

Arkansas Living

MAY 2024



Rib-eyes on the Prize

**Steak Cook-off
sizzles in Magnolia**

Page 8

Plus:

**MacArthur Museum
Canoe Club Cleanup
Arkansas State Spelling Bee**

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CHANCE ALLMON

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Make it medium! The World Championship Steak Cook-off is part of the annual Magnolia Blossom Festival held May 17-18.

Photo by Chance Allmon



RITA MCCLELAND

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Spelling, Splashing, Serving

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

Electric cooperative employees wear many hats, and not just hardhats.

Not only do these professionals perform a variety of duties at work, they often dedicate their time to performing civic duties. After all, it's just the cooperative way.

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles, among them are "Concern for Community" and "Cooperation Among Cooperatives." Not only do employees "work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership," they come together and work together.

(see page 14) and the Arkansas State Spelling Bee (see page 24).

Our co-op families' servant hearts, assistance and smiles make every situation more efficient and more fun.

And the same can be said for our statewide team of cooperative communicators who work with Arkansas Living (see your local co-op's content starting on page 22). Contributing to the magazine is just a fraction of the challenging jobs that our cooperative colleagues do. We'd like to acknowledge them here.

Our hats off to these many-hat wearers:

Barbara Jenkins, Arkansas Valley Electric

Rodney Chapman, Ashley-Chicot Electric

Mike Berry and Christy Tucker, C & L Electric

Claudia Harp and Cory Smith, Carroll Electric

Molly Jett, Clay County Electric

Jon David Carmack and Marti Hook, Craighead Electric

Brynn Bowen, Farmers Electric

Tonya Sexton, First Electric

Brad Harrison and Angie Hamm, Mississippi County Electric

Tori Moss, North Arkansas Electric

Kari Strickland and Sabrina Estridge, Ouachita Electric

Erin Rogers and Bridgette Caples, Ozarks Electric

Tonia Robbins, Petit Jean Electric

Chris Parker, Rich Mountain Electric

Sandy Manning, South Central Arkansas Electric

Rhonda Morrow, Southwest Arkansas Electric

Anna Howton, Woodruff Electric

Have a marvelous May!

Jennifer Christman Cia
jennifer.cia@aeci.com



Cooperative employee volunteers pose with Arkansas State Spelling Bee champion Ryan Fan (center) of Fayetteville.

There was much coming together and working together in recent months. Employees from some of our 17 distribution cooperatives — as well as Today's Power, Inc. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., which also publishes Arkansas Living) — recently traveled from various parts of the state to Little Rock to assist with two youth programs sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. They are the Arkansas SeaPerch Challenge

May We Remember

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



May is a month when I sometimes write about beekeeping. I want to confirm that I continue to keep bees, although I procrastinated and failed to order bees for a hive that didn't survive the winter. However, I do have two strong hives and may

be doing my first split this spring.

In May, I have also written about Mother's Day. However, there is another very important day this month that deserves special attention, and that is Memorial Day.

I was reading the news recently and noted that The New York Times credited Alex Garland's movie, "Civil War," as No. 1 at the box office. The article stated that the "R-rated film benefited from a savvy release date — a time when Americans, sharply divided, are paying attention to the coming presidential election but are not completely worn out by it." This led me to pontificate on how the term "Civil War" is bandied about these days and how truly awful the concept of Civil War is.

The Civil War ended in 1865 and claimed 620,000 American lives — more lives than any conflict in U.S. history; World War II was next with 405,399; followed by World War I with 116,516; the Vietnam War with 58,209; the Korean War with 36,516; the American Revolution with 25,000; and the War on Terror (2001-2024) with 7,078 American lives.

In fact, it was the very horror of the Civil War and the staggering

loss of life that gave rise to what we know today as Memorial Day.

The exact origins of Memorial Day are not perfectly clear, but it was originally known as "Decoration Day" and believed to have informally begun when Mary Ann Williams of Columbus, Georgia, wrote a letter to her local newspaper, espousing that one day each year should be set aside to wreath the graves of our martyred dead from the Civil War. On May 5, 1868, three years after the war had ended, John Logan, head of the Union veterans' organization known as the Grand Army of the Republic, proclaimed May 30 as "Decoration Day," a day of remembrance. It is rumored that he picked this date because it did not signify the dates of any great battles, and it was also a time when flowers would be in bloom in both the North and the South.

The first official national Decoration Day ceremony was held at Arlington National Cemetery, where the Grand Army of the Republic placed flowers on the graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant presided over the ceremony. Initially a day of remembrance for Civil War dead only, it was during

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

By John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



MAY WE REMEMBER continued on page 6

A harmonious partnership: Country Music Awards and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas



JD Lowery presents an award at the 2023 Arkansas Country Music Awards.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are proud to continue sponsorship of the Arkansas Country Music Awards.

The seventh annual event will take place June 3 from 6-9:30 p.m. at Reynolds Performance Hall on the University of Central Arkansas campus in Conway. In addition to the presentation of awards — in categories including everything from Entertainer of the Year to Fiddle Player of the Year — the event will feature performances by nominees and hitmakers.

JD Lowery, director of community and economic development for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, says, “We are proud to support this event that showcases the exceptional musical talent throughout our state.”

Attire is listed as “Anywhere between cowboy, cowgirl, cocktail to business-casual.”

More information is available and tickets (\$35-\$100) can be purchased by visiting arkansasmusic.org.

MAY WE REMEMBER *continued from page 5*

World War I that Decoration Day was expanded to include all of America’s war dead. It was also during World War I that the red poppy became a symbol for Memorial Day.

Canadian Lt. John McCrae, battle surgeon and poet, noted that the only thing growing in a decimated battlefield in Flanders, Belgium, were red poppies. He was so touched by this sight in May 1915 that he wrote the famous poem “In Flanders Fields,” and the red poppy has been a symbol of remembrance ever since.

Following the world wars, the term Memorial Day became more popular than Decoration Day, but it wasn’t until 1968, when Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, that the term Memorial Day became official. The date was shifted to the last Monday of May to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. This is still a point of contention for many groups, who still believe that keeping it separate and on May 30 would make the day more significant and keep it from getting lost in a three-day weekend full of barbecues and fun. An example of this occurred in 1923, when the Indiana state Legislature passed a bill that the Indianapolis 500 could not be held on Memorial Day, but this was so contentious that Gov. Warren McCray vetoed the bill. The race went on and continues to run over Memorial Day weekend, as does the Coca-Cola 600.

Memorial Day has a unique flag tradition. At sunrise, the American flag should be rapidly raised to full staff and

then slowly lowered to half staff until noon, at which time the flag should be rapidly raised back to full staff. Another time-honored tradition is the president of the United States placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, as a way of honoring all those who have died fighting for our country. President Bill Clinton signed the National Moment of Remembrance Act in 2000 that asks Americans to pause for one minute of silence to pay tribute to all of America’s fallen heroes at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day.

**The Civil War ended in 1865
and claimed 620,000 American lives —
more lives than any conflict in U.S. history.**

May is also my birthday month, so it’s always a time of reflection on getting a year older and, every so often, a little wiser. My wife would say that this doesn’t happen every year, but that it does happen every so often. I would hope that we all take time to reflect on the true meaning of Memorial Day and that we do take a pause for at least one minute at 3 p.m. this May 27 to recognize and remember those who have given their lives as the ultimate sacrifice for this great nation. I would also hope that we take some time to reflect on the very events that sparked this holiday, and that we all find ways to be wiser, to learn from the past and not repeat history.

Arkansas lineworkers assist neighboring states

In April, the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas dispatched 77 lineworkers and utility vehicles, along with construction equipment, to assist Alabama Power and DEMCO of Central City, Louisiana, with power restoration efforts following severe weather.

Seventy of the lineworkers were employees of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI) of Little Rock, and seven were employees of Petit Jean Electric Cooperative of Clinton.

Thirty-seven of the AECI lineworkers who worked in Alabama had completed a power restoration assignment with Mississippi Power earlier the same week.

Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas lineworkers restore power after severe weather in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.



JOSEPH HALEY

Where Is It?

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

In the April issue, we hid a pair of solar glasses in honor of the eclipse.

Joked one correct reader, who found them: "I TOTALLY found the eclipse glasses on the face of Vernon 'Buddy' Hasten on page 5. It was a great article about the total solar eclipse happening on April 8, 2024."

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

- Chester Dixon, Sherwood (First Electric Cooperative)**
- Danny Clowers, Blytheville (Mississippi Electric Cooperative)**
- Christy Payton, Fayetteville (Ozarks Electric Cooperative)**
- Dion Stanford, Henderson (North Arkansas Electric Cooperative)**
- Greg Bourns, Mena (Rich Mountain Electric Cooperative)**

This month, we've hidden a sock in honor of a "toe-tally" silly occasion — National Lost Sock Memorial Day (May 9). Keep looking until you find it — don't be "de-feeted!"



Enter by May 15 via the "Where Is It?" link on the homepage of arkansaslivingmagazine.com, or go directly to arkansaslivingmagazine.com/where-is-it-contest/.

Or mail in entries to:

Where Is It
Arkansas Living
P.O. Box 510
Little Rock, AR 72203.

Include your name, address and electric co-op (nonmembers also are eligible), plus the correct page number.

** 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! March's winner was: **Jan Welshenbaugh, Rogers (Carroll Electric Cooperative).***

- The Transportation Security Administration reports nearly \$1 million in change was left behind in security bins in 2019.

- When leaning in for a kiss, 75% of people turn their heads to the right.

- With a database of 2,315 five-letter words, the New York Times' game, "Wordle," should last into 2027, as it's currently played with one unique word per day.

- Watching a horror movie can burn up to 200 calories.

- Hot dogs with cheese inside were invented in 1956 by the Finkbeiner Meatpacking Company in Little Rock.

- Babies are born with 300 bones, but adults have 206.

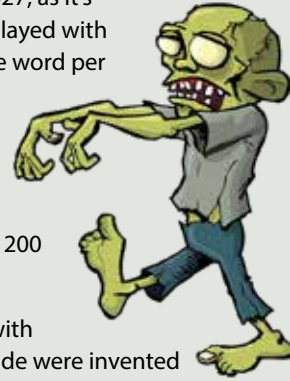
- Following the Civil War in 1868, Ann Jarvis founded a committee to foster friendship between mothers on both sides of the war, later becoming Mother's Day in 1908.

- Octothorpe is the actual name for a hashtag or pound sign.

- Rugs from IKEA were used as costumes for the Night's Watch cloaks in "Game of Thrones."

- The overall record for driving across the U.S. in the fastest time is 25 hours and 39 minutes, set by Arne Toman and Doug Tabbutt.

- "Whatever you do, always give 100%. Unless you're donating blood." — Bill Murray, actor.





Rib-eyes

World Championship Steak Cook-off sizzles at Magnolia Blossom Festival

STORY BY KAT ROBINSON
PHOTOS BY CHANCE ALLMON

There's a lot at "steak" in Magnolia this month, when thousands of hungry folks will watch dozens of teams compete to see who prepares the best steak. The World Championship Steak Cook-off is part of the annual Magnolia Blossom Festival, which takes place this year on May 17 and 18 on the city's downtown square.

The event began as the Sidewalk Art Show way back in 1950, growing over the years until becoming the Magnolia Blossom Festival in 1989. The following year, O.A. "Buddy" Franks — a Magnolia resident and businessman — had an idea for a new event for the festival, and what is now known as the World Championship Steak Cook-off was born.

Every year since, contenders from across the nation have come to test their mettle and steel — or cast-irons and grills — against each other for the chance to have their



The World Championship Steak Cook-off brings competitors from across the nation.



The Magnolia Blossom Festival started in 1950 as the Sidewalk Art Show. Today's festival includes food and craft vendors, a car show, a 5K race and a pet show among other events.

on the Prize

steaks declared the best in the world.

“This is the original steak cook-off that we know of,” event chairman Jason Ray shares. “It has been copied by many over the years, but never done as well or as friendly as what we do!”

Ray says in addition to all the activities the festival has to offer, it’s a great opportunity to get advice on grilling the perfect steak.

“All of these cookers are great people and love to talk. They love to show off their grills,” he says. “They won’t all give you their secrets but are quick to tell you why they have the best steak.”

Where’s the beef?

For competitors, there’s an expectation to “meat.” Not only is each team expected to turn in a steak for the overall competition, they’re also expected to serve attendees who purchase a steak cook-off ticket. Each team is given 40 to 50 rib-eye steaks, each weighing 1 pound. The steaks can be seasoned as the competitors wish, but they cannot have any sort of identifying marks on them. Most teams will select two or three steaks for the final grilling, then the chief cook will choose one to send to the judges. The steak must be cooked to a perfect medium — no cool red centers, and no overdone rib-eyes allowed.

Each steak is judged for doneness, tenderness, taste, appearance and overall impression.

Saturday at 6 p.m. is when the feasting begins. “There are four serving lines on the square, and one drive-thru line

about two blocks off the square,” Ray says. “This allows us to serve about 2,500 steaks in about 10-15 minutes.”

Attendees take their cook-off tickets to the serving lines. “They get a potato, salad, roll, drink, and fixings there,” Ray continues. “They then get to go to any cooker that still has steaks; some serving lines give a little dessert as well. Lines open at 6 p.m., but a few people ➤



Competitors can use seasonings of their choice on the 1 pound rib-eye steaks.



The World Championship Steak Cook-off is the original steak competition, according to Jason Ray, event chairman.

start lining up as early as 4.” Competitors have flags to indicate that there are still steaks to be had at their station, which keeps those in line from waiting in vain.

A rare event

There’s a lot more that goes on at the festival.

“On the Friday night of the festival, we have a free concert,” Magnolia-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Rachel Jenkins says. “This year the headliner is Chapel Hart. We still incorporate the original Sidewalk Art Show, now moved inside Magnolia Arts, a local nonprofit. We also have the Rods and Ribeyes car show, which brings in a variety of cars from surrounding regions. There are food and craft vendors, a 5K race, a fishing tournament, a pageant and a pet show. This year, Arkansas Circus Arts will be joining us on May 18.”

The festival is free to attend. Steak cook-off tickets can be purchased in advance for \$30 by visiting blossomfestival.org.

A limited number of tickets will be available for sale the morning of May 18. Parking is available for free in lots around central Magnolia. For more information, visit the aforementioned website, or call the Magnolia-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce at (870) 234-4352. 📍



Past winners of the Miss Magnolia Blossom Festival Pageant.



The World Championship Steak Cook-off trophy filled with charcoal.



Steak Cook-off contestants strive for a perfectly cooked medium steak.



Festivalgoers with a cook-off ticket receive a steak, potato, salad and other fixings.



The Rods and Ribeyes Car and Truck Show is part of the festivities.

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Paddles with Purpose

Arkansas Canoe Club cleans up state waterways

BY BOB ROBINSON

“Epic” is the best word to describe the cleanup adventures of Arkansas Canoe Club Black Ops Advanced Trash Retrieval (BOATR). It began as a group of friends in the Arkansas Canoe Club who met regularly to retrieve trash and large objects that littered the state’s waterways. They enjoyed the challenge of plotting creative methods to haul out everything from run-of-the-mill trash to abandoned ski boats, portable toilets, mattresses, TVs, refrigerators and, of course, LOTS of tires.

Since its founding in 2015, the group has made a significant impact, removing over 200 tons of garbage from Arkansas’ streams and tributaries. This includes over 6,000 tires — ranging from small temporary tires still mounted on a rim to tractor tires as tall as the crew members who hauled them out — precariously balanced atop their boats.

Co-founder Cowper Chadbourn and his troop of dedicated volunteers are legends among Arkansas paddlers. Tales of BOATR cleanup escapades are a recurring topic of conversation whenever boaters gather.

A favorite story often recounted is “The Giant Dumpster Adventure.” During the 2015 flood, a 7-cubic-foot metal trash receptacle at Tyler Bend Recreation Area was swept into the Buffalo National River. BOATR’s recovery process proved far from easy. At the end of a long day on their initial attempt, they were unable even to budge



Arkansas Canoe Club volunteers at the Saline Crossing Regional Park and Recreation Area for the annual Black Friday Cleanup.

the dumpster off the bottom of the river. Chadbourn was reminded of Chief Brody’s famous phrase from the movie “Jaws” — “We’re gonna need a bigger boat.”

And come back with a bigger boat they did. A large wooden frame was constructed to house a set of cataraft tubes used on whitewater rafts. Using pulleys anchored on the shore, they tilted the dumpster up enough to slide the frame underneath. Once the dumpster was positioned atop the frame, they aired up the tubes to lift it off the bottom and pull it to shore. After repairing numerous holes in the dumpster, they rowed the makeshift barge downstream to the nearest access. In total, the operation required four outings.

Coming clean

BOATR outings are not limited to trash that is only accessible by water. They also schedule cleanups in communities such as Benton, where this writer joined one of their annual Black Friday Cleanups. The event included a group of boats led by Debbie Doss to clean up a section of the Saline River. However, the “main target” of the cleanup was the Saline Crossing Regional Park & Recreation Area (SCRPA).

The crossing had been part of the historic



More than 6,000 tires of all sizes have been removed from waterways by the Arkansas Canoe Club since 2015.

Southwest Trail, a major route for early travelers enroute to Texas and other southwest settlements. Legendary figures such as Sam Houston, Stephen F. Austin and Davy Crockett crossed at the very spot where BOATR picked up trash. SCRPRRA has plans to preserve this historical area and establish a public river access for visitors.

“Saline Crossing has such a rich history; it’s truly an honor to serve and assist with others to preserve that history for generations to come,” said Michael Sacomani, SCRPRRA president and a fellow volunteer.

With pickup tools clicking and gloved hands grabbing, the team set to work filling a 30-yard dumpster. In all, a set of box springs, two mattresses, a rotted sofa, a toilet, a fire extinguisher, appliances, tires of all sizes and countless pieces of garbage were collected.

It was rewarding to play a role in converting what had become a popular dumpsite into a scenic location where families could spend quality time outdoors.

“These organized cleanups are great for Arkansas communities,” Chadbourn explained. “But tackling litter is not a one-day-a-year event. Visitors need to gather a little trash every time they go out.”



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS CANOE CLUB BOATR

Arkansas Canoe Club Black Ops Advanced Trash Retrieval (BOATR) co-founder Cowper Chadbourn and another volunteer remove a discarded boat.



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS CANOE CLUB BOATR



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS CANOE CLUB BOATR



BOB ROBINSON

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cowper Chadbourn creatively floats on a discarded culvert as part of the group’s trash retrieval.

A discarded toilet, carried by volunteer Tonya Sacomani, is one of the many finds at the Saline Crossing Regional Park & Recreation Area annual Black Friday Cleanup.

Volunteers remove a 7-cubic-foot metal trash receptacle from the Buffalo National River in an effort nicknamed “The Giant Dumpster Adventure.”

Making a splash

Although Chadbourn doesn’t want people to believe the battle has been won, it does appear their efforts are paying off. The Buffalo National River is an example of progress.

As of last month, they had only collected 17 tires for the entire year. Years ago, there were times they retrieved that many tires from the river in a single day.

Chadbourn’s efforts to educate the public on proper tire disposal also contribute to reducing the number of discarded tires. He directs people to the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality website (adeq.state.ar.us/tap/districts.aspx) to learn the nearest location where they can drop off four tires monthly, free of charge, for disposal.

Visit ACC BOATR’s Facebook page to stay abreast of their activities. While there, check out the Feb. 28 post of Arkansas Off-Road Recovery (AORR)’s video. They removed a Toyota pickup that was stranded in Archey Fork of the Little Red River. It was so remote and difficult to reach that it had been stranded in the creek for over a year.

Joshua Sperry, AORR owner, said, “There’s nothing worse when floating a beautiful creek than coming across an eyesore like this. Let’s keep our rivers clean!”

Aquatic Robotics

Arkansas 4-H, Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas host 2024 SeaPerch Challenge

BY REBEKAH HALL

A record number of students participated in the 2024 Arkansas SeaPerch Challenge, held March 1 at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The annual underwater robotics competition welcomed teams from 12 Arkansas counties and one Mississippi county to put their submersible robots to the test.

Arkansas 4-H and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas host the competition, which began in 2016. Since then, the program has grown to 66 teams with 241 participating students.

Brad McGinley, Grant County extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and director of the Arkansas SeaPerch Challenge, said, "It's a unique, hands-on project that I think many youth find fun and challenging."

Rob Roedel, senior director of corporate communications for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, said, "We have worked to spread the great learning opportunities that SeaPerch provides to the youth of Arkansas. Our team is actively working with schools and 4-H groups to provide assistance in purchasing kits and sponsoring the program."

Participants used more than three dozen parts to design and build their remotely operated vehicles, or ROVs, including pieces of pool noodles, electrical tape, 12-volt motors, PVC pipe and 3D printed parts. Teams then steered their ROVs through an underwater obstacle course and mission course, which was designed to mimic deep-sea exploration.

The overall winning senior, junior, open and wild card teams will compete at the International SeaPerch Challenge May 31-June 1 at the University of Maryland.

Remembering Hope

McGinley said it was important for the event to honor Hope Bragg, former extension instructor in 4-H youth development for the Division of Agriculture, who directed



Winning Senior Team:

Deep Water Vanguard from Grant County: Gavin McGinley, Callen Shaw and Gracie McGinley



Winning Junior Team:

The Wet Willies from Grant County: Miley McGinley, Ryleigh Kimbrell, Luke Douthit and Jaxson Andrews



Winning Open Team:

Aquanauts from Grant County: Eli Watson, Garrett Key and Priyam Laxmi



Winning Wild Card Team:


Submarine Crew from Madison County: Elijah Franklin and Jayden Griffin

the SeaPerch program last year. On the underwater mission course, "Hope" was stamped on a door in signature 4-H green.

Bragg, her husband Don, and their children Kenny, 22, and Elizabeth, 19, were killed in a house explosion in Michigan on Dec. 30, 2023. The same blast injured their son, Stephen, 16, and Hope's father, Richard Pruden, 72.

McGinley said, "Anyone who knew Hope knew her passion for science, teaching youth and lifelong learning. We wanted to make sure she was honored and remembered for the impact she had on the 4-H program and the lives of youth across the state."

The Arkansas 4-H Foundation established the Bragg Family Memorial Scholarship Fund. To learn more about the scholarship, visit arkansas4hfoundation.org/ways-to-give/bragg-family-scholarship.aspx.

Rebekah Hall is communications program specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. 



Families and quality early educators partner for **Kindergarten Readiness**

Written by Kelli Hilburn, Better Beginnings Program Administrator

What is kindergarten readiness?

A child that is ready for kindergarten has the social, emotional, and academic knowledge, skills and behaviors for school success, which results in lifelong learning.

Partner for success

Preparing for school begins at birth. Daily interactions with family and other caregivers promote learning. Talking, reading, and playing may seem simple but are critical activities that help children's minds and behaviors develop.

Better Beginnings early childhood educators prepare children for kindergarten with positive experiences, research-based curriculum, and learning through play.

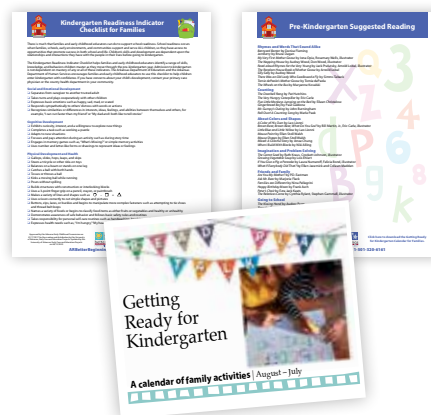
Families can partner with their early childhood educators at child care to focus on getting their child ready for kindergarten.

Better Beginnings has tools to help families focus on kindergarten readiness. The *Kindergarten*

Readiness section of our *Family Resource Library* helps families learn the skills and knowledge expected of children starting school. Families can follow week-by-week activities for learning at home in the *Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar*. All resources are free and available online for download.



Scan the code or click **Kindergarten Readiness** in our website footer for the tools to get started.



The year before kindergarten is the ideal time to focus on children's readiness for school.

Help your child start school with confidence

We encourage families to partner with their child care early educators to help their child start kindergarten with confidence.

Looking for your early education partner?

Click the orange banner at ARBetterBeginnings.com to find star-rated quality early educators who help children get ready for kindergarten through positive learning experiences.

Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Education.



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Part Five: Powering the Future

This is the fifth installment in a multipart series to educate electric cooperative members about power generation and the increased challenges facing electric utilities, including the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. To read more, visit aecc.com/balance-of-power/.

So far in our series, we've outlined several significant problems the power industry faces in protecting the reliability of the electric grid.

The demand for electric energy is greater than ever — at a time when reliable generation resources are being forced to retire. Many of these existing, reliable, dependable generation resources are being forced to retire ahead of their useful life, as a result of existing and proposed federal regulations. Some regulations require unproven technology that cannot be installed within the timelines proposed. This creates problems for utilities.

Still, for utilities like the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas — with a mission of providing members with energy that is Reliable, Affordable and Responsible — power industry professionals must continue to press forward and work toward solutions to ensure that our lights stay on and our nation can continue to thrive.

"We've always considered emerging technologies to meet our demand needs," says Jonathan Oliver, chief of operations for Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp. (AECC), the wholesale power supplier for the state's 17 local distribution cooperatives.

This installment will cover some of the energy innovations on the horizon, as well as their pros and cons.

"Renewable" Resources

What: Non-fossil, intermittent resources including,



An artist's rendering of NuScale Power's VOYGR small modular reactor (SMR) nuclear power plant.

among others, solar and wind power.

Pros: Lower costs and emissions. AECC Vice President of Power Production Kollin Derynck says, "Initially, you've got what can be argued to be a fairly high production/construction/development cost associated with 'renewables.' But the big component that you eliminate is that variable cost of fuel."

Still, as Oliver points out, power costs from "renewables" have been as low as some fossil-based resources only because of government subsidies.

Derynck says, "The other component to 'renewables' is you don't have the same emissions. We're not burning a fuel, and so we're not emitting the carbons and the nitrogen oxides and the sulfur dioxides and so forth."

Cons: Decreased reliability. Derynck says, "So now, I don't have a fuel source to pull from, I really don't have control over when I generate from those resources. We obviously don't control when the wind blows or the sun shines. And so, it's difficult for us to match our members' demands with the generation from those types of resources."

Another drawback: Solar and wind generation require about 10 times more land per unit of power than coal or natural gas plants.

Batteries

What: Utility-scale (often called large-scale or grid-scale) batteries that can be connected to power-generation assets to store and deploy energy.

Pros: The technology could help with supply and demand by reserving energy and supplying it back to the grid when needed. Derynck says, "Storage would be a game changer."

Cons: Limited duration and cost. Derynck explains, while duration could improve over time, current battery technology only provides energy for up to 4 hours when conditions are ideal.

Oliver adds, "And that's when it's not zero degrees outside." Extreme temperatures significantly impact a battery's ability to perform.

Cost is another concern. "Batteries, like wind and solar, have no fuel cost, but they do

have high installation costs and a power cost,” Oliver says. “The cost of electricity out of a battery system is the cost of power you put into it plus the cost of the battery. Ideally, one would charge batteries when power prices are low and discharge them when power prices are high, but sometimes that isn’t possible — for example during extreme weather events like Winter Storms Uri or Gerri. Batteries or other storage technology will be part of the future. The exact role they will play, and their benefits, are yet to be determined.”

Nuclear

What: Oliver explains, “Nuclear was a big player decades and decades ago. Since the early ’80s, only two new nuclear units have been built. The new units at Plant Vogtle in Georgia cost more than double the original



The Woodruff County Solar project, AECC's first utility-scale solar project, is a 122-megawatt (MW) solar array near Augusta.

Cons: Price and perception. As for cost, Derynck says, “Nuclear certainly is very expensive. It always has been. And so that continues to be an issue. We also haven’t seen anyone yet develop small modular nuclear. So, while it’s the hot topic and there’s a lot of discussion on it — it has some promise, some hope — no one’s really hit the ground running with it just yet.” Nuclear has long had a reputation of being dangerous. But Derynck says, “If you look at the safety performance and record of nuclear, it’s fantastic. It’s really better than other power generation resources, typically far, far safer than coal and natural gas plants. ... There are a lot of safety mechanisms to make sure that happens. And the performance there is very good, despite maybe some of the public perception that’s out there.”

Natural Gas

What: Natural gas has become an increasingly important energy source across the United States and the world, accounting for as much as one-quarter of global electric generation.

Pros: Abundant, dispatchable and reliable, natural gas has lower emissions than other fossil fuels. New technologies make it even more promising. Derynck says, “We’re seeing what are called advanced class turbines that are larger in size and much more efficient than older technology. Efficiency is going up, emissions are coming



AECC's Thomas B. Fitzhugh Generating Station, a natural gas plant in Ozark, can produce 170 megawatts (MW).

estimate and saw extensive schedule delays. But the United States continues to tout nuclear as a necessary technology to reduce carbon emissions. The promising nuclear technology garnering attention today is small modular reactors.” Small modular reactors (SMRs), as their names suggest, are smaller than traditional nuclear power reactors with about one-third of the generating capacity.

Pros: “Nuclear is clean, it’s safe, there are no carbon emissions, it’s reliable,” Oliver says.

down, and we're able to produce more energy, so a lot of positive things there."

And it's a cleaner energy, Oliver says. "If you look at the atomic structure of natural gas, it has some hydrogen in it. ... Right there, you cut your CO2 emissions in half just by using natural gas, and now you're getting into some efficiencies with these new turbines that are really just incredible. They truly have the ability to significantly lower emissions, including carbon, today ... and it's proven, commercial technology."


Cons: Market volatility for price and viability and reliance on pipelines.

Looking ahead

Because existing — and emerging — technologies have pros and cons, the best strategy to ensure Reliable, Affordable and Responsible energy is maintaining a diverse portfolio of generation resources. The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas call this approach The Balance of Power.

"Due to a long-term Balance of Power strategy, our generation fleet has a mix of resources, from coal to natural gas to wind and solar and hydroelectric," Oliver says. Still, two coal plants co-owned by AECC — White Bluff Steam Electric Station in Redfield and Independence Steam Electric Station near Newark — will be required to cease operations in 2028 and 2030 respectively.

Oliver continues, "As we look to bridge that gap, we're primarily looking at natural gas because it has some characteristics that we need; it has capacity, it has that dispatchability. But we're also considering, additional 'renewables.' Batteries are not quite there yet. Although you can get them today, they're not as reliable as you think. They're costly. Same with nuclear.

"Some of these new technologies are maybe years to decades in the future, but there's promise out there." 



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Saluting those who Served

MacArthur Museum honors Arkansas' military history

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JACK SCHNEDLER

A World War II jeep looking ready to roll into action greets visitors to Little Rock's MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History.

Housed in the landmark building where the legendary Gen. Douglas MacArthur was born in 1880, the attraction's exhibits explore the many roles of Arkansans in America's military conflicts going back to the 19th century.

As Memorial Day approaches on May 27, the museum's goals include honoring the numerous Arkansans who've died while serving their country. Displays in 11 galleries on two floors extend from the Civil War through both world wars, Korea and Vietnam to this century's conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One of the most compelling exhibits, printed on cloth and hanging from floor to ceiling, lists the names of the nearly 600 Arkansans who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. They are printed in alphabetical order, beginning with John Wayne Acosta.

"I have seen visitors looking carefully at the list of the dead, trying to find the name of a family member or friend," says Stephan McAteer, the museum's executive director. "It has real personal meaning to them."

Stories of valor lie behind other exhibits, including those in the Medal of Honor Gallery. Among the 26 native Arkansans who received the nation's highest military salute, Fayetteville-born Marine Corps Cpl. John Henry Pruitt stands out as the state's only recipient of two such medals.

Pruitt was honored by both the Army and the Navy, as his exhibit explains, while serving with the American Expeditionary Force at Blanc Mount Ridge in France. He "singlehandedly attacked two German machine-gun positions and captured 40 prisoners nearby, but was killed soon afterward by shell fire while on sniper duty. He died on his 20th birthday," — Oct. 4, 1918, little more than a month before the war ended.

Nearby in MacArthur Park stands the Arkansas Korean War Veterans Memorial. Maintained by the museum, it records the names of 461 Arkansans who died in the Korean conflict from 1950 to 1953. One of them, Cpl. Gilbert G. Collier of Tichnor in Arkansas County, is pictured in the museum.

McAteer says that museum visitors usually fall into one of three categories: "One is those interested in the history of the Arsenal Building, especially during the Civil War. A second is



TOP: The birthplace of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the historic Little Rock Arsenal, houses the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History.

MIDDLE: A World War II jeep is on display at the MacArthur Museum.

BOTTOM: A museum photo shows World War II soldiers from Arkansas playing with children.

MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History

Where

Address: 503 E. Ninth St., Little Rock

When

Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Contact

(501) 376-4602
littlerock.gov/macarthur

those interested in Douglas MacArthur. Third are those interested in Arkansas military history in general. Those interests do often overlap.”



Gen. Douglas MacArthur was born in Little Rock in 1880.

After MacArthur's birth in what is now the museum building on Jan. 26, 1880, he was baptized in Little Rock's Christ Episcopal Church. Three months later, he left the city when his Army father was transferred to another post. As an adult, he called himself a Virginian.

The museum's theater shows a 22-minute video on MacArthur's life and career. An exhibit chronicles his only return to Little Rock, in March 1952, a year after he had been relieved of command in the Far East by President Harry S. Truman.

One museum source of pride is its collection of more than 4,600 World War II photographs originally taken for a news service. They can be viewed selectively in binders at the museum or in their entirety on the website littlerock.gov/macarthur.

ARKANSAS MILITARY MUSEUMS

Arkansas has a number of other notable military museums, including these:

Arkansas Air Museum

Drake Field, U.S. 71, Fayetteville, arkansasairandmilitary.com

Arkansas National Guard Museum

Camp Robinson, Sixth Street and Missouri Avenue, North Little Rock, arngmuseum.com

Jacksonville Museum of Military History

100 Veterans Circle, Jacksonville, jaxmilitarymuseum.org

Museum of Veterans and Military History

4290 S. School Ave., Vilonia, veteransmuseumvilonia.com

Wings of Honor Museum

70 Beacon Road, Walnut Ridge, wingsofhonor.org

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As a member-owner, don't be left in the dark

This is the first in a series of articles about the importance of a Balance of Power approach.

First Electric recently conducted a member survey asking our member-owners questions about their service with the cooperative.

The most impactful information came from the question, "How concerned are you about governmental regulations impacting the price and reliability of your electricity?" Overwhelmingly, 93% of our members who responded said that they are somewhat concerned to very concerned about the impact.

First Electric's wholesale power provider Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) is a minority owner in White Bluff Steam Electric Station, and Independence Steam Electric Station which will both cease operations in 2028 and 2030 respectively. The closure of these two plants, without a sustainable source of baseload generation (coal, gas or nuclear) present a danger to our reliability and affordability.

AECC is working to replace the generation capacity from the two plants and ensure the availability of baseload generation for First Electric's member-owners and the state's other 16 electric cooperatives. However, that can't be replaced with renewable, or intermittent resources alone.

Non-readily dispatchable generation resources, such as renewable generation — like solar and wind power — is sometimes referred to as intermittent. That term is used because the nature of the power generated is not continuous. This means the amount of electricity they produce can vary depending on factors such as weather conditions.

Baseload generation is crucial to provide a reliable and constant supply of electricity to serve our member-owners with affordable and reliable power.

First Electric supports an all-of-the-above "Balance of Power" approach so our member-owners won't be left in the dark!



Taylor Mascaro, First Electric lineman, serving First Electric's member-owners.



Independence Steam Electric Station will cease operation in 2030.

Vegetation management vital to providing reliable power

First Electric focuses on right-of-way maintenance near overhead lines to provide safe and reliable service for our members. Right-of-way refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that is maintained and cleared.

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 outages or create dangerous situations for anyone coming in contact with them. Trees must grow at a distance far enough from conductors, where they will not cause harm to individuals or disruption to electrical service.

In 2023, approximately 12% of First Electric's power interruptions occurred from trees or other vegetation near lines. "Ideally, the dripline of a mature tree's canopy should not be within 15 feet on either side of overhead lines or within 10 feet of our underground transformers," Tim Felty, right-of-way maintenance supervisor, said.

Any tree adjacent to First Electric's lines are subject to removal during regularly scheduled maintenance regardless of size or height. "Before work begins, we try to notify our members with door hangers. Our website is a great way to see where our crews and contractors are working. Cleanup crews follow the right-of-way work three to five days after clearing," said Felty.

Call 800-489-7405 to report trees near lines, or read more at firstelectric.coop/vegetation-management.

2024 CONTRACTORS PERFORMING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT:

Asplundh, Kiowa, PTS, Riggs and West Tree Service



First Electric's right-of-way crews work year-round on vegetation management. The co-op also uses outside contractors to help with maintenance. Cleanup crews usually follow three to five days after maintenance.



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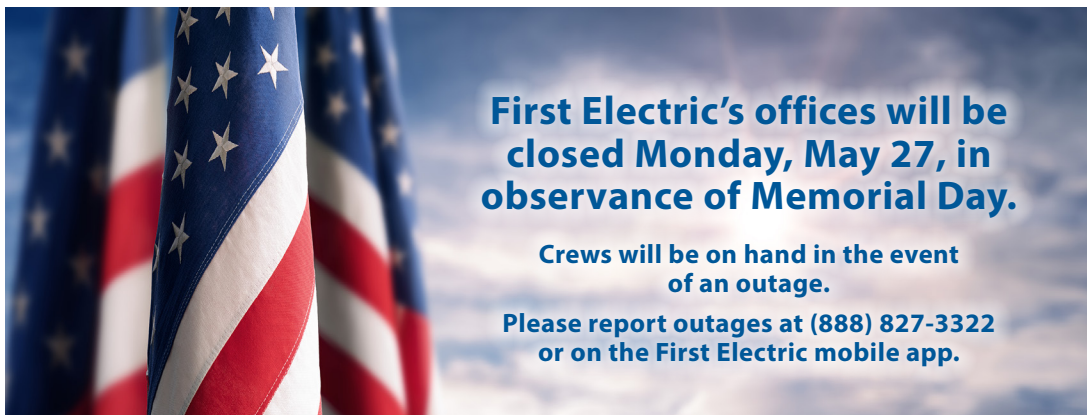
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Buzz Words

Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas S-P-O-N-S-O-R Spelling Bee


“Predominant” is defined by Merriam-Webster as “having superior strength, influence or authority” and “prevailing.”

It’s only fitting that “predominant” was the word that allowed Ryan Fan, 11, of Fayetteville in Washington County to win the title of 2024 Arkansas State Spelling Bee Champion. Since 2020, the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas have sponsored the event.

Fan, a McNair Middle School student who placed fourth in last year’s competition, will proceed to The Scripps National Spelling Bee, the nation’s largest and longest-running educational program.

Over 85,000 students from 426 schools in 56 counties across Arkansas participated in local and county contests leading up to the 2024 State Spelling Bee, held March 9 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock.

The purpose of the Scripps National Spelling Bee is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabulary, learn concepts and develop correct English usage that will help them throughout their lives.

Winning second place was Zeeshan Anower of Sebastian County, who was the 2023 Arkansas State Spelling Bee Champion. Winning third place was Daksh Singh of White County. 



KYLE DOLLARHITE



KYLE DOLLARHITE



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

ABOVE Students representing 56 Arkansas counties participated in the March event held at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock.

FAR LEFT Charles Shiran Dong of Faulkner County came in fourth place at the Arkansas State Spelling Bee.

NEAR LEFT Sydney Grace Clements represented Pope County.



KYLE DOLLARHITE



KYLE DOLLARHITE

Winners of the 2024 Arkansas State Spelling Bee, sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, from left: Zeeshan Anower (second place), Ryan Fan (first place) and Daksh Singh (third place).

Sara Hwa Soon Chen of Pulaski County came in fifth place at the Arkansas State Spelling Bee.


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Grow your summer energy savings

Fresh, homegrown food — whether it’s shopping at the local farmers’ market or sharing the abundance of garden tomatoes with a neighbor — is one of the best parts of summer. It’s amazing how just a few seeds, some fertilizer and water can turn into a bounty.

Just as simple steps can yield an abundance of food, simple steps can also result in energy savings. You don’t need to be a farmer or botanist to know that plants need water — just like you don’t have to be a lineworker or engineer to know that adjusting the thermostat or turning off lights can reduce your monthly electric bill.

Summer months bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. But why? Cooling your home accounts for a large portion of your monthly energy use, and the hotter it gets, the harder (and longer) your air conditioner works to keep you cool.

One of the great things about being part of First Electric Cooperative is that we’re locally owned by you, our members. So instead of making profits, we can focus on helping our community. That’s why we want to help you keep your money in your wallet.

Most people don’t know everything about electricity, and that’s why we’re here to help you. There are no investors making profits here — just knowledgeable people with local jobs, working for our neighbors to ensure there is electricity available when needed.

Consider these simple no-cost energy savings tips this summer.

- **Raise your thermostat.** A smart, programmable thermostat learns your household’s patterns and adjusts itself when the house is not occupied reducing energy use when no one is home.

- **Install window covers.** About 76% of sunlight coming through a standard double-pane window enters the home, according to the Department of Energy.

- **Seal air leaks with caulk and weatherstripping.** Leaks allow cooled air to escape and may contribute to moisture problems within the home.

- **Run ceiling fans. Remember, fans cool people, not rooms.** Be sure to turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

- **Lower your water heater thermostat.** Water heaters set higher than 120 degrees can waste anywhere from \$31 to \$61 annually in energy costs, according to the Department of Energy.

Find more ways to save energy and money at energy.gov.

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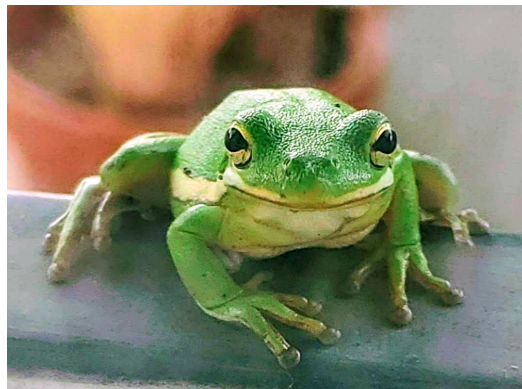
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By Lori Block





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Snapshots from our readers



Don't get between Oaklie and her corn! Rita McClelland, Prairie Grove.



Teigen and Tatum in a sea of beautiful tulip magnolia leaves. Hannah Erb, Alma.



Casten is proud of his freshly picked broccoli. Shayna Newton, Hampton.



Lily helping mom in the garden. Meghan Moore, Rogers.



Kiersey bringing in the bounty.
Maribeth Hicks, Warren.



Adler with monster sweet potatoes.
Megan Chadwick, Friendship.



Mary Louise says pulling carrots is no "walk in the garden!" Jo Henderson, North Little Rock.



Beau and Caroline having some fun in the garden.
Bryce and Ashley Berry, Wooster.



Copeland found some fabulous morels.
Coty Campbell, Marshall.

Share your photos with your fellow Arkansas Living readers! Please submit high-resolution photos with detailed information about the pictures (who took it, where, who is in it, etc.) to: arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submit-a-photo.


Bring on the Blooms

Plant a summer symphony of bulb beauties



BY JANET B. CARSON

Gardeners plant bulbs as an easy way to add color, but most people consider only spring-blooming bulbs like daffodils, tulips and hyacinths. There are many bulbs that can be planted now for summer enjoyment.

Whether you are looking for foliage or flowers, plants for sun or shade, there are plenty of options with summer bulbs. You can find dried bulbs for planting as well as potted bulbs that are already growing. Some bulbs are annuals, and others are long-living perennials. Common bulbs are readily available at local nurseries, while more obscure or old-fashioned plants may need to be ordered online. 

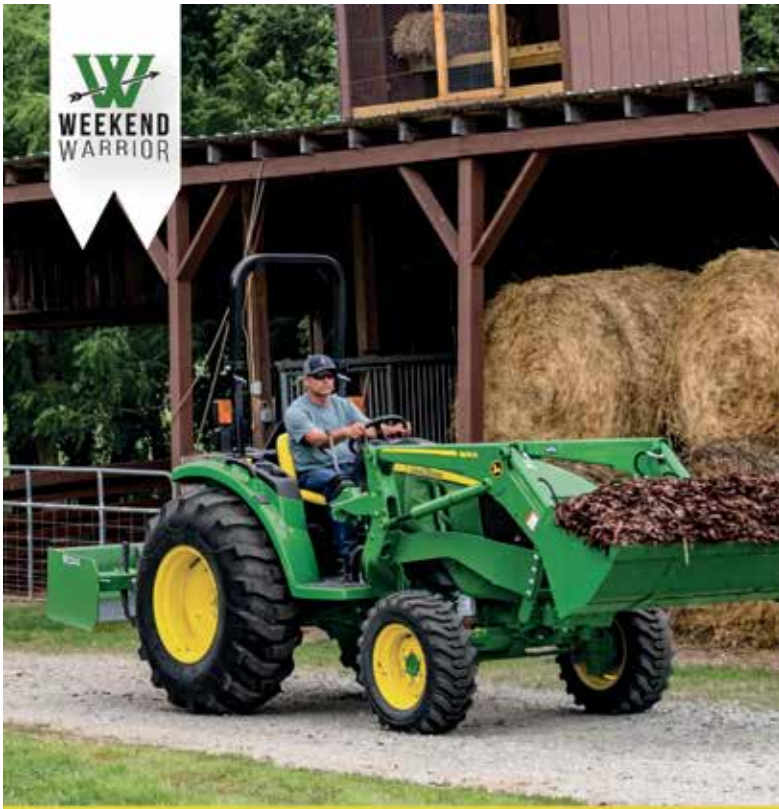


Gladiolus

BULB NAME	PLANT FEATURES	BLOOM SEASON	CULTURE
Agapanthus	Clumps of grass-like foliage. About 2 to 4 feet in height. Showy, round clusters of blue, purple or white blooms.	Late June to early August	Best in full sun. Short-lived perennials but can be lifted and stored for the winter.
Caladiums	Heat-loving, showy foliage plants in a wide array of colors and patterns. About 1 to 3 feet in height. Traditionally a shade plant, but now sun options are available. Mixtures of green, white, red or pink.	Frost to frost	All are annuals in Arkansas, but bulbs can be lifted and dried for the winter to be replanted. They like warm soil, so don't plant too early.
Calla Lilies	Speckled or green leaves. Showy, trumpet-shaped flowers produced on 2- to 3-foot-tall plants. White was the traditional color, but now you can choose from yellow, orange, red, pink or purple. Blooms can be long-lasting.	Mid-summer	Moderately hearty in southern half of the state. Can be lifted and stored for winter or grown as an annual. Full sun to partial shade.
Cannas	Bulbs are grown for foliage and flowers. Plants can be 2- to 6-feet-tall. Dramatic foliage colors available, with flowers in shades of red, pink, yellow and orange.	Early summer through fall	Long-lived perennial in central and southern Arkansas. Could be lifted and stored for winter in northern tier. Cannas do best in full sun. Deadhead old blooms to keep them flowering.
Crinum Lilies	Large cluster of trumpet-shaped blooms in white or shades of pink. Large clumps of strap-shaped foliage. Old-fashioned plant for the South.	Early to mid-summer	Full sun to partial shade. Long-lived staple in southern two-thirds of the state. Needs room to grow.
Crocasmia	Narrow, grass-like foliage. About 2- to 3-feet-tall with spikes of orange, red or yellow blooms.	Mid-summer	Best in full sun. Foliage can be aggressive in shady areas with no flowers.
Elephant Ears	Dramatic, large-foliaged plants. Leaf color can be a variety of green shades, yellow, black (dark purple) or mottled. Mature size also varies. Elephant Ears is the common name for Alocasia, Colocasia and Xanthosoma. Many varieties to choose from.	Summer through frost	Winter hardiness varies by species. Most prefer shade in the afternoon and ample moisture. Large, dramatic foliage dies back in the winter.
Gladiolus	Old-fashioned plant, often used in a cutting garden. Tall, grass-like foliage, with a stalk of blooms, which open from the bottom and move upward. Flowers can last for up to two weeks in a vase. Wide range of colors. Plants are deer-resistant.	Mid-summer through fall	Moderate perennial in half of the state. Full sun, well-drained soil, but ample moisture needed. Tall stems often need perennial stakes for added support.
Lilies	Many species to choose from. Mature height can be 2 feet to more than 6 feet. Flowers add beauty and fragrance to the garden. Showy blooms are often fragrant. Colors vary tremendously from white to pink, purple, orange, yellow, red and bicolors.	Mid-summer through fall	Good perennial plant statewide. Best grown in full sun in a well-drained soil. Taller varieties benefit from staking. Will multiply.



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Franks a Lot!

These hot dog toppings are tops

RECIPES AND PHOTOS
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Apple Curry Relish

Makes 4-5 servings.

- 1 teaspoon oil
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 3 tablespoons red onion, minced
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and chopped
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- Salt to taste

In a skillet, heat oil. Sauté celery and red onion for 4 minutes. Add curry powder and apples, and cook for 2 minutes. Add dried cranberries, apple cider vinegar, sugar and salt, and simmer for 5 minutes. Allow to cool before serving.

Notes: This is particularly good on chicken brats or turkey hot dogs. This was the crowd favorite.

Muffuletta-Inspired Relish

Makes 5 servings.

- 6 slices salami
- 1 1/2 stalks celery, cut into chunks
- 1 slice smoked or Swiss cheese
- 1/4 cup jarred red bell peppers, drained
- 2-inch wedge red onion
- 1/2 cup green olives, drained
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Place all ingredients into food processor, and pulse until relish comes together. Refrigerate until time to serve.

Greek Topper

Makes 6 servings.

- 1 cup cucumber, minced
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup kalamata olives, drained and chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried dill
- 1 green onion, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning
- Salt to taste

In a large bowl, stir all ingredients together. Refrigerate for 2 hours.



Apple Curry Relish

Muffuletta-Inspired Relish

Greek Topper



Pickled Onions with a Kick

Makes 4-5 servings.

- 1 1/2 teaspoons black peppercorns
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin seed
- 2 fresh jalapeños, sliced
- Water for boiling
- 1 very large red onion, thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

Evenly divide peppercorns, cumin seed and jalapeño slices into 5 (4-ounce) Mason jars. Set aside.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add onions and cook for 10 seconds. Drain immediately, allowing onions to drain for another 5 minutes.

Refill pot with apple cider vinegar, 1/4 cup water, white vinegar, sugar and salt over medium-high heat. While mixture comes to a boil, evenly pack onions into jars.

When vinegar mixture reaches a boil, evenly pour into jars (use funnel or ladle), allowing onions to rest for 40 minutes. Cover and refrigerate onions until serving.

Notes: These are best made a day in advance or longer. They will keep for several weeks in the refrigerator.



This month's web exclusive recipe:
Reuben Slaw Topper

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.

Flavor Fiesta

Mexican-inspired fare with flair

Mexican Meatballs

- 2 cups cornbread, crumbled
- 1 (10-ounce) can mild or hot enchilada sauce (divided use)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- Optional toppings (cilantro, jalapeños, sour cream guacamole, etc.)

Heat oven to 350.

In a large bowl, combine cornbread, 1/2 cup enchilada sauce and salt. Add ground beef, mixing well. Shape into balls, place in a shallow baking dish. Bake uncovered for 18-20 minutes or until done.

In a saucepan, combine tomato sauce and remaining enchilada sauce and heat. Evenly pour sauce on meatballs, and add cheese over top. Keep warm (like in a chafing dish or skillet over low heat) until serving; garnish with optional toppings if desired.

Notes: You can add green chilies, jalapeños or picante sauce to meat mixture before cooking for flavor. I've served meatballs with rice or noodles. My family likes more sauce, so I double up on it. The family also likes Mexican cheese blend and Mexican cornbread.

David Carpenter, Jacksonville



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

Missy's Easy Chicken Enchiladas

Makes 5 servings.

- 1 (10.75-ounce) can cream of chicken soup
- 1 (8-ounce) carton sour cream
- 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chilies
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded (divided use)
- 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts, seasoned as preferred, cooked and cubed/shredded
- 10 corn tortillas

Heat oven to 350. Lightly grease a 13x9 baking dish.

Add cream of chicken soup, sour cream, diced green chilies, garlic powder and onion powder to blender. Mix until creamy. Add 1/2 cup of cheddar cheese to mixture. Set aside 1 cup of mixture for topping.

In a large bowl, stir together remaining mixture and chicken until combined.

Fill each tortilla with a large spoonful of chicken mixture, roll up, and place seam-side-down in prepared baking dish. Pour reserved mixture over enchiladas and spread evenly. Top enchiladas with remaining cheese.

Cover and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly.

Melissa Pumphrey, Junction City

Taco Soup in a Hurry or Not

- 1 onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 pound ground beef or venison (optional)
- 2 (1-ounce) packages taco seasoning mix
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 (15.25-ounce) can whole kernel corn or hominy, undrained
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 3 (15.5-ounce) cans different beans (any red, white or black varieties), undrained

Corn chips and sour cream for serving

In a soup pot, sauté onion in butter. Brown meat if using, add remaining ingredients, and heat well. Serve with corn chips and sour cream.

Notes: Like most soups, this one is better the next day. This recipe is from my brother, Rayford Shelton.

Mary Sheba Graves, Mena

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On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

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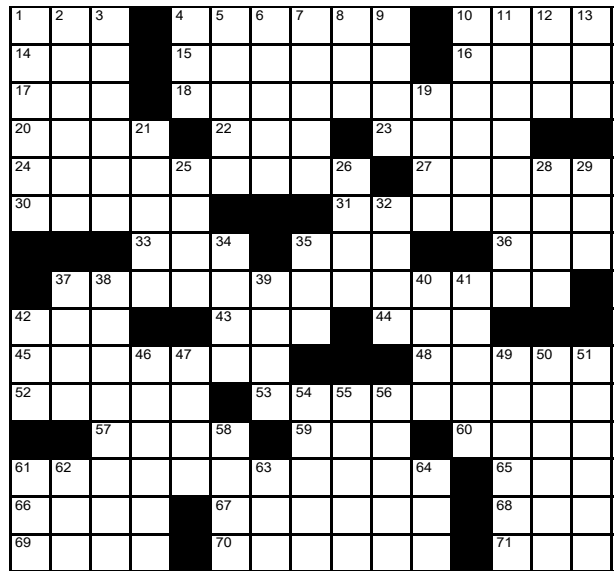
Oscar Nods *By Victor Fleming*

ACROSS

- 1 Start to treat?
- 4 Biblical prophet
- 10 Carry-on for a plane boarder
- 14 Docs' bloc
- 15 Non-glossy finishes
- 16 Perlman of acting
- 17 Stanley Cup org.
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- 20 Day's halfway mark
- 22 NPR's Shapiro
- 23 Be jealous of
- 24 Best Actress winner
- 27 "The Dancing Class" painter
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- 31 Garble
- 33 100 %
- 35 "___ in apple"
- 36 Dallas campus (abbr.)
- 37 Best Actor winner
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- 45 Has a connection
- 48 Grim
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- 53 "___ of Little Rock" (nominee that didn't win Best Documentary Short)
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- 66 Domain
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- 69 Cots and cradles
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- 1 Behavior



- 2 "Hi, honey!" follower
- 3 1953 Rita Hayworth title role
- 4 Broody music genre
- 5 Wash gently against
- 6 Ace at solving problems with Acers, informally
- 7 Author Gertrude
- 8 Barnyard layer
- 9 Court king Arthur
- 10 Hot-dish mount
- 11 "For real?!"
- 12 Golf ball's platform
- 13 Pierced body part, often
- 19 At loose ___
- 21 Like engagements at sea
- 25 Broker's advice
- 26 Ball-shaped cheese
- 28 Beetle Bailey's outfit
- 29 "Fifth Beatle" Sutcliffe
- 32 "The rest ___ to you!"
- 34 7UP ingredient
- 35 "A Bug's Life" character
- 37 "Fargo" family name
- 38 Inopportune
- 39 Abbr. before D.A.
- 40 Civil rights activist Parks
- 41 Jordanian landmark city
- 42 ___ Lanka
- 46 Appetite awakens
- 47 "West Side Story" beau
- 49 Head monk's realm
- 50 Mail-in incentive
- 51 Alison of music
- 54 Overact, with "up"
- 55 Horror film locale (abbr.)
- 56 Designer Geoffrey
- 58 Analogous
- 61 Abrupt poke
- 62 Fury
- 63 Common mineral suffix
- 64 Classic Ford

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Not your average Jo

Sheridan diner dishes out comfort for over a decade



STORY AND PHOTOS
BY ROB ROEDEL

Jo Crutchfield opened Jo's Diner in Sheridan in February of 2012. Since

then, she has served comfort food while treating customers like family.

Her family owned and operated another restaurant years ago that has since closed. She moved to Hot Springs, but on her visits back to Sheridan, her friends and neighbors asked her when she was moving home. Eventually, Crutchfield moved back to Sheridan and opened Jo's Diner, much to the delight of locals.



Owner Jo Crutchfield (left) and her team treat their customers like family at Jo's Diner in Sheridan.



Her charming restaurant's walls are adorned with nostalgic photos of classic movie stars and country music artists. An impressive number of vintage soft drink bottles are displayed on shelves; guests often bring her bottles to add to the collection.

All of the dining tables at Jo's are square, except for one round table. I noticed a group of men sitting around the table eating and talking and asked Crutchfield if they were regulars. She smiled and told me that she uses this group to test new recipes.

"I have regulars that stop by every day at the same time," she said. "The round-table men come in shifts throughout the day. Many of our guests consider the restaurant a second home."

On the day of the Let's Eat visit, the daily special was Hamburger Steak with two sides and a roll.

The plate Crutchfield delivered to my table included a large, nicely spiced and perfectly cooked ground chuck steak, swimming in a generous amount of rich brown gravy with

The classic Cheeseburger is topped with American cheese, jalapeños and bacon and served with onion rings.

sautéed onions. The spices ensured that this was not your average Hamburger Steak. The plate also included green beans and mashed potatoes with more country-good gravy. It was a great combination.

Although I couldn't sample the daily specials offered on other days, I would bet they are all great. She did mention Chicken and Dumplings, Meatloaf and USDA farm-raised



The Chicken Fried Chicken is a huge, golden-brown breast served with white gravy, mashed potatoes, purple hull peas and cornbread.



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Locals flock to Jo's Diner in Sheridan for down-home delights.

Catfish as three of the top orders.

Crutchfield promised me the Chicken Fried Chicken was excellent, and I will attest that she was accurate. The serving featured a huge, golden-brown fried chicken breast topped with an outstanding white gravy that also accented the yummy mashed potatoes. I also loved the purple hull peas that accompanied the tender, moist yardbird.

The final entrée was a classic Cheeseburger with onion rings. The large, ground chuck burger topped with melted American cheese, jalapeños and bacon was a winner. Of course, I dipped the onion rings in the house-made ranch dressing.

Other menu items include everything from fried shrimp to salads to sandwiches. Breakfast, which includes traditional favorites like Biscuits and Gravy, is served daily until 10:30 a.m. and until 11 a.m. on Saturdays. Crutchfield said the omelets are extremely popular, especially the Western Omelet.

Desserts at Jo's vary, but on my visit, I was treated to slices of Lemon Icebox Pie and Hershey Pie. The lemon was light and tasty, and the Hershey Pie was "My, oh, my!" good. 

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

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Hamburg, hamburgchamber.com

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Arts & The Park
Hot Springs, hotspringsarts.org

May 2-4

Cabot Strawberry Festival
Cabot, facebook.com/StrawberryFestivalCabot

May 3-4

Mountain View Iris Festival
Mountain View, mountainviewirisfest.com

The Steel Horse Rally

Fort Smith, thesteelhorserrally.com

May 3-5

Arkansas Pottery Festival
Fayetteville, experiencefayetteville.com

Toad Suck Daze

Conway, toadsuck.org

May 4

Cotter Trout Festival
Cotter, facebook.com/CotterGassvilleChamber

Mayhaw Festival

El Dorado, facebook.com/mayhawfestival

May 4 Fiesta

Arkadelphia, arkadelphia.gov/may-4th-fiesta/

May 9-11

Airing of the Quilts
Greenwood, facebook.com/GreenwoodQuilts

May 11

Hop Alley Rally
Corning, tinyurl.com/HopAlleyRally

May 11-12

Old Timers Day Steampunk Festival
Van Buren, oldtownvanburen.com

May 12

Mother's Day at the Little Rock Zoo
Little Rock, littlerockzoo.com

May 17-18

Crawdadd Days
Harrison, facebook.com/crawdaddays

Freshgrass

Bentonville, freshgrass.com

Magnolia Blossom Festival and World Championship Steak Cook-off

Magnolia, blossomfestival.org

Osceola Heritage Music Festival

Osceola, osceolaheritagemusicfestival.com

Picklefest

Atkins, facebook.com/peopleforabetteratkins

Photo Expo

Little Rock, bedfordphotoexpo.com

Norfolk Pioneer Days

Norfolk, cityofnorfolk.org/pioneer-days

May 19

Fayetteville Strawberry Festival
Fayetteville, downtownfay.org/strawberry-festival

May 24-25

Blues & BBQ
Fairfield Bay, visitfairfieldbay.com/events/blues-bbq

May 26

Memorial Day Fireworks
Lake Hamilton, hotsprings.org

May 27-June 1

Old Fort Days Rodeo
Fort Smith, fortsmith.org

May 30-June 2

Eureka Springs Blues Party
Eureka Springs, eukaspringsbluesparty.com

May 30-June 7

Farm Fest
Wynne, facebook.com/wynnefarmfest



Groundwork
Workforce Housing for Northwest Arkansas



Groundwork's mission is to strengthen our community by expanding housing for working families near core city centers in Northwest Arkansas.



Learn more at
groundworknwa.org



BALANCE OF POWER



NATURAL GAS &
DIESEL RESERVE

We're always prepared 24/7 with on-demand baseload power resources.

Thomas B. Fitzhugh Generating Station in Ozark is one of our Natural Gas power plants with the ability to switch to diesel under emergency circumstances. This plant is capable of generating 170 megawatts of power for the 17 member cooperatives to supply the needs of the 1.2 million Arkansas electric cooperative members. Proven plants like these are **reliable** baseload resources—balanced with our coal, wind, hydro, solar and biomass energy sources—that allow us to **responsibly** deliver **affordable** power.



**Electric Cooperatives
of Arkansas**

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