

Arkansas Living

MARCH 2026

Go with the *Flow*

'Arkansas Waterfalls'
an expanded guide

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Plus:

ESSE Purse Museum

Cavender's Greek Seasoning

Cake of Many Colors

Baum-Walker Stadium

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ON THE COVER

Flood Springs Fall is the tallest measured waterfall in the Ouachita Mountains at 91 feet. Photographer Tim Ernst is pictured hiking to the falls he documented for his updated "Arkansas Waterfalls."

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Shamrockin' Good Time

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

I am mostly Irish. And yet, it took my husband's Italian (hence Cia, pronounced "chia") and German family to teach me how to properly observe St. Patrick's Day.

In my childhood, March 17 meant maybe a green shirt but little fanfare otherwise — and certainly no brisket simmering in the kitchen.

That changed after I married into a family that treated St. Patrick's Day as a reason to party. My husband's maternal grandparents were married on March 17, giving the holiday a bit of extra meaning and a standing invitation to gather.

That's when corned beef and cabbage entered my culinary world: savory beef paired with tender potatoes, sweet carrots and mellow cabbage. It's comfort food at its best. Even better, it's one of the easiest meals to make. Toss everything in the slow cooker, let time do the work, and before long, you've got a celebration all ready to serve.

If you're looking for a few more Irish-ish ideas (well, they contain corned beef, cabbage or potatoes) to round out your March menu, turn to page 34. And if corned beef and cabbage is new to you — or just overdue — what follows is the simple, hands-off version that shows up on our table every year.

A few notes to start: The vegetables don't need to be exact. If they fit in the slow cooker, they belong. Potatoes and carrots can go in earlier, but add the cabbage near the end to keep it from overcooking. This recipe doubles easily if you're feeding a crowd, so I'll often set up two slow cookers. (One corned beef may look generous going in, but it shrinks as it cooks.)

The good news? Leftovers are always welcome. Consider them your pot o' gold at the end of the slow cooker.

Slow-Cooker Corned Beef and Cabbage

Makes 6-8 servings.

- 1 large onion, sliced
- 3-4 pounds corned beef brisket, uncooked, with spice packet
- 2 1/2-3 cups water
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 2-3 pounds red potatoes, quartered
- 1-2 pounds baby carrots
- 1 medium head green cabbage, cut into wedges
- Parsley, chopped (optional garnish)

Place onion in bottom of slow cooker. Set corned beef on top, and sprinkle with seasoning packet.

Pour water into slow cooker around beef. Add garlic and bay leaves. Cover and cook on low for about 8 hours.

After the first 3 hours of cooking, add potatoes and carrots, nestling them around the brisket.

About 1-2 hours before serving, add



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

cabbage wedges.

Remove bay leaves. Remove corned beef from slow cooker, letting it rest 10-15 minutes before slicing against the grain. Serve with potatoes, carrots and cabbage, and garnish with parsley for an additional pop of green — it's St. Patrick's Day, after all!

Sláinte,

Jennifer

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The Book of Acts

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



The Book of Acts, authored by the Apostle Luke, tells the story of the founding of the Christian church and its spread across the Roman Empire. While an amazing story, I will leave the telling of that story to pastors and will focus on Act 676. To be best

understood, some context is needed.

Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) is owned by the electric distribution cooperatives. AECC exists to provide wholesale electricity to its members so they can provide retail electricity to you, their members. AECC and its electric distribution cooperative members are not-for-profit. Our mission is to provide Affordable, Reliable and Responsible energy to our members. There is no profit motive to increase rates, rather there is constant motive to keep rates as low as possible while maintaining a reliable electric system. Balancing affordability with spending needed for reliability has never been more challenging.

The Department of Energy reported in 2023 that much of the electric grid was built in the 1960s-1970s, with 70% of transmission lines being over 25 years old. The average age of U.S. power plants has steadily increased as well, with very few being built over the last 20 years. The average age of hydroelectric power plants is 64 years, coal plants 39-45 years, nuclear plants 42 years and natural gas plants 22-30 years. As older, fully depreciated power plants age, new infrastructure must come online to supply power and to keep the grid reliable. Compounding this problem was the singular national focus on reducing carbon emissions over the last 20 years, which accelerated the closure of coal power plants. Today, there are approximately 224 coal plants still in operation in the U.S. — down from over 600 in the early 2000s, mainly due to stricter environmental regulations. Replacing these power plants requires spending on new infrastructure, which adds cost, that in turn causes electricity rates to increase.

Electricity price increases across America have made national headlines and are considered a new political bellwether in the upcoming 2026 midterm elections. Understanding the reasons for these electricity price increases

is nearly impossible for the average American, as the media is short-term focused with heavy bias toward intermittent, lower-carbon resources like wind and solar.

No one wants to pay more for electricity, and everyone is looking for someone to blame. The current villain is data centers. No doubt, the basics of supply and demand come into play here, especially when talking about very large electric loads like data centers. However, focusing solely on demand and not supply is not entirely honest.

Electric infrastructure is expensive to build, but is designed to last for 50 to 60 years, so when averaged over the asset lifetime, it becomes much more economical. For example, the newest American nuclear plants (Vogtle 3 and 4) cost \$36 billion. However, the average cost of all operating nuclear plants is 3 cents per kilowatt-hour, which, when combined with their superior reliability, makes it some of the most cost-effective power in the country.



Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) President and CEO Vernon "Buddy" Hasten (left) meets with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum during the January National Coal Council board meeting in Washington, D.C., where discussions include power plant retirements, infrastructure investment and the future of power generation. Robert Shields, AECC senior director of regulatory and rates, also serves on the council.

America has decommissioned many nuclear and coal plants over the last two decades and replaced them with less-capable but still expensive infrastructure, all in the name of climate change. This has resulted in a less-capable power grid, as evidenced by the North American Electric Reliability ►

BOOK OF ACTS continued on page 6



COURTESY OF AECE UTILITY SOLUTIONS

Cooperatives assist with Winter Storm Fern outages

In January, Arkansas electric cooperatives sent crews and equipment to Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee to help restore power following Winter Storm Fern.

AECI Utility Solutions, along with 11 Arkansas distribution cooperatives, dispatched over 250 lineworkers and support personnel to assist with outage restoration efforts across the region.

AECI Utility Solutions crews assist with out-of-state storm restoration through mutual aid efforts involving 11 Arkansas distribution cooperatives.

ERMCO announces westward expansion

Electric Research and Manufacturing Cooperative, Inc. (ERMCO), a subsidiary of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., announced plans to open a new three-phase transformer manufacturing facility in Waddell, Arizona.

ERMCO is a leading U.S. manufacturer of single-phase and three-phase distribution transformers used by electric utilities nationwide. The new facility will expand ERMCO's three-phase pad-mounted transformer production to meet growing demand tied to grid modernization, infrastructure upgrades and continued commercial and residential development.

Construction is planned in 2026 with transformer production expected to begin in 2027.



COURTESY OF ERMCO

ERMCO, a subsidiary of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., will open a new three-phase transformer manufacturing facility in Arizona.

BOOK OF ACTS continued from page 5

Corporation's (NERC) long-term reliability assessment released last month. It showed large portions of the U.S. at high risk for electricity shortfalls under normal and severe weather conditions. As my dad would say, "These eggs were hatched years ago and now, the chickens have come home to roost."

This leads me back to Act 676. It is the process that AECC uses to raise rates, and we filed for a 5% rate increase this year. AECC wholesale power costs account for about 60% of the retail rates that you pay your distribution cooperative, so when we raise rates, they must pass that on to you. Why? Cooperatives function with very low margins. A cost increase like this is nearly impossible to absorb, so they must pass it through to stay financially viable.

Why is AECC raising rates? In our case, it has nothing to do with data centers. It has everything to do with national energy policy previously stated. In 2018, the Sierra Club sued Entergy Arkansas, alleging Clean Air Act violations as part of a "sue and settle" policy that was popular at that time. The result was a settlement that required the White Bluff Steam Electric Station to cease operating in 2028, and the Independence Steam Electric Station to cease operating in 2030, short of their normal useful life. Those chickens

have come home to roost and require AECC to build new natural gas plants to replace our 1.2 gigawatt-share of those coal plants — estimated to cost nearly \$3 billion.

Spoken in English, that is 1 billion 200 million watts, or enough power to light 20 million 60-watt light bulbs. This represents over 25% of our current power supply. No new data centers or factories are driving this, just a federally approved settlement agreement to switch from coal to gas.

Building new power plants for new load allows spreading those costs over a larger base and doesn't impact rates nearly as much. Unfortunately, adding new costs to the same base only serves to raise rates. AECC must raise rates to grow the margins needed to have the equity required by financial institutions to fund these new power plants. Cooperatives cannot issue stocks to raise capital; we can only raise rates to collect excess revenue, and then retain those earnings as collateral to finance power plants.

It is just that simple. We know it is our responsibility to keep your power affordable and look for every option to keep your rates as low as possible. However, it is also our responsibility to deliver reliable power to your home, so you can feel confident that you will have the energy you need whenever you need it. 🍋

Cooperatives launch new legislative guide app

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas recently launched a new version of the Arkansas Legislative Guide app that includes innovative features and functions.

“The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Legislative Guide app puts the power to connect with elected officials in Arkansans’ pockets,” said Vernon “Buddy” Hasten, president/CEO of Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation. “As advocates for affordable, reliable electricity, the electric cooperatives offer the app as a tool for Arkansans who partner with us to ensure that policies and laws are fair and in the best interest of our state.”

The easy-to-use app provides detailed profiles of state and federal officials, tools to keep notes on bills and committees, interactive content links and maps with personal pinpoint functions.

Scan the appropriate QR code to download the app or visit aecc.com/government-affairs/legislative-guide to view a PDF file.



Scan for Android



Scan for Apple

Where Is It?

Welcome back to our hidden object contest, “Where Is It?”

In February’s issue, we hid a conversation candy heart on the Contents page in the Valentine-themed Reflections photo. “Pg. 3 — in the picture of the little girl in the top right. Oh, she is such a sweetheart!” gushed one correct reader.

Winners selected in our drawing to receive an Arkansas Living mug were:

- Debby Vest, Charleston (Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative)**
- Darell Argenbright, Mena (Rich Mountain Electric Cooperative)**
- Piper Keeler, Brookland (Craighead Electric Cooperative)**
- G. Sullinger, Pocahtonas (Clay County Electric Cooperative)**
- William Fitzgerald, Centerton (Carroll Electric Cooperative)**

For March, we’ve hidden a pinwheel — a little spin on spring winds. Don’t blow your chance to win; March 15 is the deadline to enter!

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

Or mail 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. January’s winner was: **Richelle Daniel, Benton (First Electric Cooperative).***



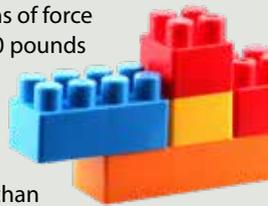
TRIVIA

- The largest identified prime number is named M136279841 and is made up of more than 40 million digits.
- Mariana Trench, located in the Pacific Ocean southwest of Guam, is the deepest point on Earth at more than 36,000 feet below sea level — 7,000 feet deeper than Mount Everest is tall.
- The world record holder for most Academy Awards to a single individual is Walt Disney. He was nominated 59 times and won 32 awards.
- There are more combinations of possible chess moves within a game than there are atoms in the observable universe.



- If you use Google to search the word “askew” on a computer, the webpage becomes askew.

- Rodger Bumpass, the voice of Squidward from the popular cartoon “SpongeBob SquarePants,” was born and raised in Little Rock and graduated from Arkansas State University.
- Fingernails grow more quickly during warm summer months.
- A single LEGO can endure over 4,240 newtons of force (around 1,000 pounds of pressure) before breaking, making the toy stronger than some brands of concrete.



- “And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” — Haruki Murakami, author

PHOTOS BY TIM ERNST



Go with the *Flow*

Tim Ernst's expanded 'Arkansas Waterfalls' guide adds hundreds more sites

BY BOB ROBINSON

Arkansas is not only The Natural State but also the waterfalls state. Hundreds of these spectacular free-flowing water drops are located across the landscape. They are the result of powerful tectonic collisions between continental plates that occurred some 300 million years ago. These forces uplifted ancient seabed sediments, forming a broad plateau that became the Ozark Mountains. Further south, the collisions triggered intense mountain-building events, folding and faulting rock layers that created the Ouachitas. This was followed by millions of years of streams cutting through



Accessible only by boat along the Buffalo National River, Bear Slide Falls in Bear Cave Hollow is one of Tim Ernst's favorite newly documented waterfalls. A half-mile hike up the hollow reveals three striking cascades.

LEFT Mirror Lake Waterfall, located near Fifty-Six, is part of the Blanchard Springs Recreational Area and has an easily accessible trail.

sandstone and shale layers, exploiting fractures and faults, forming hundreds of beautiful waterfalls.

Wilderness photographer and Ozarks Electric Cooperative member Tim Ernst has spent over 50 years trekking across these eroded plateaus and exploring the fractured crevices in search of these natural wonders. He has shared his discoveries in “Arkansas Waterfalls” guidebooks since 2002.

“I enjoy telling others about the many special places that we have in Arkansas and also showing them how to get there through my guidebooks,” Ernst says.

The latest third edition has doubled the number of waterfalls and cascades from 200 chronicled in prior editions to over 400. It would take years to visit all of them.

Whether you are a hardcore off-trail bushwhacker with years of experience tramping through the backwoods, or someone who has not stepped foot off a paved walking path, this book will have something for you. Ernst has put in the legwork and research, identifying and documenting Arkansas’ most scenic natural water spectacles.

Each entry in the book includes a map, GPS coordinates, photo, falls height, hike difficulty, driving directions to the start location and hiking directions. For those who have been checking off sites you have visited in the first and second editions of the guidebooks, Ernst tags the new falls in this edition with an asterisk to make them easy to identify.

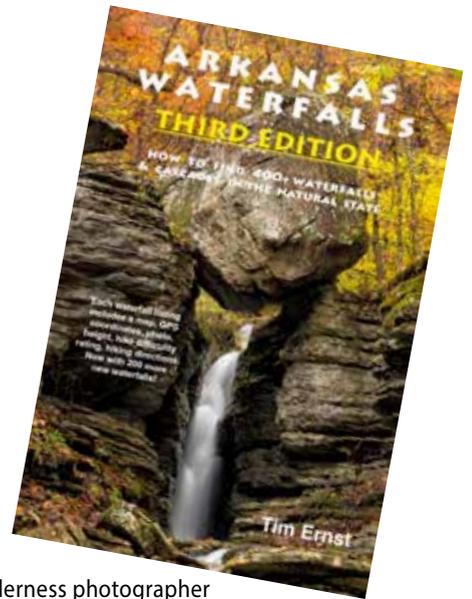
So, pick up this latest edition at your local outdoor store or timernst.com. And let your adventure begin.

Falling into place

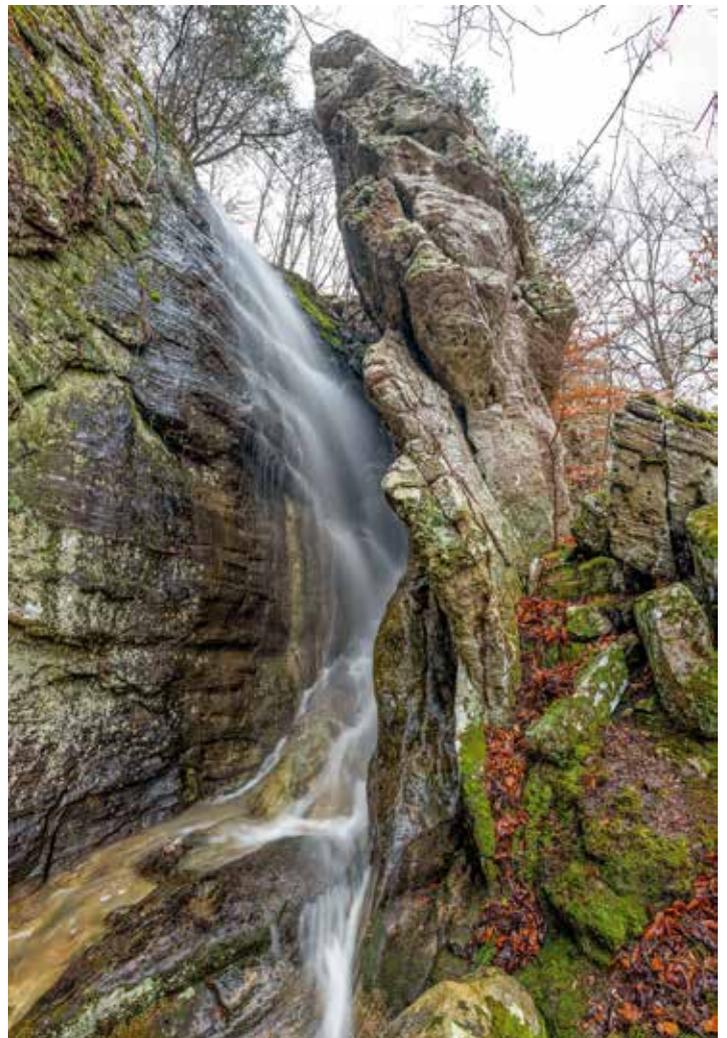
Once you have your guidebook, the first thing to do is browse through the beautiful pictures.

After thumbing through all the pictures, read the introduction to understand how to use the guide, then flip to the Waterfall Location Map in the back to locate the ones nearest to you. Most Arkansans will find plenty of them right outside their door. Those who reside in the flatlands of the southern and southeastern portions of the state may have to drive a ways. Sorry.

Don’t be intimidated by the thought of hiking a path less traveled. “This guidebook will take you by the hand and lead you right to them,” Ernst assures hikers. ➤



Wilderness photographer Tim Ernst’s third edition of “Arkansas Waterfalls” includes over 200 additional falls.



Hidden Falls is one of many natural waterfalls in the Ponca area.

On most hikes, you are rewarded with more than one waterfall. Generally, an area with one fall will have others. For example, the Ponca Bridge Downstream Waterfalls trek Ernst mentions on page 74. It is a short 2.4-mile round-trip that includes five falls. This is also a great hike to introduce novice hikers to hiking off trail. He starts you out on the Buffalo River Trail, then routes you through an interesting crack in the bluff to its base, nothing too technical, but a good intro to trekking in the forest without a trail to follow.

“Most waterfalls do not have official names,” Ernst explains. “I try to use names that are historical, geographical, educational or honoring a particular person.”

A good example is Hideout Hollow Falls, located in a bluff shelter that was once inhabited by a group of draft dodgers known as the Slacker Gang during World War I. Clemmer Falls is another, named after the Clemmer family, who once lived and farmed in that area.

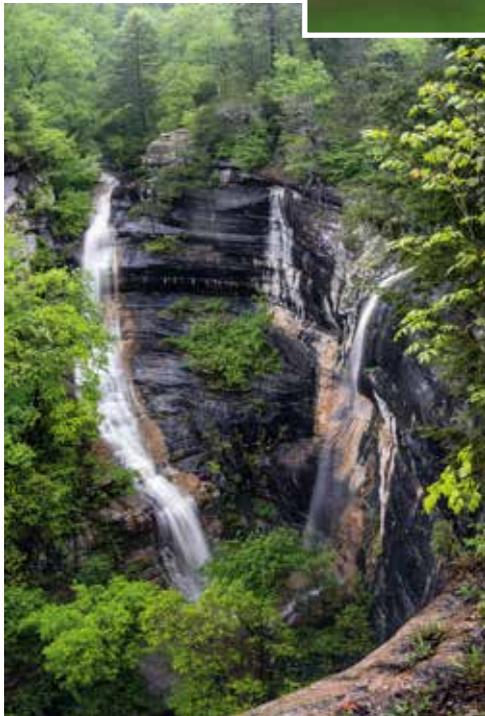
Springing into action

Spring is the best time to head outdoors to bag some trophy falls. During winter, all the trees are dormant, so any precipitation that falls during those months has saturated the ground. When spring rains begin, the water has nowhere to go but cascade down the mountainside to plunge over the bluffs.

“The best time to go waterfall hunting is after it has rained for several days during the rainy season,” Ernst advises.

Many of the photographs in Ernst’s guidebooks were taken during high water or even during floods. So, when you visit a waterfall, don’t be disappointed if it isn’t as impressive as the picture. Even if they aren’t picture-perfect, a day of hiking outdoors in The Natural State makes for a perfect adventure.

In addition to Ernst’s books, more information on Arkansas waterfalls can be found at: arkansas.com/articles/finding-arkansas-waterfalls. 



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Recluse Falls, along Leatherwood Creek near Ponca in the Buffalo National River area, cascades 61 feet.

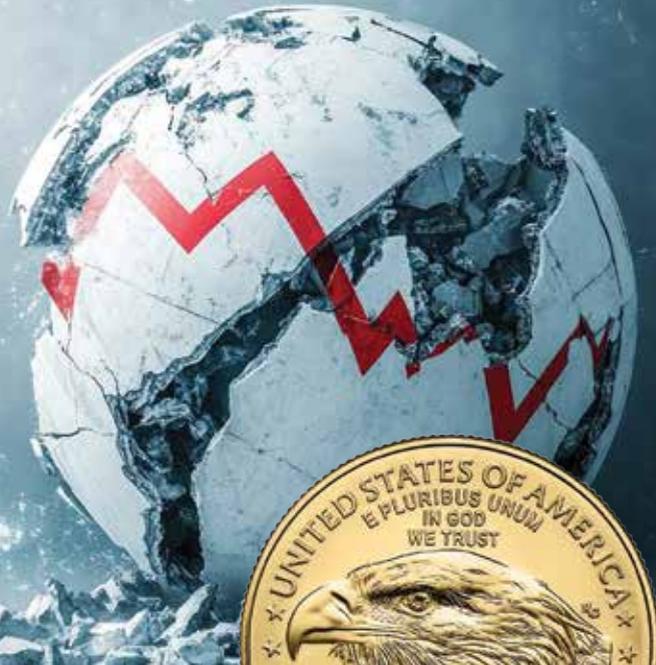
Located near Oark in the Ozark National Forest, Short Grotto Falls is a natural wonder in The Natural State.

Cecil Hollow and Smokey Joe Falls are located near Compton.



**AMERICAN
GOLD RESERVE**

IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY, FOLLOW HISTORY, BUY GOLD



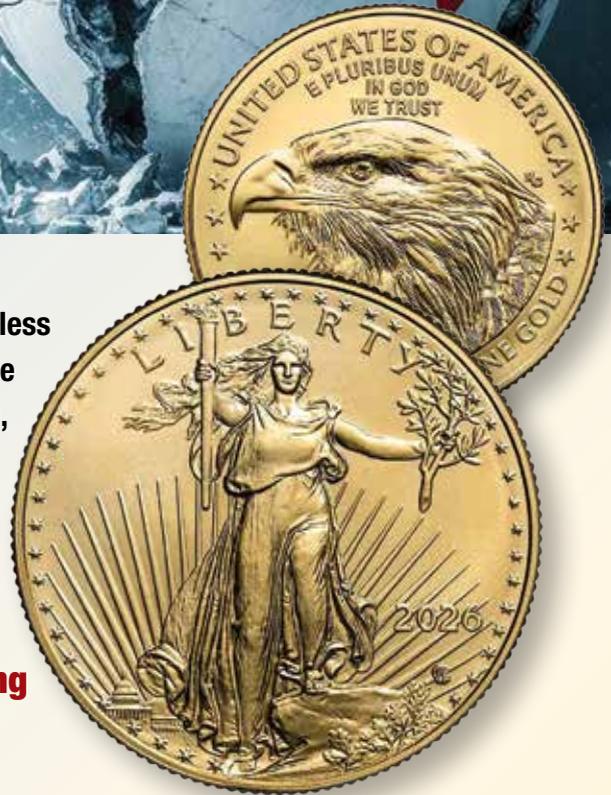
In times of economic uncertainty—when inflation rises, markets fluctuate, and long-term financial stability feels less predictable—many investors turn to gold as a dependable store of value. By holding a portion of your wealth in gold, you can help safeguard your portfolio and preserve long-term financial security, even when broader economic conditions are unclear.

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Big Purse-onality

Museum explores women's history through handbags

STORY BY JACK SCHNEDLER PHOTOS BY MARCIA SCHNEDLER

America's only purse museum is also a unique Arkansas treasure. And it doubles as a history museum by chronicling women's progress decade by decade during the 20th century.

ESSE Purse Museum, in Little Rock's lively SOMA neighborhood, is the creation of Anita Davis, who owns other properties that have helped rejuvenate South Main Street. The Murfreesboro native, who opened the museum in 2013, was "always interested in finding old things. As I kept finding old purses and feminine accessories, I didn't know I was doing homework for a museum."

Observing that "very few museums focus on women," Davis describes ESSE as "using purses to tell women's stories throughout the 20th century" — a mission that resonates in March, Women's History Month.

The name comes from "esse," a Latin infinitive meaning "to be." ESSE's website asserts that "It is often the smallest details, the scribbled notes in the margins of our history, that truly encompass the female experience. As we take you on the journey of the 20th-century woman, you will feel not only nostalgia but also the sense of solidarity."

There is only one other purse museum in the world, located in South Korea. Davis says that hers is unique in using purses to convey history lessons. She observes that "Honoring women has not been all that popular."

The museum is entered through its gift shop. Davis says, "Many people are interested in the fashion aspect, and usually the store has a purse or something else for them to buy. Tourists might want a souvenir of our odd little museum. We love to



Anita Davis opened the ESSE Purse Museum in 2013.

offer lighthearted items that might bring a smile or even a laugh."

Store Manager Marley Hinkel is part of the ESSE staff that includes Office Manager Ti Brown, Art Director Steven Otis and Social Media Manager Annaleah Witsell.



The ESSE Purse Museum is located in Little Rock's lively South Main (SOMA) neighborhood.

Handled with care

The spine of the museum's main gallery is a procession of 10 tall rectangular showcases arranged in chronological order. Decade by decade, the cases span the 1900s.

This arrangement, says Davis, "makes it easier to envision the importance of purses, and how the purse reflected what was going on in women's lives during each 10-year period. It is an opportunity to describe fashion, culture, economics and even wars."

As examples, she points out that "Our 1920s case shows when more women started wearing lipstick and rouge. And



As the only purse museum in the country, ESSE's exhibits honor women's history throughout the 20th century.

more women began smoking in the late '20s and '30s." In the early 1900s, "There was a dearth of bank checkbooks in purses, given that most women lacked financial independence."

In the earliest three cases, "filled dance cards represented some young women's popularity at socials. Until the 1960s, most purses held a handkerchief. What it was made of and its design told a lot about the woman who carried the purse."

Davis says ESSE "has seen more men choosing to visit in the last few years. ... Early on, while their female companion visited, they might sit in their vehicle or roam the street outside our building."

These days, "Many of our male visitors stay longer than the women. There is definitely a lot of mystique around a woman's purse, so maybe men have always wondered what's in that bag."

A side gallery displays temporary exhibitions. Among the most popular have been one on Barbie doll accessories and another titled "The Secret History of Home Economics." Scheduled to open on March 17 is "Three Sisters," focusing on a trio of Davis' enterprises: ESSE Purse Museum, Bernice Garden and The Authentic Self.

Heavy baggage

The museum has an interactive exhibit that serves as lagniappe to ESSE's main mission of conveying women's history through purses. The display offers women the chance to do a weight check — but not of themselves. In a red alcove, a scale hangs from the ceiling near a large-type invitation: "Weigh your bag."

A posting asks, "Is your bag too heavy?" Listed are six burden-easing suggestions from a Little Rock chiropractor. They include having multiple compartments to help with weight distribution, wearing a wide strap over the shoulder opposite the purse, and keeping the purse's weight between 5% and 10% of body weight.

Davis says, "I think of our purse scale as being like the highway checkpoints that weigh those big trucks." 



A poodle-shaped evening bag from the 1950s is just one of the many unique handbags found at the ESSE Purse Museum.



Purses of every style — from classic designs to exotic animal skins — reflect changing trends through the decades.

ESSE Purse Museum

Where

1510 Main St., Little Rock

When

Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Tuesday-Sunday

Admission

\$10 (\$8 for students and visitors 60-plus, free for children under 6)

Contact

essepursemuseum.com
(501) 916-9022



BAGS AND BITES

Visitors to ESSE Purse Museum have a range of choices for lunch or a snack in Little Rock's popular SOMA neighborhood along South Main Street. Some notable spots are listed here alphabetically.

BCW, 1424 Main St., bcwlittlerock.com. The acronym stands for "bread, cheese, wine." Its sharable fondue is widely lauded.

Boulevard Bread Company, 1417 Main St., boulevardbread.com. This branch offers the mini-chain's mix of coffees, salads, soups and sandwiches.

Community Bakery, 1200 Main St., communitybakery.com. A South Main Street fixture since 1947, its stay-awhile setting features sweets and sandwiches.

El Sur Street Food Co., 1214 Main St., elsurstreetfoodco.com. This eatery is "where central Arkansas meets Honduras and Latin America."

Raduno Brick Oven & Barroom, 1318 Main St., radunolr.com. Highly rated Raduno goes beyond pizza standards to toppings like kale and butternut squash.

Rex's Restaurant, 1501 Main St., rexsrestaurant.com. From schnitzels to smashburgers, this bistro specializes in "globally inspired comfort food."

Rock N' Roll Sushi, 1224 Main St., rocknrollsushi.com. This outlet of a Southern chain serves grilled hibachi meals along with an extensive sushi menu.

The Root Cafe, 1500 Main St., therootcafe.com. The Root aims to acquire as many of its ingredients as possible from small Arkansas farms and producers.

Spice of Life

Famous Arkansas seasoning flavors the world

BY KAT ROBINSON

Folks all over these parts reach for the yellow-and-red canister when they want to add a particular flavor of home. Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning is a pantry staple all over The Natural State. But did you know it comes from Harrison?

Lester "Spike" Cavender and his wife, Katherine, moved to the Ozarks in the late 1940s. Spike, who grew up in Oklahoma and Texas, wanted his son, Steve, to have plenty of opportunities to hunt and fish, and he wanted to take advantage of business opportunities the area offered. He owned several businesses over the years — from running a Honda motorcycle dealership to selling root beer to running a mercantile.

Spike decided he wanted to try to market the seasoning blend he had been whipping up for years. He had a friend who had given him the recipe before passing away, and it worked well for seasoning just about everything. So, in 1971, Spike and Steve opened the S.C. Seasoning Company and began selling and distributing the popular spice blend. The product and the fandom for its unique flavor continue today.

"We are run by four generations of the Cavender family — my grandfather, my dad, myself and my two daughters," says Cara Cavender Wohlgemuth, vice president of the company. "My husband has been with the company as long as I have. He is the president of the company, so it is very much a family affair."

The factory where the spices are mixed sits in Harrison. Some days, you can smell the scent waft on the breeze several blocks away. Inside, past the showroom, there's a



From 3.25-ounce bottles to 5-pound tubs, Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning is distributed worldwide.

floor where those spices are brought in. At first, they're measured and mixed in 55-gallon drums. They're then loaded into machines. Three of those machines are used for packaging — one for

3.25-ounce bottles, one for 8-ounce bottles, and one for the massive 5-pound tubs used primarily in food service. Cavender's processes up to 5 tons of seasoning every day.

The right blend

So just how many spices go into Cavender's Greek Seasoning? "Thirteen ingredients!" Cara shares. "My grandfather wanted more than Colonel Sanders with Kentucky Fried Chicken."

While the exact blend remains a family secret, the label offers a few hints. Among other ingredients, it contains garlic and oregano, along with parsley and "five other spices" the family keeps close to the vest.

But it's no secret how many Arkansas businesses use the spice. Hamburger joints use pounds of the spice every year. The yellow package blend contains salt, which means you can use it without anything else. The blue package blend is salt-free, which makes it more accessible to those who must regulate their sodium intake.

The signature seasoning can be found on shelves, in pantries and on tables across the globe. While Cavender's distribution map is within the United States and Canada, it is commonly sold at U.S. military bases and through worldwide distributors like Amazon and Walmart. It's been sighted on tables in Japan, India, Iraq and Brazil, thanks to its popularity.

Its ubiquity, though, is certainly within Arkansas' borders, being one of the few universally used items in kitchens. Wohlgemuth says that's a target goal for the company.

"We hope Cavender's is a staple on every counter in the Arkansas household for sure," she says. "Since it is an All Purpose Greek Seasoning, we pride ourselves for it being well-rounded with lots of uses. It does not make everything taste the same, if you use it in many different dishes at the same meal."

Cavender's Greek Seasoning is carried by Walmart, Kroger, Harp's, Edwards Food Giant and other Arkansas retailers. If you'd like to order it to be shipped directly to your home, head to the company's website at GreekSeasoning.com, where they have recipes from Cavender's Croutons to Cavender's Seafood Boil. 



Since 1971, four generations of the Cavender family have made the popular All Purpose Greek Seasoning in Harrison.

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Break Free

Time together outside shapes spring memories



BY CARLTON AND LEIGH WING

Most schools in Arkansas schedule spring break in March, allowing families to enjoy the great outdoors together for an entire week!

If you would like to stay closer to home, there are many family-friendly and rejuvenating experiences within the state. The Arkansas State Parks website (arkansasstateparks.com) features a map to help you find the park closest to you, along with information on amenities and activities.

A favorite family spring break trip involved taking our camper to DeGray Lake Resort State Park near Arkadelphia, where we stayed in one of their Class AAA sites with full hookups. The campsite had plenty of space nestled in the woods. When choosing your site, you have the options of a lake view or a forest view. The natural tree canopy made us feel like we were deep in the woods and far from the busyness of our hectic schedules.

During our stay, we enjoyed a lively park interpreter who ferried our group out to the island and led a hike, showing us all kinds of clues about how the owls live and hunt. The boys (ages 10 and 15 at the time) also made a craft at another interpretive event.

Most parks have interpreters who specialize in that park, and they work hard to add more activities during spring break. Event schedules can be found online and are also available in printed form upon check-in. If you or another in your party has a certain interest, be sure to call in advance and ask what options might be available. Park interpreters make efforts to accommodate guest needs and interests. Take advantage of their knowledge to enhance your experience at our amazing state parks.

Some in our family chose to play the golf course; we all played a game of disc golf, hiked and bonded during our cast-iron dinners and fireside chats. There are so many options for activities at DeGray Lake that we did not have time to take advantage of the sunset cruise, basketball or tennis courts, fishing or the paddleboats.

We left feeling refreshed and wanting to return for more. Every park's website will list their amenities and recreation options, along with scheduled activities so you can plan ahead to enjoy family time outside during spring break!

Carlton and Leigh Wing host the "Arkansas' Great Outdoors" weekly television series. Visit [facebook.com/arkansasgreatoutdoors](https://www.facebook.com/arkansasgreatoutdoors).



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP

DeGray Lake Resort State Park near Arkadelphia is one of many state parks that offer spring break activities for families.

Disc golf is a popular activity at DeGray Lake and other Arkansas State Parks.

Spring break hikes uncover hidden gems and create special moments.



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Hello, Dolly!

Arkansas baker goes big for country legend's 80th birthday

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

On most weekdays, lab technician Hannah Rider's hands are busy at Northwest Orthodontics in Fayetteville.

But on nights and weekends, they're shaping elaborate cakes in her kitchen — carefully and patiently, often late into the night. What those hands created this winter, however, carried her far beyond her Huntsville home: a child-size, edible re-creation of Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors," made to celebrate the singer's 80th birthday.

Rider traces her love of baking back to family celebrations and a saying her great-grandfather lived by: "Every day is a holiday." Growing up, gatherings were frequent and festive, and she gravitated toward making something special for such occasions. "I've always loved celebrating people no matter what it's for," she says. Long before she launched Hannah's Cake Co. in 2022, Rider was baking for family and friends, creating cakes that felt personal and meaningful.

Family — including her husband, Seith, and her father, Jason Combs, a customer service representative who has worked for Carroll Electric for about 25 years — remains central to Rider's life and work. Her close-knit circle was the first audience for one of Rider's most unexpected creations — a hyperrealistic turkey cake she made months ago for the family's Thanksgiving gathering. When she posted a video of herself carving it, the internet clip racked up nearly 5 million views on TikTok, with viewers insisting the creation couldn't possibly be cake.

From viral to vinyl

The viral moment led to an unlikely opportunity. Rider's friend, Jett Mason, a rock artist with ties to Nashville producer Kent Wells — who also produces for Dolly Parton — shared Rider's work. With Parton's 80th birthday approaching on Jan. 19, the idea surfaced: What if Rider made the cake?

Almost immediately, an image came to Rider's mind: the "Coat of Many Colors," from Parton's iconic song (later adapted into a made-for-TV movie) about the garment her mother lovingly stitched together from rags — worn with pride.

"I absolutely love Dolly, the 'Coat of Many Colors' movie and everything about her," Rider says. "I watched the movie three times before I even started the cake, even though I'd already seen it, just to make sure I got every little detail right."

Wanting it to be more than a cake on a board, Rider envisioned the coat standing upright, like it was being worn. She began building the structure the week after Christmas, then spent weeks preparing details in advance — chocolate records and microphones, sugar-paper sheet music printed with lyrics from "Coat of Many Colors" and "I Will Always Love You," and 70 to 90 textured handmade "fabric" panels created



Legendary singer Dolly Parton is presented with a special "Coat of Many Colors" birthday cake created by Arkansas baker Hannah Rider.



With nearly 5 million views, social media users gobbled up a video of Hannah Rider's turkey cake.

through a gelatin process. To ensure accuracy, she studied Parton's original coat and even measured her 9-year-old cousin — about the same age Parton was when she wore it — to capture proportions. The finished piece required 20 cakes, with arms and shoulders formed from Rice Krispies treats.

Rider transported the components to Nashville, where she rented an Airbnb, baked for two days and decorated before delivering the cake to Wells' recording studio.

Sweet success

Parton's reaction is something Rider can't get over. "She just stopped in her tracks," Rider recalls. "She said, 'The coat of many colors — that's my coat!'" Then came the disbelief: It's all cake? "She kept saying, 'This is just fantastic.'"

Rider says the "spunky," "so funny," 80-year-old singer even climbed a ladder to pose behind the cake, insisting to those trying to help her, "Leave me alone. I got this!" Photos and video quickly circulated beyond the studio.

For Rider, the moment went beyond the cake itself. She says, "I'm such a big fan, not only of her music, but of who she is — she's the most humble person, and she carries herself in such a Christ-like way."

Back in Huntsville, Rider continues balancing a constantly ringing phone with her cake work, her full-time job and active participation in her church, Huntsville First Assembly of God, where she teaches a weekly pre-teen class. When she started her cake business, Rider says, "I asked for the Lord to use me and for His will be done, and I gave it to Him."

Sharing those gifts in a meaningful way for His glory, she says, has been the icing on the cake. 🍩



COURTESY OF HANNAH RIDER

Feather in her cap: Hannah Rider's chicken cake wins the Grand Champion ribbon at the Madison County Fair.

A large mural on a brick wall depicts various historical scenes, including people in period clothing, a horse, and a building. In the foreground, there are red and purple flowers. A QR code is in the top left corner, and a yellow sign with a pedestrian symbol and the text "DUCK XING" is on a pole to the left.

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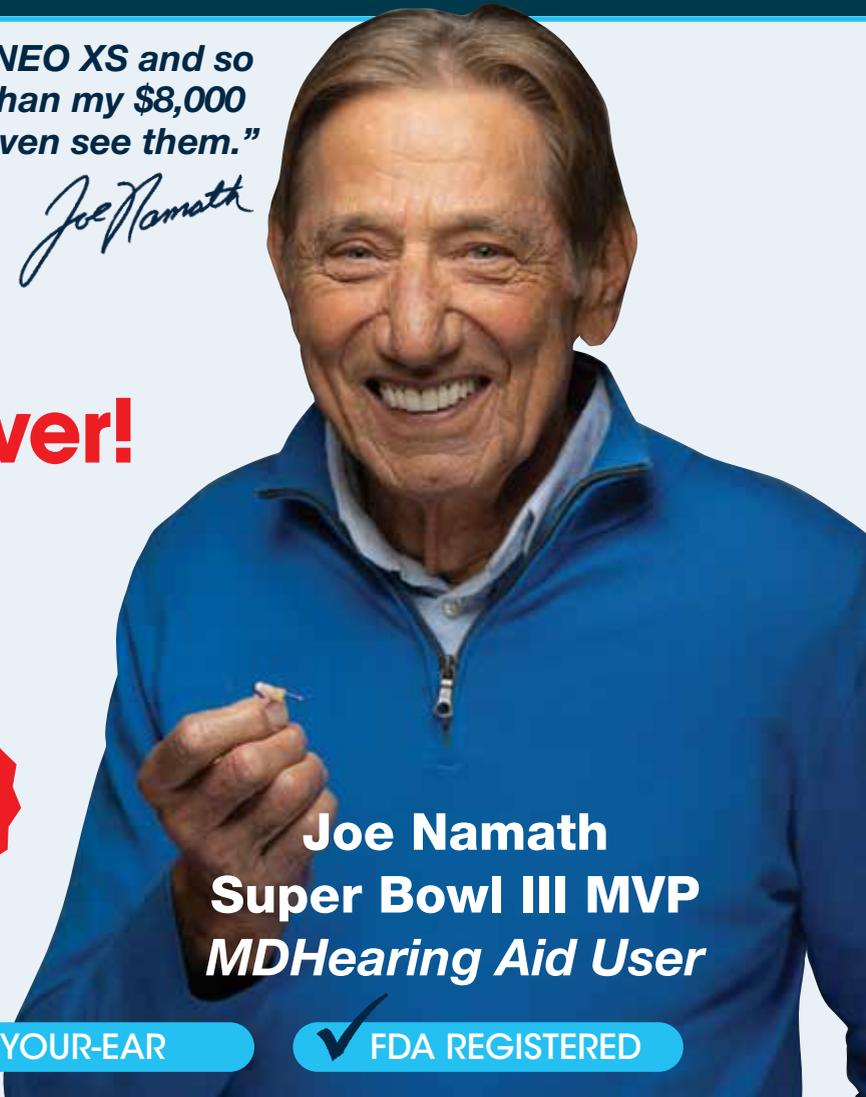


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Opportunities for Students

Youth Tour and Scholarship applications now open at First Electric

Important Deadlines:

- **March 6: Youth Tour application**
- **May 1: Operation Round-Up Scholarship**

At First Electric Cooperative, investing in young people is an important part of serving our members and strengthening the future of our communities. Each year, First Electric offers local students the opportunity to participate in the Electric Cooperative of Arkansas Youth Tour and apply for college scholarships designed to support their educational goals.

Youth Tour gives high school students a once-in-a-lifetime chance to travel to Washington, D.C., where they join students from across the country to learn about government, leadership and the cooperative business model. Participants meet elected officials, tour historic landmarks and build friendships with other students who share an interest in leadership and community involvement.

In addition to Youth Tour, First Electric awards Operation Round-Up scholarships to graduating seniors whose parents or guardians are cooperative members. These scholarships help ease the financial burden of higher education and reflect the cooperative’s long-standing commitment to supporting local students as they pursue their dreams.

Both programs are competitive, and selections are based on academic achievement, leadership and community involvement.

By offering programs like Youth Tour and Operation Round-Up scholarships, First Electric continues to invest in the next generation of leaders — helping students gain valuable experiences today while building stronger communities for tomorrow.

To apply, visit our website:

- **YOUTH TOUR: firstelectric.coop/youth-tour**
- **SCHOLARSHIPS: firstelectric.coop/scholarships**

Students and parents may also contact their school counselor for more information.



CHANCE ALMON

On the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Youth Tour, First Electric delegates get to visit the U.S. Capitol.

Vegetation Management Essential for Reliable Power

At First Electric, we prioritize right-of-way maintenance year-round near overhead lines to ensure safe and reliable service for our members. A right-of-way is a designated strip of land that is maintained and cleared beneath or around power lines.

Trees are a major cause of power outages in areas with overhead utility lines. When they come into contact with live wires, they can become conductors of electricity, leading to outages or creating dangerous situations for anyone who encounters them. Trees must grow far enough from conductors to avoid harming individuals or disrupting electrical service.

“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,” said Tim Felty, right-of-way maintenance supervisor.

All trees along fences, roadways and other unmaintained areas will be removed during regularly scheduled maintenance regardless of size or height. “Before work begins, we try to notify our members with door hanger fliers. 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.

To report trees near power lines, call 800-489-7405 or read more at firstelectric.coop/vegetation-management.



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.

Membership has its Advantages at First Electric

At First Electric Cooperative, membership means more than just receiving electric service; it means being part of a locally owned organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in the communities we serve. Because our members are also our owners, every decision is guided by a simple principle: we are here to serve our members.

One of the biggest benefits of membership is local leadership. Members elect fellow members to serve on the Board of Directors, ensuring the cooperative is guided by people who live and work right here at home and understand local needs.

Membership also means sharing in the cooperative's success through capital credits, which are returned to members when financial conditions allow — another benefit of being part of a not-for-profit, member-owned utility.

In addition to reliable electric service, many members also have access to fast, dependable internet through



Connect2First, a subsidiary of First Electric, offers fast, dependable internet service to help members stay connected.



First Electric's member-funded Operation Round-Up program supports local nonprofits, community projects and scholarships.

Connect2First, First Electric's fiber subsidiary. High-speed fiber supports education, health care, remote work and local businesses, helping communities stay connected and grow.

Members benefit from community-focused programs like Operation Round-Up, which allows First Electric members to help support worthwhile projects in our communities and scholarships for students. Energy-efficiency resources and safety-education programs help families and businesses thrive.

From electricity and fiber to community investment and local leadership, one thing remains true: Membership has its advantages — and at First Electric, we are here to serve our members.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOTICE

The Nominating Committee will meet
March 19 at 11 a.m. to review
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Position 3.



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Field of Dreams

Baum-Walker Stadium celebrates three decades of Hog baseball

BY CHRIS HOOTEN

University of Arkansas (UA) baseball was not ready for the big leagues back in 1992.

Under legendary coach Norm DeBriyn, the Razorbacks had routinely topped 40 wins the previous 14 seasons (51 wins in 1985, 1987 and 1989) in the Southwest Conference (SWC). The Texas Longhorns dominated the now-defunct SWC those years, but the Hogs often vied for second place and captured league crowns in 1989 and 1990.

Then, Athletic Director Frank Broyles, the architect of UA athletics, took his Razorbacks to the Southeastern Conference (SEC). One season of playing in SEC venues and a 10-13 conference record convinced DeBriyn he needed better facilities.

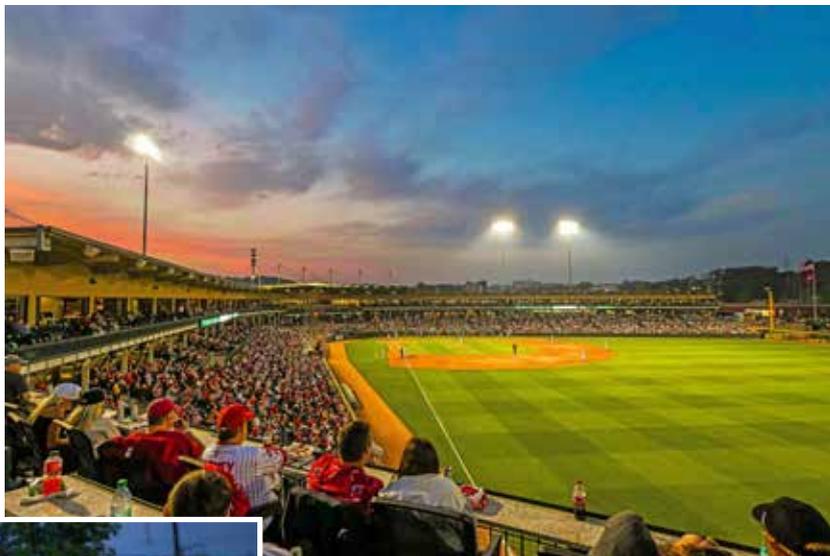
“Norm got Coach Broyles’ approval to expand George Cole Field, which was outdated,” says former UA sports information director Rick Schaeffer, “but there was just not a lot of room to expand. At the last minute, Coach Broyles said, ‘We’re not going to do this. We’re going to build a new stadium.’”

Former Walmart store manager and early investor Charlie Baum died in the summer of 1992, and his family would contribute \$1 million in seed money for the new stadium. Broyles jetted to Kansas City to meet with HOK, an architecture firm that had just designed the retro Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore. He liked the traditional feel with modern amenities but didn’t simply hand off the project to HOK. Broyles toured and studied ballparks all over the country.

Diamond destiny

Just a few days before opening Baum Stadium in April 1996, Schaeffer, a rabid fan of baseball and all things Razorbacks, entered the new venue for the first time. “I remember thinking, ‘I cannot believe this is our ballpark,’” Schaeffer says. “Then I took a seat, and it was comparable to Camden Yards. In any seat, you feel like you are in a major league park. Instead of updating George Cole Field, we got the best ballpark in college baseball.”

Baseball America concurred in 1998, ranking Baum



BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS ATHLETICS



ABOVE Celebrating 30 years, Baum-Walker Stadium in Fayetteville was named the top college baseball facility in the country by Baseball America.

LEFT Baum-Walker Stadium in Fayetteville has the seating capacity to hold 11,000 Razorback baseball fans.

Stadium as the top college baseball facility in the country, and the monthly publication has repeatedly labeled it as a “crown jewel” for its design and atmosphere.

DeBriyn’s Hogs thrived in their new home, winning a school-record 18 straight games to open the 1996 season. Packed crowds would “root, root, root for the Hog team” and sing along with legendary announcer Larry Shank who directed the crowd with a mini bat.

Arkansas notched 40 wins again in 1999, but DeBriyn could not get his Razorbacks above .500 in SEC games the next three seasons. So, after 33 years with 15 NCAA tournament and four College World Series (CWS) appearances, DeBriyn retired in 2002.

“We need more seats.”

Really? Broyles must’ve been taken aback by the demand by Dave Van Horn, his choice to succeed DeBriyn. The former Razorback infielder and 1982 team MVP had quickly climbed the coaching ladder from Texarkana Community College to the University of Nebraska. In five years, Van Horn led the Cornhuskers to four NCAA tournaments, including a pair of trips to the CWS.

But Broyles still got his man, and DVH (as he’s known now by Hog fans) got his extra seats. With financial

support from the Willard Walker family, Arkansas added 2,600 chairback seats before the 2003 season and extended its double-wide concourse, still a novelty two decades later.

“That was a brilliant concept by Frank Broyles,” Schaeffer says. “All the other SEC parks lacked a concourse big enough to mill around and visit, even get out of the rain if needed, and still see the game.”

The UA has added suites, skyboxes, seats above the Razorback bullpen, video boards and more the past 20 years, bringing the seating capacity to over 11,000. Arkansas renamed its crown jewel Baum-Walker Stadium in 2019.

Hog heaven

Madison McEntire is a 1990 UA graduate and member of the Society for American Baseball Research who published “Big League Trivia” in 2006. He has visited 30 major league ballparks and almost all the SEC venues.

McEntire first took his son and future Razorback pitcher, Will, as an 8-year-old to Baum-Walker Stadium. From 2020-2025, McEntire saw his son take the mound 82 times from his seat in Section 105. That was also the perfect perch to watch in amazement as fans rushed the Hog Pen grassy area behind left field 90 minutes before the opening pitch to claim a good spot.

“That was my favorite thing,” McEntire says. “There are fans camping out Tuesday night to get in (Friday night), and these people are in their 40s and 50s, not students. They get to take in coolers and grills. The university encourages all the flags and banners. The atmosphere is great because people go nuts.”

Sounds like a party. Happy 30th birthday, Baum-Walker Stadium. The Arkansas Razorbacks have won at a 75% clip in your fan-friendly confines with expectations in 2026 to contend for an SEC title and reach the CWS for the 13th time in school history. 🍀

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



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Spring Energy Tips for Our Members at First Electric

March in Arkansas often brings a mix of cool mornings, warm afternoons and unpredictable weather. For our members at First Electric, these quick temperature changes can mean heating and cooling systems are working harder than usual. A few small adjustments now can help keep your home comfortable while managing energy use as we head into spring.

Adjust your thermostat for changing temperatures

With chilly mornings and warmer afternoons, it's easy for heating and cooling to overlap. Setting your thermostat to 68 degrees or lower when heating and 75 degrees or higher when cooling can make a noticeable difference. Lowering it a few degrees at night can also help reduce energy use without affecting comfort.

Enjoy the fresh air on mild days

When the weather is comfortable, opening windows and using ceiling fans can help you stay cool without running your HVAC system. Just be sure windows are closed before turning heating or cooling back on, so you're not paying to condition outdoor air.

Check doors and windows after winter

Cold weather can take a toll on seals around doors and windows. Replacing worn weather stripping and sealing small gaps can help keep warm or cool air inside where it belongs and help your system run more efficiently.

Replace or clean your HVAC filters

After a long winter, HVAC filters can accumulate dust and debris. Replacing filters regularly improves airflow, helps your system run more efficiently, and can lower energy use while extending the life of your equipment.

Think ahead with spring landscaping

Spring is a great time to plan for summer savings. Planting shade trees on the west and south sides of your home can help block the hot afternoon sun and reduce cooling costs during the warmer months.

Unplug winter equipment

As space heaters and electric blankets get put away, unplug them when not in use. Using power strips can make it easy to shut off multiple devices at once and reduce energy used by electronics that draw power even when turned off.

Schedule maintenance before summer heat arrives

Having your HVAC system checked in the spring can help catch small issues before they become big problems during peak summer heat. Sealing duct leaks and checking insulation can help prevent higher bills later.

At First Electric, we're here to help you stay safe, comfortable and energy-smart year-round. If you have questions about your usage or want to learn more about energy-saving programs, our team is always ready to help.

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Snapshots from our readers



Indiana is done ruling the burger kingdom. Dianna Jowers, Norfolk.



Clover Jae is a born baker. Brandy Sanders, Van Buren.



Hold up! There's an imposter among us! Richard Chaney, Ravenden.



Jack Alan and Snowflake enjoying a pretty sunset. Callie Peterson, Star City.



Rio, Yeti and Penny the Jenny munching away on a foggy morning.
Melissa Tatum, Jacksonville.



Wylder loves to feed the cows.
Sheila Winkley, Doddridge.



Jenni, that's one long-legged chicken!
Perry Grimsley, Springdale.



Wrenley is the designated egg gatherer.
Love the skirt! Selena Smith, Heber Springs.

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.

Dazzling Dogwoods

Beloved Southern trees are springtime showstoppers



BY JANET B. CARSON

One of the most beloved spring-blooming trees is our native dogwood with beautiful four-petaled white bracts (flowers) that appear before the foliage does. This lovely understory tree performs best in morning sun or dappled sunlight. Beyond the classic Southern dogwood, gardeners can choose from a variety of hardy hybrids, native alternatives and other well-adapted nonnative species. 



Flowering dogwood

TREE	CHARACTERISTICS	CARE
Alternate-leaf dogwood	Native tree up to 20 feet tall. Fragrant clusters of small white flowers appear May-July, followed by a bluish-black fruit. The leaves are attached alternately (most dogwoods have opposite leaf attachment) on the stems, with branches that form tiers.	Will tolerate more sun in cooler zones than most dogwoods, but in most of Arkansas, would benefit from protection from hot afternoon sun. Likes moist, well-amended soil.
Rough-leaf dogwood	Native small tree or large bush, growing up to 16 by 16 feet. Clusters of creamy white flowers appear after the foliage is on, in May or June. Produces a white berry. The upper leaf surface is rough to the touch.	A more adaptable dogwood. Will grow in full sun to partial shade and will survive in poorer soils than most dogwoods. It can produce suckers; remove those as you find them.
Flowering dogwood	Native, most commonly in white, but there are pink and red varieties, too. Many improved cultivars with double blooms, variegated foliage and hybrids with other species. All species have red berries in the fall that birds adore.	Does best in well-amended soil with excellent drainage, but ample moisture. Needs bright sunlight in the morning to bloom, but protection from afternoon sun is important for long-term success.
Kousa dogwood	Nonnative showy tree with star-shaped blooms that appear after the foliage is on in late spring. Grows up to 30 feet tall. Large, showy pinkish-red edible rounded drupes ripen in late summer into early fall.	Tougher tree than our native species, but since the flowers appear after the foliage, it's not as showy. Will handle more sunlight and tolerate drought better. It is more disease-resistant. Still would perform best with ample moisture.
Cornelian cherry dogwood	Nonnative small tree up to 25 feet tall and 15-20 feet wide. Early bloomer, covered in small clusters of yellow flowers before the foliage appears. Small, edible, cherry-like fruits start to turn red mid-summer and are ready to eat when they turn dark red.	Thrives in partial to heavy shade, in a well-drained but moist site. Has nice exfoliating bark as it ages. Give it room to spread. Can have nice fall foliage, too.
Red-twigged dogwood	Native species grown as a multistemmed shrub with bright red stems that are showy in the winter. Can grow 6-9 feet tall, but best if a third of the stems are thinned annually, since new growth is redder. Clusters of small white flowers appear in early summer followed by white berries.	Will tolerate more sun than most, but in hot summers, it would still prefer some afternoon shade. Likes consistently moist soil and can tolerate wet areas well.



Kousa dogwood



Cornelian cherry dogwood



Red-twigged dogwood



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Hop to It!

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RECIPES AND PHOTOS
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Horseradish Deviled Eggs with Capers and Dill

Makes 6-8 servings.

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 6-8 | boiled eggs, cooled and peeled | 1/4 | teaspoon pepper |
| | | 1/4 | teaspoon salt |
| 3 | tablespoons mayonnaise | 2 | teaspoons capers |
| 3 | tablespoons horseradish sauce | | Thinly sliced cucumber |
| | | | Dried dill |

Slice eggs in half. Remove yolks from whites.

In a bowl, smash all yolks with fork until powdery. Add mayonnaise, horseradish sauce, pepper, salt and capers. Stir until thoroughly mixed. Fill egg whites with yolk mixture. Top each with a slice of cucumber, and sprinkle with dried dill.



Note: While you only need 6 eggs for this recipe, I always make 2 extra in case of cracking or shell-sticking.

Scalloped Potatoes

Makes 8 servings.

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--------------------------|
| 3 | tablespoons butter, plus more to grease pan | 1 | bay leaf |
| 4-6 | russet potatoes, scrubbed and peeled | 3 | cloves garlic, chopped |
| 2 | cups milk | | Pinch of thyme |
| 1 1/2 | cups heavy cream | | Salt and pepper to taste |

Heat oven to 350. Grease casserole dish with butter.

Thinly slice potatoes, making them as uniform as possible.

Place remaining butter, milk, heavy cream, bay leaf, garlic and thyme in a pot over medium-low heat. Allow mixture to cook for 7-10 minutes.

Layer potatoes in dish, adding generous amount of salt and pepper to each layer. Remove bay leaf and pour milk



mixture over potatoes.

Bake uncovered for 1 hour or until potatoes are tender and top is browned. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before serving.



Ultimate Strawberry Cake

Makes 8 servings.

Strawberry purée

- 1 (16-ounce) bag frozen strawberries
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/4 cup sugar

Cake

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 1/2 cups cake flour, sifted
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 4 egg whites, at room temperature
- 1 whole egg, at room temperature

- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 6 ounces strawberry yogurt, at room temperature
- 1 1/4 cups reduced strawberry purée
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1-2 drops red food coloring (optional)

Frosting

- 2 (8-ounce) packages strawberry cream cheese, at room temperature
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup powdered sugar, or more to taste
- 7 ounces marshmallow cream

For strawberry purée: Place frozen strawberries and water in a small pot over medium heat. Cook and reduce for 20-25 minutes, breaking up strawberries with fork until they fall apart. Add sugar and cook for 3-5 minutes, until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and cool. (This step can be done a day in advance.)

For cake: Heat oven to 350. Grease two 9-inch pans and line bottoms with parchment paper. Spray with nonstick cooking spray.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

In a separate mixing bowl, beat butter and sugar until creamy. Add egg whites and beat until fluffy. Beat in whole egg, oil, yogurt, reduced strawberry purée, vanilla extract and red food coloring if desired. Add dry ingredients, half at a time, until thoroughly combined. Divide batter evenly between pans. Bake for 24-26 minutes. Cool for 2 hours. For best results, freeze cake for 1 hour to make frosting easier.

For frosting: In a mixing bowl, beat together all frosting ingredients. Spread frosting on bottom layer of cooled cake; add top layer, and cover with frosting.

Notes: Cake can be made and frozen up to 1 week before frosting. Wrap cooled cake in plastic wrap, then foil. Lay flat in freezer. On the day of serving, frost cake while frozen, then allow to thaw.



This month's web exclusive recipe: Pesto Spinach Artichoke Dip

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.

Taste o' the Irish

Dishes worthy of St. Patrick's Day

Potato Soup

Makes 8 servings.

- 5 slices bacon, diced
 - 1 onion, diced
 - 4 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 - 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock
 - 2 cups milk, warmed
 - 1 1/2 pounds Yukon Gold or other potatoes, peeled and diced
 - 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
 - 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt or sour cream
 - 1 teaspoon sea salt
 - 1/2 teaspoon freshly cracked pepper
- Additional cooked bacon, shredded cheese, diced green onion (optional garnish)

Heat a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Add bacon and cook until crisp, stirring occasionally. Transfer bacon to a plate, reserving 3 tablespoons drippings in pot. Add onion to drippings and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft. Stir in garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes more. Sprinkle flour on mixture and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Gradually stir in stock until smooth, and add milk and potatoes.

Cook until soup just reaches a simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring every few minutes, until potatoes are tender. Stir in cheese, Greek yogurt or sour cream, salt, pepper and cooked bacon. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Garnish with additional cooked bacon, shredded cheese and diced green onion if desired.

*Note: Serve with warm bread and a green salad.
Lynn Blanke, Shell Knob, Missouri*



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN, OIA

Savory Sausage & Cabbage Bake

Makes 4 servings.

- Nonstick cooking spray
- Half a medium head cabbage, diced into 1-inch squares
- 2 cups fresh spinach
- 1 cup carrots, julienned
- 1/2 cup sweet onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon Herbs de Provence
- 2 tablespoons honey-ginger white balsamic vinegar (can use apple cider vinegar)
- 1 (14-ounce) smoked sausage link, cut into 1/2-inch rounds
- 1/4 cup honey barbecue sauce

Heat oven to 350.

Lightly coat a medium casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray or olive oil. Layer cabbage in bottom of dish. Layer spinach, carrots and onions on cabbage. Sprinkle Herbs de Provence over vegetables, and drizzle with vinegar, tossing gently to combine. Layer sausage on vegetables. Drizzle barbecue sauce evenly on sausage. Cover and bake for 1 hour. Serve warm.

*Note: Yellow squash rounds also work well in this dish.
Lisa Smotherman, Austin*

Corned Beef Soup

Makes 8-10 servings.

- 2 (15-ounce) cans tomato sauce
- 5 cans water (use sauce cans)
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 3 ounces tomato paste
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon Accent seasoning or salt
- 2 (15-ounce) cans whole kernel corn, undrained
- 2 (12-ounce) cans corned beef, chopped
- 5 pounds russet potatoes, diced
- 1 (16-ounce) package elbow macaroni

Combine all ingredients except macaroni in a large soup pot. Cook over medium-high heat until potatoes are about halfway done, stirring frequently to prevent sticking.

Add macaroni and continue cooking until nearly tender. Cover pot, remove from heat and allow macaroni to finish cooking. Soup is ready when potatoes and macaroni are tender, 30 to 45 minutes total.

Notes: This soup was a favorite of my Maw Maw and later my Mama. Corned beef was something she loved, and the ingredients were affordable and filling. This remains my favorite made-from-scratch soup. We serve it with cornbread.

Ellen Siler, Conway

SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE SUMMER RECIPES! If your recipe is selected for printing, we will send you an Arkansas Living wooden spoon! Four Arkansas Living readers will win a copy of the "Cooks of the Buffalo" cookbook. Submit any personal favorite summer recipe by March 15 to be entered in a random drawing.

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New Recipe Contest: SUMMER, SERVED!

Arkansas Living's Summer, Served! recipe contest celebrates easy, shareable summer cooking.

To enter our random drawing, just submit any personal favorite summer recipe — simple suppers, no-cook favorites, seasonal salads, cookout classics, make-ahead dishes, lake-day eats and sweet seasonal treats.

Four Arkansas Living readers will win a copy of the "Cooks of the Buffalo" cookbook. Submit your recipe by March 15 to be entered in a random drawing. Enter at arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submit-a-recipe.

Spring Forward! Contest Winners Announced

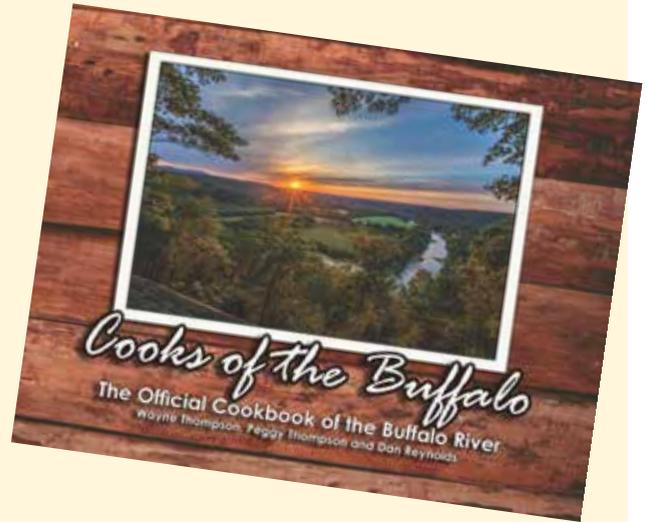
Thank you to everyone who participated in our Spring Forward! recipe contest. Congratulations to our four winners, each receiving a rechargeable digital kitchen scale:

Cathy Kuhlmann, Blue Eye, Missouri (Carroll Electric Cooperative)

Karen Sewejkis, Paron (First Electric Cooperative)

Trish Waltz, Clinton (Petit Jean Electric Cooperative)

Jenifer Walker, Cherry Valley (Woodruff Electric Cooperative)



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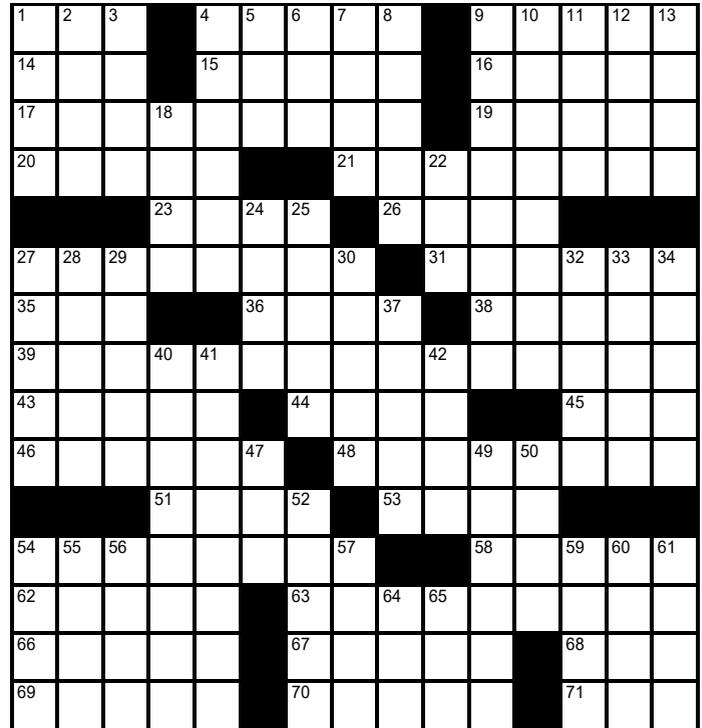


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- 1 Angry
- 4 Table alternative
- 9 Willy in "Death of a Salesman"
- 14 "___ recall ..."
- 15 Beta preceдер
- 16 St. Theresa's town
- 17 Start of the subject of one of this issue's articles
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- 31 Prepares to drive, at the links
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DOWN

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- 2 Quickly, in memos
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- 59 Petty criticisms
- 60 Annoying insect
- 61 Tough boss
- 64 Epoch
- 65 Down in the dumps

CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 42

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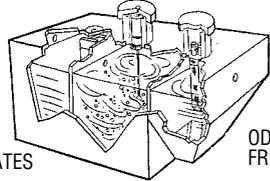


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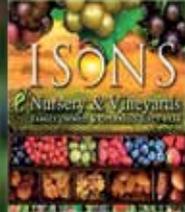
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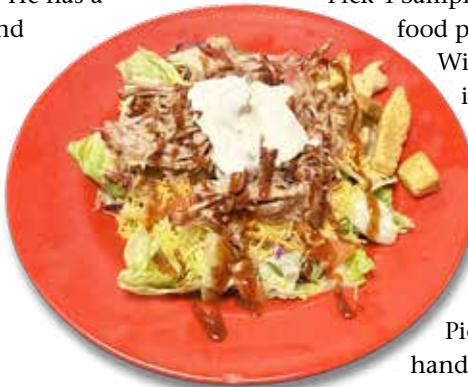
STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROB ROEDEL

Usually when someone talks about "This Guy," it signals the start of a fun story. And at This Guy's Smoke N Grill in Searcy, that story is told one plate at a time.

This Guy's owner is Thurman McCroskey, who has operated the tastefully decorated and neat-as-a-pin barbecue joint since 2019. He had a dream of owning a restaurant for many years and is now living it. He credits the support of his church, his wife and family for the restaurant's success.

McCroskey developed his culinary skills by catering for church events, weddings and other occasions, which he still does today. He has a love for cooking and "tinkering" in the kitchen with

This Guy's Smoke N Salad can be topped with a choice of several homemade barbecue sauces and dressings.



recipes. His employees enjoy his experiments, as they get to try his creations.

According to McCroskey, he and his staff miscommunicated on such an experiment once. "I had cooked a hamburger for my meal and walked away for a few minutes. When I returned, my creation was gone," he said. "They thought it was an item for them to sample."

My waitress advised me to try a Pick 4 Sampler to commence the food parade. This Guy's Wings, featuring bone-in chicken, came out piping hot, with a nice smoky flavor accented by a secret dry rub recipe. I also enjoyed Fried Dill Pickle Chips that were hand-breaded and fried to a golden-brown goodness.

The Fried Green Beans were a fabulous way to tell my doctor that I ate my vegetables. I loved the comforting Mac & Cheese Bites that had a hint of jalapeño, balanced by ranch dressing for dipping. The Smoke N Salad featured iceberg lettuce, chopped



With a half-pound Angus hand-patted burger, smoked sausage, bacon, pulled pork and barbecue sauce, The Smoke Stack is burger barbecue perfection.

carrots, purple cabbage, diced tomato, shredded cheese and croutons topped with delicious pulled, smoked pork. I added ranch dressing and This Guy's North Carolina Sauce. Other barbecue sauces include Memphis, Kansas City Sweet, Texas Bold, House or Smoke N Grill. I tried and liked all of them. Let me know your favorite after you visit. McCroskey makes his own sauces and rubs, so if he has been tinkering, there



This Guy's in Searcy is known for its barbecue meats served with a selection of sides.



THE EATING ESSENTIALS

This Guy's Smoke N Grill

2030 S. Benton Ave.
Searcy
(501) 305-4227
facebook.com/thisguysmokegrill

Hours of Operation

Monday-Saturday: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m.



might be a new flavor to sample.

If you are in the mood for a burger but also want barbecue, This Guy's has the answer. The Smoke Stack featured a half-pound Angus hand-patted hamburger (chicken breast is another option) topped with pepper jack cheese, sliced smoked sausage, bacon, Kansas City Sweet barbecue sauce and smoked pulled pork on a toasted bun.

The Smoke N Nachos were fun to enjoy, loaded chip by loaded chip. They included a pile of house-cooked tortilla chips topped with smoked brisket (other choices are pulled pork or chicken), This Guy's Original Barbecue sauce, housemade cheese sauce and jalapeños. Each bite

delivered a unique culinary experience.

Desserts included fried pies, hand-dipped ice cream, shakes, cheesecake and a signature Caramel Brownie 'Splosion. I ordered the 'Splosion and was blown away by the warm caramel brownie topped with vanilla ice cream and drizzled with caramel and chocolate sauces along with a generous portion of whipped cream. I paused before spooning into the work of art. The flavor matched the beauty of the sweet treat.

"We have a good restaurant, and the Lord has blessed us," McCroskey said. "My staff is fantastic. Some started working for me in high school and now have families and still work at



The Caramel Brownie 'Splosion is a decadent blast of dessert.

This Guy's. They are like family."

I can attest to This Guy's hospitality. The staff treated me like family during my visit. I am sure they will do the same for you. 

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

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World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade

COURTESY OF WORLD'S SHORTEST ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

March 1

24th annual Little Rock Marathon
Little Rock, littlerockmarathon.com

March 7

Arkansas State Spelling Bee
Little Rock, aecc.com/spellingbee

March 12-14

Mountain View Spring Bluegrass Festival
Mountain View, mountainviewbluegrass.com

AAA State Basketball Championships
Hot Springs, ahsaa.org

March 13

Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge
Little Rock, 4h.uada.edu

March 14

Historic Camden Daffodil Festival
Camden, facebook.com/CamdenDaffodilFestival/

St. Patrick's Day Parade

Eureka Springs, visiteurekasprings.com/event/2026-st-patricks-day-parade

March 17

Wee Lil Hooligan Parade
Arkadelphia, scaec.com/community/st-patricks-day-parade/

World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade

Hot Springs, shortteststpats.com

March 20-21

Historic Washington State Park Jonquil Festival
Washington, facebook.com/jonquifestival

March 21

Texarkana Home & Garden Show
Texarkana, txkhomeshow.com

March 27-29

Arkansas Climbers Festival
Jasper, arkansasclimbers.org/festival

March 28

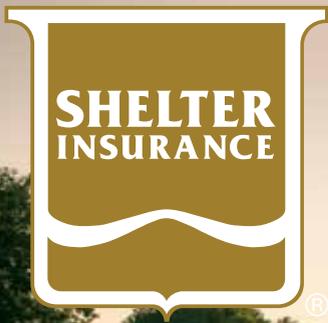
Arkansas Derby
Hot Springs, oaklawn.com

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

for puzzle on page 38

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

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