

# Arkansas Living

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APRIL 2026

## ON THE LINE

April celebrates  
lineworkers; May  
tests their craft

*Page 8*

*Plus:*

Famous Chili Co.

Jacksonville's Journey

Spelling Bee on TV

Sultana Museum



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CHANCE ALLMON

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ROB ROEDEL



## ON THE COVER

The mid-morning sun blazing behind him, third-year apprentice lineworker Ronnie Byrd of Woodruff Electric practices a pole-top rescue as part of his training and in preparation for May's Lineman Rodeo in Little Rock.

*Photo by Chance Allmon*

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APRIL 2026

VOLUME LXXIX, NUMBER 6

Arkansas Living (ISSN 0048-878X) (USPS 472-960) is published monthly by Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., 1 Cooperative Way, Little Rock, AR 72209.

Periodicals postage paid at Little Rock, AR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Arkansas Living, P.O. Box 510, Little Rock, AR 72203-0510  
Members: Please send name of your cooperative with mailing label.



An Official Publication of

**Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.**

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Subscription Price:  
\$12 per year for nonmembers

Member of Arkansas Press Association



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# Small-Town Splendor

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

An assignment last spring gave me the excuse I needed to finally detour through Wilson.

Established in the late 1800s as a company town, Wilson's scale is small but its preservation is remarkable. The Tudor-styled town square, in particular, feels like a jewel box, carefully restored, architecturally rich and unexpectedly refined in the middle of the Delta.

I arrived on a weekday and made a beeline for White's Mercantile 10 minutes before closing. There wasn't nearly enough

time to delight in the curated shelves of candles, kitchenwares, home décor and clothing, but I still left with a heavenly hand cream and a new friend.

When I mentioned the family I was headed to interview the next day — in a town about 15 miles away — the lovely woman working there smiled and said she knew them. Of course she did. That easy connectedness felt distinctly Arkansas.

I wish I had scheduled more time to explore Hampson Archaeological Museum State Park, which tells the story of the region's earliest inhabitants, and several other closed-for-the-evening businesses around the square.

But I needed to get checked in at The Louis. On my own dime, I feel compelled to add. Boutique hotels aren't line items in our not-for-profit budget. But every now and then, curiosity justifies a personal splurge. And this absolutely did.

My room balanced Delta history with quiet luxury and thoughtful details. That evening, I picked up dinner from Wilson Cafe — "Colossal Shrimp and Grits" that was no exaggeration — and took it back to enjoy on my room's veranda before settling in, fully embracing a plush robe



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

ABOVE Wilson Cafe on the town square is known for elevated Southern cuisine.



LEFT The Lee Wilson & Company cotton gin greets visitors to Wilson.

and the elegant stillness.

My only regret? I'd missed Wilson's Crawfish Festival by just a bit. You, however, are right on time. On April 11, the 11th annual Wilson Crawfish Festival will bring a full day of crawfish, live regional music, local vendors, the Little Miss Crawfish Pageant and plenty of family-friendly fun. Admission is complimentary with a donation benefiting the Wilson Fire Department and Rivercrest FFA.

There's plenty more to uncover in Wilson beyond crawfish season. According to the town's website ([wilsonarkansas.com](http://wilsonarkansas.com)), events unfold throughout the year. I can only imagine how Hallmarkian the square must feel at Christmas.

If my brief stop in Wilson proved anything, it's that Arkansas rewards curiosity. Sometimes the smallest towns leave the biggest impressions.

Happy exploring,

Jennifer Christman Cia  
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# April Fools'

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



Recently my wife and I were discussing common sense and that our granddaughter, Luna, possesses a lot of it for being only 5 years old. Actually, all our grandchildren have a lot of common sense and we asked ourselves, "Why is that?"

One answer is that they have grown up in a family that prides itself on pranks and jokes, and after years of being repeatedly tricked, they have learned to question everything and be less gullible. My youngest grandson, Owen, was born on April Fools' Day, and early indications are that he will be an epic prankster in a family full of them.

The Bible states in Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." A Google search for "Laughter is the best medicine" will yield over 100 million results, some stating that it relieves stress, some claiming that those who smile and laugh often add an average of seven years to their lives. Laughter appears to be serious stuff.

So, in honor of all the jokesters, pranksters and jesters out there who make us laugh and add joy and years to our lives, this April Fools' article is for you.

The exact origin of April Fools' Day is unknown, but historians have traced its roots back centuries. One theory is that it dates back to ancient Rome and a festival called Hilaria, held at the end of March near the vernal equinox, celebrating the end of winter gloom with masquerades and merriment.

Another theory is that it dates all the way back to 1582 when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. In the Julian calendar, the new year began on April 1. News traveled very slowly back then, so those who didn't get the message that the calendar had shifted continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1 and were called April Fools.

My first memory of being pranked was by my stepfather. My brother and I had lived in town before my mom married my stepfather, who immediately moved us to a farm in rural Iowa. He referred to us as "city slickers," and as young boys with no previous father figure, we were motivated to prove our worth to him on the farm.

The first challenge he gave us was to find rooster eggs. We would run out to gather eggs in the morning before school and then run in and ask him if we had found any rooster eggs. He would carefully inspect them and tell us no, we had not found any. He told us that rooster eggs are special, and that you can tell them from hens' eggs because they have large brown spots. The next day, we'd gather and show him eggs with brown spots, only for him to say the spots weren't big enough and to keep looking. This went on for days, until my mom finally had mercy on us and formally educated us on eggs, hens, roosters and how the process really worked. Decades later, my stepfather would randomly ask me if I had found any rooster eggs lately and laugh a bit.



One of my favorite April Fools' pranks involves my wife. I am a well-known prankster and with that reputation, people start to suspect everything that seems questionable, making every subsequent prank harder to pull off. Enter my sweet, kind, loving wife, Tracy, the trusted one.

For April Fools' Day one year, she purchased whole pigs' feet, boiled them in a big pot on the stove and served them up for dinner. I am sure there are good recipes for pigs' feet out there, but putting whole pigs' feet in a pot of boiling water with no seasoning yields a somewhat alien-looking and terrifying delicacy. Tracy made the normal side dishes, set the table and very sweetly called the kids down for dinner. Once the kids were seated, she very quietly grabbed a pair of tongs and served each of us ►

*APRIL FOOLS' continued on page 6*

## Cooperatives, AGFC partner on outdoor safety

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) have announced a three-year partnership aimed at elevating outdoor safety education across The Natural State. Through the agreement, the cooperatives will serve as AGFC’s “Official Outdoor Safety Education Partner.”



COURTESY OF ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

A highlight of the partnership is the introduction of the Arkansas Outdoor Safety Graduation Cord. This program, scheduled to launch during the 2026-27 school year, recognizes high school seniors who demonstrate a superior commitment to responsible recreation. To earn the cord, graduating high school seniors must complete certifications in hunter education, boater education and all-terrain vehicle safety.

Vernon “Buddy” Hasten, president/CEO of Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation and Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. said, “The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are built on a foundation of safety and community service, making this partnership a natural fit. The electric cooperatives in Arkansas work to improve the quality of life for members. Safety is always an area of focus in all aspects of our operations. This partnership extends our emphasis on safety to ensure that every Arkansan who enjoys the woods and waters returns home safely.

“We are honored to support the AGFC in educating the next generation of outdoorsmen and women.”

## Clark County’s triple certification backed by cooperatives

Clark County has reached a major milestone in its economic development strategy, earning three significant industrial site development-ready designations.

In addition to ONSite certification from the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, Clark County has received the Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI) designation from the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Select Site certification from Entergy Arkansas.



TYLER HALE, ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Cooperative leaders and state and local officials mark Clark County’s economic development certifications for a new development-ready industrial site.

Cooperative leadership, including JD Lowery, director of community and economic development, and Colby Wells, CEO of South Central Arkansas Electric Cooperative, joined state officials like Secretary of Commerce Hugh McDonald and community leaders to celebrate the announcement in late February.

Lowery said, “This is truly a great example of teamwork in Arkansas to support one of the communities we serve. Because this site is split between two electric providers’ territory lines, it is the first in the state to earn a site certification from both the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and Entergy Arkansas.”

McDonald said, “Clark County is on the rise, and we’re looking forward to big wins in the future.”

### APRIL FOOLS’ continued from page 5

a whole boiled pig foot. We said grace, and then Tracy and I casually grabbed our knife and fork and began cutting on our pigs’ feet. It was at this point that the kids went into hysterics saying, “What is this?” “This is disgusting,” and “There is no way I am eating this.” To be fair, it was a pretty smelly and gruesome affair. Tracy then very calmly said, “April Fools’” and went and got a meatloaf out of the oven.

In a world that has become all too divided, with a recent Gallup poll indicating that unhappiness is at a record high, with people feeling more anger, stress and worry than ever before, a little laughter probably is the best medicine. I hope that you and your family find some laughter and fun this April Fools’ Day and keep it going the rest of the year. ☺

## Crayons, kindness and thank-yous

After the completion of mutual aid outage restoration work following Winter Storm Fern, Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI) Utility Solutions crews received colorful drawings and handwritten thank-you notes from students at Ripley Middle School in Ripley, Mississippi, served by Tippah Electric Power Association.

The students thanked the lineworkers, right-of-way crews and safety professionals who braved the harsh conditions to get the power back on.

Line Construction Foreman Brandon Grinde shared how much the notes meant to crews in the field.

“The response and gratitude from these communities and amazing people is what kept us warm in those dark and cold weeks,” Grinde said. “Part of why we do what we do is simply that those around us need a hand sometimes, and that’s what good neighbors are for.”

That sense of purpose resonates throughout the organization. Senior Director of Utility Sales Ross O’Kelley said the drawings and notes were a powerful reflection of the impact crews make every day.

“Heartwarming responses are good reminders that our teams are out there truly impacting lives and making a positive difference,” O’Kelley said. “We are very proud and thankful to work for an organization that focuses on helping people and the things that really matter.”



COURTESY OF RIPLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

## TRIVIA

- Nine-banded armadillos are surprisingly adept in water. They can cross water by inflating their intestines for buoyancy or walking along the bottom of a stream or pond while holding their breath up to six minutes.
- Arkansas is named after the Quapaw Indians, who were referred to by Algonquian speakers as “Akansea.”
- Trees enter dormancy in the fall by shrinking their cells and concentrating sugars, which hardens the cells and helps prevent freezing damage during winter. However, in extreme cold, this defense may not be successful, and trees can rupture.



- Many baby birds are born with the ability to sing but must learn the specific melodies of their species from elders.

## Where Is It?

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

In the March issue, we hid a pinwheel. Remarkably one correct reader who found it in a Razorback fan photo accompanying the Baum-Walker Stadium story: “A windy day at the ballpark! Page 24 on right-hand side of the picture in the middle of the page.”

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

**Jevonna Luna, Brookland (Craighead Electric Cooperative)**

**Betty D. Jones-Burt, Cabot (First Electric Cooperative)**

**Larry Collins, Monticello (C & L Electric Cooperative)**

**Linda Maksymiak, Kingston (Carroll Electric Cooperative)**

**Sherry Cook, Newport (Farmers Electric Cooperative)**

For April, we’ve hidden these Easter lilies, and they’re going to be a lily bit challenging to find!

April 15 is the deadline (for this and your taxes!). To enter, click on the “Where Is It?” link on the homepage of [arkansaslivingmagazine.com](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com), or go directly to [arkansaslivingmagazine.com/where-is-it-contest](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.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. February’s winner was: Pamela Bradford, Viola (North Arkansas Electric Cooperative).*



- The collective nouns for animals are delightfully diverse, including a smack of jellyfish, a mob of kangaroos and a business of ferrets.



- In January 1925, 20 courageous mushers and their sled dogs completed a treacherous 674-mile relay-style journey from Nenana to Nome, Alaska, in 127 hours to provide 300,000 units of lifesaving diphtheria antitoxin, stopping a deadly epidemic. The journey normally took a month.
- “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” — Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist

# ON THE

*April celebrates lineworkers;  
May tests their craft*

STORY BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA  
PHOTOS BY CHANCE ALLMON

The clock ticks as a lineworker ascends a utility pole toward an injured co-worker — a brother on the line.

Five minutes.

Five minutes to reach him. Five minutes to secure and lower him safely to the ground. Five minutes to begin life-saving care and seek medical attention.

“Timing is your enemy right now,” says Henry Smith, manager of safety training and workforce development for Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC), watching from below.

The drill is called pole-top rescue, and the scenario is not theoretical.

“What this simulates is somebody who’s been incapacitated — shocked, heart attack, something, while he’s up there,” Smith explains. “And you’ve got to get him down in less than five minutes.”

And speed alone isn’t enough. Protocols matter. Equipment must be secured properly, and every step followed exactly.

The drill unfolds at the cooperatives’ North Little Rock training facility during a weeklong Northwest Lineworker College class. It’s a cold February morning. Wooden poles rise against a wide Arkansas sky, the sun beaming but the air sharp as apprentices — gloves on, hooks strapped, belts cinched — move through a rescue that demands control as much as quick action.

It’s rehearsal for the work they do all year long. Even in the controlled training yard, the scenario reflects real-world complications.

April 13 is when the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and many cooperatives mark Lineworker Appreciation Day — a time to recognize this discipline and the men and women who restore power after storms, and keep Arkansas and our neighbors in other states energized year-round.



**ABOVE**  
Seconds count. Third-year apprentice lineworker Ronnie Byrd of Woodruff Electric demonstrates precision, safety and speed during a pole-top rescue simulation.

**LEFT**  
Woodruff Electric apprentice lineworkers Ronnie Byrd and Dalton Reynolds inspect and prepare their safety straps before a climb.

# LINE

## Rodeo-ready

In May, this same mastery will move to the Arkansas State Fairgrounds in Little Rock, where cooperative lineworkers from across the state will gather for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Lineman Rodeo — competing hard, learning from one another and strengthening the solidarity that matters when storms hit. This year's rodeo represents a renewed statewide effort to bring the state's cooperative crews together.

Much of the rodeo highlights the work lineworkers already perform — climbing, transferring equipment, executing tasks at height — only this time, it is scored for safety, efficiency and execution. With some fun in the mix.

"It's a series of events," Smith says. "Some of them are safety, like pole-top rescue, there's one called the egg race and then there are some mystery events."

---

**"What this simulates is somebody who's been incapacitated — shocked, heart attack, something, while he's up there," Smith explains. "And you've got to get him down in less than five minutes."**



Before the first step is taken, lineworkers inspect their safety equipment.

The mystery events aren't gimmicks or tricks, Smith says: "These mystery events are everyday jobs that they do out in the field." There are team and individual competitions, and the rodeo will feature participants from younger apprentices to experienced journeymen.

Overseeing this morning's activities is the apprentices' instructor, John Finley, AECC health and safety specialist III. He says the rodeo sweet spot often falls among third- and fourth-year apprentices. "They're young, energetic. Get up and down the pole, good and quick."

But age alone doesn't define readiness. Even some seasoned lineworkers still push themselves, Finley says. He mentions a veteran who times his own performance during training "to make sure he stays competitive against his own."

First-, second- and third-place awards will be presented, along with an overall team champion. The winning cooperative will receive a perpetual trophy that remains with the champion for the year before returning to be awarded again, its base growing with each new name engraved.

Precision matters. Communication matters. Small mistakes cost points. Proper form earns them.

"It's like the Olympics," Smith says.

Not because of flash, but because of execution.

He adds, "It's a thing of beauty to see when everything's working. It's like an orchestra. You know, everything's in sync with each other."

Smith knows this personally. He joined the cooperatives in early December after 27 years with Memphis Light, Gas and Water, where he worked primarily as an underground lineworker — what he calls a "mole man," spending most of his career in vaults and manholes beneath downtown Memphis. Storm work, long hours and the demands of the trade are familiar territory. ➤

First Electric fourth-year apprentice lineworker Tristen Cottrell secures the hard line for a fellow apprentice climbing a pole.

## Performance and partnership

This year's rodeo is not open to the general public. Organizers hope to grow the rodeo thoughtfully in the years ahead — expanding participation and opening to broader audiences while preserving a focus on safety and skill.

The long-term vision includes strengthening the state's representation at the International Lineman's Rodeo & Expo. This year's competition will be held Oct. 14-17 in Overland Park, Kansas, with more details at [linemansrodeokc.com](http://linemansrodeokc.com).

Of the apprentices training on this February morning, some say they will participate in the Little Rock rodeo. For them, the competition is less about trophies and more about measuring themselves.

Second-year apprentice Dalton Reynolds of Woodruff Electric doesn't hesitate when asked what he hopes to prove.

"Be the best there is," he says.

He adds, "We just want to go see how we compare to everybody else. See how we match up against everybody."

Third-year apprentice Ronnie Byrd, also of Woodruff Electric, sees the rodeo as both challenge and milestone.

"It sounds like a pretty good experience," he says. "It'd be real fun."

Behind the friendly competition



Second-year apprentice lineworker Dalton Reynolds of Woodruff Electric looks forward to demonstrating and measuring his skills at the Lineman Rodeo.

lies something deeper. Smith says, "It builds camaraderie."

Which is everything in the cooperative world, as today's competitor may be tomorrow's partner. The rodeo ensures that when lineworkers do meet — often in difficult conditions — they've already shaken hands.

And when storms roll in, competition gives way to cooperation.

Smith says, "We want to win, but we're going to come together when we need each other." 



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# Brick by Brick

*Four generations built Fort Smith's Famous Chili Company*

BY KAT ROBINSON

The Korkames family has handed down a legacy of hearty culinary creations through four generations, from a quiet start in the Arkansas River Valley.

The Famous Chili Company began just over a century ago. Four brothers from Lebanon arrived at Ellis Island around 1900, where they were naturalized as American citizens. These young men worked their way across the country to Texas, where they first laid down roots. That's where the chili story begins, with Joseph Korkames making his first big investments.

"My great-grandfather had saved up money through his work and eventually bought three movie theaters during the silent picture era," Joseph Korkames, vice president and director of operations for Famous Chili Company, says. "He had patents in fishing equipment, candy making, all kinds of stuff. He bought the chili recipe with no meat in it from one of his employees, added beef and had a winner."

After the elder Korkames lost the theaters to fires over time, he moved his wife and three boys to Russellville, where the family started first a sandwich shop and later, the Famous Cafe, in the 1920s. Chili was one of the restaurant's specialties.

In the 1930s, the family moved to Fort Smith and opened the Famous Cafe there, running it until the 1950s. When a landlord raised the rent, the cafe moved back to Russellville and was still in operation into the 1990s. The chili operation remained in Fort Smith on the state's western edge.

## All about the base

By the 1930s, Famous Chili was already producing chili in concentrated bricks.

"The idea was never just to sell a finished bowl of chili," Korkames explains. "It was meant to be a base. You add water, tomatoes, beans, whatever you have, and suddenly you've got a meal that feeds people."

Those bricks grew in popularity, and the company expanded.

"This company exists because my family learned how to adapt," Korkames admits. "Every generation faced something that forced them to rebuild. Food was always the way forward."



Dating back to the 1920s, the Korkames family's Famous Chili was a favorite menu item served at their Famous Cafe.

Famous Chili is made with beef ground daily, with no pork, chicken, fillers or defatted meats. Its low water content, higher salt and spice levels and unique packaging process give it a refrigerated shelf life of about a year. "One brick can turn into over 2 pounds of finished chili," Korkames says. "People don't always realize how much food you can make with it."

It's a truly versatile product that can be served straight up or used as a base for tacos, sloppy joes, enchiladas, chili cheese dip or spaghetti-style dishes. Two brands — Famous Chili and Four Star Chili — are made for the retail market by the company, with slight differences in spice level and packaging.

"For a long time, we didn't advertise at all," Korkames says. "We relied on restaurants, on word of mouth and on people trusting the product."

Famous Chili supplies restaurants throughout Arkansas and the region. Many local restaurants rely on the chili bricks as a starter for their own house-made offerings.

## Hearty helpings

The company regularly gives back, too, supporting school fundraisers, charitable causes and local events, sometimes even without recognition.

“My dad never believed in advertising,” Korkames says. “But he believed in giving back. That’s something I wanted to carry forward.”

When Korkames took over leadership at the end of 2023, he brought a renewed focus on telling the company’s story and expanding its footprint. Famous Chili has grown by roughly 30% these past couple of years, with expanded food service distribution and increased visibility through marketing and social media.

“Growth doesn’t mean changing who we are,” he says. “It means making sure this company is still here for the next generation.”

In the near future, Famous Chili plans to pursue Food and Drug Administration (FDA) grants for packet spices, reintroduce products like cheese dip and salsa and expand spaghetti sauce offerings. One way or another, Korkames says the caliber of the operation and the grade of the products won’t falter.

“The recipe, the quality, the family — that’s nonnegotiable,” he says. “That’s what carried us through everything. 



COURTESY OF THE FAMOUS CHILI COMPANY

The Famous Chili Company in Fort Smith makes Famous Chili and 4 Star Chili bricks for retail consumers and restaurants.

### ARKANSAS STATE CHILI COOKOFF: THE SCOOP

On April 11, the 10th annual Arkansas State Chili Cookoff will be held at the Barn in Holiday Island. The event is sanctioned by The International Chili Society. Proceeds will go to benefit People Helping People, a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, including how to enter, contact Steve Falkowski at (845) 235-3073 or visit [tinyurl.com/2026ARChili](https://tinyurl.com/2026ARChili).

WEB EXCLUSIVE! Read an expanded version of this story at: [arkansaslivingmagazine.com](https://arkansaslivingmagazine.com)



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# Jacksonville's Journey

*City's rapid growth fueled by war, wings*

STORY BY JACK SCHNEDLER

On the eve of World War II, Jacksonville's population totaled around 400. It wasn't yet an incorporated community. Now, it is the Little Rock metropolitan area's sixth largest city, with nearly 30,000 residents.

This astonishing growth since 1941 is thanks mainly to the military impetus of World War II and the Cold War, followed by the ongoing support for America's defense. About one-third of the city's 28.7 square miles is occupied by the **Little Rock Air Force Base** (LRAFB), 1500 Vandenberg Blvd. ([littlerock.af.mil](http://littlerock.af.mil)), which employs 7,200 military and civilian staff. The city also serves as the headquarters for **First Electric Cooperative**.

In June 1941, six months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the federal government announced that a \$33 million fuse and detonator plant would be built in Jacksonville. Incorporation as a city soon followed.

"The land was taken over by the federal government by condemnation proceedings and Jacksonville became a boom town," reports the Encyclopedia of Arkansas. "Housing was in very limited supply, and people lived wherever they could, even in their cars, until a trailer park and housing addition could be built."

The ordnance plant closed at the end of the war, bringing a lull to Jacksonville's growth. Then civic efforts led to LRAFB's opening in the fall of 1955. Population growth renewed, thanks also to later suburban sprawl. A new city hall was built in the 1990s.



Standing on the original grounds of the WWII-era ordnance plant, the Jacksonville Museum of Military History preserves the stories of those who served.

Parked near the front gate of the LRAFB, is a Super Hercules transport that was the last C-130 to fly from Vietnam as that war ended. On April 29, 1975, the crew evacuated 452 South Vietnamese civilians, more than five times its rated capacity. The cockpit alone was crammed with 32. The refugees were brought safely to Thailand. Visitors may park outside the main gate for a closer view of this airplane with a history.

The popular **Thunder Over the Rock** ([facebook.com/thunderovertherock](https://facebook.com/thunderovertherock)) LRAFB Air Show is scheduled to return in 2027.

## Honoring history

Given the city's martial connections, it's fitting that a prime visitor attraction is the **Jacksonville Museum of Military History** ([jaxmilitarymuseum.org](http://jaxmilitarymuseum.org)), one of the best of its kind in Arkansas. Opened in 2005, the museum occupies the building at 100 Veterans Circle that served as the ordnance plant's administrative office during World War II.

A display just inside the entrance puts a human face on a statement attributed to Civil War Union Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman: "War is hell!"



A C-130H aircraft rests on the flightline at the Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas' largest military installation and a longtime driver of Jacksonville's growth.



The 56,000-square-foot Jacksonville Community Center hosts various recreational activities and special events.

Shaped like a map of The Natural State, the wall-size memorial lists alphabetically the 596 Arkansans who died during the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. Arrayed overhead are 596 military dog tags. Hanging like a teardrop, each represents one of those lost. The explanatory text is brief, letting the names and dog tags speak for themselves.

William Kehler, a retired colonel, leads museum tours that are lively as well as informative. He explains Arkansas' two Titan missile disasters while standing near the red-tipped reentry cone of a Titan II missile with a warhead 600 times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic bomb. In 1965, a Titan missile-silo fire near Searcy killed 53 workers. In 1980, a silo explosion near Damascus caused one death and threatened central Arkansas with catastrophe.

Some of the museum's most fascinating exhibits relate to World War II. Several feature women, who totaled 70% of the 14,000 employees at the Arkansas Ordnance Plant. One poster shows three female workers identified as "Soldiers Without Guns." In another, a woman is pictured with a soldier in the background and a headline reading: "The girl he left behind is still behind him. She's a WOW — Woman Ordnance Worker."

On Jacksonville's southern fringe, a layout marks the Civil War engagement of Aug. 27, 1863, at **Reed's Bridge** ([tinyurl.com/ReedsBridgeBattlefield](http://tinyurl.com/ReedsBridgeBattlefield)), on Arkansas 161 (South First Street).

Displays include a replica cannon and information about the Southern forces' delay of the Union advance on Little Rock. A Confederate major wrote that his unit's guns "sent shell and shot, winged with fury screaming and hissing up their lines." Also on the site is a replica ensemble of five farm buildings from the Civil War era.

Dating back even farther is **McCraw Cemetery** ([tinyurl.com/McCrawJacksonville](http://tinyurl.com/McCrawJacksonville)) 300 yards east of Military Road Baptist Church, 2101 Old Military Road. The earliest of its 37 marked graves is that of Elizabeth Sander, who died in 1841. Other burials include Elzie Wood, a veteran of the 1898 Spanish-American War. Among Black burials in the cemetery's southwest corner is Maria Smith, interred in 1916 beneath a gravestone from a fraternal group.

### Recreation and restaurants

Elsewhere in Jacksonville, the **Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Shooting Sports Complex** ([tinyurl.com/AGFCShootingRange](http://tinyurl.com/AGFCShootingRange)), 2800 Graham Road, is said to be the largest recreational facility of its kind in Arkansas.

The layout includes 14 trap-shooting fields, three skeet overlays, a 3D archery range, a lake, two pavilions and three lighted fields. Its 5,100-square-foot clubhouse has a classroom seating 100. Future plans include a rifle and pistol range.

**Splash Zone** water park ([tinyurl.com/SplashZoneWaterPark](http://tinyurl.com/SplashZoneWaterPark)), 201 Martin St., is preparing to open for the 2026 season on Memorial Day weekend. Its popular three-pool layout includes a plunge pool with two water slides, a water tunnel, a dual-racer slide, dew-drop water showers and water blasters.

**Paradise Park** ([tinyurl.com/ParadiseParkJacksonville](http://tinyurl.com/ParadiseParkJacksonville)), North Redmond Road, offers inviting facilities. There are pavilions, a basketball court, a playground, ➤



Reed's Bridge Civil War site in Jacksonville has a replica cannon and information on the 1863 battle.



With trap and skeet shooting and archery, the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Shooting Sports Complex in Jacksonville is the largest recreational facility of its kind in the state.



Opening Memorial Day weekend, Splash Zone has three pools, two water slides and a water tunnel.



Colorful murals are found throughout Jacksonville's downtown.

picnic tables, a horseshoe pitch and a paved wildlife trail.

Varied activities and special events take place at the 56,000-square-foot **Jacksonville Community Center** ([tinyurl.com/JacksonvilleCommunityCenter](http://tinyurl.com/JacksonvilleCommunityCenter)), 5 Municipal Drive. The center has been honored as an Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association Facility of the Year and received a Governor's Fitness Award.

Among Jacksonville's restaurant options are **The Fried Pie Shop**, 1321 T.P. White Drive, ([facebook.com/Theoriginalfriedpieshop](https://www.facebook.com/Theoriginalfriedpieshop)); **Smokin' Buns BBQ**, 25401 Arkansas 107 ([smokinbuns.net](http://smokinbuns.net)); **The Hook Catfish Restaurant**, 1802 S. Arkansas 161 ([thehookjacksonville.com](http://thehookjacksonville.com)); and **Pho and More**, 123 S. Jeff Davis Ave. ([facebook.com/phoandmore.inc](https://www.facebook.com/phoandmore.inc)). 

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# Spring's Sure Thing

*Garvan Woodland Gardens delivers, whatever the weather*



BY CARLTON AND LEIGH WING

Arkansas is famous for false springs, meaning the weather warms up early in the calendar, and we get a little too excited about outside activities in short sleeves.

No matter how many times we fall for Mother Nature's mirage, there is a place in Garland County that will always look beautiful and showcase flora's finest: Garvan Woodland Gardens.

Hot Springs boasts some of the finest outdoor recreation around — from mountain biking and hiking to fishing on Lake Ouachita, Lake Hamilton or Lake Catherine. (Keep in mind, those horse races are outside, too!) At Garvan Woodland Gardens, you can explore over 4 miles of scenic trails surrounded by Arkansas' beautiful plant life.

Did you know, there are over 10,000 different types of azaleas? (Bring that fact to your next game of Trivial Pursuit.) Garvan highlights some of Arkansas' best azaleas by showing the top 160 varieties along its 210 acres of land. In the winter their horticulture team plants 150,000 tulips showcasing 150 varieties. They usually show their beauty in early spring, but if you missed them, you can purchase the bulbs for your garden in the gift shop! After the tulips finish their bloom, the gardening team changes out the beds for summer annuals, always offering visual feasts.

If you are looking for an outdoorsy chapel for your wedding, it's hard to find a more "out of doors" experience than inside the doors of Anthony Chapel. Built from both glass and wood, the glass is so prominent that one gets the feeling the wood is only there for structural integrity. The glass provides all the views of the woods with rain-proof protection for that expensive wedding dress and updo for the photos. It hosts over 200 weddings a year, rain or shine.

It's nice to have a place where everyone can walk on easy paths and appreciate the beauty of our Natural State's plant-life. While visiting you will see flower enthusiasts, photographers, hikers, families and people who just need to get away and surround themselves with the touch of nature.

Leigh's father is a lifelong farmer who taught his children, "Those plants will change you."

Anywhere in Arkansas' great outdoors is an opportunity to let the scene change you for the better.

For a visual look at the amazing Garvan Woodland Gardens, visit Arkansas' Great Outdoors on YouTube, and watch Episode 38 ([tinyurl.com/AGOGarvan](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tinyurl.com/AGOGarvan)). For more information about Garvan Woodland Gardens, visit [garvangardens.org](http://garvangardens.org).

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



SABRINA HIMSCHOOT



MARION BALL

ABOVE Thousands of tulips in full bloom are part of the annual Tulip Extravaganza each spring.

LEFT A butterfly enjoys the flowers at Garvan Woodland Gardens.

BELOW Garvan Woodland Gardens in Hot Springs has over 4 miles of scenic trails surrounded by beautiful plant life.



COURTESY OF GARVAN WOODLAND GARDENS



# The Bee on TV

Cooperatives-sponsored spelling competition airs April 2

BY DAVID COPELAND

In a thrilling display of linguistic skill, 11-year-old sixth grader Karthik Dalai from East Hills Middle School in Sebastian County emerged victorious at the 2026 Arkansas State Spelling Bee, held March 7 at the Arkansas 4-H Vines Center in Little Rock.

The excitement of the Arkansas State Spelling Bee won't be limited to those in the room. The full competition will be televised on Arkansas TV — formerly Arkansas PBS — on April 2 at 7 p.m., giving viewers across the state a chance to follow every round, including Karthik's championship-clinching performance.

Karthik won by correctly spelling "paratactic." Deriving from Greek, the adjective is defined as "of, relating to, or exhibiting coordinate ranging of clauses, phrases or words one after another without coordinating connectives."

Having finished in fourth place last year, Karthik's victory marks a personal milestone and positions him to represent Arkansas at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., May 26-28. In school, Karthik favors mathematics and science and has big future dreams of becoming a doctor.

The state bee was sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas for the seventh year. This ongoing commitment exemplifies the cooperatives' dedication to the Cooperative Principle of "Concern for Community." By supporting educational initiatives like the spelling bee, the cooperatives invest in Arkansas' youth, fostering skills that extend far beyond the classroom. This year's program reached over 85,000



JENNIFER CHRISTIAN/CIA



CHANCE ALLMON

ABOVE A bee-hind the scenes look as Arkansas TV is set to air the state bee on April 2 with champion speller Karthik Dalai and host Marine Glisovic, director of strategic communications for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

LEFT After correctly spelling "paratactic," 11-year-old sixth grader Karthik Dalai becomes the 2026 Arkansas State Spelling Bee champion.

**The full competition will be televised on Arkansas TV — formerly Arkansas PBS — on April 2 at 7 p.m., giving viewers across the state a chance to follow every round, including Karthik’s championship-clinching performance.**



KYLE DOLARHITE

students in 430 schools across Arkansas.

Spelling bees offer benefits that go far beyond simply spelling a word correctly. The competition helps develop public speaking confidence, teaches resilience under pressure and encourages perseverance — qualities that benefit students in every area of life.

As Karthik prepares for nationals, his story inspires the next swarm of spellers. Public, private and homeschool students can participate in the Scripps National Spelling Bee program by visiting [spellingbee.com](http://spellingbee.com).



CHANCE ALLMON

ABOVE Top finishers (bottom row, from left): Viktoria Caril of Pulaski County placed second; Arav Ashish of Benton County tied for fourth; Michael Jones of Baxter County tied for third; and Joshua Oh of Lonoke County tied for fifth. (Top row, from left) Warren Reynolds of Union County tied for fifth; Carter Metcalf of Marion County tied for fifth; Kaylee Tran of Craighead County tied for fourth; and Daksh Singh of White County tied for third.



CHANCE ALLMON

ABOVE 2026 Arkansas State Spelling Bee champion Karthik Dalia lifts his trophy as Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Senior Director of Corporate Communications Rob Roedel cheers on.

LEFT Joseph MungNgaihte of Logan County concentrates while taking a turn at the mic on the 4-H Vines Center stage.

BELOW Callen Johnson of Clark County uses his hands to help him spell out a word.



CHANCE ALLMON

*David Copeland, manager of grants and economic development for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, is the director of the Arkansas State Spelling Bee.* 

**Spell along with the Bee!**

Scan this QR code to spell along with the competitors during the televised Arkansas State Spelling Bee on Arkansas TV, April 2 at 7 p.m.



**Bee-yond the winning word**

Additional words spelled correctly by Karthik included:

- ✓ Sous vide
- ✓ Alisier
- ✓ Gondwana
- ✓ Naumachia
- ✓ Oopuhue
- ✓ Morion
- ✓ Deimos

A total of 22 rounds and 274 words were required to determine a champion at the 2026 Arkansas State Spelling Bee.

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Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

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This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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# The Heart Behind the Lines: The Legacy of Norman Griffin

## Honoring National Lineman Appreciation Day

When storms roll through Arkansas and the lights go out, linemen answer the call. Often working in dangerous conditions and around the clock, these men quietly keep the power flowing to homes, farms and businesses across rural communities.

Each year on the second Monday of April, electric cooperatives across the country recognize those dedicated professionals on National Lineman Appreciation Day — observed this year on April 13. For First Electric Cooperative, that spirit of service is perfectly reflected in the legacy of longtime lineman Norman Griffin.

When Griffin began his career with First Electric on Jan. 3, 1978, he wasn't simply starting a job — he was joining a brotherhood that would shape his life for the next 31 years.

Throughout his career, Griffin built more than power lines. He built lasting friendships and a deep sense of family alongside fellow crew members Lloyd Jones, Dave Price, Tommy Brown and Holly Crum. Forged through long hours, unpredictable weather and demanding work, those relationships became the foundation of a career defined by dedication, perseverance and heart.

Griffin admits he was “pretty headstrong,” and learning the trade did not always come easily. But he never backed down from a challenge. Through determination and a willingness to work hard, he grew into his role, guided by a belief he often shared: “You can't build a line in one day.”

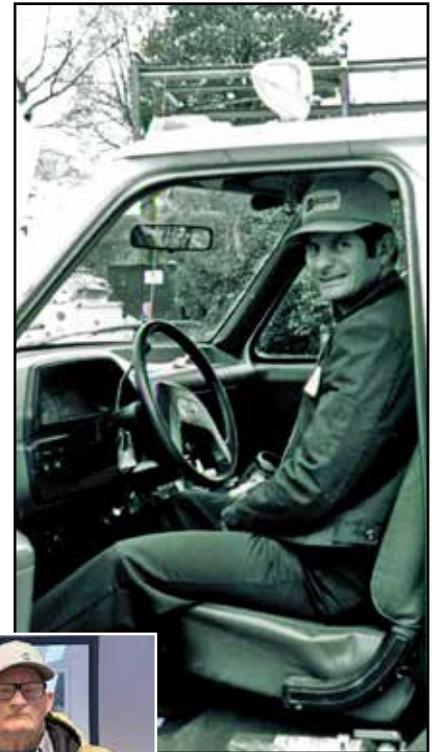
That patient, steady mindset defined both his work and his character.

Known for his dependable spirit, Griffin also became recognized for a phrase he frequently shared with dispatch when responding to outages: “We are on the way.” His fellow crew members embraced the saying so much that they gifted him a small mouse that rode along in his truck — a lighthearted reminder of the camaraderie shared among the crew.

That sense of brotherhood carried him through the toughest days.

In 1989, Griffin became a serviceman in an area linemen referred to as “the bottom,” a region known for its numerous wells and heavy agricultural demands. There, he fully understood the responsibility that came with the job. Keeping the power running meant more than restoring electricity — it meant keeping farms operating and supporting local families' livelihoods.

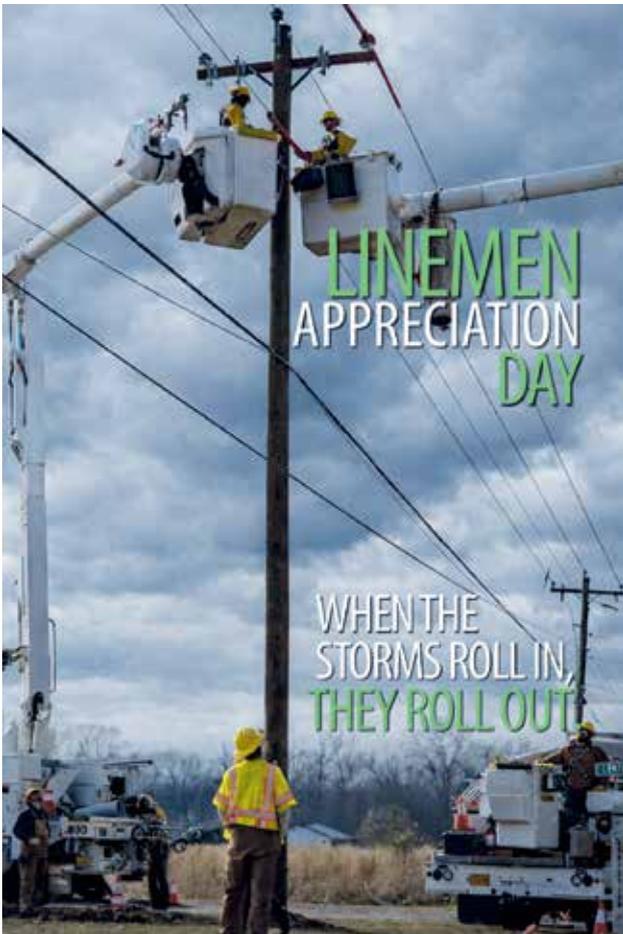
We honor Norman and every lineman whose courage and compassion keep our communities powered.



NOW AND THEN: (Top photo) Norman Griffin in his early days at First Electric as a lineman, and (left photo) Griffin today as a retired employee.



Norman Griffin and his mouse traveled to many service calls.



# Powering Communities while Caring for the Land

## Celebrating Earth Day

Each year on April 22, Earth Day reminds us of the importance of caring for the land and natural resources that support our communities. For cooperatives like First Electric, stewardship of the land has long been part of our mission. Because cooperatives are locally owned, the decisions made each day reflect the values of the communities we serve.

Providing reliable electricity is the main goal, but doing so responsibly — with care for the environment — is equally important. One way cooperatives support this balance is through responsible vegetation management. Keeping trees and plants properly trimmed near power lines helps prevent outages, improves safety, encourages healthy growth and protects Arkansas' forests and farmland. Electric cooperatives also encourage members to use energy wisely.

Simple steps such as sealing air leaks, improving insulation or choosing energy-efficient appliances can help families reduce energy use and lower monthly bills. Across Arkansas, electricity powers farms, schools, small businesses and homes that keep communities thriving.

Delivering that power safely and reliably while caring for the land around us is a priority for First Electric. This Earth Day, our cooperative joins communities across the country in recognizing the importance of protecting the natural resources that make rural life possible.



By investing in modern infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency and responsibly managing the land around power lines, cooperatives continue working to power our communities while caring for the place we call home.

Improving insulation can help families reduce energy use and lower monthly bills.



First Electric right-of-way crews keep trees trimmed near power lines to help prevent outages and improve safety.



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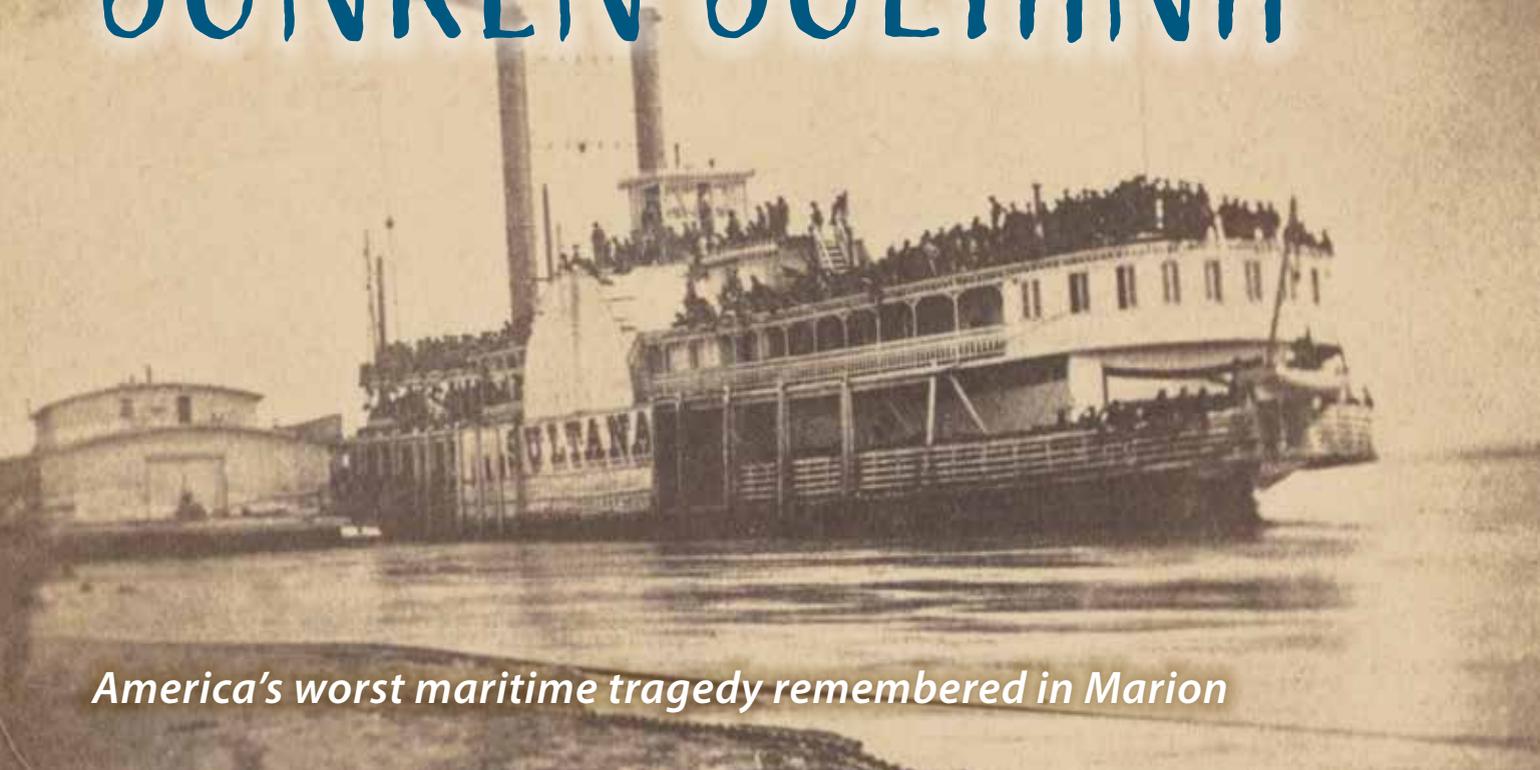
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# SUNKEN SULTANA



*America's worst maritime tragedy remembered in Marion*

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BY CHRIS HOOTEN

**J**ohn Fogleman, an Arkansas State University (ASU) senior in 1978, waited until after class to ask his American history professor about the Sultana disaster. After all, his professor was an authority on the Civil War era, and the Sultana was the worst maritime disaster in American history.

The event occurred at 2 a.m. on April 27, 1865, on a flooded Mississippi River near current Marion. A north-bound steamboat named Sultana (legal capacity 376), overloaded with mostly emaciated Union ex-prisoners of war heading home, exploded when three of its four strained boilers blew up.

Of the 2,100 people on board, more than 1,200 died. Steam and shrapnel killed hundreds instantly. Others burned to death, drowned or died from hypothermia, including the captain and part owner J.C. Mason, whose body was found miles down the river. Locals, including ancestors of the Fogleman and Barton families still in Crittenden County, risked their lives to rescue and treat more than 100 survivors.

Referring to his history professor, Fogleman says, "Yeah, he'd never heard of the Sultana." A retired circuit court judge from Marion, Fogleman is president of the Sultana Disaster Museum board of directors.

As the Mississippi River changed course over the years, the remains of the Sultana were buried beneath farmland near Marion, and so was its story.

## Forgotten tragedy

April 1865 ranks as one of the more pivotal months in American history. Here's a quick rundown:

**April 9:** Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to signal the end of the Civil War.

**April 14:** Famous Shakespearean stage actor John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln while Booth's accomplices attempted to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward.



CHRIS HOOTEN

Retired school teacher Melody Walker has served as director of planning and operations the past four years at the current Sultana Disaster Museum in Marion.

LEFT The Sultana steamboat sank on the Mississippi River near Marion in 1865 carrying 2,100 passengers, making it the worst maritime disaster in U.S. history.



**April 21:** The Lincoln funeral train left Washington, D.C., for a 13-day journey to Springfield, Illinois, with 180 stops across 1,654 miles.

**April 26:** A 12-day manhunt for Booth ended in a tobacco barn in Virginia where Booth was killed after refusing to surrender.

**April 27:** The Sultana exploded seven miles upriver from Memphis, Tennessee, after picking up 1,000 bushels of coal for fuel at Hopefield, now West Memphis.

Historians have paid little attention to the Sultana disaster.

A survey of several respected books on the Civil War reveals most don't even mention it. The late writer Shelby Foote, made famous by his commentary in Ken Burns' 1990 TV miniseries "The Civil War," devoted less than a page to the Sultana out of 3,000 pages in "The Civil War: A Narrative." For a century now, Arkansas history textbooks have — pardon the cliché — missed the boat.

"I just think the Sultana was one of those things in the cavalcade of events in April 1865 that just fell through the cracks," says Dr. Thomas DeBlack, author of "With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874" and a former history professor at Arkansas Tech University. "It was in that gray area between the end of the war and reconstruction."

The Sultana Survivors Association (SSA) formed 20 years later with an ambitious agenda. It solicited Congress for pensions and a national monument to the Sultana and eventually got both. The SSA erected the first monument in 1916 in Mount Olive Cemetery near Knoxville, Tennessee. East Tennessee was part of the Union, and 522 prisoners of war from there were aboard the Sultana; 429 died.

"After the last survivors died in the 1930s," Fogleman says, "the Sultana story was basically dead and forgotten."

### A new chapter

Fifty years later, an attorney from Knoxville, Tennessee, and a newspaper reporter learned of the Sultana disaster, wrote a feature and invited interested parties to a meeting at the Mount Olive cemetery. More than 50 people showed up in 1987, and a loose association of friends and descendants has met annually since.



April 27 is Sultana Remembrance Day in Arkansas, marking 161 years since the disaster near Marion.

Chicago historian Gene Salecker authored "Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Explosion, April 27, 1865" in 1996. He brought his collection of Sultana artifacts and a 14-foot replica of the steamboat in 2011 to an exhibit at ASU. Two years later, Marion residents formed the Sultana Historical Preservation Society, and it opened the current 1,000-square foot Sultana Disaster Museum in 2015.

It has taken more than a decade, but the Sultana Disaster Museum shifts this fall to a permanent and handsome home, the renovated and enlarged Marion High gymnasium of 1939. The school donated the gym/auditorium in 2020, and fundraising

took off in 2021.

"It has been crazy," Fogleman says, "with donations coming from 28 states and more than 400 individuals." The heavy hitters include FedEx and Munich Re with \$1 million apiece. The latter purchased the former Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co. in 2009.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas are a sponsor of the Sultana Disaster Museum and will have a room named after the organization.

The \$8-million investment to date has transformed the old gym into inviting spaces Heartland Scenic Studio of Omaha, Nebraska, will fill with high-tech exhibits. The plans include a scaled version of the Sultana taking up much of the gym floor. A space with exposed original rafters for travelling exhibits once housed a shop class. A new hallway will lead to a classroom for independent programming, and a modern library and boardroom will retain the gym's original ticket window. There will be a dining area in the back and a museum store up front. An auditorium with a 21-foot screen and space for 120 guests will be available to rent.

Memphis historian and author Jerry O. Potter called the Sultana Disaster one of the 10 greatest forgotten events in American history. Sadly, most Arkansans never knew it happened. Late this fall, a state-of-the-art museum in Marion will tell the countless stories of the Sultana in ways visitors will never forget.

*The Sultana Disaster Museum is located at 104 Washington St. in Marion. For more information on when the new museum will open this fall, visit [sultanadisastermuseum.com](http://sultanadisastermuseum.com).* 

## Keep Clear around Pad-Mounted Transformers

The green boxes in neighborhoods are pad-mounted transformers that are vital for safely and reliably delivering electricity to homes and businesses. While they may seem harmless, these transformers contain high-voltage equipment and should never be used as play areas.

Parents are advised to remind children not to climb, sit or play on or near these transformers. Doing so can be dangerous and might interfere with equipment essential for keeping power flowing to your home.

Members can also help by avoiding planting shrubs, flowers or other landscaping too close to transformers. Keeping the area clear allows linemen safe access for maintenance and quick restoration of service during outages.

If you notice a damaged or open transformer, stay away and contact First Electric Cooperative immediately by calling 800-489-7405.

Maintaining a clear area around transformers is crucial to ensuring safe and reliable electric service for the entire community.



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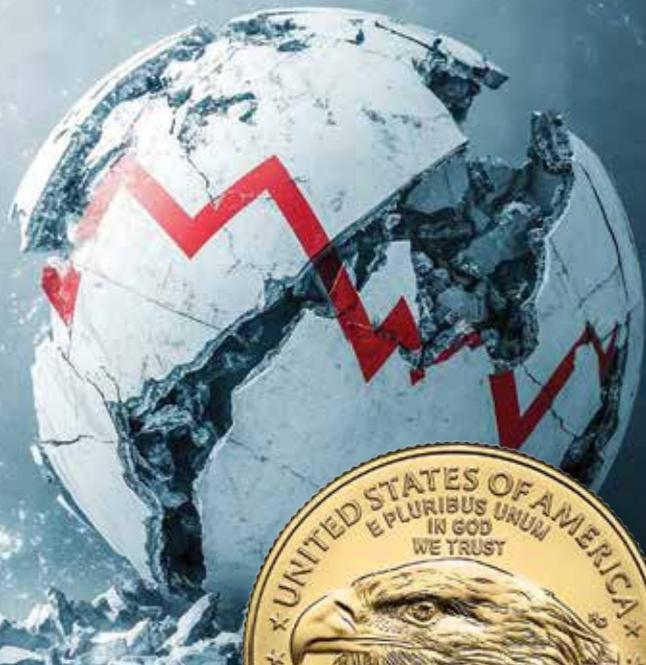
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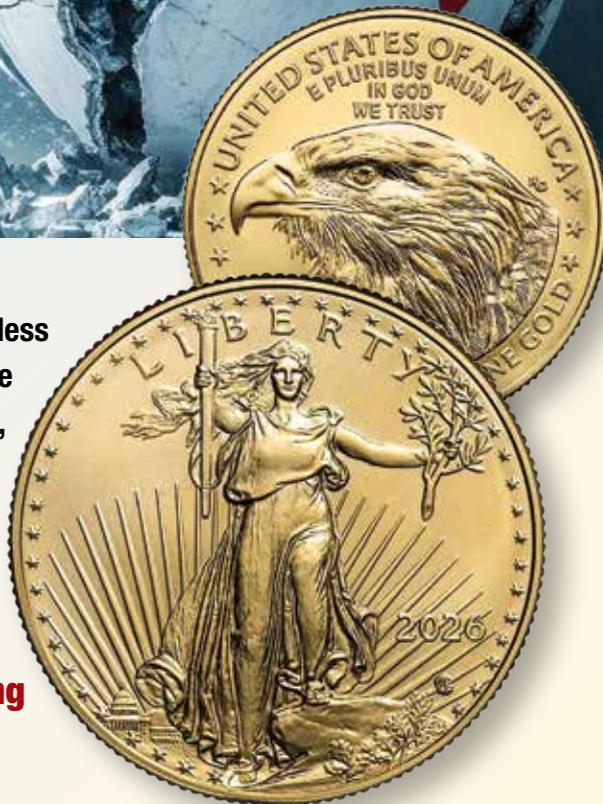
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# Snapshots from our readers



Fletcher's very first Easter. Ashley Conner, Rison.



Jack says counting his Easter eggs is serious business. Stephanie King, Camden.



Witten, Wren Leigh and Jrue met a new best friend down the road, Ms. Cherokee. Shirley Myers, Van Buren.



Lyla is a beautiful girl among the pretty spring flowers. Amber White Photography, Benton.





**Skyla gets to visit a real Easter bunny!**  
Joann Grace, Lowell.



**Vivi, Hollis and Xander — besties since birth! Dying eggs on a lovely spring day.**  
Rae Corn, Cave Springs.



**Macklyn baking chick cupcakes.** Tracy Ashburn, Jonesboro.



**Jaylon getting a little “help” opening his eggs.**  
Lezlie Vaughan, Huntsville.



**Jack is all ears!**  
Charlotte Stone, Star City.

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](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com/submit-a-photo).

# Annual Appeal

*Colorful blooms to conquer the summer heat*



BY JANET B. CARSON

Gardeners love to see color in their gardens. An easy way to achieve color quickly is using flowering annuals. We have two distinct seasons for annuals — one for heat-loving summer color and one for cool-season blooms. April is when to plant summer color, and choosing plants that can endure the heat will ensure nonstop blooms all summer long.

When choosing annuals, consider the planting site. Do you have full sun or heavy shade? Is the soil decent or poor and rocky? Will plants grow in containers or in the ground? Do you have water nearby? How much space do you have to fill?

Next comes color — bright, bold colors or softer pastels? Seasonal color has to be replaced twice a year, so don't plant only summer annuals. Concentrate your color in high visibility areas instead of diluting it by scattering plants throughout the landscape. 



Dragonwing Begonia

ANNUALS	CHARACTERISTICS	VARIETIES
Angelonias	Full sun is best. Spikes of blooms in shades of pink, purple, white and red.	Angel Mist is a compact-spreading variety that grows no taller than 8-10 inches. Archangel and Serena varieties can grow up to 20 inches.
Begonias	Wide range of varieties. Some do best in full sun, while others do best in the shade. Red, pink and white flowers are most common, but there are some orange and yellow varieties.	Dragonwing grows best with morning sun and afternoon shade. Wax leaf begonias will grow in sun or shade. Pink, red or white blooms. Babywing is a more compact plant, while Big and Whopper are large varieties.
Caladiums	Caladiums are grown for their showy foliage. While there are varieties for sun and shade, they add a lot of color in shady areas. Foliage color can range from white to red, pink or silver with a variety of patterns.	These can be planted as dried bulbs or bought as plants. Some popular varieties include White Christmas, Pink Beauty, Tapestry and Wildfire.
Coleus	Many varieties to choose from, with excellent choices for sun and shade. Wide range of leaf sizes, shapes and colors.	Flame Thrower series, Wasabi, Redhead, Inferno and Lava Rose are popular choices.
Cupheas	Heat- and sun-loving plants that attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Tall tubular flowers in shades of red and orange that bloom nonstop. Several varieties to choose from.	Honeybells is more cascading. Vermillionaire is taller and more upright. Sweet Talk and Sriracha series have larger blooms. Bat-Faced has interesting flowers.
Impatiens	Wide range of varieties and colors. Popular and prolific bloomer with flat, five-petaled flowers in red, pink, white, purple and orange.	Common impatiens do best in shade. Sunpatiens will tolerate full sun, while New Guinea hybrids fall in the middle, which tolerate more light but need afternoon sun protection.
Lantanas	Heat- and sun-loving plants. Lovely blooms are made up of a cluster of small flowers, with solid colors or mixed colors per flower. Compact, tall and spreading varieties exist. Rabbit- and deer-resistant.	Bandana and Luscious series grow up to 20 inches tall and up to 16 inches across. The Lucky series is a bit smaller, while the varieties New Gold and Passionfruit spread up to 24 inches while only growing 12 inches tall.
Pentas	Heat- and sun-loving plants and a hummingbird favorite. Clusters of small star-shaped blooms in shades of red, pink and white bloom all summer long.	Graffiti and Lucky Star series are a bit more compact.
Vincas	Heat- and sun-loving plants. Nonstop bloomer in shades of pink, red, purple and white.	Cora and Titanium series are disease-resistant. They grow 12-14 inches tall with a 10-12 inch spread. Tattoo series has some interesting color combinations.
Zinnias	Several new series give a wide range of colors and most are disease-resistant. Full sun is best.	Zahara series has some unique colors. Profusion series has been around longer and is a good performer.

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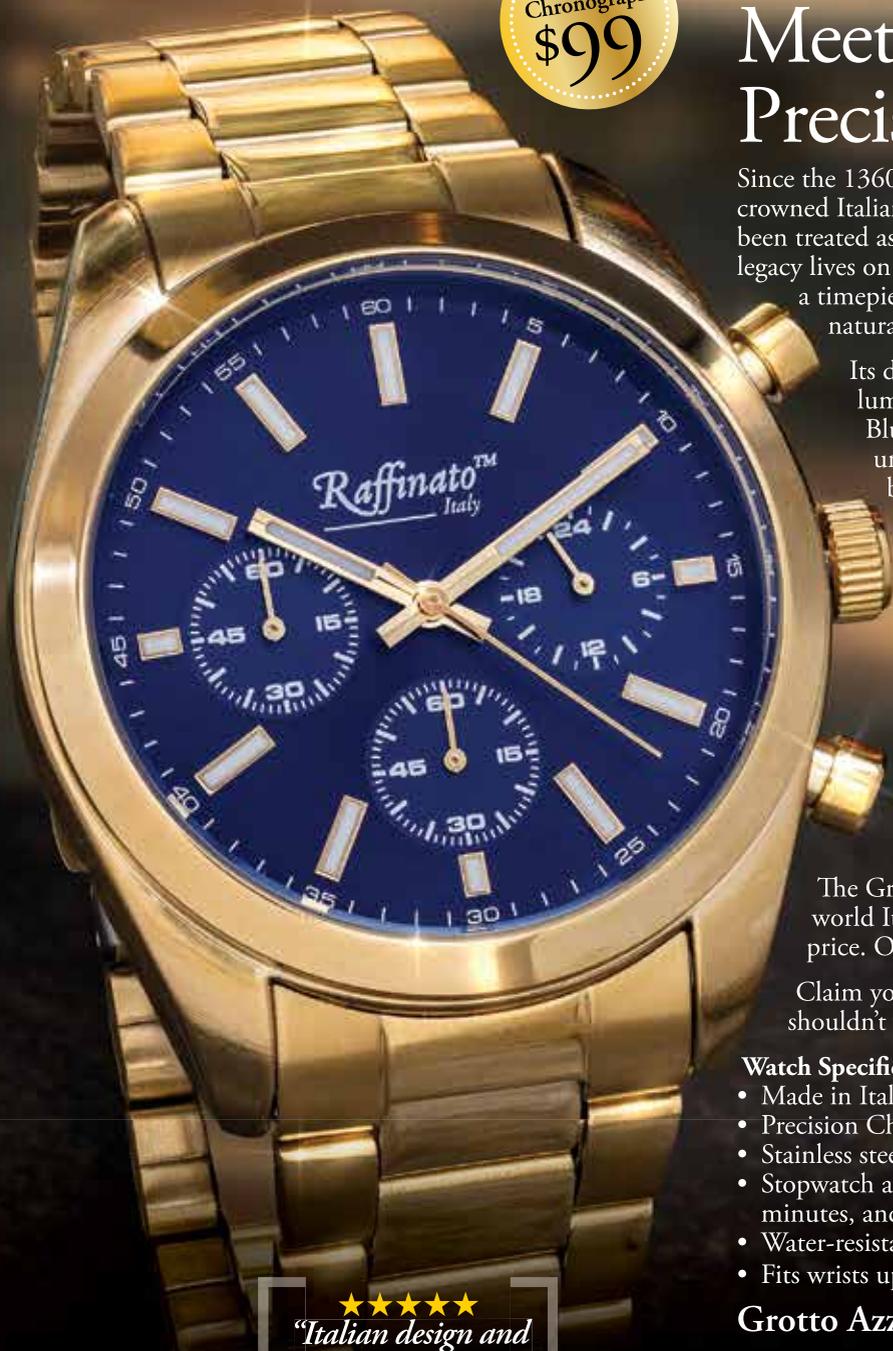
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# Splashes of Citrus

*Bright dishes burst with fresh, juicy flavors*

RECIPES AND PHOTOS  
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

## Lemony Cucumber Pepper Salad with Dill

Makes 4 servings.

### Dressing:

- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 cup fresh dill, roughly chopped

### Salad:

- 2 cups seedless cucumber, chopped
- 1/4 cup red onion, chopped
- Half a red bell pepper, chopped
- Half a yellow bell pepper, chopped
- Half an orange bell pepper, chopped
- Salt, pepper to taste



**For dressing:** Place all dressing ingredients in a jar and shake until combined.

**For salad:** In a bowl, toss vegetables and dressing together. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before serving. Add salt and pepper to taste.

*Note: Fresh dill is best, but if you don't have it, use 2 tablespoons dried dill.*

## Lemon Berry Parfaits

Makes 6 servings.

- Zest from one lemon
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 6 ounces lemon yogurt
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 cups whipped topping, thawed
- 2 1/2 cups blueberries and/or raspberries
- 8 graham crackers, crushed

Wash lemon and zest it prior to juicing. In a bowl, whisk together lemon zest, lemon juice, yogurt, sweetened condensed milk and whipped topping until well-combined. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

To serve, fill glass dishes halfway with lemon mixture, add berries and top with a little more lemon mixture. Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs on top and serve.





## Ecuadorian-Inspired Shrimp Cocktail

Makes 6 or more servings.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1/2 cup ketchup                                     | 3/4 cup cilantro, chopped                    |
| 1/2 cup fresh lime juice                            | 1 Roma or other small tomato, finely chopped |
| 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice                     | 2 ripe avocados, peeled, pitted and diced    |
| 1/4 cup fresh orange juice                          | 1 1/2 cups seedless cucumber, chopped        |
| 1 small red onion, chopped                          | Salt to taste                                |
| 24 ounces cooked shrimp, deveined and tails removed |  |

In a glass bowl, stir together ketchup and lime, lemon and orange juices. Add remaining ingredients, and toss to coat. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

*Notes: This dish is a blend of Mexican shrimp cocktail and Ecuadorian ceviche. It's delicious, healthy and light. Serve with tortilla chips or the traditional Ecuadorian topping, popcorn — unexpected but authentic.*



This month's web exclusive recipe:

## Guacamole

More recipes on our website: [arkansaslivingmagazine.com](http://arkansaslivingmagazine.com)

*Juliana Goodwin is a food columnist, cookbook author and avid traveler. If you have a question, email [julianalovesfood23@gmail.com](mailto:julianalovesfood23@gmail.com).*

# Rise and Dine

*Lively selections for spring brunches*

## Garden Quiche

Makes 6-8 servings.

- 1 frozen deep-dish pie crust
- Garden veggies of choice, chopped (onion, kale or spinach, peppers, asparagus, halved cherry tomatoes)
- Olive oil
- Cooked meat of choice, chopped (ham is my favorite)
- Shredded cheese
- 9 eggs
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- Salt, pepper to taste
- Italian seasoning

Heat oven to 350. Thaw/prick pie crust with fork, if recommended by package directions.

Sauté veggies in olive oil. Start with firmer veggies like onions and peppers. Add softer veggies like tomatoes and spinach last.

Layer meat in bottom of crust. Top with sautéed veggies, then shredded cheese.

In a bowl, whisk together eggs and heavy whipping cream and pour over filling. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and Italian seasoning.

Place pie on a baking sheet to catch any spillage. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Center should be set when gently shaken.

*April Hutain, Norfolk*



Garden Quiche

JENNIFER CHRISTMAN, CIA

## Tom's Savory Sausage Casserole

Makes 6 servings.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Butter for pan  | 1 pound Italian sausage, hot or mild, casings removed |
| 1 pound new potatoes  | 3 large eggs  |
| 2 tablespoons unsalted butter                                       | 1 1/2 cups half-and-half                              |
| 8 ounces fresh mushrooms, chopped                                   | 1 cup Gruyere or Swiss cheese, grated                 |
| 1 1/4 cups onion, chopped   |   |
| 2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped (or 1 heaping teaspoon dried) |   |

Heat oven to 350. Butter a 9x13 pan.

Bring a large pot of water to boil and cook potatoes until just done, about 10-15 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool.

In a skillet, melt butter over low heat. Add mushrooms and onions, cooking until onions are transparent. Remove mixture to a heatproof bowl, draining excess liquid. Stir in parsley and set aside.

Using the same skillet, raise heat to medium-low and cook sausage until browned. Set aside.

Slice cooled potatoes into 1/2-inch rounds and place in bottom of prepared pan. Add mushroom mixture over potatoes, then sausage.

In a large bowl, beat eggs with half-and-half until smooth, about 3-5 minutes. Pour over casserole and sprinkle cheese on top.

Bake for 35-45 minutes, until top is golden brown and egg mixture is set in center. Serve immediately.

*Peggy Schultz, Austin*

## Sunrise Banana Nut Bread

Makes 16-20 servings.

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cooking spray/butter/shortening | 1 tablespoon orange zest            |
| Flour                           | 2 teaspoons baking powder           |
| 1 cup sugar                     | 1 teaspoon baking soda              |
| 1 cup packed light brown sugar  | 1/2 teaspoon Himalayan pink salt    |
| 1 1/2 sticks butter, softened   | 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour |
| 1 cup vanilla almond milk       | 1 tablespoon vanilla extract        |
| 2 eggs                          | 1 cup cashews or walnuts, chopped   |
| 3 ripe bananas, mashed          |                                     |

Heat oven to 350. Grease and flour two loaf pans.

In a large bowl, cream together sugar, light brown sugar and butter with an electric mixer. Add remaining ingredients gradually. Beat for about 3 minutes until well-combined.

Pour batter into prepared pans.

Bake for 1 hour or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

*Note: This is an easy-to-make bread that is delicious and has a great texture.*

*Mary Shipp, Ash Flat*

**Submit your favorite recipes! If your recipe is selected for printing, we will send you an Arkansas Living wooden spoon!**

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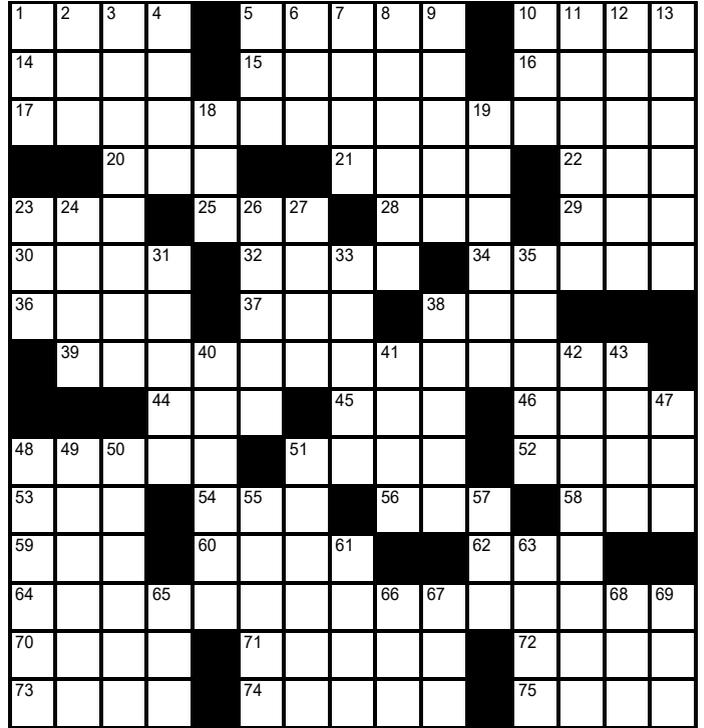


## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Time-Sensitive Oddities *By Victor Fleming*

#### ACROSS

- 1 \_\_\_ John's (pizza chain)
- 5 Coolidge, Gruber and Hayworth
- 10 Blues singer \_\_\_ James
- 14 "Make it fast!"
- 15 Scruggs' music partner
- 16 "\_\_\_ Lake"
- 17 Topic of a 2008 Canada-based radio show
- 20 Chopping tool
- 21 "At \_\_\_" (military order)
- 22 Hosp. area
- 23 Comm. syst. for the deaf
- 25 Hunting dog, briefly
- 28 "Be quiet!"
- 29 "I get it!"
- 30 Bird at the beach
- 32 Wander \_\_\_ (longing to travel)
- 34 With 48-Across, "day" that 17-, 39-, and 64-Across were in the news
- 36 Black and white cookie
- 37 Smeltery input
- 38 "Live from N.Y." show
- 39 Topic of a 2008 British TV report
- 44 Consumed
- 45 Bloc for docs
- 46 Thom of shoe fame
- 48 See 34-Across
- 51 Photo defect
- 52 Alpha, \_\_\_, gamma
- 53 "Vive le \_\_\_!"
- 54 Penny, in Macau
- 56 "... two if by \_\_\_"
- 58 Corn on the \_\_\_
- 59 Not well
- 60 Redbone, Spinks or Uris
- 62 Scratch, say
- 64 Topic of a 1996 ad in many newspapers
- 70 Skin care products brand



- 71 "Don't Know Why" singer Jones
- 72 \_\_\_ into (bawled out)
- 73 "Compos mentis"
- 74 Easy mark
- 75 Ambulance personnel, briefly
- 24 Hang ten
- 26 "Home \_\_\_"
- 27 Ending for Blacks, Gettys and Lynch
- 31 Like a devoted friend
- 33 Flower feature
- 35 Exactly vertical
- 38 Animal trap
- 40 "In the game" lead-in
- 41 Aussie birds
- 42 Birthday party serving
- 43 Alliance since 1949
- 47 Capture
- 48 Big name in chips
- 49 French exclamation
- 50 Lubricant container
- 51 Mistake, to a tot
- 55 Blood lines
- 57 Grant, Madigan or Reynaldo
- 61 Foam ball brand
- 63 Fit for the task
- 65 "\_\_\_ Como Va" (Santana hit)
- 66 Mouse kin
- 67 "Love \_\_\_ neighbor"
- 68 All fired up?
- 69 Mormon group, for short

#### DOWN

- 1 Boone or Summerall
- 2 Fleck from a fire
- 3 \_\_\_ bars (gym sight)
- 4 High spot
- 5 "Mayberry \_\_\_"
- 6 U.N. agcy. since 1919
- 7 "A \_\_\_ of Two Cities"
- 8 "Finally!"
- 9 Cash in a cache, e.g.
- 10 Upper-left keyboard key
- 11 Kind of garage
- 12 Chinese martial art
- 13 Like the Oscars and the Orcas
- 18 Conger or moray
- 19 Put up again, as an artwork
- 23 "A long time \_\_\_..."

CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 42

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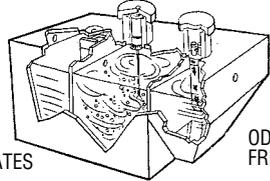
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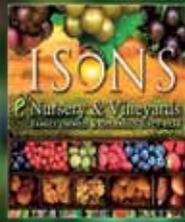
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# Bobby's, Built to Last

*Family-run fixture still delights in central Arkansas*



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROB ROEDEL

When Bobby and Linda Brock opened Bobby's Dairy Bar on Arch Street in Little Rock in 1958, they built it on simple values: good food, good service and happy customers.

The cafe has changed locations over the years, finally settling in North Little Rock. About 12 years ago Bobby Brock III and Tiffany assumed ownership. But its comfort food classics and loyal guests remain at the heart of the business.

Bobby's opens with strong appetizers, including the



Fried Green Beans are a standout appetizer at Bobby's Cafe.

enjoyable Fried Green Beans, Cheese Sticks, Onion Rings, Queso and Chips and Fried Pickles.

The Ham Super Salad was particularly good, featuring fresh lettuce, black olives, onions, bell peppers, bacon bits and a large amount of chopped, smoked ham. The salad, which I ordered with ranch dressing, provided an array of flavors with each forkful and was a great lighter meal option.

Daily specials are always a treat at Bobby's Cafe. The special on this day was Hamburger Steak.

I enjoyed the dish that included a freshly ground beef patty topped with rich, brown gravy and sliced onions. There are also daily vegetable options. I chose fried okra along with mashed potatoes and gravy. Other daily specials include Chicken Fried Steak, Chicken Fried Chicken, Beef Tips, Open-Faced Roast Beef Sandwiches, Barbecue Chicken, Pork Loin and more.

Bobby's Cafe's signature menu item, the Bobby

Burger, was created in response to a regular customer's request for a bigger hamburger. Bobby's dad created the legendary masterpiece, which fills a full dining plate of real estate. It



The Fried Catfish Plate at Bobby's Cafe is a popular daily lunch dish and evening option on Thursdays and Fridays when the restaurant stays open until 7:30 p.m.

features 1 pound of ground beef topped with bacon, a choice of pepper jack or American cheese, lettuce, tomato, onion, mayonnaise and pickles.

I loved the presentation and flavor of the Bobby Burger. I thought I was doing a decent job consuming a quarter of the creation, until I noticed a table of construction workers. Out of the eight-man crew, five of them completed their Bobby Burgers along with orders of fries and onion rings. They told me that they are



Piled with meat, lettuce, black olives, onions, bell peppers and bacon bits, the Ham Super Salad is a lighter menu option.



## THE EATING ESSENTIALS

### Bobby's Cafe

18505 MacArthur Drive  
North Little Rock  
(501) 851-7888  
[tinyurl.com/BobbysCafeNLR](http://tinyurl.com/BobbysCafeNLR)

### Hours of Operation

Monday-Wednesday: 6:30 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Thursday-Friday: 6:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.  
Saturday: 6:30 a.m.-noon



regulars and love the Bobby Burger. I'll order a regular hamburger next time and leave the Bobby Burger to the younger guests with more physically demanding jobs.

The Catfish Plate is offered daily and is especially popular on Thursday and Friday evenings when the restaurant is open until 7:30 p.m. The three pieces of golden brown USDA catfish are accompanied by hushpuppies, coleslaw and fries. Fresh catfish that is cooked right can't be beat, and Bobby's Cafe does it right.

Desserts are also available daily. I enjoyed a huge piece of Eclair Cake with layers of crushed chocolate graham crackers, vanilla pudding and a chocolate fudge frosting. No matter what day you visit, there are usually three or so delicious options.

Multiple customers told me that Bobby's is known for breakfast, including three-egg omelets, pancakes and an extensive selection of other menu items. I trust the warm, friendly service of the veteran servers and a hot country-style breakfast at Bobby's Cafe is a great way to start a day. 🍷



Daily lunch specials, like Hamburger Steak, come with a choice of two vegetable selections.

Dining recommendations? Contact Rob Roedel at [rob.roedel@aecc.com](mailto:rob.roedel@aecc.com).

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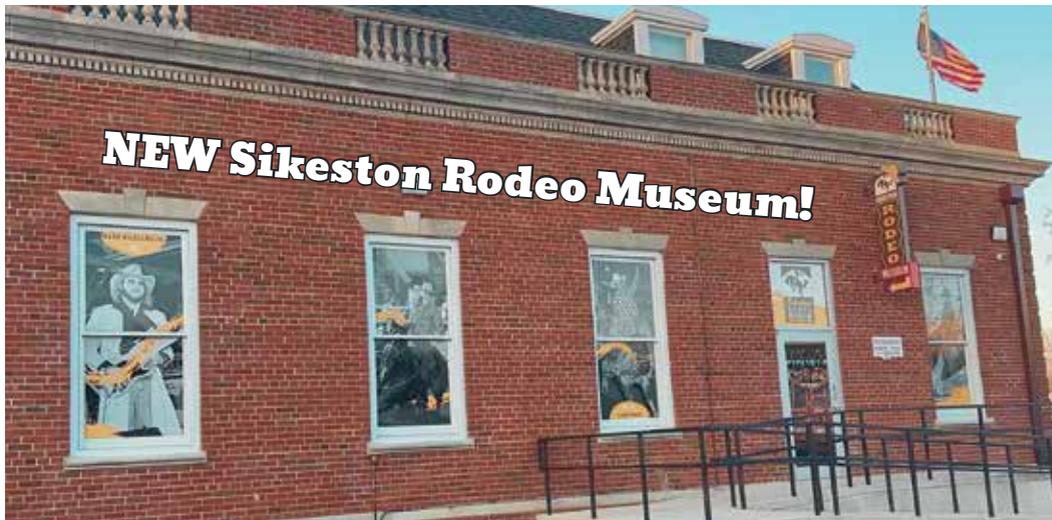
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# Calendar



Arkansas Cherry Blossom Festival  
COURTESY OF VISIT HOT SPRINGS



Arkansas Pie Festival  
BRANDI BURKE



Pine Log Vintage Market  
COURTESY OF PINE LOG VINTAGE MARKET

**March 28-29, April 3-5**

**Easter Festival**  
Fayetteville, rivercrestorchard.com/  
easterfestival

**April 4**

**Arkansas Cherry Blossom Festival**  
Hot Springs, tinyurl.com/AR2026CBF

**Autism Festival & Walk**  
Little Rock, tinyurl.com/AutismFestival

**April 4-11**

**Hogskin Holidays**  
Hampton, hogskin-holidays.com

**April 7**

**Arkansas Travelers Opening Day**  
North Little Rock, milb.com/arkansas

**Northwest Arkansas Naturals Opening Day**  
Springdale, milb.com/northwest-arkansas

**April 11**

**Arkansas Roots Music Festival**  
Dyess Colony, tinyurl.com/RootsFest2026

**10th annual Arkansas State Chili Championship**  
Holiday Island, tinyurl.com/2026ARCHili

**11th annual Wilson Crawfish Festival**  
Wilson, wilsonarkansas.com

**April 16-19**

**Lanterns Festival at Wildwood Park**  
Little Rock, wildwoodlanterns.org

**April 17-18**

**Byrdfest**  
Ozark, byrdfest.com

**Arkansas Folk Festival**  
Mountain View, tinyurl.com/FolkFestAR

**April 18**

**Blazin' BBQ Festival**  
Manila, blazinbbqfestival.com

**Bee Day**  
Little Rock, tinyurl.com/BeeDay2026

**April 18-19**  
**Spring Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show**  
Bentonville, tinyurl.com/GMJ26

**April 18-25**  
**Fordyce on the Cotton Belt Festival**  
Fordyce, fordyceonthecottonbeltfestival.com

**April 22-26**  
**Spring Fling Bike Rally**  
Eureka Springs, springflingrally.com

**April 23-25**  
**Timberland Bluegrass Revival**  
Sheridan, tinyurl.com/TimberlandRevival

**April 24-26**  
**Pine Log Vintage Market**  
Brookland, pinelogmarket.com

**Dogwood Festival**  
Siloam Springs, tinyurl.com/ARDogwoodFest

**April 24-May 3**  
**Arts & The Park**  
Hot Springs, tinyurl.com/ArtPark26

**April 25**  
**Arkansas Pie Festival**  
Cherokee Village, arkansaspiefestival.com



Central Arkansas Heart Walk  
NANCY MOORE

**Central Arkansas Heart Walk**  
Little Rock, tinyurl.com/heartwalker

**Northwest Arkansas Heart Walk**  
Bentonville, tinyurl.com/heartwalker

**Oasis Arts and Eats Fest**  
Jonesboro, oasisfest.org/artsandeats

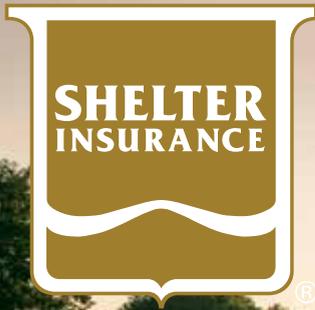
**Red Shoe Shuffle 5K**  
Little Rock, tinyurl.com/RedShoeShuffle

**April 25-26**  
**Fouke Monster Festival**  
Fouke, facebook.com/FoukeMonsterFest

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS**  
*for puzzle on page 38*

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