

All-American★ Fayetteville's Rukaya Alrubaye is NRECA youth spokesperson

Page 8

Plus:

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Ozarks Electric Cooperative Youth Tour delegate Rukaya Alrubaye, 17, recently captivated an audience of thousands as the national youth spokesperson for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Photo courtesy of Rukaya Alrubaye



SARAH SHEPARD

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Full Circle

Catching up with a Youth Tour star

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

On page 8 of this issue, you'll meet — and be inspired by — Rukaya

Alrubaye of Fayetteville, the second Arkansan selected as national youth spokesperson for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

But first, let's check in with the initial NRECA youth spokesperson from Arkansas, Samantha Evans.

In 2002, Evans, from Toad Suck in Perry County, applied to attend Youth Tour — an educational trip to Washington, D.C. — at the urging of a beloved neighbor who worked for First Electric Cooperative. She was selected to represent the co-op.

Evans says, "That was the first time I had been to D.C. That was the first time I had been out of state without my parents. That was the first time that I rode on an

airplane. There's many firsts."

She would soon have more plane rides in her future, as she was selected as the Arkansas Youth Leadership Council delegate and the NRECA national youth spokesperson. For 17-year-old Evans, writing and presenting a speech before thousands at a national conference in Nashville, Tennessee, was daunting enough, but then trauma struck.

Months before her speech, "I had a car accident, a major car accident, where I was hit head-on. ... I broke my hip, my femur, my right arm and several ribs," Evans says.

Working with doctors and physical

therapists, she relearned how to walk, using her NRECA speech as motivation during recovery.

Evans says she was moved by encouraging cooperative cheerleaders: "Everyone sent flowers and get-well wishes. The rural electric network is just powerful. I will never forget that."

She will also never forget the speech experience. "Imagine a little girl from Toad Suck, Arkansas, with broken limbs coming in, talking (before) this huge group. You know, I could fit probably 20 of my towns in that place."

With help rehearsing and refining her presentation, Evans says she made it through, recalling, "It was a really great moment."

Evans interned for First Electric and graduated from Bigelow High School, Spelman College and the University of Minnesota. She worked for the City of North Little Rock, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute.

Today, Evans, mom to 14-year-old Jeremiah, lives in Conway and has worked for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis since 2018.

Her position — senior community development advisor — has allowed the former Youth Tour star to come full circle.

She says, "My primary focus here is really on rural and economic development. So, go figure, right? ... I'm excited that I get to contribute back to the communities that I grew up in and that I still love and cherish through the work that I'm doing now."

Jennifer
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COURTESY OF SAMANTHA EVANS



Samantha Evans

Mother's Day Challenge

BY VERNON "BUDDY" HASTEN

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



May is a month with a lot of topics to write about.

May is Military Appreciation Month and includes Memorial Day, and as Americans, we all owe those who made the ultimate sacrifice our thanks and respect. Mother's Day

is also in May, and mothers also deserve our thanks and respect for their sacrifices. May is also the month I was born; I turn 55, so it is a milestone year. This is when AARP gets serious about convincing me to join the club, and I begin to wonder how much tiger is left in the tank and what I can do to ensure the next generation of cooperative leaders are ready for the challenge.

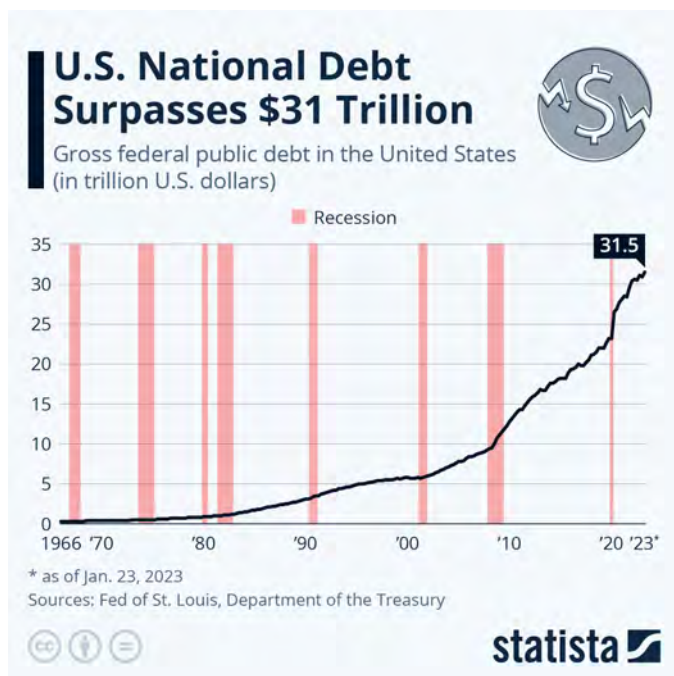
Moms make a lot of sacrifices for the next generation, and last February, I wrote about many that my mom made for me. However, motherhood isn't just about sacrifice but also about teaching, mentoring and developing kids who will be the adults running the show in the future. My mom did this by making sure we made it to school, work and church. She would also make sure that we actively participated. Failure to sing like a songbird in church would be met with a rap on the head with a hymnal, and nodding off in church would get a solid twist of the ear.

My mother often used church lessons to manage my rather rambunctious behavior. She taught us to be critical thinkers and to be confident enough to do our own thing and not just follow the crowd. If I was guilty of following the crowd, she would ask me, "If everyone got in a line and jumped off a bridge with no water below, would you do that too?" She would then ask me, "If the rapture came, and you were left behind, would you follow the crowd or would you be ready to face the tribulation?" I was 6!

My mom was always present when I got home from school, except one day. School let out early, and mom didn't get the memo. I walked home and let myself in and hollered for mom, my brother (age 4) and sister (newborn). No answer. I ran into every room hollering; I ran out to the back yard hollering — no answer. It was at that moment I concluded that her dire prediction about my rambunctious behavior had come true, and I was indeed "left behind!" I won't lie, fear gripped me because I had been told how

tough things would be for those "left behind." I spent the afternoon steeling myself for what was to come. Imagine my relief when I heard mom and my siblings coming through the front door later that day.

I think it is fair to say that I was quite the challenge to raise, and my mom was up to the challenge. This month, we recognize some amazing young Arkansans in the magazine, and I suspect their moms are up to the challenge as well. Our cover story is on Rukaya Alrubaye, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) youth spokesperson, from Ozarks Electric, who did a phenomenal job representing our state on the national stage in March. I was blessed to be able to meet her and



Over the last five decades, the U.S. national debt has risen to \$31.5 trillion.

her family. Rukaya truly embodies the cooperative spirit and is a powerful force for good. The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas also hosted the Arkansas State Spelling Bee and got to know Zeeshan Anower, who will represent the state at the Scripps National Spelling Bee near Washington, D.C., this month. We wish him good luck! We also hosted the Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge this year, ➤

MOTHER'S continued on page 24

Co-ops recognized at ECA Day at the Capitol

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA



A few days prior to St. Patrick's Day, the Arkansas state Capitol corridors were full of people wearing green in the form of Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas (ECA) Delegate stickers.

March 14 was ECA Day at the Capitol. Employees from ECA's Little Rock-based headquarters and the 17 member distribution cooperatives attended to meet with state lawmakers and officials.

Following a breakfast with General Assembly members, ECA delegates attended legislative committee meetings and visited with lawmakers.

At noon, ECA delegates gathered in the second-floor rotunda, where they were greeted by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Attorney General Tim Griffin and ECA President and CEO Vernon "Buddy" Hasten.

Sanders said, "My administration is committed to helping our co-ops keep up the same excellent record of service that they have maintained for decades," pledging her support for "new frontiers," such as the cooperatives' investment in broadband.

"If we want to build a strong 21st-century economy, we have to start by giving Arkansans 21st-century tools," Sanders said. "This means affordable, accessible broadband internet for (everyone). I look forward to working with each of you to make it happen. I know the people in this room ... are the ones who are going to make it possible."

"Nearly a century ago, government and co-ops came together to turn the lights on in every home in Arkansas. I'm ready to repeat that accomplishment in Arkansas and expand broadband to every part of our state."

After presenting Sanders with a framed cover of the March 2023 Arkansas Living issue that she appeared on, Hasten expressed his gratitude to the ECA delegates.

"It's the people who make it all happen," Hasten told delegates, thanking them for their "dedication to our mission to serve our members. ... That's what we live for; that's our purpose."

ECA delegates observed the afternoon sessions of both the Arkansas House of Representatives and Senate. During the sessions, resolutions recognizing the history, significance and ongoing efforts of Arkansas' electric cooperatives were read and unanimously approved by both bodies.

Turning out to show their appreciation for the cooperatives' long-term support were members of FFA and Arkansas 4-H.

Rob Roedel contributed to this story.



CHANCE ALLMON



CHANCE ALLMON

ABOVE Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas (ECA) Day was commemorated with a group photo at the Capitol with Attorney General Tim Griffin and Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

LEFT Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders accepts a framed cover of the March 2023 issue of Arkansas Living from Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas President and CEO Vernon "Buddy" Hasten.

March tornadoes damage transmission

After several tornadoes swept through Arkansas on March 31, crews at electric cooperatives across Arkansas worked tirelessly to restore service to members impacted by the storms.

At the peak of the storms, cooperatives collectively had about 10,000 outages among the 17 member systems. First Electric of Jacksonville and Woodruff Electric of Forrest City experienced the worst of the outages, primarily in Cross and Lonoke counties.

Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC), the generation and transmission provider for the state's 17 local electric distribution providers, replaced more than 23 transmission structures that were damaged or destroyed east of Wynne.

Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI) and contract crews were called in to assist with the restoration process. AECI also dispatched lineworkers and equipment to assist North Little Rock Electric with power outages caused by the storms.



Crews restore power in Woodruff Electric Cooperative's territory following the March 31 tornadoes.

Where Is It?

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

Last month, we hid an umbrella for April showers.

Joked one correct reader who discovered it in a Museum of Fine Arts story photo: "The bitty umbrella appears on page 15 with the Children's Theater group. Hope it doesn't rain 'cause that little thing will be of little help in keeping anything dry!"

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

- Edith Parks, Leslie (Petit Jean Electric Cooperative)
- Russell Musgrove, Texarkana (Southwest Arkansas Electric Cooperative)
- Jerri Courville, Camden (Ouachita Electric Cooperative)
- Tammie Stanford, Harrisburg (Craighead Electric Cooperative)
- Robbie Stone, Rogers (Carroll Electric Cooperative)

In this issue, we've hidden Cinco de Mayo maracas, and finding them might leave you rattled! Enter via the "Where Is It?" link on the homepage of arkansaslivingmagazine.com, or go directly to arkansaslivingmagazine.com/contest-where-is-it/.

Or you can mail entries to:

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

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

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

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

• TRIVIA •



- Sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia is the medical term for brain freeze.
- The smell of fresh-cut grass is actually a cry for help. When in distress, leafy plants release airborne chemical compounds called green leaf volatiles (GLVs), which scientists say are plant distress signals.
- Memorial Day starts hot-dog-eating season, with nearly 71 million consumed on the holiday. Yet comparably, the number of bun packs would fall short by approximately 1.3 million.
- Caffeine withdrawal is a mental disorder, according to the American Psychiatric Association.
- Cinco de Mayo is not Mexican Independence Day. It celebrates a single battle, the Mexican army's victory over France at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.
- Susan B. Anthony was fined \$100 for illegally voting in the 1872 presidential election. She never paid the fine.
- Buying books and letting them pile up without reading them is called Tsundoku.
- Mother's Day is the top holiday for dining out, as reported by the National Restaurant Association.
- Vincent van Gogh's famous painting, "The Starry Night" depicts his view from an asylum, where he was being treated for mental illness.
- "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."
— Marie Curie, Nobel Prize winner, and the only person to win for two different sciences, physics and chemistry.





JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA



All-American

Fayetteville's Rukaya Alrubaye is NRECA youth spokesperson



CHANCE ALLMON

As a 2022 Youth Tour delegate from Ozarks Electric Cooperative, Rukaya Alrubaye visits the U.S. Capitol.

BY JENNIFER CHRISTMAN CIA

Rukaya Alrubaye received some thrilling news the day before this interview. The 17-year-old recent graduate of Fayetteville's Haas Hall Academy announces, "I was accepted into the medical school that I applied to!" She explains the selective six-year, high-school-to-med-school program at the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

For this naturalized U.S. citizen born in Iraq, it's another piece of the American dream realized. And for this aspiring surgeon, it's the final flourish of a sensational senior year.

That year began last June, when she represented Ozarks Electric Cooperative on Youth Tour, an educational trip to Washington, D.C.

"Ozarks Electric Cooperative was proud to have Rukaya as our Youth Tour representative," says Mitchell Johnson, the cooperative's president and CEO. "Her poise and friendliness made it an easy choice for us. She has a servant heart, and her leadership style inspires the cooperative's concern for community."

Youth Tour wasn't Rukaya's first trip to D.C.; it wasn't even her first trip to D.C. in 2022. She had visited in January when she — as president of Project Prevent, a statewide youth tobacco prevention coalition — attended a

LEFT Arkansan Rukaya Alrubaye speaks to over 8,000 cooperative directors and employees at the NRECA PowerXchange conference in March.

conference. She returned in May when she was named National Youth Advocate of the Year by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

For Rukaya, tobacco prevention advocacy is personal. She says, “Growing up, my dad had a really bad cough. And it wasn’t because he smoked, but because my grandpa smoked. My grandpa used to smoke two packs of cigarettes a day for 30 years. ... There’s not much education or resources (in Iraq) to combat tobacco and nicotine. ... Hearing my dad’s story growing up and hearing him cough all the time and in pain ... that inspired me to want to prevent that and make sure people were educated enough about it, so they don’t start.”

Her passion — for this cause and for this country — led to her being chosen by her Youth Tour peers to serve as the Arkansas Youth Leadership Council delegate, which included travel and training opportunities.

“It made me feel incredible,” she says, adding, “I didn’t know any of them. ... All I did was tell my story in my speech, and it was amazing to see how much everybody loved it.”

Electric Cooperative of Arkansas directors loved it when she spoke at the summer conference in Jonesboro. Equally impressed, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) announced Rukaya as the organization’s national youth spokesperson earlier this year.

As spokesperson, Rukaya addressed an audience of more than 8,000 cooperative directors and employees at the organization’s PowerXchange conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in March — on the same stage that would later host football star Tim Tebow.

All are opportunities that Rukaya never would have enjoyed if her family did not move from Iraq to the United States 15 years ago in search of a safer and better future.

“We know Rukaya will continue to advocate for the youth community as she continues to give back through volunteerism and as a changemaker,” Johnson says. “I look forward to seeing what her future has in store for her – I know it will be impactful.”

Nobody can tell Rukaya’s story better than she can. What follows is the moving NRECA address that she delivered March 7, after a fitting introduction by fellow Arkansan Mel Coleman, North Arkansas Electric Cooperative CEO and former NRECA president.

“A lot of people call Arkansas the Diamond State,” Coleman says. “We have a real gem with us this morning. She is truly a wonderful young lady. ... I’ve had the privilege of watching (Rukaya) present, and I could not be prouder to have her to represent our state of Arkansas, but also represent the young men and young women on this stage and all of us.”

In Rukaya’s own words...

I’d like to tell you a love story. A story about my family, and how I fell in love with this wonderful country. But just like any good love story, it’s complicated.

My family and I moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, from Iraq in January 2008, when I was 2 years old. We couldn’t have done this without retired U.S. Lt. Col. Barney Morris — a man I would later come to know simply as Grandpa Barney.

But let me give you a little background.

During the war in Iraq, my father worked for RTI International, a company in Iraq that supported the American troops. At the time, he was Lt. Col. Barney Morris’ chief of staff. Like many of his Iraqi friends who worked with the American troops, my father’s life was in danger every day.

One day, surrounding militias attacked the U.S. compound where my father and Lt. Col. Morris worked. Through sounds of heavy gunshots and mortar attacks, my father raced around the compound to make sure everyone had evacuated. When he reached the building’s rooftop, however, he found a despondent but determined Lt. Col. Morris, sitting there with an AK-47 in

his hand, ready to defend a hopeless situation. It didn’t take long for my father to realize that this man’s life was in imminent danger. My father urged him to leave quickly and move to a safe location. Both men will tell you today that if Lt. Col. Morris had stayed on that roof, he would have been killed.

The dangerous situation in Iraq didn’t improve, but my father continued looking for opportunities to complete his Ph.D. while being an instructor at the University of Wasit. In 2006, he received an



Rukaya Alrubaye meets football star Tim Tebow backstage at the NRECA PowerXchange conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

academic scholarship to continue his studies in the U.S. It was his ticket to safety and a better life, so he called Lt. Col. Morris for help. He asked my father if he'd like to come to Arkansas. My father had never even heard of Arkansas before, but he immediately said yes to a safer life for him and his family.

The process of getting out of Iraq was draining on my young parents, financially and emotionally. They were taking their three children — my 4-year-old sister, 2-year-old me and my infant brother — to a foreign land, away from their family, friends and support.

Coming to America

When we first arrived, it was very hard for my parents, and at times, they didn't know if they could make ends meet. While studying to get their degrees from the University of Arkansas, they both picked up multiple jobs — like washing dishes and prepping salads at the dining halls of the university — all while working on mastering the English language and making sure we kids were loved on and cared for.

Their tenacity paid off.

Today my mother, Dr. Hawraa Alzouwain, is a professor of Arabic, and my father, Dr. Adnan Alrubaye, is a professor of microbiology. They are both doctors at the University of Arkansas.

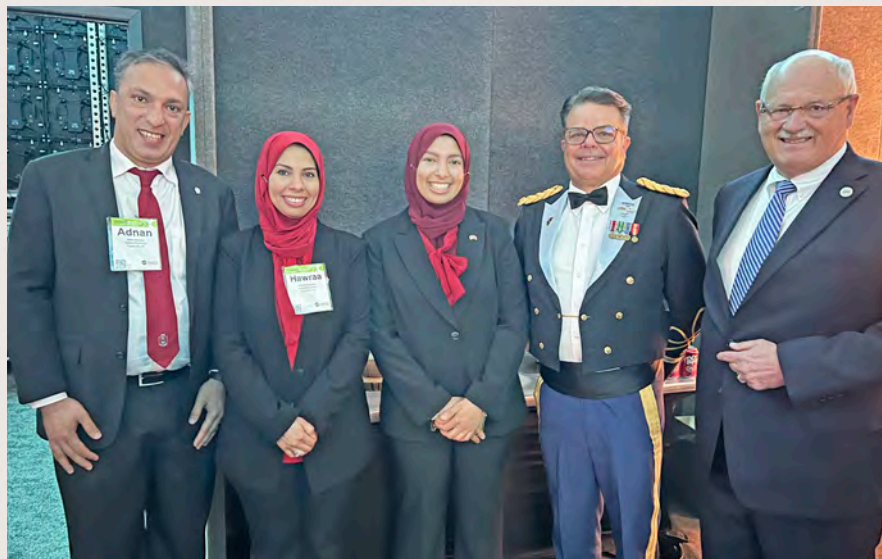
They hope that their story will inspire others to follow their dreams, too.

So, what about that American soldier who worked to help my family find a safer and better life here in the United States? Well, that Lt. Col. Barney Morris — or, as we all call him, Grandpa Barney — also received his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Arkansas.

He gave a speech a few years ago at a ceremony where my father received the top teaching and student mentorship award.

Grandpa Barney said, "There are two things I'm most proud of in my life: my service to the United States, and bringing Adnan and his family here."

I'm so happy to inform you that both of my parents and Grandpa Barney are in



From left: Proud parents Dr. Adnan Alrubaye and Dr. Hawraa Alzouwain pose with their daughter, Rukaya Alrubaye, retired U.S. Lt. Col. "Grandpa" Barney Morris and North Arkansas Electric Cooperative CEO Mel Coleman.

the audience today. Could the three of you please stand and be recognized?

My parents have always told me that if they can survive three wars, leave their family and culture and become professors in America, then I can do anything. That's a pretty compelling argument!

But this brings us to another complicated part of this love story. As I grew older, I struggled in society as a young Muslim Iraqi woman. The struggle continued even when I became an American citizen in 2017. One year ago, as I was sitting with my friends after school, a boy came up to me and asked, "Is 9/11 your favorite holiday?" I was so hurt and offended, because it was just one reminder of how I am often viewed in society.

But at the same time, I was determined to use this hurtful incident to be an advocate and stand up for people who don't have a strong voice.

For the past year, I have been honored to sing the national anthem at the University of Arkansas Razorback sports games. Little old me! All by myself. In the middle of a gym. Singing about how much I love this country to almost 20,000 people. It's an emotional experience each time I do this.

I love it because, for me, it is a song about patriotism and the bravery of soldiers like my Grandpa Barney. I love this country. That part is not complicated. I love it in a way that, unless you've seen the alternative to living in this country, you may not even be able to understand.

Back in Iraq

When I was 12 years old, I traveled back to Iraq with my family to visit our relatives. I was heartbroken by everything I saw. Every day, there were blackouts, and we'd have to suffer through 125-degree weather without electricity. That meant no fans or cool air or any light. If that happened during dinner, we would have to search for each other in the shadows.

I was also told not to walk anywhere without my sandals or shoes because at any time, I could have 220 volts of electricity shocking me through the floor. At first, I was stunned and wondered how the Iraqi people could live every day like this — in their homes! But this became my new normal for a few months.

It struck me that this country was where I came from. I could have been one of the many children lost to the never-ending ➤

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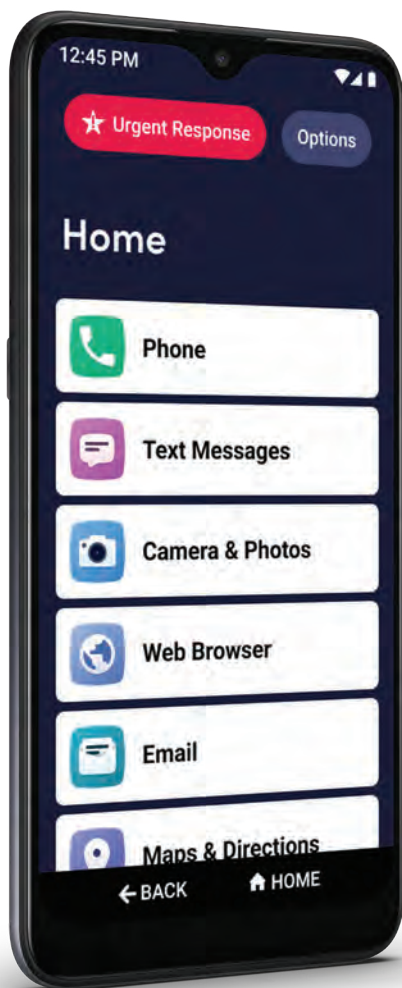
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violence in Iraq. So, when I returned home to the United States, I looked at my life differently. I didn't have to eat my dinner in the dark. I could drink a glass of cold and uncontaminated water anytime I wanted to. I could walk around with bare feet without worrying about getting killed or injured from electric shock. I became more grateful for everything I had and started to take advantage of every opportunity that came my way.

The Cooperative Connection

And this is why I applied for NRECA's Youth Tour program. This year, I learned so much about the history of electric cooperatives, and how electric cooperatives form a community of people who help each other. When I was in Washington, D.C., I also learned that, like my extended family in Iraq, there are millions of people in the world who still don't have access to reliable electricity, but that many American electric co-ops are helping them.

My electric cooperative family plays a big role in my love story with this country. I am very grateful for the support I receive from Mitchell Johnson and the rest of the Ozarks Electric Cooperative team. They inspire youth like me to use our voices to speak out and take action.

And to my Grandpa, retired U.S. Lt. Col. Barney Morris, I will forever be grateful to you for giving me, a young Iraqi American



CHANCE ALLISON

Ozarks Electric Cooperative's 2022 Youth Tour delegates Haley Person, Rukaya Alrubaye and Janet Fu tour George Washington's Mount Vernon.

immigrant, the opportunity to dream big.

Our purpose as members of the cooperative community is to help one another. My father saved Grandpa Barney's life nearly 17 years ago. It's because of their friendship that I am speaking with you today. Just one act of kindness can ripple and change the

lives of others. So, as a community of cooperatives, and as human beings — what can we do to help each other, and other people around the world? Because you never know who you may inspire. Or whose life you may save. You could be helping a young girl like me, from Iraq, become a leader. Because I am ready to make a difference in this world now.

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But I can't do this alone. I believe that if we work together, and if you give youth the opportunity to lead, we can improve the lives of people across the globe.

Rukaya would like to extend special thanks to Dr. Martin Schoppmeyer, founder and superintendent of Haas Hall Academy, for his support of Arkansas students. ■

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State Spelling Bee ends in tiebreaker T-E-S-T

BY NANCY MEADOR

After enduring 22 rounds in a grueling 40-minute, head-to-head battle, finalists Zeeshan Anower and Matt Brodbent ended the 2023 Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas State Spelling Bee in a most unexpected way — a written, tiebreaker test.

“I honestly have terrible handwriting,” Zeeshan says. “But then my competitor told me backstage that he has terrible handwriting too, and then I was OK.”

Fifth grade student Zeeshan, 10, of Sebastian County, and eighth grade student Matt, 12, of Cross County, were given five words — ametropia, hylozoism, avodire, lomilomi and pseudepigrapha — to correctly spell in a written test. Zeeshan was declared the winner after spelling one word, “lomilomi,” correctly over Matt.

Both contestants spent countless hours preparing for the contest by studying word lists and practicing their spelling aloud. However, neither took writing into consideration.

“I don’t like writing, first of all,” Matt says with a laugh. “As for preparing, it usually starts with memorization. In preparing for State, I started trying to recognize the patterns that are in words. And I tried to learn root words, so I can break them down. The really important thing is don’t get frustrated. Just stay calm when you’re doing it.”

He should know. Matt has won every class, school and county spelling competition he has entered since the fourth grade. He competed at the State Spelling Bee four times, placing third last year.

Zeeshan is a spelling-competition newcomer, winning the State Bee on his first try. He uses a unique practice method in his preparation — American Sign Language.

“American Sign Language helps me keep pace of the words,” he says, using his hands to demonstrate. “Like, if I spell super-fast, but my sign language is super-slow, I get lost on the word. It also helps me deal with the stress.”

Held March 11 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock, this was the fourth year for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to sponsor the State Spelling Bee. Rob Roedel, corporate communications director, says it was the first time that the competition had to resort to a written finale.

“The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas consider it an honor to ensure that children throughout Arkansas experience a top-grade experience at the State Spelling Bee,” he says. “Our goal is to have participants from all 75 counties in our great state. And we are working diligently to do so.” ➤



**“At the end of the Bee,
much attention is placed
on the champion, though
it truly is a sport where
there is no loser.”
— David Copeland**

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David Copeland, energy advisor for Today's Power, Inc., wholly owned by Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., has coordinated the State Spelling Bee for the past four years.

He says the competition encourages students to step out of their comfort zone and gain a new level of confidence that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

"At the end of the Bee, much attention is placed on the champion, though it truly is a sport where there is no loser," Copeland says. "While there are often a few tears shed and spellers that leave frustrated that they misspelled a word, in a few years, they will be able to recognize that the benefit of their participation was much greater than simply being able to spell a word."

Carter Metcalf, 11, a fifth grader from Marion County, took third place. Five students were awarded fourth place, and 10 tied for fifth. Approximately 84,350 students from 422 schools in 55 counties participated in local and county contests that led up to the State Spelling Bee.

Zeeshan, the son of Mohammad Anower and Sharmin Afroz, will represent Arkansas in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in National Harbor, Maryland, May 30 to June 1. ■



The 2023 Arkansas State Spelling Bee winners were (from left to right) Zeeshan Anower of Sebastian County, first place; Matt Brodbent of Cross County, second place; and Carter Metcalf of Marion County, third place.



Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas 2023 State Spelling Bee Finishers

1st Place	Zeeshan Anower, Sebastian County
2nd Place	Matt Brodbent, Cross County
3rd Place	Carter Metcalf, Marion County
4th Place	Kingston Mitchell, Saline County Ryan Fan, Washington County Eleanor Huff, White County Arianna Hill, Crittenden County Adalynn Moser, Clay County
5th Place	Samuel Barney, Benton County Ramsey Beck, Hempstead County Colten Breedlove, Pope County Yojit Acharya, Garland County Ximena Larsen, Sharp County Emilio Jack, Crawford County Geoffrey Gallinero, Jefferson County Kais Charaniya, Lonoke County Bronx Holland, Jackson County Kylie Richardson, Perry County



Arkansas State Spelling Bee finalists Zeeshan Anower and Matt Brodbent were given a written, tiebreaker test, a first for the competition.

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Taking the plunge!

Students, robots make “swimpressive” showing at SeaPerch

BY REBEKAH HALL

Arkansas 4-H students gathered at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Aquatic Center on March 3 to test their robotics knowledge and teamwork at the 2023 SeaPerch Challenge.

At the competition, hosted by Arkansas 4-H and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, junior and high school student teams steered remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) through underwater challenge courses, completed project workbooks and answered interview questions. Sixty-one teams from 12 Arkansas counties competed, as well as two teams from Grenada, Mississippi.

The overall winning junior, senior and open teams will compete at the International SeaPerch Challenge at the University of Maryland on May 13.

Hope Bragg, extension instructor in 4-H youth development for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, says the SeaPerch competition “continues to see record growth” as the 4-H students’ engineering skills improve.

“Our 4-H youth amaze me with their skills in engineering, as their robots become faster and more agile underwater,” Bragg says. “As part of the 4-H STEM program, SeaPerch allows our youth to broaden their experience with technology while realizing the real-world application of ideas they have.”

To construct their submersible robots, teams used more than three dozen parts, including pieces of pool noodles, electrical tape, propellers, 12-volt motors and batteries, and PVC pipes. Each team selected two members to steer robots through a mission course and an obstacle course. The mission course, designed to simulate space exploration, tested the ROVs’ abilities to pick up and move objects. The obstacle course required competitors to navigate robots through a series of plastic hoops floating at different angles.

Judges evaluated teams’ performances and timed their progress. Teams were also scored on technical reports and engineering notebooks, submitted in advance. Teams were also interviewed by a panel of judges who rated organization and creativity, engineering and design, and presentation delivery.

Bragg says teams were encouraged to “express their unique personalities” by dressing up for their presentations to the judges.

“I saw 4-H students dressed as sea monsters, wearing scuba gear and donning hula skirts,” Bragg says. “These kids made this year’s contest so much fun.”

SEAPERCH 2023 OVERALL WINNERS



SENIOR TEAM: TURBO FLARE 2.0, GRANT COUNTY

Members from left: Gracie McGinley, Callen Shaw, Gavin McGinley and Riley Raymick. Coaches: Serena and Brad McGinley.



JUNIOR TEAM: SHOCK WAVES, HOWARD COUNTY

Members from left: Ace McKinnon, Asher Howard and Kody O'Brien. Coach: Morgan Howard.



OPEN TEAM: THE MIGHTY DUCKS, GRANT COUNTY

Members from left: Garrett Key, Jaxson Andrews, Priyam Laxmi, Miley McGinley, Luke Douhit and Madi Andrews. Coaches: Brad McGinley and Tina Melton.

[Scan here for a full list of SeaPerch winners.](#)





Sixty-one teams competed at the 2023 SeaPerch Challenge, held at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Aquatic Center.

Staff from the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and from some of Arkansas' 17 member cooperatives volunteered at the event.

Rob Roedel, director of corporate communications for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, says the organization has partnered with the University of Arkansas' Cooperative Extension Service for decades to improve the quality of life for Arkansans.


"Working in partnership, the cooperatives and Arkansas 4-H have increased SeaPerch youth participation by more than 600% in five years," Roedel says. "The SeaPerch program provides an economically efficient STEM-based learning opportunity for students and 4-H members. The program encourages problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, hands-on learning and much more.

"These are skills that are critical in today's workplace and must be learned, and they can't all be taught in a classroom."


For more information about the Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge, visit 4h.uada.edu. To learn more about the SeaPerch program, visit seaperch.org/about. ■

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

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Rising from the rubble

Vilonia military museum rebuilds, grows in tornado's aftermath

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHEILA YOUNT

It's been nine years since a deadly tornado roared through Vilonia, causing extensive damage to the Faulkner County town. Among the buildings heavily damaged was the Museum of Veterans and Military History, located downtown in an old house.

"We were able to get about 70% of our stuff, but that doesn't mean it was usable," says Linda Hicks, museum director. "A lot of it had insulation, glass (on it) and was wet."

Hicks and the museum's crew of dedicated volunteers, known as "the brigade," were not initially sure if they could rebuild on their shoestring budget. Thanks to fundraisers, donations, grants and lots of hard work, the museum reopened on 2 acres donated by Charlie Weaver of Vilonia on April 25, 2015, one year after the tornado struck. The new 40- by 60-foot building, located at 53 N. Mount Olive Road, has a metal roof and is made of hybrid blocks designed to withstand winds of 220 mph.

In addition to a new and better building, the museum has doubled its inventory of items, as well as added outdoor exhibits and a chapel. While the museum itself has changed, the mission has not.

"The museum is a tool to reach out to veterans," Hicks says, adding that the museum provides a source of socialization for many retired veterans. The veteran volunteers lead tours of the museum and "shoot the bull" with each other over cups of coffee in the lounge, better known as the "war room," Hicks says.

Hicks' husband, Paul, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Air Force, and Harold Clevinger, a Korean War veteran who served in the Army, are among the volunteers who lead tours of the museum's exhibits, which range from the Revolutionary War to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The museum's collection includes items from eight wars, with the most coming from World War II, Hicks says. That is due, in large part, to the collection of Harold Steelman of Little Rock, which the museum received after his death. Other items have been donated "from all over" from collectors and veterans' families, she adds. Such items include medals, letters, photographs, uniforms, rifles, knives, bayonets, communications equipment, a functioning WWII generator, a tea set from the U.S.S. Missouri, where the Japanese surrendered to Allied Forces in 1945, and much more.



The Museum of Veterans and Military History in Vilonia includes items from eight wars, including the Civil War.

The museum's largest collection is from World War II, with many items being donated by the family of Harold Steelman of Little Rock.

The museum's volunteers welcome about 4,800 visitors each year, including students from area schools. "We've had people from 28 states and four continents," Hicks says.

In addition to preserving artifacts and offering educational tours, the museum also serves as a network for veterans.

"We serve as a clearinghouse," she says. "A lot of veterans' families, when the veteran passes away, they have maybe a wheelchair that is something that another veteran would want. And, so, we can pass that along."

The Museum of Veterans and Military History is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, including Memorial Day weekend. Tours can also be arranged by appointment. Admission is free, but donations are accepted. For more information call 501-796-8181 or visit veteransmuseumvilonia.com. ■

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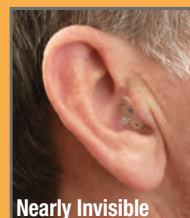
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From Your Board Chairman Rick Love

Connect2First (C2F) celebrated a milestone in early March by connecting our 10,000th customer. It sounds cheesy, but we're moving at the speed of light!

C2F crews and contractors are working in the co-op's five districts to engineer, construct and deploy gig-speed internet to all co-op members. We have an aggressive schedule and

construction process in place, and I'm proud to say we're more than 4,000 miles into an 8,000-mile buildout.

It takes an inside team to support the sales and service requests created by the construction. I'm pleased to tell you we have a group of customer experience specialists who all reside in Arkansas. In March alone, 855 new customers were added, and the team fielded over 3,400 calls. For a small group, they are focused and service-driven!

Our philosophy is to "underpromise and overdeliver." To gauge this process, all new customers receive a survey from C2F to rate the fiber technicians' and customer experience specialists' overall performance based upon professionalism and knowledge. I'm happy to report (but not surprised) that all categories scored well above 94%.

The survey also asks a question that calculates our Net Promoter Score (NPS), which was created by Bain & Company, a management consulting firm. The scoring system has been widely adopted by many different business segments. The NPS approach is based on asking customers a single question that predicts the likelihood of both repurchase and referral: "How likely is it that you would recommend this company to a friend or colleague?"

NPS is calculated using a 0–10 rating scale. Then, the accumulated ratings are graded as one number on a 100-point scale.

The industry average NPS for telecommunications/internet service provider is 30. C2F knocked it out of the park in 2022 with a score of 86! I tip my hat to the employees and contractors working in the trenches. They're getting a job done that is desperately needed in the areas we serve.

Don't miss out! Visit **Connect2First.net** to check availability or sign up for service! If you have questions, feel free to call us at 833-411-2234.

May is Electrical Safety Month



At First Electric Cooperative, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year round. From our co-op crews to you, the members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous it can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

Safety is our top priority. That's why you'll see First Electric hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

- Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.
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- Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home.
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Please talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors.

Contact First Electric at 800-489-7405 or visit FirstElectric.coop for additional electrical safety tips or to arrange a safety demonstration at your school or upcoming community event.

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*Old Skating Rink - Star City, AR.
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and we wish winning teams good luck at the international competition at the University of Maryland this month.

Why did I title this article Mother's Day Challenge? Well, raising kids is always a challenge, but I think that today it is harder than ever. The national debt is currently at \$31.5 trillion, which is \$31,500 billion; that is a lot of dollars. The hope of all parents is to turn over a future to their children that is better than the one turned over to them.

The national debt was essentially \$0 in 1968 when I was born. In 1990, 22 years later when my oldest son, Nick, was born, it was at about \$3.5 trillion. In 2013, when my first grandson, Logan, was born, it had grown to \$16 trillion. And last year, when my newest grandson, Owen, was born, it was \$30.8 trillion.

I am not an economist, and likely there are some who would say this is no big deal, however, I see it as debt hanging over all American households. It has always been my experience that if you are working hard and still go into debt, then you must work even harder to get out of it. A very challenging political environment at home with China on the rise abroad and growing national debt all signal to me that our kids and grandkids will have to do more than we did, or at least do things differently, to fix it.

This is what I mean by the Mother's Day Challenge, and

I know we have some great moms out there who are up to the challenge to raise the next generation of Arkansans to be great. The young people we recognize in the magazine this month are prime examples, and if you need more motivation, I strongly recommend the movie "Greater," which is streaming on Amazon Prime and other platforms.

Why did I title this article Mother's Day Challenge? Well, raising kids is always a challenge, but I think that today it is harder than ever.

It is about Brandon Burlsworth, University of Arkansas All-American offensive lineman, who joined the Razorbacks as a walk-on and worked his way to the top. I was so impressed with how the movie depicted Brandon's mother, Barbara (which is also my mom's name). She had to fill the role of mom and dad and still instilled such deep values, showed such support and overcame many challenges to raise an amazing son.

I guess if I could offer any advice to moms who face the challenge of raising the next generation of leaders in our state, it would be to raise them to "Do it the Burls way." ■

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\$20



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HeartsGood Farms is a family-owned business from Cave Springs, AR



First Electric members fund donations to 20 local nonprofit organizations through Operation Round-Up

Thanks to members who participate in Operation Round-Up, \$22,100 was donated to 20 local organizations in April.

These members volunteer to have their bill rounded up to the next even dollar amount each month. That money — an average of \$6 a year — is used for donations to local organizations and for college scholarships.

First Electric has a nine-member board of trustees, appointed by the board of directors, that oversees the disbursement of funds and awards scholarships to high school seniors.

To date, Operation Round-Up has donated more than \$1.2 million to worthwhile community projects and scholarships.

Donation recipients include:

Cleburne County

- Breakin Bread Ministries, \$850.
- Skate the Lake, \$500.

Conway County

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

Garland County

- Single Parent Scholarship of Garland County, \$250.

Grant County

- Single Parent Scholarship of Grant County, \$250.

Lonoke County

- Beyond Boundaries, \$2,000.
- Carlisle High School Alumni Association, \$500.
- Single Parent Scholarship of Lonoke County, \$1,500.

Perry County

- Perry County Arts League, \$1,000.
- Perry County Historical Museum, \$1,500.
- The Safe Place Inc., \$1,000.

Pulaski County

- AR Kids Read, \$1,500.
- Fishnet Missions of Jacksonville, \$2,000.
- Here to Help Foundation, \$2,000.
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Pulaski County, \$1,500.

Saline County

- Imagination Library of Saline County, \$2,000.
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Saline County, \$1,500.

Stone County

- Stone County Hometown Health Planning Coalition, \$500.

White County

- Arkansas Bikers for Children, \$1,000.

Yell County

- Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Yell County, \$250.

STAYING SAFE DURING AN OUTAGE

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including the:

Extent of the storm's destruction

Severity of utility equipment damage

Number and extent of outages

Accessibility to damaged equipment

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED

- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.

Prepare for a storm by gathering these items:

Bottles of water

Non-perishable food

Portable phone charger

Extra batteries

Pet supplies

Blankets

COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

PUBLIC DAMAGE

Damage by vehicle accidents or construction equipment can cause broken utility poles, downed power lines and equipment damage.

WEATHER

Lightning, high winds and ice are common weather-related power interruptions.

WILDLIFE

Squirrels, snakes and birds can come in contact with equipment, like transformers and fuses, which can cause equipment to momentarily fail or shut down completely.

TREES

Trees and tree limbs can interfere with power lines, which is why co-ops routinely perform vegetation maintenance in right-of-ways.

EQUIPMENT FAILURE

Although regularly inspected, the electric grid is a highly complex infrastructure with a lot of mechanical elements that can fail due to age, performance and other issues.



First Electric's offices will be closed Monday, May 29, in observance of Memorial Day. Crews will be on hand in the event of an outage. Please report outages at 888-827-3322 or on the First Electric mobile app.

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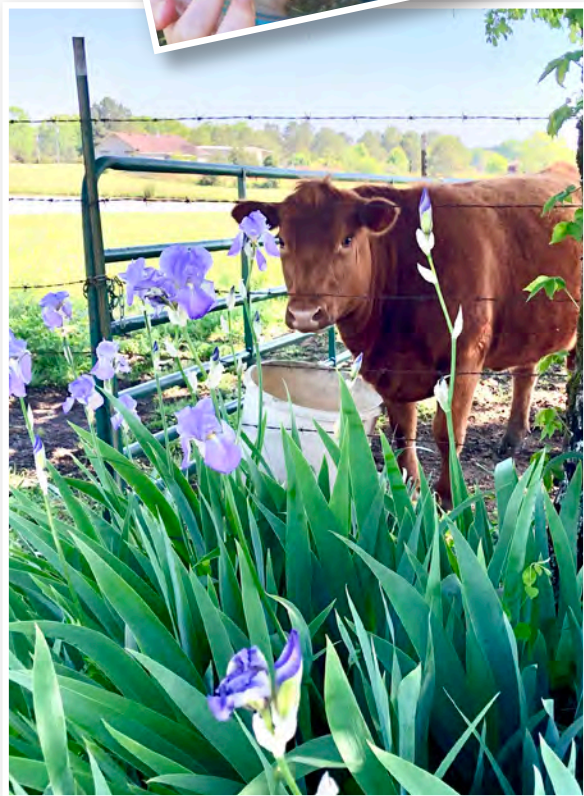
Reflections



Nora can hardly wait! Sarah Shepard, Rogers.



A fruitful moment for Rylan and her great-grandma. Kathryn Loughery, Huntsville



Daisy seizes the moo-moment to stop and smell the flowers. Nita Spears, Beebe.



Is Clyde making friends, or making plans? Rona Taylor, Tontitown.



"Hey, no spashing at the pool party!" Steve Walker, Bentonville.



The Old Mill, all decked out for spring. Betty Chambliss, Pine Bluff.



Ginger, Ladybug, and Cooper, all in a row.
Kristie Bohl, Figure Five.



Emmarie galloping away on a carousel zebra.
Jeanettie Kimes, taken at the Washington County Fair Grounds, Fayetteville.



Kes with his favorite goat, Cher.
Cathy Messer, Austin.



Emily-ann and Ella Claire are flower-girl ready.
Stephanie Pieroni, Lake Village.

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

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

What's old is new again

Heirloom gardening blooms in popularity



BY JANET B. CARSON

What goes around comes around. Heirloom, heritage, antique and pass-along — all are words used

interchangeably for growing old plants. Whether it is re-creating a historic landscape to match a period home, or simply growing a rose bush or a vegetable variety that your grandmother grew, heirloom gardening has wide appeal.

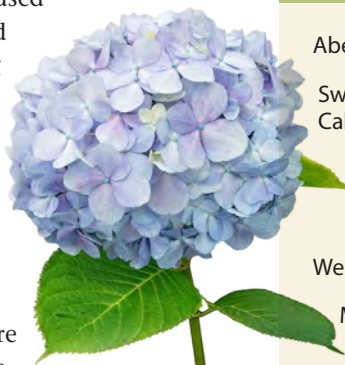
Many gardeners look for plants that are pretty and require little care. This is why gardeners are rediscovering an appreciation for plants of the past, due to their ease of growth, disease resistance, fragrance and graceful growth habit. Most heirloom plants grow well in average soils and have few insect or disease problems. Look at old home sites, some of which have been abandoned for years, yet their plants live on.

While there are a variety of dates used — and debate as to which dates are correct — most gardeners believe “heirloom” applies to plants growing 50-100 years ago. Such plants have proven their worth over several generations. Today, there are improved cultivars of some older plants that retain many attributes of the original.

Heirloom gardens include native and nonnative plants; many gardeners brought plants with them when relocating, so they would have a taste of home in their new landscape. Consider getting a piece of your own heritage. Visit with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and find out what they have in their gardens, or what plants they remember. Pass-along plants are an inexpensive way to add new plants to your garden while continuing a family legacy. Many gardeners are willing to share cuttings, divisions or whole plants.

The two most developed groups of heirloom plants are roses and vegetables, with many varieties available via local and online retailers. Antique roses steadily gain in demand with varieties that are disease-resistant and fragrant. Some popular varieties include: Belinda's Dream, Cecile Brunner, Mutabilis, New Dawn and The Fairy. Of all the heirloom vegetables, tomatoes rank No. 1, but there are some popular heirloom beans, corn, melons and squash too.

Growing heirloom plants connects us to the past, creating living bonds with gardeners who came before us. ■



Hydrangea

COMMON HEIRLOOM VARIETIES

Shrubs	Annuals/ Perennials	Bulbs
Abelia	Daylilies	Cannas
Sweet Shrub – Calycanthus floridus	Flowering Tobacco	Crinum Lily
Hydrangea	Hollyhocks	Gladiolus
Rose of Sharon	Hosta	Iris
Weigela	Larkspur	Lilies
Mock Orange – Philadelphus	Phlox	Lycoris – Surprise Lilies & Naked Ladies
Spirea (Bridal Wreath & Anthony Waterer)	Sweet Peas	Snowdrops – Galanthus
Flowering Quince – Chaenomeles	Yarrow	Summer Snowflakes



Snowdrops



Hollyhocks



Larkspur

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Picnic pasta-bilities

Easy dishes for casual, outdoor gatherings

RECIPES AND PHOTOS
BY JULIANA GOODWIN

Mexican Corn Pasta Salad

Makes 8 servings.

Salad	Dressing
3 cups rotini pasta, uncooked	1 cup mayonnaise
1 red bell pepper, chopped	2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 (15-ounce) can corn, drained	2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 cup black beans, drained	1 teaspoon garlic salt
4 green onions, sliced	1/2 cup salsa
1/4 cup cilantro, chopped	1 teaspoon lime juice

For salad: Cook pasta according to directions. Rinse with cold water, and add to a large bowl. Stir in red bell pepper, corn, black beans, green onions and cilantro.

For dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together all

dressing ingredients until well-combined.

Add dressing to salad, stirring to coat. Cover with plastic wrap so that it touches pasta (to help prevent it from drying out). Refrigerate until time to serve.



Kielbasa and Dijon Potato Salad

Makes 4-5 servings.

Salad	Dressing
1 1/2 pounds baby potatoes, assorted colors (if available)	1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt (for water)	3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 (14-ounce) package kielbasa, sliced and cooked according to directions	1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
3 green onions, sliced	1/4 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning
	1 teaspoon salt
	3/4 teaspoon Italian seasoning
	1 garlic clove, minced

For salad: Cut larger potatoes in half, so you have as many uniform potatoes as possible.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add potatoes, and cook for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain and cool. In a large bowl, combine potatoes with cooked kielbasa and green onions.

For dressing: In a small bowl, whisk together all dressing ingredients.

Add dressing to salad, tossing until well-combined. Refrigerate until time to serve.

Notes: This salad is best made a day in advance. A nice change from traditional potato salad, it contains no mayonnaise, so there's less worry about it spoiling if eating outside.





Lemon Berry Trifle

Makes 8 or more servings.

Cake

1 (15.25-ounce) box
lemon cake mix
(plus ingredients to
prepare)

2 1/3 cups fresh, sliced
strawberries, divided

Lemon mousse

1 (14-ounce) can
sweetened
condensed milk

1/3 cup fresh lemon
juice

1 (8-ounce) container
whipped topping,
divided

Berry sauce

3/4 cup water

1/2 cup sugar

6 ounces fresh
raspberries

For cake: Bake cake according to package directions. Allow to cool. Cut into cubes.

For berry sauce: Combine water, sugar, raspberries and 1/3 cup strawberries in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, and reduce to a simmer for 10-15 minutes. Cool and puree. Refrigerate.

For lemon mousse: Whisk together sweetened condensed milk, lemon juice and 1 cup whipped topping.

Place half the cake cubes in a trifle dish or big glass bowl. Spread half the lemon mousse on top. Top with half the berry sauce. Add 1 cup of strawberries. Repeat layers with remaining ingredients, and top with remaining whipped topping and a few reserved berries.



This month's web exclusive recipe:
**Date Bacon Salad with
Orange-Kissed Dressing**

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.*

Coming in hot!

Mexcellent, spicy dishes for Cinco de Mayo

King Ranch Chicken

- 4-6 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
- 12 corn tortillas, cut in halves or quarters
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic salt
- 1 large onion, chopped and sautéed
- 12 ounces mild cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 (10.5-ounce) can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 (10.5-ounce) can cream of chicken soup
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies (I use Ro-Tel)
- Favorite taco toppings

Heat oven to 350.

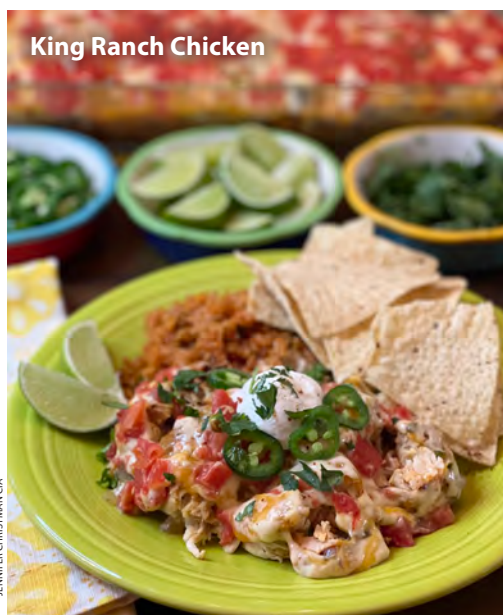
Boil chicken breasts until done, saving broth. Dip tortillas in broth, and evenly layer to line a 13x9 baking dish.

Dice chicken, and place on top of tortillas. Evenly sprinkle chili powder, garlic salt, onion and cheddar cheese on chicken. In a medium bowl, combine both soups, and spread evenly on cheese. Spread tomatoes and green chilies on top. Bake for 45 minutes. Serve with favorite taco toppings.

Notes: My sweet ex-mother-in-law, Norma Stanley, made this often. I can't tell you how many times I have eaten this dish and loved it.

For a speedy version, use rotisserie chicken.

Celeste McMahon, Longview, Texas



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN, CA

Mexican Meatloaf

Makes 2 loaves.

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 pounds ground chuck
- 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce, divided
- 2 cups corn tortilla chips, crushed
- 1 cup onions, finely chopped
- 2 (4-ounce) cans diced green chiles
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt

Heat oven to 375.

Coat 2 loaf pans or a large, shallow baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, mix ground chuck with half the tomato sauce and all remaining ingredients. Divide meat mixture into 2 parts; add to prepared loaf pans, or shape into loaves and add to prepared baking dish. Bake for 1 hour. Evenly pour reserved tomato sauce on loaves, and bake for 5 more minutes.

Notes: A neighbor across the pond shared this recipe. I've added a few more spices to suit my family's tastes.

Gina Smith, Paragould

Mexican Cornbread

- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal
- 3/4 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 2/3 cup oil
- 1 cup cream-style corn
- 3/4 cup onion, minced
- 1 medium bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 4 jalapeño peppers, diced
- 1 cup grated cheese

Heat oven to 325.

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together until combined. Pour into a skillet or baking pan. Bake for 1 hour.

Recipe origin: This was my grandmother's (Martha Garrison) recipe. She would have been 105 this year.

Dianne Garrison-Vandervoort, Stephens

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

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Little Rock, AR 72203

Email: arkansasliving@aeci.com
Online: arkansaslivingmagazine.com

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

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2 Bioptic Driving Glasses

Bioptic Drives glasses allow drivers to continue to drive when they struggle with seeing road signs. These glasses have small telescopes that allow drivers to see road signs and traffic lights. They can also be used by grand parents to see grandchildren playing soccer and other sports.



3 Spectacle Microscope Glasses

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4 Spectacle Prismatic Glasses

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8 Testing and solutions individually prescribed

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

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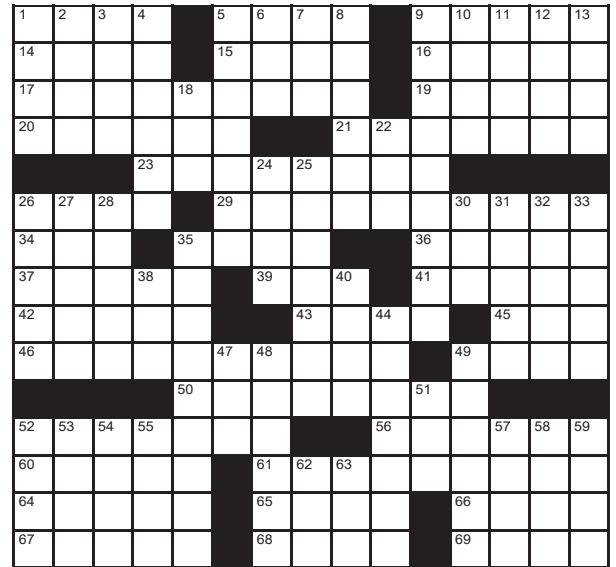
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Movie of the Year *By Victor Fleming*

ACROSS

- 1 Et ____ (and others)
- 5 Arkansas Lighting product
- 9 Gets moo juice from
- 14 Maned attraction at the Little Rock Zoo
- 15 Bit of pond scum
- 16 As strong as ____ tree
- 17 What the film contained in this puzzle was nominated for (winning seven)
- 19 In need of a scratch
- 20 1957 Dale Hawkins rockabilly hit
- 21 Bikini wearer's mark
- 23 Hydrogen's lack
- 26 "Saturday Night Live" offering
- 29 "I can resist ____ except temptation": Wilde
- 34 Not a whit
- 35 Part of Q.E.D.
- 36 "L.A. Law" role ____ Becker
- 37 Allure of baking bread
- 39 Apply gently, with "on"
- 41 Kind of question
- 42 Thorny items at Tipton-Hurst
- 43 Smooch
- 45 Cease
- 46 "Spread love ____ you go": Mother Teresa
- 49 Eye annoyance
- 50 Available in large quantities
- 52 Jetsam partner
- 56 Ongoing television show
- 60 Began to beam
- 61 "But ____ ... she understood everything": Dostoyevsky
- 64 "I was in Gillett at the Coon Supper that night," e.g.
- 65 Journalist Oman of the Democrat-Gazette
- 66 Qatar capital
- 67 Ad hoc Western group
- 68 Door sign
- 69 Chemical compound



DOWN

- 1 Keys next to space bars
- 2 In ____ of
- 3 Accelerator particles
- 4 Consecrate with oil
- 5 Natural varnish
- 6 In the style of
- 7 Pt. of G.M.
- 8 Betsy Singleton or Randy Hyde
- 9 Chief supports
- 10 Like LAX or JFK
- 11 Sets of points, in geometry
- 12 Madeline, Gus or Marion
- 13 Hebrides island
- 18 Use one's eyes
- 22 "Pick a card, ____ card"
- 24 Commercial break
- 25 Gotten back
- 26 Animal trap
- 27 Bolshoi rival
- 28 Terse concession speech?
- 30 Bygone Eur. realm
- 31 Atlas close-up
- 32 Foolish sort
- 33 Crystal-bearing rock found around Mt. Ida
- 35 "Nothing to it!"
- 38 "La ____" (Debussy work)
- 40 Northern mocking ____
- 44 Flavoring from the deep
- 47 Org. with TKOs
- 48 Pulaski County ____ Society
- 49 Walked with authority
- 51 Fishbowl accessory
- 52 Argument
- 53 "____ & Stitch"
- 54 Singer Redding
- 55 Bathroom fixtures
- 57 A part of
- 58 Alpine feedback
- 59 Close, as an envelope
- 62 Bagel go-with
- 63 "Blue Hawaii" prop

CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 39

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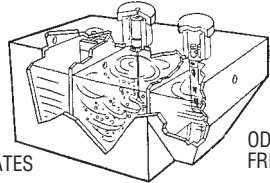
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CROSSWORD ANSWERS
for puzzle on page 38

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Greg & Jim's in Colt gives a taste of history



STORY AND PHOTOS
BY ROB ROEDEL

Erected in 1889, the building that houses Greg & Jim's Restaurant was originally a general store that served Colt's local farming community.

In 1973, the owners at the time — sisters Hazel Gray and Evelyn Haynes (whose images still hang above the establishment's entrance) — began serving sandwiches and other offerings in addition to groceries.

The restaurant's namesakes, cousins Greg Gray and Jim Haynes, assumed daily operations in about 1985, but Jim decided to pursue a college education

soon after. And, in 2012, Greg ceased offering groceries and shifted to a restaurant-only format. The busy restaurant grew steadily, feeding residents and thousands of hunters flocking to the area during duck season. In December 2020, local businessman James Tracy and his wife, Jamie, purchased the business and carry on the legacy — and name — of Greg & Jim's.

"I grew up eating here," James said. "I had heard that the family was thinking of selling, and after a short talk, I was in the restaurant business."

James said that his goal was to keep the restaurant running as it always has. "I don't want to mess with perfection," he said with a warm smile. "Our long-time employees are critical to our success. We haven't changed any recipes but did start offering some different, higher-end items on Friday and Saturday evenings," including

steak, crab legs and the like. And, according to locals, the specials are, well, very special!

I could sense the history of the restaurant when I walked in. It felt like a classic Delta farmland place, where many, many discussions about politics,



With three all-beef patties, Greg & Jim's Fat Boy Burger is aptly named.

the price of cotton and other issues were discussed and debated over the years. Quite frankly, I felt at home, and I bet you will too when you visit.

Be sure to try the Fat Boy Burger, a monstrosity with three all-beef patties, cheese, tomato, onion, lettuce and much more. This big boy definitely earned its name based on size, but the flavor was equally big.

A comfort-food classic, the Country-Fried Steak Plate came with mashed potatoes, fried okra, a bonus serving of broccoli drizzled with melted cheese and a roll. The meat and mashed potatoes were coated in biscuit "lotion" — aka white cream gravy.



Greg & Jim's Catfish Plate is a golden-fried plate of perfection.



Built in 1889, the original general store is now Greg & Jim's Restaurant, a popular Delta eatery.



THE EATING ESSENTIALS

Greg & Jim's Restaurant

46 Old Military Road, Colt
Facebook: Greg & Jim's
870-633-0541

Hours of Operation

Monday-Thursday: 6 a.m.-8 p.m.
Friday: 6 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5-9 p.m.
Saturday: 6 a.m.-2 p.m.





The Cheese and Sausage Plate can be an appetizer or a meal by itself.

The Catfish Plate featured three USDA catfish fillets, breaded perfectly and fried to a golden brown; the team knows how to cook Ol' Mr. Whiskers just right. The fish was accompanied by classic crinkle-cut fries, house-made coleslaw, sliced onion and tartar sauce.

If you are craving a salad, I suggest the Crispy Chicken Salad of mixed greens, shredded cheese, a boiled egg and a signature fried chicken strip. Homemade Ranch was the perfect dressing.

The Cheese and Sausage Plate included sliced, smoked sausage, American cheese fingers, pickle chips, a few sweet peppers sprinkled with a delicious barbecue seasoning and served with saltine crackers.

According to many of my farmer and duck-hunter friends, Greg & Jim's breakfast is legendary. So, I ordered the Breakfast Plate with over-easy eggs, biscuits and gravy, country ham, toast and hash browns covered with chopped jalapeños and cheese. Farmers and hunters don't often miss the mark on much, and they were right on target with this suggestion; the plate was as good as a bumper crop.

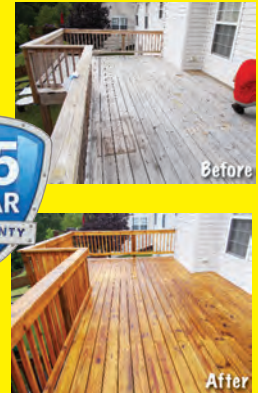
Be sure to have a homemade cinnamon roll or take one home to enjoy later as you treasure your visit to Greg & Jim's. ■

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

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Calendar



Mother's Day at the Little Rock Zoo



Magnolia Blossom Festival and World Championship Steak Cook-Off



Balloons Over Russellville



Crawdadd Days



Old Fort Days Rodeo

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

May 1-7

Arts & The Park

Hot Springs, hotspringsarts.org

May 4-7

World Famous Armadillo Festival

Hamburg, hamburgchamber.com

May 5

Cinco de Mayo

Arkadelphia, arkadelphia.gov

Cinco de Mayo Fest

Russellville, balloonsoverrussellville.com/cinco-de-mayo-fest

May 5-6

Iris Festival

Mountain View, mountainviewirifest.com

The 2023 Steel Horse Rally

Fort Smith, fortsmith.org

May 5-7

Arkansas Pottery Festival

Fayetteville, waltonartscenter.org

Balloons Over Russellville

Russellville, balloonsoverrussellville.com

Devil's Den State Park's Annual Birder Weekend

West Fork, arkansasstateparks.com

May 6

South Arkansas Mayhaw Festival

El Dorado, facebook.com/mayhawfestival

May 13

Second Saturday Family Funday

Pine Bluff, asc701.org

Johnny Cash Boyhood Home Summer Concert Series

Jonesboro, nativebrewworks.com

May 14

Mother's Day at the Little Rock Zoo

Little Rock, littlerockzoo.com

May 11-13

Spaceberry Festival

Eureka Springs, spaceberryfestival.com

May 12-13

Bombers & BBQ

Hot Springs, hotsprings.org

May 18-20

Arkansas Elvis Festival

Jonesboro, tourjonesboro.com

May 19-20

Magnolia Blossom Festival and World Championship Steak Cook-Off

Magnolia, blossomfestival.org

Picklefest

Atkins, facebook.com/peopleforabetteratkins

True Crime Fest NWA

Rogers, allthelostgirls.org

May 19-21

Crawdadd Days

Harrison, facebook.com/crawdaddays

May 20

Carpenter's Country Fest

Ozark, carpenterscountryfest.com

May 20-25

Catalina 22 National Championship Regatta

DeGray Lake, catalina22.org

May 28

Memorial Day Fireworks

Lake Hamilton, hotsprings.org

May 29

Memorial Day Ceremony at Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery

North Little Rock, facebook.com/ASVCNLR

May 29-June 4

Old Fort Days Rodeo

Fort Smith, fortsmith.org

★ ★ ★ Thank You ★ ★ ★

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