitored for safety. The setting is a good bet for birthday parties and other family occasions.

For outdoor recreation within Jonesboro's city limits, one haven is 700-acre **Craighead Forest Park**, 4910 S. Culberhouse Road (jonesboro.org). Facilities include basketball, volleyball and softball courts; a disc golf course; a softball field; hiking and biking trails; and camping facilities. The park's lake is known for bass and bream.

Just southwest of the park, the state-operated **Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center**, 600 E. Lawson Road, (agfc.com) focuses on the natural history of the unusual north-south formation that runs from southeast Missouri to near Helena-West Helena. The center's three-story building brims with enlightening exhibits on the ridge's fauna and flora. The surrounding landscape includes about 100 acres of woods, a 5.5-acre prairie and a 2.5-acre pond.

Set atop Crowley's Ridge, 10 miles north of Jonesboro,

JONESBORO FACTS

Incorporated: 1883

City population: 81,969

Metro population: 135,287

Size: 80.2 square miles

is 114-acre **Lake Frierson State Park**, 7904 Arkansas 141

(arkansasstateparks.com). A renowned fishing location, it is also designated as an Environmental Education Park with programs focused on energy for the future, pollution and waste disposal. On Sept. 16, visitors can join the "100 Hours of Centennial Service" cleanup project to do a good deed as part of their day outdoors. ■



Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center offers visitors a chance to learn about the natural history of Northeast Arkansas.



Located in downtown Jonesboro, a World War I memorial stands near the Craighead County Courthouse.



"Rockabilly: A Northeast Arkansas Story" is currently on exhibit at the Arkansas State University Museum.

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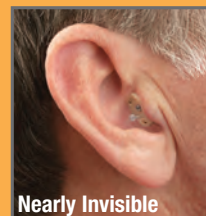
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5 Steps
Before
Installing
Solar

1. Call us first.

If you're considering purchasing solar, it's important to understand how net metering, demand billing and current regulation could impact you. Call us first at 800-489-7405 and speak with our marketing and development representatives.

2. Understand how net metering works.

Most arrays will provide you with a portion of the electricity needed but won't meet all of your needs. At night and on cloudy days, you'll need more power than your array can produce. That means you'll still be connected to First Electric's power lines where energy can flow both ways. First Electric has set policies and procedures in place for interconnecting solar arrays to our grid. In order for your solar array to be interconnected, go to firstelectric.coop/net-metering-service to learn how net metering works.

3. Make your home more energy-efficient.

Adding insulation, sealing air leaks and completing other energy efficiency enhancements can cut your energy costs immediately resulting in the need for a smaller solar array. In order to determine the size of the solar array that you will need, review your past

electric bills to determine your energy use needs.

4. Economics.

If you purchase a solar array, you will be the owner, which means you will be responsible for the purchase price as well as any ongoing maintenance and repair costs. Consider all expenses you could incur during the lifetime of the array. These costs may include installation, interconnection costs, insurance and taxes. Any financial incentives available will help reduce your investment costs. One great resource is dsireusa.org which includes an interactive map showing federal and state incentives, credits, grants, loans and rebates.

5. Questions

If you decide to purchase solar, be certain you have the technology available to view and read the array production. First Electric cannot see this information, only what the member is using on the meter. If you experience any issues or have a complaint about an array's production, please reach out to the Attorney General's office to file a consumer complaint report at arkansasag.gov/resources/contact-us/file-a-consumer-complaint/.

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Are you eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program? ACP was designed to assist those needing help with signing up and maintaining affordable internet in their homes. Learn more about this program and find out if you qualify at [Connect2First.net/fiber/affordable-connectivity-program](https://connect2first.net/fiber/affordable-connectivity-program). Also, learn more about Lifeline, a program similar to ACP that assists low income families by providing a discount on phone or internet service.

Connect2First is now becoming available in the Olmstead and Drasco areas, and crews continue construction in the of Avilla, Tannenbaum, Brownsville and Collegeville areas.

Learn more about our services at [Connect2First.net](https://connect2first.net) and be sure to submit your information through our Check Availability page. We will contact you when service is available in your area! Also, please be sure to visit [Facebook.com/Connect2First](https://facebook.com/Connect2First) to learn more about fiber-optic internet and how it can help you build a smart home of the future!

Member Photo Contest Winner



Female Ruby-Throated Hummingbird
submitted by Shirley Pohlman

Calling ALL NonProfits

**Application Deadline
Sept. 15**

Operation Round-Up allows First Electric members to help support worthwhile projects in our communities and scholarships for students.

Participating in Operation Round-Up is easy. Each month, First Electric simply "rounds up" the electric bill of participating members to the next highest dollar. For example, a member's monthly bill of \$52.73 would be rounded up to \$53, with the additional 27 cents going to the Operation Round-Up Trust fund. Donations are tax-deductible, and participating members are sent a summary of their yearly contributions in December and January.

The Operation Round-Up Trust fund is overseen by a nine-member board of community members, who are selected to serve by First Electric's board of directors. The trustees meet quarterly to review donation applications and select the recipients. First Electric pays all administrative expenses for the program, which allows all "rounded up" monies to be used for nonprofit donations and college scholarships. Since its inception in 1998, the Operation Round-Up program has awarded more than \$1.47 million in donations to nonprofit organizations and college scholarships.

Meetings are held the first week of each quarter. The deadlines for nonprofit donation applications are:

1st Quarter deadline – March 15

2nd Quarter deadline – June 15

3rd Quarter deadline – Sept. 15

4th Quarter deadline – Nov. 15

Members can enroll by calling 800-489-7405, using our app or stopping by any First Electric office.

Go to firstelectric.coop/operation-round-up



U.S. 71 Scenic Byway a portal to the past

BY SHEILA YOUNT

For generations of students and Razorback fans, U.S. 71 was the main route to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Starting at Alma, the winding mountain road tested the nerves and driving skills of countless drivers for 42 miles to the Fayetteville city limits.

Today that section of U.S. 71 is a state-designated scenic byway that is part of the Boston Mountain Scenic Loop, along with Interstate 49, also a state-designated scenic byway. Although it has been supplanted by I-49 as the most traveled route to Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas from I-40, it remains a nice option for a slower-paced drive, where you can fully enjoy the mountain scenery. It is especially spectacular when the surrounding Ozark National Forest is ablaze with autumn colors.

U.S. 71 follows a route based on Native American and stagecoach trails. Until the 1920s and 1930s, the road was mostly a “deeply rutted wagon trail,” stretching through western Arkansas from the Louisiana state line to the Missouri border, according to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas. It was transformed into a major thoroughfare paved with concrete. It drew tourists at the dawn of the automobile age until the 1950s, when improvements began, leaving sections of the Old Highway 71 cut off like oxbow lakes from a river. Six sections of the old road are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and portions are still visible from the main road.

‘Crooked and steep’

For those who remember traveling the highway before I-49 opened in 1999, it is a portal to the past. It is still “crooked and steep,” as the highway signs warn, but it



Sunrise over Artist Point on the U.S. 71 Scenic Byway.

somehow seems less formidable without heavy traffic. Gone are the signs that once encouraged motorists to drive carefully so they would not become the next fatality on the curvy road, which could become especially treacherous in bad weather.

The U.S. 71 Scenic Byway starts at the Alma exit off I-40. Here you can grab a bite to eat and fill up your vehicle with gas before heading up through the hills. Outside of Alma, you will pass through rolling hills and small farms where horses and cattle graze. You will also begin to notice that the drop-off in traffic with the construction of I-49 has taken its toll. Grass grows in the pavement cracks on the highway’s shoulders, while native rock buildings that once housed charming gift shops, cafés and other businesses sadly stand abandoned.

Mixed with the remains of the past are such stalwarts as **Artist Point**, 19924 N. U.S. 71, Mountainburg, a gift shop, museum and hummingbird sanctuary with its iconic overlook of Saddle Canyon. There’s also the charming **Sky-Vue Lodge** (22822 N. U.S. 71, Winslow, skyvuelodge.com) operated by Glenn and Janice Jorgenson. Located atop Mount Gayler, Sky-Vue is a 91-year-old refurbished tourist court featuring cabins and a lodge. A homestyle breakfast is included, along with sweeping views of the surrounding Boston Mountains and Ozark National Forest.



The Sky-Vue Lodge lures travelers to stop with its historic tourist court charm and stunning overlook.



SHELLA YOUNT

A portion of the old U.S. 71, first built in the 1920s-'30s, can still be seen running along the newer version.

Across the highway from the lodge is the home of **Ozark Folkways** (22733 N. U.S. 71, Winslow, ozarkfolkways.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the arts, crafts and music of the Ozarks, located in a historic, two-story rock building. Visitors can attend workshops and concerts and shop for arts and crafts made by local artisans.

You'll also find live music, featuring country and traditional mountain genres, at the nearby towns of Chester and West Fork, home of the **Little O' Oprey** (271 S. Campbell Ave., West Fork, littleoprey.org). Nature lovers can easily access **Lake Fort Smith State Park** (15458 Sheperd Springs Road, Mountainburg, arkansasstateparks.com) with its cabins, marina, lodge, hiking trails and visitor center along the 1,500-acre lake. And as you head into Fayetteville, there's the **Arkansas Air and Military Museum** (4290 S. School Ave., Fayetteville, arkansasairandmilitary.com) with vintage aircraft and other artifacts and exhibits at Drake Field.

If you want to head back south after your Fayetteville visit, try the other side of the loop — I-49. Not only will you make it back to I-40 much faster, you'll also find that the views from I-49, with its wide-open spans across the mountain valleys, are even more expansive than on U.S. 71. ■

WEB EXCLUSIVE! Read an expanded version of this story at: arkansaslivingmagazine.com

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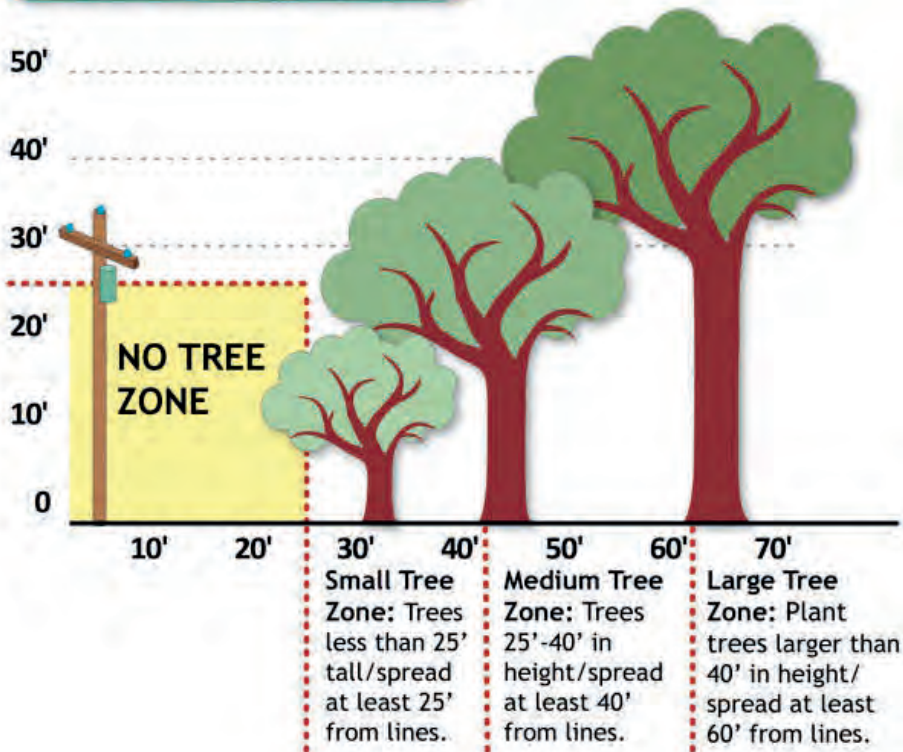
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Tree Planting Guide



Tree placement important for safety and service reliability

Trees are one of the major causes of power outages in areas with overhead utility lines. When trees contact live wires, they may become conductors of electricity and cause power outages or create dangerous situations for anyone coming in contact with them.

When selecting a tree for planting, be sure to consider the mature height of the tree when determining a suitable planting location. Native species often will grow better with fewer insect and disease problems than nonnative trees.

For areas near houses and overhead utilities, there are three tree height zones for small, medium and large trees as depicted in the graphic above. Plant only large shrubs and small trees with mature heights of 20 feet or less in the no tree zone.

Before you plant, call Arkansas 811 at least 48 hours in advance (not counting weekends and holidays) to have your underground utilities marked at no charge.

Trees planted within First Electric's easement (15 feet on either side of the line) will have to be removed once trimming becomes necessary. All trees along fences, roadways and other unmaintained areas will be removed during regularly scheduled maintenance regardless of size or height.

Go to firstelectric.coop/vegetation-management for more information on vegetation management.

MEMBER BASICS: Cooperative Principles

First Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric cooperative. As a cooperative, we operate by these seven cooperative principles:

1. VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights – one member, one vote – and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3. MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6. COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

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Reflections



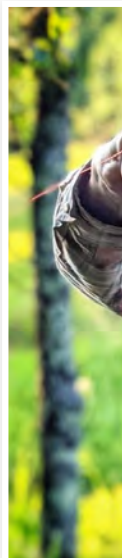
Harmony showing off her pig, Jimmy Dean.
Hayley White, Kirby.



Hudson helping his dad mow the lawn.
Sue Summers, Fayetteville.



Bayleigh enjoying a beautiful Arkansas sunset. Haleigh Hunt, Waldron.





Vaughn is 88 years young!
Cheryl Walker, Pettigrew.



Katelynn, that's one mighty big frog!
Candy Womack, Nashville.



Romo likes to "read" the magazine, too.
Betty Chambliss, Pine Bluff.



Isabella perched on papaw's tailgate.
Roger Pickens, Kelso.



Twins Addison and Jackson finally caught "Big Bertha," the infamous pond monster! Jonathan Bard, taken at Leah Hughes' pond, Texarkana.



Rowen is proud of his very first fish.
Connie Kleffman, at great-grandpa's pond.

Share your photos with your fellow Arkansas Living readers! Please send high-resolution photos with detailed information about the pictures (who took it, where, who is in it, etc.) to: Dixie.Rogers@aeci.com

Or mail to:
Reflections, Arkansas Living
P.O. Box 510, Little Rock, AR 72203

Muscadines: Striving for grapeness



BY JANET B. CARSON

When it comes to grapes, most gardeners think of table grapes, seedless green or red varieties or wine grapes. But a true Southern delicacy is the muscadine grape. Native to the southeastern part of the U.S., they are native throughout Arkansas except in the colder regions up north. While wild varieties can be tasty, improved cultivated varieties offer plenty of options. They have a distinctive flavor and aroma and are quite high in antioxidants.

In the wild, muscadine plants are either male or female and both are needed to produce fruit. In cultivated varieties, you can choose either female-only blooms or perfect flowers containing both male and female flowers, often sold as self-fertile. To produce fruit, you can grow a perfect or self-fertile variety or a combination of perfect and female plants. One vine of a perfect plant can pollinate up to eight female plants. Female varieties usually produce larger, sweeter fruits, but need



Muscadines come in several varieties and are a true Southern delicacy.

perfect flowering plants to pollinate them. Perfect plants typically have higher yields. Fruit color varies from black, red, bronze or green with some varieties having large seeds, while others are seedless. Muscadines are easy to grow and much less susceptible to disease. While they do benefit from annual pruning, the pruning is not as severe or exacting as for table and wine grapes.

In the wild, you will find muscadine vines growing up trees, but in cultivation, it is best to grow them on a trellis or a fence row. They are fairly adaptive to soil types but will produce best in full sun with a minimum of eight hours of sunlight. Fertilize annually in the spring as they begin to grow. The first year after planting, you will prune to develop the framework of the plant. Every year after that, prune in late winter/early spring — before new growth begins to increase yields.

Want a taste of muscadines this month? Consider visiting the Post Familie Vineyards Muscadine You-Pick, 1700 Saint Mary's Mountain Road, Altus, taking place Sept. 29-30. Visit postwinery.com or call 479-468-6400 for more information. ■

VARIETY	FLOWER TYPES	COLOR	OTHER ATTRIBUTES
Black Beauty	Female	Black	Large fruit, good plant vigor.
Carlos	Perfect	Bronze	Good cold-tolerance, high yield, good plant vigor.
Cowart	Perfect	Black	Good pollinator, medium-large fruit.
Darlene	Female	Reddish bronze	Largest fruit, excellent flavor.
Fry	Female	Bronze	Large fruit, good flavor.
Nesbitt	Perfect	Black	Large, flavorful fruit with great plant vigor.
Scuppernong	Female	Bronze	Oldest variety, good flavor, very cold-tolerant.
Sugargate	Female	Black	Large fruit, early season, good cold-hardiness.
Summit	Female	Bronze	Large, flavorful fruit, good disease- and cold-hardiness.

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RECIPES AND PHOTOS
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Blue Cheese & Bacon Cheeseball

Makes 6 or more servings.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|----------------------------------|
| 1 | (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened | 2 | tablespoons red onion, diced |
| 1/3 | cup blue cheese crumbles | 1/4 | cup Granny Smith apple, diced |
| 1/2 | cup real bacon pieces, more for topping | 1 | cup fiesta blend shredded cheese |
| | Pepper to taste | | Crackers for serving |

Stir together cream cheese, blue cheese and bacon until well-incorporated. Add pepper, red onion and apple. Stir in shredded cheese, and form into a ball. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until time to serve.

Take cheeseball out 30 minutes before serving, so it can soften slightly.

Before serving, sprinkle extra bacon pieces on top. Serve with crackers.



Grilled Vegetable & Artichoke Dip

Makes 10-12 servings.

- | | | | |
|---|---|-----|---|
| 1 | large zucchini, sliced vertically | 1/4 | cup red onion, minced |
| 1 | large yellow squash, sliced vertically | 1/2 | teaspoon garlic salt |
| 1 | tablespoon olive oil | 2 | tablespoons sun-dried tomatoes, minced |
| | Salt and pepper | 1 | (15-ounce) can artichoke quarters, drained |
| 1 | (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened | 2 | cups Italian blend shredded cheese, divided |
| 1 | cup mayonnaise | 3/4 | teaspoon Italian seasoning |
| 1 | tablespoon, plus 1 teaspoon pesto (fresh is best) | | Crackers or crostini for serving |

Heat grill to 400.

Brush zucchini and squash slices with olive oil. Generously sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill 5 minutes per side or until tender. Allow to cool for 5 minutes.

Heat oven to 375.

Chop zucchini and squash, and place in a cast-iron skillet. Stir in cream cheese, mayonnaise, pesto, red onion, garlic salt, and sun-dried tomatoes until well-blended. Stir in artichokes and half the shredded cheese. Spread remaining cheese on top, and sprinkle with Italian seasoning. Bake for 18-23 minutes or until bubbly. Serve with crackers or crostini.





Killer Creamy Chicken Enchilada Dip

Makes 6 or more servings.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened | 2 cups rotisserie chicken, chopped |
| 1 heaping tablespoon taco seasoning | 1 2/3 cups fiesta blend shredded cheese, divided |
| 2/3 cup mayonnaise | 1 green onion, sliced |
| 1 cup red enchilada sauce | 1/4 cup black olives, sliced |
| 1 1/2 cups canned corn, drained | Tortilla chips for serving |

Heat oven to 375.

In a deep-dish pie pan, stir together cream cheese and taco seasoning until combined. Stir in mayonnaise. Stir in enchilada sauce, corn, chicken and half the cheese until well-combined. Cover with remaining cheese, green onion and black olives. Bake for 18-23 minutes or until bubbly. Serve with tortilla chips.



This month's web exclusive recipe:

Roast Beef Sliders

More recipes on our website:
arkansaslivingmagazine.com

*Juliana Goodwin is a food columnist, cookbook author and avid traveler.
 If you have a question, email julianalovesfood23@gmail.com.*

How 'bout them apples?

Fruity fall treats are tasty to the core

Apple Butter Oatmeal Cookies

- 1 (15.25-ounce) box white or yellow cake mix
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup apple butter
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Heat oven to 350.

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together. Drop by tablespoon onto a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes.

Jacki Spotts, Mountain Home

Sweet Potato Apple Bread

- Nonstick cooking spray/flour for pans
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 4 eggs
- 2/3 cup water
- 1 cup oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 large apple, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped

Heat oven to 350. Coat two loaf pans with cooking spray and a dusting of flour.

Boil sweet potatoes until tender; add to a large bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat sweet potatoes, adding in eggs, water, oil and vanilla extract. Add flour, baking soda, salt, sugar and brown sugar, and mix well. Stir in apple and pecans. Evenly pour mixture into two prepared pans.

Bake for 1 hour or until fork comes out clean.

Dorothy Greenway, Star City

Slow Cooker Apple Spice Cake

- 2 (21-ounce) cans apple pie filling
- 1 (15.25-ounce) box spice cake mix
- 1 1/2-2 sticks butter, cut into slices

Add apple pie filling to bottom of slow cooker. Evenly pour cake mix on top, and layer butter slices on top of cake mix (do not mix!). Close lid, and cook on high for 2 1/2 hours.

Note: Dessert can be served as is or with ice cream.

Karen A. Barnes, Farmington



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN, CA

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Entries must include your name, phone, address and origin of recipe.

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4 Spectacle Prismatic Glasses

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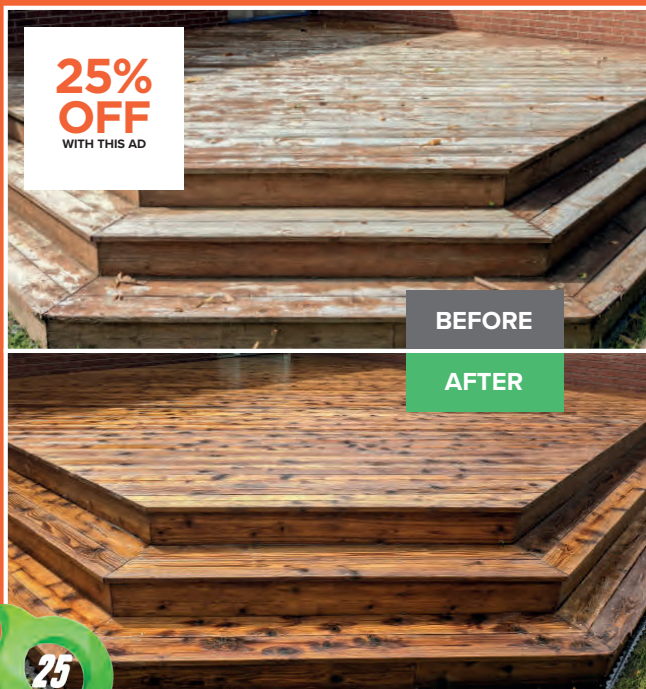
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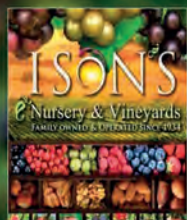
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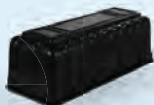
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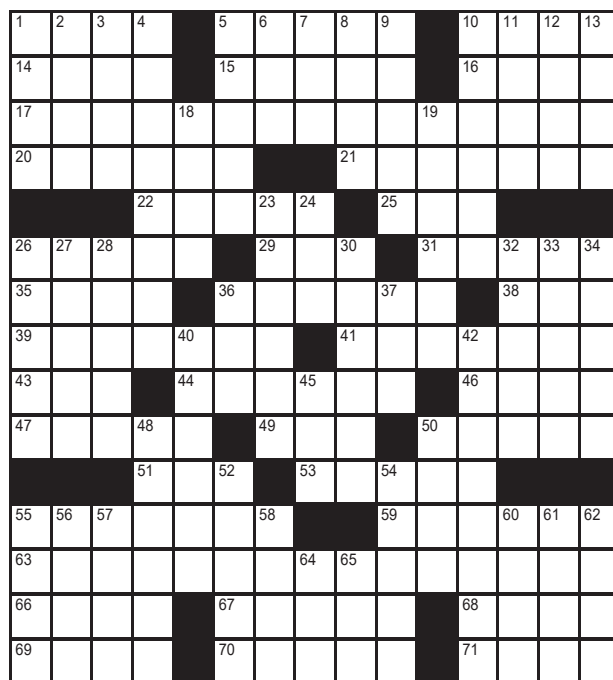
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

September Daze By Victor Fleming

ACROSS

- 1 Word preceding down or waiter
- 5 Dandy
- 10 Theresa and Genevieve for short
- 14 Whitish gem
- 15 Maine university town
- 16 It's west of Hilo
- 17 Sept. 22, the first day of fall
- 20 Bubble's shape
- 21 Dawn's early light
- 22 Followers of alphas
- 25 Amphibious creepy crawler
- 26 Burritos' kin
- 29 ___ long way toward (be particularly helpful in)
- 31 With respect to
- 35 "Kid'll eat the middle" cookie

- 36 Famous oracle locale
- 38 Big inits. in news
- 39 With 41-Across, group celebrated on Sept. 16
- 41 See 39-Across
- 43 911 responder, briefly
- 44 ___ of justice
- 46 Start to chamber or room
- 47 Concentrated beam
- 49 "The Princess and the ___"
- 50 Big name in former Arkansas senators
- 51 Cleaning cloth, often
- 53 Idealistic hope
- 55 Actors
- 59 Not for family viewing
- 63 Sept. 19, International ___ Day
- 66 Domain
- 67 Words on a book spine
- 68 Aerodynamic toy
- 69 Pageant accessory
- 70 Petite
- 71 "Grand" homer



DOWN

- 1 "When in Rome, ___ ..."
- 2 Start of a lyric that ends "in my beautiful balloon"
- 3 Algebra and trig
- 4 Place for a student's essay
- 5 Lisa of "High Fidelity"
- 6 Disco '70s, e.g.
- 7 Company in a 2000 merger
- 8 Ones, in Paris
- 9 Chef's chapeau
- 10 Kilts' cousins
- 11 "Beloved" author Morrison
- 12 "Book of Mormon" book
- 13 Old German duchy
- 18 Servings on bivouac (abbr.)
- 19 Lopsided, as an advantage
- 23 Space in a relationship?
- 24 Costa del ___, Spain
- 26 After-bath need
- 27 Agreeable smell

- 28 Breath Savers competitor
- 30 Turn up
- 32 Amusing
- 33 Decide one will
- 34 Choir platform
- 36 Biden's grp.
- 37 Is in possession of
- 40 Little Rock's Temple B'nai ___
- 42 Designates for a purpose
- 45 Showed the way
- 48 Badu of music
- 50 ___-mutuel (Oaklawn betting mode)
- 52 Southern breakfast side
- 54 Boot from school
- 55 Bake sale sponsors, for short
- 56 Farrar of Arkansas Business
- 57 Certain brews
- 58 Dairy choice
- 60 What a puppy wags
- 61 Blues singer James
- 62 Believe
- 64 Incoming flight info
- 65 "I'm ___ ears!"

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CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 39

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CROSSWORD ANSWERS
for puzzle on page 38

W	V	L	S	T	T	V	M	S	H	S	V	S
E	T	I	K	E	T	I	T	V	E	R	V	A
E	T	V	R	I	P	E	K	I	T	K	T	V
D	E	X	R	A	T	E	S	P	L	A	V	P
R	O	Y	R	P	E	P	E	R	S	V	A	T
E	T	N	V	S	E	T	V	C	S	T	W	E
S	T	N	E	V	P	G	N	I	K	R	O	M
I	P	U	I	H	P	T	E	D	O	E	R	O
R	O	F	S	V	A	O	G	S	O	C	O	V
E	S	I	R	N	U	S	E	R	E	H	P	S
X	O	N	I	U	S	E	T	V	N	U	T	V
V	N	O	K	O	N	O	R	O	T	V	P	O
S	E	T	S	T	U	V	E	B	B	M	U	D

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Uncle Taco a (James) Best bet in Jonesboro



STORY AND PHOTOS
BY ROB ROEDEL

Uncle Taco is the whimsical mascot of Chef James Best's newest restaurant. The character reflects the animated atmosphere, but don't let Uncle Taco fool you, as he delivers some seriously good offerings.

Manager Sarah Reeves laughed as she explained the origin of the mascot. "We have fun with Uncle Taco," she said. "Our staff wears T-shirts that feature him having fun."

And fun is exactly what the restaurant is all about, along with top-shelf "Ark-Mex" dishes.

Best is known for his successful Skinny J's restaurants, creative

menus and a keen skill for renovating restaurant spaces. Uncle Taco is located in the thriving downtown Jonesboro Main Street area. Best went with bright, cheerful colors, accentuated with natural light delivered by huge storefront windows. The two-story space is decorated with an upcycled style.

My food journey commenced with The Three Amigos appetizer, featuring tortilla chips and three made-fresh-daily dips. The queso dip includes green chiles, herbs and a secret blend of cheeses. Uncle Taco's guacamole incorporates ripe avocados, cumin, chile pepper, tomato and onion. The salsa combines delicious fire-roasted tomatoes, cilantro, roasted jalapeños and onion. Other available salsa varieties are pineapple salsa and salsa verde.

There are nine flavorful taco options that can also be served as salads, bowls or burritos. Reeves fixed me up with a Carne Asada taco with tasty, grilled flank steak, salsa verde, white onion, cilantro and lime nestled between a corn tortilla. The Fish taco featured beer-battered cod with pineapple salsa, cotija cheese, cilantro and chipotle cream on a flour tortilla. Other taco options include: The Basic (ground beef), Carnitas, Smoked Pork, Smoked Chicken, Chorizo, Fried Honey Chipotle Chicken and Honey Chipotle Shrimp.



Named after Chef James Best's daughter, the Eleanor Pie at Uncle Taco is a layered Mexican pizza.



The Three Amigos sampler features chips with guacamole, queso and the salsa of your choice.

The Street Corn makes an outstanding side and goes great with any taco.

I also enjoyed a Smoked Chicken Salad. The fresh, smoked chicken was lovingly placed on a crispy, fried flour tortilla and topped with fresh lettuce and sour cream. The combination made me want the whole enchilada, well, salad.



The Smoked Chicken Salad is served in a crispy, fried tortilla.



Uncle Taco's staff wear colorful, fun T-shirts with the restaurant's mascot.



THE EATING ESSENTIALS

Uncle Taco

211 S. Main St., Jonesboro
870-520-6356
eatuncletaco.com

Hours of Operation

Monday-Wednesday: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.
Thursday-Friday: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m.-10 p.m.
Sunday: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.



Uncle Taco offers refreshing and colorful cocktails and “mocktails.”

The Eleanor Pie is a Mexican pizza named after Best’s daughter. I loved, loved this creation, which layered flour tortillas with refried beans, cheddar cheese, a fab-o red sauce, pico de gallo and, if desired, a choice of protein. I opted for the ground beef, but other options include steak, chicken, chorizo, carnitas or smoked pork. I love pizza and Mexican food, and this Uncle Taco creation was easily one of the best items that I have sampled in a few years.

The cocktail menu is clever and very extensive, but I was equally impressed with the “mocktails.” Don’t tell my boss, but I tried a couple. The alcohol-free beverages were fabulous and refreshing.

Brunch is available on Saturdays and Sundays. Uncle Taco calls that service “BrUncle Taco,” with the slogan: “Brunch ‘til you say Uncle.” The innovative brunch menu includes lively offerings, such as a breakfast version of the Eleanor Pie. ■

Dining recommendations? Contact Rob Roedel at rob.roedel@aecc.com.

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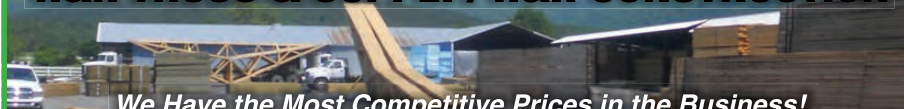
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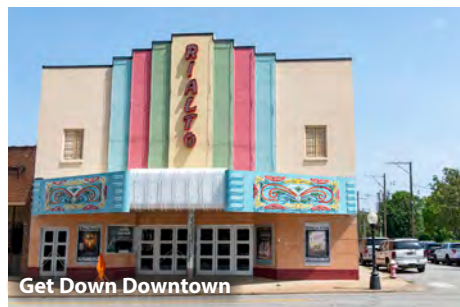
Beatles at the Ridge Musical Festival



Arkansas Hot Air Balloon State Championship



Blooms & Butterflies



Get Down Downtown

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Sept. 2

Jazzfest

Hot Springs, hotsprings.org

Antique and Classic Car Show

Mammoth Spring, arkansas.com/mammoth-spring

FestiVille

Jacksonville, cityofjacksonville.net

Sept. 3

Labor Day Fireworks

Lake Hamilton, hotsprings.org

Sept. 5-9

Saline County Fair

Benton, salinecountyfairgrounds.com

Sept. 7-23

ACANSA Arts Festival of the South

North Little Rock, acansa.org

Sept. 7-9

Buffalo River Bluegrass Festival

Jasper, facebook.com/buffaloriverbluegrass

Sept. 7-10

Pan American Bass Championship

Hot Springs, hotsprings.org

Sept. 8-9

Arkansas Hot Air Balloon State Championship

Harrison, exploreharrison.com

Local Fest

Jonesboro, foamusic.org/localfest

Sept. 8-10

Arkansas Comic Con

Little Rock, arkansascomiccon.com

Sept. 9

South Arkansas Outdoor Expo

El Dorado, southarkexpo.com

Sept. 11-16

White County Fair

Searcy, whitecountyfairgrounds.org

Sept. 16

Beatles at the Ridge Musical Festival

Walnut Ridge, beatlesattheridge.com

Sept. 17

Main Street Food Truck Festival

Little Rock, mainstreetfoodtrucks.com

Sept. 20-23

Bikes, Blues & BBQ

Rogers, bikesbluesandbbq.org

Sept. 21-23

Fall Swap Meet

Petit Jean Mountain, museumofautos.com

Sept. 22-23

Ouachita Bigfoot Festival & Conference

Mena, blueziplinefarm.com

Sept. 22-24

FORMAT Festival

Bentonville, visitbentonville.com

Sept. 22-30

Arkansas-Oklahoma State Fair

Fort Smith, arkansasoklahomafair.com

Sept. 23

Fort Smith Fall Festival

Fort Smith, fortsmith.org

Sept. 29-30

Downtown Jonesboro BBQ Festival

Jonesboro, facebook.com/downtownjonesborobbqfest

Get Down Downtown

Searcy, facebook.com/mainstreetsearcy

Sept. 29-30

Autumn on the Square

Marianna, facebook.com/autumn.square.56

Blooms & Butterflies

Black Rock, visitjacksonfarm.com

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