

arkansas living

JANUARY 2023

Picture This!

**Winners of our 2023
Reader Photo Contest**

Page 8

Plus:

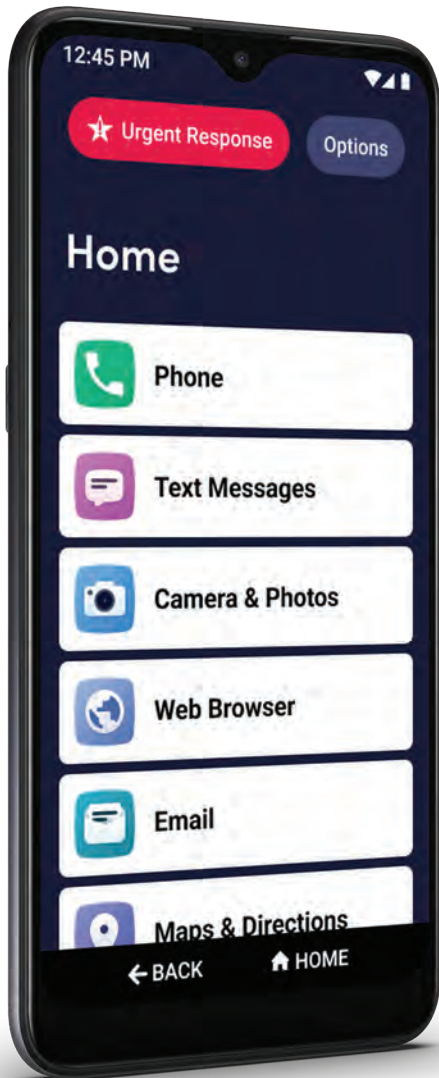
Hiking into the new year

**Pine Bluff's Delta Civil
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Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at 1958 college graduation.

By Jack Schmedler

on the cover

"Tree Frog Snuggling in the Winter Squash Blossom" by Judith Allen, one of our 2023 Reader Photo Contest winners.

Shares Allen, who took the photo in October at SalScilla Farms, Inc. in Mayflower: "On a cold fall morning, while checking my winter squash, I saw a speck of green sticking out of a blossom. When I opened it, the cutest tree frog was tucked in sleeping. We found several more after realizing they were using our squash blossoms for blankets."



KARLY VAUGHN

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BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA



They say a picture is worth 1,000 words.

So, thank you, readers, for sending

us 1.6 million words! You spoiled us by submitting 1,606 outstanding entries to Arkansas Living's 2023 Reader Photo Contest. (Our ultra-organized Associate Editor Nancy Meador counted and categorized them. Our most popular category: birds with 432 entries. Egret-fully we couldn't run them all!)

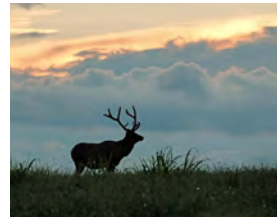
Our team had the toughest time deciding winners out of so many fine photos. And we could only select one for the cover, when 100 would have looked splendid.

Ultimately, we chose "Tree Frog Snuggling in the Winter Squash



Barn at Sunset, Lawrence County — RANDY STORY

"Blossom" — taken by Judith Allen at SalScilla Farms, Inc. in Mayflower — as our cover because of its subject matter,



Bull Elk Silhouette, Harrison — JUSTIN SMITH

storytelling and authenticity. It tickled us to discover it was taken with an everyday smartphone, proving that everyone can be brilliant photographers — even without specialized training and professional equipment — if we are present in the moment and appreciate the splendor that surrounds us.

Please see our wonderful winning photos, published on pages 8 through 14. Others will appear in Reflections (page 28) and will be used elsewhere in the magazine and on social media throughout the year.

Enough words. Let's use this space for a few more fantastic photos.

Until next year's contest, keep your eyes open, and stay focused!

Jennifer

Jennifer Christman Cia
jennifer.cia@aeci.com



The Littlest Cowboy, Russellville — DIANE RACE

Watt's Fair

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



A long time ago on an Iowa farm, I was subjected to some injustice that I can't remember. I'm sure I wanted to do something, and my parents said, "No." I remember that it made me angry, and I lashed out, "That's not fair!"

I definitely remember my dad calmly saying, "Buddy, you will learn that life isn't fair, so get over it," and much like *Forrest Gump*, that was all he had to say about that.

I have learned that life often isn't fair, and people almost always react negatively, like I did, when they perceive unfairness. Turns out, my dad's advice was good advice but hard to follow.

This reaction is normal. Social scientists call this phenomenon inequity aversion. Economists and psychologists have conducted experiments using the Ultimatum Game to prove this. In one game variation, a moderator gives \$100 to Player 1, who splits the money into two envelopes; Player 1 keeps one envelope, handing the other to Player 2. If Player 2 is satisfied with the amount, both Players keep their respective envelopes. If Player 2 is not satisfied with the share and rejects the deal, both players give their envelopes back to the moderator, and the game is over. No one gets any money.

In a completely rational world, there is no instance where Player 2 should reject the deal, unless there is \$0 in the envelope. It is free money. However, in real case studies, Player 2 doesn't always act rationally. Player 2 almost always accepts the deal if offered between \$40 to \$50. If offered \$20 or less, Player 2 rarely accepts the deal. The concept of fairness can cause Player 2 to react irrationally and punish Player 1 for a perceived unfairness.

Humans are not the only ones to display this phenomenon. Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal conducted an experiment with Capuchin monkeys, teaching them to trade rocks for slices of cucumber. He found that two monkeys positioned side by side in cages would trade rocks for cucumber slices agreeably for a long time. However,

when he began rewarding one monkey with more desirable grapes, the other monkey was no longer satisfied and began throwing the cucumber slices at the administrator.

Why all this talk about fairness and game theory? They illustrate why the Electric Cooperatives have been advocating for a change to Arkansas' solar net metering rules. Current rules allow a member with privately owned solar panels to put excess energy produced on the electric grid, and cooperatives are required to credit their account at the full retail rate for those kilowatt hours (kWh). Rules also allow them to bank those credits for a rainy day. On the surface, it seems fair, but it is not. It is much more like one member getting a grape and the other getting a cucumber slice, and we saw how that worked out in the lab.

Why is it not fair? Well, there are several cost shifts that create this inequity. The first is the overcompensation for the excess kWh. Cooperatives are required to credit a net metering account at full retail, which is about 12 cents per kWh, when wholesale power costs about 5 cents per kWh. The difference between the wholesale power price and the

retail cost of power is the cost to build, operate and maintain the entire electric distribution system, which benefits everyone. How does this create a cost shift? This overcompensation for excess kWh results in cooperatives collecting less revenue to operate the electric grid. However, cooperatives are not-for-profit, so this is not about shrinking profits but rather shrinking revenue

to pay for fixed costs to maintain the grid. Ultimately, cooperatives must raise rates, and when that happens, more of that increased cost is passed on to non-solar members.

The second form of cost shift is the ability to time-shift energy using the cooperatives' balance sheets. In the physical world, if you want to time-shift energy, you need a battery. A good strategy would be to charge your battery when prices are low and discharge it when prices are high — and hope the value you get would more than pay for the cost of the battery. Members who net meter benefit, as they generally produce excess kWh when power prices and demand are low, but claim credits back when power prices and demand are high. Take Winter Storm Uri, for instance. Solar output was minimal during Uri, so all members were pulling their power off the grid and contributing to the entire cost ➤



FAIR continued on page 24

AECC Board of Directors elects new officers

The Board of Directors of Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC), the Little Rock-based wholesale power supplier for Arkansas' 17 electric distribution cooperatives, elected new officers at the board's December meeting. They are:

Chairman: Sam Houston, a director for Farmers Electric Cooperative

Vice Chairman: David Smith, CEO of Clay County Electric Cooperative

Secretary: Terry Rorex, a director for Craighead Electric Cooperative

Treasurer: Rodney Chapman, general manager for Ashley-Chicot Electric Cooperative



Sam Houston



David Smith



Terry Rorex



Rodney Chapman

Picture perfect: Like father, like son

An Arkansas lineworker won a national photo contest. RE Magazine, the flagship publication of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), hosts a monthly photo contest (cooperative.com/remagazine/photo-challenge).

Landen Burns, a lineworker at C & L Electric Cooperative in Star City, won November's contest, which had nearly 300 entries and more than 5,500 votes cast.

Burns' winning entry shows his son, Paul Ander, dressed up as a lineworker for Halloween and riding in a "bucket truck" — just like his dad.

The image will appear on the 2023 NRECA Member Decal and will be displayed on co-op offices and vehicles across the country.



COURTESY OF LANDEN BURNS

C & L Electric Cooperative Lineworker Landen Burns' photo of his son, Paul Ander, won a photo contest.

Big Sister earns big honors

A guiding principle for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas is "Concern for Community." Halea Anthony, manager of Human Resources Projects for Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC), recently received awards exemplifying this fundamental.

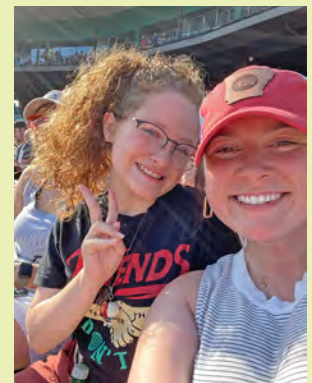
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arkansas honored Anthony as the "Big of the Year" and "Match of the Year" with her Little Sister EK.

Anthony says, "It meant the world to me that I made a significant impact on someone else's life and family." After all, that's the reason she became a Big Sister in October of 2021.

"The world can be so cruel at times, and I knew this would be a small way I could give back that love and kindness to someone who needed it," Anthony says, adding that the year 2020 "really showed me what was important in life, and I knew that I wanted to be involved."

Being involved, Anthony says, has helped her as much as it has helped EK: "EK has taught me to slow down and enjoy the little things. ... It's OK to not be perfect, and actually, it's more enjoyable when you aren't. Be present and in the moment with those you cherish."

And EK, Anthony says, is someone she cherishes the most: "I got a best friend and a sister!"



COURTESY OF HALEA ANTHONY

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arkansas named AECC's Halea Anthony (right) and Little Sister EK (left) as Match of the Year.

Where Is It?

Welcome back to our hidden object game, “Where Is It?” Last month, we hid a Christmas elf.

Joked one correct reader who spotted the elf on a Christmas train graphic: “Page 4. I love the play on words throughout the magazine. I had to sTRAIN to see those elf feet.”

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

Alexine Barber, Waldron (Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative)

Gerald Freeman, Cleveland (Petit Jean Electric Cooperative)

Emily Farley, Siloam Springs (Carroll Electric Cooperative)

Chuckie Smith, Romance (First Electric Cooperative)

Melba Joice, Salem (North Arkansas Electric Cooperative)

In honor of our 2023 Reader Photo Contest, we’ve hidden this camera. And don’t expect finding it to be a “snap!” Here’s how to enter:

1. Enter via the “Where Is It?” link on the homepage of arkansaslivingmagazine.com, or go directly to arkansaslivingmagazine.com/contest-where-is-it/.



2. 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.)

Entries must be received by Jan. 15*. Include your name, address and electric co-op (if applicable; nonmembers also are eligible), plus the correct page number.

** 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! November’s winner was: **Gentry Thomason, Bradford (Farmers Electric Cooperative)**.*

trivia

- The odds of a New Year’s baby being born at 12:01 a.m. are roughly the same as being struck by lightning.
- Goosebumps are caused by the arrector pili muscle, which causes hairs to stand up, making skin look bumpy.
- Actor Samuel L. Jackson was an usher at the funeral for Martin Luther King Jr.
- Drinking coffee before exercising can boost performance by as much as 12%.
- Arkansan and actress Mary Steenburgen received her first big break from actor Jack Nicholson.
- Cats, camels and giraffes have the same walking sequence. They are the only animals that move both right feet before moving both left feet.
- Lemons float, and limes sink.
- No number contains the letter “a” before 1,000.
- Dr. James Naismith invented the game of basketball, yet he had a losing record as head coach of the University of Kansas Jayhawks.
- “Every single year, we’re a different person. I don’t think we’re the same person all of our lives.”
— *Steven Spielberg, director, producer and writer*

Staying warm outside this winter

“Jack Frost nipping at your nose” is better sung than experienced. Here are some winter safety tips from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

- Adults and children should wear: a hat; a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth; sleeves snug at the wrist; mittens (they are warmer than gloves); water-resistant coat and boots; and several layers of loose-fitting clothing (like a cotton inner layer, a wool or fleece insulation layer plus a water- and-wind-resistant outer layer).
- Remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm. Excess sweating causes the body to lose more heat.
- Stay dry. Wet clothing chills the body quickly.
- Don’t ignore shivering. Constant shivering is a sign that it is time to go inside.
- Know hypothermia symptoms: shivering, exhaustion/tiredness, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness. In babies, signs include bright red, cold skin and very low energy.
- Know frostbite symptoms: loss of feeling in nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers and toes; white or grayish-yellow skin areas; and skin that feels unusually firm or waxy; and numbness.
- Get medical attention immediately if you suspect hypothermia or frostbite.



Picture This!

WINNERS OF ARKANSAS LIVING'S 2023 READER PHOTO CONTEST



Every photo tells a story.

And our readers are excellent storytellers.

Arkansas Living's 2023 Reader Photo Contest winners have captured moments in time, ranging from majestic to moody to merry. Often, it's the unexpected moments that make the most stirring photographs.

Shares Dee Dee Conklin, who took "Charlotte's Web" on page 13: "I was a little disappointed because it was misting rain, and I was wanting to take pictures. I noticed a big spider web with the rain drops clinging to it, and it looked so cool. The end result was a happier me, even with the rain."

So, always keep the faith, and keep taking pictures!



The Dance, Gentry — PHILLIP MARTIN



Snowy Bison, Harrison — JUSTIN SMITH



A Step Back in Time, Winthrop — PATTY WELCH



Mini Moo and Her Momma, Manila — RACHEL THIEME



Baby Raccoons, Austin — STEPHANIE CLARK



Butterfly and Bee, Shirley — MARY PIKE



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Who Will Blink First?, Boxley Valley — KAREN BRUCKS



Bouncing Goat,
Poinsett County
— JIMMY MCCAIN



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Charlotte's Web, Boxley Valley — DEE DEE CONKLIN



Surprise Visitor, Boxley Valley — LANEESA GRIFFIN



Trumpeter Swan, Heber Springs — ASHLEY FLORY



Pretty In Pink, Melbourne — LEAH SMITH

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Take a hike on a winter's day

BY SHEILA YOUNT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

With the arrival of winter, it can be tempting to hunker down inside until the daffodils begin to bloom. But, if you do, you'll be missing out on one of the best things about living in Arkansas — the outdoors.

While there are certainly days in January and February when staying inside with a cup of hot chocolate, a fire and the TV remote is the most inviting choice, there are often milder days that are perfect for taking a hike along one of the state's trails. Arkansas is well-known as a spring and fall hiking destination, but Tim Ernst, wilderness photographer and author of several Arkansas outdoor guides, says winter is a great hiking season in The Natural State.

"Some years we have long stretches of 60- to 70-degree days, with brilliant sunshine," Ernst writes in his "Buffalo River Hiking Trails" guidebook. "Many of the trails that run through endless tunnels of heavy forest the rest of the year are now open to the world — with no leaves on the trees, you can see deep into the hills and hollows and out across the countryside."

Unlike in summer, which is usually too hot and humid for a comfortable hike, there's no need to worry about snakes, mosquitoes or other bugs in winter. You still want to carry water to stay hydrated and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes/boots. Hiking poles/sticks are helpful on the more rugged trails, especially after a rain, when rocks can be slippery or even icy on a frosty morning. For day hikes, pack a lunch or some snacks to keep your energy level up. Especially important in the winter is to wear layers and avoid working up a sweat on colder days.

"When it is cold out, you tend to start hiking with too many clothes on, and soon break out in a sweat," Ernst writes. Sweating while out in cold temperatures can lead to potentially deadly hypothermia, he warns. He suggests the layering method, where you simply remove clothing as you get warm to make regulating body temperature easier. Once you start walking, especially on the more demanding trails, it usually doesn't take long to warm up.

Arkansas has about 1,800 miles of trails located throughout state, including all six geographic regions. The trails range in length from less than 1 mile to more than 200 miles. Some are accessible while others are extremely difficult. About 300 miles of trails are located within Arkansas' state parks, and the longest trails, including the Ozark Highlands Trail (165 miles) and the Ouachita National Recreation Trail (223 miles), are located within the state's two national forests. ➤



ABOVE Guided hikes, like this one at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, are popular with groups and families.



LEFT Hikers enjoy the view along Sam's Throne Trail, a moderately difficult 2.9-mile loop near Mount Judea in the Ozark National Forest.



The Spy Rock Overlook Trail near Ozark is an easy out-and-back trail that includes a panoramic vista of the Ozark National Forest.

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Some of the state's most popular hiking trails are located at Petit Jean State Park in the Arkansas River Valley, Devil's Den State Park near Fayetteville and Pinnacle Mountain State Park near Little Rock. These trails feature numerous rock outcroppings and vistas, and Petit Jean even has a 95-foot waterfall.

You can see for miles and miles at Pinnacle Mountain State Park near Little Rock.

First Day Hikes

A great way to kick off the new year and to discover the hiking opportunities at Arkansas' state parks is by participating in the First Day Hikes interpretive programs offered at several state parks.

The hikes, which take place on Jan. 1, are part of a nationwide initiative led by the American Hiking Society. State park interpreters lead the hikes, and those who complete them receive a sticker commemorating the event. Visit: arkansasstateparks.com/first-day-hikes.

For more details on Arkansas' state park hiking trails, visit the trail finder at: arkansasstateparks.com/trails.

For more tips on cold-weather hiking, visit: americanhiking.org/resources/cold-weather-hiking/. ■



Join us for the Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo January 25-28, 2023 Embassy Suites by Hilton in West Little Rock

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The conference will include annual meetings and workshops for the Arkansas Horticulture Society, Arkansas Blackberry Growers Association, Arkansas Association of Grape Growers, Arkansas Farmers Market Association/ ArCOP, Arkansas Agritourism Association, and more!

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Pine Bluff's civil rights past

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at 1958 college graduation

BY JACK SCHNEDLER

Martin Luther King Jr. was not yet a household name when he delivered the 1958 commencement address at what is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB).

Then 29, the Baptist minister was five years away from issuing his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” to justify peaceful civil rights protests. He was also five years away from making the legendary “I Have a Dream” speech on Washington’s National Mall. He was six years away from winning the Nobel Peace Prize. His crusade for racial equality would span a dizzying decade before he was shot to death in Memphis on April 4, 1968. His legacy is honored annually by Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on Jan. 16 this year.

The former Hazzard Gymnasium, where King spoke 65 years ago to 233 new graduates of what was then Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College (AM&N), is among 22 locations on Pine Bluff’s Delta Civil Rights Legacy Trail. The building at 1387 University Drive now houses the school’s Division of Military Science. Some of the trail’s other structures are gone, but their historical roles are spelled out at explorepinebluff.com/delta-civil-rights-legacy-trail.

Pine Bluff may not leap to mind as an important location for the civil rights movement. But Sheri Storie, executive director of Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission, makes the case for its stature: “Pine Bluff boasts credentials on par with Selma, Little Rock and Montgomery. Pine Bluff was the site of boycotts, sit-ins, demonstrations and bombings as African Americans demanded an end to segregated facilities and jobs in the early 1960s.”

In his speech, King spoke of the methods, benefits and sacrifices necessary on the road to racial freedom and equality for Black Americans. He said that “through the use of nonviolence, understanding and goodwill, we will achieve desegregation and integration.



Martin Luther King Jr. was welcomed in 1958 by students and faculty at Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College, now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

After we are brought together physically, we will come together spiritually because men will see that it is right and natural.”

During the address, King also employed some of the language that would later appear in his 1965 “I Have a Dream” speech — including the indelible phrase “free at last, free at last.”

He received several rounds of applause and a standing ovation from more than 1,000 people who attended the graduation.

King’s continued nonviolent campaigning inspired some AM&N students to organize sit-ins at Pine Bluff’s segregated Woolworth lunch counter in 1963.

The former Woolworth building is on the Civil Rights Legacy Trail, along with several other protest locations. Among them is the structure that housed the former Missouri Pacific train station and Greyhound bus depot. A plaque denotes the onetime headquarters of the city’s Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee chapter, a major force in the demonstrations.

There’s no hint outside St. James United Methodist Church, 900 University Drive, that it was bombed in 1963. An incendiary device broke windows and part of the church caught fire, as described on the trail’s website. But quick discovery led to the fire being extinguished before major damage. Nobody was injured. The perpetrators were never identified.

The Jefferson County Courthouse, 101 W. Barraque St., is listed on the trail because a lynching took place outside the building in 1892. Two Black men accused of killing a white merchant were hanged on adjacent telegraph poles and shot more than 100 times.

Some interracial history is painful to recall. But the progress mapped out by many locations on Pine Bluff’s Delta Civil Rights Legacy Trail gives heartening hope of continued progress. ■



The Jefferson County Courthouse is a historic landmark on the Delta Civil Rights Legacy Trail.

MARICA SCHNEDLER

PINE BLUFF ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION COMMISSION

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

The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . **The Zinger.**

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

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-Kent C., California

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From Your Board Chairman Rick Love

Who remembers taking home a “vintage” report card from school? It was a single card stock proudly displaying the school’s name, student’s name, grade and teacher’s name on the front with printed columns on one side which reflected your adherence to (or lack of) citizenship, cooperation and other respective categories. The flip side gave

way to your scholastic performance in subjects like English, math and science and was reflected as a letter grade (which many years ago, was easy to change)! The same report card was used for all four quarters of the school year, and at the end of the year, you were able to take it home for your parents to either proudly display or to hide.

I think about how First Electric would fair with a report card. In my humble opinion, our recent retirement of capital credits would get a solid A+ with over \$7.55 million retired this year! The total represents a percentage of margins based upon years 2002 through 2005 and 2018 through 2021. We began this practice back in the 1940s, and I’m pleased to share that we have refunded more than \$140 million to you – our members.

Okay, I joke about the report cards, but the co-op employees and directors work daily to serve our membership. First Electric members and Connect2First customers receive surveys to rate the level of service they receive. So, in essence, there actually is a report card. The surveys ask a variety of questions, but when asked about employees’ knowledge and professionalism, all scored in the mid 90s. Now, that’s an A to proudly display!

We don’t get graded on a curve, and it can’t be accomplished without all employees doing their equal part. One thing that I would like to note is our employee group has an innate desire to help our members. Yes, it’s part training, but ultimately, it’s a desire within them to help and serve. If you have a chance to visit with a co-op employee, you will notice that quality immediately!

In 2023, we hope to provide you with the best service from electric to fiber that we can accomplish. Not for the grade, but for the commitment we have made to you as members of the cooperative and customers of Connect2First. On behalf of the board, here’s to a prosperous year!

Sincerely,
Rick Love

Members fund donations to 17 local nonprofits

Thanks to members who participate in Operation Round-Up, \$24,500 was donated to 17 local organizations in December.

These members volunteer to have their bill rounded up to the next even dollar amount each month. That money — an average of \$6 a year — is used for donations to local organizations and for college scholarships. To date, Operation Round-Up has donated more than \$1.47 million.

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.

Recipients by county include:

Arkansas County

- Keaton Township Project, \$1,000.
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Arkansas County, \$1,000.

Cleburne County

- Margie's Haven House, Inc., \$2,000.
- CASA of the 16th Judicial District, \$2,000.
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Cleburne County, \$2,000.

Garland County

- Altrusa International Foundation in Hot Springs Village, Inc., \$1,000.

Lonoke County

- Lonoke County Safe Haven, \$2,000.
- Lonoke County Museum, \$1,500.

Monroe County

- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Monroe County, \$500.

Perry County

- Perry County Day Service Center, \$2,000.



Altrusa International Foundation in Hot Springs Village, Inc. awards scholarships of \$500 to seniors at four area high schools who achieve a 4.0 GPA from freshman through senior year. Each year, the scholarships are awarded at a luncheon at the Arkansas Governor's Mansion. Altrusa estimates that 18 students will qualify this school year. Altrusa Foundation was awarded \$1,000 for this purpose by the Operation Round-Up board of trustees. This photo of last year's recipients was provided by Altrusa International Foundation in Hot Springs Village, Inc.

- Rose Creek Community Building, \$1,000.

Pulaski County

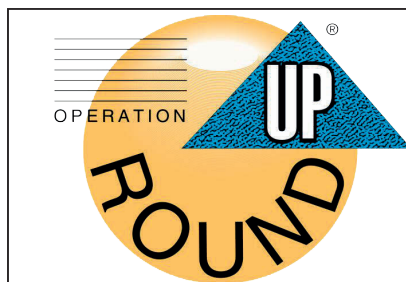
- North Pulaski Community Complex, \$1,000.
- Methodist Family Health Foundations, \$1,000.
- Operation Warm Heart, \$2,000.

Saline County

- Shaw Fire Protection District, \$2,000.
- Cooper-Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center, \$2,000.

Stone County

- Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Stone County, \$500.



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FAIR continued from page 5

of that storm, which was about \$100 million for five days of electricity. However, if you had net metering credit, you could use it during that storm and avoid the incredible fuel costs passed on to members who were billed for their usage, even though you contributed to the high cost.

The average cost shift for an average net metering account is about \$500 per year. This means that those with solar panels avoid about \$500 of the fixed costs needed to maintain the electric system. And those costs are passed on to others because this is a nonprofit system. As more members net meter, the impact gets larger and larger on each non-solar member. Solar installations are not cheap and often can only be financed or afforded by economically successful members. This cost shift has been referred to as a regressive subsidy, since it pushes increased costs onto members who can likely least afford them.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas depend on principles grounded in fairness to work. Concepts of nondiscrimination and fairness are central to what has made cooperatives successful since the 1800s.

To be clear, we support all forms of generation technology, and we advocate for fair rules and economic policies for all forms of generation — and for ALL members in accordance with the cooperative principles.

Another thing that would not be fair would be changing the rules on a member after solar was installed. That is why we have advocated for ending the highly subsidized rule and shifting to a fairer set of net metering rules for the future. We support maintaining the current rules for those who have already installed their systems, known as “grandfathering.” However, this is unsustainable if applied to every current and future account.

We want to ensure that future net metering accounts pay their equitable share to maintain the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas that stand for Reliable, Affordable and Responsible power and for fairness for all members. ■

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Don't let solar companies cloud your judgment

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Yet, some solar companies attempt to mislead our members with promises too good to be true.

Collectively, the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are one of the state's largest net metering utilities, and we're supportive of solar. However, we have issue with third-party solar or other companies using deceptive sales tactics to deceive our members.

Be aware of these red flags to look out for:

- **No more electric bill.** You'll still receive a monthly electric bill for a service availability charge, a fixed fee that covers the basic monthly costs of providing poles, transformers, wires, meters, billing, etc.
- **A 30% tax incentive.** The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) offers a 30% tax credit for rooftop solar. A tax credit is a reduction of the income tax you owe. It is not a rebate or discount.
- **Financing makes solar affordable.** Do the math. If your average electric bill is \$200 per month, and your solar payment will be \$200 a month, you're not saving money. There are charges on your monthly electric bill that aren't impacted by the installation of solar. Also, most financing options require a lump sum payment equivalent to the 30% tax credit amount within the first year to maintain your monthly payment, or your payment will increase. Financing solar often results in a lien being placed on your home. This lien could present an issue if you decide to sell your home. Financing decisions come with opportunity cost as you could finance something else with a better return for your money. When you finance a solar array, you are making the decision to pay 20 years of your utility bill up front.
- **Solar panels add to the value of a home.** The appraised value of your home may not increase with the installation of solar.
- **Living off the grid.** Solar energy is intermittent and does not produce energy when the sun goes down (or is not shining). You'll still be connected to the grid to power your home when solar does not generate sufficient electricity. The co-op's diverse mix of resources supplies reliable electricity when needed 24/7/365.
- **No more power outages.** Unless you have sufficient battery storage, you'll still experience outages.
- **Electricity costs will continue to rise.** Over the past decade, the base rate of electricity has risen by an average of 1.5% annually. Solar companies often exaggerate the future cost of electricity to increase by 3 to 6% annually. This makes for impressive saving projections that simply aren't based on long-term historical rates.

If you're still interested in solar, please contact First Electric. As your trusted energy service provider, we can look at your account and provide you with factual data to help you make an informed decision before you sign a contract. If you see a misleading solar ad or are approached by an aggressive door-to-door solar salesperson, don't fall for their scams! File a consumer complaint with the Arkansas Attorney General's office at 800-482-8982 or by emailing consumer@ArkansasAG.gov.

Member Photo Contest Winner



*Fall over Maplewood Cemetery - Harrison, AR.
Submitted by Kim Waymack of Ward.*

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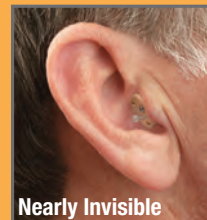
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Snapshots from our readers

Reflections



Choo Choo taking a ride on the "snow slide!"
Karly Vaughn, Ozark.



Old barn in the snow. Rita Martin, taken at Boxley Valley.



"Hey, mind if I snack on your nose?"
Sydney asks. Leah Hayes, Wynne.



Remington and his "fisher" snowman.
Notice all the lures and pole!
Emily Neighbors, Lodi.



"But, you didn't say it was going to be THIS cold," Ja'Kaylee says.
Kimberly Broughton, Fordyce.



Frosty mountain. Debbie Cannon Fritsche, taken at Mount Magazine Lodge, Paris.



Jackson says, "The climb is worth the ride!" Cynthia Smotherman, Heber Springs.



Declan and Sailor, packed in and ready to fly! Walz Family, Benton.



Karoline says that an umbrella works for snow, too. Audrey Lee, Russellville.



Backyard friend. Steve Walker, Bentonville.



Twilight the cat on a winter day. Holly Bryant, Carroll County.

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:
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Aloe, there! How to succeed with succulents

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JANET B. CARSON

Probably all of us had a grandmother with African violets on the windowsill or a philodendron plant vining around the kitchen. Houseplants have made a comeback, but these days, succulents top the list. Visit any plant store and you will see a huge array of succulents, from small hens and chick rosettes to larger paddle plant kalanchoe and much more.

Succulents have thick, fleshy leaves that retain water. They can survive well in dry conditions, in fact, they can almost take care of themselves. Watering once a month should suffice for most of them during the winter months, but there are many factors that affect water needs — the type of plant, the home’s temperature (the warmer it is, the more water a plant typically needs), plus the size of the container. Test soil to see if it is dry. When watering, soak the soil, and let the water exit at the base, discarding any excess water.

When choosing a container, it must have a drainage hole. Piling up pebbles in the bottom is not aiding in drainage. Succulent containers can be shallow because plants typically don’t have a deep root system. They need a very well-drained soil. Pre-mixed cactus/succulent potting soils are available, or you can mix coarse sand or perlite into regular potting soil to aid in drainage. You will often find that the top of the container has been topped with small stones or sand. These are used to help dry the surface of the container and keep the foliage dry to prevent decay.

Grow one succulent in a container or grow a mix of succulents. Some interesting plants to try:

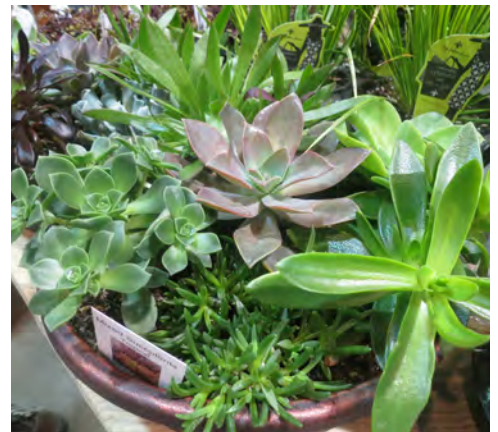
NAME:	APPEARANCE:	DESCRIPTION:
Aloes	Large, thick, fleshy leaves.	More than just the medicinal plant we know, there are 300 species.
Crassula	Larger, shrubby jade plants. There are numerous smaller varieties as well.	Native to South Africa, they are easy to grow.
Echeveria	Rosette of foliage.	Multiple colors to choose from.
Kalanchoe	Large, paddle-shaped foliage. Comes in varieties like flapjack, copper spoons and mother of thousands.	Depending on variety, foliage can be grayish green, red, pink or cinnamon-colored.
Haworthia	Rigid with bumpy foliage.	One of the easiest to start with. Tolerates a wide variety of conditions. Slow growing.

Just like any other houseplants, succulents need light. Some prefer bright light, while Haworthia and Crassula can tolerate the lowest light. Grow succulents in a sunny location indoors or use artificial light.

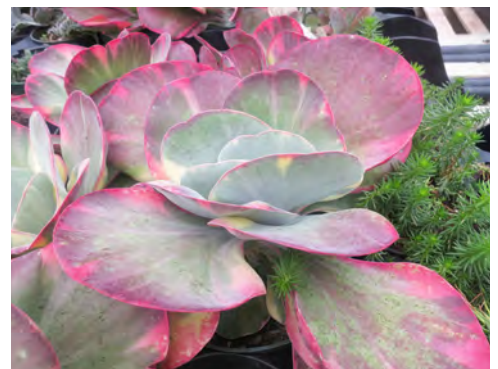
Succulents can make your living space inviting. They fill a void left behind after the holiday decorations are gone, and they are extremely easy to care for. ■



Echeveria rosettes come in a variety of colors.



A mix of succulents can be planted together in a shallow container.



Kalanchoe has large, paddle-shaped foliage.



Janet B. Carson is a freelance writer specializing in gardening.

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Winter, winter, chicken dinner!

The party menu is all planned, just add friends!

RECIPES AND PHOTOS BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Pear Cranberry Salad with Maple Dijon Dressing

Makes 4 servings.

Dressing:

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Dijon or stone-ground mustard
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons orange juice

Salad:

- 3 cups assorted greens, chopped
- 2 tablespoons red onion, minced
- 1/2 cup walnuts, halved
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 2 ripe pears, sliced
- 2 ounces honey goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds (optional)
- 3/4 cup cucumber, sliced



In a medium bowl, whisk together all dressing ingredients until thoroughly combined. Assemble salad, and serve with dressing.

Cranberry Sauce Chicken

Makes 4 servings

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1/4 cup flour | 1 (15-ounce) can whole cranberry sauce |
| 1 teaspoon salt | 1/2 cup orange juice |
| 1 teaspoon pepper | 1 cup chicken stock |
| 1 teaspoon onion powder | 2 teaspoons garlic, minced |
| 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts | Cooked rice for serving |
| 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive or canola oil | |

In a shallow bowl, combine flour, salt, pepper and onion powder.

Dredge chicken breasts in flour mixture. In a skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. When hot, add chicken, and sear on each side for 2-3 minutes. Stir in cranberry sauce, orange juice, chicken stock and garlic. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until chicken is done. Serve with rice.



Blender Chocolate Chess Pie

Makes 8 servings.

- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup evaporated milk
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 prepared pie crust

Heat oven to 350.

In a medium bowl, whisk together cocoa powder, sugar and cornstarch.

To a blender, add eggs, evaporated milk, melted butter and vanilla extract, and pour in sugar mixture. Blend for 30 seconds. Scrape down sides, and blend again.

Pour into prepared pie crust. Bake for 45 minutes or until set. Cool for 2 hours.

Notes: This pie is best served at room temperature. Refrigerate leftovers.



Juliana Goodwin is a food columnist, cookbook author and avid traveler.

If you have a question, email julianalovesfood23@gmail.com.



This month's web exclusive recipe:
Mushroom and Caramelized Onion Flatbread Appetizer

More recipes on our website:
arkansaslivingmagazine.com

From our readers

Warm up with soup-remely comforting recipes

Best Ever Potato Soup

Makes 8-10 servings.

- 2 pounds potatoes, chopped and cooked
- 1/2 pound cooked ham, diced
- 6 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 4-6 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 1 small carrot, shredded
- 2 sticks butter
- 1 cup flour
- 1 generous tablespoon chicken soup base (not bouillon)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons liquid smoke
- 1 1/2 teaspoons hot sauce (I use Tabasco)
- Salt, pepper to taste



To a slow cooker, add potatoes, ham and milk, and keep warm. In a skillet, sauté onion, celery and carrot in butter; cook until tender. Add flour, stirring until pasty. Remove from heat, and gradually add some of the warmed milk mixture to it until it is thinner. Slowly add flour mixture into milk mixture in slow cooker, stirring vigorously until well-blended. Cook on low heat only until hot and thickened; do not boil. Turn off heat, and add soup base, liquid smoke, hot sauce, salt and pepper.

Note: This recipe was used at church socials.

Erna Spath, Mountain Home

Slow Cooker Chicken Enchilada Soup

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 1 small green or red bell pepper, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Coarse salt, black pepper to taste
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies (like Rotel)
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1 1/4 pounds chicken breasts
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 avocado, sliced (optional garnish)

To a large pot over medium heat, add olive oil, and sauté onion, red or green pepper, garlic, salt and black pepper. Cook for 10 minutes. To a slow cooker, add chicken broth, diced tomatoes with green chilies, black beans, chili powder, cumin, oregano and chicken breasts. Add onion mixture. Cook for 3-4 hours on high or 5-6 hours on low. Remove chicken breasts to cutting board and shred. Add shredded chicken back into pot along with cheese and sour cream. Cook for 1 more hour on low heat. Serve topped with avocado.

Jana Barnes, Mountain Home

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If it's one thing experience has taught me. There is no one solution for helping low vision patients. Each case involves listening carefully to the specific needs of each patient, carefully examining their usable vision and then using the best low vision solutions to address their individual needs. Prescription telescope, bioptic and reading glasses are only available by prescription.

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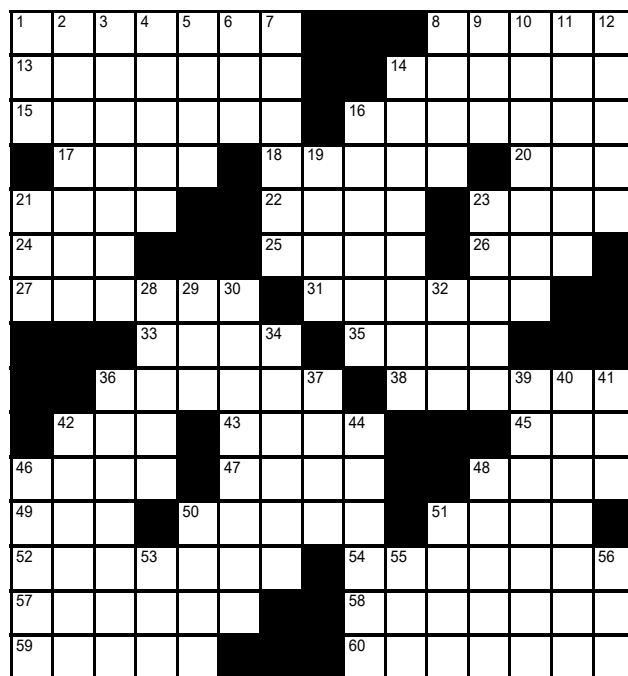


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ACROSS

- 1 What King Cole was, after "merry"
- 8 Classic record label
- 13 Rye bread seed ... or Senator Hattie (first woman elected to the U.S. Senate)
- 14 Shoelace hole
- 15 One purposely causing a delay
- 16 Howard Earl ____ (1975 electee to the Baseball Hall of Fame)
- 17 Immature newts
- 18 Ember near-homophone ... or Justice Annabelle (first woman elected to the Arkansas Supreme Court)
- 20 Culture-supporting org.
- 21 Aesthetically pretentious
- 22 Veggie on an ear
- 23 I, R and S (abbr.)
- 24 Clod buster
- 25 Leopard mark
- 26 Myrna of old movies
- 27 Justice Roaf (first Black woman appointed to the Arkansas Supreme Court)
- 31 Ho Chi Minh City, formerly
- 33 Ark. neighbor
- 35 1944 turning point
- 36 Actually, in Latin
- 38 Those due respect ... or Surgeon General Joycelyn (first Black woman appointed to the position)
- 42 Half a swim suit
- 43 "____ Her Standing There"
- 45 Scottish boy
- 46 Afternoon quaffs
- 47 Good name for a teaser
- 48 Boring routines
- 49 "A League of Their ____"
- 50 Ex ____ (legal phrase)



51 Amount on a tag

52 Apparel

54 Sends again

57 Delphi prophet

58 Slowly changes

59 It may be common

60 Wood smoothers ... or Governor Sarah (first woman elected to the position)

DOWN

1 Training program for lieuts.

2 At some future time

3 Wrote up, as a contract

4 Coarse, as a joke

5 Birds that hoot

6 Fed. of sheikdoms

7 Words to a song

8 Batik producer

9 Always, in a sonnet

10 Van Buren County seat ... or Secretary of State / Senator / First Lady Hillary

11 Crunchy vegetable

12 Book of maps

14 Night, to poets

16 Across the sea

19 Swabs

21 Cry after an epiphany

23 Beau Bridges's dad

28 Barrett and Jaffe

29 Barely achieve, with "out"

30 U.S. District Judge Roy (first woman appointed to the Arkansas Supreme Court)

32 ____ pal

34 Arrange by class

36 Teheran citizen

37 Sunrise direction

39 Hard to catch

40 Dangerous snake

41 1960s protest grp.

42 "____ of Dog?"

44 "____ Waldo?"

46 Bulls in the ring

48 Novelist Dahl

50 Brazilian soccer hero

51 "Hurry up!"

53 Banquet hosts, briefly

55 Gabor or Mendes

56 40-Down's warning

Crossword answers on page 39

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crossword answers
for puzzle on page 38

S	R	E	D	N	V	S				E	S	N	E	S										
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						C	A			D	E	C			L	U	O	S	D		L	O		

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Tickled pink: Colorful Neal's Café delights with fried chicken, pie

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROB ROEDEL

Northwest Arkansas has changed tremendously since Toy and Bertha Neal opened Neal's Café nearly 80 years ago in Springdale. However, four generations and one new building later, the tradition of serving "best foods better" has endured.

Owner Micah Neal proudly continues the family heritage of running the iconic pink gathering place. He told me exceptional stories about his great-grandparents, grandparents and parents and their dedication to the café's loyal, longtime customers.

Toy and Bertha started the restaurant in 1944. The couple bought 40 acres that, at the time, were outside the city limits. The family sold off parcels throughout the years and kept about 2 acres. The original Neal's was where the restaurant's sign stands

today. The owners had to tear the building down and rebuild further off the road in



A fourth-generation owner, Micah Neal (left) now runs Neal's Café with his father, Don.



Neal's Café's cast-iron skillet fried chicken, served with corn, brown beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, was recently honored by Southern Living magazine.

1963 when Thompson Street was widened.

Micah showed me cool features within the restaurant, including tables made from cedar trees cut from the original family farmland. If you get lucky, you may be seated at one of the tables that features embedded local arrowheads, a checkerboard design or a one-of-a-kind table featuring "wheat" pennies, alternating between heads and tails.

I have heard about the fried chicken at Neal's Café for years, so I was thrilled when Micah delivered a three-piece order of cast-iron skillet fried chicken to my table. My favorite cuts of chicken are the keel and the pulley bone. And, at Neal's, they use the 10-piece cut method, which provides these pieces of chicken. I read that Neal's had been honored as one of the top places in America to eat fried chicken by Southern Living magazine. And, after eating three pieces of crispy, golden-fried goodness,



Springdale's Neal's Café is as iconic as its vibrant pink exterior.

I agree. The poultry was moist and very flavorful. I enjoyed the corn, brown beans and mashed potatoes and gravy that accompanied the yard bird. If you prefer, you can order the tasty hand-breaded jumbo chicken strips.

Neal's take on chicken-fried steak is also a winner. The steak is locally sourced, hand-breaded and fork-tender. It reminded me of chicken-fried steaks that I enjoyed during my childhood in rural Northeast Arkansas.

The bacon cheeseburger is made from fresh beef that is hand-pressed daily. Other sandwiches are sure to please your palate.

the eating essentials

NEAL'S CAFÉ

806 N. Thompson St., Springdale
479-751-9996

Hours of Operation

Tuesday-Thursday: 7 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Friday: 6 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Saturday: 7 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Sunday: 7 a.m.-2 p.m.





The distinctive blueberry walnut pie is made from a family recipe.

A unique side dish served is apple salad. It is a favorite of customers, including Rep. Steve Womack, who represents Arkansas' 3rd Congressional District. I had never tried apple salad, but after one bite, I was a fan.

Breakfast is served from opening until 10:45 a.m. daily. There is a fireplace that I hear is a popular breakfast gathering area for locals.

Breakfast meats include bacon, ham, sausage, chicken, chicken-fried steak, country ham, pork chops and even fried fish.

Daily specials include chicken and dumplings, meatloaf, chicken pot pie, turkey and dressing, smothered steak and baked chicken. An array of sides includes fried/grilled squash, cinnamon applesauce and fried jalapeños.

The pies at Neal's are legendary; choices include apple, coconut, blueberry, blueberry walnut, cherry, pecan and pumpkin. The blueberry walnut, made from a family recipe, is a Neal's Café original.

In 2022, Neal's Café was inducted into the Arkansas Food Hall of Fame. After one visit, I can say the honor is well-deserved. ■

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

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Calendar

Jan. 6

Arkansas Duck Derby Banquet



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONWAY REGIONAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

University of Central Arkansas HPER Center
201 Donaghey Ave., Conway
501-506-2747
Admission is \$50. 5:30 p.m.

Live and silent auctions, a duck truck raffle, great food and tournament winners announced. Proceeds benefit the Conway Regional Men's Health Initiative and the Growing Together campaign.
ArkansasDuckDerby.com

Jan. 6-8

Arkansas Shorts



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER GERBER

Malco Theater
817 Central Ave., Hot Springs
501-506-2747

Tickets \$10 each or \$65 for all-access. See website for schedule.

The 16th annual film festival showcases short films in three categories: Arkansas, North America and International. Films made in the Inception to Projection workshop will also be featured. Stay for the after parties and networking. lowkeyarts.org

Jan. 14

MLK Recommitment Celebration



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SPECIAL COLLECTION DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

Fayetteville Public Library
401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville
501-985-1533
Admission is \$50. 5-9 p.m.

The Northwest Arkansas Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Council presents the 27th annual Recommitment Celebration with featured speaker Dr. Cornel West. The 2023 Salute to Greatness award recipients will also be recognized. nwamlk.org

Jan. 14

Krewe of Krazo Taste of N'Awlins



PHOTO COURTESY OF EUREKA SPRINGS MARDI GRAS

Basin Park Hotel
12 Spring St., Eureka Springs
501-985-1533

Tickets are \$15. Starts at 1 p.m.

Come dressed in purple, green and gold to taste genuine New Orleans cuisine while listening to a jazz band. Pinning of the Royal Court takes place, followed by a Second Line parade. One of many events leading up to Eureka Springs Mardi Gras.
eurekaspringsmardigras.org

Jan. 25-28

Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Embassy Suites
11301 Financial Centre Parkway, Little Rock

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture has partnered with Arkansas agriculture associations to host this first-ever event, which focuses on Arkansas farmers with workshops, speakers, a trade show, farm tours, local wine tasting and delicious local foods. arkansasgrown.org

Jan. 27-29

Arkansas Big Buck Classic



PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG BUCK CLASSIC

Arkansas State Fairgrounds
2600 Howard St., Little Rock
501-985-1533

General admission is \$15 for adults, kids ages 5-12 are \$5. Friday 1-8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-8 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

The three-day festival centers on the Big Buck Contest, with hundreds of antlers and mounts on display. Snake handlers, a kids zone, monster trucks, chain saw carving and a chili cook-off round out the fun.
bigbuckclassic.com

For an extensive listing of events around Arkansas, visit arkansas.com/events

Listings reflect information verified by Arkansas Living at press time. Be sure to check an event's status prior to making your plans.

To submit a listing for consideration, go to: arkansaslivingmagazine.com

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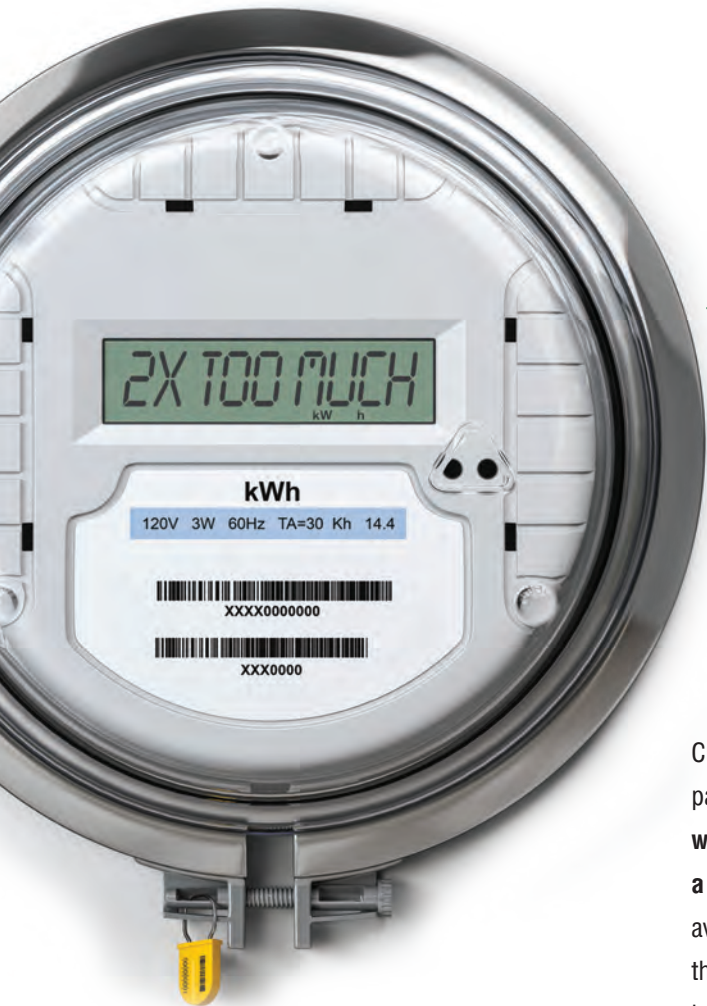
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*Those who installed a net-metering facility before the end of 2022 will remain under the current policy until up to 2040 pursuant to state law.